

PERRY LEE HARNED



BOBBIE ROSS DAVIDSON

PERRY LEE HARNED

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Bobbie Ross Davidson

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ABSTRACT

Perry Lee Harned, a leading educator in Tennessee, and the son of a farmer, Enos Harned, was born in Montgomery County, Tennessee, November 16, 1866. He grew up in Montgomery County and attended the Tarsus School in Palmyra, studied at Edgewood Normal School, and the University of Tennessee.

Professor Harned began his professional career in education in 1890 as Principal of Southside School. A year later he was elected to serve as Superintendent of Public Schools in Montgomery County. His interest in educational activities continued and he held various positions including Superintendent of Clarksville City Schools, the first State High School Supervisor and State Elementary School Supervisor.

During much of this time, Professor Harned also served as a member of the State Board of Education, the Text Book Commission, the State Teachers Association, and the State Public School Officers Association.

From 1914 to 1921 he was the Postmaster in Clarksville, but, at the same time, he was actively involved in school affairs.

Governor Austin Peay appointed Professor Harned to the position of State Commissioner of Education in 1923,

where he remained until 1933, thus serving as Commissioner of Education for a longer period of time than anyone else in Tennessee history.

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A Thesis

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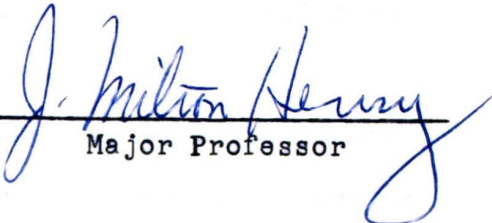
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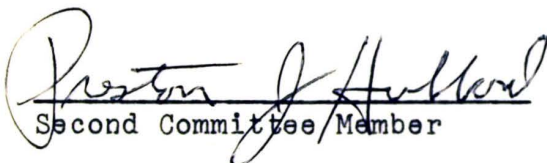
April, 1975

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Bobbie Ross Davidson entitled "Perry Lee Harned." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

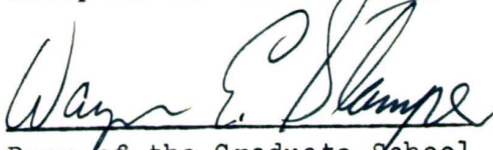

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:


Second Committee Member


Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

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Chapter I

SUPERINTENDENT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1891-1907

Perry Lee Harned was a leading educator in Tennessee. He was born on November 16, 1866, on a farm near Palmyra, in Montgomery County, Tennessee.¹ Little is known about his parents, Enos Harned (January 12, 1830 - March 4, 1905), and Mary Etta Allman Harned (March 18, 1833 - June 21, 1890), who were married on March 6, 1851.² Enos Harned, a farmer, was born in Kentucky, and Mary Etta Allman Harned was born in Tennessee.³

In a personal interview with Mr. James Bailey Williams of Palmyra, Tennessee, on May 10, 1973, a grand-nephew of Perry Lee Harned, Mr. Williams related that seven children were born to Enos and Mary Etta Harned: James, John Wesley, Sam, Newt, Ada, William, and Perry Lee.

¹John Trotwood Moore, ed., Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923, Vol. II (Nashville: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1923), p. 835.

²Harned family cemetery records (grave markers) in Palmyra, Tennessee.

³John Trotwood Moore, ed., Tennessee, The Volunteer State, 1769-1923, p. 835.

In the acquirement of his early education, Perry Lee attended the Tarsus School in Palmyra, near the home farm, and later studied at Edgewood Normal School.⁴

He moved to Southside in 1890 where he was a teacher and principal of the small elementary school. The original building was made of logs. The enrollment increased and plans were formulated to establish a preparatory school. The movement to establish the school was supported by the people of the community, many of whom bought stock, and the Southside Preparatory School was established. A building was constructed and a curriculum was adopted which provided higher education for the youths who came from local homes and who boarded in the town. The county soon recognized the ambitious teacher's ability to organize and lead. The people sought him for superintendent.⁵

In 1891, while principal of Southside School, Mr. Harned was elected Superintendent of Public Schools in Montgomery County, a position which he held until 1907. The County Superintendent of Public Schools was elected by the County Court every two years, the first Monday in January being the day under the law when the Superintendent was to be elected. Mr. J. U. Taylor had held this office

⁴Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, 1673-1932, Vol. IV (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1933), p. 521.

