

The Founding and Development of St. Andrew's School

By ALLAN JOHNSTONE HENRY, '00 C.

THE Certificate of Incorporation of The Episcopal Church School Foundation dated December 26, 1928, is no more than a crystalization of thought in legal form and represents the initial step in the founding of St. Andrew's School purely in a material sense. For many years previous to this date, the idea had been in the mind of the Founder, Alexis Felix duPont ('01 C) and what may be regarded as the spiritual cornerstone was laid long before anything of concrete form came into being. His main objective was primarily of a religious nature and he regarded the Protestant Episcopal Church as the most fitting interpreter of the Christian faith. Long and active association with that Church both on the part of his Father ('70 C) and himself had tended to confirm this belief and the opportunity to strike a telling blow for the Cause finally came. His object, as stated to those whom he called into preliminary consultation was apparently a simple one but with a vast ever-widening background. It was hoped by him that boys who attended this school would absorb enough of the Christian spirit to keep in touch with their Church in after life no matter where their habitat might be. If their fortunes should take them to some small town in our West for instance, their interest would impel them to look up a nearby Episcopal House of Worship and attend its services. St. Andrew's School, by its teachings, would be at least a contributory cause to this end. This, as has been said above, is a modest desire, humbly expressed but with the greatest significance to those who look to the future welfare of our oncoming generations.

In midsummer of 1927, Mr. duPont, at lunch with The Rt. Rev. Philip Cook, Bishop of Delaware, asked for advice as to the best manner in which he could give aid to the Episcopal Church, particularly in the State of Delaware. In this connection, he mentioned his dream of a Church Boarding School patterned largely along the lines of other famous schools of the country in this category such as St. Pauls, St. Marks, Groton, Kent, and "Virginia Episcopal High."

Bishop Cook felt that the greatest service Mr. duPont could render would be through the promotion and support of religious education and that, in his opinion, the partially-conceived project would have the enthusiastic support of the entire Diocese of Delaware as well as the Episcopal Church as a whole. There the matter rested for about a year during which period these two gentlemen made informal inquiries and investigations with a view to forming a tentative opinion in regard to the feasibility of the undertaking.

Mr. duPont desired first of all that a reasonably unanimous approval should be given to the establishment of the School in Delaware by those most competent to judge of such matters and the leading headmasters of the East were therefore consulted either verbally as the opportunity offered or through correspondence. It was found to be the consensus of opinion that there was a place for such a school, a strong indication of this being the long waiting lists of the great New England institutions and it also developed that the territory between New England and Maryland was not overcrowded although there had for many years been such nationally known boarding schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey as Hill School, Mercersburg Academy, Lawrenceville and others. This all-important question having been decided, the next step consisted of the determination of a suitable location in Delaware and the gathering of advisory data from the various Church Schools of the country. In the autumn of 1928, an opportunity presented itself to engage the services of an investigator with thorough training and experience along educational lines. Mr. Theodore N. Denslow, former Head of The Donaldson School of Baltimore (the individual in question) was therefore given a roving commission to study and report on the two important matters mentioned above. The idea then began to take definite form.

An informal committee, consisting of Bishop Cook, Mr. duPont, Mr. Walter J. Laird and the writer had been in existence for some time previous so that Mr. Denslow reported his findings to this body. The schedule upon which his intensive and comprehensive study was based is worth mentioning in detail as it indicates the scientific treatment and care which attended the development of the idea through its preliminary stages past the organization and construction periods

into the full bloom of a successful boys school. A general outline of proposed policies (drawn up in rough memorandum form by the Founder) should also prove interesting and is therefore given immediately preceding the data having relation to the Survey.

A COLLEGE PREPARATORY CHURCH BOARDING-SCHOOL FOR BOYS IN THE DIOCESE OF DELAWARE

Education—Full advantage taken of modern contribution to the science of teaching, but no unproven principles to be used. Religious teaching of prime importance. Definite teaching to prepare boys to become useful laymen carried on intensively.

Discipline—Regulations no more strict than should obtain in an ideal home. Limited student government.

Government—A Board of Trustees, Bishop of the Diocese to be chairman. Additional connection with the Diocese considered after recommendation of the Bishop. A Headmaster or a Rector in charge of the school under the authority of the Board of Trustees. A Chaplain in the event of the headmaster being a layman. The plant to be incorporated and endowed, the Trustees to be made directors of the Corporation. (?)

