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Terry L. Birdwhistell

University of Kentucky, tlbird@uky.edu

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Divided We Fall: State College and the Normal School Movement in Kentucky, 1880-1910

Divided We Fall: State College and the Normal School Movement in Kentucky, 1880-1910

by Terry L. Birdwhistell

As the 1905 school year opened, James K. Patterson faced his most serious challenge since overseeing the establishment of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Kentucky as an independent institution more than a quarter of a century earlier. For nearly three decades the elderly, aloof, and somewhat cantankerous educator had been recognized as the leading spokesperson for public higher education in the Commonwealth. A teacher in Kentucky since before the Civil War, Patterson had been on the original faculty of the A&M College when it was founded in 1866 as part of Kentucky University. President Patterson had developed a reputation for toughness, if not stubbornness, and State College virtually consumed his life. Even though the college historically had been underfunded, and perhaps underappreciated, Patterson believed that State College was the true hope for Kentucky's educational future. But now Patterson found himself embroiled in a debate over teacher education that ironically threatened to fragment the state's education dollars as new institutions were created to train the teachers so desperately needed for Kentucky's growing number of common schools.¹

In 1878, the Agricultural and Mechanical College separated from Kentucky University and was chartered by the General Assembly as the state's only public institution for higher education. Under the leadership of Patterson, the A&M College was offered land for its campus on Lexington's south side in a fifty-eight-acre park. Two years later, the General Assembly passed

The author serves as university archivist and director of the Oral History Program at the University of Kentucky. He wishes to thank Dr. Richard Angelo, chair of the Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation Department at the University of Kentucky, for first suggesting this topic and reviewing the manuscript.

Photographs accompanying this essay appear courtesy of the Division of Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Library.

¹Mabel H. Pollitt, *A Biography of James K. Patterson* (Louisville, 1925), 83-187.



“The elderly, aloof, and somewhat cantakerous James K. Patterson was recognized as the leading spokesperson for public higher education in the Commonwealth.”

legislation creating a Normal Department at the A&M College, establishing “a course of instruction for irregular periods designed more particularly, but not exclusively, to qualify teachers for common or other schools.”²

By Patterson’s own account, attendance in the Normal Department at State College was “at first meager.” However,

²C. W. Hackensmith, “Out of Time and Tide: The Evolution of Education in Kentucky, The Beginnings Through the 1930’s,” *Bulletin of the Bureau of School Service* [College of Education, University of Kentucky] 43 (1970): 135-43; Moses Edward Ligon,

as the school year of 1880-81 advanced, enrollment in the Normal Department "grew to very respectable proportions." From the outset, President Patterson envisioned a Normal Department as part of the larger liberal college that would supply "the immediate necessities of the Common Schools" and that would, in addition, induce teachers whenever possible "to aim at something higher than proficiency in the branches required for the lowest grade certificate." Patterson explained in the State College catalog of 1880-81 that "the theory and practice of teaching goes hand in hand with instruction in the subjects taught. The pupil who graduates in the Normal School will not only know the subjects taught, but how to teach them to others."³

The establishment of the Normal Department opened the doors of State College to women. In the first year alone, forty-three women students enrolled in the A&M College for instruction in the Normal Department. The normal school legislation also provided for scholarships that included free tuition for one year to a student from each representative district. The scholarships were available to women and men students alike.⁴

During the first ten years of its existence, under the guidance of Professors Maurice Kirby (1880-87), J. R. Potter (1887-89), and Alexander Peterman (1889-91), the Normal Department went about the business of preparing teachers for work in the common schools of the state. As anticipated, the Normal Department had a significant impact on the growing enrollment at State

"A History of Public Education in Kentucky: A Study of the Development and Control of Public Education Based Upon the Constitutional Provisions and the Legislative Acts of the General Assembly," *ibid.* 14 (1942): 287; Edwin Smith, *The Rise of Teacher Training in Kentucky* (Nashville, 1932), 136; Ruth Osborne, *The College of Education, University of Kentucky* (Lexington, 1965), 6; *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Kentucky For the Two Years Beginning July 1, 1903, and Ending June 30, 1905* (Louisville, 1905), 100 (hereafter *Superintendent's Report*, [date, page]).

This article does not attempt to deal with African-American education in Kentucky between 1880 and 1910. In 1886, the General Assembly established the Kentucky State Normal School for Colored Persons. For a recent study of this subject see John Arthur Hardin, "Hope Versus Reality: Black Higher Education in Kentucky, 1904-1954" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989).

³*Annual Register of the State College of Kentucky: Statement of the Condition, Matriculates and Course of Study For The Collegiate Year 1880-1881, With The Announcements For 1881-1882* (Lexington, 1881), 8.

⁴Osborne, *The College of Education*, 7; President's Report, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, State College, June 5, 1905, 81 (hereafter *President's Report*, [date, page]).



"Professor Rurik Roark was ambitious and willing to be an advocate for teacher education, not only within State College, but throughout Kentucky and the United States." Portrait from Rothert, *A History of Muhlenberg County* (1913).

College. For students not prepared to enter college work, an academy was established that offered subcollege work to individuals desiring to qualify for enrollment. The academy was administered by President Patterson's brother, Walter, who had served as principal of several private academies in Kentucky before joining his brother at State College.⁵

Between 1889 and 1891, there were curricular changes within the Normal Department resulting in the development of two distinct courses of study. A one-year course was created in which elementary subjects were reviewed to prepare individuals to teach in the common schools. The second course of study required four years to complete and was designed for individuals desiring to teach at the high school level or those planning to become principals or superintendents. The degree offered for this coursework was the Bachelor of Pedagogy.⁶

⁵Ligon, "History of Public Education in Kentucky," 290-91.

