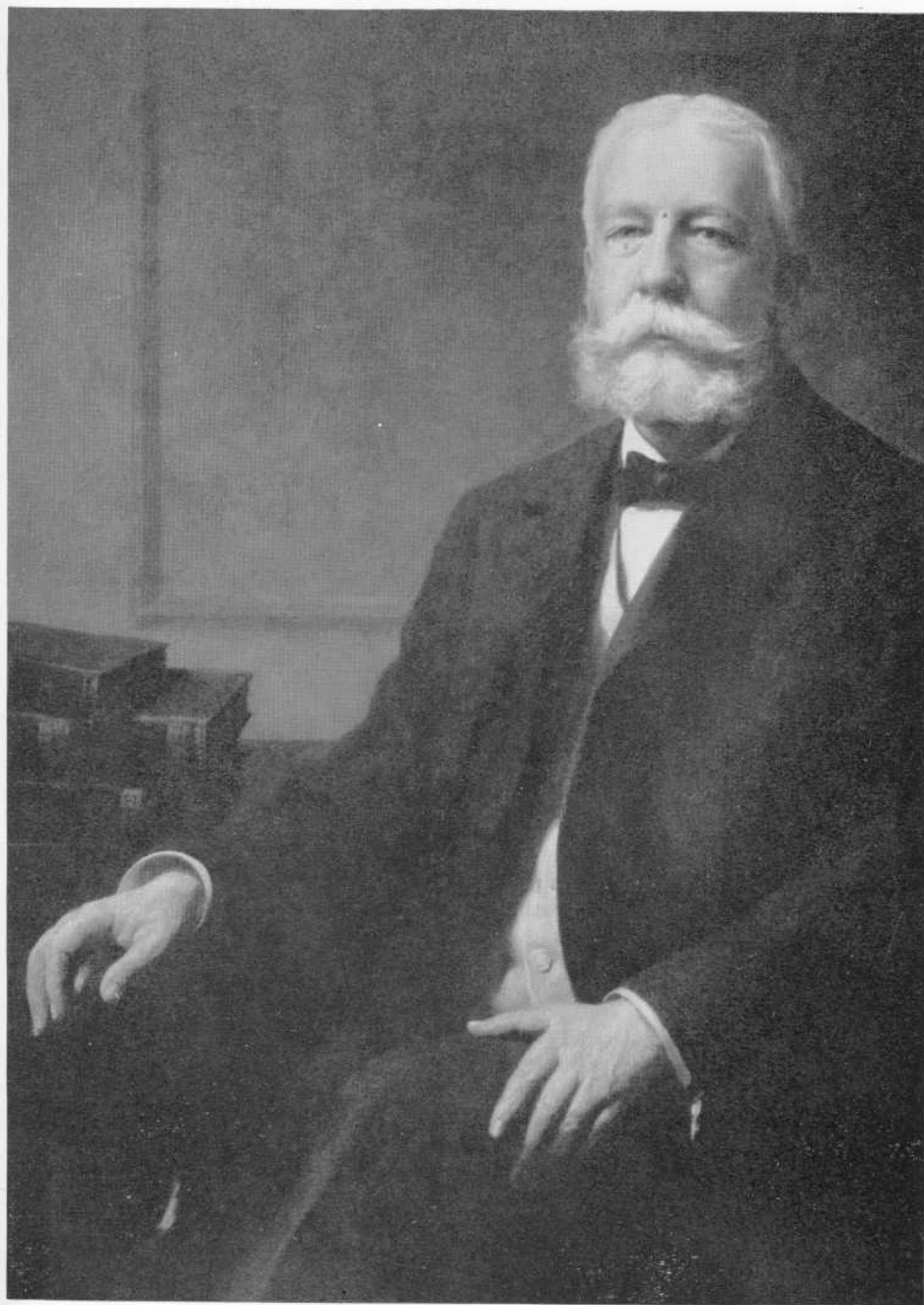

LEONTINE LINCOLN

LEONTINE LINCOLN

1846 - 1923

When we consider the educational annals of Fall River during the last half century, the services rendered by Leontine Lincoln as a layman, to maintain and advance standards are pre-eminent. Mr. Lincoln was for twenty-four years (1880-1904), a member of the school committee and for sixteen years the chairman. He was also the secretary of the Board of Trustees of the B. M. C. Durfee High School. He was one of the organizers of the Bradford Durfee Textile School, elected president the year of its organization (1903) and held the office until his death.

