

Susan Sloan Pierce, my mother, was one of a family of twelve children of Samuel and Rachel McMinn Sloan. Samuel Sloan was born on February 7, 1776, in the town of Armagh, County of Tyrone, Ireland, and died in Worcester, New York, on November 9, 1870. Rachel Mc Minn was born on January 12, 1791, in the town of ~~D~~^Wgannon, County of Tyrone, and died at Union Center on March 8, 1874. They were of Scotch blood. They became engaged to be married, and Samuel came to America in 1806 to get a start in the world, promising to return for Rachel when he could. In five years he kept his promise. They were married on April 6, 1812, and sailed on June 1 of that year for their new home. It was during the War of 1812, and their vessel was captured by the British and landed at Halifax, Nova Scotia, instead of at New York. Remaining there three years, they made their way to Argyle, Washington County, New York, where they found a settlement of Scotch-Irish. Two of their twelve children were born in Halifax but the other ten were born in Argyle or near-by Salem. From Argyle the family moved to Worcester, Otsego County, New York, on April 1, 1835.

It was in Worcester, New York, that my mother became acquainted with Edmund Pierce, son of Isaac and Matilda Babcock Pierce, and married him June 15, 1854. Both Isaac Pierce and

his wife, Matilda Babcock Pierce, were born and reared in Otsego County, New York, but I am sorry to say any record of their parents is lacking. Grandmother Pierce was one of ten children and I have no knowledge of any of them except one sister, Elizabeth Babcock Holden, whose two daughters were known to us as "Auntie" Hartwell and "Auntie" Belknap. It was the latter who had connection with a wealthy family in New York whose old clothes she sent Mother for help in clothing me. How often I wished that just once I could have a dress made from cloth purchased for that purpose instead of the made-over dresses of beautiful material much better than the other children had, for any child will tell you what a cross to bear is being different in any way from one's youthful friends.

My Father being an only son felt obligated to live at home and there he took Mother. Soon after their marriage Grandfather decided to move to Colesville, Broome County, New York, which was quite an undertaking for there was no transportation other than by horse and wagon and driving all live stock on foot. My older brother was born in Colesville. When he was about four years old, Father, urged by my Mother, decided to leave home and went into business with Uncle William Sloan, my mother's brother, in Worcester, New York. Father did not make a successful

merchant as he could not stand up to a customer in the interests of the business. If, as really happened, a customer bought a kerosene lamp and a gallon of kerosene and a year later came to return the lamp because she could not afford to keep it since the whole gallon of kerosene had been used, Father refunded the purchase price. Uncle William and Father dissolved partnership and in 1869 Father purchased a farm four miles from Worcester village in Decatur.

Meantime, I had been born September 18, 1866, and in 1868 twin boys, one of whom died before his second year. They had made a comfortable adjustment to life on this farm when Father's mother died in October, 1873, in Union Center, where Grandfather had moved shortly after Father went to Worcester to live. Because of family and other matters, Father went alone to the funeral. When he returned he brought the bad news of his agreement to return to his father's home and care for him and a maiden aunt. As can be imagined, this was not an arrangement agreeable to Mother, but those were the days when wives submitted to husbands plans, and in late October, 1873, our home became a farm in Union Center, Broome County, New York.

I was seven years old and had never been in school, but this does not mean my education had not been given attention.

As was customary in those days, a child must learn his letters. Mother considered this the only way to teach reading: first to know the letters and then laboriously to name the letters in each word and then to be told the word. I have heard that the process by which I learned to read, after knowing the letters, was to follow Mother about the house as she worked and spell the words. If, for any reason, she paid no attention, I would spell W-H-A-T over and over ending with "Huh" until I got the word What or any other word I needed to know. Thus my education began in these early years in my home. I cannot remember when we did not have the weekly publication called "The Youth's Companion," which covered a wide field of youthful interests in a helpful, sensible, and dignified way. Also we had certain religious papers and the Bible. Mother read to us and very early I preferred to read for myself. Our farm home was at a distance from neighbors and these with few children, so that we were thrown more or less upon our own resources. One result of this was that we shared the home activities. Whenever Mother baked pie, cake, bread, or whatever it might be, we had our own small rolling pins, breadboards, cooky cutters, etc. One requirement was that we must eat what we made. There was never any waste in our family. One of the lost means of education

