

## Correspondence.

SALT LAKE CITY,  
July 30th, 1879.

Editors Deseret News:

Some time ago, by my request, Professor John R. Park, president of the faculty of the University of Deseret, and L. F. Monch, county superintendent of common schools for Weber County, visited the counties of Davis, Box Elder, Cache, and Rich, in the interests of education, and have made to me the following report, and as many practical suggestions are made by these gentlemen whose positions and practical ability will not be disputed, I take pleasure in forwarding to you for publication believing they will be interesting to all associated with our district schools, as well as general educational interests.

Respectfully, etc.,

JOHN TAYLOR,  
Territorial Superintendent of District Schools.

SALT LAKE CITY,  
July 18th, 1879.

To Hon. John Taylor, Ter. Superintendent of District Schools, Utah:

Dear Sir—In compliance with your request and appointment, Prof Monch and myself left Salt Lake City, June 16th ult., to visit and examine the schools of Davis, Box Elder, Cache, and Rich Counties, and having completed our labors, we beg leave herewith to submit a report of our travels and work.

Our plan of procedure on entering each county was, first, to present ourselves to the school superintendent, and acquaint him with the character and object of our commission, and gather from him such information, and get such assistance as would best facilitate our work of examining the schools of his county. Such aid, in most cases, was freely given, and materially furthered our efforts, the superintendent in every case, with one exception, planning the order of our visits, making arrangements for it, calling meetings for us to address, and accompanying us in all our visits throughout his county.

Second, having decided on the order our visits should take, we proceeded to examine such schools as were in session. In these examinations we did not interfere with the regular order of exercises when they were sufficient to exhibit the character of the instruction, the progress of the pupils, and the ability of the teacher as an instructor.

On other occasions, however, when our time was limited, we would call for what we deemed test classes. At other times we would conduct classes ourselves, sometimes with the object of determining how thorough had been the instruction given, and at other times for the purpose of making a little knowledge and advice to the teacher as to better methods of instruction than those he had adopted. We realized the necessity to success in teaching, of an implicit confidence of the pupil in the teacher, hence we often choose this guise for our instruction to the teacher, which, while transparent to him, did not violate the faith of his pupils.

When circumstances favored, we would address the children of the school and in familiar language and by pleasing illustrations, impress them with some realization of the advantages of education, the benefits of school, the necessity of regular and punctual attendance while going to school, the duty and effects of fidelity, the importance of habits of cleanliness, refinement, &c., and with all the duty of gratitude, love and obedience to their parents, kindness and respect to their associates, and faith in God.

During our visit, we also took notes of such facts as we thought might be of interest to you, or of statistical importance to your office, pertaining to the location and character of the school building, its material, size, condition, etc., its furniture and material for aid in illustration, as maps, charts, globes, blackboards, &c. After the dismissal of the school, if we remained so long, we took the opportunity of giving such direct advice to the teacher as our observations seemed to justify.

A third step in the course of our

investigations was to hold a conference with the trustees, who generally accompanied us in our visits to the schools. In this conference we urged as essential to the best interests of their district, that they study the duties of their office, and perform those duties with fidelity and promptness; and in order to avoid the unpleasant and sometimes expensive blunders that are occasionally made, that they study closely the school law, and with a view also of noting its defects, that as an instrument designed to aid in the production of good schools, it might be improved. On such occasions we also proposed to hear any questions that they might wish to ask pertaining to the duties of their office. In many cases, these questions were answered, and elicited the fact that blunders in attempts to discharge their duties were not uncommon. Through ignorance of the law or its misinterpretation we learned that ineligible persons had been elected trustees, that in some cases meetings, at which a local tax had been assessed, were illegal; that teachers were sometimes employed who held no certificate from the County Board of Examination; that its enumeration of a district was sometimes made up from the teacher's roll-book, thus swelling, if not corrected, the enumeration of its district by counting the same name two, three, and perhaps four times, and even including within it such as were below six years of age, or over sixteen. The opportunity was taken also, by the trustees occasionally, to consult our judgment in regard to the proper location for school-houses, and advice asked as to the best plan of construction, to meet the purposes in view.

These meetings impressed us more strongly than ever with the responsibility and importance of the office of a trustee.

The office requires men of observation, good judgment and good business capacity.

It is too often the case, however, that men are chosen who neglect their own personal business and thus seem to have time to spare, and for this reason they are thought best suited for the office, but the truth is, that the busiest and thriftiest men have the most time and execute the duties of the office best.

Fourth, We held ourselves in readiness to speak to the people on the subject of education, when they seemed to desire it, which appeared to be the case in almost every settlement, so much so that for the first twenty-one days out, we held twenty-one meetings. On these occasions we endeavored to set forth the true nature of education as a means of human development, and for the acquisition of correct knowledge; the necessity of founding all learning on a basis of true morality and religion; its importance to a community like ours, with so rich an inheritance of children, and with such a prospect of influence, power, and material progression.

We would call the attention of parents to their duties in the home training of their children; to the Sunday schools as a means of religious, moral and even secular instruction; to the necessity of a proper organization and gradation of schools; to the danger of employing any other than honest teachers, with intelligence and education founded on the true principles of morality and religion; to the evil effects of any mental or social eccentricity or physical deformity in the teacher; to the necessity of giving greater attention, at home and at school, to the cultivation of the social virtues.

## DAVIS COUNTY.

On leaving Salt Lake City, we proceeded at once to Bountiful, the nearest settlement in Davis County, and called upon the superintendent, Mr. Chester Call, whom we found at his home awaiting our arrival and prepared with a programme for our work in his county. We visited in order, the principal settlements of the county—Bountiful, Centerville, Farmington and Kaysville, with their several districts, the schools in most of which we found in session.

Having heard the charge so often made that the people of this Territory are indifferent to any public school interest, that they are in fact opposed to general education, we were, to say the least, much gratified, though not surprised, to find such proof of the incorrectness of the charge as we saw manifest in the educational spirit and work of the people of Davis County. We

did not find a school room that we could pronounce bad, but on the other hand, many of them are well constructed, and of good material, adobe, rock and brick.

The furniture generally was home made, though we found a number of rooms supplied with the patent "Triumph" desk. Though imported furniture is in most respects superior to the home made, yet we took occasion, in most instances to encourage the latter, chiefly on the ground of economy. Imported desks, in the first place, are expensive, and again, to purchase them takes the money from the district and from the Territory, where it would act again and again, directly and indirectly, to the benefit of the school. When good patterns are secured, and these can be secured, the home made article will answer every necessity of cheapness, comfort and utility.

Though better supplied than the majority of schools we visited in the matter of school apparatus, or material for illustration, yet the schools of this county are not supplied in this respect as we think they should be.

The Superintendent, Mr. Chester Call, however, has furnished each district in the county, or at least those we visited, with a set of Sander's reading tablets, and a set of Payson, Dutton & Scribner's charts of penmanship, which we think the trustees ought to supplement with additional material. In some instances, we found additional pieces of apparatus, but those were, generally, the personal property of the teacher.

A remark here upon the care of school property, and especially that used for the purpose of class illustration, will, perhaps, be proven. On several occasions during our travels we thought we discovered inexcusable negligence in this respect.

With all proper allowance for ordinary wear and tear and unavoidable accident, we still found such material sometimes so sadly abused through indifferent care, as scarcely fit for class use. What with proper care would have been good wall maps, tablets, and charts, we have found lying upon the floor, or pushed behind benches or bookcases, covered with dirt and cobwebs, or faded and warped and blistered from exposure in the window as sunshades, or to stop the wind and rain through broken glass; globes we have seen dismounted and dented and scarred, and blackboards wantonly defaced.

These observations are general and apply with greater significance, perhaps, to schools in other places than to those of Davis County.

In the matter of good teacher for her schools, this county has just reasons to be proud. There is nothing, perhaps, connected with our school affairs that more significantly indicates true efficiency, or their relation to the spirit and progress of the age than the character of the teachers employed. Fine grounds and houses and furniture and apparatus and books, all of the best and most expensive kinds, are simply dead, unproductive manner without the animus of a live and progressive teacher. The old-fashioned textbook questions-and-answer teachers, we believe are rapidly becoming obsolete, and we trust will be soon entirely supplanted by a class with better scholastic attainments, higher conceptions of man and his destiny, broader views of the objects and duties of life and in consequence, in possession of improved and more consistent methods of instruction.

Without detracting anything from the appreciation and good judgment of the trustees in this county, who have employed competent teachers, we have reason to believe that their opportunities for such selections are due, in a great measure, to the efficient management of their county superintendent. We found him greatly interested in the welfare of the schools of his county, and so active in the duties of his office that he seemed to be thoroughly acquainted with the condition and wants of every district in his charge, especially in the matter of teachers.

The grading of schools is a subject of which we took particular note and urged on almost every occasion in speaking before the people. There has been scarcely an attempt yet at gradation in Davis County, though it has fine facilities for executing such a plan to its evident advantage.

In East Bountiful district, however, arrangements are being made, which probably will be completed

for the winter session, for using the buildings now occupied for primary grades only, and a central building, now in course of erection, for intermediate and high grades. The new building promises to be a fine structure of brick, two stories, and 45 x 28 feet in dimensions. The plan of the house is well designed for the purposes intended, and so confident are the trustees of the early completion of every arrangement necessary to carry into effect their plan, that they have already secured their teachers for the intermediate and higher grades. The Superintendent, Mr. Call, desires and expects to bring the other districts of Bountiful, South and West, soon into the same plan, and by the good results which he believes will follow, he hopes to induce other settlements of his County to adopt a similar organization. In recommending the gradation of our schools, we would have it understood that we do not refer to the procrustean plan of classification that is, an arbitrary grouping of pupils into classes, or grades as they are called, without any reference to mental peculiarity or capacity, taste or disposition. This plan of casting all natures, however diversified in character, into the same educational world, restricting all to the same class of studies and to the same rate of progression, is proving a failure where it has been tried, and is becoming justly unpopular.