⁵Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, June 11, 1949, p. 2.

for two terms prior to the election of Mr. Harned.

At the meeting of the County Court in 1891, there was a discussion concerning the salary of the Superintendent. Some wanted to raise it to \$600 per year; however, the proposal was voted down and the salary remained at \$200 per year. The names of J. G. Rollow, P. L. Harned, E. S. Davie, N. L. Whitfield, and William Yarrell were placed in nomination. Mr. Harned received thirty-one votes on the second ballot and was elected.⁶

After the election, an editorial in the Clarksville Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle stated:

The County Court as observed from published proceedings declined to increase the salary of the Superintendent . . .

That body doubtless acted upon the suggestion of the minority report of the committee appointed to consider the whole matter.

The purpose of this is to make suggestions to Mr. Harned and the school directors in the several districts as well as the teachers.

If the Superintendent will demonstrate his capacity and worth, a generous court will be forced to recognize the value of his services and reward them accordingly.⁷

For two years after his election in 1891, he served as Southside principal, carrying a double duty with that and the office of superintendent.⁸

⁶Clarksville Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, Jan. 5, 1891, p. 4.

⁷Editorial, Clarksville Daily Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, Jan. 10, 1891, p. 3.

⁸Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, June 11, 1949, p. 2.

On January 3, 1893, the regular quarterly term of the County Court was held with Judge Tyler presiding. Superintendent Harned submitted a report with regard to the free school system of the county. He reported that there were 105 schools in the county with 130 teachers employed at an average salary of \$34.88 per month. The total school enrollment was 6,428 pupils. Also at this meeting of the County Court, P. L. Harned was re-elected County Superintendent of Schools and his salary was fixed at \$300 per year instead of \$200 as heretofore.⁹

While employed at Southside, Mr. Harned met a teacher at the school, Miss Myra Gill McKay, the daughter of Silas Harland McKay and Mary Ralston McKay.¹⁰

Miss McKay was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, but had moved to Clarksville, Tennessee, with her parents when she was a girl. Mr. Harned and Miss McKay were married on August 17, 1894, and the two worked closely in developing the Southside Preparatory School.¹¹

Three daughters and one son were born to Superintendent and Mrs. Harned: Mary Lee, the eldest, was born on

⁹Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, Jan. 3, 1893, p. 4.

¹⁰Margaret Elizabeth Harned Harris, daughter of P. L. Harned, personal interview, May 14, 1973.

¹¹John Trotwood Moore, ed., Tennessee, The Volunteer State, p. 836.

May 21, 1896, and married Harry E. Greer from Paris, Tennessee; Mrs. Greer presently resides in Hazard, Kentucky. Margaret Elizabeth, the second child, was born on July 4, 1899, and married Finis E. Harris, a lawyer from around Erin, Tennessee; Mrs. Harris resides in Cookeville, Tennessee. Perry McKay Harned, the only son, was born on January 1, 1901, and resides in New Market, Alabama. The youngest child, Myra Felicia, was born on September 28, 1905, and married Murphy Cohen; Mrs. Cohen resides in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.¹²

Superintendent and Mrs. Harned were very active in the First Presbyterian Church in Clarksville. He was an elder in the church and served as Superintendent of Sunday School, while Mrs. Harned was a Sunday School teacher.¹³

Mr. Harned was a Mason, and held membership in the Blue Lodge and the Royal Arch Chapter. He was also affiliated with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythies.¹⁴

While serving in the dual capacity of Principal of Southside School, and Superintendent of Public Schools in Montgomery County, Mr. Harned decided that he needed more

¹²Margaret Elizabeth Harned Harris, personal interview, May 14, 1973.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, p. 521.

training for the career he had chosen. He took a leave of absence in 1893 and closed the Southside School for part of a term while he took special courses in teacher training at the University of Tennessee, where he received a university diploma instead of a degree.¹⁵ With this diploma, he was certified to teach in any county of the state.