He was appointed a trustee of the Public Library in 1878 and was president of the board from 1896 to 1923. In the "Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public Library" for 1923, the year of his demise, are recorded the following tributes. "He was a remarkable personality. Dignified in bearing, courteous and kind in manners, and ever possessing a real devotion to high ideals, it was a rare good fortune to be associated with him in public affairs." "Leontine Lincoln was a model citizen of whom the community and state had reason to be proud."

Mr. Lincoln was a member of the Old Colony Historical Society and one of the founders of the Fall River Historical Society.

Edward S. Adams[1] who has rendered aid of great value in the preparation of this history, furnishing valuable information which has made several chapters more accurate and complete, was closely associated with Mr. Lincoln in a number of activities. Mr. Adams was a member of the school committee for eighteen years, during seven of which he was chairman and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Bradford Durfee Textile School and the B. M. C. Durfee High School. He is a charter member and past president of the Fall River Historical Society and has contributed several important papers, including articles on churches, schools and the underground railroad.

Leontine Lincoln was appointed by Governor Greenhalgh, Feb. 14, 1894, to the State Board of Lunacy and Charity, afterwards the State Board

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[1] The editor regrets that he must accede to the wishes of Mr. Adams and refrain from publishing the tribute prepared by the author.

of Charity and served until the board was abolished by Governor Cox. He refused nominations for mayor and congressman, never accepting a remunerative office.

He was born in Fall River, Dec. 26, 1846, educated in the local schools and a private school in Providence. The honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon him by Brown University. He began his business career in the office of Kilburn and Lincoln Company of which his father was one of the founders and became treasurer and the fourth president. His business connections, though many and varied never prevented him from giving of his time and talents to the public and to private charitable organizations. He was one of the best known and highly regarded men of his day. He died June 1, 1923.

Chapter VI

EARLY EDUCATION

The Pilgrims who settled in Plymouth (founding Plymouth colony) and the Puritans who settled in Boston and Salem (founding Massachusetts Bay Colony) were Englishmen from the same walks of life, having the same aspirations, the same civilization and the same culture, but the Plymouth settlement was ten years earlier than the other and during that time much in the line of education had been accomplished in Plymouth by the Pilgrims.

In papers prepared and presented to the Fall River Historical Society, the early education and the early school system of the Puritans, with many early examples of their school life, were carefully edited for the records of that society, and will therefore not be repeated in detail by me.

After the first winter, the Mayflower band consisted of twenty-five families; 51 persons had died and 51 survived. At first there had been twenty-one boys and eleven girls, but during the first winter seven of these died so that in 1621 there were only twenty-five children and youths (to which may be added three servants, two of whom were seamen). Many of these had an early education either in England or in Holland. Plymouth Colony functioned for several years under a communistic contract which required the undivided effort of all the settlers for the common purpose of paying off the primary cost of their adventure.

It was not until the Warwick patent, granting of their territory to William Bradford and his heirs and associates in 1630,[1] that the colonists were free agents, and empowered to act in all matters on their own responsibility. This Warwick patent granted to Bradford and his associates all the land which was then occupied by the Pokonoket nation of Indians, and as that nation had previously occupied the Island of Aquidneck in Narragansett Bay and the westerly line of the patent extended to the middle of that bay, the Aquidneck island (now called Prudence) was included in the

[1] The Bradford Associates retained title to the Colony lands for ten years. In 1640 they conveyed the lands to the colony, after making some reservations to themselves.

grant. Massasoit in his later wars had lost his sovereignty over Aquidneck Island, and accordingly Bradford yielded his claim to Aquidneck to those who settled in Rhode Island and who claimed to own it as successor to the Narragansett Indians who had wrested it from the Pokonokets.

It is to be noted that the Warwick patent corresponded in date (1630) with the arrival of the Winthrop fleet in Salem, which was the inception of the Puritan settlement.

