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ADDRESS OF

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PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS,

BEFORE THE

State Teachers' Association,

AT

SHERMAN, TEXAS,

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 1901.

**ADDRESS OF WILLIAM L. PRATHER, PRESIDENT OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, BEFORE THE STATE
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.**

DELIVERED WEDNESDAY NIGHT, JUNE 26, 1901.

Members of the State Teachers' Association, Ladies and Gentlemen:

When four years ago I bade the representatives of the State Teachers' Association of Texas welcome to Waco, my home, I little thought that one day I should come as a member of this same body of earnest workers, to be welcomed to the homes and hospitality of another city of Texas. Recognizing the fact that these teachers represent the intellectual and moral forces which are shaping the destiny of Texas, I feel that by reason of their high vocation and their achievements they, of right, are welcome everywhere. There is no higher calling than that of the true teacher. The grand opportunity of inspiring, guiding, and encouraging the young mind and heart in the pathway of truth, as it traverses with all the confidence and buoyancy of youth the fenceless fields of thought, is a privilege equalled only by the mighty responsibility it imposes. Never in the history of the world was there committed to a band of teachers a more solemn trust than the training of the rising generation of Texans to meet the duties and issues of the new century. I believe that in point of talent, inherent strength, and independence of character, the population of Texas is unsurpassed upon the face of the globe. When to the race of heroes who founded this Empire of the West, was added that noble increment of the very flower of Southern manhood and womanhood from every State of the South as a result of the civil war, (and this was supplemented by those enterprising spirits from the North and East and from beyond the seas, who come seeking broader fields for the employment of their restless energies), we find gathered within the borders of Texas a heterogeneous population possessing the highest elements of individual excellence. They need only the blending influence of a common education, and the welding power of lofty patriotism, to make a homogenous people whose combined strength will deliver itself with momentous power upon the mighty problems of the opening century. Great as is our territory and the variety and wealth of our natural resources, greater still is the capacity of our people. We are ceasing somewhat to talk of our broad acres and our cattle upon a thousand hills, and are coming to dwell rather upon the intellectual and spiritual life of our people, and to cast up its enormous potentialities for the future of our State. We are learning to discern that the greatness of a people lies in their history and their character, and not in their lands and their railroads; in what they are, rather than in what they possess.

In fixing and maintaining the standards and ideals of this great people, The University of Texas, the child of our Fathers, born of their wisdom, endowed with their wealth and baptized with their love, must play a leading part. Texans were the first among the people of the world to declare that the failure of the government to provide for the education of its children, although possessed of boundless resources in its public domain, was a ground for revolution. In that grand Declaration of Texas Independence, which on the second of March each year, should be read and commented upon in every public school in Texas, our Fathers declared, "it is an axiom in political science that unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty or the capacity for self-government."

This clarion note of liberty, clearer than was ever sounded in the Declaration of '76, was defiantly uttered in the face of an invading foe vastly superior in numbers and equipment. Its authors boldly declared to the civilized world, in the conclusion of that great declaration of human rights, that, "Conscious of the rectitude of our intentions, we fearlessly and confidently commit the issue to the Supreme Arbiter of the destinies of nations."

Fifteen days after that declaration was made, the first Constitution of the Republic of Texas was signed, wherein it was provided: "It shall be the duty of Congress, as soon as circumstances will permit, to provide by law for a general system of education," and Texas sent forth her statesmen from the council chamber to enforce upon the field of carnage her demand for the education of her children. This declaration in behalf of education is without a precedent in the history of nations. It was no idle declamation, but the utterance of a profound economic and philosophic truth. The framers of that declaration of advanced human rights, were scholars and statesmen who had studied and interpreted wisely the great lessons of human history. After the cruel butcheries of Goliad and the Alamo had been avenged upon the field of San Jacinto, and the smoke of battle had cleared away, President Lamar, himself a scholar, a patriot, and a statesman, and to whom perhaps the cause of State education in Texas owes more than to any other man, sent his first message to Congress in 1839, urging the establishment of a general system of education in obedience to the command of the first Constitution of the Republic of Texas.