⁶James F. Hopkins, *The University of Kentucky: Origins and Early Years* (Lexington, 1951), 210-11.

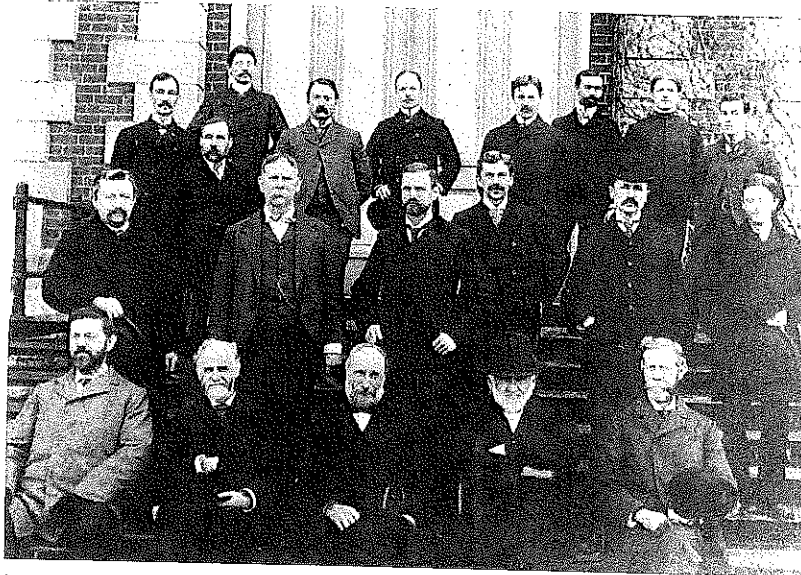
It is probably not coincidental that many changes were made in the Normal Department shortly after Rurik N. Roark joined the A&M faculty in 1889. A native of Greenville, Kentucky, Roark received his early education in the public schools of Greenville and in the Greenville Academy. He subsequently attended the National Normal School in Lebanon, Ohio, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1881. Roark then taught at National Normal for four years before returning to Kentucky to become principal of Glasgow School in Glasgow. He became dean of the Normal Department at State College in 1891. Professor Roark was aligned closely with the growing national normal school movement. Moreover, Professor Roark was ambitious and willing to be an advocate for teacher education, not only within State College, but throughout Kentucky and the United States.⁷

Enrollment in the Normal Department continued to grow during the 1890s. The Lexington *Daily Press* reported in January 1891 that "the State College is daily adding new names to her 'roll-call' and the Normal Department will soon be 'filled to overflowing,' as a hundred new pupils are looked for in a few days." In 1894, reporters for the Lexington *Daily Transcript* spoke of similar successes when they wrote, "Professor R. N. Roark, principal of the Normal Department of the State College, has received seventy-two new students since Christmas, twenty more than at this time last year, and new students are coming in every day."⁸ However, the good news of increasing enrollments only tended to overshadow the schism that was building between President Patterson and Professor Roark.

Even as an increasing number of State College students pursued work toward teacher certification, the relative status of the Normal Department within the college remained low. Most required courses, other than those specifically dealing with teaching method, were taken in the other departments throughout the college. In fact, there were no education courses offered for freshmen and sophomores, and only a very small number was available

⁷Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. (New York, 1936), 15: 643-44; Hopkins, *University of Kentucky*, 211; Ligon, "History of Public Education in Kentucky," 296; Otto A. Rothert, *A History of Muhlenberg County* (Louisville, 1913), 347-48.

⁸Lexington *Daily Press*, January 27, 1891; Lexington *Daily Transcript*, January 30, 1894.



The faculty of State College in 1894. By this time, "a generational and philosophical gulf" separated President Patterson (*front row, center*) and Professor Roark (*back row, third from right*).

during the last two years of college work. These factors caused Roark to become increasingly frustrated.⁹

Criticism of Patterson's attitude toward the Normal Department began to surface. Some believed the department was not accorded the status or the budget it deserved within the college. A similar dissatisfaction had existed in regard to agricultural instruction. Adding to the suspicion toward teacher education, however, was the personal antagonism between Roark and Patterson.¹⁰

J. T. Cotton Noe came to State College in 1906 as a member of the Normal Department faculty. He commented in his autobiography that Roark and Patterson "could not agree on many things concerning the conduct and the administration of this [normal] school. . . ." About the "considerable rivalry between Patterson and Roark," Noe recalled, "Roark had written several books which were popular, and he was an excellent speaker,"

⁹Hopkins, *University of Kentucky*, 212.

¹⁰Ligon, "History of Public Education in Kentucky," 290.



J.T. Cotton Noe joined the faculty of the Normal Department in 1906.

whereas "Patterson, though a great scholar, had written no books, but was considered a very able speaker. And it is said the President was jealous of Roark's popularity."¹¹

Moreover, there was a generational and philosophical gulf between Roark and Patterson. At the turn of the century, the aging Patterson stood in stark contrast to the forty-one-year-old Roark. Ironically, Roark was born in Greenville the same year that Patterson was teaching in the Greenville Academy. One professor allegedly remarked that "Patterson knew more dead people and fewer living ones than any other person he knew." Professor Noe summed up his impression of Patterson by concluding that

¹¹J. T. Cotton Noe, "The Years That Swiftly Sped," Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Library, 205-6.

the president "was a man of strong prejudices and narrow sympathies, but of tremendous force of character and indomitable will and determination."¹²

Patterson's supporters could be equally caustic about Roark. A friend of Patterson pronounced Roark a "regular snake in the grass" who should "go north of the Ohio river and join the Yankees whose methods he seems to admire so much."¹³ Over ten years in the making, the tension between Roark and Patterson erupted into a full-fledged public debate.