for children is the too generous supply of "ready-made" in every field of food and clothing. I never wore a pair of stockings bought at a store until I was a big girl. No wonder Mother had to learn to read while knitting or there could have been little reading with five pairs of feet to cover. My formal education began when the family moved to Union Center in 1873. The one-teacher rural school was not far from home. There were two terms a year: one for the big boys and girls, November-February, with a man teacher, and one for younger children, May-August, with a woman teacher. I began the winter term in November, 1873, but mumps and whooping-cough prevented my attendance beyond the first weeks. We were classified according to the reader, and as it was my first experience, naturally it was the First Reader I took to school. Mr. Smith, the teacher, sent word to Father that another reader was needed, ^{As} I had memorized all of the First Reader, It, therefore, happened that the Third Reader was provided. The pupils in the Third Reader were boys all older than I, so that I became an easy mark for their teasing. I was a greenhorn and did not know how to protect myself, but later I learned.

For the next five years life was without variety except that I made the acquaintance of death. Grandmother Sloan and

Grandfather Pierce, both of whom lived with us, died, and in the spring of 1878 Father died. During practically his whole life he had suffered from severe headaches, and at 56 he escaped further suffering. This left Mother with a dependent maiden aunt, three children, and a farm of forty acres from which to extract a living. That she did this shows what a marvelous person she was. With a sense of humor that helped us all over many bumps, good management, and the help of relatives who sent us used clothing, we were never cold nor hungry nor naked, and always a cheerful optimism prevailed that made life happy for us.

In the fall of 1879, one of Mother's sisters, Aunt Margaret, and her daughter living in Albany, offered to give me a home with them and a chance to attend Albany Public School #2 as a pupil in the 9th Grade. To appreciate the situation, it has to be remembered that I had attended only this two-term rural school where each departing teacher left no records of achievement behind them so that there was no worry about "passing." Every term each pupil told the new teacher where he belonged, and as a result, I had avoided getting into the part of Arithmetic I did not like. Thus in my fourteenth year, there had been no systematic coverage in any subject that the pupils in this Albany school had been doing for eight years. Music and Drawing were absolutely

new fields of study. I never worked harder in school than that year, but I kept up with the rest and stood fourth in the class of twenty-five pupils. Moreover, I had my first experience of being away from home. Because there was need for economy in providing some extra clothes, there was no money to pay for visits back and forth so that I did not see Mother and my brothers from the last of August, 1880, until early in July, 1881.

There was no possibility of my having four years in high school, and so the next year I was at home. To pass the time I went to the winter term of the rural school and rehashed the work done in Albany. One of the older men of the community, interested in the young, suggested to my mother that I apply for the position of teacher for the summer term. I did this and had the promise that if I passed the examination for a Third Grade Certificate, the position would be mine. Twice each year an Institute was conducted to help teachers in learning teaching techniques and other matters supposed to build up teacher morale and improve the quality of their teaching. In September, 1881, an older young woman invited me to go with her to the Institute meeting in Binghamton. Without seriously considering this important, but only as a chance to spend a week in the city, I went

and attended every session, also taking the examination, but not even asking for a report, as my age, not yet quite fifteen, made me ineligible for a certificate. But the situation was different in March, 1882, when again I attended the sessions and took the examination for, if successful, I would have a Third Grade Certificate and thus be allowed to teach the Bradley Creek School, May 1-August 18, 1882, and earn \$1 a day. If you reckon the time, it will show just eighty days so that I taught eighty days and had \$80--quite an event in the life of a young person who had never before earned any money. Yes, I passed and received the Certificate, though Commissioner L. never quite believed that I did not see the blank for reporting age--as really was true.

