

Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

Founding Celebration

2-19-1909

1909 First Annual Founder's Day Article

Illinois State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/founding>

Recommended Citation

Illinois State University, "1909 First Annual Founder's Day Article" (1909). *Founding Celebration*. 264.
<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/founding/264>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Founding Celebration by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact ISURed@ilstu.edu.

**FOUNDERS' DAY IS
INSTITUTED AT NORMAL**

FIRST ANNUAL CELEBRATION

**Absence of Gov. Deneen Only Dis-
appointing Feature of an Historic
Occasion at University.**

ADDRESS BY DISTINGUISHED MEN.

**Banquet in Gymnasium a Brilliant Affair
—Scholarly Paper by Capt. J. H. Burn-
ham.**

A new red letter date on the calendar of the Illinois State Normal University was marked yesterday, and hereafter, for all time to come, "Founders' Day" will probably be commemorated in some manner befitting its nature and significance.

The initial celebration of the occasion, which is to mark a memorial to the men and influences which led to the passage and signing of the law which established the first normal school in Illinois, was arranged in the nature of a banquet, at which the students and faculty of the institution were in attendance and at which several distinguished men made addresses. It had been arranged that Gov. Deneen should be present and make a talk but for unavoidable reasons he was unable to be here. This was the only unfortunate occurrence connected with the affair, and otherwise every feature of it was enjoyable and notable.

Decorations.

The gymnasium was most beautifully decorated last evening for the occasion of the first annual Founders' Day banquet. On entering the building, the first thing that greeted the eye was the national flag, placed in honor of the governor, who was one of the guests of honor, and one of the speakers of the evening. Inside the gymnasium room was a sight to admire. Fifty-four tables, large and small, were grouped around one central table, all spread in white and each decorated with spring flowers, violets, hyacinths and tulips. From the high rafters were suspended six large and beautiful hanging baskets of ferns. Around the balcony were potted plants and everywhere on the main floor were banks and pyramids of Sago palms, rubber plants, Aspidistras, Pandanus and ferns and palms. All of the beautiful flowers used in the decorating were the property of the institution, being raised on the grounds in the University green house.

Banquet Without the Governor.

It had been expected that Gov. Deneen would be present, and the serving of the banquet was delayed to a much later hour than at first planned, expecting his arrival. However, hope of his coming was abandoned toward 9 o'clock at which time the tables, seating 326, were filled and the serving began. Each guest found at his plate a menu folder, on the first page of which was printed "First Annual Founders' Day Banquet 1857-1909." Underneath this announcement was printed a picture of Gov. William H. Bissel, 1857-1860, who signed the first normal school bills. The following menu was served by Mrs. Harris: Fruit cocktail, chicken paties, baked ham, glazed potatoes, rice croquets, rolls, lettuce heart salad, brown bread sandwiches, ginger ice cream, cake, black coffee, cream cheese and crackers.

Hon. F. G. Blair, Toastmaster.

Hon. Francis G. Blair, state superintendent of public instruction, and an alumnus of the Normal university, was present and served in the capacity of toastmaster. Before introducing the speakers of the occasion he first made some brief remarks on his own behalf. He said that he remembered with pleasure his own school days in this university. He spoke of the excellent spirit of the faculty at that time, and of the work of the students. He commended the efforts of the instructors and mentioned the last-ling lessons in character building which they instilled. In introducing President Felmley as the next speaker, Gov. Deneen being unable to take his place on the program. Mr. Blair paid a tribute to the ability and energy of the present head of the school.

President Felmley.

The theme of Mr. Felmley's talk was "The Meaning of the Day." He said that this occasion begins a long series of celebrations. Perhaps they will not be of the same character as this, but in some way for years to come Founders' Day will be commemorated. As a man grows in age, he more and more grows into the habit of recalling the past. An institution, likewise, when it reaches an age when it is justified in doing so, looks back into its own past, and properly recalls the deeds of its founders, their struggles and triumphs.