Enrollment—Boys of age 12 to 13 admissible by examination—mental, physical and (?) Psychological. Family history to be taken into account. Committee of Trustees to have final decision as to fitness of a candidate.

Athletics—All usual forms maintained, and athletics of some kind compulsory with every student unless prohibited by a physician.

Chapel—An ornate chapel, a dignified service which will be an inspiration to masters and students and make them feel that the life of the School emanates from that source. Early institution of observances or ceremonies that will be unique and will in years to come be attractive traditions which will give the school an "Atmosphere".

SURVEY

1. *Religious*—Does the Church School produce the results that should be expected of it?

Visit Dr. Drury, Father Sill, Dr. Thayer, Dr. Quail, Mr. Onderdonk and others.

Can results be improved if modifications of average practice be made at the start?

2. *Location*—A careful search to be made and the location to be determined by— a. Climatic advantages; b. Economic advantages; c. Sanitary advantages; d. Athletic advantages; e. Environment advantages.

3. *Cost*—After determining above, an option to be taken on land and a tentative plan to be drawn up from which an approximate estimate can be made of a plant capable of handling— a. Forty students; b. Eighty students; c. One hundred students.

Estimates then to be made of the cost of operating the plant and the tuition fee required to balance operating and maintenance expenses.

4. *Educational Principles*—Religious instruction of students always held up as a necessary part of their education.

Instruction in the Church as an organization and the layman's place in it, as a school boy, as a college student and as a business man, should always be emphasized, and a careful study must be made to find out if this can be done with good results, if it has been done and if not, why.

5. *Modern Methods of Education*—Consultation with Headmasters of other Boys Schools will be held, and all kinds of schools will be visited, from the most radically modern to the most conservative. Results of the practice of these schools will be compared and tabulated.

6. *Government and Discipline*—Experience of other Headmasters will be sought and an attempt made to choose the best.

7. *Athletics*—Careful investigation of this subject will be made and the amount of athletic activity determined by the experience of others.

The kind of athletic activity for which plans will be made and equipment provided will be carefully chosen with regard to climatic and topographical conditions. This must be studied.

8. Should such a school be limited or should it be expected to grow in size? Why?

Unfortunately, there is no room here to repeat all of the data which Mr. Denslow presented to the Committee. Suffice it to say that he spent three weeks in his investigation in the State of Delaware during which he travelled 1,500 miles. His report included interviews with many residents of Delaware well qualified to advise as to location and any other pertinent matters as well; figures covering climatological conditions in five different latitudes of the State showing temperatures, rainfall and snowfall were comparatively studied; and suggestions of six sites with advantages and disadvantages set forth. When this all-important work was completed, he visited 19 schools, eleven of which were Church Schools in the course of his further investigations. Among these were St. Pauls, St. Marks, St. James, Kent, Salisbury, Lawrenceville, Hotchkiss and Mercersburg. Some of his intensely interesting findings are epitomized as follows:

First, in reply to the query "does the Church School produce the results that should be expected of it?". No categorical reply was made by any of the headmasters except Father Sill of Kent School who stated that 94% of his graduates had replied in the affirmative on the School's questionnaire to the inquiry "Have you attended the Service of Holy Communion at least once during the past year" and that 54% had attended this Service once a month in the same period. The other schools visited could give very little information on this point as practically none of them kept such records which seems rather surprising to say the least.

If the new school's Headmaster should be a clergyman (which was desired by the Committee) he should be an experienced "boarding schoolman." The term pastor disqualifies *per se* the individual without the school teaching experience or tendency. The life's work of the two according to many schoolmen is radically different and the clergyman therefore seldom has the qualifications of the teacher of boys.

On the other hand, all of the masters should be churchmen and religious teaching should be a distinctly noticeable part of the school curriculum and a necessary part of a boy's education.

No emphasis, generally speaking, was laid on the matter of instruction in the Church as an organization among the schools visited except in isolated instances where boys act as vestrymen (as at Virginia Episcopal High and now at St. Andrews), take up the offering and read the lesson. An effort naturally is made to teach boys their duty to the Church in the year of graduation but whether or not these precepts have "taken" it is impossible to determine without specific data.

No suggestions were made by any of those consulted to modify or change in any manner Mr. duPont's outline of policies. It was significantly recommended by Mr. Denslow at the conclusion of his report that the system of religious training should be "the main point of difference between our school and the other church schools of the country."