Gradation, however, based upon the principle of division of labor, a tried and true principle of political economy, is quite a different thing, and is what we should recommend in all cases justified by the extent of patronage, and its diversity of attainment in pupils. There is no cramping of the intellect in this system, but each pupil is given the fullest latitude possible to carry out any peculiar bent of mind, or to foster any aptitude that he may possess, and thus perhaps attain a superior degree of excellence in a direction unsuited to every other mind. Its most plausible and popular argument, however, is found in the economy of labor and expense that it secures.

In closing our report of Davis County, we should not forget to call your attention to the pleasant receptions we met, and the kind entertainment and treatment we everywhere received as commissioners of the chief educational officer of our Territory. The civil officers, the bishops, and the people of this county, as well as the others we visited, by their favor and assistance, aided us greatly in the accomplishment of our work, which we truly appreciate, and we hope, in all instances, properly recognized.

## BOX ELDER COUNTY.

Our introduction to Box Elder County was auspicious. Arriving in Willard City, on Sunday, June 22, we were met by the County Superintendent Wm. A. Christensen, from whom we learned that arrangements had been made for us to address the people in the evening on the subject of our mission.

The meeting held was large and the audience attentive, and manifested a deep interest in the subject of education, and an ability, if we may judge from impressions received, to discriminate in favor of its best principles.

On the following day we visited the only school then in session in the settlement. We found it excellent in almost every respect. It has two departments, a primary and a more advanced one, both teachers of which are good, the principal, by his broad conception of the object of education, his apt qualities, and his excellent method of instruction, certainly deserving the name he bears. The appointments of the school rooms were all that could be expected; patent "Triumph" desks, Monteith's wall map, Spencerian writing charts, good wall blackboards, globe, map of Utah, color charts, numerical frame, primary charts, etc., most of which were used in our presence in such a way as gave evidence that both teacher and pupil had comprehended their utility in other ways than that of serving simply to adorn the school room.

Leaving Willard we proceeded to Brigham City, and from that point visited in succession the schools of Mantua, Corinne, Lake Side, and Deweyville, the only settlements thus accessible to us that had schools in session.

We attempted meetings in only two of these places, Brigham City

and Mantua, at both of which there seemed to be a fine educational spirit prevailing.

The earnestness of the good people of Mantua is shown in their willingness to convene on such a call as an educational meeting at an hour so unpropitious as 4 p.m. We remonstrated with Superintendent Christensen for calling a meeting at such an unfavorable time for farmers, and in their busiest season. However, it seemed to be the only time possible, under the arrangements for our visit; but he said the people would "come out" and indeed they did, for we had a crowded house of attentive listeners. After our examination of the school and at the close of the meeting, we held our usual conference with the trustees, and for the first time heard a complaint which we encountered frequently afterwards in this and other counties. They say, "We can get none of the public money for our schools." "Why is it?" "We engage our teachers, pledging ourselves for such part of the salary as the public school money would pay; but, being unable to obtain our proportionment of the school fund, we are obliged to borrow money at a heavy interest, to keep our contracts inviolate." They reason, "as much as the three mill tax for the payment of school taxes only, it should be used for nothing else; that under the new law relating the collection of taxes should be few if any taxes; that this school money, therefore, come into the hands, that if this is the case why can we not get their orders cashed?" We report this fact to you substantiated as we have heard it frequently throughout Box Elder, Cache and Rich counties, and, it may be, the same fact is true of Davis county, but we did not happen to hear it.

There was but one school in session in Brigham City during our visit, and that composed chiefly of primary pupils, which might be said in truth of nearly all the schools we examined. The lateness of the season and the demands of the harvest have left but few of the larger advanced pupils in the schools. The principal school had closed a session before our arrival. We visited the room, however, in which the school had been taught and found it large and commodious, 33 x 63 feet in dimensions, heated with 62 of the patent "Triumph" desks, and supplied with several good pieces of school apparatus.

The building, the upper room of which are used for school purposes is known as the Social Hall. It is not school property, that is, it is not legally in the possession of the trustees, which we found to be true with respect to the property used for school purposes in every district of this county that we visited, but two, Willard and Lake Side.

In this respect Box Elder is most exceptional to the other counties we visited, for in them we were correctly informed, most of the property employed for school purposes is deeded to the trustees of the district, and the houses generally, used exclusively for school purposes. Corinne was renting a new Methodist church for her school. I had been conveniently visited for the school, and as it is a new purpose, we thought it well.

Deweyville was the last place on our route through Box Elder County, at which we found a school in session. We here missed the superintendent, Mr. Christensen, and prepared to pilot ourselves until we should reach our next field of regular labor. On our road to Cache County, we called at the Indian Farm on the banks of Bear River, where we found preparations under way for opening a school for the Indian youth. A convenient room had been set apart for the purpose, in a building recently erected. It needed only the requisite furniture and a competent teacher to complete the arrangements, which, we were informed, would soon be supplied.

Leaving the Indian Farm we proceeded to the "Dairy," a cooperative enterprise of Brigham City, located near the boundary line, between Box Elder and Cache Counties. The institution employs over 20 girls to milk over 400 cows and make the necessary butter and cheese.

These young people have organized themselves into a Mutual Improvement Society, which builds