

# The ECHO

In celebration of the 125th  
Anniversary of Hunter College

Journal of the Hunter College Archives

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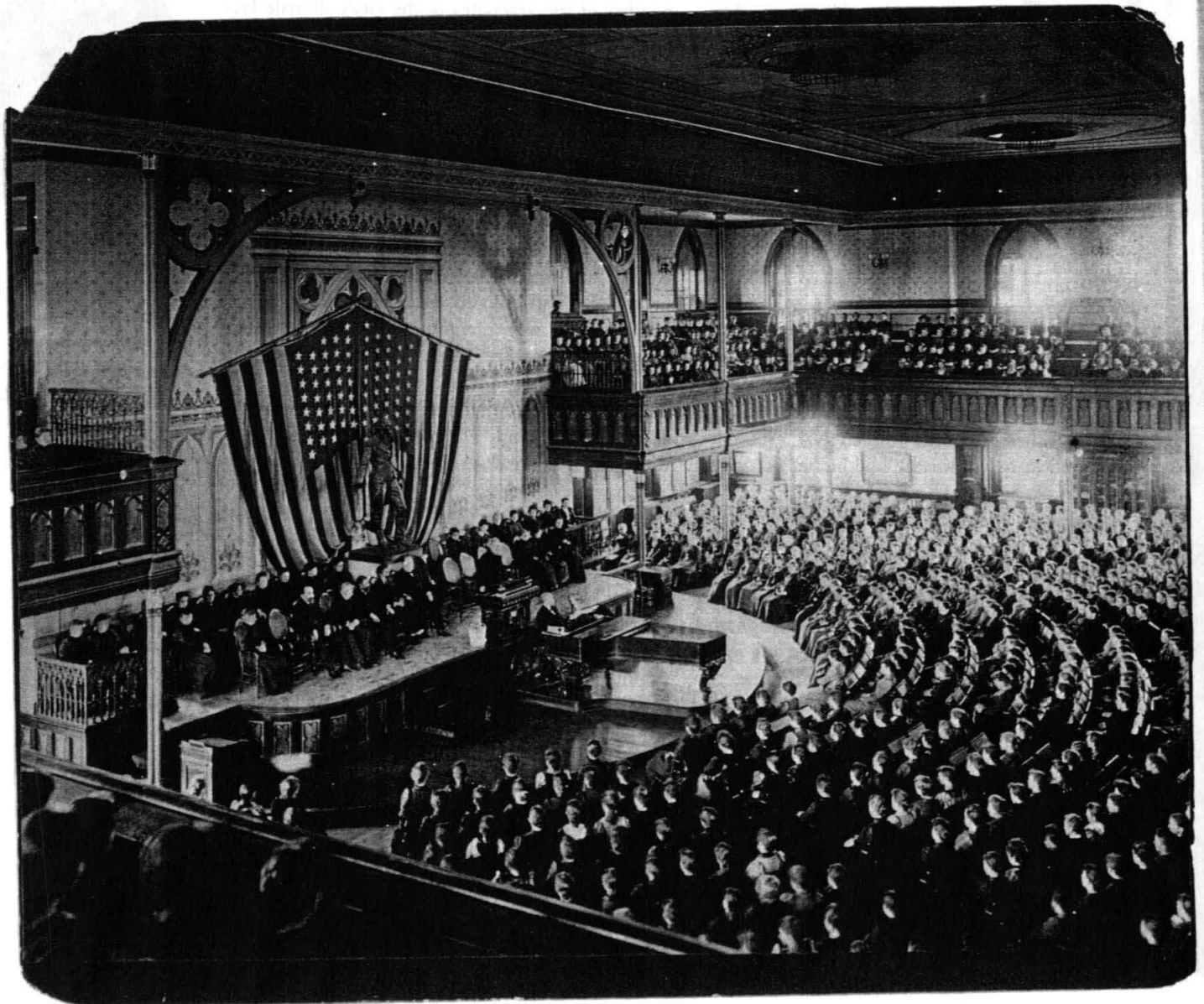
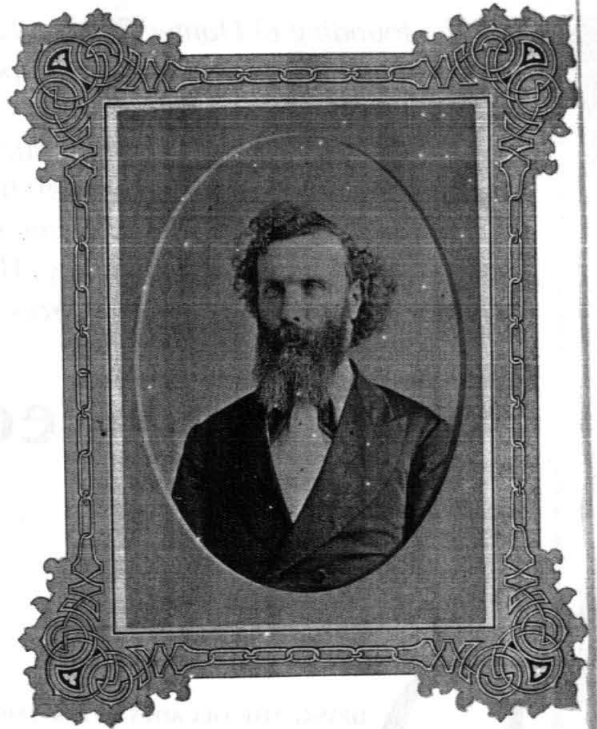
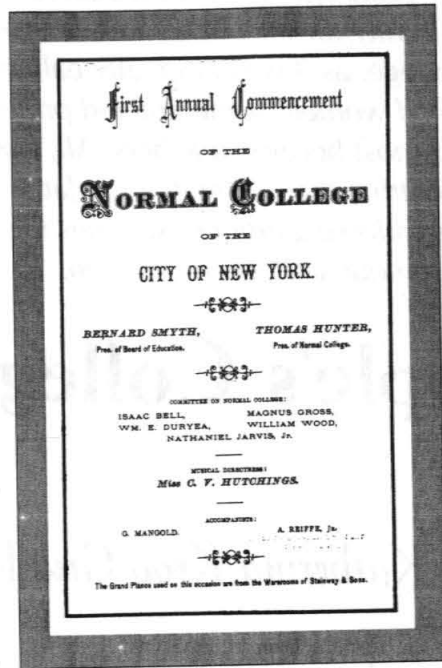
61 The Women's City Club of New York



