

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)

DOCUMENTS

PRINTED BY ORDER OF

THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1845.

AUGUSTA:

WM. T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1845.

TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 9.]

[SENATE.

*To the members of the Senate
and House of Representatives :*

Since the date of my annual communication, I have received from Mr. James C. Madigan, who was appointed to superintend the establishment of schools in the Madawaska settlements upon the St. John, under resolve of February 16th, 1844, his third and final report, which I herewith transmit for the consideration of the Legislature.

Having referred to this subject in a former communication, I deem it necessary only to add, that a perusal of the report above referred to has confirmed the opinion I then expressed, in relation both to the utility and practicability of the undertaking; and I trust it may be deemed compatible with the interests of the State, to continue a moderate appropriation for its further prosecution.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, }
February 3, 1845. }

H. J. ANDERSON.

FINAL REPORT
OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT AND INSTRUCTOR
OF
SCHOOLS IN MADAWASKA SETTLEMENT,
FOR THE YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR.

*To the honorable the Governor and Council
of the State of Maine :*

HAVING discharged, according to the best of my ability, the duties incumbent upon me under my appointment of 21st February, A. D. 1844, I respectfully submit this my final report, in compliance with article six of instructions. As my former communications are upon the files of your honorable board, it may not be deemed necessary to enter, at this time, into a minute statement regarding such matters affecting my labors as have been already noticed. It remains for me, however, to allude to the issue of former arrangements, and speak slightly upon hopes for the future, and of the probable manner of realizing the assurances of those hopes.

Situated as the inhabitants of this settlement have been since their first location here ; governed as they were, until of late, *virtually* by the authorities of the province of New Brunswick ; having acquaintance, in fact, with no laws other than those emanating thence, it will be clearly apparent, that to effect a perfect change in their former conceived notions, is a task of some considerable importance. The more speedily, however, they are brought to a knowledge of the benefits and blessings attendant on the just and

impartial administration of a government by the people, the sooner will they realize the sacred obligations of citizens, and as a consequence the more endeavor to fit themselves for a proper participation in them. And regarding, as I do, the common school system as a chief corner stone in the foundation of our free institutions, I have studiously endeavored to impress upon the minds of all those, with whom I have been associated, the happy results to be anticipated from a spread of information among them. I have desired not only that this system should be understood and appreciated, but have cherished and eagerly seized upon every opportunity, which warranted the slightest approach to it. It was for this reason, together with a desire to extend as widely as possible the benefits hoped to be derived from the appropriation by the legislature at its last session, that the subscription of some of the inhabitants in four of the districts, and of which mention is made in my first quarterly report, was received and appropriated. I have not yet had reason to question the propriety of this course. Its happy tendency is already manifested, in having excited individual and united effort for the improvement of the youth, as a proof of which I will mention, that, at the close of the established schools, families in various sections of the settlement joined together with a view of obtaining *winter* instruction for their children. As another benefit, the imagined burden of supporting schools, will, when imposed, fall less heavily upon them.

The school in St. Francis district, (sixteen miles above Fort Kent,) under tuition of Miss Elizabeth Baker, closed September 4, having continued three months and three days, one week's vacation inclusive. Twenty scholars were in attendance, none of whom were more than fourteen years of age—all studied English. The majority of these children were of American parents, and had before received some little instruction. Great improvement was made by them, in spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic, owing in a great degree to the unwearied care and attention of the instructress. The very evident satisfaction of the parents is a sufficient testimonial of her ability.

That near the chapel, St. Luce Parish, (eight miles below Fort

Kent,) continued until 31st September, a term of four months and five days. Thirty-three pupils attended, their ages varying from six to twenty-seven years. Nineteen of these commenced the French alphabet, seven in words of two and three syllables, all of whom, at the last examination, were able to read more or less fluently in the common tales of their primary reading books. Seven had attended school for a few months previous, and read well at the close of this term. Five wrote quite prettily. Three only of nine who commenced continued the study of English. I cannot speak too highly of the efforts of Mr. Hamel, the teacher, of the assiduity of the scholars, or of their punctuality in attendance. The great majority of the people in this district, thought themselves unable to subscribe in aid of the school, and had not even a room to offer me in which it could be holden. By choosing a situation a few miles removed from this, subscription could have been had, but a much smaller number of children would have received benefit. I therefore judged it proper to act in consonance with the most liberal intentions of the legislature and your honorable body.

