
WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

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GLEANINGS FROM THE HISTORY OF EASTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE

A paper delivered before the Washtenaw Historical Society
at its October meeting, 1958, by Professor E.R. Isbell

In entering upon the following discussion of aspects of the history of Eastern Michigan College, a brief bibliographical comment may be in order. The College, in its 106 years of actual existence (109 years of legal existence) has, unfortunately, been only fitfully mindful of its own history. It was reminded that it had a history, for example, when the occasion arose for celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1899. The one published history of the College that exists appeared at that time, written and compiled by Professor Daniel Putnam. This book contains much factual material about curriculum and physical campus, and a mixture of fact and sentiment about staff. Because of the care with which the factual material was gathered, it is a valuable guide to the first half century. Some, but much less, attention was given to the history of the College on the occasion of the observance of its 25th anniversary in 1874; and in 1949 - its centennial celebration was content to present its past in the more ephemeral forms of parade, drama, and reminiscence.

This relative lack of concern for the record is revealed in the attitude of most of those who served and helped shape its destiny. Of the fourteen men who have headed the school, prior to the present regime, only one made his personal papers available

to the college. At least one deliberately burned his papers, upon retiring. This lack of concern is not, however, untypical. It seems that only in the last decade or so has there appeared a fairly widespread introspective interest on the part of colleges over the country.

The result for Eastern Michigan College has been doubly unfortunate: first - there appears to be a dearth of primary materials in existence; second, an institution of great importance in the development and execution of programs for the preparation of teachers for the schools of our nation, with a record of outstanding achievement in its field and a long list of outstanding members of staff and administration - greets new staff and new students year after year with miscellaneous and often vague hints of a distinguished past which contains so much that could be stimulating and even inspirational.

Official records are, of course, readily available - the reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the minutes of the State Board of Education. There are the published writings of many, and the usual published biographical resources.

In the spring of 1955 President Elliott agreed to appoint a committee to undertake the gathering of materials - and ultimately the writing of an up-to-date history of the College. The College Library has become the responsible repository of all materials and has provided an Archives Room for the organizing and filing of materials, together with provision for working with them. Our efforts thus far have been largely spare-time, and directed towards the securing of materials, with some special attention to the fourteen Principals and Presidents who have guided the destinies of the institution down to 1948 - the year of the retirement of President Munson. The many distinguished names of the faculties have yet to receive attention.

Tonight I propose to give you - in a more or less disconnected fashion - some of the highlights as they attend some of the more historically important of the administrative heads. I would like to begin with Principal Welch.

Adonijah Strong Welch was the first Principal of the Normal School. He took office on October 5, 1852, and resigned for reasons of health in 1865. His background was varied. Coming from Connecticut, he entered the University of Michigan, and was a member of the first graduating class of that institution. He studied law in the office of Judge Lothrop of Detroit, and was admitted to the Bar. While a student at the University he was placed in charge of its Preparatory Department. He organized the Union School at Jonesville - the first school of its kind in the State - and served as its principal. He joined a group of Michigan men and went west to California in search of gold. He conducted the first Teachers' Institute, held at Ypsilanti in 1852, aided in the organization of the first State Teachers' Association, and was its first president. He wrote much of its first constitution. Upon leaving the Normal in 1865, Mr. Welch moved to Florida where he engaged in business - lumbering and oranges. He was elected

U. S. Senator by the Legislature of Florida, upon the re-admission of that State to the Union after the Civil War. While in Congress he served on the Committee on Agriculture, and the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. He next accepted an offer from Iowa to become the first President of the newly-formed Iowa State Agricultural College at Ames. Of his work there, it is said:

"The Campus, and indeed the College as a whole, is said to be his truest monument. To him are attributed the college fields, walks, buildings, and artistic ornamentation. The course of study was his thought also, and it has been claimed that 'no one ever changed but to mar it.' "

In 1884 he was commissioned by the U. S. Commissioner of Agriculture to inspect foreign colleges of agriculture. He visited colleges in Germany, Belgium and England.