In his 1902 report to the board of trustees, Patterson reiterated his annual concern about enrollment. But 1902 was exceptional in that Patterson attributed the drop in enrollment to a decline in the number of students in the Normal Department. In what even for Patterson was an unusual personal public attack upon a member of his faculty, he expressed concern over Professor Roark's activities:

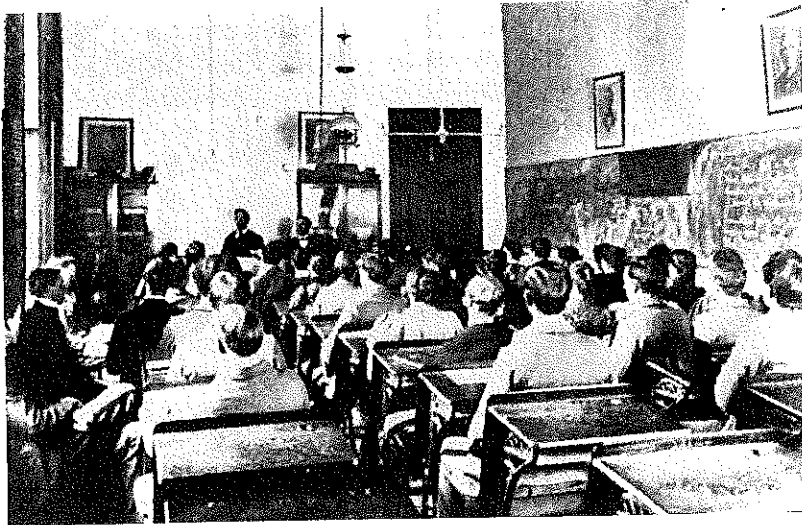
In this connection it may be proper to remark that for several years past the Normal Department has not grown *pari passu* with some of the other Departments in the College. It is not pushed as some of them are. The Dean of the Normal Course [Roark] is a man of rare ability and fitness for his work. His services are in great demand outside of Kentucky for the conduct of Teachers Institutes. He has held institutes during the summer session in states North and East and for the coming vacation he has engagements in Texas. While it is gratifying that his reputation procures him remunerative employment outside of the Commonwealth it is a matter of regret that during the period when patronage should be worked up at home his services are altogether lost to us. It is true that his time is his own and his services go where he is best paid. Still it is not less a matter of regret. I am not, be it understood, complaining of Professor Roark's disposition of his time. It is nevertheless a regrettable fact.¹⁴

Yet, Patterson was complaining about Roark's use of his time. Patterson could have added that during the same period Roark was also the president of Kentucky Correspondence College, a private school that offered courses in mathematics, English,

¹²*Ibid.*, 206-7.

¹³J. W. Newman to James K. Patterson, June 20, 1905, Box 15, June 1905, James K. Patterson Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Library (hereafter Patterson Papers).

¹⁴President's Report, June 3, 1902, 104.



The 1901 State College yearbook featured a photograph of Professor Roark in the classroom.

history, pedagogy, geography, and physiology. Roark operated the school from an office building in downtown Lexington.¹⁵ Roark's response to Patterson's charges began a public dispute between the two men that ultimately would become a struggle for control over not only the future of State College, but also the future of higher education in Kentucky.¹⁶

The new century seemed to awaken a renewed interest in educational reform in the Commonwealth. Calls for increased attention to education were heard from various constituencies. The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs, the Kentucky Education Association, and others were diligently promoting education reform. President Patterson was aware of, and active in, this movement and was somewhat optimistic about his college's future. He had high expectations that the 1904 session of the

¹⁵U. D. Collins to H. H. Cherry, May 25, 1904, Box 1, General Letters, 1903-05, H. H. Cherry Papers, University Archives, Western Kentucky University (hereafter Cherry Papers). Collins served as secretary and business manager of Kentucky Correspondence College.

¹⁶Lexington Leader, June 2, 1902; Ezra L. Gillis, *The University of Kentucky: Its History and Development; A Series of Charts Depicting The More Important Data, 1862-1955* (Lexington, 1956), 20 (hereafter *University of Kentucky . . . Charts*).

General Assembly might allocate additional funding for his college. However, efforts to increase appropriations for State College became entangled in the power struggle between Patterson and Roark. Legislation was passed favorable to State College's Normal Department, but Governor J. C. W. Beckham vetoed the bill, citing insufficient state revenue. Many observers were convinced that the bill was vetoed, in truth, because of the public disagreements between Patterson and Roark.¹⁷

During the legislative session Roark had lobbied hard to secure funding specifically for the Normal Department. At the June 10, 1904, meeting of the college's board of trustees, most of the discussion dealt with Patterson's concern over Roark's activities during the legislative session. Specifically, Roark was charged with obstructing State College's legislative initiative by attempting to secure a separate appropriation for the Normal Department. Roark appeared before the board in his own defense. He stated that he was unaware of the existence of the board's legislative committee and argued that he "did not think it improper to try to secure additional appropriations for the department of which he is head. . . ." The board passed a resolution to rebuke and condemn the actions of Roark during the past legislative session, "which they believe resulted in the practical failure of important legislation much needed by the State College."¹⁸

Thus, the lines were drawn. A key member of the faculty stood in public opposition to the college's president and board of trustees, and he had been publicly rebuked. But these events at State College merely foreshadowed a wider division that was developing among educational interests in Kentucky.¹⁹

At the annual meeting of the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) in Maysville in June 1904, there was increasing optimism among education proponents. A committee was appointed to examine the status of teachers in Kentucky; it was

¹⁷Porter H. Hopkins, *K.E.A.: The First Hundred Years* (Lexington, 1957), 36-52; Nancy K. Forderhase, "The Clear Call of Thoroughbred Women: The Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs and the Crusade for Educational Reform, 1903-1909," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 83 (1985): 19-35.