A few sentences from that striking message will not be out of place here: "If we desire," said President Lamar, "to establish a republican government upon a broad and permanent basis, it will become our duty to adopt a comprehensive and well-regulated system of mental and moral culture. * * * It is admitted by all, that cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, is the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire. The influence of education in the moral world is like light in the physical, rendering luminous what was before obscure. * * * Without its aid, how perilous and insufficient would be the deliberations of a government like ours! How ignoble and useless its legislation for all the purposes of happiness! How fragile and insecure its liberties! * * * Cultivation is as necessary to the supply of rich intellectual and moral fruits, as are the labors of the husbandman to bring forth the valuable productions of the earth. * * * Lose not the present auspicious opportunity to provide for literary institutions, with an influence commensurate with our future destinies. * * * Our young Republic has been formed by a Spartan spirit. Let it progress and ripen into Roman firmness, and Athenian gracefulness and wisdom. Let those names which have been inscribed on the standard of her national glory, be found also on the page of her history, associated with that profound and enlightened policy which is to make our country a bright link in that chain of free States which will some day encircle and unite in harmony the American continent. * * *

"The present is a propitious moment to lay the foundation of a great moral and intellectual edifice which will in after ages be hailed as the chief ornament and blessing of Texas. A suitable appropriation of lands

for the purpose of general education, can be made at this time without inconvenience to the government or the people; but defer it until the public domain shall have passed from our hands, and the uneducated youths of Texas will constitute the living monument of our neglect. To commence a liberal system of education a few years hence may be attended with many difficulties. The imposition of taxes will be necessary. Sectional jealousies will spring up; and the whole plan may be defeated in the conflict of selfishness; or be suffered to languish under a feeble and inefficient support. A liberal endowment which will be adequate to the general diffusion of a good rudimental education in every district of the Republic, and to the establishment of a university where the highest branches of science may be taught, can now be effected without the expenditure of a single dollar. Postpone it a few years, and millions will be necessary to accomplish the great design."

These were words of prophetic wisdom. Not infrequently is it said of the Texas Fathers that "they builded wiser than they knew," but no man who has studied their history or is familiar with their achievements will make this statement. They were wise and great men, and, freed from the shackles of ancient customs and prejudices, their keen foresight penetrated the mighty future and saw the possibilities, when a race of free men, "heirs of all the ages and foremost in the files of time," should possess this goodly land with its boundless resources.

That message of President Lamar to Congress was a trumpet call to duty, and nobly did they respond by passing an act providing for a general system of education, and set apart from the virgin soil of Texas four leagues of land for the establishment of an academy in each county, then or thereafter organized, and fifty leagues for the establishment of two colleges or universities. The bill, as reported by the Educational Committee, gave twenty leagues of land "for the establishment and endowment of two colleges or universities," which were "hereafter to be created, one to be established in the eastern and the other in the western part of Texas."

On consideration of the bill, "twenty" was changed to "fifty" leagues, and the language, "one to be established in the eastern and the other in the western part of Texas," was stricken out by Congress, leaving the phraseology "two colleges or universities," until 1858.

Senator Louis T. Wigfall, in his report as chairman of Committee on State Affairs to the 7th Legislature, in which it was recommended that one university be established, states that his "Committee is informed upon good authority that the appropriation to two institutions was not made with a view to establish two for young men, and thus make the institutions sectional. The idea was suggested, but was indignantly frowned down by the patriots of that day. The word 'two' was retained, that one might be established for each of the sexes, should it afterwards be deemed expedient."

Thus we see that the Texas Fathers considered the rights of women to higher education even at that early day, and when the act was finally passed in 1881, organizing the university, I glory in the fact that it was there written that women should be admitted to its halls upon equal terms with men. They are the makers and keepers of our homes and the hope of our rapidly advancing civilization.

