

Letter of 7/11/17 not in file

406 West Main Street,
Knoxville, Tennessee,
July 18, 1917.

President Julian A. Burruss,
State Normal School,
Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Dear Mr. Burruss:

For some time I have been intending to write you, to tell you about some of my observations here, and now, since I have your esteemed letter of the 11th instant, I will not delay any longer. Sometimes I do not call at the University postoffice every day - that accounts for the delay in the receipt of your letter.

What you say about the pageant here, the song, "Old Virginia," etc., is much appreciated. The account of the pageant in the paper I sent you might be understood as suggesting that most of what we had was nonsense, but that was not the case. The statement about the song being written for that occasion was of course a mistake, but I find the task of keeping newspapers straight, or of getting them straight after an error of that sort has been made, so difficult, not to say impossible, that I usually rest as easily I as can without making any effort.

It looked for awhile as if Virginia was not going to have any part in the pageant. So far as I have ascertained, there is not a single student here from Virginia - this fact I can only interpret as a compliment to the Virginia summer schools; but by a special effort I was able to assemble a few Virginians, not students: Mrs. Ayres, wife of the President; Mrs. Campbell, wife of Professor John P. Campbell of the University of Georgia; and Miss Mary W. Ball, formerly of Richmond, who is Y. W. C. A. secretary here. Professor Campbell is teaching biology here in the summer school. Mrs. Campbell is a daughter of Major Robt. W. Hunter, formerly of Winchester. Mrs. Ayres is a native of Lexington.

We made a scroll of history, 30-odd feet long, for Virginia, in red, white, and blue. When we were called to the platform I held the roll, Mrs. Ayres took hold of the end of the scroll and started across the stage. Then Miss Ball, Miss Vera Parker of Maryland (who assisted us), and Mrs. Campbell took hold of the scroll at proper intervals. When it was all unrolled it reached from one side of the stage to the other. Then as we held it, Mrs. Campbell sang "Old Virginia." Then we asked everybody in the audience who had Virginia ancestry on one side or the other to rise. It seemed to me that about half of the audience stood up. Then we sang a stanza or two of "Carry me Back to Ole Virginny." Then, as we proceeded to roll up the scroll and move off the stage we sang Brother Keister's nonsense song "There are no flies on us." I was really ashamed to do this part of it, but President Ayres had suggested it the evening before when we were rehearsing at his house. He said that Keister had made a hit with it here several years ago. I have the scroll and am expecting to bring it home with me.

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I wish that I might have witnessed the pageant at our school - I am certain that it was fine. The big attendance is very encouraging. It seems that more persons - especially more women - are going to school this summer than ever. There were over 600 at Radford when I was there, and Dr. McConnell was expecting that the total would run above 700 before the end of the session. The attendance here is not as large as it used to be - only about 1400 this summer.

I answered the communication from Commissioner Claxton, which you sent me, as best I could. Also I put in a little personal note to him from the summer school here, which he acknowledged very cordially. It happened that I was here in the summer of 1911 (I believe it was) the very day that his appointment as Commissioner was announced.

My work here is very pleasant and interesting. I have three classes - one in European History Since 1870, one in American History Since 1870, and one in Methods of Teaching History. There are about 25 in each of the two first named, and about 50 in the last. The 100 persons altogether represent some twelve states, ranging geographically from Maryland to Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Most of the students here (over 900) are from Tennessee; but there are a hundred or more from Georgia, between forty and fifty from Florida, etc.

For the Play Festival a queen was elected from the whole student body. Various states, Georgia, South Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama and others, put up candidates. The Florida girl, Marguerite Blocker of St. Petersburg, was elected by a big majority. It is a rather striking coincidence to me that she looks like Elizabeth Kelley, and the colors of the Floridians in the pageant and in the festival were Green and White.

The enclosed cards, which are samples of those used here to keep record of the individual students in the classes, may be of interest to you or Dr. Sanger - to whom please remember me. The program of specials may also interest you. I have heard most of the people on it. President Lincoln Hulley is a fine entertainer, and Rev. Henry R. Rose is a rather unusually fine speaker. If you ever have a chance to get him at Harrisonburg I hope you will do so. Fisher, with his bird talks and bird pictures, is also attractive.

Several days ago (a week or two) I saw Miss Mabel Cain, who taught a year or two in Harrisonburg. She has been teaching biology and related subjects here in one of the Knoxville schools since coming home. She is now at Columbia, I think.

Please remember me to Mrs. Burruss and Mrs. Ebbert. With kindest regards and best wishes, I remain,

Yours very truly,

John W. Wayland.

I am told that Dr. Magruder is going west next year. He certainly has done a fine piece of work in his American Government.