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I recommend acceptance of this seminar paper to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of this candidate's requirements for the degree of Master of Science. The candidate has completed her oral seminar report.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VERNON COUNTY

TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL

1907-1920

by

O. Audrey Weber

ABSTRACT

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this paper to report on the establishment and first thirteen years of a teacher training institution, the Vernon County Teachers Training School, located at Viroqua, Wisconsin.

Method and procedure used. Microfilmed copies of the two local newspapers, The Viroqua Republican and The Vernon County Censor, provided by the Wisconsin State Historical Society through the Main Public Library in La Crosse, proved to be the most plentiful source of information for this paper. Interviews with Mr. August E. Smith, the principal of the Vernon County Teachers Training School during 1907-1920, corroborated information obtained through the newspapers. Additional information was obtained through interviews and correspondence with seven graduates of the school's first thirteen-year period.

Summary of the findings. The need for some agency to train teachers for the rural elementary schools of Vernon County became increasingly evident after 1900. The Vernon County Teachers Training School, located in Viroqua, Wisconsin, opened in September, 1907. The purpose of the institution was to prepare teachers for working in the rural elementary

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schools of the county. During its first thirteen years of operation 338 students were graduated; there were not more than four faculty members at one time. The school was guided through those first thirteen years by one principal, Mr. August E. Smith. To accommodate the increasing number of applicants within this period, a new building was constructed.

The citizens of three Vernon County villages, Westby, La Farge, and Viola expressed their desire to have the school located in their respective village. It is the opinion of this researcher that this desire stemmed from the convenience and prestige factors rather than from a hope of economic gain. This controversy existed for ten years until the members of the county board of supervisors voted unanimously to locate the school in Viroqua, the centrally located county seat of Vernon County.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the Vernon County Teachers Training School served the specific function for which it was intended; that is, to train teachers for working in the rural elementary schools of Vernon County. It is not to be assumed that graduates of the school confined their work to rural elementary schools of Vernon County.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VERNON COUNTY

TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL

1907-1920

A Seminar Research Paper

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

Wisconsin State University at La Crosse

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

Seminar in Elementary Education 761

by

O. Audrey Weber

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PREFACE

When it became apparent that there was no written historical account of the early years of the Vernon County Teachers Training School, I was motivated to organize this paper. Having been graduated from the school, I hope that this effort will in some small way repay for my two memorable and decisive years there.

This paper is a brief history of the Vernon County Teachers Training School located in Viroqua, Wisconsin, the county seat of Vernon County. This report does not seek to be exhaustive. Over sixty years have elapsed since the idea of the training school began growing. During this time records have been lost and memories have become dim.

There were no school annuals published during the period 1907-1920. The information used in this paper was acquired through newspapers, books, correspondence and personal interviews. These acknowledgements are located in the footnotes and bibliography.

Special gratitude is due to Mr. August E. Smith, first principal of the school, and to Mrs. Elsie Buttrick, sister of Mr. Smith, for their valuable assistance. Mrs. R. E. Wolfgram, Viroqua, local historian, gave colorful and insightful verbal descriptions. Florence Weber Vance and Kate Weber Erickson provided material on the school's first year of operation. For aid in researching, the services of Miss Emma Diekroeger and others of the staff at the Main Public Library, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, were most helpful.

For items of information I am indebted to more individuals than I can name. To all, my sincere thanks.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND EXPLANATIONS OF TERMS USED

The preparation of able teachers in sufficient numbers has always been a problem. In the East, state normal schools were put into operation in the 1820's and 1830's.¹ These two-year institutions later became four-year teachers colleges.² As early as 1848 the Wisconsin legislature gave the University of Wisconsin its first authorization to provide offerings in teacher education. In keeping with the high school urgency, state normal schools directed their efforts toward high school teachers' education. Rural educators charged that education for the rural teachers was being neglected.³

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this paper to report on the establishment and first thirteen years of a teacher training institution, the Vernon County Teachers Training School, located at Viroqua, Wisconsin.

Importance of the study. Prior to this study there had been no organized collection of information on any phase of the Vernon County

¹Ellwood P. Cubberley, State and County School Administration (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), p. 574.

²Ibid., p. 575.

³Paul Monroe (ed.), A Cyclopedia of Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), p. 516.

Teachers Training School. Recent state legislation provides for the closing of two-year teachers training institutions by June, 1970. The relatively brief but important part played by these schools in teacher training will be relegated to history. It was with a desire to preserve a portion of educational history for both the lay reader and future researchers that this study was undertaken.

II. EXPLANATIONS OF TERMS USED

Vernon County. Vernon County is located in midwest Wisconsin and borders on the Mississippi River. The original name of the county was Bad Axe. "Vernon" was chosen, since it suggested the rolling topography and green fields of Mount Vernon. The name became official on March 22, 1862.⁴ Viroqua, located in the approximate center of the county, serves as the county seat.

Vernon County Teachers Training School. When the school first opened in September 1907, the school was housed on the third floor of the red brick building which was then used as a high school and is now used by elementary school students.

Normal School. This term is a translation of the French ecole normale. The term dates back to the secularization and reorganization

⁴Earl M. Rogers (ed.), Memoirs of Vernon County (Madison, Wisconsin: Western Wisconsin Historical Association, 1907), p. 76.

of the school system during the French Revolution. The term became anglicized in the 1830's as a name for teacher-training institutions.⁵

Rural School. The terms rural school and country school have been used synonymously in the writings investigated. Rural schools were located throughout Vernon County. Most of these schools were one-room buildings for grades one through eight. They were under the jurisdiction of the county superintendent.⁶

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Information for this paper was gathered over an eighteen-month period from July, 1967 through December, 1968. Microfilmed copies of the two local newspapers, The Viroqua Republican and The Vernon County Censor, provided by the Wisconsin State Historical Society through the Main Public Library in La Crosse, proved to be the most plentiful source of information. Interviews and correspondence was conducted to expand and verify information obtained from the newspapers concerning the organization and continuation of the school. Books used in the preparation of this paper were obtained from the Florence Wing Library on the Wisconsin State University Campus, the Main Public Library in La Crosse, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison.