That report of Senator Wigfall clearly indicates the purpose of our Fathers in providing for a university. It states: "It is deemed expe-

dient to dispense with the faculty of theology, for the obvious reason that its establishment would involve the necessity of deciding upon the orthodoxy of the different sects into which the religious community is divided. All are tolerated and protected. None can be encouraged, or established by law. It is believed, however, that all will be greatly benefited by the establishment of a university. * * * The religious sects, by establishing in the vicinity of the university, a theological college, in which is to be taught its peculiar tenets, will be saved the expense of employing professors of languages, history and sciences, which are necessary to be studied and understood by those who are to expound the Scriptures. This great advantage, it is believed, will soon be seen and appreciated by the different religious sects in our country. Churches will rapidly be built up near the university, and thus, without any invidious interference on the part of the State, ample opportunities will be offered to all who attend it, to worship God after the dictates of their own consciences.

By establishing a university instead of a college, great advantage will be offered to all, both the rich and the poor. No particular course of study will be prescribed; no procrustean rule established; no impracticable efforts will be made to prepare all for every pursuit in life, but each may be fitted for any he may desire. * * *

To establish even one university, which will be of any practical benefit to the people, the outlay must be large. What is called economy is often extravagance in disguise. Parsimony is always so. * * * 'Niggardliness is not good husbandry.' State pride forbids the idea of establishing an institution not commensurate with the vast resources of the State. The lectures should be free to all citizens of the State. No monopoly of learning should be secured to wealth. The funds we are appropriating were purchased by the blood of the heroes of our revolution. * * * Your Committee would regret to see the descendants of one who perished at Goliad or in the Alamo, excluded from an institution of learning, founded by the State from the very fund furnished by his blood, into which the son of a fortunate land speculator could buy his own way. * * * Texas should be a unit. No friendships are so lasting as those formed in early youth. No ties so binding as those of college life. The chum is a brother, not of accident, but of choice. Then let us bring our youth from the East and the West, from the North and the South, and educating them at one common institution, teach them to feel that they are Texans. When their hearts are most susceptible to impressions allow them to form friendships which will last with life. When they meet upon the great theatre of action let them meet like brothers. Establish two institutions and you will already have formed two States. Those who have been educated out of a common fund will meet in your legislative halls like strangers, they will feel like strangers, they will act like strangers. * * * It was not for the East or the West that the blood of our patriot heroes was shed in 1836. It was for Texas that they bled, her independence, her glory and prosperity."

The preamble to the act of 1858 establishing one university, recites that from the earliest time it has been the cherished design of the people of the Republic and the State that there should be established within her limits an institution of learning for the instruction of her youths in the higher branches of learning and in the liberal arts and sciences, and to be so endowed, supported and maintained as to place within the reach of her people, whether rich or poor, opportunities for acquiring a thorough

education. Also that this institution should be the means whereby the attachment of the young men of the State to the interests, the institutions, the rights of the State and the liberties of the people might be encouraged and increased. The preamble, which accompanied the article in our present Constitution, providing, "The Legislature shall, as soon as practicable, establish, organize and provide for the maintenance, support and direction of a university of the first class," when introduced in the constitutional convention of 1875, recited that "From the earliest period of Texas history the people have, through their representatives, repeatedly expressed a cherished purpose to establish within the State an institution of learning of the highest order, * * * to place within the reach of her sons, whether rich or poor, an opportunity of acquiring in Texas a thorough education, in the classics and in all the branches of the liberal arts and sciences, * * *" and that "such an institution will bring together a large number of young Texans in a common field of continuous intellectual labor, thereby tending to encourage a love of Texas, her history and her institutions."

From the foregoing historical statements, it is seen that Texas, from the earliest days of the Republic, has clearly announced and steadfastly adhered to the wisdom of a system of education by the State, and this is now the fixed and irrevocable policy of the commonwealth. At first the State's provision was only for the indigent, but later the blessings of education came through our system of free schools, alike to the rich and poor. Provision for a State system of education has been wisely imbedded in every constitution of the Republic and of the State. Our fathers made munificent appropriations for public free education, and wisely determined that the permanent endowment by means of our lands should constitute a perpetual fund, the annual income from which should be available for all time, to supplement the contributions of each succeeding generation for free education. The people of Texas have practically dedicated one-half their public domain to the cause of education, and where can a parallel be found for such liberality in the history of nations? Every child born upon Texas soil, as his birthright, shares in this inheritance for free education. It is a priceless heritage for which the blood of heroes was shed. It comes as a blessed benefaction to lighten the burdens of taxation to each succeeding generation in Texas, and will go on forever.