By the end of this term, my aunt and cousin again came to the rescue and offered me a chance to attend the Albany State Normal School--a two year course. Admission was an elementary Regents Academic Certificate which I had received as a graduate of the Albany Public School⁶. So conscientious was the aforementioned School Commissioner that he dated the blank recommending me on my sixteenth birthday though I was admitted about two weeks earlier as a Junior First to the Albany State Normal School. The course consisted largely of subject matter in Elementary Algebra, Plane Geometry, Rhetoric, Grammar, Arithmetic, Drawing,

Geography, Penmanship, a little Physics, and Chemistry, Botany, Bookkeeping, Ethics, and twenty weeks of practice teaching with some supervision and individual interviews, if needed. Plans were written for the first week or so and then omitted. I had a class of two girls in Geography for ten weeks and a class of six girls in Arithmetic for ten weeks. During the first year we were classed as Junior Firsts and Seconds and the second year as Senior Firsts and Seconds. Except for the nominal practice teaching and the study of Ethics, the course was the equivalent to that of a two-year high school course. We were supposed to learn how to teach by observing those who taught us, and as nearly all had come with the same preparation as I, from small rural communities, it was an education to be in the capital city and to meet teachers of real worth, though few of them were college graduates. Miss Kate Stoneman, who was a graduate of 1866, was one of these teachers. She taught Geography, Drawing and Penmanship, and at the same time, studied Law. A special act of the Legislature had to be passed to permit her admission to the Bar since she was a woman. She was an ardent suffragist and considered peculiar--^{"Why} should women have the vote?" Miss Stoneman is quoted as saying, "It would be a good thing if all the men could be placed on the top of the Capitol and the ladder removed."^{omit}

On June 26, 1884, I was given a diploma which licensed me to teach in the schools of the State of New York. In August, 1889, Dr. Edward P. Waterbury died. He had been President since September, 1882. One of the notable accomplishments of his presidency was his convincing the Legislature that 4 Lodge Street was not suited to its purpose and the appropriation for the purchase of site and erection of a building on Willett Street, which was occupied in the fall of 1885. Another activity was his preparing and publishing a history of graduates of the Normal School from its organization in 1845 to 1886, and his securing gifts from the Alumni for the erection of a \$5,000 Memorial Window in the new building on Willett Street. With this brief statement of historical matter I shall return to the time of my graduation and recount my second experience as a teacher. Having been away from home, the family desired me to secure the position of second teacher in a two-teacher rural school, the other teacher a man. It was a winter term. The building was old and was replaced before the end of the sixteen weeks by a new one. I had a classroom into which were sent the classes to be instructed. If I remember, there were nearly thirty of these groups and each could be given only about fifteen minutes, part of which time was devoted to getting order and attention. I have never been at all happy in the memory of those weeks from October 20, 1884, to February 17, 1885. Conditions over which I had no control were partly at fault.

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Soon after the close of this term, a friend told me of a vacancy in the position of preceptress in Lisle Academy about twenty miles north of Binghamton, New York, and suggested I apply. She gave me the name of the President of the Board. The letter was written and the position was mine. Here the duties were those of a classroom teacher to whom classes came to be instructed. The atmosphere was pleasant and the work occupied fully the hours of the school day, 9-12 and 1-4. Rhetoric, Botany, Bookkeeping, American History, Algebra, both elementary and advanced, and Geometry. My pupils were about my own age. They had to be prepared to take Regents Examinations. Compare this load with present-day practices. Now a high school teacher in New York State concentrates on one subject as a major and another as a minor and her license permits her to teach only these subjects with a few exceptions. She spends hours, months, years, in preparation and in her first year of teaching may receive \$1200 to \$1500 in payment. I received \$7 a week or \$280 for forty weeks' work, but my preparation had not been so costly nor so thorough.

At the end of the term I was offered the position for the next year, 1885-1886, and accepted it.

Lucky is the man or woman who has friends. This is especially true in my case. It seemed to be so even before I realized the need of help. While teaching in Lisle, my cousin, Andrew Sloan Draper, was elected to the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, April 7, 1886. (Later this position became the New York State Commissioner of Education.) Also he was on the Board of Trustees of the ^{Albany} State Normal School. As a former pupil of Dr. Waterbury in the Albany Boys Academy, he was in a position to talk with President Waterbury about his young cousin who was teaching in Lisle Academy. The result of this was a letter to me from Dr. Draper, saying that Dr. Waterbury was enough interested in me to visit Lisle to discover the possibilities of my being useful in my Alma Mater. The visit happened to come at the right time, for Dr. Waterbury found me teaching Algebra, a subject in which he was particularly interested, and the class of seventeen was large enough to test my ability to manage a group of students. Evidently a conference followed for I was advised that because of my youth it would be well to accept the position in Lisle for another year provided they would increase my pay from \$7 to \$10 a week. The position was offered, but the request for an increase was met by the statement that they never had paid and could not now afford to pay more than

the \$7. Therefore, I went home the last of June with no job ahead. Mother, in her usual way of meeting situations, said that so long as there was the home I would have food and a roof over my head. On July 25 a letter came from Dr. Draper saying, "You were yesterday appointed by the Executive Committee of the Albany Normal School as a relief teacher and secretary to the president, at a salary of \$500 per year, to commence at the opening of the school in September. You will please make your arrangements accordingly."

