CHAPTER ONE

A Brief History of Teacher Training in Ohio from the Beginning to 1910
ANY ACCOUNT of the history of the institution now known as Bowling Green State University must start with a consideration of teacher training in Ohio, since this school was created to provide such training for the teachers of the northwestern portion of the state. Although Ohio was among the earliest of the states admitted to the Union, it was one of the last to provide training for teachers in state-supported schools. In fact, it was almost a century after its admission as a state, in 1803, before legislation was passed providing for the first state support of teacher-training.

Reasons for the Late Start

Ohio’s long delay in entering this field was not due to a lack of interest in the education of its citizens, but to a number of other causes. The first of these, both in time and importance, was the character and background of the early settlers. They were hardy pioneers and, as such, were independent, self-reliant, and highly distrustful of any attempts at centralized control. Dr. Alonzo Myers in his Contributions to Education, No. 266, Columbia University Press, states:

Ohio was from the beginning opposed to centralization of government authority. . . . Nowhere is this prejudice against centralized administration better illustrated than in the various phases of educational legislation.

The early settlers were thrifty as well as independent. These two traits resulted in a willingness on the part of the General Assembly to encourage local enterprise and initiative in matters of education, as long as the state was not asked to furnish support or assume control.
The early settlers of Ohio, in the main, shared these characteristics of self-reliance and thrift, but differed widely in most other respects as different parts of the state were settled by people having widely diverse racial, religious, educational, political, and social backgrounds. Furthermore, for many years, the means of transportation and communication were poor, or non-existent. As a result each section provided its own educational facilities according to its own ideas. Samuel Lewis, State School Superintendent, stated in his annual report for 1838:

The people have not heretofore followed any particular system (of education). The directors of each district have done that which was right in their own eyes, and generally adopted as far as they could the particular system of the state from whence they came.

First Certification of Teachers

There were no legal requirements for teaching in the early days. *A History of Education in the State of Ohio*, published in 1876 by the authority of the General Assembly, contains the following statement:

The teachers of the pioneer schools in Ohio were selected more on account of their unfitness to perform manual labor than by reason of their intellectual worth . . . The capacity of a teacher to teach was never a reason for employing him, but the fact that he could do nothing else was a satisfactory one.

However, as early as 1825 there was considerable public sentiment for better teachers and, in that year, a law was passed requiring that teachers be certified. The certification authority was vested in a local board of three appointed by the Court of Common Pleas. A candidate seeking a teaching position appeared before this board, and had to convince the members that he had sufficient knowledge of subject matter and good moral character. The standards of the board members with respect to knowledge of subject matter were usually not very high, since they were, of necessity, based on the knowledge they themselves possessed. In 1831 the law was amended to require an examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Local control of certification continued until 1864, when a law was enacted providing for a state board of examiners. This board conducted examinations and issued certificates that were good for the life of the holder.

The Establishment of Private Schools

The enactment of legislation requiring certification of teachers based on some knowledge of subject matter resulted in the establishment of a number of private normal schools. From 1830 to 1880, the number of such institutions increased very rapidly, until, at the end of this period, Ohio had more private normal schools, and institutions having normal departments, than any other state. These schools arose to meet a need, and for many years
rendered valuable service to the people of Ohio. In the end, however, they proved inadequate, and became serious obstacles to the development of state-supported facilities for the training of teachers.

Many of these private schools were discontinued before the establishment of the first state normal school. Some of the stronger schools survived and were strongly opposed to the creation of new institutions with state support. Much of this opposition arose from an honest belief that the existing schools were meeting all the needs for teacher training and that no new institutions were needed. Some of the opposition, however, was due to the fear that the private schools would be driven out of business by the creation of new, state-supported institutions. Since many of the members of the legislature had received at least part of their education in these private schools, they naturally shared in these loyalties and fears.

The first normal school in Ohio was established at Marietta in 1832, as Marietta Collegiate Institute and Western Teacher's Seminary. Three years later, it was rechartered as Marietta College. In 1877, I. W. Andrews, who was then president of this college, addressed the State Teachers Association. After speaking of the excellent work being done at Miami University, he continued:

I am equally sincere in the expression of the hope that no legislature of Ohio will make appropriations for the support of that institution whether in land or money. It is possible that the necessity exists somewhere that a state should provide funds from its treasury to support one or more colleges, but there is no such necessity in Ohio.

It should be remembered in this connection that, prior to 1902, neither Miami nor Ohio University received any regular financial support from the state.

Private Schools Inadequate

For many years before any action was taken to correct the situation, many educational leaders, educational associations, and state officials recognized the inadequacy of the existing institutions for the training of teachers. Several private colleges were doing excellent work in the preparation of high school teachers as far as knowledge of subject matter was concerned, but little or no consideration was given to the problems of teaching. This was partly due to lack of material of college grade for such courses, but even more to the unsympathetic or hostile attitude of most faculty members. As late as 1917, after the state Department of Education had set up professional requirements for a high school certificate, one professor of mathematics in a well-known Ohio college was giving his students a course in advanced mathematics and entering it on the records as *Methods of Teaching High School Mathematics*. He defended his action by stating that the mathematics course would do them more good, and that methods courses were a waste of time.
The situation with respect to the preparation of elementary teachers was much more serious. Such preparation was largely in the hands of private academies and normal schools. These were poorly equipped and were staffed, in many cases, by teachers with insufficient preparation. Furthermore, their entrance requirements were too low to permit work on the college level. The usual requirements for admission were a tolerably fair knowledge of the common branches, correct habits and good character. In an article published in the *Ohio Educational Monthly* of September, 1879, John Ogara wrote:

Time and experience have demonstrated that it will not do to intrust this matter of the training of teachers to private institutions. Under this management they soon develop into mere catch-penny concerns. It is safe to say that today there are fifty institutions of various grades in Ohio that claim to be normal schools or to have normal departments—and it is equally safe to say that not one in ten of them has the slightest claim to the title outside of the name.