Every child who is a beneficiary of this public school fund, should know its history and be taught the obligations he owes to the State and the community which provides for his education. He should be made to understand that benefits and privileges always impose reciprocal obligations. As Robert Browning wrote amid scenes famous in his own land: "Here and here hath England helped me—how can I help England?" Oh, teachers of the public schools, point each pupil to this glorious past and demand of him that he will help Texas! I feel that this heroic past is the one thing we must not let slip in the education of our youth. These are the bonds which weld a people and give them unity and power. The record of Texas is unique. Texas *first*, among the English speaking race, abolished imprisonment for debt; in the administration of remedial justice in the courts, Texas *first* abolished all distinctions between law and equity, and gave the right of trial by jury in cases in equity as well as in law; Texans *first* established the true equality of woman with man, by recognizing her separate and community rights of prop-

erty; Texans *first* evolved for the protection of the family the great idea of the homestead and exemption laws; and, finally crowned these everlasting triumphs by laying broad and deep the foundation for the free education of the people. Texas alone among the States of this Union achieved her independence single handed; Texas alone had a separate national existence. My countrymen, it is something to have a history all your own; and such a glorious history! "Athens had her Marathon, and Sparta her Thermopylae; but San Jacinto rivaled the one, and the Alamo excelled the other; and both legends blaze proudly on the stainless escutcheon of Texas."

Our safety as a people demands a wise and vigorous effort to educate the masses to an intelligent appreciation of the blessings which we as freemen enjoy. Teach the children of Texas from the primary grades in your public schools to your University, to honor and love the flag of their State, because it represents the government which has given them an education as an inheritance. On Independence Day of each year, let the flag of our fathers, the Lone Star flag of Texas, be raised upon every school house throughout this mighty commonwealth, as an object lesson, proclaiming to mankind that in our schools abideth our hope, and that here are the fortresses of our strength as a free people. On all public occasions at the University of Texas the Lone Star flag proudly floats from the eastern and western towers of the building, while above them from the central tower, grandly waves the glorious stars and stripes as the emblem of our nation. To this great center of learning, planted at the capital of the State, and to our public schools, we must largely look in the future for that stalwart and vitalizing American sentiment which shall not only withstand, but shall quickly transform and assimilate the uninstructed foreign population now flocking to our shores. I do not mean to say that private and denominational schools will not do their full share in cultivating this patriotic spirit—indeed, if the influence of the illustrious spirits of a Mood and a Burleson still lives, I know it will be done; but it is pre-eminently the business of State schools to guard with jealous care the ideals that gave her birth, and by which her sovereign power is regulated and perpetuated.

A free State university at the head of a State system of free public education is an evolution of the best western thought, and is the noblest civic achievement of the commonwealth. The State university should be the great central institution of learning, which, like the well regulated clock of some grand old cathedral, should furnish a standard by which all other time pieces are regulated. As the planets revolve round the sun and borrow their light and lustre from this great luminary, so the subordinate schools should derive their culture, their standards and tone from the University. The true university is a perpetual fountain of pure and noble ideals. As the University grows, its magnetic life should permeate every district school and be an inspiration and blessing to all good learning. There should ever be the closest and most harmonious relations between the University and all the educational agencies of the State. The system of elementary and secondary education should culminate in the University. The University is dependent upon the secondary schools for the preliminary training of its students, and these schools are dependent upon the University for their standards and ideals. Neither can dispense with the other any more than the head can do without the body, or the body without the head. The efficiency of the sec-

ondary schools and of the University can be greatly increased by a closer correlation of their work and a judicious limitation of their respective spheres of teaching. It was the original purpose of our fathers to establish the county academy for intermediate instruction between the common schools and the University, and for this purpose the Republic and State gave the four leagues of land to each county. The city high school during the past twenty years has sprung up to fill this need. Its standards, and courses of study depend largely upon the local educational authorities, and thus lack of uniformity becomes a serious impediment to progress in education, and necessarily results in great waste of energy upon the part of teachers, and of money on the part of the people. If the State permitted the tax assessor and collector of each county to inaugurate his own method for levying and collecting taxes it would soon be without any system and bankruptcy would follow. Under our Constitution the Legislature is charged with the duty of providing an efficient system of education for the people, and it would seem to be the part of wisdom that some efficient instrumentality should be created by it, which should devise a more closely correlated, effective and economical system.