⁵Clarence Barnhart, "Speaking of Words," School Briefs, A Service for School Executives, (Glenview, Illinois: The Scott, Foresman Company, September-October, 1961), p. 4.

⁶Henry L. Gardner, "Report of the County Superintendent of Schools to the County Board of Supervisors," The Vernon County Censor, December 5, 1906.

CHAPTER II

TEACHERS INSTITUTES AND CERTIFICATION PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE VERNON COUNTY TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL

"The physical reality cannot precede the idea. The school was Henry's idea. He was a steady, capable fellow!" So spoke Mr. August E. Smith when this writer interviewed him on June 28, 1968. Across an interim of more than sixty years Mr. A. E. Smith recalled the task of establishing an institution which has been in continuous operation since 1907.

Henry Gardner, Vernon County Superintendent of Schools, had ample opportunity to see the need for better educated teachers for the children attending the rural schools of the county. In his report to the county board of supervisors, September, 1906, Superintendent Gardner stated "that there are now 155 school districts in the county, 193 schools are maintained; that it requires 202 teachers to operate the country schools; that wages of male teachers average \$37.30; lady teachers \$30.80 per month."⁷

The lack of training for the majority of those teachers was a weakness in the country elementary system. Few classes in the state normal schools prepared teachers for the rural schools, and those teachers

⁷Gardner, op. cit.

who were graduated from state normal schools were drawn to the better wages and better teaching conditions offered in the graded systems of the cities.^{8 & 9}

Teachers in the rural schools relied on teachers institutes for instruction. In his report of 1853, Azel P. Ladd, the second State Superintendent of Public Instruction, said:

To mitigate the disadvantages arising from the engagement of a number of persons so diversified in qualifications and character, I have adopted the system of holding temporary normal schools for their instruction in the branches of sciences and the art of teaching.¹⁰

These institutes were held for a single day, on Saturdays, and attendance was voluntary. The Vernon County Censor carried the following announcement of a typical institute offering:

A teachers' meeting will be held at Chaseburg, Saturday, February 24, 1906. Teachers within a reasonable distance should

⁸Conrad E. Patzer, Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison, Wisconsin, 1924), p. 383.

⁹The Constitution of Wisconsin, adopted in 1848, authorized the creation of state normal schools, but it was not until 1866 that the first state normal school was opened at Platteville. Other schools established were Whitewater, 1868; Oshkosh, 1871; River Falls, 1875; Milwaukee, 1885; Stevens Point, 1894; Superior, 1896; La Crosse, 1909; and Eau Claire, 1916. From Guiding Wisconsin's Growing Generations, (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Teachers Association, 1933). p. 199.

¹⁰J. W. Stearns (ed.), Columbian History of Education in Wisconsin (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Evening Wisconsin Company, 1893), pp. 296-97.

be present at this meeting. Program will be as follows:

Reading Class Exercise by Pupils in Primary Form,
Edith Pasco, Teacher
Geography Superintendent H. L. Gardner
Arithmetic Things That Should be Emphasized
Agriculture The Flower and the Seed
Some Profitable Busy Work for Primary Pupils.¹¹

This type of institute had its place in molding public sentiment and in preparing for the better method of teacher instruction that followed.¹²

It was recognized that teachers should meet certain qualifications. By action of the legislative assembly of the Territory of Wisconsin in 1839, it was declared that the voters of any organized school district might elect a board of trustees with authority to determine the fitness of candidates for positions as teachers.¹³ The early examinations were largely oral.¹⁴ In 1848, by an act of the legislature of the State of Wisconsin, the authority of the local board of trustees was supplanted by that of a town superintendent. The town superintendent, elected in early spring, examined and licensed teachers.¹⁵ The examinations continued to

¹¹The Vernon County Censor, February 14, 1906.

¹²Stearns, op. cit., p. 304.

¹³Patzer, op. cit., p. 431.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 434.

be oral and lacking in uniformity from one township to the next.¹⁶ This was a typical announcement of an examination:

The spring series of the public examinations of teachers for the several districts of Vernon County will be held as follows: Hillsboro, March 14, 15, and 16; La Farge, March 19 and 20; Viroqua Court House, March 22, 23, and 25; DeSoto, March 28 and 29.

Applicants should come prepared with pen, blotter, good legal cap paper and black ink. Work will begin at 9 a.m. of the first day and 8 a.m. of the second day.

All persons intending to teach in Vernon County should attend a public examination. . . .

In preparing for examination in Theory and Art of Teaching, study some good text books on Pedagogy.

H. L. Gardner,
County Superintendent
March 6, 1907.¹⁷

Legislative action in 1861 created the office of County Superintendent of Schools. Every applicant for a teaching "situation" in the elementary schools of the state was to be examined by the county superintendent in regard to "moral character, learning and ability to teach."¹⁸ In April, 1862, the legislature passed an act establishing a system of certification that constituted the foundation of all the certification laws in Wisconsin since that time:

Three grades of certificates were established by the law, to be known as first, second and third grade. The branches required for a third grade were orthoepy, orthography, reading, penmanship, intellectual and written arithmetic, primary grammar

¹⁶Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁷The Viroqua Republican, March 6, 1907.

¹⁸Patzer, op. cit., pp. 442-43.

and geography. The branches required for a second grade were those required for a third grade, and, in addition thereto, grammatical analysis, physiology, physical geography, elementary algebra, United States history, and theory and practice of teaching. The branches required for a first grade were those required for a second grade, and, in addition thereto, higher algebra, natural philosophy, and geometry.