A day later one was received from Dr. Waterbury telling of the appointment and adding, "You will be needed here September 5. Please let me know of your acceptance of the position. I congratulate you."

Therefore, early September found me in Albany. Dr. Waterbury's office was small. I sat on one side of a large desk and the president on the other. My duties were not arduous as a secretary. As a penman I was not very satisfactory since all records, letters, and documents of every kind were written in longhand. The day of the stenographer and typewriter had not come to the Normal School in 1886. I have no very clear memory of the details of the office. I acted as a messenger, taught some classes, and enjoyed the nearness to Mrs. Waterbury and her daughter. One door of the office

opened directly into the residence of the president. It was no uncommon thing for Mrs. Waterbury to open the door and indicate that I was invited in to enjoy a snack, to see a new dress, or just for an exchange of words about this and that. There was a kindness and fatherly interest that included the whole faculty. All of them at that time were graduates of the school including Dr. Waterbury, himself.

At the end of the year I received an extra check for \$100 which was given to me, it was explained, because I had earned it. Naturally this, with the assurance of returning in September, sent me home feeling that life was a very pleasant experience.

Early in September, 1887, I received the following letter written by Dr. David Murray, Secretary of the Trustees of the Normal School, "I am directed by the Executive Committee of the Normal School at Albany to notify you that at a meeting held September 10, 1887, you were appointed a member of the Faculty of said School at a salary of \$700 for the year, commencing September 14, 1887."

This appointment gave me the status of a teacher, and for the next two years there was little change in my life. I taught some Algebra and Geometry classes, a class in Rhetoric, and one "directed towards helping the young teacher understand common

fractions and improve her ability to teach them." In this class we asked "why" about every rule. For example, in dividing a fraction by a fraction why invert the terms of the divisor and then proceed as in the multiplication of a fraction by a fraction.

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Dr. William J. Milne, whose work in Genesee State Normal

School had been outstanding together with his other activities,

From 1891 to the present time I have served on the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association. Several of those years I was the Secretary. Since 1934 I have been president of the Half Century Club, the membership of which consists of all who have been graduated fifty years or more. When the Benevolent Association of State College for Teachers was organized in 1928 I became a member of its Board of Directors.

made his selection to the presidency a wise one.

In 1890 the State Normal School became the State Normal College. Admission requirements were changed, and the new purpose of the college became "the training of its enrollment exclusively in the art and science of teaching." This meant changes in the faculty. My work no longer fitted into the plan and Dr. Milne advised that I prepare for work in the Practice School. To do this I was given a year's leave of absence without pay and in September of 1890 I went to the Oswego State Normal School to observe and study the work of their practice school, to take some courses given there in Child Study and Psychology, and to attend sessions of criticism given by those working with practice teachers. Dr. Milne wrote to me while there, "I want you to see something of all the work that is done and bring home as much as you can that we can make use of."

Perhaps it is fitting here to explain the reason for my going to Oswego Normal School rather than ^{to} one of the others. Dr. Sheldon, President, was a follower of the Pestalozzian method, which is based on the study of children and nature rather than on books. He had gathered a faculty in accordance with the theory of using objects instead of books in teaching

children. It was to be my privilege to bring this viewpoint to my work in the practice school of Albany State Normal School.

At the end of the term in January, Dr. Milne advised me to return to Albany and become an observer in our practice school. In September, 1891, there was established a practice school including all grades from kindergarten through a four-year high school. I became principal of the primary department, which consisted of grades 1-5. A full-time teacher was employed to teach the first grade, but practice teachers taught the other four with thoroughly prepared supervisors or critics to direct their work. I retained this position from 1891-1909, when all the departments below the high school were closed, as the school had in 1905 become a four-year college conferring the degrees of A. B. and B. S. and preparing only high school teachers. This meant another change in my status on the faculty.

