

Ellettsville Normal in 1889 promised modern methods

"Teachers, students, parents and all interested in the advancement of education, we ask you to consider the merits of our School. You have the opportunity of taking any course of study that you desire, the advantage of securing a higher education at home." — Monroe County Citizen, Vol. 7, No. 15.

The advertisement on the front page of the newspaper proclaimed that the Ellettsville Normal would open on April 9, 1889, and explained that "All Branches Taught. Latest Methods Used. Common Branches, Higher Mathematics, Sciences, Languages, and Literature will Receive Thorough Investigation. Be With Us."

Included in the announcement was a description of the course of study, which included arithmetic, English grammar, history, geography, physiology, spelling, reading, algebra, Latin, vocal and instrumental and other subjects by arrangement — higher mathematics, sciences, literature (English and American), Shakespeare, Milton, psychology, rhetoric, Greek and debating.

After claiming that the mathematics



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

instruction "will be made interesting and simple," the advertisement moved on to the subject of English. There would be beginning and advanced classes in which the students had the opportunity to learn how to write a letter "and the elementary principles of language."

As for the advanced students, they were expected to take up grammar and learn to do painless parsing (diagramming) of sentences. History classes would include political science, since "Special attention will be given civil government and the constitution the latter part of the term."

It was suggested to teachers that in the classes they would learn how to make history interesting in the classroom. In the physiology classes students would have the benefit of

anatomical charts and the dissection of animals. Those Ellettsvillians who wanted to lose their Southern Indiana twang would get some help in the reading classes, which offered "Daily drill in voice culture, expression and select reading."

The advertisement revealed that G.W. Moreland, "an experienced teacher, who has but few superiors as an instructor," was to be in charge of the vocal and instrumental music. Penmanship was also in the curriculum.

The section, "Expenses," included important details. "Terms, indeed cheap. Private board in noble, christian families at \$2.50 to 8.00 per week, and in some instances even cheaper, everything furnished. Tuition for entire term, ten weeks, \$8 in advance, which admits you to all classes. Reduction given to two or more attending from same family. Tuition refunded in case of sickness."

It is unlikely that the normal school began with any library to speak of. "Bring all your books. No one author taken as standard, but best points selected from all. Buy no new

books until term begins."

Apparently, the new normal school included a preparatory school for elementary-age pupils. It was directly overseen by the principal, who was assisted by "an experienced teacher."

The Columbia Encyclopedia indicates that the first normal school in the United States was founded in 1823 by Samuel R. Hallin. The first public normal school was started by the state of Massachusetts in 1839. There was in the beginning a separation of authority. Normal schools were limited to preparing elementary school teachers and the ones heading for secondary school classrooms went to a liberal arts college.

A demand for more teachers led the normal schools to expand into four-year, degree-granting institutions. Apparently, the Ellettsville Normal didn't thrive, since it doesn't figure prominently in that town's history. One important detail was missing from the advertisement — the location. There is nothing in the ad to indicate where the classes were to be held.

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