

## ESSEX COUNTY

C. M. Davis, Superintendent.

To E. A. Apgar. State Superintendent:

In obedience to law. I have the honor to present the following report:

Although there have been no striking changes in this county during the past year, what we have to state is decidedly favorable. The school property has increased in value \$32,000; the number of children, 2,208; those enrolled on the school register, 1,527; the average attendance, 1,863; one new house, (valued at \$15,000,) has been erected, and two old ones repaired; the number of pupils attending private schools has decreased 754; and (we are sorry to add) those attending no school have increased 1,445. Most of the latter, however, consist of those children whose parents think them too young to go to school, although over five years of age; or, having attended school until fifteen or sixteen years old, have, through necessity or choice, "gone to work." Still there are many that can and ought to attend school, but who do not; we hope the time is not far distant when there will be none of this class.

### BUILDINGS.

The county is now supplied with buildings valued at \$1,423,450, in good condition, except in two districts. In one of these (No.41) \$3,000 has been voted for a new house, which will be *very good* for that district. In the other (No. 25) the building is large enough for the district, but needs repairing and new furniture. Caldwell has just finished a handsome and convenient house, at an expense of \$15,000. The value of the school property in the three districts of East Orange is, respectively, \$45,000, \$40,000, and \$24,000. This is the only township in the county of which it can be said that all the buildings are *very good*. How many other such townships are there in the state?

### TEACHERS.

It has given me great pleasure to mention, in former reports, the high character and attainments of most of the teachers in this county. Some of our principals are second to none in the State, either in scholarship, gentlemanly manners, ability to instruct, or in their personal influence upon the pupils, as well as the citizens of their districts. Many of the assistants and the teachers in district schools are doing a superior work for our children. In justice to such I would ask, cannot something be done by which such teachers may be put, at least, on an equality with an inexperienced girl just graduating from the State Normal School? The third grade State certificate ranks one degree above the first grade county certificate, remains in force four years, and is granted to Normal graduates. Cannot some means be devised by which teachers of undoubted scholarship, ability, and success, and who have taught for ten or fifteen years, can receive a certificate for life?

### INSTITUTE.

The second annual institute was held during the first week of April, in Bloomfield. The citizens cordially entertained the teachers, and also attended the sessions in large numbers. It is not necessary to give a particular description of the exercises; they were varied and valuable. The teachers were greatly interested and benefited, and the cause of public school education in Bloomfield received a decided impulse. This district was the first one in the State that established free public schools, it having so done by an act of Legislature, passed in 1849. Since then, its progress in educational matters has been onward. I cannot leave this subject without mentioning the loss this county has sustained by the

resignation of Prof. John P. Gross, of Montclair. The valuable work done by Mr. Gross, in Montclair, is well known throughout the country, and even much farther. His assistance as examiner, his active exertions in the county association, and his instructions before the institute, made his influence for good very widely felt. It is gratifying to know that the State does not lose the benefit of his labors, as he has removed no farther than the neighboring county of Union.

#### SENTIMENTS OF THE PEOPLE.

These are universally in favor of a good common school education. Their views may differ somewhat as to what this comprises; but none would withhold what they call by this name. It is conceded that the State is right in offering this, free, to all its children. They still differ, however, and will for a long time, as to the propriety of providing a higher education. This has been wisely left to the districts to decide for themselves. In this county they will act with wise and deliberate liberality. When all the expensive buildings are paid for, and the taxable property of the county has sensibly increased, the districts will feel able to pay larger sums for instruction. Four of our graded schools, Montclair, Bloomfield, the Eastern and the Ashland districts of East Orange, have established high school departments. The first graduating class of the Montclair High School held its commencement exercises in the largest church in that village, on the 25th of June last. Having been present on that occasion, you yourself can testify that the crowded building showed the interest of the people in their school, and that the exercises of the graduating class were of a high order, and reflected great credit on their instructors. It was stated by the president of the board, that three of the class had been examined for admission to Yale College, and had been admitted without conditions.