The private schools were not only deficient (in most cases) in the quality of their work, but they were also failing to provide an adequate supply of teachers. In 1860, Anson Smyth, State Commissioner of Common Schools, stated in his annual report:

For the preparation of teachers for our schools, the state has never yet appropriated a dollar. The normal schools of the state are private enterprises and with their limited means can accomplish but little towards supplying 20,000 teachers.

**Agitation for State Support**

Dissatisfaction with existing facilities for the preparation of teachers led to early and repeated suggestions that the state enter this field. These recommendations came from prominent educators, teachers organizations, and state officials. As early as 1871, Gov. Thomas Worthington recommended to the General Assembly the establishment of a state school at Columbus for the training of teachers. The office of State Superintendent of Schools was created in 1837, and in 1838 Samuel Lewis, the first incumbent of the office, made several recommendations to the Assembly with respect to facilities for teacher education. These included the recommendation for the organization of a normal school at Columbus, and the appropriation of $5,000 for this purpose. The Assembly took no action. Similar recommendations were made in 1844, 1845, and 1846 by Samuel Galloway, Secretary of State, who assumed the duties of superintendent of schools after that office was abolished in 1840. Again the General Assembly failed to act.

In 1851, under the new constitution, the office of State Superintendent of Schools was revived under the title of State Commissioner of Schools. In 1865, E. E. White, who then held this office, was requested by the legislature
to study the best normal schools in the country, and to recommend a plan for organizing one or more such schools in Ohio. His report was submitted to the Assembly in 1866. It recommended the establishment of county teachers' institutes, a normal institute in each of nine judicial districts, and a state normal school. This report probably set back the cause of state-supported teacher-training by many years, as it aroused strong opposition from two quarters. Many educators seriously doubted the value of the teachers' institutes and were opposed to state support for such a program. As always, the private schools and their friends in the legislature opposed the establishment of a state-supported normal school. As a result, no action was taken at this time or for over 30 years to follow. However, the agitation continued. In 1899, Lewis D. Bonebrake, State Commissioner of Schools, pointed out:

Of all the states and territories of the American Union, Ohio, Arkansas, Delaware, New Mexico and Alaska are the only ones not attempting to provide special normal training for teachers.

Many Ohioans did not like this company, but three more years were to pass before the General Assembly took the first steps to remedy the situation.

Beginning of State Support

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, the movement for the professional training of teachers gained greater momentum throughout the country, and educational bodies in Ohio continued their agitation for state provision and control of such training. This resulted in the establishment of a pedagogical department at Ohio State University in 1897. The work of this department, and of similar departments in a number of private colleges, was planned for administrators and high school teachers, so the agitation for some state provision for the training of elementary teachers continued and increased.

In 1899, Charles F. Seese of Summit County introduced a bill in the General Assembly covering the whole field of teacher training. It met with the usual opposition from the private colleges and schools, and was defeated. However, Rep. Seese continued his interest in teacher training, and gave numerous talks before groups of teachers and citizens. Since the private schools and colleges opposed the establishment of new institutions on the grounds that Ohio already had too many, the original Seese bill was rewritten to provide for the organization of state-supported normal schools in connection with two old institutions—Miami University and Ohio University. This change, together with increased public sentiment, resulted in the successful passage of the new bill, on March 12, 1902, and the first victory was won in the long fight to secure state provision for teacher training.
The Normal School Commission of 1902

In addition to establishing normal schools at Ohio and Miami universities, the Seese bill provided for the establishment of a normal school commission to:

Make an investigation of the need and advisability of the future establishment of one or more additional state normal schools and to consider how private institutions can become more active and effective in training teachers.

This commission was appointed by Gov. George K. Nash, and made its report in 1903. Its chief recommendation was for the establishment of a state Board of Education to:

Have full charge of all normal schools and to have power to enter into contract or affiliation with private colleges and universities within the state to provide for teacher training.

It neatly evaded the troublesome question of the establishment of new normal schools by recommending that this problem be worked out by the state Board of Education. Possibly the recommendations of the commission were influenced by the fact that three of its four members were from existing colleges.

Agitation for New Schools

No action was taken on the report of Gov. Nash's commission and the agitation for new schools continued. This was especially true in northern Ohio. In 1904, Edmund E. Jones, State School Commissioner, stated in his report:

I am satisfied that some provision should be made as early as possible for the teachers in the northern half of the state. I do not believe a large number of normal schools is necessary in Ohio. In my opinion, two additional schools conveniently located in the northern half of the state, with a higher department that might be known as a teacher's college, centrally located, would meet the needs of our state in this direction for many years to come.

Mr. Jones made similar recommendations in 1905, 1906, and 1907, but no action was taken by the General Assembly.
First Professional Training of Teachers

Local certification of teachers, as we have seen, came in Ohio in 1825, and state certification in 1864. The next significant change did not come until 1914, when legislation was passed requiring, for the first time, professional as well as academic training for the securing of a teaching certificate. Although this legislation was not passed until after the creation of the Bowling Green and Kent institutions, educators had been advocating such a move for some time, and everyone felt it would come within a few years at most. This feeling was an important factor in the establishment of the new state-supported schools in northern Ohio.