The members of the  
Alpha Gamma and  
Philomathean societies,  
who jointly published  
*The Echo*, posed  
in front of the College  
in 1896.



The first Commencement Exercises of the Normal College took place on Tuesday, July 12, 1870 at the Academy of Music. After 1873, Commencements were held in the Chapel planned by President Thomas Hunter as part of his design for the College building. The Chapel was used for assemblies and student plays until 1936 when a fire destroyed the old building.



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*With the founding of Hunter College 125 years ago, New York offered the women of the city an unparalleled opportunity for intellectual advancement. Free, inclusive, rigorous, The Normal College, as it was originally called, graduated a steady stream of well-educated women: some entered professions just beginning to open up to women, but most became teachers. All, however, affirmed the college's underlying doctrine that a literate population is the truest safeguard of democracy. The following article examines the early years of Hunter when it was New York's unique college for women.*

## Behold the People's College: 1870-1895

*Katherina Kroo Grunfeld*

**D**URING THE DECADES AFTER THE Civil War, industrialization, urbanization and immigration constituted basic challenges through which American society was transformed. In the resulting "search for order," new social forms and processes appeared while existing ones were altered.<sup>1</sup> Education, both elementary and higher, public and private, came to assume a role equally unprecedented in the daily life of youngsters and in the vocational opportunities of adults. Not only did institutions of education extend their influence vertically, into more and more age groups, they also grew horizontally by drawing ever-increasing segments of the population into the system. They thereby simultaneously opened new opportunities for some while restricting access to others. Women formed one group for whom secondary, vocational, and higher education became available.

In the years after the Civil War, New York City maintained a decentralized system of schooling. Each ward or political district was placed in the hands of an unpaid superintendent and of a board of trustees responsible for the hiring, supervision and training of teachers. The trustees resisted any move to centralize teacher training in a school under the aegis of the Board of Education.

For most children, education ended after eight years of primary and grammar school. There were no public high schools, although 'supplementary classes' in several of the girls' grammar schools helped prepare young women to teach. Barely more than this grammar school education was required, until late in the century, to teach in the public schools. Teachers could move into and out of school positions with ease and, since most women taught only until marriage, the schools were in constant

need of new instructors. Although a large number of the graduates of the city's all-male Free Academy (the precursor of City College) became teachers, most men considered teaching, at best, a way-stop toward another career, and the absolute numbers of male teachers remained small. In 1874, for example, of the 2,300 teachers employed by the Board of Education, all but 200 were women.

Once appointed, teachers attended one of three normal (teacher-training) classes maintained by the Board of Education: one on Saturday mornings for women, another on Wednesday afternoons for men, or a third for all 'colored' teachers. At this time, the city schools were beginning their precipitous growth — expanding from 100,000 students in the common schools in 1869, with more than 2,500 teachers, to double that number of students in 1897. As this arrangement "was totally inadequate to meet the wants of a great system of common schools on which was expended in 1869 about \$3,000,000... it became an act of necessity as well as economy to procure, at any reasonable cost, the services of trained and accomplished teachers."<sup>2</sup>

On November 17, 1869, a newly appointed Board of Education of the City of New York (Manhattan and the Bronx) voted to establish a Normal and High School for females. In doing so, the Board based its actions upon seventy-five years of state support for public and higher education. In 1834, New York State had authorized subsidies for eight academies, one in each senatorial district, "for the better education of teachers."<sup>3</sup> Several years later, in 1847, the State appropriated public funds and authorized the City of New York to establish an institution of higher education for male graduates of the public grammar schools. The legislature confirmed the continuance of the Free Academy in 1854, and provided for the founding of a similar



*On opening day, Lydia Wadleigh lead 300 young ladies from Girls School No. 47 to the temporary quarters of the Normal College on Broadway in a long column, exhorting them to walk briskly and to ignore the stares of young men along the way.*



institution for females. It took until 1870 before the female equivalent was brought into existence.

