The real growth, the absolute progress of civilization, the change from a frontier post, subject to Indian attack, through various gradations to a great country, from its early poverty to great prosperity, is best observed in the beginning and growth of the schools and the relative interest taken in them by the community.

There had been little progress since 1834, when the first school bill of Pennsylvania was put through, in the face of much opposition, by Thaddeus Stevens, who had come into the Legislature for the sole purpose of putting through the school bill.

The schools were single story log cabins with huge stone chimneys and fire places. Glass or greased paper admitted light. The door was held shut by a wooden latch to which a string was attached to lift it. Seats were made of split logs into which pegs were driven for legs. There were no backs to these and they were so high that the feet could not reach the floor. Desks were made of slabs supported by pins driven into the walls. The pens were made from quills by the teacher and the ink was made from berries.

One school house stood near a sugar tree. When the shadow of the school house reached the tree the teacher knew it was time to dismiss.

We read of one teacher who was considered very good. He was severe in his discipline but successful in beating what he did know into the heads of others. He was a great tobacco chewer and the floor around his seat was always besmeared.

The alphabet was the first thing taught. Then the pupil

*Read before the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society on June 1, 1920.
would go to words of few letters whose endings were the same. They would increase these words until at last they could “spell-off” the book. In Arithmetic there were no explanations made. The chief object was to get the question worked and put in a copy book. If you could not solve the question the teacher would work it for you but without an explanation. The New Testament was greatly used.

Twenty-six days constituted a month and six days a week. On Saturdays the catechism was taught and spelling matches were held. Each one tried to stay head the longest.

At the beginning of the decade of 1850-1860 little progress was seen. The school term was no longer and the teachers were no better paid and no better trained than before. This was partly due to the many nationalities making up the population of Pennsylvania. They had to be trained to the new system.

By 1852 many of the counties were holding institutes. The teachers of Allegheny county organized in 1848 and those of Washington county in 1850. These institutes usually met for one day. All who were interested would attend and take part in the discussions. These meetings aroused the attention and interest of the people. By the end of that year the system had come to such a state that the needed reform could be gotten through.

William Bigler who became Governor in 1852 was in favor of the reform of 1854 and used all his personal influence and the influence of his administration in its behalf. He signed the bill without any thought of his political future.

Francis Huges, one of the Secretaries of the Commonwealth, in his report gave the following as some of the defects in the prevalent system:

- incompetent teachers
- no power to enforce taxes or collection of them
- want of corporate divisions
- want of proper buildings.

The bill of 1854 was read in place in the Senate by Dr. Jonas R. McClintock of Allegheny County, Chairman of the Committee on Education. There was much opposition to the bill and it was passed with low majorities.

This law reorganized the system of public education. The township was made the unit of the system. The term
was increased to four months. Reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography and arithmetic were made the statute subjects thus doubling the course in many districts. Grants to private and religious schools were prohibited. The offices of county superintendent for each county and of deputy superintendent of common schools were created. The directors with the aid of the teachers were to select the books. Separate schools for negroes and mulattos were to be established when there were twenty or more in a district. The last provision was repealed in 1881 but the schools continued.

A convention of the County Superintendents met in Harrisburg in September 1854. Thirty-six counties were represented. The grade and form of certificate that they adopted were practically the same as those of today. The provisional being granted to many and the permanent to few.

Many looked down upon the County Superintendents and wanted the provision of the law referring to them repealed. In many counties it became a political issue. Governor Bigler was not re-elected in 1855. Many thought that his successor, Governor Pollock, would go against the school law but in his message he said that he stood for the County Superintendents, better schools and normals for the training of teachers.

The County Superintendents were to be given a fair trial under Governor Pollock. This had not been done the previous year as many times low salaries kept efficient men from accepting the position. In other cases the county would put in a man who knew nothing whatsoever about education. The teachers objected to them on the grounds that they could not get a position if they were to be examined by these men; that they did not care for their visits and the remarks they made; that the men would put in personal friends.

The County Superintendents of Western Pennsylvania and their salaries for the first term were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny</td>
<td>James M. Pryor</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong</td>
<td>John Campbell</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>Thomas Nicholson</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>Isaac Black</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>Joshua V. Gibbons</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>John A. Gordon</td>
<td>262.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1852 the first number of the *Pennsylvania School Journal* was published. This became the educational magazine of the state. Also in this year the State Teachers' Association was organized at Harrisburg. The following year the *Tutor and Pupil*, a monthly journal, was published at Chambersburg. This was meant to be a stimulus for the young people.

