

A Brief Historical Sketch of the Deseret University.

The history of the University of Deseret is in part the history of a pioneer people who first settled the desolate regions in the vicinity of the Great Salt Lake, then Mexican territory, in 1847. These hardy and industrious pioneers, refugees from religious persecution in Missouri and Illinois, fixed upon this spot as their future home. A thousand miles from other civilization and from any source of supply beyond that ^{wanted} ~~wanted~~ from a parched soil, these devoted seekers for a home and religious freedom, struggled for years to maintain a bare existence. Still, during this period of isolation and severe trial, they did not forget the education of their children, which they considered almost equally essential to their welfare as the means for their physical sustenance. At first, economy, arising from sheer necessity, compelled them to utilize their public buildings for the combined purposes of religious

services and secular education. The gradual development of their resources together with their educational spirit led, in time, to a wider outlook and to preparations for a more extended course of scholastic training than that provided by the elementary schools.

So, in 1850, on the 28th of February, about two and a half years subsequent to the first settlement of the Territory, which had then been organized into a provisional government known as the State of Deseret, the Legislature of this provisional State passed an ordinance incorporating the University of the State of Deseret. The ordinance, or charter designated Salt Lake City as the location of the Institution, and vested its powers in a chancellor and a board ^{twelve} of regents to be elected annually by the joint vote of both houses of the General Assembly. A treasurer was also provided in the same way, while the board was empowered to elect its secretary. The degree of confidence in the success of the organization

and the high value placed upon the proper execution of the duties prescribed for its officials by the Legislature is shown in the extent of the Official Bonds required of them. The Chancellor, regents, and secretary besides taking the usual oath of office ^{were} each required to give bonds in the sum of ten thousand dollars and the treasurer in that of one hundred thousand. The Chancellor was made the chief executive officer of the Board.

During the same session of the Legislature in which the Ordinance was passed, the first Chancellor, board of regents, and treasurer were elected. They were Orson Spencer, as Chancellor, Daniel Spencer, Orson Pratt, John M. Bernhisel, Samuel W. Richards, W. W. Phelps, Albert Cornington, Wm. J. Appleby, Daniel H. Wells, Robert L. Campbell, Hosea Stout, Elias Smith, and Gerubbabel Snow, as regents; David Fullmer as treasurer.

The first meeting of the Board of Regents was held March 13th, 1850. At this meeting James Lewis was elected secretary and three members were appointed as a committee to select in connection

with the Governor, then Brigham Young, a site for the University building and also locations for primary school buildings.

From this initiative action of the Board, it may be inferred that its powers were more comprehensive than what seems to be defined in the charter, or even implied in the name University; for it is not customary that Universities have ~~control~~ jurisdiction over primary schools. Circumstances however, are sometimes made to interpret the most definite enactments. And, as at this time, no common school law had been passed by the Legislature, and as the future patronage of the Institution would depend, in a great measure, on the existence of preparatory schools, the Board might very reasonably assume an active interest in their establishment. Moreover, subsequent legislation mainly shows that jurisdiction over the educational interests of the Territory was intended to be given to the University, for in an Act of the Legislature of Utah, approved October 4, 1857, the Chancellor and Board of Regents of the University of Deseret were authorized to appoint a Superintendent

primary schools to be under their supervision and discretionary control and to award him such salary for his services at the expense of the Territory as they might deem expedient, provided: such salary should not exceed one thousand dollars per annum.

That the Legislature when incorporating the University, had mainly in view a practical institution of learning, is indicated by one section of the charter appropriating \$500. annually for its support; and it can signify nothing contrary to this idea that this section was subsequently repealed when a separate provision had been made for common schools, and the patronage of higher education was found to be very limited.

On the second Monday of November following its incorporation, the University was for the first time opened for the reception of students, under the name of the "Parent School." Dr. Cyrus Collins, A.M., a sojourner in the Territory on his way to California; was employed under the supervision of the Chancellor to take immediate charge of the school. Some difficulty seems to have existed at this time in procuring a suitable

building or room in which to hold the session of the "Parent School", and a like difficulty was also met with in providing for the Primary School.

"Parent School."

The Parent School commenced on Monday, Nov. 11th at Mrs. Pack's house, 7th Ward under the direct ^{ion} supervision of Professor Orson Spencer. The Board of Regents have employed Dr. Collins A. M. for the present, who will instruct in all branches taught in high schools. The prospect is favorable for a rapid advancement in the sciences.