After due consideration of this report by the Committee, it was decided that the project was feasible and following further investigation the location reported as Site No. 6 was chosen. This included the old and beautiful artificial lake known as Noxontown Pond about two miles long and some 25 miles south of Wilmington, bounded on the East by a great many small properties and on the West by three large farms. For various reasons, the West side was preferable and negotiations were opened with all of the owners culminating in the purchase of what was known as the Comegys Farm at the Northwest end of the lake and bordering upon a smaller pond at another part of the property—360 acres in all. A substantial donation by the Founder supplied the "sinews of war" in this instance, to be followed by other gifts from time to time both from him and his sister, Mrs. Irene duPont, as the occasion required. Mr. Caleb S. Layton ('07 C) who attended to the legal details in connection with this purchase on behalf of the Committee was called upon for advice as to incorporation shortly afterwards and The Episcopal Church Foundation, Inc. thereupon came into being with broad powers "to establish and carry on an institution or institutions of learning." The original Incorporators and Trustees were Bishop Cook

(President), Messrs. duPont (Vice-President), Allan J. Henry (Sec. & Treas.), and Walter J. Laird.

Shortly after the incorporation, a number of heads of the prominent schools in this section of the land were invited to come to Wilmington as Mr. duPont's guests to visit the site of the school and to continue to help in the Foundation's plans for the development of religious education. The response was most gratifying and the gathering a truly representative one. A great deal of valuable advice was given and noted and another step taken in the logical development of the great idea. Mr. Arthur H. Brockie of Philadelphia ('95C) who had been informally designated as the Architect of the Foundation attended the conference throughout.

Little remains to be said in regard to the physical development of the School. After the Board of the Foundation had been doubled by the addition of Hon. Richard S. Rodney, Messrs. J. Thompson Brown and Caleb S. Layton, all of Delaware, and Mr. John O. Platt of Philadelphia, carefully considered plans by the architect, Mr. Brockie, were finally adopted and the Turner Construction Company engaged as contractors during the latter part of July, 1929. Ground was broken a few weeks later and the cornerstone laid on St. Andrew's Day, November 30, 1929. The original buildings, consisting of the first unit of the main building, a garage and a Master's House were completed in August and September, 1930. Comprehensive plans for the future were drawn up by the landscape gardeners, Messrs. Wheelwright & Stevenson of Philadelphia, and the architect which have been adhered to, generally speaking, as the school grew. Service quarters (now known as The Annex and used as a dormitory), a Superintendent's dwelling house, a second Masters House, a Boat-house (presented by Mr. Henry B. duPont, a cousin of the Founder and elected a Trustee in June, 1934), and finally, the Headmasters House have been completed since 1930, besides the many improvements to the farm buildings in the form of additions thereto for the most part. The grounds include tennis courts, two football and baseball fields and provision for a running track. It is eventually intended to erect a commodious athletic building with squash and basket ball courts, wings from the main building which would more than double its present capacity, an adequate number of Masters dwellings

and a chapel. A system of roads and paths with appropriate grading and planting according to schedule will keep pace with the building program. Planting as laid out by the landscape gardeners has been going on almost continuously since ground was broken with most gratifying results. The prevailing type of architecture is known as Collegiate with Tudor influence and is of the highest order in all respects. That aesthetic values have been carefully looked to is quite apparent. The buildings and the grounds with the lake in the background form a most striking picture which grows in beauty each year with the trees and shrubbery and vines.

The farm on the estate which is administered by the Headmaster, supplies the school with most of its provender and all of its milk. A farmer is employed on a salary basis which was thought to be a satisfactory arrangement and has since proven so. The large deficit under which the farm first struggled along has shrunk each year until it now appears (*mirabile dictu*) that it will soon become an important asset. The Trustees seriously discussed giving up farming entirely but fortunately (as it turned out) decided to carry on long enough to determine the logical course of action through experience.

Realizing fully that the selection of a Headmaster was by far the most important duty of the Trustees, a great deal of consideration had been given this matter from the very beginning. A systematic search was conducted and many splendidly equipped men brought to light, most of whom, however, were disqualified by the first requirement of the Board, namely that the Headmaster must be in holy orders. Again it was thought that teaching experience was a *sine qua non* which immediately disbarred practically all of the clerical candidates. The only schoolmaster-priests heard of were already in responsible positions and after one or two abortive attempts to secure the right man and a thorough and detailed inquiry which entailed a great deal of correspondence, travel and interviews, it looked as though the Trustees, having exhausted every resource could do nothing but wait in the hope that the Lord would provide. Efforts were continued, however, by some and by a most fortunate circumstance, it was found that the Rev. Walden Pell 2nd, Asst. Headmaster of Lenox School, Lenox, Mass. might be available. Further investigation disclosed that this was the case although the Trustees had understood from several

sources that Mr. Pell's services were not available at least as far as the Foundation was concerned. A series of negotiations ended by his taking charge in the Summer of 1930 and, of course, assuming active command as Headmaster when the school first opened its doors in September, 1930.