¹⁸Lexington *Leader*, June 10, 1904; Minutes of the Board of Trustees, State College, June 9, 1904, 261-62.

¹⁹Gillis, *University of Kentucky . . . Charts*, 26.

to report at the next annual meeting of the association.²⁰ President Patterson believed the KEA actions resulted from the association's displeasure with State College's administration of its Normal Department. In his report to the board of trustees in December 1904, Patterson warned:

I hear of ominous indications of an unfeuding attack by the Normal School men, during the session of the next General Assembly, upon the relation existing between the College and its Normal Department. Resolutions reflecting in very uncomplimentary terms upon the school for its alleged unadequate [*sic*] support of the Normal School were adopted by the State Teachers Association which met in Maysville in midsummer. Though the next Legislature will not meet for more than a year it is well that we should know the danger which confronts us and be prepared for the issue.²¹

Meanwhile, President Patterson sent a letter to all school superintendents in the state in which he attempted to explain his attitude toward the Normal Department and the campaign for new normal schools:

When the next Legislature convenes we desire to make an earnest effort to obtain appropriations for the necessary additional endowment, equipment and enlargement of the Normal School, including a building of suitable proportions. The State College will moreover give its hearty support to any well matured plan for the establishment of one or more additional Normal Schools properly equipped and liberally endowed. The State College will give them its hearty support when established and work loyally with them for the attainment of a higher standard of education among teachers and increased efficiency in their work. For these objects the State College solicits your aid and your cooperation. You are in close touch with the law makers of the Commonwealth and can do much toward molding public sentiment in the right direction.²²

One particularly interesting response came from E. H. Mark, Louisville's superintendent of schools. Mark, who served on the committee appointed at the Maysville meeting, responded: "I have just received your letter containing a copy of one which you

²⁰*Superintendent's Report, 1909*, 334-35.

²¹President's Report, December 13, 1904, 285.

²²James K. Patterson to Superintendents of Schools in Kentucky, April 1905, Box 15, Patterson Papers.

have sent to the Superintendents. I have not yet had an opportunity to read it but shall do so to-day. I sincerely hope that there will be no conflict between the State College and the Normal School movement." Mark was already aligned with the normal school proponents, and it soon became obvious that Patterson did not have the backing of the state's largest school district.²³

State College's relationship with the normal school movement was further complicated by Roark's resignation as dean of the Normal Department in May 1905. In a statement to the press, Roark remarked simply:

I desire to say only that my resignation was tendered to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees on last Saturday, to take effect at the close of the current collegiate year. As to the cause of my withdrawal I must let those who may be interested in the matter draw their own conclusions. It is perhaps sufficient to say further, that I shall, for some time to come, remain a citizen of Kentucky.

Students in the Normal Department expressed their regret over Roark's resignation and presented him a set of books in appreciation for his work.²⁴

In other circles speculation continued in regard to Roark's role in the normal school movement. In June 1905, a local newspaper reported:

Professor R. N. Roark, whose resignation as dean of the Normal Department of State College created a sensation in educational circles several weeks ago, made the following statement Friday night. Professor Roark bears out the *Leader's* information that the movement has the support of many leading educators of the State and the fight will be taken into the next Legislature. He, however, denies that the movement is a blow at State College, or an attack on the policy of that institution. But those who are championing the movement frankly admit that if the plan as proposed is carried out State College will lose the financial support from the State which makes possible the existence of its normal department. Should the normal training school system be established, Professor Roark is "tipped" as the most available man to be put in charge of the system, and his friends throughout the State, it is said, will leave no stone unturned in his behalf.²⁵

²³E. H. Mark to James K. Patterson, May 6, 1905, *ibid.*

²⁴Lexington *Leader*, April 20, May 20, 1905.

²⁵*Ibid.*, June 17, 1905.

Although diplomatic in his public statements, there was little doubt that Roark was committed to the normal school movement. His departure from State College only widened the gulf between Patterson and the normal school advocates in Kentucky.

In the spring of 1905, State Superintendent of Public Instruction James H. Fuqua called a special meeting in Frankfort composed of "a large body of citizens and educators." A committee was appointed by the group to work with the recently created KEA committee to devise a plan for the formation of "an educational organization embracing both educators and private citizens." Among the members of the committee were President Patterson and H. H. Cherry, the president of a private normal school in Bowling Green. Their report was also due at the next annual meeting of the KEA, scheduled to meet at Mammoth Cave.²⁶

Prior to the Mammoth Cave meeting Patterson rehearsed his position before his own board of trustees. He reported that the Normal Department at State College was in need of a new building because of the anticipated increase in attendance. But the president warned his trustees:

The air is full of rumors that the State Teachers Association, inspired by hostility outside our own organization, and by disaffected persons within are organizing a movement against the present relations of the Normal Department of the State College with a view to the severance of its connection and establishment on an independent basis.

The meeting at Maysville adopted resolutions last year looking in this direction. Copies of these resolutions have been sent by certain parties connected with the State College to every Superintendent of the County Schools in Kentucky, urging their adoption by the institution of their respective counties.