Plymouth settlers relied upon family teaching as a means of education until 1624, prior to which time they had the aid of William Bradford, the governor of the colony, and of William Brewster, the elder of the Pilgrim church, in carrying out the system of family teaching, and as that was confined to perhaps fifteen persons of school age it seemed to be sufficient, but in 1624 Bradford organized a school which was to supersede family teaching though it was not to supersede oversight by himself and Brewster. The new system, in use for many years, throughout the colony came to be called the "Dame System", i.e. teaching by women who were deemed competent, and who volunteered for the service, at that time without pay.

As the colony settlements extended, control of education was controlled by the general court and such control was effective. In 1636 when Mrs. Fuller undertook to adopt a Plymouth lad, consent was given to the apprenticeship on condition that she keep him "at school" for two years. By 1639 a Mr. Townsend Bishop had been appointed schoolmaster at Taunton and in the following year a plan for an academy or college at Jones' River was prepared by Deacon Paddy and others. In 1644 Rehoboth settlers assigned a lot of land for the use of their schoolmaster. The first class at Harvard graduated Nathaniel Brewster in 1642, and Isaac Allerton, Jr. was a graduate of Harvard in 1650. Education in town schools as well as in higher seminaries was of general interest long before it needed the stimulus of law. The first Plymouth legislative act was on June 3, 1658; it consisted merely of a proposal to the towns that serious consideration be given to set up a schoolmaster in every town "to train the children to reading and writing". There was a similar act in 1662, charging each municipality to set up a schoolmaster, and, by act of June 4th, 1674, when a report was made by the deputies of the several towns, that a major part of the freemen of the colony agreed that the profits of the fishing on Cape Cod should be granted by the court for the erection and maintenance of a school "wherever a competent number of scholars (not less than eight or ten) appear to be devoted thereto;" it was so ordered, "provided no further demands be made upon the colony for the maintenance of such a school". There had been an order

two years earlier (as of June 4, 1662) that the charge of the free school which is thirty-three pounds a year "shall be defrayed by the treasurer out of the profits arising from the fishing at the Cape", until the minds of the freemen be made known at the next Court of election. That was the Court which passed the ordinance of 1674 to which I have referred.

On November 1, 1677 the court ordered that "Forasmuch as the maintenance of good literature doth much tend to the advancement of the weale and flourishing estate of society and republics, it is ordered that in townships consisting of fifty families or more, some one shall be engaged to teach a grammar school and that the town shall allow at least twelve pounds a year to be raised by rate on all the inhabitants; that with what those having an immediate benefit thereof, by reason of their children going to school, and what others may voluntarily give to promote so good a work and general good, shall make up the necessary residue and that the profits of the Cape fishing be distributed to such towns, not over five pounds a year, unless the court treasurer shall see fit to allow more, but not more than five pounds extra"; further that "towns consisting of seventy families and upwards which have not a grammar school shall pay five pounds a year to the next town which hath one, said sum to be levied by rate and collected by the constables on proper warrant".

Meanwhile in 1671 parents and masters were subject to fine unless their children and servants were allowed to train in reading and the fundamental laws, and be taught in the grounds of religion and be trained to some calling; that after three warnings the children of such who were negligent in this respect should be taken away and placed during minority with some person who would discharge this duty, lest they "prove pests instead of blessings to the country".

Plymouth's first school was taught by John Morton, but wishing to raise its standard, the colony hired a Harvard graduate named Corlet to have charge, and when the townspeople were dissatisfied because he devoted so much time to Latin and Greek, the town meeting of 1674 ordered that "due attention be paid to reading, writing and arithmetic". This was the first free school to be established in New England by law because the schools established in Massachusetts Bay in 1642 were supported by tuition fees, and that rule was still in effect in Massachusetts Bay when Plymouth required such schools to be "absolutely free" (see Thatcher's Plymouth page 302). When Plymouth, Barnstable and Bristol became shire towns in 1685 a Latin school was ordered to be maintained in each of these towns, each pupil to pay three pence a week for English branches and six pence

per week "when he comes to his grammar (i.e. Latin)." Grammar children coming from other towns, however, were not required to pay anything.

