

February 14, 1916.

Hon. Richard B. Davis,
Chairman, Virginia Normal School Board,
Petersburg, Virginia.

Dear Mr. Davis:

I regret very much to have to report that we are having serious trouble with our heating plant. As stated to you in a special report some time ago the heating plant is entirely inadequate to properly heat all of our present buildings. The entire group of five buildings is dependent upon two small 10-section low-pressure boilers, which even under the best conditions are barely sufficient to warm the buildings comfortably.

Last Wednesday night an accident happened to one of the two boilers. Complaint had been made that the dormitories were uncomfortable, the regular night fireman was sick, a substitute was in his place, and the boilers were overtaxed in the effort to get up a sufficient pressure to take care of the dormitories. One boiler was put of use completely. I telegraphed for repairs to be sent immediately by express. At this writing these repairs have not yet arrived.

Since Wednesday night we have been dependent upon one small boiler to heat the entire group of buildings. Thursday night this boiler, being overtaxed, showed signs of trouble. Together with two ~~mechanics~~ steam-fitters and the fireman, I remained in the boiler-room most of the night nursing the boiler, and we managed to get through without further serious trouble, although the buildings were uncomfortable Friday and some classes had to be dismissed.

Sunday night further trouble developed in the single boiler now in use. This appears to be a leak of some consequence, and cannot be repaired until the fire can be removed. We were up again last night a good portion of the night trying to do something to relieve the situation.

A spell of cold weather is upon us now, the ground is covered with ice and snow, a high North wind is blowing, and our buildings are in bad shape for heat. I have cut off the radiation in the school buildings, and concentrated the steam in the dormitories. This means that we shall be without practically all of our classrooms and will have to abandon school work today, and perhaps longer, depending upon the weather conditions and the arrival of the repairs for the other boiler.

We have a long sick-list, mostly tonsillitis and colds, and we cannot afford to risk taking any heat away from the dormitories.

We are looking for the repairs on every train, and we hope they will arrive tonight. In the meantime we are doing everything we can to keep things moving.

I think it is best to report this matter to you, not that I wish to burden you with our troubles, but simply because some question may arise later. I also think it well to call your attention to this state of affairs as confirming my statement to the Board as to the needs of this school for better heating facilities. It is certainly a source of deep regret to me that the Board cut out all provision for extending the heating system when it made out its budget for the General Assembly. Perhaps this was done with the idea that we might apply part of the dormitory appropriation, if secured, to this purpose, but you will recall that the amount requested for dormitory is considerably less than the estimated cost.

This matter has weighed very heavily upon me during the past five days. The responsibility for the health of these girls is not a light responsibility, and I do not feel that we should be called upon to take such a risk another winter. I sincerely trust that the Board has plans in mind, which have not been explained to me, for taking care of the needs of this institution in this direction, as I can hardly think that they would expect us to continue to bear so great a responsibility. The situation is, to my mind, one of grave importance.

Very truly yours,

B/J

President.