The forthcoming meeting at Mammoth Cave will take collective action on the reports received and this action is not likely to be inimical to us. It behooves us to be on the alert in order to prevent disintegration and impairment of revenue. I believe that the Board can truthfully say that the Normal Department equally with the others has shared without prejudice in the provision made for the instruction, and in the free and unrestricted use of all the advantages offered by all the associated Departments of the College. The College is still straightened by the reason of the failure of revenue to keep pace with expenditures.²⁷

²⁶*Superintendent's Report, 1909, 335.*

²⁷*President's Report, May 30, 1905, 8.*

The two education committees held a joint meeting at Mammoth Cave in June 1905 and formed the Educational Improvement Commission. An executive committee of that commission, elected by KEA members, included Dr. E. E. Hume of Frankfort, chair; E. H. Mark, Louisville; J. H. Fuqua, Sr., Frankfort; H. H. Cherry, Bowling Green; and J. A. Sharon, Richmond. At its first meeting the executive committee concluded that ". . . no educational reform in our educational system could be wrought except through those who teach; hence it was determined to make the first fight for the professional training of teachers." The campaign for the creation of additional normal schools in the state officially had begun.²⁸

That Patterson still underestimated the strength of the movement is illustrated in a quotation he gave to a Lexington newspaper following the Mammoth Cave meeting: "It is almost a safe presumption, or, I might say almost a settled fact, that there will be no independent normal school in Kentucky outside of the one now existing at State College to be supported by the common school funds of the State." The newspaper confidently reported that other educational leaders agreed and that, in fact, the state administration would not look favorably on the plan to remove the normal department from State College.²⁹

Moreover, it appears that the Lexington community was beginning to realize that economics and community pride were at stake. The *Lexington Leader* noted that the slogan of those opposed to moving the normal department from State College was "Stand By State College and You Stand by Lexington." The newspaper explained that "this local feeling is said to arise from the fact that State College, which is a state institution, partakes largely of a local character; that it is an institution in which the people of Lexington, of Fayette County, and even the entire Blue Grass region, take especial interest and pride. . . ." Perhaps unknowingly, the editors were stating explicitly why other regions of the state were demanding their own institutions. State College was viewed as a Lexington or Bluegrass institution. In the same article the newspaper reported, incidentally, that Professor

²⁸*Superintendent's Report, 1909, 336.*

²⁹*Lexington Leader, June 26, 1905.*

Roark had been in southern Kentucky promoting the establishment of a normal school there.³⁰

A less parochial view was expressed by interested observers outside the Bluegrass who did not necessarily have a vested interest in the normal school movement. A Jackson, Kentucky, newspaper editorialized that the idea of more normal schools was “. . . readily seen and admitted by all who have given any thought to the subject.” However, the editorial also commended State College for its excellent work and suggested that, in addition to the establishment of two new normal schools, the work of teacher education at the State College be expanded. “Since, we have but one State College we can have but one normal school so connected,” the editor wrote, “but that one should be made the school to which we are to look for the training of our greatest teachers.”³¹

Before the opening of the General Assembly in 1906, President Patterson reiterated his attitude toward teacher training. He argued that State College had been reasonably successful in educating teachers when one considered the limited state funds received by the college. However, Patterson realized that much remained to be accomplished:

The general intelligence of the people depends on the efficiency of the common schools. The efficiency of the common schools depends upon the education of the teacher; this latter element it belongs to the State College to supply. Let it be understood that the State College does not stand in the way of a liberal provision for schools for the education of teachers elsewhere. To these it would ever be ready to give a helping hand, but the school for training teachers, or the Normal School, as it is generally called, in connection with the State College, is co-supported with its reorganization, and should be maintained and supported with a liberal hand. Give us the means by which to educate the teachers and to make education effective and we will be able to do a work for the public at large, out of all proportion to what we have hitherto done, beneficent though it has been.³²

When the General Assembly convened in January 1906, the proponents of the normal school movement were prepared, if

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Jackson [Ky.] *Hustler*, in *Lexington Leader*, December 5, 1905.

³²President's Report, December 12, 1905, 48.

not entirely united. Much maneuvering occurred during the legislative session as individuals and groups with vested interests vied for control of the proposed normal schools. H. H. Cherry worked tirelessly to have a normal school located in Bowling Green, where he was owner and president of the private and financially strapped Southern Normal School. Citizens of Richmond were lobbying for the placement of a normal school in their city on the abandoned campus of the defunct Central University. The legislation eventually introduced called for the creation of two normal schools located in communities to be selected later by a committee appointed by the superintendent of schools. It was understood, however, that the two cities would be Bowling Green and Richmond.³³

In written testimony prepared for delivery to the legislature's Appropriations Committee, Patterson reviewed the advantages of having a normal department associated with State College. He then explained his concern about the normal school proposal:

Here let it be understood that the sole object of the authorities of the State College, its Board of Trustees, its Faculty, and of myself, is to maintain and to conserve what the State College already possesses and to which it has the prescriptive title of twenty-six years. We have no contest with those who wish to establish independent Normal Schools. If established, they would doubtless do a good but subsidiary grade of work, because of the absence of the collateral advantages which the State College offers to all matriculates of the Normal School Department. Our effort to build up and to maintain and to conserve what the State College already possesses and carry out the mandate of the General Government on the one hand and of the State of Kentucky on the other, implies no hostility whatever to any independent movement. Indeed, all intelligent and legitimate efforts for developing and upbuilding the intellect of the Commonwealth have our cordial sympathy and will meet with our hearty cooperation, but we cannot be expected to assist in furthering and developing any movement at the expense of our collegiate interests. This would be asking a sacrifice which no individual and no corporation could be expected to concede.³⁴

³³Carl P. Chelf, "A Selective View of the Politics of Higher Education in Kentucky and the Role of H. H. Cherry, Educator-Politician" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1968), 86-116.

³⁴James K. Patterson testimony prepared for delivery before the Committee on Appropriations, Kentucky General Assembly, 1906, Box 15, Patterson Papers.