The girls' school was, in fact, neither mirror nor twin to the boys' school which became the College of the City of New York in 1866. Although the female school found itself renamed the Normal College of the City of New York within a year of its founding, this was, as its president remarked, "a misnomer, since the school granted no degrees."<sup>4</sup> The Normal College was a high school, and from its inception maintained a clearly utilitarian purpose. Unlike the graduates of City College, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a diploma, the graduates of the Normal College earned a certificate and a license to teach. Like other normal schools in the United States, the Normal College taught the 'norms' of pedagogy and was, in essence, a professional teacher-training institution. Normal schools were common in many areas of the country and functioned much like today's community colleges; they brought educational opportunities and practical instruction to local communities and were often called "the people's colleges."<sup>5</sup>

In New York, the establishment of the Normal College and its complement, the City College, created an educational ladder that eventually offered free, excellent education from kindergarten through graduate studies to the children and citizens of the city. Organized at a time of increasing immigration and industrialization, the city's system of public education served both as a means of acculturation for millions of new Americans and as an incubator of intellectual and professional talent which repaid the largesse of the taxpayers many times over. Constructed to "enable the laboring class of our fellow citizens [to] have the opportunity of giving to their children an education that will more effectively fit them for the various departments of labor and toil by which they will earn their bread,"<sup>6</sup> the two public colleges have supplied the city and state with an abundance of skills and resources beyond the dreams of their founders.

Thomas Hunter was appointed President of the newly formed normal school. The popular principal of Grammar School No. 35, the largest and one of the most prestigious grammar schools for boys, Hunter was a former president of the Principals' Association and the successful organizer and principal of the New York Evening High School. Miss Lydia Wadleigh, the principal of the equally illustrious Girls School No. 47, was selected as Lady Superintendent. Hunter and his new Vice Principal, Arthur Dundon, spent a month visiting existing normal schools in the Northeast. In their subsequent report to the Board, they recommended that the best teacher preparation include both normal (pedagogical) instruction and the use of a training school for practice teaching.

Temporary quarters were rented, above a car-



riage shop, and the Female Normal and High School was opened for the admission of the 'supplementary classes' of the grammar schools "on February 14 (of all the days in the year, St. Valentine's Day), 1870....[N]otices must have been sent out in some way, for there was quite a large assembly of notables."<sup>7</sup> Miss Wadleigh brought 300 young ladies from the supplementary classes of No. 47; they formed the real core of the school. Another 400 students came from other city schools. Hunter formed six grades or half-year classes.

From the beginning, the president and the Board intended to offer both high school and normal training. Convinced of the necessity of grounding all theoretical and practical pedagogical instruction in a thorough academic foundation Hunter argued that eight years of grammar school education were insufficient for the intellectual preparation of well-trained teachers. Thus, despite opposition from those families who wished for a short, utilitarian course to allow their daughters to begin earning as quickly as possible, a three-year program was created. The first two years were purely academic, albeit not classical: a compromise allowed Latin, but not Greek, into the curriculum. Pedagogy and practice teaching were introduced only in the third year. This was in line with the most advanced theories on normal instruction and equaled the most extensive programs available anywhere.<sup>8</sup>

Opposition to the Normal College came not only from families objecting to the length of the program, but also from politicians objecting to public expenditures for higher education and from many others opposed to continued or liberal education for girls. Hunter countered that once the state

*By its twenty-fifth anniversary, the College was becoming a liberal arts institution, offering a BA degree in addition to the teaching license. Although President Hunter initially disapproved of extra-curricular activities for his students, he allowed them to form two literary societies. As the school moved to collegiate status after 1888, The Alpha Beta Gamma and Philomathean societies jointly published The Echo, the student magazine, and in 1898 lauded a decade of editors.*



assumes the responsibility for any public education, there is no logical distinction that differentiates between lower and higher education. Moreover, if the state is responsible for educating children, it is also responsible for supplying well-trained teachers to fulfill this mandate.

Against the argument that decried the education of women, Hunter and the Board responded with the concept of virtuous womanhood. This intellectual underpinning of the Normal College postulated that women were uniquely qualified for domestic and educational responsibilities: it emphasized the desirability of preparing women for their distinctive roles as mothers and teachers by giving them appropriate scientific and practical training.<sup>9</sup> On a practical level, it was assumed, correctly, that women teachers would work at far lower wages and with greater job stability than men.

Resentment during the first year also centered on Thomas Hunter's insistence on competitive examinations for admission, promotion, and graduation. Teacher-training was centralized in the Normal College, which had hired as tutors the best teachers of the supplementary classes after these classes had been eliminated in the grammar schools. Competitive examination curtailed the power of principals and ward trustees to appoint teachers and to recommend students to advanced classes. In addition, some parents were displeased that they could no longer use their influence in obtaining positions for their daughters. Hunter prevailed, however: "All things considered, it was best that rich and poor, high and low, should be placed upon a common platform, and subjected to the same conditions and regulations. In a competitive, written examination

alone can uniform justice be secured for every individual."<sup>10</sup> This fervent belief in the 'democratic' value of admission solely on merit had a decisive impact upon the history of the school. Competitive written entrance examinations have remained in force and are still the basis of admission to the elementary and high school divisions of the Hunter College Campus Schools.

