

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# FORTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE.

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HOUSE.

No. 39.

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## STATEMENT OF FACTS

IN REGARD TO

## WILTON ACADEMY.

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Wilton Academy Corporation received their charter in 1866, and in the spring of that year the organization was completed by the election of a Board of Trustees and other necessary officers. Subscription papers were opened and in a short time our citizens had subscribed nearly three thousand dollars towards the erection of a suitable Academy building. A most excellent and convenient lot of land was obtained on which was standing what was known as the Union Meeting-House, which was included in the purchase.

It was first contemplated to repair this house, and to remodel it as it stood; it being supposed that its size and shape could be made to answer the purpose for which it was intended. It was thought that three thousand dollars would be sufficient to complete the building, and that the citizens of Wilton would be able to accomplish this work. On further investigation the Trustees became satisfied that in order to meet the wants of the inhabitants of that large section of country, who would look to this institution for its privileges and benefits, it would be necessary to enlarge the building, and its length was therefore extended from fifty to seventy feet, and raised twelve feet, incurring a much larger outlay than was at first contemplated.

The lower story furnishes one of the best school-rooms in the State, capable of accommodating two hundred scholars. One hundred and twenty seats and desks are in place ready for use.

There are also provided suitable and convenient recitation rooms, six in number, closets, &c., with a hall above, forty-two by fifty-eight feet, well finished and furnished, the whole warmed by furnaces in the basement, where there is also convenient room for the storage of fuel.

The structure, with its fixtures, has cost nearly nine thousand dollars. The citizens of Wilton have come up nobly to the work, and with but little assistance from abroad, have raised and paid five thousand dollars, leaving an indebtedness of a little over three thousand eight hundred dollars to be provided for. Temporary relief has been obtained by a mortgage on the property to certain persons who have advanced three thousand dollars. The mortgage was dated May 15th, 1868, the notes given on two years' time, with interest annually; a foreclosure will therefore take place next May, unless funds can be raised to pay the interest that will then become due.

The school has been in operation two years and a half, and the average attendance has been about 120. It is confidently believed that when the school is permanently established and properly endowed there will be an average attendance of one hundred and fifty to two hundred pupils at each term.

The building is finely located, on a slight eminence, just on the border of and overlooking the village and a large portion of the town, while in the distance and in full view are Old Blue, Saddle-Back and Bald Mountains, a landscape beautiful and interesting.

Wilton village is situated on the Androscoggin Railroad, eight miles from Farmington, its northern terminus, contains about five hundred inhabitants, and two churches with Sabbath schools of an average attendance of two hundred scholars.

We mention this as an indication of good society, unusually free from intemperance, profanity, and kindred vices, which often lead youth astray. Wilton Academy takes the place of the Farmington Academy, which has been converted into one of the State Normal Schools. To more fully understand the claims of the former upon the State, a brief history of the latter becomes necessary.

Farmington Academy was chartered in 1807; and in 1812, the first school building was completed and the Institution put in operation. From that time until changed into a Normal school, a term of over fifty years, it was cherished as a Franklin County Institution, of which the people were justly proud. In 1811 the State of Massachusetts granted in aid of the same, a half town-

ship of land, but this was not made available until 1822, at which time it was disposed of for about \$2000, mainly to pay debts that had previously accrued. In 1850, the legislature of this State made an additional grant of a half township, which was sold for \$2000. Under the law of 1863, this Academy was changed to a State Normal School, and in 1867, the entire Academy property valued by the best judges at \$13,000, was conveyed to the State by the Trustees.

This included the new brick building erected by the trustees, at a cost of about \$8200, which absorbed their accumulated fund of \$4900, and created a debt. The conveyance was, however, made subject to this condition, that the State should pay the debt of the Academy, amounting to \$3,600 which the property had been mortgaged to secure.

From the facts stated it will be seen that the account between the State and Franklin county, on educational matters stands thus: Aid from Massachusetts, \$2000; from Maine, \$2000; debt paid by the State, \$3600; total amount \$7600. Value of property conveyed to the State, \$13,000. Balance between the amount received by the county and that conveyed to the State, \$5400.

If therefore the State shall now aid Wilton Academy in the sum of \$5000, she will then lack \$400 of settling the account; while in, perhaps, all other sections or counties she has contributed generously to the support of similar institutions, without reward, only in the education of those who are to develop her future greatness. This claim is therefore based, not simply on the ground of liberality, equality, or the future educational interests, welfare and prosperity of the county and State; but upon the principle of fair dealing in dollars and cents as between man and man.

We have thus given you in a few words a partial academical history of Franklin county. We might present other, and the very strongest reasons why the State should come to the rescue of this much needed Franklin County Institution. She cannot afford to let so large and respectable a portion of her citizens suffer so great a calamity, as to be deprived of this much needed means of education.

Rev. Mr. Burnham who was Preceptor of Farmington Academy from 1849 to 1859, says the attendance was never less than one hundred at any term during that time, and frequently reaching

one hundred and fifty or sixty. He also states that about one thirteenth part of all the students who entered Bowdoin College in the ten years were fitted at this institution, besides others who entered at Waterville and other places. Among them are many of the present able men of the State, one of whom stands now at the head of the educational interests of Maine.

Farmington Academy, and Wilton Academy its successor, are the only Institutions of the kind that have ever existed in Franklin county, which in 1860, had over 20,000 inhabitants. There are none outside its borders, southerly within twenty miles, while easterly and westerly the distance would be ten to twenty miles greater.

Franklin county is an agricultural community, with but one village that enjoys the benefit of graded schools. Few districts draw an amount of money necessary for a length of term sufficient to educate the scholars, up to that standard, desirable by all, and being thus debarred the privilege enjoyed by the more populous and wealthy portions of the State, they come to you asking aid to enable them to give their children an education befitting the stations that by nature they are qualified to fill.

Grant the prayer of the petitioners by passing this resolve and the Institution will continue and shed its blessed influence far and near; refuse to do so, and it is gone from us forever.

EDWIN R. FRENCH,	<i>Senator.</i>
LEONARD F. GREEN,	} <i>Representatives</i> <i>from</i> <i>Franklin County.</i>
JOHN C. WHEELER,	
M. A. PHILLIPS,	
JOHN McLAIN,	
W. L. DAGGETT,	

## STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }  
February 12, 1870. }

Ordered to be printed.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk.*