His colorful career and personality are symbolized in the following account of an episode during the Civil War, related by the college historian, Mr. Putnam. It was contained in a letter written by one of the Normal boys at the front to Austin George:

"I remember we were stopping for three or four days, and he was disappointed at not witnessing some fighting, and expressed a wish to take a gun and go in with the boys, if such an occasion occurred while he was there. The evening before he was to leave we had a 'spread', with singing and speeches.... The Professor again spoke of his desire to be with the company in actual fighting, and had hardly more than finished speaking when the long roll beat, as we heard some picket-firing. Everyone sprang for his gun, and the Professor soon rigged himself up in the accouterments of a soldier who had that day gone away sick. I well remember how comical he looked - so little, with a silk hat on, and a belt, and a gun! He turned in with the company, and was as good as his word. Fortunately it proved to be only a scare, and no further test of valor was required."

Principal Welch's 13 years with the Normal School were long enough to give form and character to the new institution. In light of subsequent events, it is regrettable that his vision was at times lost sight of. His views on education are expressed in the following excerpts from addresses that he made:

"May I not also express the hope that while this institution is nourished by the general regard of its friends in the State, they may not look too early for its fruits. That mental excellence which marks the true scholar is not the product of a day. It is found only in self-denial and self application, and its treasures are open only as the hard earnings of intellectual toil. Not even among the marvelous inventions of the present age can there be found any labor-saving processes for the attainment of intellectual worth." (Inaugural address.)

Again -

"No amount of text book knowledge, as such - no memory of straggling undigested facts or details - no skimming of the area of knowledge of whatever sort, can make the genuine scholar or the independent thinker. It is rather by the relations of facts and things - by a close scrutiny of the reasons on which opinions are founded - by a right analysis of every subject brought before his attention - that the student, at last, attains to a genuine cultivation of the intellect." (Address, Teachers' Institute.)

As to the importance of a well-rounded education:

"By some, even the eccentricity of a distorted intellect is regarded as an index of genius. The nose of the antagonist of Sancho Panza, which hid all his other features, was not in more ghastly disproportion. Would we nourish an exuberance of limb or feature, until it amounts to a deformity? Would you fix the head of a giant upon the shoulders of a dwarf?" (Address, "What Constitutes the True Teacher.")

Austin George, one-time head of the Normal Training School, has paid this very fitting tribute to Adonijah Welch:

"Professor Welch had the distinguished privilege of starting three educational institutions which were new in their states, namely: the Union School at Jonesville, the Michigan State Normal School, and the Iowa Agricultural College; and the great success of each is a triple monument to his transcendent ability."

After the resignation of Principal Welch in 1865, there was a period of delay of six years in procuring a successor - a delay which was most unfortunate for a new and developing institution. During this time the pressure for trained teachers - both at the elementary and secondary levels - had become great. There was nothing in the concept of the Normal School to prevent expansion into the secondary area of teacher preparation. The vacuum left by the failure of the Normal to take vigorous steps to meet the need resulted in pressures for action in other directions. In 1864, for example, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Gregory) proposed that legal authority be granted to colleges and high schools to organize Teachers' Departments. Kalamazoo College established a professional course for teachers in that same year. In 1867 the State Siperintendent's Report (Hosford) showed that teachers' courses were being offered in twelve Union Schools, Colleges, and Academies throughout the State. He urged, in 1868, the establishment of at least one more Normal School, asserting that the Normal School at Ypsilanti could not hope to meet the need. And in 1879 the University of Michigan established a Chair of Pedagogics. As early as 1858 the State Superintendent (Gregory) had strongly urged the University to contribute to the preparation of teachers for the common schools. In 1873 the State Superintendent (Briggs) appealed to the University, saying:

"In view of the pressing need of a larger supply of trained and skilful teachers, may not our preparatory schools... put in a plea for the establishment of a normal department in the University, especially as it is graduating so many who become teachers.... The constant increase of the number, and elevation of character of our public schools, render it more and more difficult to supply the demand for trained teachers."