A third or second grade entitled the holder to teach for a period of one year, and a first grade entitled the holder to teach for a period of two years.¹⁹

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Prior to the opening of the Vernon County Teachers Training School in 1907 teachers institutes provided the most accessible means of education for the rural elementary teachers of Vernon County. Those one-day institutes in combination with public examinations comprised the formal education of the rural elementary teachers. Certification requirements had remained at the level established by Wisconsin state legislation in 1862. By 1907 the public viewpoint in Vernon County was in favor of increased training for their rural school teachers.

¹⁹Patzer, op. cit., pp. 443.

CHAPTER III

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VERNON COUNTY TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL

In February, 1906, ex-state superintendent of public instruction L. D. Harvey's pleas for rural communities to develop higher ideals in educational matters appeared in a local paper.²⁰ It had been through the efforts of Mr. Harvey and others that the legislature of 1899 passed an act authorizing the establishment of county colleges.²¹ Any county that did not have a state normal school was authorized to appropriate money for the organization, equipment, and maintenance of a county training school. The county training school board was to be composed of the county superintendent of schools and two other members appointed by the county board of supervisors. They were to serve for a period of three years. The state superintendent of public instruction was to give such assistance as was necessary to organize these schools.²²

The first school of this type opened in the fall of 1899 in Wausau, Marathon County.²³ The advantages of the school listed by Mr. Harvey were its proximity to rural students, the lower cost of attendance

²⁰The Vernon County Censor, February 28, 1906.

²¹Patzer, op. cit., p. 175.

²²Ibid., p. 469.

²³Ibid., p. 175.

in comparison with state universities, and a course of study adapted to a younger class of students than the university was reaching.²⁴

At the annual session which convened on Monday, November 19, 1906, the Vernon County Board of Supervisors voted that application be made for the establishment of a county training school for teachers to be located in the city of Viroqua.²⁵

The idea of a county training school for teachers received the hearty endorsement of the board. It was voted, only seven members dissenting, to appropriate \$500 to maintain such a school, provided the state will pay the usual two-thirds of the expenses. Supervisors R. M. McAuley and J. H. Potts were chosen as the county training school board to serve with County Superintendent of Schools, H. L. Gardner, who by virtue of his office is secretary of the board.²⁶

The first meeting of the training school board was held May 11, 1907. Applications for assistant of the training school were considered and Miss Ella Wilson was elected at seventy-five dollars per month. The board met again on July 31 and, after conferring with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction by telephone, elected August E. Smith as principal at one hundred and fifty dollars per month.²⁷ (Appendix A)

During the month of August, 1907, a circular was issued by Mr. A. E. Smith and distributed throughout the county explaining the purposes and aims of the new school.²⁸ Classrooms were located:

²⁴The Vernon County Censor, February 28, 1906.

²⁵The Vernon County Censor, November 21, 1906.

²⁶The Vernon County Censor, November 28, 1906.

²⁷Proceedings of the County Board of Supervisors, The Viroqua Republican, January 23, 1908.

²⁸The Viroqua Republican, August 15, 1907.

Two attic rooms on the north of the red brick building were finished for our use. One room was used for an assembly, the other for a class room. We shared one room with a high school class also. The building is now used as a grade school.²⁹

September 2, 1907, marked the opening date of the Vernon County Teachers Training School. An editorial in The Viroqua Republican expounded on the forthcoming benefits of such a school:

When the Vernon County Training School opened last Monday morning, there was launched, in this community, one of the most valuable institutions the county has ever established. A county training school begins at the very root of education and will yield many times its cost in abundant value to the coming generations of country boys and girls.

Heretofore the country schools have had to be at the expense of training its own teachers. Young men and young women who had enough book learning to get a teacher's certificate would go from high school to the country to start in on a career of teaching little boys and girls of the rural districts. These young men and women would start out without any experience as teachers and they learned how to teach by practising on the country children. Often when they had practised in the country schools long enough to become good, they then got positions back in the city and thus it went.

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The training school is designed to turn out teachers who know how to teach before they try. We venture to prophesy that five years from now the citizens of Vernon County will consider that the Vernon County Training School would have been a good investment if it had cost ten times as much as it will have cost.³⁰

²⁹Correspondence with Florence Weber Vance, Class of 1908, December, 1967.

³⁰Editorial in The Viroqua Republican, September 4, 1907.

Commenting on the first year of operation Mr. A. E. Smith said:

There was no prescribed course of study to go by. We had few books; all we really had was determination and teamwork. Miss Ella Wilson was the valuable cog in the wheel. That first year was based largely on her experience. We couldn't have done what we did without her. Yes, we had our hands full getting things going. The community had great respect for us and what we were trying to do.³¹ (Appendix B)

The first senior class had an enrollment of seven. These students, who had had four years of high school, completed their work at the training school in one year. Ten students, with less high school, were classified as semi-seniors and completed their work in one and one-half years. The junior class, those students who had not attended high school, was required to attend the training school for two years in order to be graduated. Most of the students came from the rural areas of Westby, Ontario, Rockland, DeSoto and Viroqua. Two boys were enrolled that first year.³²

As nearly as I can recall, Mr. A. E. Smith taught Geography, History, Methods of Teaching, Grammar and Arithmetic. Miss Wilson taught Literature, Composition and Spelling. We also had training for seatwork such as paper folding and cutting, making illustrated booklets, and related work. Miss Wilson supervised a lot of our practice teaching in the classrooms of the Viroqua Public School. Miss Eleanor Thomas, music instructor in the Viroqua Public School, was our vocal music instructor.³³

³¹Interview with Mr. A. E. Smith, June 28, 1968.

³²Correspondence with Florence Weber Vance, December, 1967.

³³Ibid.