The school in the Oliver R. Sirois district, (at the confluence of the Madawaska and St. John,) under charge of Mr. Tighe, continued until 12th November, a term of five months, vacation time not included. Thirty-one scholars under fourteen years of age attended constantly, four adults occasionally. Twenty-one studied English—ten French—twenty-seven commenced the alphabet. Four could read a little at the commencement. At the close twelve read fluently—the remainder spelled and read in their primary readers. Seven wrote quite handsomely. The efforts of Mr. Tighe were crowned with happy success.

That in the Registe Daigle district, (four miles below the confluence,) continued until 20th November, a term of five months and nine days, vacation not included. Thirty-seven scholars, ages varying from five to twenty-two years, were in attendance, but four of whom pursued English studies. Twenty-one commenced the alphabet—the remaining sixteen were able to spell or read a little, at the commencement. At the close, those in English read easily and intelligibly, fifteen of those in French well in general reading

sixteen without difficulty in their primary readers. Five wrote quite handsomely, and a few others tolerably well. The improvement of the pupils, and their quiet and pleasing deportment, bore sufficient testimony to the capability of Mr. Gagnon, their instructor.

The school at St. Bruno, (eleven miles above the east line of the State, and forty-two below Fort Kent,) continued until 1st November, a term of four months. Thirty-three scholars, ages varying from six to twenty-seven years, attended here, all of whom studied English. Twenty-one commenced the alphabet, and at the close furnished, as in the other schools, sufficient evidence of good improvement. Some of the others had attended schools holden upon the north side of the river some few years ago, and in spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic, made very satisfactory advancement. The teacher, Mr. Stanly, labored assiduously and successfully, in the discharge of his duties. At its commencement, this school was for a time under my own immediate direction.

A sixth would have been established, but the season had so far advanced, before it was possible to procure a teacher having acquaintance with the French as well as English language, that I was obliged to abandon the idea.

At the close of each school, I left in the hands of the several scholars such books as had been used by them, for the purpose of inciting them to retain what they had learned by continued reviews. Up to this time, as a general thing, they have followed my instructions in this respect, the younger receiving occasional assistance from an older brother or sister, and they in turn from some other person who may have become somewhat more advanced.

In my directions to the teachers, I discountenanced corporal punishment. Other means were resorted to, which, while sparing instructors, pupils and parents many unpleasant emotions, have produced, I think I may say without exception, the most gratifying results. Indeed, I do not know of a single instance in which corporal punishment was inflicted upon any of the scholars since the commencement of the schools, and no incident has occurred to mar the most perfect harmony. Each scholar was given to understand, that perfect or faulty recitations, good or bad conduct, attention or

inattention to studies, regular or irregular attendance, etc., would be noted, at the close of each day, in a book kept by the teacher for that purpose. Whoever received more than a certain number of bad marks, or less than a certain number of good ones, lost all right to receive of the premiums which were to be distributed at each examination. The examinations were generally attended by all the parents and the clergyman of the parish in which they were holden, and their presence together with the bestowal of premiums thus dispensed produced a happy and visible effect. I am aware that some friends of education are opposed to the conferring of premiums, but in my opinion, thus arranged, almost, perhaps every cause, for feelings of envy, rivalry and distrust, among the associated pupils, was removed. At any rate, I considered the benefits to far counterbalance the evils. A reward thus gained was not a victory over a fellow, but over one's self, and while confidence was reposed in the teacher, there were no chances for the nurturing of those unkindly feelings, that so often enervate and deaden the better nature of the youthful heart. Certain it is, that cases in which scholars, as a whole, have made greater improvement than these, during the same time, are rarely found. This fact has been remarked by several gentlemen from the Provinces of Canada and New Brunswick, as well as by some from our own State, who have favored me with their attendance at some of my visits. The causes for this may be found in the novelty of the matter—in the first opportunity for education under the laws of the State, in the interest manifested by parents, and in the age of the children, few being younger than seven years.

