

INDIANA COUNTY

175th

Anniversary History

by

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instruction, he emphasized, was worse than no school.⁶⁵ Numerous other local and county institutes were held in the ensuing years, but space precludes reviewing them here.

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT. INDIANA COUNTY NORMAL SCHOOL.

The Act of May 8, 1854 provided for the naming of a county superintendent of schools. Accordingly, the directors of the various Indiana County School Districts met in Indiana June 29 and organized by naming Rev. Peter Sahn, chairman; and Thomas Walker and William Evans, secretaries. The salary of the county superintendent was set at \$500 a year; and, although a letter signed "Teacher" had been published earlier recommending George S. Mendall of Blairsville for the position, the directors elected Rev. Samuel P. Bollman on the first ballot.⁶⁶

At a meeting called by Bollman on August 22 a committee of five persons - Robert McCrea, Joseph Griffith, Jacob Wolf, John Barge & John Stanard - recommended that a teachers association for Indiana County "would be beneficial to teachers" and would aid in "imparting a professional spirit, producing uniformity in modes of instructions, causing harmonious action on every subject involving education, and elevate the standard of qualification for the business of teaching." Another committee consisting of Silas M. Clark, J. A. Ewing, Samuel Wolf, Thomas E. Morgan and William Loughry, was appointed to prepare a constitution and by-laws to be presented at the next meeting in December. The first officers elected were A. T. Moorhead Sr., president; Thomas Gibson, vice president; A. W. Kimmel, recording secretary; John Barge, corresponding secretary; and W. H. Coleman, treasurer.⁶⁷

Bollman's next step was to press for the establishment of an Indiana County Normal School. In July 1855 he sent a circular to the school directors asking how many teachers would attend and whether there would be any financial aid to secure two professors to assist the county superintendent. On August 18 a meeting was held in the Indiana Academy chaired by Rev. P. Sahn, with Andrew Getty and A. W. McCullough, secretaries. A committee was set up to make the arrangements for a Normal School: Rev. Bollman, Dr. Thomas St. Clair, E. P. Hildebrand, Thomas Gibson and John Adair. On September 11 an advertisement appeared stating that the Indiana County Normal School would open September 25 in the Indiana Academy and the basement of the new Associate Church, and continue for one month under the Supervision of Rev. Bollman, assisted by Professor J. F. Stoddard of the Lancaster County Normal School, M. C. Walker of Boston; R. T. Cornwell, Barryville, N. Y.; and Dr. Cutter, Warren, Mass. The school opened with a beginning

enrollment of 76, which increased to 108 by the end of the term. On account of Bollman's illness and inability to participate part of the time, S. M. Clark offered a resolution that Prof. Stoddard be asked to remain longer. Deputy State Superintendent, Dr. Henry C. Hickok, visited on October 11 & 12 and "designated Indiana as the Banner County in the Educational Cause, west of the mountains," giving much of the credit to Rev. Bollman. The following resolution was adopted:

Whereas, a Normal School has been raised up and made to flourish in Indiana County, in the midst of not only a chilly apathy towards all educational advancements, but of active opposition arrayed against all improvement in the culture of the youthful faculties; and whereas this school has been brought into existence, cherished and sustained, by the disinterested and indefatigable energy and perseverance of S. P. Bollman, our County Superintendent, until the most satisfactory proofs have been afforded of the incalculable utility of this school, therefore

Resolved, That we the pupils of the Indiana County Normal School, hereby express our gratitude to our Superintendent, for his unwearied labors in behalf of education generally, and particularly for the improvement of teachers, and system of teaching...⁶⁸

The second session of the county Normal School began October 1, 1856 and continued for four weeks. It was similar in structure to the first. Tuition of \$2.50 was charged. Among the resolutions were two commending Rev. Bollman and expressing "our earnest desire that he be re-elected."⁶⁹ The annual sessions of the Normal School continued each year.

In March 1857 Rev. Bollman announced his candidacy for re-election, stating he had "fairly learned the business" and was "anxious to have an opportunity to prove his skill, and rectify his apprenticeship blunders..." On May 4 the school directors re-elected him and increased his salary to \$650.⁷⁰

The County Superintendency seems to have come under heavy local attack about this time, and near the end of the year 1857 we find the Pennsylvania State Teachers Association meeting in the Indiana Lutheran Church (December 29 & 30). Among the resolutions were the following:

Whereas: In some sections of [Indiana] county the attempt has been made to underrate the importance of, and to overturn the office of County Superintendent..