The following shows the general trend in courses of study adopted in teachers training schools of this era:³⁴

First Quarter	Second Quarter
Manual	Pedagogy
Reading	Literary Reading
Arithmetic	Arithmetic
Geography	Physical Geography
Grammar	Grammar and Composition
Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter
Practice Teaching	Practice Teaching
Literary Reading	American Literature
United States History	United States History
Physiology	Elements of Agriculture
Library Readings	Constitution

Graduation, June 12, 1908, closed the first year's work of the teachers training school. (Appendix C) The graduating class presented a program of songs, declamations, and poetry. President John F. Sims of Stevens Point Normal was the speaker. On the evening before graduation the junior class gave a banquet for the graduates, a practice that became traditional.³⁵

Most of the June, 1908 graduates taught for one to five years in rural schools of the county.³⁶ This appears to be the pattern followed by

³⁴C. P. Cary (comp.), Twelfth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Wisconsin (Madison, Wisconsin: Democrat Printing Company, State Printer, 1906), p. 61.

³⁵Correspondence with Kate Weber Erickson, December, 1967.

³⁶Correspondence with Florence Weber Vance, December, 1967.

the majority of the graduates; however, one graduate of that first class, Ida Opperud was still teaching at the time of this writing. She reviewed her teaching career as follows:

I taught grades 1 through 4 at Bloomingdale in 1908-1909. My salary was \$35 a month. During 1909-1910 I taught grades 1 and 2 at La Farge. My salary was \$60 a month. Then I taught three years at Marseilles, Illinois in the first grade at \$60 a month. In 1914-1915 I was in Coon Valley teaching the first three grades and music. My salary remained at \$60 a month. I attended Milwaukee State Normal during 1915-1916 and received a diploma from there. Then I returned to Vernon County and taught at the Sand Hill rural school near La Farge until I went to teach at the Vernon County Normal in 1917. I taught cooking, sewing, and music. In 1920 I went to Milwaukee where I taught in the 4th and 6th grades, in the Reading Center, and evening classes in the English language to foreigners. During this time I attended evening and Saturday classes at Marquette University and received a Bachelor's degree.³⁷

Since her retirement from the Milwaukee Public Schools in 1956 Miss Ida Opperud has been tutoring children in reading and at present conducts a Norwegian language study in her Milwaukee, Wisconsin home.³⁸

Before the first year of operation was completed, applications for the second year began coming in until approximately 100 persons had applied for admission. A total of 67 students were accepted.³⁹ (Appendix D)

³⁷Correspondence with Ida Opperud, August, 1967.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹The Viroqua Republican, November 16, 1908.

By state legislative action in 1909 two subjects, library cataloging and school management were added to the curriculum for teacher training institutions. This increased to twenty-three the subjects to be passed to receive a first grade certificate.⁴⁰ Also by this legislation, for the first time professional training was required of all persons who intended to teach in the elementary schools of the state. Prior to taking the examinations conducted by county and city superintendents all persons were required to attend a professional school for teachers for at least six weeks and to receive satisfactory standings.⁴¹

In remarks to the fifth graduating class, June 1912, Principal A. E. Smith said that the school had now passed from an experimental stage to a condition of proven worth. Up to this time the faculty had remained the same from the beginning of the institution. Miss Eleanor Thomas, music instructor, retired in June, 1912. Her services had been shared with the Viroqua Public School, a practice that music instructors were to continue.⁴²

⁴⁰The Viroqua Republican, November 16, 1908.

⁴¹Patzer, op. cit., p. 475.

⁴²The Vernon County Censor, June 19, 1912.

State legislation in 1913 provided for a salary for country school teachers of not less than \$40 per month. This was the first minimum salary law relating to teachers in Wisconsin.⁴³ The amendments of 1913 of the teachers' certification law provided that after January 1, 1915, no person should begin teaching unless he had done at least two year's work above the eighth grade and one of those years must have been done in a professional school for teachers.⁴⁴

Legislation in 1915 provided "that a high school graduate who is also a graduate of a two-year rural school course in a training school shall receive a bonus of \$10 per month for the first year of teaching in a rural school and \$15 per month thereafter." The bonus, paid by the state, was to be in addition to the regular salary paid by the district.⁴⁵ In his report of June, 1919, the county superintendent reported that "the highest salary this year is \$100. . . the average salary for the rural school teachers is \$67.40."⁴⁶

⁴³Patzer, op. cit., p. 477.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Patzer, op. cit., p. 479.

⁴⁶The Vernon County Censor, November 27, 1919.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The opening of the Vernon County Teachers Training School at Viroqua in 1907 provided a centrally located institution for prospective rural school teachers of Vernon County. Public support was forthcoming from the time of the schools inception as evidenced by the local newspapers and information obtained through interviews with former students and Mr. A. E. Smith. Wisconsin state legislation requiring professional training in order to obtain teacher certification, and the establishment of a minimum wage law were factors which probably provided impetus for the school's growth.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW BUILDING

The school had been in operation only three months when the community was alerted to the possibility of losing the institution to another location. The village of Viola attempted to get the county boards of Vernon and Richland counties to establish a joint school in the village of Viola.⁴⁷

Here in Viroqua many citizens seem to labor under the wrongful impression that they do not have to exert themselves to keep the school because it has already been placed here, but they are mistaken, for, unless they do show some signs of their desiring it to remain, they are in great danger of having it removed. . . . Because it does not loom up as a wonderful addition to the city the very first year, some seem to look upon it as not of much consequence, which attitude is taken advantage of and aggravated by a few who have a feeling that the training school interferes with the city high school.⁴⁸

Upon good authority we are assured that if the present attitude of Viroqua people is maintained, this city is in eminent danger of losing the county training school, whether or not Viola succeeds in getting a joint school. The same source is our authority for the statement that Westby has her eyes open watching to lay claim to the institution if an opportunity presents itself.⁴⁹

⁴⁷The Viroqua Republican, December 12, 1907.

⁴⁸The "interference" may have made reference to the use of high school rooms by the training school, or to the practice of the training school to accept students with little or no high school training, thus lowering the enrollment in the high school classes.