There had been no system of teacher certification in Tennessee prior to 1856, and the qualifications of teachers were judged by the local school directors. The legislature, in 1856, passed an act "to prevent incompetent persons from teaching in the free schools," which contained the following provisions:¹⁶

The County Courts of each county in this State are authorized and required, on the first Monday in January of each and every year, to elect one or more commissioner or commissioners, whose duty it shall be to examine all applicants to teach the free schools; and if, upon examination, the applicant is considered competent to teach Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, English Grammar, etc., he or she shall be entitled to a certificate of such competency; and be it further enacted, that the Common School Commissioners shall not employ any person to teach school without their first producing a certificate, as required by the Commissioners.¹⁷

¹⁵Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, June 11, 1949, p. 2.

¹⁶Tennessee Department of Education, A Study of Local School Units in Tennessee, in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. (Nashville: Cullom and Chertner Co., 1937), p. 23.

¹⁷Acts of Tennessee, 1856, ch. 114.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as provided under the General School Law of 1873, had the responsibility to "prescribe the mode of examining and licensing school teachers, and their necessary qualifications," and the County Superintendent was to "perform such duties in relation to the examination of teachers and issuing to them certificates of qualification as may be required of him by the State Superintendent."¹⁸

While certification by examination was the first manner of teacher certification in Tennessee, other methods were soon introduced. An act of 1875 provided for the establishment of state normal schools and contained a section which reads as follows:

Diplomas shall be granted to those who honorably complete the course of study prescribed in said schools; and the possession of such diploma shall exempt the holder thereof from the examination prescribed as a condition precedent to employment in the public schools of the State; any such graduate being eligible as a teacher in any county of the state.¹⁹

As a result of this law, some institutions, including the University of Tennessee, were authorized to issue diplomas to students completing certain specified minimum courses. The diplomas entitled the holders to teacher certificates without examination. These came to be known

¹⁸Acts of Tennessee, 1873, ch. 25.

¹⁹Acts of Tennessee, 1875, ch. 99.

as professional certificates. These certificates were more valuable than the examination certificates because the professional certificates entitled the holder to teach in any county in the state, whereas the examination certificates were valid only in the county in which the examination was taken.²⁰

Superintendent Harned, by taking special courses in teacher training at the University of Tennessee, was awarded a professional certificate.

In the conduct of his duties, Superintendent Harned announced rules pertaining to teacher certification at various teachers' meetings. On June 22, 1893, he announced that all who had first grade certificates and had been engaged in regular work would have their certificates renewed without further examination. All others would have to take examinations. Those who desired to take the secondary examination, but held no primary certificate from the county, would be required to take the primary as well as the secondary examination.²¹

Until 1891, the County Court did not have the power to sub-divide school districts, although it was done in a few cases. During a meeting of the County Court on

²⁰Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, June 22, 1893, p. 4.

²¹Ibid., Jan. 23, 1893, p. 2.

January 22, 1893, the matter of creating a new school district in the 18th civil district was referred to a special committee which was to report at the April term of court.²²

At the April 4, 1893, term of the County Court, a petition was presented to construct a new school district from parts of the 16th and 20th districts, so as to include the town of Morrison on the Mineral Road, and to establish a public school at that point. The petition was adopted by the Court.²³

Superintendent Harned urged the directors not to sign any petition to sub-divide a district if it appeared to be detrimental to any district, and asked the Court to aid him in preventing any such changes.²⁴ (For at least part of the time, the local civil district school directors had power to change boundaries, and during the interval from 1891 to 1903 the County Courts were empowered to alter boundaries and establish new districts.)

The legislature passed a number of acts in 1903 which affected the public school system. Chief among the acts was the one which made the school district and the

²²Ibid.

²³Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf-Chronicle, April 5, 1893, p. 2.

²⁴Ibid., June 22, 1893, p. 4.

civil district co-extensive. In his report covering the year 1903, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Seymour Mynders, stated that under the previous law permitting County Courts to create school districts, many districts had been formed with scholastic populations of less than fifty pupils, and with total school revenues from all sources amounting to less than \$100. The school law replacing this statute provided for and in reality forced a consolidation of numerous small districts into larger units which received school funds sufficiently large to enable them to prolong the length of the school terms and to employ more competent teachers.²⁵

An important measure considered by the legislature in 1903 was a bill to abolish the office of District School Director, and to establish in its place County Boards of Education. The bill, written by P. L. Harned, was introduced in the House by Austin Peay of Montgomery County.²⁶ Representative Hamill of Montgomery County introduced it in the Senate.²⁷ The bill was vigorously contested and was finally amended so as to apply only to Montgomery County. Under this act, one member from each

²⁵Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, 1796-1929, (Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, Inc., 1929), p. 147.

²⁶House Bill No. 365, House Journal, 1903, p. 417.

²⁷Senate Bill 365, Senate Journal, 1903, p. 313.

civil district in the county composed the board of education, thus making the county unit responsible for purposes of taxation and school administration.²⁸

In a carefully prepared report from Superintendent P. L. Harned, it was shown that the school term in Montgomery County had been increased twenty-six days under the county unit plan without any increase in the school levy.²⁹ Eventually, school officials were impressed and the statewide change to county control followed in 1907, known as the County Board Law.³⁰

Administrative machinery providing for the county unit included the County Superintendent to act as supervisory officer and the County Court to levy school taxes. From 1899 to 1921, county high schools were managed by separate county high school boards of education, but in 1921, the high school boards were abolished and the regular county boards controlled both elementary and high schools.³¹

Superintendent Harned was appointed to the State Board of Education in 1903, and served on the Board except

²⁸Acts of Tennessee, 1903, ch. 254.

²⁹Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, p. 148.

³⁰Acts of Tennessee, 1907, ch. 236.

³¹Tennessee, Department of Education, A Study of Local School Units in Tennessee, p. 50.

for the years 1910-1914, until 1929. He served as Chairman of the State Board of Education from 1915 to 1923.³²

From 1904-1909 he was a member of the State Textbook Association.³³ An act known as the Uniform Textbook Law was passed by the legislature in 1899. Prior to this law, the selection of textbooks had been a duty to be discharged by the School Directors whom the County Superintendent was directed to advise as to what changes in textbooks were desirable. The Textbook Law affected the method of selection of textbooks for use in the public schools of the state. A provision of the law was that a sub-committee of teachers was to examine textbooks and then submit a report to the Textbook Commission. This report was to record, in order of merit, the findings of the sub-committee. The sub-committee, composed of teachers in the main, was retained in the law until it was eliminated by the act of 1919. The textbooks selected by the various textbook commissions after the act of 1899 were required to be used in the public schools of the state.³⁴

³²Robert C. Cook, ed., Who's Who in American Education, 1929-30, Vol. II (New York: The Robert C. Cook Company, 1931), p. 329.

³³Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, p. 521.

³⁴Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, p. 146.

Mrs. Finis Harris (nee Margaret Elizabeth Harned), related that while her father served as a member of the Textbook Association, many individuals came to their home to try to influence her father regarding the desirability of choosing certain books published by their company. She specifically recalled one book company representative, a Mr. Charles Daniels, as having been a frequent visitor in their home.³⁵

³⁵Margaret Elizabeth Harned Harris, personal interview, May 14, 1973.

Chapter II

SUPERINTENDENT OF CLARKSVILLE CITY SCHOOLS, 1907-1909

In March, 1903, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Seymour A. Mynders, who served in the position from 1903 to 1907, issued a circular letter to the County Superintendents, County Courts, and others inviting them to attend an educational conference to be held at the Peabody Normal College in Nashville. This meeting, the call for which was made within two weeks after Superintendent Mynders had been in office, marked the beginning of an educational campaign in Tennessee which continued for a decade. The campaign had for its objectives: better schools through increased revenues, more efficient supervision and administration, and improved library facilities.³⁶

The educational campaigns in Tennessee were the outgrowth of campaigns which were sweeping the South in the beginning of the twentieth century. This enthusiasm and interest for better schools and the ensuing educational revival came mainly from the Conference for Education in

³⁶Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee State Educational Organization, p. 147.

the South. The First Capon Springs Conference for Christian Education in the South was assembled in June, 1898.³⁷

Robert C. Ogden, at the Third Capon Springs Conference, in 1900, expressed the following regarding education:

In my judgment as a business man, the Capon Springs Conference can find a wide sphere of salutary influence by bringing the whole subject of popular education urgently before the business-men of the South as a business proposition.³⁸

The Southern Education Board, whose members were appointed by Mr. Ogden, provided the funds for carrying out the work.³⁹ The campaigns in Tennessee were planned and directed primarily by Superintendent Mynders, who was aided by Philander Priestly Claxton.⁴⁰

Mr. Claxton, a native of Bedford County, Tennessee, was Chairman of the Department of Education at the University of Tennessee in 1903. He served as United States Commissioner of Education from 1914 to 1918, and later

³⁷H. B. Frissell, "A Survey of the Field," Proceedings, First Capon Springs Conference for Christian Education in the South, 1898, pp. 3-7.

³⁸Robert C. Ogden, "A Few Suggestions upon the Objects of the Capon Springs Educational Conference, as seen by a Northern Business Man," Proceedings, Third Capon Springs Conference for Education in the South, 1900, p. 25.

³⁹Robert C. Ogden, "Annual Address of the President," Proceedings, Fifth Conference for Education in the South, 1902, p. 15.

⁴⁰Robert H. White, Development of the Tennessee Educational Organization, p. 147.

became President of Austin Peay Normal School in November 1930.⁴¹

The educational campaign which Superintendent Mynders had planned was managed by Mr. Claxton. Dr. Charles W. Dabney, President of the University of Tennessee, was also active in the campaigns. All the County Superintendents were asked to discuss the purposes of the programs of the educational campaigns in their teachers' meetings.⁴²

A series of rallies and campaigns were arranged. The first was conducted in East Tennessee. During this campaign no definite legislative program had been presented to the people. It was then decided to draw up a program under seven headings in the form of a resolution, as follows:

We do hereby petition the general assembly at its next session to make the following appropriations, and we request our representative in both houses to give their support and influence to the enactment of laws providing for such appropriation:

1. Seventy-five cents per capita per child of school age.
2. Continuation of the Tollett Bill appropriation of \$50,000 to help weak schools (which the legislature had passed in 1905) which limited to \$300,000 the amount the state school fund might receive in any year from the "surplus act" of 1903, \$50,000 of which was to be used as an equalization fund for poor counties.
3. Annual appropriation of \$25,000 to encourage and assist the establishment of public high schools.

⁴¹Charles Lee Lewis, Philander Priestly Claxton, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1948), p. 281.

⁴²Ibid., p. 150.

4. Annual appropriation of \$75,000 for the establishment and maintenance of three normal schools.
5. Annual appropriation of \$50,000 for the University of Tennessee.
6. Annual appropriation of \$5,000 for encouraging and assisting rural schools to establish school libraries.
7. The establishment and maintenance of an agricultural school in each Congressional district.⁴³

The educational rallies drew large attendance.

Flags, banners, local bands, and groups of singing children were used to attract attention. The banners bore such mottoes as: "Education Makes Wealth," "Education, A Debt Due by the Present to the Future," "Education of All the Children of All the People," and "No Freedom without Education." The average attendance was more than a thousand. There were 95 rallies, one in each county except Houston and Stewart, for which a joint meeting was held in connection with their joint county fair.⁴⁴

P. L. Harned was among the prominent school superintendents who spoke at many of the rallies. In 1905, Mr. Harned was elected Secretary and Treasurer of the State Public School Officers Association, and served as an officer in this organization for twenty-five years.⁴⁵ The Public School Officers Association was organized in 1887, and it was especially important during the years of 1903

⁴³Ibid., p. 153.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 154.

⁴⁵Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, p. 521.

through 1913 when the educational campaigns were conducted. The association's resolutions regularly endorsed the work of the campaigners and on many occasions wrote out the specific legislative program which the educational campaigners wanted passed.⁴⁶

It was announced in the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle in 1907 that Superintendent Harned was not a candidate for re-election as Superintendent of County Schools because he had accepted the position as Principal of Howell School, and Superintendent of City Schools for Montgomery County.⁴⁷

At the January 7, 1907 meeting of the County Court, J. G. Rollow was elected County Superintendent over Elliott Buckner and B. C. Thomason. The following resolution offered by Squire Corbin concerning P. L. Harned passed unanimously:

We, the members of the County Court of Montgomery County recognize the sixteen years of efficient service of our County Superintendent of Schools, P. L. Harned, and realize how he has built up the schools to a high state of perfection by his untiring energy, and knowing his fitness for the responsible position of State Superintendent of Education, hereby endorse him and request Governor-elect M. R. Patterson appoint him to that important office.⁴⁸

Professor Harned was also honored by the Montgomery Teachers Association in May, 1907, when he was presented

⁴⁶Rhey Boyd Parsons, Teacher Education in Tennessee, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1935), p. 93.

