

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Board of Instruction

OF THE

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, N. H.



For The Year Ending **1903**
DECEMBER 31,

APPENDIX B.
HISTORY OF PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL.

Previous to the separation of the New Hampshire settlements from Massachusetts in 1692, public schools were maintained here according to the laws of that colony. After the separation there was some opposition to the continuance of these schools. We find that in 1697 there was a remonstrance signed by twenty-one citizens of Portsmouth against raising "thirty pounds mony pr anum fer sd scollmaster's sallery."

Germes of education, however, were early implanted in Portsmouth. In 1693 a law was passed in the colony requiring the building and repairing of schoolhouses, and the paying of a schoolmaster by taxation. For many years the colony contributed regularly to the support of Harvard College.

The first town schoolhouse was built in 1713. There had previously been a town school. Thomas Phipps was appointed schoolmaster in 1697, and taught for several years in a wooden building about on the site of the building on State Street now occupied by the Central Office of the School Department and the Women's Exchange. This building was rented from Ebenezer Wentworth and exchanged by him with the town in 1735 for the lot on Daniel Street which had been bequeathed to the town by Mrs. Graffort for school purposes. This wooden building remained until it was replaced by a brick one in 1790. A contract made in 1748 between Samuel Hale and the Selectmen of Portsmouth obliged Mr. Hale to keep the Grammar School of Portsmouth and instruct in the languages

for five years; for which the selectmen bound the town to give him an annual salary of forty-five pounds. Maj. Hale continued to keep the school until several years after the Revolutionary War.

The last master in the wooden building was Salmon Chase, father of Salmon P. Chase, Chief Justice of the United States from 1864—1873. Salmon Chase was succeeded by Amos Tappan in 1790. In the upper story of the brick school building, Mr. Tappan began a *High School for Boys*. Here he prepared boys for college. His salary was one hundred pounds a year. Deacon Tappan continued as master of the school for about twelve years. The next master was Peter Cochrane, who was followed in 1805 by Eleazar Taft. Mr. Taft had received a Classical education at Brown University. He remained until the fire of 1813, when he retired. The course of study in his school consisted in reading, spelling, writing, geography, grammar, natural philosophy, mathematics and Latin and Greek. Mr. Taft fitted many of his boys for college and several of them graduated from Harvard.

Soon after the fire of 1813 the building on State Street was rebuilt and the upper story continued to be occupied as a boys' high school until 1856, at which time the present brick building was erected on Daniel Street on the site of the Graffort homestead, which the city had purchased for this purpose. The lower floor of the State Street building was occupied by a school of lower grade called the Peabody School.

The first school in the town to which girls were admitted was opened on Market Street in 1780. A Girls' High School was kept in the basement of the old Court House on Court Street for several years previous to 1856. We find that in 1832, Israel Bourne was master of the

"Male School," and Nathan Merrill was master of the "Female School." Each received a salary of \$550. Mr. Bourne was succeeded, about 1833, by Chandler E. Potter, who kept the Boys' High School until John T. Tasker followed him about 1840, continuing until Israel Kimball became principal.

In 1845 Israel Kimball was master of the Boys' High School at a salary of \$750, and Phinehas Nichols, of the Girls' School received \$650. The boys' school had 58 pupils and the girls' 148. Besides reading, arithmetic, geography and history; the boys were instructed in English composition, geometry, natural philosophy, Greek, Latin and French. The girls had English composition, natural philosophy, mental philosophy and French, in addition to the common branches.

In 1854 the course of study for the boys' school was as follows: grammar, geography, arithmetic, algebra, bookkeeping, history of the United States with general history, natural philosophy, chemistry and rhetoric; also Greek and Latin for boys expecting to go to college. The course for the girls' school comprised grammar, geography, arithmetic, algebra, bookkeeping, United States history, natural philosophy, natural history, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, and French. Apparently the only chance for electives was in the matter of Greek and Latin in the boys' school.

The Daniel Street building was dedicated on September 4, 1856. The girls' school occupied the upper floor and the boys' school the lower floor until the schools were united in 1873. At that time the school enrolled 162 pupils with an average attendance of 125, and had three teachers. The plan of having one session was first tried about 1864; and Saturday sessions were continued until 1881. For a few years the practice vacillated between

one session and two sessions, but since 1868 one session a day has been the rule. So long as Saturday sessions were held, there was no school on Wednesday afternoons. The school year then lasted about forty-three weeks. The summer vacation began about the middle of July and lasted until the last week in August.