⁴⁹The Viroqua Republican, February 2, 1908.

Mrs. Hattie Wakefield in a ten verse poem reminded citizens of their responsibility to the school. It said in part:

So pay up all your taxes,
To help the school along,
And keep it in Viroqua
I'm sure that isn't wrong.⁵⁰

Harry Bailey informed his readers that the local businessmen were ready to use their influence to keep the training school in Viroqua stressing the fact that Viroqua was centrally located, therefore, the most convenient location.⁵¹

An editorial by Oliver Munson stated that too much emphasis was being put on the question of the site for the teachers training school; that the buying of a location was not expensive and not the real issue. In his opinion the important issue involved the teachers and their students. Mr. Munson gave four reasons for retaining the school in Viroqua: The student teachers had the advantage of working with a large corps of teachers who had had experience and state normal training; the students had access to the largest public library in the county; the county superintendent of schools, who resided in Viroqua, could give the school close personal attention; and the larger town had more to offer students in lecture, entertainment, and church activities.⁵²

⁵⁰The Viroqua Republican, February 2, 1908.

⁵¹The Viroqua Republican, October 13, 1908.

⁵²The Vernon County Censor, October 7, 1908.

In the fall of 1908 the village of La Farge offered to supply a building site for the school.⁵³ However, the issue of a location for the school came to a temporary halt when the county board of supervisors in November, 1908 passed a resolution that said there would be no building done during the coming year.⁵⁴

In a meeting of citizens of Westby held in November, 1910, the following resolution was passed:

Resolved, that we, the citizens of Westby, in meeting assembled tender the amount of three thousand dollars to Vernon County, as an aid to a new training school building, provided the building is located at Westby, Wisconsin.⁵⁵

Westby citizens also offered the use of the old high school building for the training school until a new building could be constructed.⁵⁶

During the summer of 1911 school authorities of the city of Viroqua enlarged the assembly room of the training school and provided an additional classroom for the school's use. Members of the county board of supervisors which met in November, 1911 considered the enlarged quarters adequate and rejected the offer by Westby citizens to house the school.⁵⁷

Mrs. Gott, "a public-spirited woman and long-time educator," contributed an article to a local newspaper in support of a new building:

⁵³The Vernon County Censor, November 24, 1908.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵The Vernon County Censor, January 4, 1911.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷The Vernon County Censor, August 30, 1911.

Twenty-seven like schools are maintained in this state. Nearly all have their own building. Only two of these schools rank higher in attendance, and with room and teachers Vernon County Normal could outstrip the other schools. . . . Let the voice of the people clamor so loudly that these needed improvements shall be realized.⁵⁸

In his 1916 report to the county board of supervisors, H. L. Gardner, secretary of the training school board, stated that every year the school had more applicants than could be accommodated in its limited quarters.⁵⁹

When the school had commenced for the tenth year, the need for concerted action became imperative. On the actions of the county board of supervisors in November, 1917, Editor Munson commented:

From the opening of the county board session there was an apparent feeling on the part of members that the need of a county training school building could no longer be ignored, and the oftener supervisors visited the cramped and inconvenient quarters now occupied the stronger became the conviction. Report of the late visiting committee who inspected schools in other counties added weight in favor of the proposition. Out of the committee recommendations grew a vote on the proposition to build, the amount recommended being \$30,000 to be swelled by \$3000 state aid. The vote on building stood 18 to 14.

The Censor believes practically every member of the board realizes the desirability of having a suitable place to house the training school, and that the negative votes were cast because of a desire to avert the outlay at a time when building materials and labor are so high.

⁵⁸The Vernon County Censor, June 18, 1913.

⁵⁹The Vernon County Censor, December 27, 1916.

The \$30,000 to be raised for this school building will be by bonding the county, to be paid in six annual installments, interest not to exceed five per cent. A building committee was appointed by the chairman consisting of E. W. Hazen, Albert Spellum, and A. J. Broadhead, with the chairman of the board ex-officio member. They will take the matter up at once. The first thing will be to secure a desirable site. One of the last acts of the board was to unanimously direct by vote that the school be located at the county seat.⁶⁰

A special session of the county board of supervisors was called in March, 1918 when it became apparent that the \$30,000 originally appropriated at the 1917 session would be inadequate for the construction of a suitable building. A resolution was passed providing for \$25,000 additional bonds. Mr. Slaney of Greenwood township was the only supervisor to speak against the appropriation. He did not object to providing for the school but thought the time inopportune.⁶¹

A building site on the corner of Center and East South Street was purchased from Mary Coe for \$2,300.⁶² Plans and specifications for the building were prepared by Parkinson and Dockendorff, Architects of La Crosse, Wisconsin.⁶³ (Appendix E) It was intended that the new building be ready for occupancy early in November, 1918. However, difficulty in obtaining materials and labor caused a year's delay in the opening of the new building.⁶⁴

⁶⁰The Vernon County Censor, November 28, 1917.

⁶¹The Vernon County Censor, March 20, 1918.

⁶²Interview with Nellie M. Chapman Weber, December, 1968.

⁶³The Vernon County Censor, September 17, 1919.

⁶⁴Ibid.

On September 15, 1919, the Vernon County Teachers Training School opened in the new building described as providing "auspicious conditions."⁶⁵

The new Vernon County Normal School building is a rectangular three-story structure, 58 x 72 feet. The exterior is rough art brick . . . and has a red tile roof.

.....

On the first floor is a finely furnished domestic science room, offices for County Superintendent George E. Sanford and County Agricultural Agent Paul F. Graf, small rooms for miscellaneous purposes, and the real heart of the building--the heating plant. . . . On the second floor is the model school, presided over by Miss Phoebe Gross of La Farge--this being a new creation for the school. This room has a capacity of forty youngsters, four grades of ten each. . . . The training school students thus have the opportunity of studying and becoming familiar with the workings of a model school. . . . The western half of the third floor is given over to the spacious assembly room of the training school--a magnificent view of the country toward West Prairie can be observed from its wide windows.⁶⁶

Mr. A. E. Smith was principal in the new building for five months, until January, 1920.