The original faculty was all male; tutors and assistants were all female. As Hunter had insisted, a training school was opened with a staff of six, which soon included one of the earliest Normal College graduates, Emily Ida Conant. An early advocate of the kindergarten movement and a teacher of psychology, Conant later became the first woman in New York to hold a doctorate in pedagogy. Sarah E. Heybeck was the secretary and librarian, although

there was no library until the alumnae moved to establish one in the early 1890s.

Thomas Hunter determined the means of instruction and standards of behavior. He believed in the efficacy of single text instruction and of recitation as the approved method. Lectures could not be avoided in some subjects, although he thought them 'pernicious,' but they were offset by frequent examinations and laboratory demonstrations. Hunter also believed in physical culture and scheduled fifteen minutes of daily exercise for each student; athletics and extracurricular activities, however, had no role as yet in this urban college. Each morning began with Chapel: students were encouraged to speak in public by offering short inspirational sentences. Students were also closely monitored for punctuality and decorum.

Construction of a permanent home soon began on Park Avenue between 68th and 69th streets. The building, designed by Hunter, had no lunchroom, no library, and no lounges. It had a small calisthenium but no gymnasium, an observatory but no telescope. On the other hand, it had thirty classrooms, an art-studio, fifteen-foot-wide corridors for promenading and lunchtime dancing, and a chapel seating 2,000. The dedication ceremonies, with speeches by the Governor, Mayor, and U.S. Commissioner of Education, took place on October 29, 1873. The following June, commencement was held for the first time in the school's new chapel, and newspapers reported that "the growing popularity of the city's two free colleges... is becoming more manifest in the increasing interest shown with regard to the commencements."<sup>11</sup>

To everyone's surprise, and despite some opening day confusion, the Normal College Training Department, as the model primary school was soon named, also became popular. Although the pupils were 'experimented' upon by student-teachers, the demand for admission seemed to rival that for admission to the college. To fulfill its purpose, the Training Department classes closely resembled those of the public schools in grading, curriculum and instruction; this was not a laboratory school for the development of educational theory, but a school for practice teaching.

It was unique, however, in providing the first free public kindergarten in the United States. Hunter had called for kindergarten instruction in his first Annual Report. "Rigidity is not order," he wrote. "Children should sing, march, laugh, joke, and play under supervision."<sup>12</sup> In later years, Hunter estab-



lished six scholarships for a one-year post-graduate course in kindergarten methods as prizes for the highest ranked graduates of the Normal College. Along the same lines, he also established twelve scholarships for a course in manual training (domestic arts).

Young women came to the College in earnest pursuit of a teaching license and some education. Generally fifteen to eighteen years old, carefully nurtured and guarded by the protective mechanisms of the Victorian era, they came from families that could spare their daughters for twelve years of education. The majority of students were white, Protestant and middle-class: wealthy students did not attend the public schools, and poor girls could not afford to do so.

The various issues of *The Echo*, which began as a yearbook and evolved into a literary magazine, are the best source of information on student life after 1889. The atmosphere in these pieces of student writing is decidedly comfortable and middle-class: the columns refer casually to trips abroad, summer vacations in the country, festive gatherings and reunions. The young students of the early Normal College seemed aware of their comparatively privileged position, although there are clear indications that many students lived more difficult lives.

In order to refute charges that the College wasted taxpayer money on the children of the wealthy, Hunter eventually began to list the occupations of the parents and guardians of his students in the Annual Reports. It was a remarkably diverse population. For 1886, the first year that occupations were listed, Hunter's assessment concluded that bankers, day-laborers, presidents, coachmen, clergymen, masons, physicians, bookkeepers, blacksmiths, clothiers, carpenters, lawyers, brokers, clerks, teachers, office-holders (City, State and Federal), widows, traders, editors, journalists, reporters, janitors, grocers, horse dealers, etc., all had their representatives within the College. "Now if this be not a common school — common to all, rich and poor, high and low — and supported by a common tax, where is a common school to be found?"<sup>13</sup>

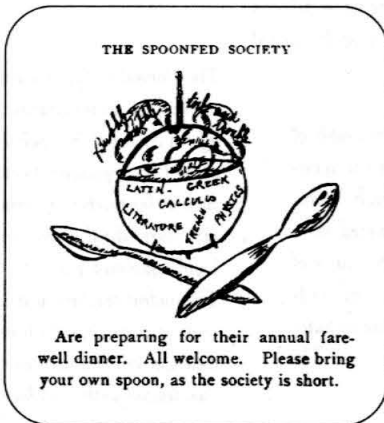
From the earliest years minorities were always present. Thomas Hunter had insisted on (and state legislation in 1874 compelled) the equal admission and integration of qualified Black students. As Linda Perkins notes in her accompanying article, eight enrolled in 1873, before the state mandate, and another eight in 1874. For a number of years, the Annual Reports listed admissions by grammar school, and the Colored Schools were clearly indicated. African-American girls continued to attend the Normal College, even after these segregated

schools were closed. In his study of Black education, Carlton Mabee states that 56 Black teachers graduated from the Normal College by 1890, although no Black teachers were hired by the New York school system until 1896.<sup>14</sup> Jewish girls were more visible: *Harper's New Monthly* suggested 200 out of an enrollment of 1,542 in 1878.<sup>15</sup> There is no direct evidence in the College records for the number of Catholic girls, but demographics would suggest their presence as well.<sup>16</sup>

