



STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, BLOOMSBURG.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLLEGE

THE BEGINNINGS OF BLOOMSBURG STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

(Academy and Institute)

W. B. SUTLIFF

To trace the origin and development of a great educational institution is sometimes as difficult as to determine the events surrounding the infancy and youth of a prominent citizen whose birth certificate is non-existent and whose childhood is obscured by the lapse of time. Fortunately, however, many of the highlights of the origin, development and growth of the institution now known as the Bloomsburg State Teachers College were recorded, and may be read, in the somewhat faded records of the Trustees of earlier years.

The movement began in the hearts and minds of the enterprising citizens of Bloomsburg before and during the period of the Civil War. Animated by a great desire to place before the youth of Bloomsburg the opportunity to secure the fundamentals of a classical education, an Academy was opened in 1839 at the corner of Third and Jefferson Streets with C. P. Waller, a graduate of Williams College, as its head. Public school teachers assisted in developing the classroom work of the Academy.

The growth of the Academy was such that in 1856 a charter was written by D. J. Waller, Sr., and a corporation legally formed to sell stock, and open and manage an Academy to be known as the Bloomsburg Literary Institute.

The Trustees in 1866, were, D. J. Waller, Sr., President; William Snyder; J. K. Gratz; L. B. Rupert; I. W. Hartman, Secretary; John G. Freeze; R. F. Clark; and William Neal. The work, enrollment, and progress had expanded to such an extent that the securing of an educator of established reputation to head the Institution became imperative. In 1866, Henry Carver of Binghamton, New York, was chosen.

He immediately began a vigorous campaign to raise funds for the erection of a building adequate for the development of a larger and more efficient school. By June of that year, 596 new shares of stock were sold at \$20 per share, netting \$11,920. To aid in the campaign for funds, Peter Billinger and C. Bittenbender were commissioned to sell stock in the Bloomsburg Literary Institute Corporation. "Each was to receive \$3 per day for the time expended."

On June 29th, 1866, just one week after the election of Henry Carver, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution to erect a building to accommodate 300 students at a cost not to exceed \$15,000.

The location of the building at once became a public issue. Sites were offered by:

1. Caleb Barton, lot, Scott Town, near Fair Ground, \$1,000.
2. M. Appleman, lot, 3 acres, \$1,200.
3. William R. Koons, lot, \$2,200.
4. D. J. Waller, residence and two acres of land at corner of Market and Fifth Streets, \$1,200.
5. William and Alice Snyder, 3 acres on land above the Forks Hotel in line with a proposed extension of Main Street.

Terms: "I agree to give three acres of ground, in the lot of ground laid off by R. R. Pealer June 22nd, 1866, whenever it may be preferred, at the rate of \$500 per acre and I will donate as stock one thousand dollars and require to be paid Five Hundred Dollars, making the sum of \$1,500 as price of land to the Trustees of Bloomsburg Literary Institute."

It is interesting to note the objections filed in a minority report to what is now considered an ideal location for Institute Hall, now Carver Hall.

1. "Position of Building has no relation to points of compass or any street, alley, or building or anything about the Town of Bloomsburg."
2. "The surroundings—A Tavern, Livery Stable, and Tannery nearby with the rear entrance of the Tavern facing the building."
3. "The amount of grading is great."
4. "The plot has been rejected by both the Lutheran and Reformed churches as a location for a church."

However, the owners of the Forks Hotel which stood squarely across Main Street, between the present location of the Town Hall and Housenick Garage, agreed to move the Hotel within a reasonable time and thus allow for the opening of Main Street up to the front of the Literary Institute Hall location.

Owners of stock, eligible to vote on the location of the building, met in the Court House June 16th, 1866. The vote was taken, resulting in 489 votes for the Snyder location and 3 for the Koons lot.

Mr. Carver was instructed to consult an architect in Washington and to secure plans for the erection of the proposed building. These were submitted to the Board of Trustees and adopted July 13th, 1866.

Meanwhile, Mr. Carver was busily engaged in advertising the opening of the Institute, enrolling students, and securing teachers for the fall term.

Some difficulty was encountered in securing a capable contractor to erect the new building. On November 25th, 1866, the Trustees requested Mr. Carver "to employ a competent teacher for the balance of the term, at the expense of the Institute, to enable Professor Carver to devote his full-time to the pending Subscriptions and the erection of the building."

For the dedication of the building on March 30th, 1867, a committee was appointed, "to invite the clergy of the Town and Judge Elwell to accompany the Trustees in a procession from the Academy to Institute Hall, on the following Wednesday at 1:00 P.M. A band led the procession and the new building was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies."

A faculty was selected and the class-room work of the Bloomsburg Literary Institute began in Institute Hall.

In the autumn of 1867, J. P. Wickersham, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, passed through Bloomsburg on the train. The location of a new Normal School in the 6th Congressional District was pending. He saw the new school on the hill, "ablaze with light." Dr. Wickersham returned to Bloomsburg and addressed a meeting of the citizens and expressed the opinion that the Literary Institute location would be ideal for a State Normal School.

