

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 15
Number 2 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 15,
Issue 2

Article 5

1936

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Recommended Citation

Crow, C. L. (1936) "Florida University (1883)," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 15: No. 2, Article 5.
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol15/iss2/5>

FLORIDA UNIVERSITY (1883)

By C. L. CROW

The most ambitious and most visionary attempt ever made to establish in Florida an institution of higher learning was probably that of the founders, or founder, of Florida University. The plan of organization of the proposed school, altho not successfully carried out, was nevertheless worthy of some respect, for Dr. Kost, its main proponent, had perhaps a vision similar in part to that which afterward inspired Mr. Buckman.

According to the First Annual Announcement of the Florida University, which appeared in 1883, it was to open with two well-manned and adequately equipt colleges, one of which had been in existence for several years as the West Florida Seminary.

Little or no mention is made in the Announcement of four of the six colleges, or institutes, of which, as we shall learn from another source, the University was finally to consist, and very little space is devoted to the Literary Department. ". . . the fortunes of the medical college seemed to be uppermost in the minds of the University regents." ¹ We read :

The literary college is endowed by act of Congress. The medical is founded on the capital of an incorporated stock company, with a capital of \$60,000.00, and authority to increase to the amount of \$80,000.00. Ten per cent and over, as provided by law, has been paid in (\$6,180.00) and has been expended for appliances; and thus the medical college has a fine anatomical museum; a museum of natural history and comparative osteology, besides chemical apparatus.

By compact with the literary department [West Florida Seminary] one of its two buildings has been appropriated to the medical college. This is a commodious brick edifice, situated on an elevated site in the western part of Tallahassee, with ample grounds, shaded by a grove of native pines. The building is of fine architectural appearance, with a frontistyle of stately white columns

1. Cutler, *History of Florida, Past and Present*, Chicago and New York, 1923. I. p. 229.

supporting an entablature and gable above the second story. The building contains two large lecture halls, and eight additional rooms of convenient sizes, well suited for the medical department, with its museums and apparatus.

The literary department retains its other buildings, situated more centrally in the city, and reposing behind a grove of live-oaks. It is of ample capacity for all the necessities of the college².

The "Literary Faculty" was to consist of six professors, one of whom had been retired. These were: Major E. R. Rivers, C. E., President; Rev. W. H. Carter, D. D., LL. D., Ph. D., Professor of Ancient Languages; E. L. Blythewood, Professor of English Literature and History; F. Wespy, Ph. D., M. D., Professor of Modern Languages; W. F. Dickerman, Professors of Chemistry; A. H. Lowrie, A. M., Professor Emeritus of Political Economy. What, if any, provision was made for the teaching of other branches generally found in college curricula is not mentioned, altho it may safely be assumed that Major Rivers was to be in charge of mathematics and allied subjects².

The institution issued a Calendar for 1884-1885, in which is stated that it "was organized [in February, 1883] under a liberal Charter and two Colleges have been in operation-the Literary and the Medical. The former contains a Military School, and is the outgrowth of what has been 'West Florida Seminary,' whose separate Charter and special organization, as to Trustees and Endowments, are still maintained." The other branch "in operation" was the "Tallahassee College of Medicine and Surgery." In addition to these two colleges the following were "recognized by the University Charter": "Law College, Theological Institute, Polytechnic and Normal Institute". Of these the first named was said to be "in course of organization". The Polytechnic Institute, it will be found later, was to be composed of

2. *First Annual Announcement*, *ibid.*

seven schools: Civil Engineering, Mining and Metallurgy, Mechanics and Building, Natural Sciences, Arts [Painting and Music], Commercial.

The principal actions taken by the State or its representatives with regard to Florida University follow :-

In 1883 the State Board of Education "projected a plan of consolidation or coordination [of the existing State educational institutions], in accordance with which the, then West Florida Seminary was denominated 'The Literary College of the University of Florida' ".³ The writer does not know whether this idea of consolidation originated with the Board of Education or with the Rev. Dr. John Kost; nor does he know how the non-State College of Medicine and Surgery, at Tallahassee, came to be included in the scheme. It is probable, however, that the charter of Florida University was secured mainly thru the efforts of the Reverend Professor and Physician, who afterwards became Chancellor of the University and Chairman of its Board of Regents.

Validating the plan of the State Board of Education, altho probably altering it somewhat, the Legislature passed, on February 16, 1885, "An Act recognizing the University of Florida", which reads:

The people of the State of Florida, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. That the Florida University as organized at the city of Tallahassee be recognized as the University of the State, and to be known as the University of Florida; Provided, there shall be no expense incurred by the State by reason of this act.

Sec. 2. That the University continue under its present organization and officers until such further action be taken by the State Legislature as the case may require⁴.

Dr. Kost was, however, not successful in advancing the claims of his institution before the framers of the constitution for the State drawn up a few

³ *University [of Florida] Record*, Vol. I, No. 2, May, 1906.

⁴ *University Record*, Vol. I, No. 2, May, 1906.

months later. On the third day, June 11, of the Constitutional Convention of 1885 D. S. Walker, Jr., delegate from Leon County, offered the following memorial:

Tallahassee, Fla., June, 1885.

To the Honorable, the Members of the Constitutional Convention, Tallahassee

The Regents of the University of Florida most respectfully memorialize your honorable body on the importance of providing, in the revision of the Constitution, amply for the maintenance of the State University, according to the spirit of the old Constitution, in Section 2 of Article VIII, and the prescribing more distinctly the method by which the endowment and maintenance shall be made. If this is to be, as seems by the old Constitution, by joint use of the common school fund, then this should be better specified.

Your memorialists respectfully represent the great importance of this provision to the highest interests of the State in every way, and refer to the fact that the sister States have all made ample provision for their great Universities.

J. Kost, Chancellor.

J. T. Bernard, Secretary^s.

This memorial was, on motion of Mr. S. B. Conover, also representing Leon County, ordered printed in the Journal and referred to the appropriate committee. The report of the Committee on Education was made on July 2. It recommended that the "Communication of J. Kost, praying for provision being made for sustenance of the University at Tallahassee" be laid upon the table and made no mention of that institution in Article IX, Education, which it presented for the consideration of the delegates.

The Calendar of the Florida University for 1884-5 has the following headings: Board of Regents; members of Faculties; Organization; College Buildings, Grounds, and Appliances; Literary Department; De-

5. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Florida, which convened at the Capitol, at Tallahassee, on Tuesday, June 2, 1885.* (Tallahassee, 1885) p. 21.
5. *Ibid.* pp. 213, 214-217.

partments of Science, Literature and Arts Catalogue [better described by the sub-heading, List of Literary and Medical Students, 1883-84]; Tallahassee College of Medicine and Surgery; Polytechnic Institute; Law College; General Information.

It may be taken for granted that the University, as such, owned little or no property, for after "Organization" comes "College Buildings, Grounds, and Appliances", by which is probably meant those of the West Florida Seminary. Of these one reads:

There is held by perfect title, free of debt Ten Acres of most charming grounds, adjoining the city, on which is a commodious brick College building of two stories, containing two large lecture halls and eight additional rooms devoted to the Museum of Natural History; Museum of Anatomy and Pathological Anatomy; Chemical and Philosophical apparatus, and Normal Appliances. Among the latter, besides Globes, Telescopes, Microscopes and Charts, is Wythe's Paper Mache Model of the City and Suburbs of Jerusalem, scrupulously exact with the English topographical survey, on a scale of one inch to the 100 feet. (Two other Colleges, or Universities, possess this appliance, which cost several thousand dollars,) and, with such other means, are of great use in teaching History.

A commodious frame building is newly constructed and is the gift of Governor Walker of Tallahassee. The Library is already respectable and is receiving large additions.

Another brick building is leased by the University, and, with the others, suffices for present necessities. But it is believed the generous citizens of Tallahassee will not long suffer a rented building to be in use by the institution, but will erect a new additional building on the College campus soon.

The Library building contains a fine lecture hall and two additional rooms, all very elegantly furnished.

In this connection, however, one should not forget the \$6,180.00 raised by the incorporated stock company in immediate control of the Tallahassee College of Medicine and Surgery.

The outline of the courses offered in the "Literary Curriculum" is introduced by the

Note.--In the literary department of Florida University it is required that the grand purposes of Congress in the appropriation of land for its endowment, and the ob-

ject of the State Legislature in chartering the institution shall be fully maintained. Therefore its officers and functionaries are not alone *maintained*, but in the continued curriculum of instruction, which comes so happily in accord with what a Literary College requires, all the "schools" heretofore organized are still maintained although some of the services of Professors in other departments of the University are necessarily brought into requisition.

In the divisions of labor in teaching, as here adopted, and which accords with those of various of the best institutions of the highest grade in our country, a full equivalent of the four yearly classes of *junior* and is maintained. And in addition to the effectiveness of these old forms of organizing the labor of teaching, it is believed better results are obtained in the present method.

We have here "schools" or departments of instruction, and the student that receives the certificate of proficiency, in the requisite schools, becomes eligible for graduation in the college.

The faculty of the Literary Department, which had evidently been enlarged after the publication of the Announcement, were now eight in number. Of these two had no academic degree; of the four Masters of Arts three had won a second degree: C. E., Ph.D., M. D., respectively; of the two other Doctors of Philosophy one held the professional degree of M.D., the second had received the honorary degrees of D.D. and LL.D. Under "Members of Faculties" four-five, if we include the Chancellor of the University and Dean of the Medical Faculty-have "Rev." before their names; no further mention of one of these gentlemen is made, the distinctive adjective does not appear before the names of two of the remaining three as printed under "Faculty" of the Literary Department.

The professor of Latin and Greek in the University becomes the Professor of Intellectual Science and Moral Philosophy in the Literary Department. As a member of the University Miss Blythewood has the rank of "Teacher", on the staff of the Literary Department she is Professor of Modern History and Physical Geography. The Professor of Instrumental

Music is not deemed worthy of mention as a member of the University. This is indeed strange, for "Members of Faculties" has names the only purpose of which seems to be that of ornament: There are chairs of Oriental and General History and Rhetoric, of Geology, Mineralogy and Palaeontology, of the Science and Principles of Teaching, of Pedagogy and Institutes, of Mechanics and Civil Engineering, of Stenography and Chirography, of Commercial Science, Book-Keeping and Banking, and of Fine Arts. The professors of the two business courses are not named, but "Provided for". There is nothing here to indicate, however, that the occupants of the eight chairs just mentioned ever met a class. They certainly do not belong in the College of Medicine and Surgery, and their names are not to be found in the Faculty roll of the Literary Department, the only other branch of the University "in operation".

Among these "honorary" professors are the Rev. J. Kost, A.M., M.D., LL.D., Chancellor of the University and Dean of the Medical Faculty-appearing here as John Kost, A.M., M.D., Professor of Geology, Mineralogy and Palaeontology-; two holders of the degree of M.D., one of whom has also that of A.M.; and in addition one A.B. and one A.M. It is perhaps not to be expected that the professors of Fine Arts and of Instrumental Music, the latter of whom seems actually to have offered courses in the Literary Department, should be college graduates.

It may be well to state that the department of Science was not inaugurated at the State College, the Literary Department of Florida University, until 1898, that of Teacher-Training until 1900⁶, that of Music until 1902 and that of Business until 1903.⁷

6. Normal instruction was begun in 1883.

7. Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of Public-School Education in Florida*. Bulletin, 1921, No. 1, State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Fla. Footnote, p. 159.

The chairs in the Literary Department that were actually occupied are stated to be: Mathematics, Engineering and Military Tactics; Intellectual Science and Moral Philosophy; Political Economy and English Literature; Natural Philosophy; Chemistry and Botany; Modern Languages; Modern History and Physical Geography; Instrumental Music. The first of these was filled by Col. E. R. Rivers, A.M., C.E., President and Commandant; the second, by the Rev. W. H. Carter, D.D., LL. D., Ph.D. The latter appears under "Members of Faculties" as Professor of Latin and Greek, his School is given in the description of courses in the Literary Department as that of Ancient Languages and Metaphysics, his work in the second of these branches is listed under "School of English Branches and History".

Five years were required to complete the courses offered in Latin and in Greek, three years in French and in German.

To give an idea of the nature of the work done, it is perhaps sufficient to quote in part the description of that of one of the Schools.

Of the "School of English Branches and History" is said:

This is to serve in this College as a **Preparatory Department** to qualify the students to enter the higher classes. The efficiency of our reliable teacher Miss E. L. Blythewood, in this institution for years past, in fitting students for advanced studies is a guarantee for continued satisfaction.

An outline of the content of the courses given follows: "Fifth Class.-Spelling, Reading, Grammar, Geography. "Fourth Class.-Word Analysis, Grammar, History, United States; Composition. "Third Class.-Rhetoric, Composition, History of England, Elocution. "Second Class.-English and American Literature, Composition. "First Class.-Logic, Mental Science, Critical Reading of English Classics."

Candidates for admission to the fifth, or lowest class, of the Literary Department had to be at least twelve years of age and, if they wished to be registered as "Military Students", not under five feet in height.

Certificates of proficiency were to be granted upon the successful completion of a School and diplomas to holders of certificates from four or more schools. The requirements for degrees were: A.B.-Certificates from "The schools of Ancient Languages, Mathematics, English Literature, History and Natural Science"; B.S.-Upon satisfactory completion of the work in "The schools of English Literature and History, Mathematics, Natural Science and Modern Languages"; B.E.-Graduation from "The schools of English Literature and History and Mathematics, Modern Languages and Civil Engineering".-It will be noted that there is some inconsistency in the names given to the Schools.-"Graduation with distinction in all the Schools excepting Commercial and Military, will entitle the student to the degree of A.M."

According to the calendar in speaking of the Tallahassee College of Medicine and Surgery: "The facilities possessed by the College for affording thorough instruction in all branches of Medicine are exceeded by very few in this country. Besides a very full Faculty of men experienced not only in teaching, but also (every one of them) in long medical and surgical practice, there are also the most ample material appliances."

This very full Faculty was seemingly composed of almost all the practicing physicians of Tallahassee. As in the case of the Literary Department, however, more names appear under "Members of Faculties" than under "Medical Faculty." The "honorary" teachers forgotten when the special list was being prepared are a "Professor Natural History and

Comparitive Physiology” and an “Instructor in Taxidermy and Embalming”.

The professorships in the special list are: “Theory and Practice and Medical Clinics”, “Surgery, - Operative and Orthopedic, and Surgical Clinics”, “Anatomy”, “Obstetrics, and Diseases of Women and Children”, “Materia Medica, Therapeutics and Pharmacy”, “Chemistry and Botany”, and “Gynecology, Histology and Medical Jurisprudence.” As is to be expected, the titles of these chairs appear somewhat altered from those given in the general list. The “Professor of Chemistry and Botany” taught these subjects in the Literary Department of Florida University and was probably overworked, for, in addition to his teaching, he was engaged, if a statement given above be true, in the practice of medicine. The letters M.D. appear after his name. In addition to the professors, there was one unnamed, but “Provided for” “Demonstrator of Anatomy.”

Suitable age, good morals and the payment of fees were the only requirements for admission. This policy is justified by the statement that “Medical lectures are useful to all persons; and on this principle all may attend. Graduation in this institution depends entirely on merit.” In the second paragraph below this is found, in defense of the standards set for graduation; “But it must not be understood that this College will ever afford ‘easy’ graduation, or allow anything to be done to lower the proper grade of the physician.”

Candidates for graduation had to “afford evidence of good moral character, possess a good English education (Latin, Greek, German and French being also desirable), as well as a competent knowledge of the Natural Sciences. The Medical requirements are such as may be attained by three years reading, on the several medical branches, under a competent

preceptor; and the attendance of two full courses of lectures; the latter should be in this College.”

The College opened annually on the last Wednesday of October and closed on the first Wednesday of March. In other words, in the case of a student who had spent three years in reading medicine, formal instruction for approximately one college semester (it being assumed that a student could take two courses of lectures a session) was considered sufficient preparation for graduation and, consequently, for professional practice.

The cost of attending the school, including the outlay for “good board and lodging”, but not for laundry and other incidentals, was estimated to be \$160.00 or, if dentistry were added as an optional, \$170.00-it will be remembered that no provision for instruction in dental science is mentioned in the Calendar. Twenty-five dollars of the amounts mentioned, the fee for “Examinations for Degrees,” was returned to unsuccessful candidates.

Final examinations covering “all the branches of medicine and their collaterals” were conducted by the assembled faculty “during the last week of the lecture course, and candidates giving full satisfaction of thoroughness of instruction, however obtained, will receive [received] a diploma”.

Upon successful candidates was to be conferred not the customary M.D., but a “University Medical Degree”, and this only by vote of the Regents: “Tallahassee College of Medicine and Surgery is authorized by its charter to confer the regular medical degrees [Note plural]. But the institution has adopted the precedent of subjecting their decisions to a vote of the Regents, and securing to all successful candidates the *University Medical Degrees*.”

The summary in the Calendar for 1884-85 gives the student enrolment from Florida by counties, except in the case of one from Centerville and of one

from Key West. The total attendance is placed at seventy-eight; there were, however, seventy-nine matriculates, the one student from Georgia being overlooked.

Of the seventy-one students in the Literary Department one came from Hillsborough County, one each from Illinois and New York and two, probably brothers, from Kentucky; the sixty-six others were registered from Northwest Florida, fifty-six of whom were from Leon County. As there were three students each from Hamilton and Madison counties and as "Each county west of the Suwannee River is [was] entitled to send [free of charge for tuition] double the number of students that it has [had] representatives in the House of the General Assembly of Florida," one is surprised at the small registration, outside of Leon County, from this section of the State. The West Florida Seminary was then, at least during this session, almost wholly a local institution and one, as we have seen, not of collegiate rank.

In the College of Medicine and Surgery were enrolled one each from Leon County, Key West and Georgia and five from Michigan. Of those from Michigan three, perhaps all, came from Kalkaska, attracted presumably because of personal relationships with a member or members of the faculty. One of the students of medicine is designated "Post Graduate"; four have in parenthesis after their names "Graduated". No distinction is apparently made between "Graduated" and "Post Graduate". Of the latter the Calendar states: "This Institution will receive post-graduates from any respectable medical college, by payment simply of the matriculation fee, and the contingents arising from expenses of material for dissection, and for chemicals in laboratory." The name of one of the "Graduated", the student from Georgia, is to be found in the roster of the faculty.

The four other Colleges of the Florida University merit but little comment. The only mention of the Theological Institute is found under "Organization", for the clergy of Tallahassee were apparently more modest than were the members of the medical profession and failed or refused to organize themselves into a theological faculty.

The lawyers were shrewd, for, altho the Law College was "in course of organization", no definite action was to be taken until "a respectable sized class" was assured. The Polytechnic Institute was, on paper, a worthy rival of such a school as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Of its organization we are told that "The plan of this Institute is projected in like order as is now so popular in several of the prominent institutions of learning in this country. It is that of organization into schools."

Of the School of Civil Engineering is said: "Our present availments comprise good service by efficient teachers and instructors in all branches." A reference to the roster of "Members of Faculties" fails to confirm this—there is no special faculty list given except for the first two colleges, Arts and Medicine. The description of the School of Mining and Metallurgy reads much like an oration on the necessity for teaching these branches of learning. We are told: "Apropos then it is for the Polytechnic Institute of Florida University to set an example of public spirit. It may cost a sacrifice at the outset, but it must proceed. Who will come to help? Will the public patronize this public enterprise?" One is informed that "We have maps, charts, models, and other appliances besides the black-board, crayon. and *books*. We have competent and intelligent teachers and shall do good work; so no student or prospective miner need hesitate to come to this institute for an education in this line." What is said of Metallurgy consists mainly of promises.

The five paragraphs devoted to the schools of Mechanics and Building and of the Natural Sciences are written in a style more befitting a promoter than an educator.

It is easy to read between the lines of what is said about the School of Arts. Under Painting one finds that

A distinguished Artist has been elected and has accepted the position, as head of the Art School of this Institute. It is A. E. Bateman, of Toledo, Ohio. What has been necessary to effect this is the relinquishment of a patronage that requires several easels constantly, by one whose pencil commands high remuneration. But it is in this case, as is the case of a large number of professors in the University, the climate,—the charming climate of Tallahassee that has done it.

Thus, it is by no means personal effort that has afforded the chief elements of the great success that has marked the establishment of Florida University.

Under Music one is informed that "The authorities have not yet definitely arranged with a principal for this school, but several are in view."

It is surprising, even in this Calendar, to find "Photography, Telephoning, Stenography, Printing, Lithographing, Engraving and the various other differentiated and useful arts" grouped together under the caption "Music". Of these Stenography is also found under "Commercial School".

Inasmuch as there has been some disagreement about the Normal Institute, it may be well to quote in its entirety what the Calendar has to say:

The authorities of the University have now effected what has long been a very great desideratum in our State, and that is the establishment of an institution complete in all its appliances and appointments for affording a complete education of *Teachers*. Assurance is now given that in *nothing* necessary for doing first-class work in this line is now lacking. In the first place, ample room for the accommodation of all that are likely to attend is possessed. Secondly, the appliances in matter of apparatus and instruments are complete. A full suit of Chemical and Philosophical apparatus is possessed. Also those for teaching Geography, as globes, maps, charts, etc., on large projections. For Music various of the usual instru-

ments are either owned or rented. For Astronomy a fine planetarium telescope, models and charts are possessed. For instance, in Sacred History, Wythe's *papier-mache* Model of Jerusalem is possessed. For Natural History an extensive Museum of Natural History is accessible and arranged for in the University. The University Library is also subject to its use. There are five chairs definitely arranged for, namely, those of Pedagogy, or Art of Teaching, Natural Philosophy, Natural History, Geology, Mineralogy and Mathematics. But these appointments by no means cover all the provisions that are made for teachers, as an arrangement is made with several of the Departments of the University for supplies. Therefore the friends of the Institute congratulate themselves with the assurance that the Normal Institute of Florida University has not a superior in this country.

It is contemplated that State students shall attend free of charge except for contingents. But more special particulars can be learned by addressing Prof. H. N. Felkel, of Tallahassee.

Tuition for other than free students is \$10 the long, or winter, term of 3 months, beginning December 3; and \$5 for the short term, of 6 weeks, beginning the second Wednesday in June.

The writer is greatly surprised that men of the highest character and repute should have lent their names to such an institution. The original Board of Regents consisted of Ex-Governor D. S. Walker, Chancellor; General W. D. Barnes, at that time State Comptroller; Judges J. F. Bernard and W. P. Byrd; the Reverend J. Kost, A.M., M.D., LL.D., and the Reverend Charles Beecher, A.M., D.D. [brother of the more famous Henry Ward Beecher], Ex-Superintendent of Public instruction. By the time of the appearance of the Calendar Governor William D. Bloxham had been added to this list and Dr. Kost had been made Chancellor. The Corresponding Secretary for the University was a gentleman of the highest standing, Professor H. N. Felkel.

It is equally astounding that the Board of Education in control of the State College should have been so influenced by the Rev. Dr. Kost that they consented to making their foundation a branch of the flamboyant University. They were not alone in this, however, for on June 17, 1886, the Board of Trustees

of the State institution in Lake City resolved that it was their belief "that the educational interests of this State would be advanced and furthered by the consolidation of the Agricultural College and the Florida University, under the name of the University of Florida and Agricultural College, and that we recommend the same". This resolution, which appears in full in the 1887 and 1888 catalogs of the Agricultural College, should perhaps, however, cause little surprise, for in the former of these two catalogs there is to be found in the roster of the faculty the name of the versatile "Rev. J. Kost, LL.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy and Geology, and Curator of Museum", with the footnote, "Rev. J. Kost is also Chancellor of the University of Florida".

How long Florida University existed is not known to the writer. "According to the American Medical Association directory of colleges, the medical school was moved to Jacksonville in 1885 . . . It went but of existence in 1886."⁹ The Catalogue of the Florida State College of 1903-4 has this mention of it: "In 1883 the institution, now long officially known as the West Florida Seminary, was organized by the Board of Education as The Literary College of the University of Florida. Owing to lack of means for the support of this more ambitious project, and also owing to the fact that soon thereafter schools for technical training were established, this association was soon dissolved." Rerick has only this to say about the institution. "In the same period there was an attempt to establish a Florida university at Tallahassee, Chancellor J. Kost being at the head of the enterprise but this failed after a brief and precarious existence."¹⁰

9. Information furnished by Mrs. Elizabeth Bohenger, Librarian of the Florida State Board of Health.

10. *Memoirs of Florida*. I, 354

Perhaps no more fitting conclusion to this sketch could be made than to quote the words of Superintendent Sheats: "We now tread gently upon the ashes of the 'Florida University', the ignis fatuus that flared up in February, 1883, issued a Catalogue for 1884-85, and disappeared, though predicted to become the 'chief cope stone to our educational fabric' ".¹¹

11. *Rep. Supt. Public Instruction.* 1894. pp. 51-2