The effort to pass the normal school legislation was intense. H. H. Cherry spent more than sixty days in Frankfort lobbying with legislators. The combined influence of Kentucky's education reform establishment put its collective weight behind passage of the bill. As the votes were counted indicating overwhelming approval of the normal school legislation, Patterson most likely reflected upon his nearly forty-year struggle for State College's development and must also have pondered the future of his institution. But for the present he focused his energies on promoting the positive attributes of his institution, for State College was still doing well in many areas in spite of recent events in the legislature.³⁵

The normal school legislation was signed into law by Governor Beckham on March 21, 1906, and became effective immediately because of an emergency clause contained in the bill. However, the normal school movement was dealt a temporary setback when a legal suit was filed by R. A. Marsee, an individual from Bell County. The suit alleged that the normal school legislation was unconstitutional because it used funds earmarked for the common schools. Roark, Cherry, and others believed that the suit was inspired by Patterson. Patterson consistently denied any hostility toward the normal schools, and no proof of his complicity apparently exists. Writing to Jeremiah Sullivan of Richmond in December 1906, an angry Patterson concluded, "It answered the purpose of certain enemies of the college to affirm its hostility. This was neither ingenuous nor honorable, especially when there was not a shred of evidence to support the allegation."³⁶

As expected, Cherry was selected president of the new Western Normal School at Bowling Green. And, in what must have been a bitter pill for Patterson, Roark was selected as the first president of Eastern Normal School in Richmond, just thirty miles from the State College campus.³⁷

³⁵*Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky pertaining to the University of Kentucky*, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Library.

³⁶Marsee v. Hager, State Auditor, 125 *Kentucky Reports* 445 (1907); James K. Patterson to Jeremiah Sullivan, December 3, 1906, Box 1, General Letters, 1906, Cherry Papers; Lowell H. Harrison, *Western Kentucky University* (Lexington, 1987), 56.

³⁷James P. Cornette, "A History of the Western Kentucky State Teachers College"

In a post-mortem to his board, Patterson reported in June 1906:

The promoters of the measure for establishing two Normal Schools were thoroughly organized. It suited their purpose to represent the State College as hostile to it, though the allegation was utterly unfounded. This somehow seemed to promote their measure and to discredit ours. Representatives had been thoroughly drilled into the conviction that the State College was inimical to the plan for establishing independent Normal Schools and during the brief session of the General Assembly it was impossible to disabuse them of this impression.³⁸

However, with this said, President Patterson could not resist the opportunity to take yet another swipe at his old nemesis Roark:

It is gratifying to learn from the Report of the Dean of the Normal Department that there has been a marked increase in attendance in that course of study during the last year. Many persons feared that the resignation of the former head of the Department [Roark] would materially diminish its matriculation and impair its prestige. The result has been quite the contrary. Instead of a loss we have gotten rid of an incubus which retarded its development and hindered its growth.³⁹

In fact, enrollment at State College was increasing slightly. But aside from summer sessions, enrollment in the Normal Department continued its downward spiral from ten students in 1904-05 to only six students by the end of 1906. In its report to the state superintendent for public instruction, State College listed 174 students in its Normal Department. These figures suggest that many students still were taking education courses at the college but were not in the four-year degree program. It was for these part-time students that the real enrollment struggle between State College and the new normal schools would take place. Nevertheless, Patterson boasted that, "exclusive of the preparatory and Normal Departments, we have more students in our College Classes than any three colleges or universities in Kentucky. Twenty

(Ph.D. diss., George Peabody College for Teachers, 1938); Jonathan T. Dorris, "Five Decades of Progress: Eastern Kentucky State College, 1906-1957," *Eastern Kentucky Review* 42 (1957): 11.

³⁸President's Report, June 5, 1906, 73-74.

³⁹*Ibid.*



In 1907, the Normal Department moved to its new quarters, today known as Frazee Hall.

years ago the preparatory and normal elements formed fully eighty percent of the total attendance. These proportions are now completely reversed."⁴⁰

The Kentucky Court of Appeals upheld the normal school legislation in a decision handed down on April 24, 1907. The court ruled that the newly created normal schools were actually extensions of the State College. President Patterson was naturally pleased with that interpretation. In a report to his board of trustees in June 1907, Patterson declared: "The State College has thus become a potent leverage for the upbuilding of the Common Schools through a perennial supply of competent teachers by the Normal Schools of the State College and its auxiliaries."⁴¹

The court decision and a nearly completed new building for the Normal Department surely buttressed Patterson's belief that State College remained the leading educational institution in Kentucky, not only for traditional collegiate work, but also for the

⁴⁰*Superintendent's Report, 1905-1907*, 298.

⁴¹President's Report, June 5, 1907, 143.

training of common-school teachers. State College's prestige in the area of teacher training was enhanced in May 1907, when it was announced that Professor Milford White, dean of the Normal Department, "had been honored by being made a member of the International Committee on Moral Training." A local newspaper reported that "this movement [was] recently inaugurated in England having for its object the promotion of moral training and the development of good citizens through the agency of the common schools." Professor White had been nominated for membership by Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University.⁴²

However, the benefits accrued by honors from afar, a trend toward increased enrollment, and the favorable interpretation of the court ruling were all short-lived. State College and the new normal schools began to compete for the scholarship students endowed by the legislature. Professor White died the following year, and there was no indication that officials at the Western and Eastern normal schools viewed their institutions as auxiliaries of State College. President Patterson and his colleagues were soon to discover that 1906 simply had been a skirmish in an all-out assault on the role of State College in higher education in Kentucky.

During 1907, a movement was initiated to change the name of State College to State University of Kentucky. In his 1907 report to the state superintendent of public instruction, Patterson observed that, "Delaware excepted, Kentucky alone of the forty-six states enjoys the unenviable distinction of having no State University and no equivalent of one." Wisconsin, he said, with fewer inhabitants and less wealth than Kentucky, in 1904 allocated \$471,500 for support of the University of Wisconsin. Kentucky by comparison managed that same year only \$36,380 for support of State College. Patterson also reported that he hoped for a brighter day in which "we are to have a University on a grand scale, worthy of its chief benefactor, the City of Lexington, and commensurate with the pride and power of this great Commonwealth." Once again, Lexington, rather than the state at large, was given the preeminent position in regard to the college. As competition between State College and the normal

⁴²President's Report, December 10, 1907, 185; Lexington *Leader*, May 27, 1907.

schools increased, the underlying regionalism of State College's support became even more apparent. Kentuckians living outside Lexington tended to view State College as Lexington's and not their own.⁴³

Meanwhile, education leaders still worried about the continuing friction between the State College and the new normal schools. Professor Cotton Noe recalled that at a 1907 KEA meeting the antagonisms were especially prominent:

I had been placed on the program, and had prepared a paper to read before the Association. A man by the name of McKee, as I recall it now, was President, a friend of Roark, and bitterly antagonistic to our department at the State. I was told afterwards that this man was drinking. I was allotted fifteen minutes for my paper and I had timed it to take exactly fifteen minutes. I had been reading five minutes when I was called down by the President. There was confusion in the room, and McHenry Rhoads, the Superintendent of the Owensboro schools, moved that I be allowed to finish my paper. The motion was carried unanimously. I saw, if I continued, further bitterness would be engendered, and I took my seat.⁴⁴

Moreover, at the KEA meeting the following year, Dean White also was kept from making a scheduled presentation. Noe was philosophical about this obvious bias against State College. "Even among teachers who should be generous and reasonable and sincere," Noe remarked, "we sometimes find selfishness and bitter antagonisms, instead of cooperation and sympathetic understanding." "Of course," Noe concluded, "Roark himself knew nothing of this unjust opposition to Milford White and the Department [of which] he was head. It was wholly the work of small men, and Roark was, himself, a big man."⁴⁵

Either Noe misjudged Roark or he was not aware of the new president's deep antagonism toward Patterson and State College. Writing to President Cherry in July 1907, Roark remarked, "I am still very distrustful of our friends at Lexington. . . . By so much as they get, by that much we lose. . . . The fact that a proposition has come from their side shows that they are on the run." He then concluded: "I would like to finish things up right before

⁴³*Superintendent's Report, 1907*, 191.

⁴⁴Noe, "Years That Swiftly Sped," 166.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 168.

we let them go. Give the matter the most careful consideration and move with the utmost caution."⁴⁶

Even as the personal bitterness continued there were signs of cooperation between the normal schools and State College. Meetings held in 1907 were attended by representatives from Western Normal School, Eastern Normal School, and State College. Interestingly, representatives attending the meetings were board members, and not necessarily administrators, from the three institutions. Patterson's influence on these meetings is not clear. But he apparently was satisfied with the recommendations that came out of the conferences, the last of which was held in December 1907, in Bowling Green.⁴⁷

Roark was more guarded. He expressed his concerns about any compromise with State College in an August 20, 1907, letter to Cherry:

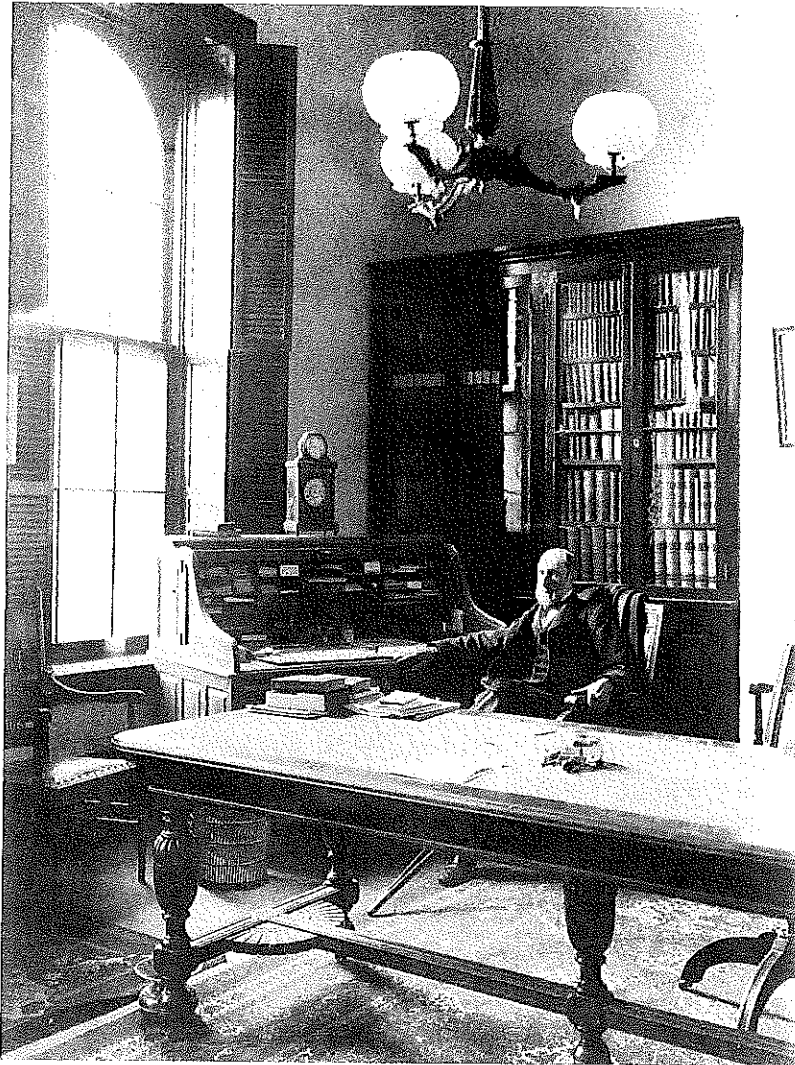
I am very much concerned just now over that November meeting. You know I will not for a moment let any personal antagonism between Patterson and myself stand in the way of harmony between any of the state institutions. At the same time some of us who have the hard earned degree of M. W. (Made Wise), would be very sorry to see any sort of compromise made which would put the State Normal schools in the slightest degree at the mercy of that man. Let me urge you and other friends who will be at that meeting to be doubly cautious and to loosen not one whit in any essential. I am certain that President Patterson and all under his control will seize and use any advantage they may get, no matter how slight, to block the State Normal schools, now or at any other time. Of course, I am writing this in the strictest confidence. I am fearful over the prospect and beg you to be careful.