Terms for one quarter \$1.50 half in advance. Samuel W. Richards has been appointed committee to make preparation and give any information necessary regarding this affair.

Mr. Woodruff has a large and well selected assortment of school books - the different boards would do well to procure a supply that their children may be rapidly advanced in the various branches which will be taught the present winter.

Nov 11th, 1856. Journal of the Club Board of Regents.
at this

time was competent teachers for the primary or ward schools. To supply them, it was strongly urged that the Parent School be patronized by everyone who could devote himself to this calling, as well as those who desired a liberal education to fit themselves better for other avocations.

The school as now organized was for young men only, but it was announced that "as soon as a room could be prepared another school similar in its object and character would be instituted for ladies."

This plan, however, was never carried into execution, as neither the patronage nor financial condition of the school justified a separate department for the sexes. At the next session of the Parent ^{meeting} institution, however, this plan was compromised by admitting both male and female pupils to the same classes. It may seem surprising that with a very liberal appropriation of funds from the State, that there should be any lack of pecuniary support for the primary effort to establish a school of this nature, but a legislative body is not always as liberal as it is supposed to be.

treasury, is not without precedent. It must be understood, however, that the capital stock of nearly every enterprise at this early day was confined to almost exclusively to labor and produce. As assistance in this form could not well be appropriated by the legislature, the Institution became wholly dependent upon its own resources for support.

The zeal of the Chancellor and Board of Regents for the educational welfare of the State prompted them to take steps for the immediate and future interests of the Institution, as well as that of the common schools. At this time they secured a grant of nearly a section of land lying within the limits of the University known as the University Reserve, and was reconfirmed to the University by an act of the Legislature of Utah Territory in 1850.

By another act of the Legislature from citizens, the University was surrounded nearly the same extent by a substantial fence.

erection of a building in the 13th Ward of the City for the accommodation of the Parent School. Not only were the Chancellor and Board of Regents providing for the Parent School, but they were equally so in their endeavors to establish primary or district schools throughout the City and Territory.

The following extract from the message of the Governor to the Legislature of the State of New York, dated January 2, 1868 will give you some idea of the condition of education in the Territory at that time:

"The State of New York, at the time of the American Revolution, was a British colony. The British Government, in 1774, had enacted a series of laws which were intended to strengthen its control over the colonies. These laws, known as the Intolerable Acts, were particularly offensive to the colonists because they violated their rights as Englishmen. The colonists, in response, declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776. The American Revolutionary War followed, and the United States was born. The new nation was faced with the task of establishing a system of education. The first schools were established in the 1780s and 1790s. These schools were primarily for the wealthy and were modeled after the British system. The common schools, which were open to all children, were not established until the 1820s. The common schools were a significant improvement over the private schools, but they were still far from perfect. The quality of education was uneven, and many children were still without any schooling. The American education system has since evolved significantly, but the challenges of providing a quality education for all children remain.

education throughout the State and must certainly meet with your candid approval and warmest encouragement.

The situation selected for educational purposes upon the eastern side of the City, will probably be enclosed the ensuing winter; and suitable buildings erected as soon as the necessary funds can be obtained for the purpose."

The second term of the Parent School was advertised to begin on Monday the 17th of February 1851 in the upper room of the State House afterwards known as the Council House on the corner of South Temple and East Temple Streets.

Dr. Collins had retired from the school and Chancellor Orion Spencer and Regent W. W. Phelps assumed the role of instructors. The school opened with about forty pupils. Both male and female pupils were now admitted to the school, this plan in the words of the Chancellor having now "been deemed advisable." The price of tuition also, had been reduced from eight dollars to five per quarter. The school has since then been conducted

with more encouragement than the first,
and to have been in every way a success.
The third term opened October 27th 1851 in
the 13th Ward school house under the same
general management and tuition with the
exception that Professor Oren Pratt had been
added to the corps of instructors, and that Ar-
ithmetic and the higher mathematics
were included in the course of study.

At this time Governor Brigham Young in his
message to the Legislature dated January
6th, 1852 says:

The University, I am happy to say, is in
successful operation under the guidance of the
Chancellor and Board of Regents, so far as a
school can prosper in its interests. Although the
institution has suffered in common with
other enterprises for the want of the promised
aid from the Legislature. The grounds are
thoroughly enclosed with a very good stone
wall and a building designed for the
temporary use is already built in the
ward.