It is amusing to note here how the problem of a choice of name for the school was handled. A process of elimination in order to get at essentials is usually a prime factor in deciding business matters and such a method was employed in this particular instance. Mr. duPont and the writer listed the names of all the saints and judged each one's fitness for use as the patronymic of the new school. Such names as St. Paul and St. Mark obviously would not do as they were already preempted and there were many others in this category. Girls' schools also took a heavy toll. It finally narrowed down to three or four names, St. Philip, St. Bartholomew, St. Andrew and St. Barnabas. One reason given for discarding "St. Bartholomew" was that his name would prove such a mouthful in a school yell. Mr. Pell settled the matter by suggesting St. Andrew as the most appropriate choice.

The school started with 32 boys comprising the two lowest forms—the second and third. Five forms with not more than 20 boys in each were decided on as the ultimate aim for the first five years and four Masters besides the Head were engaged. At the beginning of each year, a new second form was added as the others progressed. Mr. Pell's experience at Lenox School, with which he had been associated since its founding a few years before, was extraordinarily valuable. Many bad pitfalls were avoided and obstacles successfully cleared on this account. His knowledge of the details of boarding school organization stood him in good stead. Some important matters not at all apparent to the uninitiated, for instance, were the proper number of boys per master and per dormitory; the minimum age requirements; number of forms with which to begin operations; health and safety precautions; ideal size of school and religious government through a student vestry; and a hundred other matters standards for which could be found only in the school of experience.

The record of the School's growth from year to year is fascinating to contemplate on the part of those who have been actively associated with it, but would not prove of as

much interest elsewhere. It is distinctly worthy of emphasis, however, that marked progress was made each year in the face of adverse circumstances, until in June of the year 1934 the first class was graduated and the fourth year of St. Andrew's existence triumphantly completed with a full quota of 75 boys.

Here it may be in order to explain the corporate and financial relationship existing between the School and the Foundation. St. Andrew's School has no legal existence but is merely a property owned by the Episcopal Church School Foundation and maintained by it to a large extent. Perhaps it would be better to say that the School is subsidized by the Foundation. A substantial sum is realized from tuition fees and the parent organization is now obliged to pay nothing more than a sum sufficient to cover a limited amount of scholarships in addition to capital expenditures. The School does all of its own bookkeeping and accounting which are entirely separate and distinct from the Foundation's records. The balance sheet of the latter shows values of land, buildings, and equipment, whereas St. Andrew's School books have only to do with its operation. Money is forthcoming from the Foundation upon requisition for various purposes—capital expenditures, farm operation, scholarships and advances made on account of delinquencies in payment of tuition fees secured by the notes of parents or other responsible parties. The School's income, therefore, is derived from tuition fees and moneys advanced by the Foundation. The latter in turn exists upon donations and income from investments. All of this is used in connection with the development and operation of the School. The Episcopal Church School Foundation and St. Andrew's (synonymous to all intents and purposes) are not taxed as the Corporation does not operate for gain. Naturally it has no capital stock.

Of supreme interest throughout has been the unselfish advice and interested assistance that was freely forthcoming from all of the schoolmen who were approached, Rev. Dr. William G. Thayer, famous head of St. Marks, now retired, Father Sill of Kent School, an outstanding and really great figure in the education of boys, President Hullihen of Delaware University; Mr. Greville Haslam, Headmaster of the

famous old Episcopal Academy of Philadelphia; Rev. Remsen Ogilby, President of Trinity College, Mr. Archibald R. Hoxton of "Virginia Episcopal High," Rev. Dr. Quaille of Salisbury School, Rev. Gardner Monks of Lenox, Mr. Burton P. Fowler and Mr. Charles W. Bush of the two well-known Wilmington Schools, Tower Hill and Friends, and many others never failed to respond with wise counsel to the requests for guidance which were many and frequent. A splendid spirit of cooperation and fellowship was clearly discernible at all times.

