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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE  
HARRISONBURG STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE  
TO THE STATE OF VIRGINIA



AN ADDRESS

*by*

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of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Delivered at the Dedication  
of Wilson Hall at the State Teachers College  
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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COLLEGE TO VIRGINIA

**H**ISTORY passes through four stages. At first it is a simple narrative, then it becomes a chronicle, later it assumes a philosophical aspect, and lastly it is metamorphosed into a financial asset. In Virginia it has reached this last stage. We are capitalizing our historical heritage. Soon every community will have its shrine. Our hardest boiled New England friends will be forced to admit that Virginia is the "land of the pilgrim's pride." The ambition to sit in one's house by the side of the road and be a friend to man is being loudly proclaimed by "rooms for tourists" signs. Our statisticians are busily figuring the increased sale of gasoline and sandwiches. Such is history in its fourth stage. What price glory! But happily there is another side to the picture.

Our educational institutions are the best custodians of our historical wealth. Any institution should make the best of whatever history it may possess. If it should prove to be a fruitful financial asset, all the better. In this most historical of states a college is seriously handicapped when it does not enjoy some rich historical association of personages and events. Under such circumstances, which are obviously beyond its control, since history is rarely made to order, it can appeal for attention only through its own accomplishments. This has the advantage of putting it on its mettle. It is what one does that actually counts in this day of action and achievement. Since a young institution, such as this State Teachers College, must justify itself by its productiveness, it appears fitting to mention some of the contributions which it has made to its state.

This institution came into being in recognition of the need for additional facilities for the education of young women, especially for the school and the home, and per-

haps to meet the particular needs of our rural people. An earnest effort was made to set the objectives in accordance with the spirit of these aims. This has resulted in a highly useful product, as may be readily seen from the records of the graduates.

The outstanding world statesman of the present century, whom these dedication exercises are designed to honor, when asked where he was born, replied: "I was born in Staunton, Virginia," and then, as if thinking aloud, he added: "Sometimes a man's rootage means more than his leafage."

Virginia's educational system has its roots in the fertile soil of the days when there were giants in American life. We must properly nourish it to bring forth its fruit in its season. Leafage and fruitage are necessary for the perpetuation of rootage. The rich heritage which has come down to us from the fathers, constitutes a sacred trust which can be fulfilled only through administering it in such a manner as to make it of maximum service to mankind. Each of us is seeking power and influence for his particular institution. Let us remember the words of Woodrow Wilson, when he said: "Honor and distinction come only as rewards for service to mankind." Fortunately, under proper guidance, an educational institution's power and usefulness may be continually strengthened and expanded without compromising its ideals and standards.

Here there has been no fear of blazing new trails. The effort has been to anticipate needs, and to meet them in the most effective way regardless of precedent.

Before a pick was put into the ground here, the Board adopted a broad policy, to ultimately accommodate at least a thousand students, and to decide upon a complete scheme at the start. These desires were truly interpreted by architects of vision and artistic ability. The original plan has been faithfully followed. The results speak for themselves. Uncommon foresight, and the

courage to use native stone, have resulted in a conspicuously attractive group, in a setting of natural beauty which is rarely equalled.

We now have a plant of no less than fifteen buildings, substantial and modern, simple and appropriate, distinctive and harmonious. With their contents and the highly developed grounds, they represent a total valuation of one and two-thirds millions dollars. Of this total nearly a million dollars has been added during the notably constructive period of the last ten years. Let it be understood, too, that a very considerable portion of this has come from other sources than state appropriations, from students, alumnae, and friends, and from earnings and economies of the institution itself. Here is a magnificent contribution to the physical assets of the state.

This teacher training institution is unique in that it has never had a training school as a part of its own property. In the beginning an arrangement was made whereby a portion of the highly efficient city schools could be used for training school purposes. Since then a number of schools in the county have been so used. Following the successful inauguration of such a plan here, a similar arrangement has been put into operation at all of the teachers colleges in Virginia, and also in a number of other states. This institution was a real pioneer in this respect, particularly in using country schools. This innovation has saved many thousands of dollars, and is a contribution of importance not only to our own state but also to teacher training elsewhere.