So far in the history of the college there had been no one assigned to the exclusive care of student welfare. One of the women teachers had had the chore of inspecting places offered for rooming and boarding our students and of helping students to find these homes. There had been only nominal oversight of either rooms or students thereafter. Such supervision and inspection were now assigned to me as well as the granting of excuses for absences and conducting two classes in methods of

teaching elementary subjects. These courses were considered valuable for any who might become the principal of a school having grades as well as a high school department. At this time the social life among the students had not developed to any great extent, but there was an increasing demand among them to have dances and the affairs needing a central office in which to register them. Operating this clearing house became a part of my day's work. Gradually the students began calling me "Dean Pierce" and the college catalog called me "Dean of Women," but it was not until 1924 that I was officially appointed to that position. I held it until my retirement in 1933.

Previously, in 1920, my work among the students had received the grateful acknowledgment of the college and had been rewarded by the conferring of the honorary degree of Master of Pedagogy. Dr. Harlan H. Homer, Dean, presented me for the degree and Dr. Abram R. Brubacher, President, conferred it with these words, "Your loyal and faithful and fruitful service to the cause of education; your devotion to high, scholarly purposes; your own unwearied pursuit of knowledge; your solid achievements as a follower and emulation of Mary Lyon, that great pioneer in the education of women; your wisdom and your worth are here and now recognized by your Alma Mater."

During the years of inspecting boarding houses, I became convinced that the work of preparing teachers was only half done when no places were provided to give the prospective teachers satisfactory preparation socially.

In 1918, Miss Marian Syddum Van Liew, in charge of the Department of Home Economics in the College, on her own responsibility and at her own expense established Syddum Hall for the students in her department. Bishop Gibbons opened Newman Hall for Catholic girls, and with my help, the College Y. W. C. A. opened Y House and inter-sorority council established a rule that no sorority could be recognized that did not maintain a house. All this made for progress, but there was still no direct control by the College of these housing projects. In 1921, I suggested that the Alumni of the College could do something about it. The local group agreed to assume the expense of a campaign to raise \$300,000 for a dormitory, and this began in the winter of 1922. In the fall of 1925, the Alumni Halls of Residence were opened, consisting of a main hall and four cottages and housing 162 girls. Because they gave credit for the success of the project to my pugnacious and continued effort during its early days when there was need for encouragement, the Alumni Association named the hall for me. May I say

in passing that there were others who stayed by even in the early days when the dream of a hall large enough to be really helpful hung in the balance. It was hard to convince many that private service for a state-supported institution was not out of order.

In the lobby of Pierce Hall now hangs a portrait of me, painted by David G. Lithgow and presented by the class of 1927 for this purpose, proving that they believed then that there would be a residence hall some day. Since 1940, a second dormitory has been built and additional property acquired so that new Alumni-owned and operated halls house more than 300 students.

Establishing standards for the position of deans of women was another activity that seemed important. To make myself better able to do the work to which I was assigned, I began taking summer courses in Teachers College, Columbia. There I met women doing the same work, and we organized a club through which we became acquainted and exchanged plans of procedure. The idea of collecting reference material pertaining to the field of advising young women seemed worthy of putting into action, and a catalog of literature for Deans and Advisers of Women and Girls was compiled and published in 1921, and after being greatly enlarged was republished in 1923, and in 1930 a

supplement of all new material was published. This work demonstrated that there was very little material in existence pertaining directly to the counselling of women students, so in 1928 my book on Deans and Advisers of Women and Girls was published.

In 1919, as a dean of women, I was invited to attend the last week of a six-weeks' International Conference of Women Physicians, which was sponsored by the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association. A result of this meeting was an organization known as the Women's Foundation for Positive Health, in which I became interested and on whose Board of Directors I served for a number of years. Thus, I became concerned with the health of students. In 1925, while Chairman of the Health Committee of the National Association of Deans of Women, I directed a survey of the Student Health Service in the United States. In 1927 I prepared a catalog of Student Health Literature.

Religious education became another field of interest. In the Christian Endeavor Society, I saw an opportunity to help young people to develop practical Christian activities. I was the first president of the organization in my own church and later ^{held} official positions in the local and state organizations. At the age of 13 I began teaching classes in Sunday School. The need for better prepared leaders and teachers in this field was