What the Normal (and the State of Michigan) needed, above all things, during these years was a man of vision and aggressive purpose who could size up the situation and propose constructive steps to meet it. Instead, there were only temporary heads appointed (Mayhew; Bellows). And to meet the ever-mounting pressure for more teachers, the only step that the Normal leaders, and the State Board, could think of was in a most unfortunate direction - namely, to speed up the process of teacher training by reducing the curriculum. And - still worse - the curriculum was to be shortened by eliminating the academic courses! The initiative in this move appears to have been with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Repeatedly, the assertion was made that the curriculum of the Normal School was too academic, and that the high school training should be considered adequate academic training for common school teachers. This sentiment was expressed in annual reports for 1873, 1874, 1876, 1877, 1880, 1881, 1882, and 1888. A good example is the Report of Superintendent Briggs of 1873, in which he said:

"Its [the Normal's] aim should be not only to be as sparingly academic as possible in the character of the instruction it imparts, but make its curriculum almost wholly confined to methods of instruction...."

What a far cry from the concept that Principal Welch held of the function of the Normal! Indeed, how very unfortunate that his services could not have been retained during these critical years.

In 1878 the step was taken. The State Board prescribed as follows:

"Aside from general reviews in connection with professional instruction, the Normal School proper will be confined to purely professional instruction."

The experiment lasted only two years. It had been taken in spite of the protests of the Principal (Estabrook) and a majority of the faculty. It resulted in a decrease in student attendance, and was given up in 1880, coincident with the retirement of Principal Estabrook.

Another direction which the pressure for more teachers took was the effort to establish more Normal schools. In 1875 a bill was passed in the Senate to establish a second Normal School at Marquette. This bill was defeated in the House. The attitude of the Principal and faculty at the Ypsilanti Normal towards this proposal reminds one of the present day of the opposition experienced by Michigan State College in its effort to become

designated as a University. The honorable Peter White, State Senator from Marquette, who had introduced the bill, blamed its failure on the Ypsilanti school. He said:

"One would have thought such a bill would not encounter any opposition; but no, it passed the Senate by only a fair majority, and within two days brought to Lansing the principal of the Ypsilanti Normal and all his professors, two or three influential professors of the State University accompanying them, to kill the bill before it passed the House of Representatives. And they succeeded. The Normal School Principal went before the Committee on Education and talked long and eloquently to the effect that another Normal school in the state would weaken the one we had, and in the end ruin would come to both."

A similar attitude was shown by the Ypsilanti institution some 20 years later when, in 1895, a second Normal School was authorized at Mt. Pleasant. The historian of that school, Mr. Larzelare, complains:

"The establishment of a second Normal was strongly opposed by citizens of Ypsilanti and by some members of the faculty of the Normal School at that place. After the Mount Pleasant School was taken over by the Legislature that opposition was continued in the form of attempts to keep that school in a subordinate position by restricting its courses of study and the certificates which it could grant. It was felt that another Normal would limit the attendance and lessen the importance of the older institution."

During these years, too, the State Board experienced some difficulty in securing and retaining first-rate men to head the institution. Mr. Mayhew, the first permanent appointee after Principal Welch, was unable to stem the pressures for abandoning academic courses. He opposed the step, it is true, but his arguments were based on expediency rather than on principle. He also gave his active support to the opposition of a Normal School at Marquette. Principal MacVicar, who succeeded Mr. Estabrook, remained only two years. His interests proved to be more in the direction of religious work. After leaving Ypsilanti he became a member of the faculty of the Toronto Theological Seminary, was the first Chancellor of McMaster University at Toronto, and still later became Superintendent of Education of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Daniel Putnam, head of the Normal Training School, was made Acting Principal on two different occasions - for two years after the resignation of Principal MacVicar; for one year after the resignation of Principal Willits.

Edwin Willits - editor and lawyer as well as educator - remained for only two years (1883-1885). He was a man of outstanding ability; indeed, his career reminds one of Adonijah Welch. Both were lawyers, both graduated from the University of Michigan, both had a turn in the U. S. Congress, both were active in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and both, after leaving the Normal,

became president of now famous Agricultural Colleges. Mr. Willits left Ypsilanti to accept the presidency of the Michigan Agricultural College at East Lansing. Madison Kuhn, the historian for this College (now University) says of him:

"Willits' fame gave the college a hearing in the state that it had never enjoyed.... The respect shown to the President by the public and by the students was matched in the Legislature when he secured appropriations for an unprecedented number of buildings for so short a period.... In Willits' presidency agricultural research received the financial support it had long deserved.... Willits crowded the campus with buildings until a Speculum editor concluded that there was no room for more."