The Principals of the two schools, from 1845 until they were united, were, in the boys' school, Israel Kimball until 1854, Aurin M. Payson, 1854 to 1864, Lewis E. Smith, 1864 to 1868, and Stephen W. Clark, 1868 to 1873. Mr. Lewis E. Smith was connected with the school as assistant and Principal from 1859 to 1873. Phinehas Nichols was Principal of the girls' school in 1845, and in 1864 he was succeeded by Aurin M. Payson, who continued at the head of the school until 1873, after which he served as Principal of the High School for one year. He was followed by Stephen W. Clark in 1874, Mr. Clark, having remained in the school as assistant during the intervening year. During the first year of Mr. Clark's principalship, Miss Emma J. W. Magraw, who has now served the school most efficiently and conscientiously for thirty years, began her work as assistant. Mr. Clark severed his connection with the school in 1881 and was followed by Edward J. Goodwin, now, 1903, at the head of the Peter Cooper High School in New York city. The second year Mr. Goodwin was Principal of the school, Miss Frances A. Mathes began her work as assistant. Thus her influence and work, which have been of such great value to the school, have extended over a period of twenty-one years.

Mr. Goodwin severed his connection with the school after three years and was followed by George H. Rockwood, who remained one year and was succeeded by John Pickard, who was Principal from 1885 to 1889. He was

followed by Irving H. Upton who remained until 1896 and was succeeded by John H. Bartlett, Esq. Robert M. Brown was Principal from 1898 to 1900 and the present Principal began his work in September, 1900. All of these men have been college graduates, and those who have gone out into other fields have attained marked success as educators, or in other professions. It might be noted in passing that the present practice of having a commencement speaker from out of town was begun in 1890 when Mr. Upton was Principal.

Since 1873, the number of teachers has increased from three to ten, besides the addition of special teachers in Drawing, Penmanship and Music. The enrollment continued at between 150 and 160, then by gradual falling off reached low water mark at 121 in 1889. The school began to grow with general demand for secondary education in 1891. The following year with a registration of 169 pupils it became necessary to enlarge the building. At that time a laboratory and two recitation rooms were added on the rear of the building. In 1896 the school reported a registration of 210; and during the next two years the registration was 199 each year. In 1901 the registration reached 267 and now is 314. For several years the school has held and still holds second place in point of size among the high schools of the state, although Portsmouth ranks as the fifth city in population.

The number of non-resident pupils has steadily increased since 1895, until now there are seventy-five. The development of electric roads about the city and the school law of 1901, requiring towns in New Hampshire, not having a high school of their own, to pay the tuition of pupils at an approved high school; account in a measure for this increase. The spirit of the age, however, demands a gen-

eral education, and parents are not slow to use all educational opportunities offered to them for their children.

In view of the rapid growth of the school, a committee was appointed in 1901 to consider the erection of a new building. As an outcome of their efforts the public was awakened to the needs of the school, and on January 12, 1903, the Senior Class at the school voted to give a corner-stone for a new building. Soon after, the Haven estate on Islington Street was purchased by the Board of Instruction for a site, and work on a new building was begun in September last. This building will be built of brick, with buff face brick, and will accommodate five hundred pupils. It is expected that the building will be completed in time for the opening of school in September, 1904.

While it would be difficult to assign a definite date to the beginning of Portsmouth High School; while its development has followed the general principles of evolution; yet after a century or more of prosperity, under adverse circumstances at times, the school has become a great power of usefulness in the community. With the increased facilities which the new building will afford, may it continue to hold its high position in the confidence of the citizens of Portsmouth.

We would not close this sketch of the history of Portsmouth High School without mentioning its benefactors. In 1843, Horace A. Haven, a young man who had recently graduated from Harvard, left a bequest of \$800 to the town. The income from this fund was to be used for the encouragement of sound scholarship. The fund was left to accumulate, so that the income is now more than \$80 a year. A part of this is used each year for purchasing gold medals which are presented at commence-

ment time to deserving members of the graduating class and to certain members of the sophomore class.

Mrs. Martha M. Demerritt, daughter of J. Plummer Dennett, and whose husband, Samuel M. Demerritt, was a teacher in one of the grammar schools for many years, also assistant in the Boys' High School in 1857 and 1858, left to the city at her death, a fund, the income from which was to be applied to the support of needy students at college. At present two scholarships of about \$86 a year are awarded to deserving young men from this city. This same lady also left \$500 to the Boys' High School, the income to be used to buy books for their library. Another gift came to the school through the late Frank Jones, who gave his salary as mayor of the city for one year, the income from it to be used for library purposes at the high school.

These gifts have been most helpful and will continue to bless the children of future generations. The school is in need of more help of this kind. Surely it would be difficult to place a bequest where it would accomplish so lasting and perennial a benefit as it would here.

ALLEN HOWE KNAPP, *Principal.*