On March 9th, 1868, the following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved that the Trustees of the Bloomsburg Literary Institute agree to establish in connection with the same, 'A State Normal School' and to procure grounds and to put up the necessary buildings as soon as the sum of twenty thousand dollars is subscribed by responsible persons."

When the Normal School project became public, local contributors and other citizens were aroused by the fear of losing the College Preparatory feature of the school. A compromise was reached and the new Institution became officially, "The Bloomsburg Normal School and Literary Institute." In that dual capacity, it continued to function until about 1920 when complete State ownership put an end to the College Preparatory Department.

On April 15, 1868, Professor Carver submitted plans for the new dormitory. At this meeting it was agreed to purchase additional grounds, to accept the plans submitted and "to execute a contract with Henry Carver to erect the building at his estimated cost, to wit, \$36,000."

For many years the campus was bounded by a line marking what is now Penn Street, then East by a line marking East Second Street to a point just above the old tennis courts; thence north-west to a point from which a line ran south west to Penn Street, the line passing along the south boundary of the Grove. The area of the Grove and of the plot upon which Science Hall now stands was purchased at a later date.

The laying of the corner stone of the dormitory of the Bloomsburg Normal School and Literary Institute was a notable occasion. The Governor of Pennsylvania, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Judge Elwell, and other notables joined with the Trustees in making the event a memorable occasion. Prayer was offered by D. J. Waller, Sr. Governor John W. Geary laid the corner stone, made an appropriate address and handed the plans

to Professor Carver who accepted them and promised to complete the work as soon as possible. A bond issue of \$30,000 was authorized, 6% per annum, secured by mortgage.

On February 19, 1869, the school was formally recognized as the Bloomsburg State Normal School and Literary Institute. Students rooming and boarding in the new Dormitory were charged four dollars per week.

On September 4, 1875, the "Boarding Hall" burned down. Fortunately, it was a Saturday afternoon and no lives were lost. Insurance of \$30,000 was received.

On September 24, action was taken to rebuild. The new building was to be built in the form of a "T" with 162-foot front, and a back wing, 112 feet long.

The first State Appropriation mentioned in the minutes was in the sum of \$10,000, received about July 1, 1870.

The dual purpose of the Institution led to some interesting features in the life of the School. Having a Secondary Department, a more advanced College Department and a Curriculum for the training of prospective teachers, together with a "model School," *no scholastic requirements* were in force for the registration of students. The effect upon the athletic teams of that period was marked.

Dr. J. P. Welsh became the Principal of the Institution in the fall of 1890. Dr. Welsh had the vision and zeal of a promoter. He at once realized that with overcrowded dormitory and class rooms, the need of new buildings was imperative.

By January, 1894, a four-story dormitory connecting Waller Hall and Noetting Hall, together with a new Gymnasium was completed. The Athletic Field was graded and ready for use, the baseball diamond was laid out where Science Hall now stands. A cinder-track surrounded the field. A new epoch began in the life of the School. A. K. Aldinger, Howard Burdge, and Margaret Bogenrief were new additions to the Faculty, in the field of Physical Education.

Mr. Aldinger introduced the game of basketball to this community. The game was first played with nine men on each team. The girls played the game with the floor divided into three equal courts. Players were not allowed to leave their assigned court. No males were allowed to witness the girls at play. However, the introduction of the Annual Gymnastic Exhibition, to which the public was invited, soon put an end to this taboo.

The long spring term, ending about July 1 was ideal for baseball. Coach Aldinger developed teams which more than held their own in games which were regularly scheduled with Bucknell, Susquehanna University, Gettysburg, Dickinson, Carlisle Indians, Wyoming Seminary, State College and Villanova. Aldinger was equally successful in developing strong football teams.

Students and teachers living in the dormitory were greatly in the majority. No automobiles were in existence. The social life of students and teachers centered about the school itself. The close contact of students and teachers tended to develop that "friendly spirit which is Bloomsburg."

THE STATE TAKES OVER (STATE NORMAL SCHOOL)

W. B. SUTLIFF

Like all educational institutions, the Normal Schools of Pennsylvania were not self-supporting. The meager doles of the State could not meet the expanding needs of the schools.

For example, the Bloomsburg Literary Institute and State Normal School had held an option on a tract of land lying to the east of the campus and bounded on the east by what is now Spruce Street. The price was \$8,000.

The erection of Science Hall in 1906 destroyed the usefulness of the Athletic Field, insofar as its original purpose was concerned. To continue the athletic life of the school, a new field was necessary. Hence, in the spring of 1904, the eight and one-half acre plot was purchased. This was done without aid from the

State. The first payment of \$1,500 was met by borrowing the money. Bonds, secured by mortgage, were issued, to be redeemed in five years.

The Trustees of that day are commended in the highest terms for their unceasing efforts to carry on the life and work of the school without allowing either to deteriorate.

In view of the difficulty of the financial situation, the Act of the Assembly on May 18, 1911, made it possible for the State Board of Education to purchase the property of each Normal School. To assume the obligations, and to take full control, was followed by a resolution adopted November 12, 1912: