

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY FEBRUARY 28



1907 postcard of Concord State Normal School

On this day in 1872, the legislature passed an act to establish a state normal school at Concord.

CSO: SS.8.4, SS.8.23, ELA.8.1, ELA.8.22, VA.6-8.5

Investigate the Document: (*A History of Education in West Virginia: from Early Colonial Times to 1949*, Charles H. Ambler, 1951, 370.9754 A493)

1. What was the condition to which the owner of the land would tender his property to the State? What happened to the landowner after the act of the Legislature was passed? Why was this an issue for the State? What was to happen if there were no suitable buildings built within 12 months?
2. In what manner were the funds for the construction of the school funds to be raised?
3. On what date did classes officially begin at the State Normal School at Concord? At first, the school did not possess a bell to alert the students; what was used instead?
4. Roughly what percentage of enrolled students *completed* their studies and graduated between the 1875-76 and the 1891-92 school years?

Drawings

5. Which school building do you think was the earlier version? Why? Does anything stand out in one photo versus the other?
6. Ask students to imagine they are interviewing the people in the photographs to ask about their lives. Have them write a list of interview questions they would ask the individuals in the picture.

Think Critically: An act of Legislature was necessary to establish the State Normal School at Concord in 1872; what is the difference between an "act" and a "law?" Which branch creates acts & laws? What do you think going to college was like during the 1800s? Did people go to college regularly after high school as they do today? Did people even commonly finish high school at the time?

The Glenville Normal School has sent out from her walls over one hundred graduates, and she points to them with pride—most of them filling positions of honor or distinction. The first class graduated in 1874, and was composed of Misses Bina Hall and H. Cornelia Marshall; Mr. Jacob F. Cork and Mr. D. H. Dodson.

The Executive Committee at present consists of Milton Norris, R. F. Kidd and N. M. Bennett.

From the fact that Glenville is difficult of access, in past years the number of students has not been large, but a new era seems to be opening before the school, and it is now believed that an additional building is necessary to accommodate the growing demands of the school.

With pride for her past and hope for the future the work of the school is carried on.

THE CONCORD STATE NORMAL SCHOOL.

The close of the Civil War in 1865 found Mercer county, like many of her sisters in Virginia and other southern States, without a Court House; it having been burned with almost the entire town of Princeton, by order of Col. Jenifer in 1862.

As soon as it was determined to rebuild the court house, the question of re-location began to be agitated by the people in the lower end of the county, who had long been complaining of the injustice to them in the first location of the court house at Princeton. Through the influence of the "Board of Registration," the question was submitted to a vote of the people, which resulted in the location of the court house at Concord Church.

After the court house had been removed from Princeton to Concord, the people of Princeton, now in possession of the registration machinery, became very anxious to obtain it again. Before the court house was completed another vote was taken which resulted in taking it back to Princeton. This change was brought about by the people in the lower end of the county voting for Princeton. For this favor Princeton gave her assistance in having the lower end of the county cut off and formed into the county of Summers. After losing the lower end of the county, the voting population was thrown near Princeton, which left no hope of ever getting the court house back to Concord.

The unfinished court house and jail reverting to the original owner of the land on which it stood, he tendered it to the State on condition that a branch of the State Normal School should be established at Concord. Accordingly, on the 28th day of February, 1872, the Legislature passed "An act to locate a Branch State Normal School at Concord, in the county of Mercer." This act required the buildings to be fitted up and furnished for the convenience of such school, free of charge to the State.

Before anything was done toward the completion of the building, the owner of the land died, leaving his affairs in such confusion as to render it difficult, if not impossible, to procure such a title to the property as the State would accept. The friends of the measure, on the 2nd day of December, 1873, procured the passage of an act authorizing, among

other things, the procurement of the title to any other lot in Concord, and the erection of suitable buildings thereon without cost to the State. The act further provided that in case a suitable building was not erected and furnished within twelve months from its passage the school should be transferred to Princeton. I am forced to the conclusion that this last named provision contributed as much as anything toward establishing a school at Concord. It stimulated the people to make efforts which they would not otherwise have made. The inhabitants of the village of Concord, smarting from the loss of the court house, now began to realize that action was necessary or the normal school would follow in the wake of the court house.

The village consisted of five families; and it now became necessary for this little band to secure a lot and erect a building, or lose the school. Capt. Wm. Holroyd, who was the oldest resident in the village, took the matter in hand and impressed the people with the great advantages to be derived from the school. On the 29th day of May, 1874, W. H. Martin and wife conveyed to the State of West Virginia, six acres of land upon which to erect the Normal building.

One of the conditions in locating the school at Concord was that no money was to be appropriated for the erection of the buildings, so the money for this purpose had to be raised by subscription. With the money thus raised, a wooden structure was erected at a cost of about \$1,700. On the 22nd day of February, 1874, the corner stone of the old building was laid with Masonic honors.

On the 21st day of April, 1875, Capt. John A. Douglass and Hon. Wm. M. Reynolds appeared before the "Board of Regents of the Normal Schools," then in session at the Capitol in Charleston, and presented the deed of W. H. Martin and wife to the State of West Virginia. The board inspected the same and accepted it as a compliance with the act of the Legislature of December 2, 1875. At this meeting of the board, Capt. James Harvey French was appointed Principal, at a salary of \$700, and Hon. Wm. M. Reynolds, assistant, at a salary of \$600. The Board of Regents ordered that the Concord School should open on the 10th day of May, 1875 and continue twelve weeks, and then take an intermission until the first Monday in March, 1876, at which time it should be re-organized and continue twenty weeks longer.

The surroundings were not very inviting on that memorable morning of the 10th of May, 1875, when the school was first opened. Imagine the beautiful rolling lawn upon the summit of which now stands the State normal buildings, then a wilderness of red-brush and chinquapin bushes, in the midst of which stood a rough, unfinished building about 39x48 feet, two stories in height, without either windows or doors, and you have a faint idea of the outside appearance of the Concord Normal building, as it stood in the May sunshine guiltless of paint or other ornaments. The inside was not more inviting. There was a floor in the lower story, with a partition of rough boards across the building dividing it into two unequal rooms. With an unobstructed view of the weather-boarding without and the rafters over head, many of the boys, for want of better seats, sat upon the sapling joists and studied their lessons. There was not a seat in the house, except such as could be

hastily improvised from the odds and ends of the boards lying around the newly constructed building. The house was not furnished with any apparatus whatever. There were no fire places nor stoves the first session, so that on chilly days, the students, when not reciting, were out of doors warming themselves by fires made of logs with which the school grounds abounded.

There was no bell by which to assemble the students. The arrangement for that purpose being rather primitive, consisting of a cow's horn, which was in 1878, replaced by a small bell. On the adjoining page is a cut of the "Old Normal School Building," made from a photograph that was taken soon after its completion in 1876. This building was used until commencement, July 2, 1886.

Early in July, 1886, they commenced work on the new building, for which the Legislature of 1885 had made an appropriation of \$5,000.00, and completed it the first week in January, 1887. On the 10th day of January, with Capt. French unable to leave his room and Mr. Sweeney in the Legislature, Mr. James F. Holroyd, Sweeney's substitute, began school in the new building. The transfer of the school from the "Old Church," which is now used for a stable, to the new building marks the beginning of a period of progress, which before that time had not been dreamed of by the most hopeful friends of the institution. The Legislature of 1887 appropriated \$3,000 to complete the building and furnish the same. In 1888 the building was enlarged by a \$3,500 addition. The "New Concord Normal School Building," as shown by cut on adjoining page, is a large, handsome, and commodious structure. It will easily accommodate 300 students, and for convenience and comfort it is surpassed by no other building of its kind in the State. It contains nine recitation rooms, library and reading room, janitor's room, and chapel or commencement hall. This hall is 40x85 feet, handsomely furnished, and will seat about 1,000 persons. The building is situated on a slight eminence near the center of the village, and presents an imposing appearance from all parts of the town and surrounding country.

The "Ladies Residence," built by an appropriation of the Legislature of 1891, has been placed under the management of a competent person and is quite an acquisition to the school. This three-story building containing thirty rooms is situated on a beautiful and commanding site about 300 yards north of the normal school. The grounds consist of two acres, of which $1\frac{1}{3}$ acres were given by J. D. Sweeney, the other two-thirds of an acre was purchased by the faculty and citizens and presented to the State.

The rude furniture that was used in the Normal from 1875 to 1887, has been replaced by modern desks and benches. The school is supplied with ample scientific and philosophical apparatus.

The reading room and well selected library for the free use of teachers and students is the growth of the last five years.

The Literary Societies in connection with the school are in a flourishing condition.

The annual appropriation for the support of teachers in this school is now more than double what it was 1886.

In addition to the Normal and Academic departments provided for

by the Board of Regents, the faculty has established a commercial department, a penmanship department, a short-hand and type-writing department and a musical department. The following shows the number of students that were enrolled in the several departments of the school during the year of 1892-3:

	FEMALES.	MALES.	TOTAL.
Normal	86	151	217
Academic	0	6	6
Commercial.....	0	18	18
Short-hand and Type-writing	3	16	19
Penmanship.....	15	52	67
Musical.....	45	24	69
Grand total	149	247	396
Counted more than once.....	50	101	151
Total enrollment.....	99	146	245

The number of students enrolled and graduated each year is given below, so far as is shown by the records in the school:

During 1875-6 there were enrolled, 70; graduated, ..		
During 1876-7 " " " 75; " ..		
During 1877-8 " " " 86; " 2		
During 1878-9 " " " 100; " 8		
During 1879-80 " " " 65; " 6		
During 1880-1 " " " 94; " 17		
During 1881-2 " " " 90; " 11		
During 1882-3 " " " 110; " ..		
During 1883-4 " " " 137; " 9		
During 1884-5 " " " 105; " 9		
During 1885-6 " " " 95; " 3		
During 1886-7 " " " 124; " 7		
During 1887-8 " " " 170; " 4		
During 1888-9 " " " 166; " 5		
During 1889-90 " " " 166; " 7		
During 1890-1 " " " 181; " 7		
During 1891-2 " " " 245; " 7		
Totals.....	2080	102

Below is given the name of each teacher who has been connected with the Concord school, the department in which engaged, and the time employed:

Name.	Department.	Time.
James Harvey French	Normal and Academic.	.....1875-92
Wm. M. Reynolds.....	" " "	.....1875-85
Wm. M. Reynolds.....	" " "	.....1876-77
James M. Killey.....	" " "	.....1876

Name.	Department.	Time.
Miss Lizzie Hoge.....	Normal and Academic.	.....1880-93
James F. Holroyd.....	" " "	.....1885-93
John D. Sweeney.....	" " "	.....1885-90
H. R. Christie.....	Commercial	.....1885-90
T. H. R. Christy.....	Musical	.....1885-91
D. N. Croft.....	"	.....1890
C. A. Fulwider.....	Normal and Academic	.....1888-93
Miss Jennie French.....	Musical	.....1886
Miss Nannie J. McCreery..	Normal and Academic	.....1889-93
Miss Salome Johnson.....	" " "	.....1891-93
T. G. Little.....	Commercial and Pemandship	1890-93
J. W. Holton.....	Musical and Shorthand	.....1891-92
W. F. Lowance.....	Normal and Academic	.....1892
C. L. Phipps.....	Short-hand and Type-writing	.....1892-92
Miss Gertrude Ruffner..	Musical.	1892-92

The present faculty is composed of the following persons.

John D. Sweeney, C. A. Fulwider, James F. Holroyd, Miss Nannie J. McCreery, Miss Salome Johnson, Miss Gertrude Mason, T. G. Little C. L. Phipps.

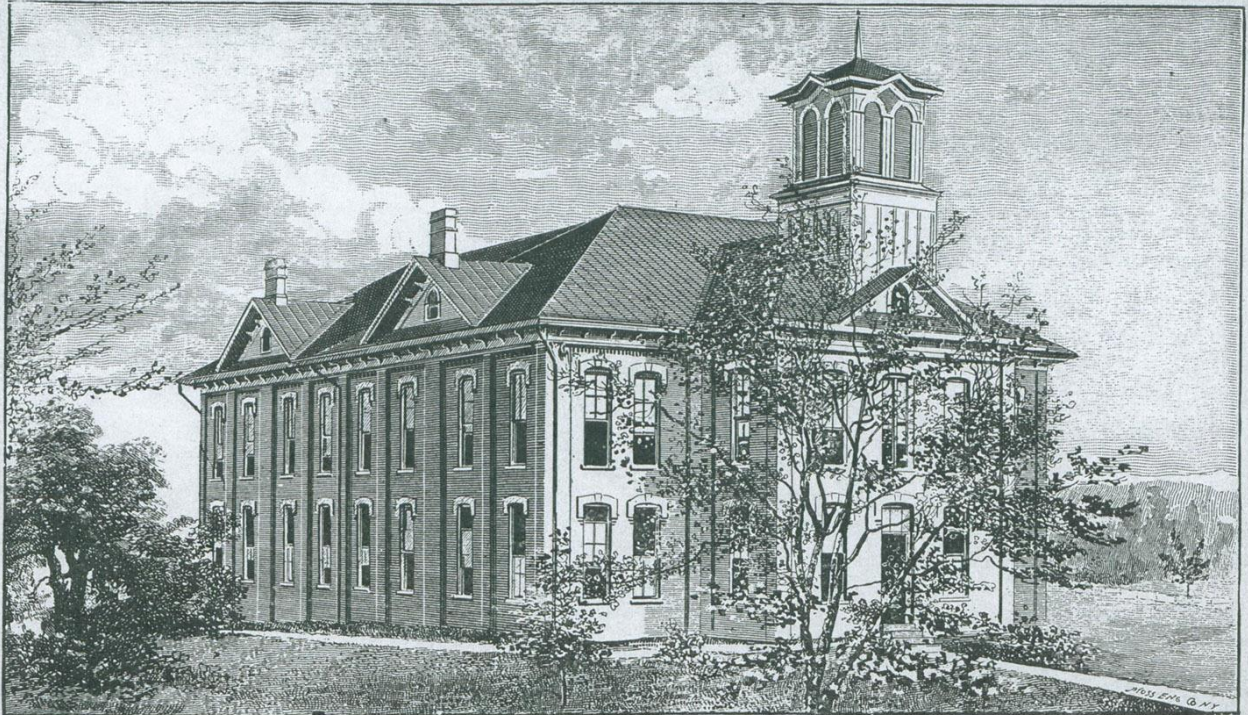
Short sketches are added of James H. French (deceased), Wm. M. Reynolds and John D. Sweeney.

JAMES HARVEY FRENCH

Captain James Harvey French, the subject of this sketch, was born in Giles county, Va., on the 20th day of October, 1818. He was educated at Georgetown, D. C., graduating with Senator John S. Barbour of Virginia. After leaving Georgetown, he took a course at the Virginia University, graduating about two years before Hon. John Randolph Tucker, who was one of his best friends while at the University. After leaving the University, he traveled extensively in the United States making one trip to the Republic of Texas. While there he received an invitation to dine with President Samuel Houston, who, was at the time, dressed in a hunting-shirt, buckskin breeches, and moccasins, and they dined on fat pork, sweet potatoes, corn-bread and coffee.

Captain French was attorney for the Commonwealth of Virginia, for the Circuit of Judge David McComas. Capt. French organized and led the first company from Giles county, Virginia, to join the Confederate army. He left Pearisburg, Va., with his company on the 24th of May, 1861, and was for three weeks with the 24th Virginia Regiment commanded by Gen. Early, after which his company "C" united with the 7th Virginia Infantry commanded by Col. James L. Kemper. Capt. French was in the battle of Bull Run on the 18th of July, 1861, and at the battle of Manassas on the 21st of July, 1861. Soon after the battle of Manassas he was compelled to leave the army on account of ill health.

Capt. French was engaged as a teacher in the Concord State Normal School at its organization on the 10th of May, 1875, being its first Principal. He remained in connection with the school until his death



New Building, Concord Normal School.



Old Building, Concord Normal School,