After having been at the head of the Vernon County Training School since its founding, thirteen years ago, Principal A. E. Smith has offered his resignation to the training school board, giving insufficient remuneration as his reason. Principal Smith's high ability in the teaching profession has never been questioned. To him must go the credit for having built up and maintained our normal school at above the average for the state, and his decision to sever connection with the institution is a matter of keen regret.

The board could not see its way clear to vote Mr. Smith an increase in salary during the school year after the budget had been made up. It did, however, recognize the justice of his contention for salary increase and voted a \$500 raise to take effect next year. After due consideration he declined to accept. Miss Grace Dinsdale has been placed in charge as temporary principal.⁶⁷

Mr. A. W. Zellmer was elected to succeed Mr. A. E. Smith as principal.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Ibid. ⁶⁶Ibid. ⁶⁷The Vernon County Censor, January 21, 1920.

⁶⁸The Vernon County Censor, June 12, 1920.

SUMMARY

The Vernon County Teachers Training School located in Viroqua, Wisconsin opened in September, 1907. Mr. August E. Smith was the principal of the school from August, 1907 to January, 1920. During the school's first thirteen years 338 students were graduated; their teaching careers were varied in length from one year to nearly fifty years. (Appendix F) There were no more than four members on the faculty at any one time. The original quarters, even though considered inadequate for the enrollment, were used for twelve years. Attempts were made by Westby, La Farge, and Viola to have the school moved to their respective village. The separate building constructed for the school's use was opened in September, 1919, in Viroqua.

CONCLUSION

The Vernon County Teachers Training School grew out of a need for better prepared teachers for the rural schools of the county. The local newspapers gave their support to the inception and continuation of the school and to the further progress of constructing a separate building in which to house the school. Those persons with authority to appropriate money seemed extremely cautious in appropriating building funds for a much needed building, although this reluctance did not appear to reflect a negative attitude toward the school, but rather seemed to this writer to mirror the general disposition of that time toward innovative measures as evidenced by information obtained in this research. The school's function was specific and served that purpose for which it was intended.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

August E. Smith

429 East South Street

Viroqua, Wisconsin

August E. Smith was born at Berlin, Wis. Aug. 27, 1879. Attended the Berlin schools. Graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1901. Came to Viroqua in 1902 to teach in the V.H.S. Taught in V.H.S. four years. Became principal of the Cashton schools in 1906. Remained there but one year as the Vernon County Board voted to establish a Teachers Training School to open in Sept., 1907, and he was selected to become its first principal. He returned to Viroqua in June, 1907, and remained as principal of the new school until 1920. He has kept his residence in Viroqua at 429 E. South St. until the present time.

His outside activities during the above labors include membership in the Hesperia Literary Society at the University of Wis.; winning of his athletic 'W' as pitcher for the University baseball team; winner of the University singles championship in handball; member of the Dubuque, Iowa Three 'I' League baseball team for two summers, and Capt. of the Cashton semi-Pro baseball team which won the state championship.

He was elected alderman from the old second ward in Viroqua in 1921 and served until chosen Mayor of Viroqua upon the resignation of Luther Roseland. He introduced the Ordinance to pave Main Street, and was mayor when Main, Rock Ave., and Decker were paved with concrete surface. As alderman he was chairman of the water committee and had charge of providing the well which has served the city for so many years. This is the well on the Foster place on Railroad Ave.

He made the rough plans for the present Teachers College building, a building which he had labored for 14 years to secure, and which is recognized as one of the best constructed buildings in Wisconsin.

He was elected to the Assembly in 1922 and served in the Legislature for three consecutive terms. In this capacity he arranged with the State Highway Commission for the first state aid for highway purposes to Vernon County. This was a grant of \$300,000 (equivalent to several times that amount today) to be used on STH #14, 27, and 33. This was the foundation of Vernon County's highway system of today.

He was made Executive Secretary of the Wisconsin Good Roads Association in 1927, a position which he held until 1933, when he was forced to retire after an automobile accident in which he was seriously hurt. His battle with the State Highway Commission in 1932 is still remembered in the Arena-Spring area. This determined that only Class A concrete surfacing should be used on STH #14, and the tar plans of the state were abandoned. The concrete road then constructed is still in use between Mazomanie and Spring Green. This assured the building of STH #14 through Richland and Vernon Counties and gave us our through road to the Northwest. For years the 11.7 miles of this road were called the "Smith Highway" in the Arena area.

More recently he was Asst. Secretary of State under the late Fred Zimmerman, acting in that capacity during the army stint of Robert Zimmerman, the present secretary. Locally he was active in several lines, even including that of assessor, in which capacity he attempted to establish the rule of no assessment without actual examination by the assessor. In this he failed, as the plan did not become the rule.

*Heart attack - Oct. 31, 1962. Taken to hospital.
Paralytic stroke about two weeks later.
Taken to Vernon County Home Jan 21, 1963*

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APPENDIX B

VERNON COUNTY TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL FACULTY, 1907-1920

Mr. August E. Smith served as principal for the period September, 1907 to January, 1920. Miss Grace Dinsdale served as temporary principal for the period January, 1920 to June, 1920.

First Assistants

Ella Wilson, 1907-1912
Grace Dinsdale, 1912-1920

Music Instructors

Eleanor Thomas, 1907-1912
Gladys Mills, 1912-1914
Lena Wimar, 1914-1917
Helen Donner, 1917-1920

Domestic Science Teachers

Marie O'Conner, 1916-1917
Ida Opperud, 1917-1920

Model Room Teacher

Phoebe Gross, 1919-1920

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APPENDIX C

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VERNON COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL FOR TEACHERS, 1908

To the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Sir: The first annual, statistical and financial report of the Vernon County Training School for Teachers is hereby submitted according to Chapter 509, Laws of 1905.