In 1673 Swansea voted to set up a school for "rhetoric, arithmetic, Latin, Greek and Hebrew and to read and write English". This school was free to those who paid school taxes, but each pupil paid twelve pence in silver toward the text books. The school was operated under the guidance of the Baptist preacher John Myles until that town was wiped out by the Indian massacre at the beginning of the Indian war. Mr. Myles' home, where much of his work was done, was at the west end of Myles' bridge at the crossing of the Warren river on the old road between Fall River and Providence.

During all this time there were no schools in the territory at or adjacent to the "ffalls river". In such scattered homes as had been built between the "ffalls river" and Assonet, the children were taught in their homes or in the home of some neighbor, or by some dame who taught them without compensation or at least with very small pay. The pastor of the town church gave voluntary aid and advice to the teaching dame, and that was expected of him since he was usually the best educated man in the community. Sometimes, and this was particularly true in the case of Rev. John Myles and his Baptist church, many of his parishioners lived beyond the parish limits, so he frequently called at many of the homes within Freetown, which at that time did not maintain a colonial church. His suggestions and his oversight during these visits played a most important part in early education in our neighborhood.

When other means of gaining an education were lacking, we find that dame schools sprang up in other parts of the colony. These dame schools were often held in the kitchens of colonial homes and while the younger pupils were reciting their letters and the older ones were reading and spelling, the dame busied her fingers with her own knitting or sewing. In these dame schools premiums of ginger bread were frequently given to scholars for good behavior, and punishment was often meted out by a tap on the delinquent's cranium with the dame's thimble. Whisperers were often silenced by having a short stick inserted in their mouths like a bridle, with strings which could be tied at the back of the head. Other transgressors were often made to stand on the benches or sit on the dunce stool, wearing dunce caps or leather spectacles.

In these early schools the facilities for teaching were very limited; the use of a "hornbook" was very general, but this really was not a book at all — simply a piece of printed paper three or four inches square, fastened

onto a thin piece of board, over which was placed a translucent sheet of horn, whence came the name. There was often a handle at one end of the board. At the top of this sheet were often printed (by hand) both the capital and small letters of the alphabet, the vowels and sometimes figures which were arranged separately. Some religious benediction was often appended, ending with the Lord's prayer. Girls were often instructed by the use of a sampler, which consisted of the embroidering of capital and small letters with the old English lettering. Yarn was used on a piece of very coarse cloth or denim and when each girl finished her sampler she kept it for use in later life as a sample of her work and as a copy for her home embroidery work.

School books, small and thin, which were of English manufacture and bound in full leather with illustrations which were very crude, made an occasional appearance in these schools. An English clergyman named Glover who came to Boston in 1674, brought over with him a printing press and he printed several books. They were the first books printed in New England. His third printing was of the "Bay Psalm Book" and it was quite extensively used as a school book.

The New England primer containing the Lord's prayer, the commandments and a few psalms "with some curious cuts of animals and odd looking trees" could be found in almost every colonial home. It was the chief text book in the Freetown schools. It was used in the dame schools as late as 1806. All issues previous to 1700 have vanished, and later issues mostly printed between 1785 and 1790 are valuable.

From time to time other books appeared for school use, but they were mostly of English authorship and of English printing. At the beginning, colonial schools had no blackboards and no maps, but blackboards soon came into general use. Globes came into use about 1820, but lead pencils were not in use for many years after that. While ink of home manufacture was plentiful, the first pens were made of goose quills and the school master's most essential accomplishment was his ability to mend these quills. Paper was rough and dark and its use very sparing because of its cost. Ciphering was frequently done upon birch bark. A ferule was standard equipment for reforming the erring pupil. The use of cat-o-nine tails was frequent, though some masters used a rattan or a cowhide.