It is proper to observe, that books have not been the sole means of instruction. Frequent oral teachings have been productive of great benefit.

It is also very gratifying to remark, that the utmost attention to personal neatness has been manifested by each and every pupil.

The parents have in general rendered every possible aid to the efforts of the superintendent, and very effective assistance has been received at the hands of the clergymen of the three parishes.

In the annexed account will be noticed a credit to the State of

\$6·25, from two gentlemen residing on the north side of the river. Four of their children attended at these schools, but were not received without the consent of the inhabitants of the district, nor until all upon our own territory in said district were accommodated. The money thus had was put into the fund for said schools.

It is worthy of notice, that the government of the Province of New Brunswick commissioned an agent, in the course of the past summer, to visit the French settlement of Madawaska, included in their jurisdiction, for the purpose of seeking information, and reporting upon the proper measures of adoption for the establishment of schools therein. It is supposed, the measure will be carried into effect, during the present year.

It becomes my duty to speak of future prospects, and to express an opinion in regard to the propriety of certain regulations. The inhabitants of this settlement cherish the hope, that their wants may be favorably regarded, and that assistance may be again granted them. They conceive, and the undersigned concurs with them, that, by the continuation of aid for another year, they would be so far advanced in an acquaintance with the school system of the State, as to be able to arrange and conduct their own schools, throughout the entire settlement, with the additional advantage of fitting native teachers, who, at the expiration of that time, would be capable of instructing.

I noticed in a former report, that several sites had been generously offered for school houses. The inhabitants are willing and anxious to build good and sufficient buildings upon these lots. The timber for one is already hauled and hewn, and that for another is in course of preparation. With some incentive, no doubt is had that several will be built in the commencement of the Spring. It is really to be hoped, that when they are being erected, care will be had that they may be constructed with reference to the comfort and health of the pupils, in order that the diseases and deformities, so often contracted in the school room, by reason even of faulty desks and benches, be avoided. A regard to this matter will produce no additional labor or expense, and the amount of suffering thus spared, or the good thus done, cannot be estimated.

In regard to the further establishment of schools in Madawaska, it is to be said, a commencement has been made and we trust upon a proper basis. Should the legislature in its wisdom decide upon a continuance of appropriation, without doubt, the benefits already resulting will be much increased. In view of this, I would suggest that there are twelve districts, in which schools with an average number of thirty scholars could be located. These could be continued five months under an appropriation of eighteen hundred dollars.

In computing the expenditure of this mission, travel is an item of no small moment, (as to distance and inconvenience of conveyance,) when it is borne in mind, that this is a settlement extending eighty five miles in length.

In some of these schools, where the scholars would be mostly young, female teachers could be employed at greater advantage than males. To say nothing of the diminution of expense by such an arrangement, while by nature they are so happily fitted to direct and fashion the infant mind, their presence and example in the settlement might produce essential good.

It is to be hoped, that the school books which may be selected for use here will be chosen with care and discrimination, and that uniformity may be regarded in the choice.

Great difficulty was experienced, in the commencement of my labors, in convincing parents, that the study of the English language would prove of as immediate benefit to their children as the French. Nevertheless, as has been noticed, a very considerable number attended to it alone, and some to the two languages. At the last examination it was found, that nearly all of those, who had made the English alone their study, by dint of self-application after school hours, with the aid of an *occasional* word from the teacher, could read the French nearly as well as the English. They, being able to read English, learned their native tongue by themselves, without much difficulty, while such as studied the French only, were unable to acquire a knowledge of the English, without the *constant* assistance of the instructor.

This fact having been noticed by all, will have a tendency to

incite the youth generally to the English study—which is much to be desired, in order that they may the more readily be brought to a knowledge of our institutions and privileges, and, by a comparison with those of other countries, learn truly to prize the genius of the American republic, now their foster mother.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully, &c.,

JAMES C. MADIGAN.

January 30, 1845.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, Feb. 4, 1845.

Referred to the committee on education, and 700 copies ordered to be printed, for the use of the legislature.

JAMES O. L. FOSTER, *Secretary.*