

ESSEX COUNTY.

Charles M. Davis, Superintendent.

In obedience to law, I have the honor to present the following report. That part of Essex county which lies outside of the cities of Newark and Orange is the field under my charge, and to which the following statements refer:

On comparing the statistics of the present year with my first report (rendered two years ago), a marked advance is to be noticed in almost every respect. The total amount then raised from all sources for school purposes was \$31,796.42; this year, \$63,091.68—an increase of nearly one hundred per cent. The value of school property then was \$108,750; this year it is \$171,158—an increase of forty-eight per cent.

The average pay of teachers has advanced from \$60.55 for males and \$33.34 for females, per month, to \$85.64 and \$35.62, respectively. This is because the teacher's work is more highly valued, and also because there is a demand for higher qualifications.

I wish I could say that the rate-bill system had been abolished; but, although this has not yet been done, still we have been approaching it so steadily that I believe another year will see its death in Essex county.

Two years ago there were fourteen districts in which the schools were not free; now there are seven. The amount of tuition fees then collected in those fourteen districts was \$2,178.06 ; in 1870 it was \$436.20, divided as follows :

District No. 15	\$125 78
District No. 16	\$25 00
District No. 17	\$70 00
District No. 21	\$93 00
District No. 23	\$32 42
District No. 25	\$25 00
District No. 26	\$65 00
	\$436 20

There are in those districts 694 children, and a district tax of 63 cents each would have made the schools free. Were the townships required by law to raise not less than four dollars for each child, no rate-bill would be necessary in any district in this county. I do not mean that such schools as I desire to see could be supported for that sum, but it would answer for such schools as we have in the country districts, which are the only ones where no district tax is raised.

The sentiment of the people is becoming fixed in favor of good public schools in many districts. Heavy taxes are assessed and willingly paid to erect suitable buildings and employ capable teachers.

There is nothing stationary with such citizens; as the facilities for giving a good education to the children increase, their ideas of what constitutes an education also enlarge, and their motto ever

seems to be “forward.” I regret that the outlying districts do not advance more rapidly, but I have hopes that the examples of those nearer the cities will steadily influence them to improve. Not that there is no improvement among them, but it is slow.

I wish to make especial mention of the teachers. It is an honor to be the superintendent of schools conducted by a corps of such teachers as are many of those now laboring in this county. There are among them not a few gentlemen of high intellectual endowments and scholarly attainments, who have made teaching their profession, and are enthusiastic in its practice. We have many ladies, too, of refined manners and careful culture, whose examples as well as instructions tend to the improvement of their pupils. Such teachers also elevate the profession and stimulate others to rival them. If fair pay were offered in all our districts there would be still more of this class.

And just here I may mention a custom which exists in some Boards of Trustees, in reference to the bargains they make with their teachers. It is an old one, but would be “more honored in the breach than in the observance.” They engage their teacher at a certain sum per annum, and pay him by the month, a month's pay being not one-tenth, but one-twelfth of a year. For example: a teacher is engaged on the first of September at \$1,000 a year; at the end of five months he leaves the school, and receives not \$500 but \$416.66. If he stays the whole year, he receives a year's pay. But even then there is often trouble. Why not have it understood that a school year is ten months, and a month's pay is one-tenth of a year's salary? Great progress has also been made in school houses and furniture. The sentiment in favor of providing good accommodations is almost universal. Every year several new buildings are erected, and old ones enlarged or repaired.

In Irvington last summer a new one was built at a cost of       ; at the dedication, the State, County, and Newark City Superintendents were present, and took part in the exercises.

A large addition has been made to the school house in Montclair, by which the accommodations have been nearly doubled. In East Orange two fine brick buildings are arising, at an expense of about \$30,000 each. Other districts are making arrangements to erect equally good buildings next year.

With such improvement in our accommodations, and with such a body of teachers, it would be strange could I not report good progress in the schools themselves. In some cases higher studies are pursued, but the principal advance has been in more thorough and intelligent instruction in the main elements of a common school education.

More efforts are made by school officers to secure prompt attendance and good deportment on the part of pupils. In District No. 28, South Orange, the Trustees, among other prizes offered, give a gold coin to the pupil who is first in attendance, and also one of equal value to the pupil whose deportment is best. Last year there were two, Anna Klein and Mary Hogan, who were not absent once. In District No. 31, the same can be said (for the third time) of Florence Headly; and in No. 38, of David Asa Dodd. It is almost unnecessary to add that these scholars also stand among the first as regard deportment.

I have sent to most of the trustees and friends of education in the county the State Superintendent's Report on the Township School System. While some earnest friends of the cause think this change would work unfavorably in some cases, and would seriously retard progress in others, still the general opinion is in favor of the change.

The vacancies in the Agricultural College are all filled.