And as for curriculum, Professor Kuhn comments:

"Willits summoned the state to fulfill its solemn promise, made when it accepted the Morrill land grant, 'to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.' Under Willits the neglected second half of that ideal was realized."

I have said that the State Board found difficulty in securing and retaining the services of outstanding men to head the Normal School. Indeed, after the resignation of Adonijah Welch one has to page through the records of 21 years before coming across an administration that reveals a degree of educational statesmanship. In 1886 John M. B. Sill was appointed Principal, and he remained with the Normal for seven years. Mr. Sill, too, was a product of the University of Michigan, and also the recipient of an honorary degree from that institution (A.M., 1870). As a young man he had been an assistant to Mr. Welch at the Jonesville Union School. Principal Welch brought him to Ypsilanti, and, during one year when visiting in Europe, made him Acting Principal. Mr. Sill's career includes, besides the Normal School position, Head and Proprietor of the Detroit Female Seminary, the Superintendency of the Detroit Public Schools at two different times (he organized the system), member of the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan, and Minister Resident and Consul General for Korea under President Cleveland.

Principal Sill's major contribution to the Normal School was a statesmanlike return to the original objectives of the School, broadening its curriculum in an effort to realize the full implications of the original concept. In this respect he did for the Normal School what President Willits did for the Agricultural College at East Lansing. Principal Sill said:

"The true function of our Normal School is to equip teachers for all grades of schools, including not only primary and grammar schools, but high schools, and the superintendence of village and city schools as well."

He succeeded in implementing this broader concept by establishing the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Pedagogics. He insisted on a balanced academic experience for the students. He also gave attention to the Training School, and at the close of his term was able to say:

"The Training School is now in reality and truth a school of observation and enlightened practice, as it was not even five years ago."

Richard Gause Boone, Mr. Sill's successor, served for six years (1893-1899). In the last year his title became "President," so he has the distinction of being the first President of Michigan State Normal College. His career includes the superintendency of the Cincinnati Public Schools, the editorship of an important professional periodical - Education, and professorships in Education at Indiana University and the University of California at Berkeley (where he retired). He became distinguished as the author of a widely-read book - Education in the United States; its History from the Earliest Settlements. This book has been described as "the first noteworthy attempt at a general history of Education in the U. S." Mr. Boone's influence at the Normal was salutary. With regard to the value of physical training, he said:

"I shall not disparage any form of physical culture when I say that neither strength of body, nor grace of carriage, nor attractive presence, nor health, nor agility, nor endurance, can for a moment be considered as an end of training. Here as elsewhere the essential fact is, the amount and quality of the mental life that goes into the process, and the reaction of the process upon the mental life."

And as to educational values:

"The mistake of the schools seems to me to be far less that moral and aesthetic and religious instincts have been ignored, than that the intellectual faculties and activities are not recognized as a great natural gateway and highway to these qualities of a noble life, not less than to scholarship."

The three years following President Boone's resignation witnessed the second experiment by the State Board of Education to result in failure. In 1899 the State Legislature approved a third Normal School - at Marquette. In an effort to unify and coordinate the work of the three Normal Schools, the Board decided to establish a new position - "President of the Normal Schools of Michigan." Each school would, therefore, be headed by a Principal, and all three Principals would be placed under the supervision of the President. The man chosen to be President was Albert Leonard, who came to the position from the Deanship of the College of Liberal Arts at Syracuse University. The Principalship of the Normal College at Ypsilanti went to Elmer Lyman, at the time head of the Mathematics Department of the Normal. The experiment lasted three years, and was adjudged a failure. Both men relinquished their positions, and in 1902 the first of the 20th century Presidents was brought in - Lewis Henry Jones (1902-1912).