In keeping with its public mandate, the College tolerated no discrimination or bigotry. Hunter claimed that, with all classes and every religious denomination present, the "faculty and tutors have exercised the nicest care and taken the most conscientious pains, to preserve the rights of each and to injure the feelings of none."<sup>17</sup> There are numerous indications that officially this was indeed the case: the constitution of the College's literary society stated that as topics for debate, "no religious subject of a denominational character shall be discussed." The delegation of Normal College students welcoming President Benjamin Harrison to New York City in connection with the Centennial Celebration of the Constitution included one, and possibly two, Black students who strewed flower petals in his path. The student body unanimously selected Annie Alida Abrahams, a Jew, to deliver the Address of Welcome to the City.<sup>18</sup> *The American Hebrew* noted that "it is creditable to the school system of the city in which it is possible that such distinction can be gained irrespective of religious affiliation."<sup>19</sup> In 1892, the faculty reminded teachers of the Training Department that "it is an established rule in the College that no student should ever be marked down [have a class mark reduced] for being absent on account of illness or religious holy days."<sup>20</sup>

It is also evident that Hunter himself, while scrupulously fair and just to all students and a self-declared staunch democrat, held prejudices. Prejudice, however, was not allowed to undermine principle or law, even if a heavy hand was applied to enforce the principle of democracy. Neither racial nor social discord appears to have been an issue in the College, and students absorbed the lessons of democracy as expounded by the faculty. The College members interpreted the mandate of their public college, like that of the public schools to which it was bound, to serve the needs of all its constituents impartially. It was, as it was intended to be, a college for all women.

The strict adherence to a policy of admission based purely upon merit was intended to reinforce this concept. Commissioner O'Brien was, therefore, pertly reprimanded by Normal College student Clara Aub for suggesting that the Normal College be limited only to women who planned to teach and who could not afford schooling elsewhere. The Normal College, she wrote, is not a charity school,



Student humor left its mark in *The Echo*. Here, one example of a secret society the editors had created. Were the students suggesting too much rigor in their courses or too little?

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it is a public school where all the classes meet, where the wealthy student can stand in awe of the gifted but poorer student, and the poor student can acquire some polish and refinement from those more fortunate.

*The great thing for which we Americans have to be thankful is not the education of the poor, but the mingling in thought and feeling of all classes, it is this that is the safeguard of the Republic.<sup>21</sup>*

As the only public high school for females in the city, the Normal College proved both successful and popular. So popular, in fact, that it soon became overcrowded, and so successful that the city, in the aftermath of the depression of 1873, had an oversupply of teachers. The time, therefore, seemed opportune to strengthen the program by lengthening it and to protect it from external intervention by political forces. The age for admission had been raised to fourteen in 1872, and the mid-winter entrance to the College abolished. Hunter and the other College authorities, however, were determined to increase the academic component of the program, which they regarded as fundamental to all professional studies. The original three year course had been shaped by the need to diffuse opposition to free higher education for girls. It was increased to four years in 1878, when the temporary oversupply of teachers allowed the Board of Education to raise

the minimum age of new teachers to eighteen.

Only gradually was the intrinsic value of higher and liberal education for women as an end in itself publicly acknowledged. The sole aim and function of the Normal College had been to prepare public school teachers, but the College had never required a commitment from its graduates to teach. As early as 1882, Hunter had advised the Board of Education to consider establishing several additional programs of study. A classical course, a business course, and an art course could easily and economically be introduced; they "would furnish in the end a superior class of teachers, and would certainly enable those students who had no taste for teaching to earn a living in other walks of life."<sup>22</sup>

J. Edward Simmons, President of the Board of Education, agreed. In his Commencement Address to the graduates of 1887, he extolled the Normal College:

*Behold the People's College — the grand triumph of popular education. . . . There can be no general accumulation of wealth without labor — in which I comprehend all the diversified pursuits of civilized men, whether manual, mental, or social. The importance of training men and women to usefulness and self-reliance cannot be over-estimated. . . . It is time to place the Normal College on the same footing as The College of the City of New York."<sup>23</sup>*

*The Normal College trained teachers for all the courses offered by the Public Schools of the City. Specialized courses, such as for teachers of domestic arts, were offered as prizes to highly qualified graduates. The student-teachers in this cooking class clearly relished their special status and learned their lessons with good humor.*





Accordingly, President Hunter requested that the state legislature put the Normal College on the same organizational basis as the City College. In 1888, after some political maneuvering, the New York State Legislature passed and the Governor signed the Cantor Bill, establishing the Normal College as a distinct corporate body with its own Board of Trustees — composed of the members of the Board of Education and the President of the College — and the power to grant “the usual degrees.” The Normal College, which had faced budgetary cutbacks in 1887, including a 9% reduction in salaries, was explicitly granted the same appropriation as City College (\$125,000.00).<sup>24</sup> Students could now choose from two programs: a four-year normal course leading to a certificate and teaching license, and a five-year classical course leading to a degree and a diploma. It was hoped that those students who had no intention of teaching would pursue other studies, while the normal course students

