

CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS
IN NEBRASKA

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THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE COLLEGE
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PREVIEW

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LINCOLN, 1914. *h*

UMI Number: EP32352

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History of Certification of Teachers.

A common school system of Nebraska was established by an act of the territorial legislature approved March 16, 1855. By this act the territorial Librarian was constituted Superintendent of Public Instruction and provision was made for a County Superintendent who was to be elected every two years. One of the chief duties of the County Superintendent was that of examining all persons offering themselves as teachers, and of issuing certificates to those found qualified, and of revoking certificates for cause. No one else was authorized to examine and issue certificates, no requirement was made as to branches to be included in the examination, and no certificate issued was good for more than one year.

The act of 1855, with amendments of 1856, was repealed by the legislature in 1858 and a new law enacted, which provided for a Territorial Commissioner of Common Schools to be elected at the territorial election for the term of two years. In place of the County Superintendent it made provision for a County Board of School Examiners to be appointed by the probate judge of each county. This board consisted of three members and was

empowered to examine applicants and issue certificates. No one could be employed in the primary common school unless found qualified in orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and English grammar. In 1861 the office of Commissioner of Common Schools was consolidated with that of Territorial Auditor and he was authorized to perform the duties of both offices.

In the revision and reenaction of the territorial laws in 1866 the legislature provided for a change from the board of three examiners, appointed by the probate judge, to one examiner who was appointed by the board of county commissioners for a term of two years. He examined applicants and issued certificates to those qualified in the six branches requisite to teach in the primary common schools, and in the additional branches necessary to teach in the common schools of higher grade. The examiner could revoke a certificate for sufficient cause, and he was allowed to charge a fee of \$1.00 for each certificate issued. Previous to this the law does not provide for any fee for a teacher's certificate.

By an act of the state legislature approved June 20, 1867, a state normal school was established

at Peru, Nebraska. The Board of Education having charge of this institution was authorized to grant certificates on the completion of twenty-two weeks' attendance and the possession of the learning and other qualifications necessary to teach a good school. These certificates were valid throughout the state and for the time and in the branches stated in the certificate. By the supplemental act of 1871 the certificate of the principal of the normal school, as to qualifications to teach, was made to supersede the necessity for further examination or other certificate. This law continued in force for ten years.

During the change from a territory to a state the school laws of 1866 continued in force until February 15, 1869 when the "Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction for the State of Nebraska" was approved. By this act the office of commissioner of common schools, as held by the auditor, was abolished and that of state superintendent of public instruction was created. At no time while Nebraska was a territory did the law authorize any one to pass on the qualifications of teachers except the county superintendent at first and later the county board of school examiners, and still later the county examiner. Indirectly the act of 1869

recognized the right of the state superintendent to grant certificates in these words, "No person shall be accounted a qualified teacher, within the meaning of the primary school law, who has not a certificate in force, or the certificate of the state superintendent of public instruction." But previous to 1876 there is no record of any certificates by the state superintendent.

In the place of the county examiner the act of 1869 established the office of county superintendent of public instruction and authorized him to grant certificates, in such forms as shall be prescribed by the state superintendent, and with the restriction that no certificate shall be granted to any person who shall not pass a satisfactory examination in orthography, reading, writing, grammar, geography, and arithmetic. Three grades of certificates were to be granted: a first year based on one year of successful teaching in Nebraska and valid in the county where granted for two years; a second grade, valid in like manner for one year; a third grade which in a specified precinct for not more than six months. No distinction was made as to the branches in which the applicant was required to pass examination.