Mr. Jones came to Ypsilanti from the Superintendency of the Cleveland Public Schools. Prior to that he had been Superintendent at Indianapolis, and while there had served as a member of the famous Committee of 15 on Elementary Education of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, appointed in 1893. Among the recommendations emanating from this committee was one for the re-organization of city school systems, with a view to excluding politics and increasing responsibility for professional administrators. Cleveland was the first large city to try the experiment - and in looking for a superintendent who might be most likely to make a success of it, they chose Jones of Indianapolis, giving him a small school board elected at large, full responsibility for the employment, promotion, and dismissal of teachers, and a life-time tenure. The outstanding success of the administration of Lewis Jones at Cleveland had much influence on the adoption of a similar system in the larger cities over the nation.

At Ypsilanti, President Jones provided a stimulating and effective leadership. Several areas of instruction, notably the Rural School, were raised to the status of department, an unusually competent teaching staff was developed, new areas of instruction (Home Economics; Commercial Work) added. The Summer Session was initiated, and outstanding educators from over the nation brought in as lecturers.

President Jones' major contribution, however, was doubtless in his personal relations with faculty and students. He was admired, respected, and loved. One of his department heads (Dimon H. Roberts, head of the Training School), attributed three major developments at the Normal to President Jones:

1. Enrollment more than doubled (2,000).
2. A general feeling of harmony and good will in the faculty, resulting in the highest professional standards.
3. The fact that the College lost none of its Department Heads, except by death.

That President Jones placed great emphasis on inspiration and ideals was expressed in his farewell address to the teachers of Cleveland, where he said:

"It is not the unworthy actual, but the noble possible that has inspiration in it.... It is this power to idealize life and to see forces and agencies at work transforming the world, that makes the difference between the great teacher and the one who is satisfied with the actual, and settles down to go through the routine form of preserving the present order of things."

Towards the close of his years at the Normal, President Jones purchased some wooded acres across and overlooking the Huron River, built a rustic summer cottage, and called it "Riverbrink." He was a lover of nature, had studied at Harvard under the great naturalist, Agassiz, and now undertook to surround himself in his last years

with his plantings. Still blooming today are his wild plum, red-bud, lilacs, syringa, honeysuckle, lilies of the valley. Here he would invite in on a frosty Sunday afternoon strolling couples for a hot cup of tea. Here he resorted for quiet study and meditation.

In 1912 began the era of Charles McKenny - "era" advisedly, for it covered a span of 21 years - the longest presidential span in the history of the College. In personality, love of nature, poetic outlook - Charles McKenny and Lewis Jones were kindred souls. Together they gave the Normal College a third of a century of inspired and respected leadership, and relative harmony. Mr. McKenny had twice been president of a Normal School before coming to Ypsilanti - first at Mt. Pleasant (their first President under State control), then at Wisconsin State Normal School at Milwaukee. He was a dreamer and a builder, and his qualities were at once evident upon his arrival at Ypsilanti. Without delay, he called upon the Legislature for new buildings and additions to existing ones. Within a year he had taken a step that - at that time - was novel in the State of Michigan. He had drawn up a building program - and he succeeded in committing the Legislature to a program of \$100,000 a year for the next seven years. He built the Pease Auditorium, long-planned by President Jones; a men's gymnasium; enlargement of the main building; an Administration Building; etc., etc. He, together with Professor Marvin Pittman, envisioned the future of consolidation of school districts and made possible the achievement of Lincoln School. He dreamed of the wonderful possibilities of a great all-college social center - and the alumni presented him with McKenny Hall. The Library and the Roosevelt School were also built in his time. A second building program, conceived shortly before the great economic collapse of 1929, provided plans that have been the basis of the major achievements in the twenty-five years following his retirement. He even dreamed of an air-strip on the Campus, and a college-owned plane to carry teams and personnel to distant places.

At the national level, President McKenny was one of the founders of the American Association of Teachers' Colleges (now known as the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education), and was its first president. He was re-elected for a second term.

In his quiet moments - as was discovered by his family after his passing - Charles McKenny found release in the writing of poetry. Here he revealed his ardent love of nature. One of his poems - called "Futurity" - includes the following lines:

"I know not what my destiny will be
When I shall quit this earthly scene
And friends will sadly say of me,
He is no more.
It may be that in a realm of endless time
This inner self, released, clay-free,
Will lead a life supreme, sublime,
in alien worlds,
Moving in joyous flight from sphere to sphere,
Learning in rapturous surprise
The truths but dimly guessed at here
by saint or sage.