February is a month especially given to celebrations, patriotic and otherwise. The recurrence of Founders' Day will add another, so far as Normal is concerned. A man's birthday anniversary is commemorated, if at all, because he represents some great idea and was pre-eminent in its advocacy. The one idea for which the normal school stands is a refutation of the statement that anybody can teach school. It stands for the dignity of the profession. Then there are the more personal associations which memory recalls to those who received their education here. Men pass away, but institutions live on. We should properly be interested in the men who founded the normal school. Every institution that amounts to anything represents the outcome of the patient care, the struggles and victories of those who fostered it in its early days.

Mr. Felmley closed with a brief recital of some of the things which the founders of the normal had met and overcome to put this institution on its feet.

Capt. Burnham's Address.

The principal paper of the evening was by Capt. J. H. Burnham of Bloomington, a member of the Normal class of 1861. His subject was "Influences Which Led to the Founding of the Normal School." The principal points of this paper are printed in full on page five of this issue of the Pantagraph. While largely historical, Capt. Burnham's paper was prepared in an entertaining manner, and recounted some facts as to the subject which have never before been made public. The whole paper is well worth permanent preservation.

For the Seniors.

Following Capt. Burnham's address a number of toasts from members of the body, representing the

senior class
sub-
He
at
7
t

added the crown to our school and warmed with their sacred fire all who have come into touch with them.

For the Juniors.

Mr. Loren Curry representing the juniors of the school opened his speech with the following quotation from Riley:

"I believe all childrens good
If they were only understood,
Even bad ones, 'pears to me,
Are just as good as they can be."

Following, he said: "The honorable and reverend men who were instrumental in establishing this institution fifty-two years ago, and all those who gave it their earnest support in the early critical years of its growth, had not heard the words of the Indiana poet, but they surely had the same thought in their hearts, or they could not have done their work as they did. We believe this was the dominant thought in their hearts, because of the result which their labor has attained. For there has arisen as the result of this labor, an institution which we are glad to acclaim as our school. And what is our school? It is not the buildings and the equipment, it is not the faculty, it is not the students, it is not the alumni, it is not any of these things alone, but it is the combination of them all. It is the mingling of the high hopes of the future, the energies of the present and the fine memories of the past. This intangible union we may call our alma mater—the prevailing spirit of the plan—the wise old mother, who thru many changing years has been busy understanding children—the good, the bad, the indifferent. She has worked on faithfully, believing that wisdom is the gate of understanding and many are the children that tonight can look back to her teachings with pleasure.

"Tonight, we, the juniors, some of her good children (as every one knows) would on this first annual Founders' Day celebration, salute the memory of the Past. We would pay those who thought so wisely and so well in the early history of our school; we would express our gratification that the custom of observing Founders' Day has been instituted and we would say that we are glad we are here, we are glad we are the junior class of this great institution at this particular time. We are glad we are understood and because we are understood we have acquired the ability to understand, hence we understand our classmates, we understand the lower sections, and we are lenient with this so-called 'Merry Brilliant Throng' for some day, when they are juniors they may be that. We understand the seniors and tonight we bid them hail. A few weeks hence, when we bid them farewell, we shall remember that they were just as good as they could be. We understand the faculty, we think we do, tho they do not always agree with us. We understand what it is to be juniors—the glory and joy of our position and so recognizing all this we would say:

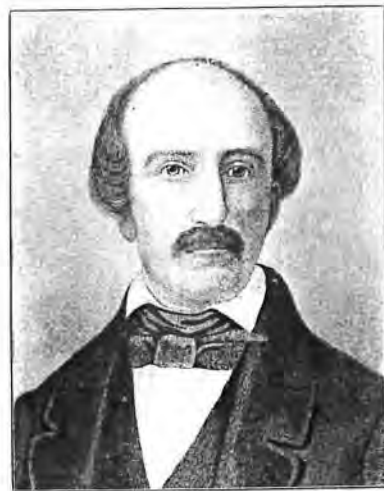
To Normal's memory here's a health,
And to her goodly past.
And may our Junior students bold
Make gallant history fast,
That all may quickly understand
The Junior reign that's o'er the land.