Statistical Report

No. days, including legal holidays, school has been taught . . .			200
	Male	Female	Total
No. teachers	1	2	3
No. pupils enrolled	2	53	55
No. graduates for year ending June 30, 1908	0	7	7
Average age of students at date of enrollment	18	18 $\frac{1}{4}$	18+
No. persons enrolled who have previously taught	0	2	2

Financial Report

Receipts

County tax levied by board of supervisors	\$2,200.00
Rent of books	55.00
From all other sources	<u>1,207.52</u>
	3,462.52

Disbursements

Salary of principal	1,500.00
Salary of first assistant	750.00
Salary of the second assistant (For music)	72.00
For postage	11.51
For printing and stationery	52.15
For school furniture	319.09
For school apparatus	45.73
For subscriptions to periodicals	15.00
For library and reference books	321.14
For lectures	12.00
For janitor's services	87.45
For fuel and rent	200.00
For all other purposes: Freight and express, \$35.39; incidentals, \$35.81; telephone, \$5.25; total	<u>76.45</u>
	3,462.52

R. M. McAuley, President
H. L. Gardner, Secretary

APPENDIX D

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1908-1909

This information was obtained from The Viroqua Republican under the column heading TRAINING SCHOOL NOTES. (October, 1908-May, 1909).

- OCTOBER** General E. M. Rogers gave an interesting discourse on Egypt to the student body. Student teachers changed teaching positions in the public school classes in Viroqua.
- NOVEMBER** Members of the County Board of Supervisors observed our classes and practice teachers at work. Two of our Senior class members finished their course of study and withdrew. General E. M. Rogers spoke to us about the War of Mexico and the Alamo. Mrs. Tulluch, wife of county board member Alex Tulluch, visited classes. Mrs. Gott presented us with a copy of Ridpath's History.
- DECEMBER** Former students came back to visit. Miss Wilson visited May Allison at the Brush Hollow School and Kate Weber at the Gorrel School.
- JANUARY** Work has begun on the senior class debate teams. Miss Wilson visited Florence Weber at the Coon Valley School.
- FEBRUARY** Several new students entered this quarter. A framed picture of Abraham Lincoln has been presented to our school.
- MARCH** Students and faculty attended the joint institute of Monroe and Vernon County teachers held at Cashton. The seniors have held their debates; Resolved: That the Philippines be given their freedom at the earliest possible date. Resolved: That immigration to the United States be reduced to a minimum. Judges were Rev. E. M. Butters, Mrs. W. P. Colburn, and F. E. Morley. Teachers, former pupils and visitors made up a goodly number of spectators.
- APRIL** Photographer Henry took group pictures. The agriculture class is experimenting with seeds. D. E. Pearson of Madison, former Viroqua High School principal, presented us with a copy of the \$15,000 picture which hangs in the Assembly Chamber of the State Capitol Building.
- MAY** We visited the county farm to observe agricultural practices. The mode of living of the blue jay was observed on a nature study trip. The seniors are making maps for use in teaching longitude and latitude. Mr. Frohock, our custodian, made a strong storage box for supplies not being used. Mr. Potts and Mr. McAuley of the County Board of Supervisors visited us and gave reports.

APPENDIX E p. 22

The building committee for the Vernon County Teachers Training School made the following report to the county board of supervisors, November, 1918:

We let contract for the erection and completion of the building as follows:

General contract, Lindstrom and Anderson	\$40,200.00
Heating, Downey Heating and Supply Company	7,689.90
Plumbing, Thill-Manning-Whalen Company	2,900.00
Automatic heat regulator, Johnson Service Company	1,540.00
Automatic clocks and gongs, Millies Building Specialties Company	625.00
Architects salary, estimate	<u>1,850.00</u>
Total cost of building	54,804.90
Real estate purchased	2,300.00
Septic tank and cesspool, hauling earth and filling	<u>1,032.31</u>
Total expenditures	58,137.21

Receipts

Bond	55,000.00
Due from state	3,000.00
From sale of building	<u>50.00</u>
Total receipts	58,000.00
Deficit	87.21

E. W. Hazen
Wm. Dolen
A. J. Broadhead
Albert Spellum

Building Committee

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APPENDIX F

GRADUATES OF THE VERNON COUNTY TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL, 1908-1920

1908

May Allison
Winifred Graham
Minnie Hayes
Emma Nelson
Ida Opprud
Florence Weber
Kate Weber

1909

Nora Aberg
Ella Adler
Gladys Allen
Julia Baumgartner
Millie Blihovde
Florence Brown
Clara Burkum
Bessie Dickson
Edith Drake
Mathilda Erickson
Henry Espeseth
Kate Graham
Gwenavere Hanesworth
Rachel Hanson
George Harris
Zoe Hook
Julia Jennings
Eva Johnson
Alida Kinserdahl
Lottie Nemeč
Emma Olson
Emma Randolph
Kate Rayner
Elvina Rudrud
Elsie Shoults
Belva Silbaugh
Myrtle Smith
Pauline Thompson
Grace Thomas

1910

Zora Fish
Margaret Graves
Hilda Josephine Rundahl

1910

Mabel Evelyn Bates
Lawrence Wakefield
Bertha Luella Thoreson
Lavina Oliver
Anna Mork
Minnie Johnson
Malla Neprud
Lottie Riley
Inez E. Drake
Julia Nelson
Aletta Helen Eliassen
Nettie Elvira Anderson
Garnet Allen
Nellie Louise Graham
Anna Brudos
Agnes Kersieck
Elma Sandlin
Kathryn M. Eckhardt
Norma Battles
Evelyn Watson
Vina A. McClurg
Palma Eleanor Lee
Erma Leora Wilson
Minnie Johnson