But this I know, so long as I am I,
I shall hold fadeless memories
Of this fair world that will not die
Though eons pass,
And oft like miser taking store, I'll ope
The jewel casket of my heart,
And count my earthly treasures o'er
With smiles and tears."

I shall close this hurried review with the era of John Munson - again, "era" advisedly, for it was the second longest in the history of the College (1933-1948); and it brings to a close the first century of the life of the Normal College.

John Munson presided over the College through the most difficult years of modern times, including as they did not only the critical years of the Great Depression but also the harrowing years of the Second World War and the tumultuous years of the post-war rush of veterans to the colleges under the "G.I. Bill." During the last 10 years of this period, much energy and time were consumed, as one would expect, in meeting the exigencies of emergency situations. From a student enrolment of 1900 in 1939, the total dropped precipitately to 1200 in 1942, to a low of 700 in 1944. The number of men students was reduced to less than 50. Colleges over the nation were closing or being threatened with extinction. The great Bomber Plant that sprang up overnight on our border requested - in the interest of the war effort - the use of the college dormitories for war workers, and nearly got them. An aroused alumni and a friendly governor responded to President Munson's call for help, and the college was saved. Had the demand been successful, the college would have had to close its doors. Rooms in the city were more than crowded with war workers paying much more than any student could afford. Incidentally, the Bomber Plant never did actually use even all of the facilities provided at Willow Run!

Then, even more precipitately, with the end of the War came the rush of veterans to college. From a low enrolment of 700 in 1944, a new high in the history of the College occurred in 1948 - a total of 2700. One can hardly imagine conditions more difficult for the financing and staffing of a college.

In spite of these parlous times, however, the campus grew. In 1938, a generous gift from Walter O. Briggs, of automotive and baseball fame, provided a beautiful baseball field and stands, a football stadium, and a modest fieldhouse. In 1939, a magnificent gift from the Rackham Foundation provided a home for the work of Professor Charles Elliott in the training of teachers for handicapped children. The federal government provided, through a depression-inspired agency, funds for the erection of a laboratory building for the natural sciences (Hover Building), and also for a large modern Student Health facility. A new plan for the securing of funds for income-producing facilities (the "self-liquidating program"), originated by Earl Kress of the Ann Arbor Trust Company, and first tried out on the campus at East Lansing, made possible the erection of five large dormitories, such as President McKenny had urged in his second building program proposal. A new Shop building was erected, with facilities for major alterations.

And finally, the State Legislature came through with funds for a new administration building to replace historic old Pierce Hall which had stood condemned as a fire hazard for more than a decade.

At the State level Mr. Munson participated in and strongly influenced important developments - including a Certification Code for teachers, and a modernizing of the whole college curriculum for all four of the teachers' colleges (the one at Kalamazoo had been added in 1903). In conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Arts, Wayne University commented as follows:

"He is recognized as an able college president, and as an authority in school law. Under his wise guidance much constructive educational legislation has been formulated for the State of Michigan."

John Munson was unique among the heads of the Ypsilanti institution in that he was the son of immigrant parents from Sweden. He was unique in another respect - he never married. In an earlier time - while a student at Ferris Institute - he had written an "Essay on Woman" that his classmates never forgot. It read in part as follows:

"No doubt the American people are a great people; great because of the problems they have solved. They tackled the Free Speech question and solved it; they tackled the Silver question and solved it; but there is one question that remains unsolved and that is, the Woman question. This they inherited from their ancestors. It is the most perplexing problem that ever confronted man...."

Mr. Munson's attitude towards college administration was conservative, to say the least. He belonged to the old school, who felt that authority and responsibility were personal, and not to be delegated. The College was, to him, an estate to be personally administered in trust for the people of Michigan. His alone was the responsibility - his the grief. During his administration, the academic standards of the College were at a maximum, and jealously guarded. Proselyting of athletics - or any color thereof - was sternly forbidden. Advertizing of the College was strictly limited. The College must stand on its solid reputation. Committee work was reduced to a minimum. The faculty must have their time and energy for their job, which was teaching. Classes must be met. Attendance on conferences, early leave from the spring term to take a summer position elsewhere were strictly limited. The grades of every student were scrutinized by the President in person at the close of each term. A note of congratulation, over the President's personal signature, went to the parents of outstanding students; those who appeared hopeless were asked to leave. A strong stand was taken against whatever appeared to be a fad in education.