For those who could not or would not teach, new avenues were to become available through the classical option. The graduates of 1894 were informed that the College was to prepare each woman “for the many opportunities that are now open to her in the field of medicine, law, journalism, commerce and others, that are now receiving her on equal terms with men.”<sup>26</sup> Many continued working for advanced degrees. The faculty had recommended that the B.A. be offered to graduates of the normal course (and all other women residing in New York) upon the successful completion of examinations in classical studies. Soon the Faculty recommended that the B.S., M.A., and Doctor of Pedagogy degrees also be offered. The Board of Trustees accepted these recommendations and appointed committees to devise appropriate courses of study.

The commencement of 1892, the twenty-third, marked a jubilant day in the history of the Normal



*The Normal College maintained both a kindergarten and an elementary school where student-teachers could gain teaching experience. The students of the first free, public kindergarten in the U.S. pose here with their teacher.*

would concentrate more effectively on their professional training.

The classical course was designed with the ambition of bringing the Normal College into eventual conformity with the standards of liberal learning in other women’s colleges. Having achieved nominal collegiate rank, Hunter could see “no reason why the Normal College of the City of New York should not be ranked with Vassar, Smith and the other colleges for the education of women.”<sup>25</sup> The creation of the classical course moved the College to a concept of women’s education far beyond the school’s original mandate. The College no longer looked to institutions of normal training — the people’s colleges — to set the standard by which to measure itself, but to the prestigious and selective private liberal arts colleges for women. In doing so, the College’s democratic credo and academic admissions policy were to be increasingly at odds with its ambitions as a liberal arts institution.

College. In his address, President Hunter thanked God that he had lived to see the day. The proceedings were widely reported, and the *New York Recorder* called it a significant event

*in the educational advancement of the country. For then, for the first time was the degree of B.A. conferred upon women by a college supported by the State and then for the first time were the daughters of this city granted all the privileges that their brothers claim.*<sup>27</sup>

This was a pleasant sentiment but not quite a factual one. The Normal College was not an accredited institution. Not only were its graduates not qualified to teach in the recently created secondary schools, but most graduate schools did not recognize the Normal College as a college-rank institution. For the majority of Normal College graduates this was a minor issue. The few graduates who intended to pursue professional degrees in law or

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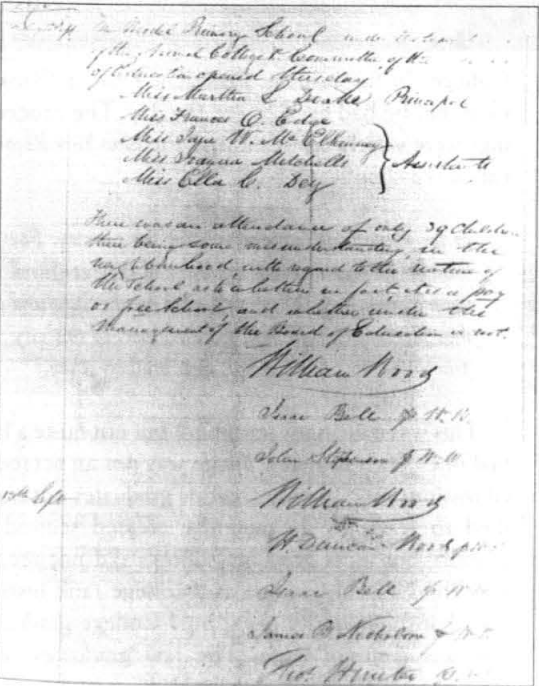
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medicine could do so on the strength of the equivalent of a high school diploma, while others could seek to enroll in either Barnard College or Teachers College. Indeed, graduates did go to medical school and to law school — the first women to graduate from the New York University Law School and the first admitted to the New York Bar were Normal College alumnae. The predominant number, however, were happy in the conviction that they would have no difficulty in finding teaching positions.

The effort to incorporate the College, therefore, was replete with paradoxes. The Normal College, which was created primarily to serve the needs of New York's schools and only incidentally to provide secondary education to women, had developed an internal impetus. Officially, teacher training continued to be the prime function of the College and the majority of its students and their parents continued to demand this type of training. A small and cohesive group of faculty, students, and alumnae, however, advocated the expansion of the College beyond normal training and its elevation to collegiate status. These women and (some) men — whose demands and needs were somewhat at odds with popular expectations — pushed the College to reconsider the meaning of public education for women.

Several distinct but overlapping tensions were highlighted by the opposition to incorporation. One set of tensions centered on questions of the extent, dimensions, and purposes of public schooling and its intended outcomes. The other focused on questions of gender and class in vocational, professional, and higher education. The tension between academic education and vocational training, inherent in Normal's original mandate, was also highlighted, as was the College's continuing com-



mitment to both the concept of democratic schooling and the preparation of superior teachers through adherence to a single, impartial, standard of merit. These are themes which ran as a constant thread through the history of the College and influenced teacher professionalization and training as well as women's education far into the future.