1911

Dena Berg
James Brockley
Mabel Buchanan
Ruth Dewitt
Ida Glenn
Maud Holcomb
Dora Knear
Minnie Lyske
Maggie Miller
Martha Moe
Alma Moore
Pluma Nelson
Lena Podawitz
Mary Roiland
Alma Sherry
Gertrude Stout
Hattie Thompson
Jessie Welch

1911

Emma Wilson
Lona Wolfe

1912

Mary Alexander
Cora Bakke
Olive Busswell
Ina Calhoon
Mollie Dauve
Florence Deaver
Leone Eckhardt
Clara Frederickson
Clara Gabrielson
Gladys Gelstrup
Mable Hanson
Audrey Haverly
Ella Larson
Nancy Larson
Helen Lothen
James McCoy
Blanche Michelet
Alice Morgan
Bonnie Potts
Tillman Ramsett
Alvina Rick
Belle Shannon
Gertrude Sonnenberg
Ernest Stout
Sophia Thompson

1913

Harvey Allen
Josephine Baer
Ella Bobst
Mabel Broadhead
Nellie Chitwood
Gladys Collins
Elsie Davis
Raleigh Dolen
Bernice Everson
Newton Farr
Clarissa Favor
Jessie Favor

1913

Helen Fredrickson
Nora Fortun
Coral Goodman
Tessia Harris
Amy Hutchison
Esther Larson
Nora Midtlien
Mabel Moore
Otilie Nelson
Dora Olson
Zoe Orrison
Olive Parker
Sadie Sayles
Anna Sherry
Mae Shreve
Madge Smith
Amanda Sorenson
Margaret Stinson
Fern Storer
Mabel Thompson
Caroline Thoreson
Henry Waddell
Bessie West

1914

Opal Bernard
Edith Calhoon
Beatrice Erickson
Alberta Graham
Vinnie Green
Ella Hanson
Alma Larson
Ethel Latta
Clara LePage
Olive LePage
Violet Macaulay
Leona McCoy
Blanche Nichols
Paris North
Marion Opsahl
Nellie Sallander
Thea Sherry
Guy Smith
Louis Smith
Ella Thompson
Goldie Wakefield
Ruby Weber
Harry Welch
Susie West

1915

Rae Anderson
Sadie Anderson
Stella J. Berg
Warnie Calhoon
Josie B. Clark
J. Regina DeWitt
Melia R. Goelde
Mabel F. Jensen
Mabel Johnson
Guida B. Latta
Bernard Miller
Maude Morgan
Helen Morrison
Ida B. Nelson
Alice M. Older
Marie Olson
Martha Overson
Olive A. Shoults
Olga Skaug
Irene Skolos
Allie Snider
Ethel Sonnenberg
Eva Stigen
Nora Stigen
Agnes Thompson
Susie A. Thompson
Clara R. Thoreson
Dora B. White

1916

Ruth Aikens
Alfreda Anderson
Merl Anderson
Pearl Brown
Tillie Dauve
Winifred Drake
May Fortun
Grace Garin
Lydia Gees
Tillia Gees
Mary Gross
Irene Hagen
Rosine Hanson
Della Kellicutt
Druscilla Lake
Pearl Larson
Pearl Morrison
Cora Nofsinger
Lela Orrison

1916

Erma Potts
Lena Primmer
Glennie Riddell
Pearl Sidie
Mabel Sime
Rena Smith
Coral Swain
Esther Wise

1917

Ragna Gakken
Lydia Ballsrud
Freda Buchanan
Cordia DeWitt
Elsie Eastman
Doris Eckhardt
Hazel Eckhardt
Lilah Franklin
Valeria Fulmer
Lola Groves
Alma Gyand
Leona Hopkins
Helen Jacobson
Harriet Lothen
Ella Marks
Cora Nelson
Helen Roddan
Pearl Roddan
Laura Sagmoen
Frances Seeley
Elma Silbaugh
Nora Skaug
Vernard Sherman
Ida Sordahl
Gladys Standiford
Lela Standiford
Minerva Storlie
Esther Tande
Elma Thurin
Nora Turner
Clara Wold

1918

Ellen Anderson
Dewey Brown
Iva Brown
Rosene Ellacott
Gladys Fortney
Carol Groves
Chrystal Guist
Olga Hanson
Katie Harder
Anna Haugh
Marie Haugh
Mildred Henry
Marie Kerkseick
Dorothy Kingslien
Inga Kingslien
Ellen Kjos
Luella Knudson
Elsie Kuchera
Rose Leahy
Martha Mattes
Ellen Moore
Lillian Nottestad
Garnet Silbaugh
Georgia Silbaugh
Ruby Silbaugh
Blanche Sonnenburg
Myrtle Strait
Hazel Tryggestad
Alice Urness
Gene Weber
Ethel West
Agnes Wiganowsky

1919

Edna Aikens
Helen Boggs
Ethel Cade
Beatrice Cox
Lulu Cox
Chrystine Dragne
Olive Edwards
Thelma Erickson
Ruth Ernest
Anna Haugen
Chrystabel Jacobus
Ollie Krogan
Jean McKenzie
Barbara Monson

1919

Jessie Parr
Lydia Riddle
Jesse Sherman
Alice Simonson
Carol Smith
Isa Smith
Tilly Thompson
Jessie Turner
Valdo Weber
Vesta West
Merle Worman

1920

Darlene Anderson
Virginia Davis
Gladys Engeliem
Louise Erickson
Tolia Fodness
Alice Fortner
Veronica Foster
Essie Goode
Mabel Hanson
Regena Hanson
Lasca Haverly
Aphra Heried
Edythe Kauffmann
Bernice Kellogg
Kathryn Leahy
Mary Leahy
Mildred Morrison
Eula Norris
Lillie Olson
Mabel Olson
Evelyn Peterson
Olga Sordahl
Helen Smith
Bernice Tewalt
Hannah Thurin
Ida Torger
Effie Tryggestad