#### PERMANENCE IN OFFICE.

Our school affairs have, in many respects, attained a permanent character, which gives them increased strength. The money invested in houses and furniture, and the established salaries paid to teachers, insure permanent schools; greater permanence in the office of trustee would secure them against changes to which they are liable, unless closely watched. As there are but three trustees in a district, it sometimes happens that by the removal, resignation, or death of one, two are to be chosen at the annual election. A few disaffected men, (and such are always to be found, even in the most enlightened and liberal districts.) by secretly making a special effort, may succeed in putting two of their number into this office, thus enabling them to discharge valuable teachers, and otherwise seriously and even fatally affecting the efficiency of the school. Greater permanency in the office of both trustee and teacher is one of our great needs. Good teachers should not be liable to removal at the caprice of a few men or women, whose children may not have been dealt with as leniently as their indulgent parents desire. How these ends are to be attained, is a subject for the consideration either of the Legislature or of the board of education. One method, in our thickly settled localities, would be to unite all the districts of a township, under the direction of a board of not less than nine members, not more than three of whom shall go out of office every year. There are other reasons, also, for such union in populous towns. I do not use my official power to form such union, as the board would still consist of only three men, and larger interests would rest upon it. But if a law were passed authorizing a township to unite its districts and elect a board of from seven to nine trustees, it would remove the difficulty.

The character of our schools is affected by a peculiar geographical feature, to which reference was made in a former report. A ridge of trap rock—called First Mountain—divides the county into two nearly equal parts. East of this there are two cities, seven townships, and part of an eighth; while west of it there are but three townships and part of a fourth. In the former there is a population of 160,000, in the latter about 7,000. The census returns of these sections since 1867, are as follows:

YEAR	EAST	WEST
1867	28,414	1,856
1868	30,807	1,817
1869	31,944	1,756
1870	33,002	1,800
1871	36,239	1,826
1872	38,346	1,804
1873	39,258	1,871
1874	41,422	1,915
Total increase in seven years,	13,008	59

The following is the report of the enrollment and average attendance during the same years:

Year	ENROLLMENT		AVERAGE ATTENDANCE	
	East.	West.	East.	West.
1867	no report.	no report.	no report.	no report.
1868	“ “	1,196	“ “	657
1869	15,107	1,184	8,837	766
1870	17,838	1,197	10,305	695
1871	18,574	1,228	12,329	738
1872	19,524	1,190	12,490	639
1873	20,379	1,186	12,580	618
1874	21,852	1,240	14,308	703
Total gain.	6,745	44	5,471	36

YEAR	EAST	WEST
1868	\$314,800	\$15,200
1869	634,600	17,450
1870	747,350	22,300
1871	816,200	23,400
1872	1,036,050	25,300
1873	1,377,300	29,600
1874	1,383,500	39,950
Increase in valuation,	\$1,068,700	\$24,750

It will be noticed that the increase in the eastern part has been constant from year to year, while in the western, excepting in the value of school property, there has been sometimes a backward movement. The total increase in the census report is over forty-five per cent. for the east, while the west shows less than four per cent. In the increase of enrollment, the per centage is forty-four and four, respectively; but in the average attendance it is still striking, being sixty-one and five. The value of school property in the eastern part had increased three hundred and forty per cent.; in the western, one hundred and sixty-three per cent.

These two equal sections, then, present on the one side a large city with populous suburbs, all steadily increasing in population, wealth, and intelligence, and making excellent provision for the education of

its children: on the other side, a scattered people, not wealthy, gaining their livelihood chiefly by agricultural and other manual labor, providing for their children's education according to their own moderate means and views, not feeling its importance generally as do the inhabitants of the other section. To this, however, there are exceptions, particularly in Caldwell, where three districts have united and erected a handsome and convenient school building, at an expense of \$15,000. In this will be opened on the first of September, the first graded school west of the mountain. As the population of the neighboring districts increases, the influence of this example will be felt, until there will be a graded school in every township of the county.