Two personal characteristics were outstanding in Mr. Munson - his sense of humor (of which we caught a glimpse, above), and his love for children. Not a week went by that he did not visit the handicapped children in the Rackham dormitory. Upon his retirement, he received the following note from them:

"No doubt many messages of appreciation are reaching your desk during these busy days. The children and the staff of Rackham School are thinking of you, too - remembering your real interest in us through the years. We wish you much happiness as you turn your attention to new interests."

His vision for education and the future of America (which he loved to the point of devotion) was in terms of children. While he was President at Northern Michigan College, at Marquette, he wrote a message "To the Boys and Girls of Michigan" which was widely publicized. It read in part as follows:

"From Maumee Bay to Isle Royal is farther than from London to Berlin. Between lies an empire - fields of grain, sparkling lakes, and richest mines. People truly exclaim: 'Michigan is a great State.' But neither because it is large nor rich is Michigan a great State. What then makes Michigan great? I will tell you. If the boys and girls of Michigan join hands, they form a solid line from Keweenaw to Lenawee - six hundred miles in all. And who are the boys and girls in that line? I know who they are. They are the Joy of Today and the Promise of a Greater Tomorrow.... I see boys and girls, ten hundred thousand of them all different, all aspiring, all good. It is they that make Michigan great."

The greatness of an institution rests on two basic factors: a purpose that genuinely serves a fundamental human need; trained men (and women) of ability, broad vision, courage, and devotion to human welfare to execute its mandate. Eastern Michigan College can be proud of its purpose, regretful of periods when vision fell short of social need, grateful for as much of the leadership as it could command of such men as Welch, Willits, Sill, Boone, Jones, McKenny, and Munson.

AS I REMEMBER IT -- THE BANK HOLIDAY

[On the evening of February 19, 1959, the Society was favored with an interesting and authoritative talk by Mr. Rudolph E. Reichert on the "Bank Holiday" of the Depression Era. Talking "off the cuff" from his fund of personal memories, since he was Michigan State Banking Commissioner at the time, Mr. Reichert had prepared no formal manuscript, in lieu of which we are substituting the following letter, written some weeks after the meeting in answer to a request from your secretary, Mrs. Groomes. From the secretary's minutes we are here reconstructing the occasion.

The speaker was introduced by your president, Mr. William E. Brown, who drew attention to Mr. Reichert's ancestral claim to the attention of this group, in that his grandparents came to Washtenaw County in 1836, where their farm soon became noteworthy for its lack of weeds. A short biographical sketch followed.

Immediately on obtaining a commercial certificate from Ann Arbor High School in 1904, young Rudolph entered the employ of the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank on the southeast corner of Main and Huron Streets. In 1910 he transferred his services to the German-American Bank, and when it later became consolidated with the State Savings Bank, he was included in the change. Later he was called to Lansing as a bank examiner, which led to his position as State Banking Commissioner. He is now president of the Ann Arbor Bank, situated on the very corner on which he humbly started his banking career. He is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Detroit.

Mrs. Groomes mentions that he spoke warmly of the courageous support he received from Governor Comstock at the time of the Bank Holiday and the faithful service rendered by his two deputies when, during the economic confusion of the early '30's, "closing time was two A.M."

With typical Groomes spontaneity, the secretary's notes conclude:

"I would not even attempt to quote from Mr. Reichert's talk. My financial struggles in the Washtenaw Historical Society have never reached \$5000, and when our speaker began to talk about thousands of millions, my head began to swim and I knew that I was in away above my depth."