Questions about the purposes of public education and its social context reflected contradictory views within the Board of Education itself. Initially, hostility to the Normal College had come from members of the lower or laboring class who objected to providing free education and liberal arts to the daughters of the wealthy. Making the course longer imposed a hardship on poor girls, who had to delay the start of their employment as teachers. Middle class opposition to the College began with the granting of degrees, which, the argument went, was best left to private institutions.

Major objection to the empowerment of the College came from the two women on the Board, Grace Hoadley Dodge and Mary Nash Agnew, who had been appointed in 1886 in recognition of the growing female presence in the public schools. William Wood, ex-president of the Board of Education, charged that Dodge had an "unreasonable feminine jealousy" of the Normal College since she had recently established the New York College for the Training of Teachers, and that Mrs. Agnew's husband, Cornelius, was a trustee of Columbia College and disliked the two free institutions. Agnew was, in fact, instrumental in establishing Barnard College which, like Dodge's renamed Teachers College, was affiliated with private, more exclusive Columbia University. "Doubtless both [Dodge and Agnew] were conscientious in opposing the higher education of girls," as Thomas Hunter later vengefully noted, "perhaps on the ground that it would tend to reduce the supply of servants and thereby increase their wages."<sup>28</sup>

It is difficult to refute Hunter's charge that a class bias and a tendency to see working women (in the guise of Normal College students) as glorified domestics actuated the ladies' opposition to the expansion of the College. Teachers, who were predominantly Normal College graduates, were to come under increasing supervisory and bureaucratic control as the movement for school reform took shape under the leadership of Nicholas Murray Butler — president first of Dodge's New York College for the Training of Teachers and then of Columbia University. The progressive reformers' perceptions of class and gender precluded a belief in these women's capacity to acculturate children to



Dr. Jennie Merrill, an early graduate of the Normal College and member of the faculty, headed the delegation that petitioned Governor Hill to sign the legislation incorporating the Normal College in 1888. President Hunter later boasted that he had sent "the prettiest and most eloquent graduates and graduate-teachers" to Albany. Merrill became a specialist in kindergarten and elementary methods.

Referring to confusion about the Hunter College Campus Schools that has persisted in the public mind until the present, the visitors book of the elementary school, the Model Primary School, noted on Opening Day "an attendance of only 39 children, there being some misunderstanding in the neighborhood with regard to the nature of the school, as to whether in fact it is a pay or free school, and whether under the management of the Board of Education or not"

'American' values. Most teachers, because they were women and because they came from the working class, were considered unreliable and incapable of independent professional action; a 'liberal' education for this sector of society was an unnecessary frivolity. Admitting students purely on the basis of academic achievement, the Normal College was to find itself increasingly suspect as more and more women from lower and otherwise 'socially undesirable' classes were perceived as gaining ever greater admission to the institution.

Not surprisingly, supporters of the school felt that the College itself had to be protected from political vicissitude and the temptations of the budget-cutters. The self-esteem and the professional prospects of the alumnae and faculty were intertwined with the prestige and stability of the institution, and it was they who forced a reorientation of the College's mission. The Alumnae Association of the Normal College of the City of New York had been organized in 1872 and within a decade had begun to seek greater influence on the activities and functioning of the Normal College. The sixteen- and seventeen-year-old graduates of the early 1870s were now matrons of nearly thirty; whether married or single, they had attained a level of personal stability, maturity, and experience. Self-sufficient and independent, some had gone on, or were going on, to advanced degrees and growing professional standing. They viewed their futures as linked to that of the Normal College. Among their concerns was the obvious fact that in this college for women there was "not a single woman professor[!] What a humiliating spectacle for us to contemplate!"<sup>29</sup> Through the 1870s and 1880s, the 'Faculty' was comprised of the Lady Superintendent and seven male department heads holding the rank of professor; everyone else was a tutor. In 1889, there were forty-two tutors, all female, including two holding the Ph.D. (or Ped.D.), one an M.D., five a B.A. and four a B.S. Most of the professors had been with the Normal College since its opening and, although all the women (students, alumnae and faculty) protested their devotion to their mentors, why should not one of their number step into a position when the inevitable vacancy occurred?

In her study of women in higher education, Barbara Solomon describes this first generation of college women in America as serious, single-minded, conscientious, with a "passionate desire" for education, and very conscious of being pioneers.<sup>30</sup> Although the teen-age students of the Normal College were too young to fit Solomon's picture, her description accurately portrays the first generation of alumnae. It is this group that, one decade after their graduation, led the effort for degrees, expanded programs, representation on governing boards, and opportunities for professional advancement. As serious, as determined, and as single-minded

as their peers in other colleges, Dr. Jennie Merrill and Dr. Ida Conant in kindergarten and elementary education, Julia Richmond and Katherine Devereux Blake in educational administration, Emma Requa and Helen Gray Cone as department heads, Dr. Augusta Requa and Dr. Margaret Barclay Wilson in medicine and hygiene, Mary A. Wells in social work, Harriet Keith in vocational placement and Annie Hickenbottom in counseling, together with other tutors and teachers, formed a small, mostly unmarried, group whose professional and personal existence was largely shaped by ties to and through the Normal College. It is this generation, the graduates of the 1870s and 1880s, which began to edge the Normal College into line with the most prestigious of the women's institutions. Very much in tune with developments elsewhere, they responded not only to an ideal of culture but also to the concept of service to the school, to the community, and to other women.