Resolved. That the County Superintendency, when its duties are properly discharged, is the chief animating influence in

our common School System.

Resolved, That to remove it would be a gross sacrilege...

Resolved, That should the unenlightened parsimony, which still seeks its removal, be successful, it would be emboldened to attempt the demolition of the whole conservative edifice.

Resolved, That we as an Association reiterate our confidence in the County Superintendency.⁷¹

The nature of the opposition became clear in January 1859 when it was reported that a "large number of petitions" were being circulated and "numerously signed" seeking the abolishment of the office of County Superintendent.⁷²

In 1860, when Bollman announced his candidacy for a third three-year term, several others also entered the field, including Samuel Wolf of Marion, J. Wallace Barkley, Prof. J. S. Wachob of Saltsburg, and Andrew Getty of Conemaugh Township. The name of Prof. R. T. Cornwell of Indiana was also suggested in a letter signed "Civitas," but Cornwell withdrew his name before the voting on May 7. Another letter signed "A Common School Teacher" observed that "Rival candidates are clamoring like hungry wolves for the office, and advertising themselves in every possible way." Bollman was re-elected, receiving 67 votes. Wolf received 28 votes, Getty 12, Wachob 12 and Barkley 3. The directors, however, reduced Bollman's salary to \$500.⁷³

Some of the sentiment against Bollman may have been due to dissatisfaction with the county normal schools as a means of improving teachers. In 1859 the catalogue of the Indiana Seminary, of which Cornwell was one of the principals, stated:

the commonly received notion that a young lady or gentleman may become a practical and efficient teacher by attending one or two... Institutes is a great mistake.* * ...the first requisite for a good teacher is a thorough and familiar knowledge of the various branches he proposes to teach, and this cannot be acquired at Institutes alone.

In January 1865 the *Indiana Weekly Register* voiced criticism of the conduct of the county and district institutes as being too loose. Many of the addresses and exercises, said the editor, were "unpardonable burlesques upon the occupation and dignity of teaching."⁷⁴

In 1863 Bollman was succeeded as County Superintendent by Samuel Wolf, elected May 4 by a vote of 61 school directors, a slight majority of the 118 votes cast.

NORMAL SCHOOL ACT

Not many people realize that an Indiana Countian, Titian J. Coffey,

serving in the State Senate, played a key role in the passage of the Normal School Act of 1857. In April it was reported Coffey had introduced a bill to divide the State into twelve normal school districts and establish in each a normal school "under the patronage but not at the expense of the State." He was named chairman of a Select Committee of the Senate which reported favorably on the bill. The Act was passed May 20, 1857 and thus was laid the foundations which led to the erection later of the State Normal School at Indiana.

The year before, Coffey, a recognized friend of education, had been invited to address the Indiana Literary Society, and said, among other things on April 11, 1856 that "Knowledge if acquired at all must be thoroughly acquired," and that "...the Temple of Knowledge stands upon the summit of a steep and rugged hill, and as yet there has been invented no Intellectual Locomotive or M'Adamized road to bear you up without the exertion of your own faculties."⁷⁵

INDIANA'S NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL.

In 1859 Indiana began to construct a new school house but a setback occurred in October when a storm knocked down one of the walls and a partition wall, breaking some joists and other timbers. The loss was estimated at \$400 and the walls had to be razed down to the foundation. In May 1860 R. C. Taylor, secretary of the school directors, advertised that the Board desired to borrow \$4,000 in sums of not less than \$500. By August it was announced that Prof. Westlake would be school superintendent.⁷⁶

The formal opening was held September 11 at 2:30 p.m. State Superintendent Thomas H. Burrowes gave an address; as also did Rev. Bollman, County Superintendent, and others. The school was "a graded Public School from the Primary to the High School department..." The term commenced Monday September 17. About 370 "permits" were issued by the school directors "to pupils wishing to attend the borough schools."

The school was described as situated on 1-1/2 acres of ground enclosed in part by a substantial board fence. The building was located in the center of Fifth Street at its intersection with School Street. A pump and other conveniences were located on each of two playgrounds. The two-story building was 65x75 feet, each story fifteen feet. There were six classrooms, each 25x35 feet, and a lecture room 35 x75 furnished with settees and lamps. There was a stone basement. In the classrooms were 320 desks and chairs of several sizes, made of cherry wood, with metal legs screwed to the floor. Each teacher had a neat desk and chair. All the walls were "handsomely papered" except for the blackboards. "Venetian Shutters" had