Shortly after 1692, when the Province of Massachusetts Bay acquired jurisdiction over the Plymouth Colony territory (viz: by Chapter XX of the Acts of 1701), the General Court provided a penalty of twenty pounds per year (and proportionally for a lesser time), if any town which had fifty

householders should fail to provide a schoolmaster to teach children and youth to read and write. A similar penalty was provided if any town which had one hundred and fifty families should fail to maintain a grammar school, and a discreet person to keep such school. It was required that every schoolmaster should be suitably paid, and that every grammar school master should be approved in writing by the minister of the town and by the ministers of the two next adjacent towns (or by any two of them).

Many of the towns then had no village nucleus, and the inhabitants were in widely scattered or in isolated hamlets, so that the schooling of the children presented many problems. Some towns voted that schools should be kept for a part of the year in each of several vicinities, and often the children were allowed to "follow" the schools. These various divisions of the town were at first called "angles" or "squadrons", but at a later time they were called "districts". The assignment of a school was often made on condition that the district should supply a school building.

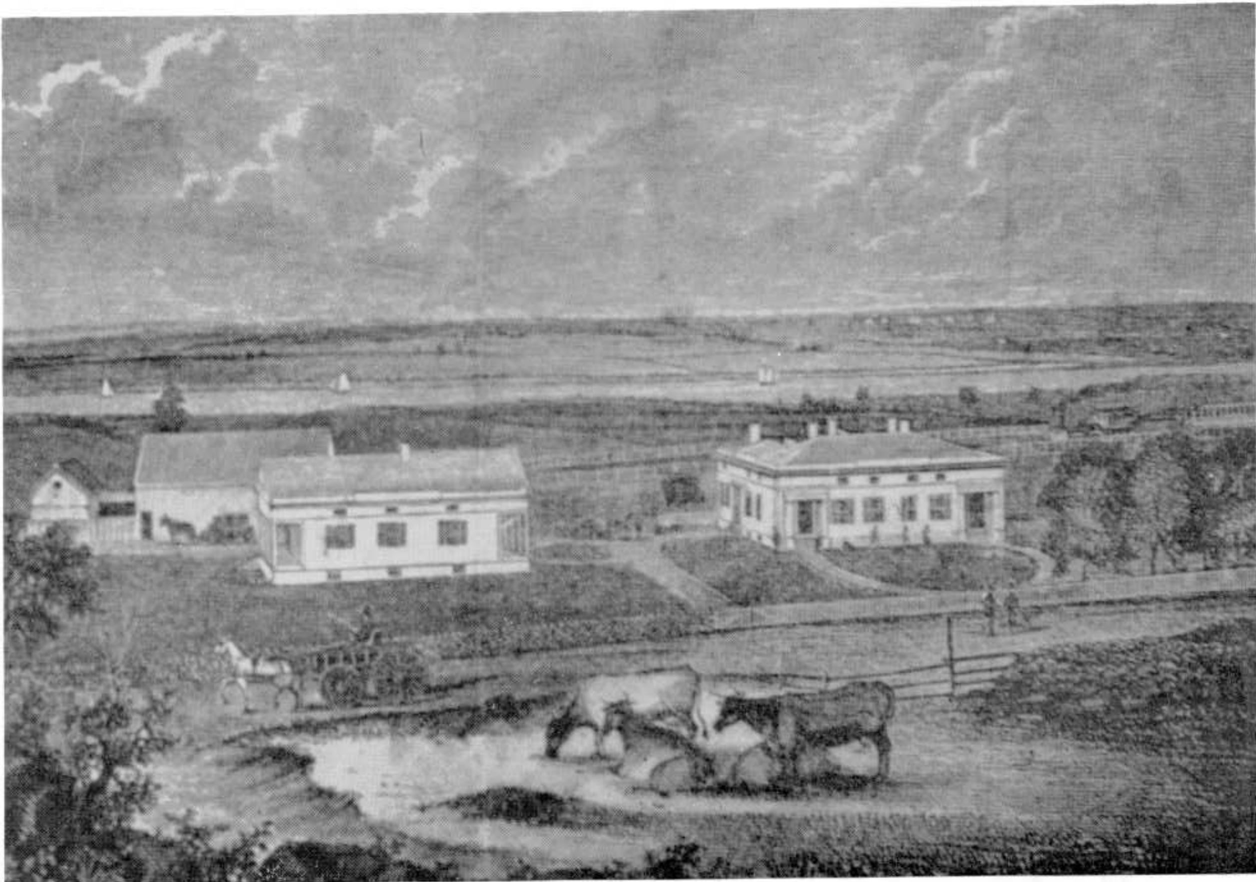
By 1750 the towns began to allot the school money to the various districts to be spent as the districts approved. In 1789 a division of towns into "districts" was authorized and the schools were called "District Schools". (After 1817 they became public corporations). The choice of teachers, their compensation and the time during which the schools should be kept, was then taken out of the hands of the selectmen and put into the hands of a district "prudential committee".