Flushed with the victory of having established the College as a corporate body, the Associate Alumnae incorporated themselves in 1889 and, with a burst of pent-up energy, threw themselves into an ongoing series of activities to benefit their Alma Mater. They successfully petitioned the mayor to appoint one of their own, Clara M. Robinson Williams, to the Board of Education in 1889. The Wadleigh Memorial Library Alcove, inspired by the death of the Lady Superintendent in 1888, became the foundation of the Alumnae Library, which in turn became the College Library. The Alumnae eventually raised over \$10,000.00, hired a graduate, Edith Rice, as librarian, and paid her salary until the library was taken over by the College (as an Alumnae gift) in 1896.

Addressing the needs of their members, the Alumnae instituted a series of advanced courses in Latin, Greek, psychology, and mathematics, to bring the advantages of education to the College community. A Shakespeare class was organized, as were courses in botany and zoology. In addition, the Alumnae reached out to the general community, inviting women to join in the choral society and arranging public lectures on themes of importance or interest to all educated women.

Always attuned to the activities of sister colleges and their organizations and eager to appear in the vanguard of collegiate activity, the Alumnae responded enthusiastically to the settlement house movement and, in 1894, opened the Normal College Alumnae Settlement House, now the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, in Germantown (Yorkville) on the Upper East Side. The alumnae's Free Kindergarten, established in 1891, was integrated into the Settlement House. Mary A. Wells, '90, was the resident head worker, and it was assumed that both the students and alumnae would donate time (and the benefits of their



A lady of firsts, Frances Ogden Edge was a member of the college's earliest graduating class in 1870 and winner of the first medal, which was the only prize awarded by the institution at this graduation. Her speech on this occasion was entitled "New York in the Year 2000." Appointed to the original staff of the Model Primary School, Edge was present on Opening Day. The inscription on this portrait notes another distinction: Edge was the first alumna to marry.



considered valuable, it would have to undertake revisions in its programs and organization.

At the same time, increasing immigration and urbanization in the 1880s spurred the growth of the city school system and created an unprecedented demand for ever more teachers. The College, a public institution dependent on public appropriations and constrained by its ties to the school system, could not be unresponsive. It moved quickly to reassert the importance of its unique position and its vital service to the city. Confounding the expectations of College authorities, the students in the classical program indicated their strong desire to obtain teachers' licenses in addition to degrees. Consequently, courses in pedagogy were offered to the seniors in the classical — now called the academic — department. All graduates were allowed to enroll in kindergarten and manual training classes.

There was nothing surprising in the students' desire to teach. Although the College had entertained high hopes with the introduction of the dual course, it was still primarily a normal school, and teacher training remained its prime mission. For decades to come, the overwhelming number of graduates became teachers in the schools of New York. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Normal College, the *New York Press* reported that 3,000 of the 4,000 New York City teachers were graduates of the Normal College and in 1896, the twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Normal College proudly proclaimed: "Since its organization in 1870 the College has graduated six thousand seven-hundred and eighty-two (6,782) young women. It is safe to assert that more than five thousand (5,000) have taught in the public schools."<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, however, it would appear that Dodge and Agnew had been correct: the attainment of collegiate status eventually devalued teacher training. The introduction of the academic course led inexorably to the elimination of the normal program. In response to student demand, a pedagogical component was added to the academic program: graduates of both courses were now eligible for teaching licenses, but only for the elementary schools. For students to qualify for the higher levels of teaching, or for any other profession, the Normal College had to join the ranks of accredited liberal arts colleges. In 1895, twenty-five years after its founding as a school for teachers, President Hunter proposed that the normal course be eliminated and a uniform five-year curriculum be introduced. "Both departments, normal and academic, having the same purpose in view, to be trained as teachers, it seems only rea-



*By 1895, the College had developed a rich tradition of 'Red-letter' days and formal rituals. Senior students, for example, presented a Christmas Play as their gift to the College. Helen Grey Cone, lower right, an early graduate, was the first woman appointed Department Head (English) and Professor of the College.*

sonable that there should be but one common curriculum, and that the highest."<sup>33</sup>

The College, in the meantime, was credibly fulfilling its mandate from the city. That nearly half of Normal College's graduates were currently teaching in the city's schools was, in Hunter's estimate, "a very large proportion. New York has certainly received more than an equivalent for the money expended in their education and training." What the college contributed to the city, however, was not merely normal training for some women. Higher education — free, accessible, meritorious — benefited the public schools and the children they served, created a pool of educated workers and trained professionals, and brought thousands of immigrants into the American polity. "But far above and beyond these is the great fact that hundreds of the graduates — some of them the daughters of the poor — have carried into humble homes a higher ideal of human life and a culture which will manifest itself in the next generation of citizens."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Clipping, no citation, Scrapbook, HCA.

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<sup>13</sup> *Annual Report, 1886*, 39-40, "Table of Occupations," 17.

<sup>14</sup> David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974); Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State from Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 114, 215, 217, 220.

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