In comparison with many of the great schools of the country, the beginning of St. Andrew's was quite simple and free from financial complications. It was born with a silver spoon in its mouth. The "Depression" of course, interfered very seriously in many ways from the very outset but even this did not create difficulties comparable to those with which the old schoolmasters were continually confronted. Nevertheless, the task of creating a successful boys' school was one of supreme magnitude and the problems that arose were many and more concentrated, so to speak. The flying start with which St. Andrew's was favored, did not change in any manner, the general aspects of the undertaking; an opportunity, however, presented itself to accomplish in a few years what it might ordinarily take generations to bring about and while the ultimate object has by no means been attained, very good progress has been made both from the spiritual and material standpoint.

In a broad sense, the objects of religious education are difficult of attainment even under ideal conditions. Ethical, religious, aesthetic and many other abstract ideals are involved in addition to the highly important educational element. In the opinion of many, the very lack of facilities is in itself a spur to success; we have seen innumerable examples of this in our own country. The newsboy, bootblack, farmhand, becomes the great banker, lawyer, surgeon, author, clergyman. As a matter of fact the House of Lords of the English Parliament was, and presumably still is, made up principally of those who began their career far down in the social scale. The same philosophy in proper degree may be applied to institutions. Those with ambition, incentive, the unquenchable desire to

improve, outstrip others whose horizon is more limited. Perhaps all of the foregoing statements are so well known that they may be classed as truisms but in spite of this, they seem to be worth repeating in order to point our argument that the heavily endowed school is not much better off than any other; in fact in the opinion of many, it is much more subject to hidden and insidious affections. In this particular discussion, we are, of course, considering the subject from the broad point of view. Material ends alone, while important, are in the last analysis, secondary objectives as far as St. Andrew's School is concerned.

In the foregoing, an attempt has been made to give in brief form a sketch of the development of St. Andrew's with the hope that it might prove interesting and possibly of some real value to those concerned with the religious education of boys either directly or in an abstract sense. There is much more to be said but space forbids and only the important points leading up to the accomplishment of today have been described. As indicated, the many difficulties, such as they were, have so far been overcome with surprising ease and we now have before us the pleasing spectacle of an established school after but six or seven years of effort.

Practically every one of the graduating class was accepted for college. The faculty, all of the members of which, hold degrees from Universities of the first rank (Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Trinity, Pennsylvania State, Michigan, Oxford) now looks after the mental, moral and physical well-being of boys whose homes are in a far-flung territory—last year's enrolment included those who hailed from thirteen States.

A most commendable spirit of co-operative effort and endeavor quite apparently exists among the faculty, the school force and the students. The athletic teams are outstanding examples of this. The football and baseball sides have become better and better as the boys grew up. Beaten, battered, knocked about by their larger and older opponents, they had their innings in both sports when fifth and sixth form years were reached and some telling victories scored up to the credit of the undaunted youths. The four and eight-oared shell crews made highly creditable showings at this most exact-

ing and difficult sport in 1934, the first full year of rowing. The Tennis Team came through with flying colors as the scholastic champions of Delaware. It is most inspiring to see (and hear) the crews gliding over the surface of Noxon-town Pond followed closely by the coaching launch in which are usually found Headmaster Pell and Holder of the Faculty giving the neophytes the benefit of their racing experience at Oxford, Princeton and Harvard. These instances are manifestations of the inner life of the school and indicative of many good things to come. Without doubt the real beginning of St. Andrew's has been reached!

The causes of this really splendid achievement are many and varied. Perhaps the best answer is a cryptic one contained in the pronouncement of the Founder:—

“The teaching and conduct of this school is based on the Christian religion. The Trustees and teachers believe that man's knowledge of right and wrong has been revealed by Almighty God, demonstrated by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and that man is guided by the Holy Spirit to live according to God's revelation,”

and in the statement of the purpose of the School which is set forth in the yearly catalogue:

“It is the purpose of the Founder that St. Andrew's should provide secondary education of a definitely Christian character, at the minimum cost consistent with modern equipment and the highest standards. The teaching and conduct of the School are based on the Christian religion. All boys are expected to take part in the School's worship and religious education, which are in accordance with the practice and principles of the Protestant Episcopal Church”.

When Walden Pell, Headmaster of St. Andrews, contemplates the beautiful estate of the School at Noxontown where he has built up a Utopian community along the highest lines of Christian idealism, his mind must dwell with satisfaction on the steady development of the great idea of the

Founder—the creation of a garden of souls—and then perhaps the lines of the old poet come to him—

A, Garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Fern'd grot-
The veriest *school*
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
Tis very sure God walks in Mine.

and I am “very sure” that he would repeat the last line many times over.