Between 1812 and the ending of the Civil War there were continually increasing demands for a higher education.

Before free public High Schools were maintained to meet this demand, a considerable number of advanced private schools were available at modest tuition charges.

Peet's Academy, also known as Hermitage Home was conducted by Josiah Peet, from 1849 to 1859, for both boys and girls, some of whom came from a considerable distance. One building, a dwelling with little outward change is still standing on North Main Street, numbered 2524 and 2530. Nearby towns which were more populous than Fall River, had notable schools. Bristol Academy in Taunton, beginning about 1795, was the second oldest school of this type in the "Old Colony" "antedated only by Derby Academy at Hingham, chartered in 1784."[2] Many youths from Fall River gained a superior education at Peirce Academy in Middleborough. This Academy was established by Major Levi Peirce in 1808 and was

[2] Historical Address by William E. Fuller in Taunton, June 30, 1892.



PEET'S ACADEMY

"Hermitage Home" – 1849-1859

Reproduction from photograph presented to the Historical Society by Mrs. Rodolphus N. Allen.

guided by the trustees of the Baptist Educational Board until 1828. It maintained pre-eminence in this section after its incorporation in 1835. Professor J. W. P. Jenks who became master of the Academy in 1842 "exerted a wide and helpful influence over all who came under his instruction" until the school was given up in 1863. Later he became curator of the Museum of Natural History at Brown University, to which he removed his large collection of zoological specimens.

There was a small finishing school in Fall River, taught by Miss Lillian Cavannaugh, daughter of a naval commandant at Newport. The first piano in Fall River was a part of the equipment of this school. Popular also was Howard Academy, a girls' school in West Bridgewater. Several attended "Brown" college which functioned for its first years in Warren, though Harvard college was more prominent for advanced courses.

Freetown Schools

In 1789 Massachusetts passed laws which provided for the length of the school year and for a measure of school supervision by the state officers and for the granting of state aid. Up to that time teachers' wages were rarely higher than twenty dollars a month and often less than half that amount, though usually board was provided for them in the homes of pupils. Children as young as five years of age studied in the schools from cards hung on the walls and as the rooms were often overcrowded (an instance was reported of one hundred children in a room only thirty feet square), the education given to each was necessarily limited. The New England Primer printed in England in 1660 continued to be the most important school book.

Freetown was incorporated by legislative act in 1683. There were no public school reports until 1844, and the reports previous to 1890 were lost by fire. There are however some town records relating to schools and of these the earliest is dated 1703, when Robert Durfee was appointed Town's agent to hire some one to dispense the gospel and teach the children. It was then voted not to build a meeting house until such a man was procured. The first teacher was William Way (1705). He was dismissed after serving one year. Next, 1718, Thomas Roberts served as schoolmaster in three different sections of the town, but after two years, he too was dismissed.

In 1727 Freetown sold its two school buildings at auction for seven dollars, and William Caswell was paid thirty pounds to keep school for a whole year; he "to board and diet himself".

In 1730 the entire town contained less than eighty families. Freetown voted, in 1733, to build two school houses, one in each half of the town. School sessions were moved several times during the year to meet grade accommodations.

After 1798, when the State required the town to maintain a school, a schoolhouse, size 25 x 30, was built. It cost only one hundred and forty dollars. The door had a wooden latch with a string; there were no shades at the windows and a fireplace at one end burned logs of full cord length. Neither maps nor books were used. Pine planks, two feet wide were used by the older pupils as desks and were arranged in a continuous line around three sides of the room. The seats in front of these desks consisted of planks without backs.