The University, upon request, has sent the members of its Faculty throughout the State to visit, inspect and affiliate these high schools until now ninety-eight schools are affiliated with the University. The terms of affiliation require that the school shall not only attain but shall maintain certain standards prescribed by the University, in order that its graduates may be admitted to the University without examination.

The purpose of the State in assuming control of the education of its children is to prepare them for all the duties of citizenship. In a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," the people must be educated. Intelligence and virtue must be enthroned at the ballot box of a free people. The right of the government to tax the rich for the education of the poor, rests upon the fact that the government by the people must be administered by the rich and poor alike for the protection of property, liberty and life. This is the corner stone upon which free education rests. This is the foundation of true democracy. If it be true that "the arrival of democracy is the fact of our time which overshadows all other facts," the very incarnation of true democracy is found in the modern State university. A university for the people without distinction of rank is the regenerating thought of the new world. The State university is the child of democracy. It is today the living embodiment of democratic ideals, and is a powerful factor in promoting their progress. History teaches that the progress of the race is toward human freedom, and because there is an indissoluble connection between intelligence and liberty, the people have decreed that institutions established to preserve, disseminate and advance the intelligence of all classes and conditions of men, shall be controlled by the whole people. It would be contrary to the spirit of the age, it would violate the doctrines for which, in America, money and toil and blood have been lavishly poured out, to entrust to any form of aristocracy or to any partisan, individual or corporate control, the education of our whole people. The State school, like the State itself, must be free from the domination of sectarian or political influence, in order that all the youth, regardless of church or party name, may enjoy the inalienable right of a liberal education. The University of Texas encourages and stimulates true

democracy by recognizing the values of all studies that have reached the plane of the liberal arts, by its efforts to improve the public schools by maintaining a school in which men and women are trained for really professional service in teaching, and by opening its summer school and giving the use of its laboratories and equipment to the teachers of the State that their usefulness and power may be increased. It shows a democratic spirit in the freedom of teaching granted to members of its faculties. This spirit is, furthermore, manifested in the government of its students, who are taught to be self-regulating, and self-respecting, and are allowed the largest personal liberty, consistent with the rights and interests of their fellows, but always subject to law. While hazing, hoodlumism, loafing, etc., are excluded, all the freedom that an honorable person desires, is granted. Of the 815 students matriculated at the Main University during the past session, 268 earned the money to pay their way, 47 earned it in part, and 146 did work while at the University to support themselves.

In all its work the University, like every other democratic institution, is the ally of true religion. All learning relates either to the phenomena of this world, which is God's world, or to phenomena pertaining to man, who is God's creature; and, therefore, all true learning is sacred, and its spiritual influence is questioned by none but the feeble-minded, or those who, for selfish reasons, are willing to trifle with the truth. The University is, of course, non-sectarian; but while it inevitably comes into conflict with superstition and bigotry, true religion will never regard it with fear, for true religion has nothing to fear; on the contrary, has all to gain from the propagation of truth. Has not the greatest religious teacher of the world said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"?

My friends, the destiny of this State is largely in the hands of those 16,000 teachers who have buckled on their armor and are going forth to train the 750,000 boys and girls of Texas. This is a grand army of progress whose numbers will swell, whose usefulness will increase, and whose triumphs will multiply with each succeeding year of the new century.

If your labors shall be hallowed by a supreme love for Texas, her history, her people and her institutions, and can be free from that dwarfing selfishness which destroys patriotism and dries up the fountains of love for learning and humanity, no foresight can predict the future of this glorious commonwealth. May the heroic spirit of our fathers, who in every sacrifice they made, in every gift they bequeathed to the cause of education, unselfishly planned, not for themselves, but for all the generations which should follow them, descend upon you and stir your hearts to glorious deeds.

"Our Fathers' faith
Let us keep 'till death;
Their fame in its cloudless splendor;
As men who stand
For their mother-land,
And die, but never surrender."