This was the first institution in Virginia to operate twelve months in every year. As a result of the then thought to be foolish rushing in of callow youth where the prudent and wise feared to tread, the enormous investment in our numerous college plants no longer lies idle and unproductive for one-fourth of every year. This has been a

contribution of magnitude, even though measured in dollars alone.

From the beginning this institution took the position that it should adapt itself to the existing conditions in our public schools and be responsive to changing conditions. Every year, as the public high schools moved up a peg, this school pulled its stakes and set them farther along in the upward climb. It has been a leader in articulating its work with the lower schools.

Especially during the last decade, entrance requirements, scholastic standards, and the qualifications of the faculty have been notably advanced. This steady climb upward has recently, through the wise and persevering leadership of its able president, culminated in the official recognition of the institution as a standard college. The contribution which such an institution is making to the building up of our public schools is beyond estimation.

The educational awakening in our state, which began about a quarter of a century ago, developed a feeling that the school should be brought into closer touch with the life of the people. It is rightfully expected that schools supported with public funds shall contribute largely to good citizenship and productive efficiency. To fulfill this expectation it is incumbent upon public education that it be brought close to the lives of the people, that it result in industry and thrift, that it make homes more attractive and sanitary, that it lead to productive work, with skilled hands, clear minds, and pure hearts. Education on any level, if it is to fulfil its proper function for more than a selected few, may not confine itself to books and theory, but must seek its material in real things, in nature, in the activities of industry and commerce, in the civic and social interests of contemporary life. The school must continually take deep draughts from the ever-flowing streams of the outside, living, moving, practical world—the home, the farm, the workshop, the office, and the marts of trade. To not a few this

sounded like heresy as recently as fifteen years ago. Here again this reckless infant of 1909 rushed in, yet it is still living, and growing and prospering.

Probably very few of us wholly agree with the recently published views of Abraham Flexner, which would make of our universities sequestered cloisters of disinterested scholarship, where queer fellows dream away their lives. Most of us prefer that a state university should serve all of the varied interests of its state, and seek its strength and its opportunity in whatever contributes to the progress of the race, whether it be among dusty volumes of forgotten lore or in the throbbing marketplace.

The college should indeed be like a city that is set upon a hill, whither the tribes go up, but it should also be like a spring of water sending out its numerous streams to gladden and refresh the physical, intellectual and spiritual lives of men and women, wherever they may be. The modern state university has discovered ways in which the mountain may be taken to Mohammed, when Mohammed cannot or will not come to the mountain; and in so doing the mountain need not lose in grandeur, but may be magnified and glorified through wider service for the toiling and aspiring sons and daughters of men. This institution was the first in Virginia to have the temerity to enter the extension field.

Despite her remarkable industrial development of the last few years, Virginia is still largely a rural state. From its beginning this school has given earnest, sympathetic, and productive attention to the conditions and needs of our country people. It was the first in Virginia, and one of the first in America, to have a rural supervisor, to undertake extension work in the country, and to use country schools as observation and practice-teaching schools for its students.

Its projects in rural sociology, home-making studies, and community experiments

in the country nearby, under the patronage of the Peabody Education Fund, represented another pioneer effort on the part of this institution. We now have here a large, well-equipped and efficiently staffed department of home economics, making a contribution to the state which is worthy of note.

With an enrolment of more than 800, this has become the largest college for women in Virginia. This is not the result of mere chance. It has significance as indicating a carefully formulated plan and an efficiently executed program. Fortunately during the recent period of rapid growth, it has been possible, through skillful leadership and untiring effort, to build a strong faculty, an expanded program of instruction, and a greatly enlarged physical plant.

Since the opening in 1909 there have been enrolled 11,162 individuals. Of these 2,136 have graduated in the two-year courses, and 469 have completed four-year courses for degrees, which have been awarded only since 1918. More than 2,000 of the number enrolled are now teaching or supervising in Virginia schools, while numerous others are holding various positions of responsibility, such as dietitians, home demonstration agents, demonstrators for public utility companies, technical assistants in public service, etc. Some hold important positions in colleges.