The Lower Classes.

Miss Zona McDowell presented for the freshmen, words of consolation over the loss of the seniors and juniors and held out the hope of the future in the freshmen. Her theme was, "We are Coming Father David, a Merry Brilliant Throng." She said that her class realized that the seniors and juniors had done well, while in the school and brought many honors upon those connected with the institution, but the younger class would try to convince the worthy president that the best was yet to come.

INDEX

Founders' Day



GOVERNOR WILLIAM H. BISSELL
1857-1860

FEBRUARY 18, 1909, marks the fifty-second anniversary of the day upon which Governor Bissell signed the bill creating the Illinois State Normal University. The school has chosen this day as the most fitting to celebrate as Founders' Day. This year the first annual Founders' Day banquet was held. The opening of the new Manual Arts building truly might be considered as the beginning of a new epoch in the school's history. So it is fitting that this year should be the first to celebrate the making of the institution. Many alumni and friends of the school attended the banquet and made it a success.

Toast by Capt. J. H. Burham

Illinois has great reason to be proud of its normal, political, commercial and educational progress, during the years between 1850 and 1860. This period may well be called the development age of Illinois. Its agricultural development, its commercial progress and its increase in population during this period was almost marvelous, and we shall see that its progress in educational ideas was fully abreast of its development in other directions. The great state educational convention of December 26, 1853, at Bloomington, in the early part of this period, was such a remarkably practical and successful convention that it merits our special attention. The call for this gathering was signed by thirty persons, twenty of whom were college presidents or professors. Less than half a dozen of the signers were what would now be called school men, as able public school instructors at that date were few and far between. Up to the time we are now considering most of the leading advocates for normal and free schools were connected with colleges, academies, or private schools and it is a sorrowful reflection that in the tremendous development of free and normal schools since 1853, it has happened that private schools, academies, and the smaller colleges have lost a very large proportion of their relative standing.

INDEX

thoughtful presidents and their thoroughly competent and capable faculties, all deserve to be classed well towards the top of our list of influences acting upon the Normal University.

SOME WRITTEN RECORDS.

The written history of Normal is an accomplishment of which its former and present pupils may well be proud. Its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1882 was commemorated in Cook & McHugh's very valuable volume. The most interesting features of the early days of Normal were there given at full length, and this book should be carefully read by every student of the institution.

The fiftieth anniversary in 1907 was the crowning event of the history of the institution. The jubilee history then published, besides reciting some of the most important events of the memorable fortieth anniversary, gives us a remarkably well prepared history of the half century just ended, with an admirable individual record of all of the graduates from the beginning, which is a monument not only to industry of the compilers, but to the Normal graduates from 1860 to 1907. I was deeply interested when I learned that no less than ninety-one of these have been, or are now, presidents or professors in other normal or training schools of the United States. Can anyone compute the immense influence thus exerted upon the educators of our land? Do not these influences extend far beyond our own limits and entitle these and other grades as well as our undergraduates to be called founders of other normals? In addition to the four other normal schools in Illinois, founded as a result of the successful career of this institution, our newer western states are full of other normals, and the imagination becomes bewildered in attempting to contemplate the important influences thus exerted. Where will these influences end?

TOASTS.

Toastmaster—Hon. F. G. Blair.

- "Meaning of the Day".....President David Felmley
- "The Influences Which Led to the Founding of the Normal School".....Captain J. H. Burnham, '61
- "The Pillars of the Institution".....
.....Mr. Norman Keith, for the Seniors
- "I believe in children's good,
If they're only understood,
Even Bad ones, 'pears to me,
'S jes as good as they can be!"
.....Mr. Loren Curry, for the Juniors
- "We Are Coming, Father David, a Merry, Brilliant Throng"....
.....Miss Zona McDowell, for the Lower Classes