Another important act of the legislature of

1869 led to the establishing of the city examining committee for the certification of teachers in cities. When Omaha became the territorial capital its citizens furnished the grounds and contributed a goodly sum of money for the erection of the building occupied by the different departments of the territorial government. After the seat of government was moved to Lincoln the state legislature, by the act of February 4, 1869, ceded to the people of Omaha the vacated grounds and buildings for educational purposes. This law provided for a board of regents of six members whose duty was to manage and control the high school, college, or other institution of learning to be established by the city of Omaha. Before the high school could be opened the legislature of 1871 passed an act which consolidated all the common school districts in the city, and with the high school, established the system of city schools for Omaha. The duties of the board of regents passed to the board of education. This board was given the power to appoint an examining committee and was forbidden to elect to a place as teacher in the Omaha schools any one who had not secured a certificate from this committee.

It was thought that the Omaha school act was

unconstitutional and to overcome this defect the legislature of 1873 reenacted its essential provisions in a general law governing schools in cities of the first class. The provision relative to the city examining committee was retained and the right to revoke its certificates was reserved to the city board of education. However, the act of February 25, 1875, organizing schools in cities of the second class, not only made no provision for a city examining committee but specifically required all teachers employed in cities of this class to present certificates in force granted by the county superintendent of public instruction, the state superintendent, or the state normal school.

The legislature of 1873 amended the law relative to county certificates. The third grade certificate was based on examination in the six required branches and made valid for six months in some special district. Not more than three third grade certificates could be granted to one person. The second grade certificate required examination in all third grade branches and in the history of the United States, blackboard drawing, and theory and art of teaching. This certificate was valid throughout the county where granted for a term of one year. The

first grade certificate included examination in all second grade subjects and in algebra, geometry, physiology, botany and natural philosophy. It was valid in the county in which it was granted and for a period of two years. Thus was established the idea of gradation in certificates based on additional academic requirements.

All the laws relating to the public schools were codified in 1881 and approved as a new "Act to establish a system of public schools in the state of Nebraska". This law defined a qualified teacher and enumerated the sources from which certificates could be obtained. It provided that a certificate could be revoked only by the authority granting it. Previous to this time no one but the county superintendent had power to revoke any teacher's certificate. The law defined the requirements for the various kinds and grades of certificates issued by (1) the county superintendent, (2) the city examining committee, (3) the state normal and (4) the state superintendent.

The county superintendent could endorse certificates from other counties not only in Nebraska but in other states. He could grant on examination three grades of certificates: The third grade, based on passing satisfactory examination in the 'six subjects' previously required

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to which were added physiology and English composition; the second grade, which included in addition to the third grade subjects examination in the history of the United States, civil government, bookkeeping, blackboard drawing, and theory and art of teaching; the first grade, which added algebra, geometry, botany, and natural philosophy to the second grade requirements. The third grade was valid for six months, the second for one year, and the first for two years.

State normal school certificates were of two kinds: The elementary, valid throughout the state for two years, was issued on completion of the common school course; the normal diploma, valid for three years, was granted on completion from the higher course. Two years of successful teaching after graduation, or three years before, entitled the student to an additional diploma good for life.

The examining committee of the board of education in cities of not less than 2000 population was authorized to grant certificates to teach in the schools of the city, and these certificates could be revoked by the board of education for sufficient cause.

The state superintendent could approve a diploma from a state normal school of another state. He could

grant, without further examination, a professional state certificate to a graduate of a college or university of good standing, provided the applicant held a first grade county certificate in this state. He could grant a professional state certificate to permanent teachers of high character, broad scholarship, and successful experience on passing examination in written arithmetic, United States history, reading and elocution, English grammar, common and physical geography with map drawing, mathematical geography and projection, school economy, physiology, algebra, natural philosophy, chemistry, composition and rhetoric, bookkeeping, plane and solid geometry, plane trigonometry, geology, zoology, botany, English literature, general history, logic, astronomy, civil government and school laws, history of education, and the theory and art of teaching.

During the sixteen years from 1881 to 1897 not many changes were made in the school laws. In 1885 the teaching of the effects of stimulants and narcotics was made obligatory and the granting of certificates forbidden to any one who had not passed a satisfactory examination in physiology and hygiene to that effect. That same year mathematical geography and projection, solid geometry,