Especially noteworthy is the large number of home economics graduates, about 200 of whom have been sent out with college degrees since 1918. Extended reference might be made to the outstanding work in the arts and sciences of the home, and also the accomplishments in the fields of music, dramatics, and physical education.

Harrisonburg alumnae constitute a vast army of trained and zealous messengers. Despatched to every city by the sea, to every town on the crowded Piedmont thorofares, and to every hamlet tucked away in the purple valleys of the great mountains, they carry the torch of learning to darkened

souls, remove the stain of illiteracy, and show the way to better and happier living. This is, of course, the greatest contribution. Its value is beyond estimation.

The average visitor to a college looks at buildings and grounds, asks the number of students enrolled, and forms his estimate accordingly. It is unfortunate that less tangible assets are usually unnoticed. The quantitative side is necessary, but the qualitative side is vastly more important. Education is a biological process rather than a mechanical one. The spirit of a college means far more than its machinery. If we would form a really intelligent and valid judgment of an institution, we must be fully informed as to the attitudes of faculty and students, their ideals and practices. The standards of a college determine the fruit of its labors, and by its fruit we shall know it.

From the beginning teachers and students here were as one big family, with the same aims and interests. Comradeship, good-fellowship, personal contact, and sympathetic co-operation have been the finest and most productive characteristics. Democratic ideals and practices, and helpful service for others, have been traditional. In setting high standards of playing and working, of living and serving, of accomplishing and giving, this institution has made a noble contribution.

Careful and economical management have characterized this college from the beginning. This has been very apparent during the present college administration, otherwise this handsome building and various others nearby, would not have been possible. This was the first of the Virginia teachers colleges to undertake to raise funds for an *alumnæ-students* building.

It was also the first to promote the building of apartment houses near the campus, by private interests, for long-term lease as student dormitories. Since these two innovations, less than ten years ago, these plans

have been widely followed at other colleges.

If it be true that fortune smiles upon those who do things for themselves, who work and accumulate by their own effort, then surely there should be no doubt as to the rewards for this college.

It should not be difficult to find other contributions than those which have been mentioned; but it is hoped that the jury is convinced that a good case has been made.

We have here a substantially equipped and an efficiently staffed college for women, which compares most favorably with similar institutions throughout the country.

Virginia has given to its people a wide range of choice in its institutions of higher learning. When some new group rises out of subconsciousness into the conscious life of the state, it soon seeks to justify its claim to a place in the sun by declaring the need for an additional educational institution. An indulgent state, and may I venture to say a state which is not unmindful of political expediency, has usually sooner or later yielded to the importunities of its more aggressive electorate. It has provided more slices from the treasury loaf, by the ingenious device of reducing the thickness of all the slices, and thinning the butter of biennial appropriations with the warmth of legislative eloquence.

Unquestionably, educational advantages of the highest type should be provided for women. However, in this state they may be supplied without forcing complete co-education upon an unwilling and resisting university; and also without entering upon the enormously expensive undertaking of building an entirely new college, to be born as an unwelcome addition to an already large family, whose children must often be sent off to bed with a spoonful of broth without any bread, their suffering perhaps intensified by the whipping of criticism for not making bricks without straw.

It need require neither sage nor prophet to discover a more promising solution of

this perennial problem. Here is an institution which has been developing through nearly a quarter century into a standard college for women. With proper support this may be made to meet every reasonable requirement for undergraduate instruction. The university is already open to women in its graduate and professional departments. This end, so devoutly to be wished, may be accomplished at much less cost to the state than would be the case if another institution were added to the already overburdened list.

At this time, particularly because of unusual and uncertain conditions in the business world, there is a tendency to check up, to see how far we have gone, what results we have produced, what mistakes we have made, and what we are heading to in the future. There is fully as much reason for a commonwealth to do this as there is for a commercial or industrial organization to do so.