In 1857 the office of State Superintendent was made a separate Department. Before this time it had been attached to the office of the Secretary of State. Also in this year the first provision for the education of teachers was made. The state was divided into twelve normal districts. Lancaster was the first district to open a normal school although there were small private and summer normals before this time. Superintendent Kerr of Allegheny County established a normal at Mansfield in 1855. In 1856 a summer normal was opened in Washington. In the summer of 1858 a normal was opened at Hillsboro which resulted in the Southwestern State Normal at California. The reason for the establishment of the normals, one man said, was "that there were more incompetents in schools than in any other profession. There are training schools for lawyers, doctors, preachers but anyone will do for a teacher."

Massachusetts led in the establishment of High Schools in the early fifties. The more progressive counties of Pennsylvania soon took them up. The people were still unused to paying taxes for education and they did not see the need of the schools so we can readily see that there was much opposition to these schools. In the *Pittsburgh Post* of 1856 appeared an editorial against the high taxes needed for the use of the High School. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* made the answer that all the taxes being paid under the heading of High School were not for the sole purpose of that building but for the other ward buildings as well. The Gazette hoped that the Post would correct this error in order that no one would become prejudiced against so good an institution. This shows the attitude of the newspapers toward education.

The High Schools were very rigid. Latin, Greek and
mathematics formed the chief subjects of the curriculum. The chief purpose of the High School at that time was to prepare for the entrance to one of the denominational colleges of the time.

Entrance to the Pittsburgh High School was given twice a year. The Central Board of Education gave an examination in spelling, reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, geography, history and simple equations in algebra. The books used were the New Testament, McGuffy's and Os-good's Readers, Western Calculator, Davis, Ray and Greenleaf's Arithmetics, Smith's Geography and Atlas, Mitchell's, Monteith's and McNally's Geography, Reed and Kellog's Grammar, Goodrich's History. Those passing these examinations were admitted to the High School. The classes averaged twenty-five.

About this time the people of Greene county held a meeting denouncing the school law of 1854 and especially the County Superintendents. They declared the law to be unconstitutional; said it would increase government agents; that it taxed the poor to pay for the education of the rich. They added that if those who had passed this law had spent a few years in the schools they never would have passed it.

Not only were there county institutes which by the end of the decade lasted three and four days but there were also district institutes held in the school houses of various townships. Part of the program was given over to exercises by the pupils. These exercises were usually in music and an examination in the different branches taught. Allegheny and Washington, the two leading counties of Western Pennsylvania, brought lecturers from all over the United States to speak at these meetings.

At a meeting in Somerset township, Washington county, the following statements were brought out. "Only competent teachers and interested parents can bring good schools. Our motto is to be: What does the pupil really know about or understand, not what has he memorized? Teach the children to understand and see that they understand clearly everything taught."

At the various institutes such topics as these were discussed: The best method of teaching the common branches; moral attainments and knowledge of branches taught; co-
education of sexes; importance of the study of the American language; establishment of schools of arts, mines, etc.; analysis of sentences; women as teachers; the product of two negative factors is negative; popular errors in teaching; powers and duties of Principals of graded schools. It was recommended at these meetings that delegates be sent to the State Association meetings; that the same text books be used throughout the county; that the Bible be used for religious service. These topics show that the people were wide awake to the needs of the schools.

It was at this time that arrangements were made for Horace Mann, the great school worker, to lecture in Pittsburgh on the needs of the schools and their benefits.

One educator gave the following plans for the building of school houses. They should be built on a North, South, East and West plan with their greatest length North and South. This should be in a ratio of 6:4. The openings should be on the East, West and South. That would leave a long unbroken space on the North side for maps, blackboards or blackened walls at which a large class could work. The ceilings should be very high—at least twelve feet.

Another educator gave the following hints on education:
There should be more home study. Rest and physical exercises should be given frequently. Have plenty of fresh air. Do not start children at four, five, and six as they are too young to do the work. The hours are too long. Establish libraries for teachers. There should be a person to stop the vice of being late and of being absent.