The Editor]

Dear Mrs. Groomes:

In regard to your note as to how the manuscript is progressing - as you will recall, I spoke to the group only from notes that I had made and it is rather difficult for me to repeat everything I said. As I recall, I began by reading from the last report that I made to the Governor on January 31, 1936, which was only a short time before my return to Ann Arbor from Lansing. This included the following -

"To summarize the work in connection with reorganizations, it is necessary to begin with the bank holiday. We had at that time in 1933, 436 banks and trust companies under our supervision, with deposits of \$482,450,000.00. Two hundred four banks and trust companies with deposits of \$253,143,000.00 were licensed for immediate reopening. The remaining 231 institutions and 31 custodianships and receiverships which were already in the process of reorganization constituted the banks for which the emergency legislation was enacted. Two hundred two banks, with original deposits of \$188,000,000.00 have been reorganized, releasing \$104,000,000.00 to depositors, and placing \$84,000,000.00 in trust to be paid to depositors as liquidation of undesirable assets permits."

I continued to speak on the events as I remembered them and did not take the trouble to get any factual information. The banking business in the State of Michigan had its problems from the first time that a bank was established and was usually conducted in the form

of private banks connected with mercantile companies. Later the legislature of the state authorized the establishment of corporate banks and in the 1857 depression these corporate banks were all closed. They were operated mostly by people who gained their charters from the legislature and then proceeded to issue their own currency - this was known as "Wild Cat Banking."

In 1863 the National Bank Act was passed, national banks were created and one of the first was established in Washtenaw County.

Following 1857, the legislature of the state passed another Act creating corporate banks under the supervision of a committee of the legislature. However, this did not prove too successful and in 1887 the present Banking Act was passed and it was modeled after the National Bank Act and the Massachusetts law which recognized the establishment of time deposits as well as commercial deposits with segregation of assets covering time deposits. That was changed in 1933, however, and there is only one type of creditor in banks now. Savings deposits are still separated in accounting from commercial deposits and carry a different reserve requirement.

Referring to the paragraph that I read, the bank holiday which came in Michigan on February 11, 1933, and nationally on March 4, 1933, created a very difficult problem. Knowing that this problem was on the way, we had endeavored to prepare ourselves to meet it by the reorganization of our institutions as soon as a conservator was appointed and a law enacted to provide for reorganization of the institutions that were not licensed on March 12 after the President of the United States stated that the banking authorities of the country, Comptroller's Office, Federal Reserve Board and Supervisors of State Banks, would begin to license banks and the deposits in them would be safe as well as the money deposited in them.

Quite a few amendments were made to the Federal Reserve Act because it was of very little help to the banks during this very difficult period and Congress wisely established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation which was used by our state and other states and also national banks to strengthen the capital structure by placing in these banks preferred stock.

Congress also passed legislation creating the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation which gave confidence to depositors. They further passed legislation to create the Home Owners' Loan Corporation which issued bonds for mortgages and land contracts which were in default so that the purchasers could save their investments.

Moratoriums were also issued to prohibit foreclosure of mortgages for a certain period which would give the purchasers an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves.

All in all, the program worked out very well. The banks were reorganized under a plan which provided for a portion of the deposits to be payable immediately, the balance to be paid at a later time. Assets were held in trust until collected. The record speaks for itself - all of the reorganized banks paid out in full and some even paid back some monies to the original stockholders; and the

banks placed in receivership by the state paid out approximately 98% to the depositors of these institutions. These receiverships came under the Special Act and were handled by the Banking Department.

In Ann Arbor three banks were included in the reorganization which provided for the induction of \$1,000,000 of preferred stock by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and \$150,000 of common stock by the previous stockholders of the various banks. The other bank in Ann Arbor which was not included in this reorganization had \$200,000 of preferred stock for a short time, which was repaid shortly, and the preferred stock of the reorganized banks was repaid in 1942. The depositors in all of the banks in Ann Arbor received one hundred cents on the dollar on their deposits and other banks in the county were also reorganized or licensed and while I have no figures on it, my recollection is that they fared equally well.

I appreciated the opportunity to speak to your group and hope that I have covered the principal points of the talk that I gave to you.

Sincerely yours

R. E. REICHERT

Editor's Note

The manuscript for the talk given by City Manager Guy C. Larcom at the April meeting has not yet been received. We hope to include it in the next issue of Washtenaw Impressions.