In yet another letter to Cherry, only two days later, Roark added: "I am still a little uneasy over the matter about which I wrote you before. Years ago, I read in a Sunday-school book about the lion and the lamb lying down together, but there is no need for the lamb to be inside the lion. I do not want that kind of peace. Please give me some more of your thoughts along these lines."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Rurik N. Roark to H. H. Cherry, July 31, 1907, Box 1, General Letters, Cherry Papers.

⁴⁷Lexington *Leader*, December 22, 1907.

⁴⁸Rurik N. Roark to H. H. Cherry, August 20, 22, 1907, Box 1, General Letters, Cherry Papers.



President Patterson in his office at State College.

Patterson also corresponded with Cherry during the summer of 1907 and continued to defend himself against "an impression which has not now and never has had any foundation in fact." Patterson denied ever saying anything negative toward or about Cherry. He concluded: "It is my sincere desire to maintain friendly and fraternal relations with the institution over which

you preside, to co-operate with you in the upbuilding and development of all the educational institutions of Kentucky."⁴⁹

At the time, Cherry appeared to be less hostile toward Patterson than Roark. However, several years later Cherry wrote that Patterson was "about the most stupid public official that I have ever met." He added that Patterson had "done more to block the progress of universal education than any other man who has ever lived in the Commonwealth." Obvious personal disagreements continued for some time but other individuals were able to begin working out a compromise for Kentucky higher education.⁵⁰

With the General Assembly scheduled to convene in January 1908, education leaders were interested in preparing a package for the legislature that would be beneficial to both the normal schools and State College. The proposed legislation called for changes in several areas: first, State College would become a university with the official name being "State University, Lexington, Ky."; second, funding would be provided for "appropriation sufficient to erect and properly equip necessary buildings for the new university and State Normal Schools in order to allow the institutions to most effectively do the work within the scope of each"; and, finally, all subfreshmen and normal instruction would gradually be eliminated from State College, except post-graduate work in the Department of Education.⁵¹

The education package passed the legislature and became law in March 1908. It granted the educational institutions most of what they requested. One interesting sidelight was that Kentucky University in Lexington was financially remunerated by the state for taking back its earlier name of Transylvania University so as not to create confusion with the newly named State University. In regard to funding, State University was allocated an increase of \$30,000 annually, bringing its total annual appropriation from the state to \$200,000. Each of the normal schools was allowed an annual increase of \$20,000, raising the annual appropriation of each to \$150,000.⁵²

⁴⁹James K. Patterson to H. H. Cherry, July 26, 1907, Box 1, General Letters, 1907, Cherry Papers.

⁵⁰Quoted in Harrison, *Western Kentucky University*, 56.

⁵¹Lexington *Leader*, December 28, 1907.

⁵²Fred Allen Engle, Jr., "The Superintendents and the Issues: A Study of the Super-

The Lexington *Leader* noted that after news reached Lexington that the governor had signed the legislation into law, "there was general felicitation among all the friends of education and progress." When asked his reaction to the news, President Patterson told a reporter that "he was too busy to talk about the matter on account of a great press of matters demanding his immediate attention."⁵³

Patterson and his colleagues at State University would find the new legislation a mixed blessing. Designation as a university created opportunities for expanded offerings at the school. A law school was opened, there was discussion about beginning a medical school, and Patterson advocated creation of a college of commerce. However, there apparently was no discussion about creating a teacher's college. The Department of Education soon would be merged into the College of Arts and Sciences.

There were immediate negative ramifications as well. First, upon the advice of the state attorney general, funds appropriated by the 1908 legislation were withheld pending a ruling by the state courts on the constitutionality of the legislation. By the time the state Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the educational institutions, the state auditor confessed that "there is not enough money in the Treasury to pay the money now, so the decision may necessitate an extra session of the Legislature. . . ." Also, the removal of all normal department work from the university created a temporary decrease in enrollment of approximately two hundred students, causing school officials much concern about the revenue that would be lost from tuition and fees.⁵⁴

To counter the loss of students and revenue, Patterson initiated an aggressive recruitment campaign throughout the state. He envisioned that the best students in Kentucky would naturally gravitate to the state's only university. However, the rapid growth of the normal schools must have caused Patterson concern.

As 1909 unfolded there were two very important changes in Kentucky's higher education picture. In the spring, Rurik Roark's promising career at Eastern State Normal School was

intendents of Public Instruction in Kentucky, 1891-1943" (Ed.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1966), 189-90; Lexington *Leader*, March 18, 1908.

⁵³Lexington *Leader*, March 18, 1908.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, September 1, 1908.

cut short by his death at the age of fifty. Later in the year, Patterson announced his intention to step down as president of State University. Both changes opened the way for H. H. Cherry to expand his own influence on higher education in Kentucky.

Thus, by the end of 1909 the pattern had been set for Kentucky higher education during the next eighty years. As educational leaders met to plan for the 1910 legislative session, groundwork was being laid that would give the normal schools an expanded role in Kentucky higher education. The hostilities between the University of Kentucky and the state normal schools would continue. Equally important, for the next eight decades Kentuckians would continue to debate the role of higher education in the state's future. The discussion would be framed by the constants of higher education in Kentucky: too little money and too many institutions, each with missions in excess of the funds to support them.