Virginia, with all the fine accomplishments to her credit, has made mistakes in the development of her system of education, particularly as regards the so-called higher institutions. When ways of correcting these mistakes have been indicated, various influences have been promptly brought into action to defeat the purpose. Ignoring the dearly bought experiences of the past, and heedless of the lessons to be learned from the business world, we have pushed aside opportunities to co-operate, to unite, or to consolidate. Still worse, we are apparently disposed to increase rather than reduce the dissipation of our energies and of such resources as may be available to us.

Is there any valid reason why a university should not control and administer, as an integral part of itself, an institution located sixty miles from the parent campus? There is involved in this no dismemberment, which might be quite objectionable. There would be no taking away of anything, but on the other hand it would mean a valuable

addition in physical plant, in faculty, in student enrolment, in good-will, and more than all in service to its commonwealth. It would not impoverish the grand old educational mother, but it would enrich her in material things and in the hearts of her people. Few states have had the opportunity to do what Virginia now has the opportunity to do, namely, to secure for itself a fully-grown college for women, as a part of its university, at comparatively little expense, and without the strong objections involved in other proposed plans. An entirely feasible transfer of control and simple revision of administration will effect this.

Of the various contributions which this institution has made to Virginia, this may be the greatest of all. At present it is merely a possibility—but what a wonderful possibility! Shall Virginia repeat the mistakes of the past by further debilitating decentralization of her educational enterprises? Or shall she recognize her mistaken policy of a century, and take this rare opportunity of reversing that policy, by a safe and readily made consolidation, which must result in strengthening her educational system?

We like to proclaim that our educational system is a unity, but is this a unity in fact or merely in theory? Can the theory be made practical and productive to a greater degree by continuing our policy of decentralization, or by a wisely conceived and sanely executed policy of correlation? Shall this opportunity be spurned, as somewhat similar opportunities in the past have been spurned, or shall we accept this greatest of the valuable contributions which this institution has offered to its state?

The worthy achievements to which attention has been directed are the combined product of several groups. Fortunately, in the beginning the Board of Trustees chose that better part, the constructive attitude of seeing visions for the development of needed service for the people of the state and of providing ways and means. They set them-

selves with determination to the task of building to the glory of God and to the service of Virginia, for all time. How well they wrought is witnessed by what we see around us.

More than any other factor, the teachers determine the standards of an institution. Therefore,

Let us now praise famous men--  
Men of little showing!  
For their work continueth,  
And their work continueth,  
Broad and deep continueth,  
Great beyond their knowing!

Another indispensable element is the students, while in attendance and later as alumnae. The superior type of young women who have enrolled here, their loyalty to the ideals, traditions, and best interests of the institution, merit the grateful recognition and high commendation of all of us.

The development of a great institution is an enticing adventure and a glorious enterprise; but it requires patience, for it is a matter of gradual progress. It is always difficult to forecast future conditions and needs, to plan wisely for meeting them, and to provide adequate means for so doing. Fulfilment of our aspirations can come only through the united efforts and unceasing labors of many, including board, faculty, alumnae, students, and numerous others now

interested in, or who may be enlisted for, such a great undertaking.

While each of us no doubt has his own ideas as to what the future of this splendid institution will be, or should be, none of us can accurately predict that future. Those of us who are familiar with the lofty ideals, the noble purposes, and the consecrated services, which have characterized this college for the last twenty-two years, are not of little faith that the achievements we have witnessed are but a small part of what may be expected.

In closing, then, may I not exhort you in the impressive words of one of our greatest Virginians, the ablest constructive leader for world democracy in our generation, in commemoration of whom this magnificent building is named:

"And then trust your guides, imperfect as they are, and some day, when we are all dead, men will come and point at the distant upland with a great shout of joy and triumph, and thank God that there were men who undertook to lead in the struggle. What difference does it make if we ourselves do not reach the uplands? We have given our lives to the enterprise. The world is made happier and humankind better because we have lived."

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