In 1859 the Western Pennsylvania Teacher's Association was to get the teachers of Western Pennsylvania into closer touch and cooperation with each other. It was also to show the educators of the East that those of the West were doing their part to make the schools a success.

From a State Report of that time we find that the school appropriation was $300,000.

| Whole Number of Districts in State | 1,632 |
| Whole Number of Schools in State   | 10,469 |
| Whole Number of Teachers in State  | 12,143 |
| Whole Number of Scholars in State  | 539,024 |
| Average salaries of male teachers per month | $22.29\frac{1}{2} |
| Average salaries of female teachers per month | $14.89\frac{1}{2} |
Average length of term__________5 months, 10 days

It is interesting to note in the comparison of the salary between male and female teachers that the female teachers of New Brighton demanded the same salary as that given male teachers. Teachers in several of the other districts took up the matter but nothing came of it.

In addition to the public schools there were many private institutions and institutions of higher learning. The most important of these are the University of Pittsburgh which was established in 1787 under the name of Pittsburgh Academy. It is the oldest existing institution west of the Alleghanies. The purpose was to establish a school in Western Pennsylvania like the University of Pennsylvania. In 1819 the name was changed to Western University of Pennsylvania. In 1908 it received its present name.

In 1787 Washington Academy had its beginning with a gift of fifty pounds from Benjamin Franklin. In 1802 Jefferson Academy, an outgrowth of McMillan’s Log Cabin, received its charter and the school was opened at Canonsburg. Both of these schools were kept up by the Presbyterian Church. After the Civil War on account of lack of funds the two schools were united under the name of Washington and Jefferson College. There was much dispute as to location. The citizens of Washington offered the college $50,000 if they would make that town their site. In 1869 the college opened at Washington.

The Female Seminary at Washington which was opened in 1838 was one of the most important of the girls’ schools. The Female Seminary at Pittsburgh was another important school for girls.

Among the commercial schools were Duff’s Mercantile College and the Iron City Commercial College.

Among the schools which were open then but do not exist today were: Florence Academy for ladies at Florence; Cross Creek Academy at West Alexander; Edgeworth Ladies in Pittsburgh. This was transferred to Braddock’s field and later to Sewickley; Steubenville Female Seminary at Steubenville; Pleasant Hill Seminary at Pleasant Hill; Beaver Female Seminary at Beaver under the auspices and patronage of the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Greensburg Academy at Greensburg; Young
Ladies Seminary at New Brighton; Classical and Commercial School for boys at Sewickley under the name of the Sewickley Academy; Rev. Dr. Killikelly's Female Seminary at Kittanning for a limited number of young ladies. In the city of Pittsburgh there were several schools. Penn Institute was on Penn Street. An English and Classical Seminary was on Ferry and Liberty Streets. A select school for boys from 10 to 16 years of age was located on 6th and Grant just opposite the Court House. Allegheny Institute at the College Building was to take care of the education of the colored children. Professor Thompson's Female Seminary in Pittsburgh.

Perhaps the reason for so many small schools throughout Western Pennsylvania was the large number of different denominational sects settling here. It is interesting to contrast the course of study, length of term and expenses of the schools of that day with those of today. Among the branches taught were Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, mathematics, natural and moral science, arts, bookkeeping and a general education. In the girls' schools were taught Dead and Modern Languages, painting both oil and water, music, vocal and instrumental, English and mathematics. The term ran from ten to twenty-two weeks. The tuition and board ran from $25.00 to $75.00 for the general education. Language was an extra item, the dead being more expensive than the modern. Oil painting was twice as expensive as water coloring. Church attendance was compulsory and pew rent had to be paid. Some times laundry was included in the board, other times it was a separate item. In some cases the students had to furnish fuel for their rooms.

In 1855 a charter was given for the founding of a Farmer's High School which was to be located in Center County. This finally became known as State College. The school was established for the purpose of correcting the evil in so many of the other schools—i.e.—the low standard set upon manual labor. They were to experiment with and test seeds and find the best breed of stock for different purposes. The expenses after the debt had been cleared was to be $75.00 per year. Dead languages were not to be taught.

Let the value of our common schools never be underrated. The schools are the stronghold of American intelli-
gence. Their doors shall ever be open to all classes and ranks on an equal basis. Their doors shall always guard against Bolshevistic influences. It is by them that the intelligence and the power of our country is to be sustained.

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