⁴⁷Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, Jan. 5, 1907, p. 2.

⁴⁸Ibid., Jan. 7, 1907, p. 1.

various gifts by the teachers as a token of the esteem in which he was held. It was also announced at this meeting that Clarksville would be the site of a Teachers' Institute which would begin in June, with P. L. Harned as conductor.⁴⁹

Leaders of the educational campaigns relied very heavily on Teachers' Institutes to sell their programs to teachers as well as to the public in general. The Teachers' Institutes were used as an agency through which the state superintendent, county superintendents, and other campaign leaders might keep in touch with the teachers of the State. These institutes were under the direct supervision of the state superintendent who arranged the schedules, planned the programs, and selected all faculty members for their annual meetings.⁵⁰

Clarksvillians felt fortunate to secure the Institute as a number of other counties had pressed their claims for it. A number of homes in Clarksville agreed to take visiting teachers to board. State Superintendent Robert L. Jones selected a faculty of well known instructors to assist Mr. Harned composed of W. C. Lawson of Pulaski, J. H. Bayer of Cumberland City, J. K. Marshall of Murfreesboro, and Miss Mattie Butler.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., May 12, 1907, p. 1.

⁵⁰Tennessee School Report, 1904, p. 26.

⁵¹Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, June 11, 1907, p. 1.

On June 14, 1907, State Superintendent Jones made an address before the Institute which was conducted at Howell School. After a short eulogy of the work of Superintendent Jones, Professor Harned introduced him to the audience. Superintendent Jones made the following remarks concerning Mr. Harned:

I am not going to deal with Mr. Harned and his work. The State of Tennessee owes him a great deal, because it was through his efforts that a revolution in educational interest has been made in this State. It was Professor Harned who formulated the law that has been adopted as a State law, and is destined to revolutionize the educational interests of the State.

. . . Professor Harned made Montgomery County the model for Tennessee and it is hoped the State will soon catch up with Montgomery County. It is a live question everywhere, and so live that although it may have some opponents--I hear you have some even in this county--I hope that it will never be repealed, nor do I believe it can be.⁵²

Accounts of the events that took place while the Institute was conducted in Clarksville were given front page space in the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle for the entire four-week period.

There was growing concern in the city of Clarksville over the crowded conditions at Howell School. Since 1879, Howell School had accommodated all departments of the city public schools including primary, intermediate, grammar school and high school. However, the enrollment had increased from 300 to 750 which crowded all the

⁵²Ibid., June 15, 1907, p. 1.

departments so much that it was considered necessary to erect another building. It was believed that to establish another grade school would have necessitated the employment of nearly twice as many teachers, which would have increased the running expenses about seventy-five per cent. So, it was decided that to build a high school and move the high school department out of the Howell School building would make room for the higher grades, would increase the teaching force but little, would enable the city to make a mutually beneficial arrangement with Montgomery County, so that the children of the county might have equal educational advantages with the children of the city, and in return for this, the county could help pay the actual running expenses of the high school.⁵³

Due to the above considerations, the process began for locating a suitable site and building. The Leaf-Chronicle reported the following:

The educational interests of a city usually are indicative of its progressiveness. It is a truth that as the school facilities are enlarged in a community or city, just so much is the material progress of such community or city increased.⁵⁴

Judge W. B. Young, a member of the City Board of Education, led the move for a new building and the idea was readily adopted by the entire Board and a committee was

⁵³Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, Nov. 21, 1907, p. 1.

⁵⁴Ibid., June 8, 1907, p. 1.

appointed for the purpose of securing a suitable lot for the building. The site on Greenwood Avenue was purchased from J. E. Elder for the sum of \$4,000 cash.⁵⁵

As soon as the plans for the high school were made known, Professor P. L. Harned threw all of his faculties into the work, as he had been striving for a long time for a county high school, and as he failed in this, he did not hesitate to use his energies for the next best thing--a city high school. It soon became evident that Mr. Harned was a good counsellor. It was known that no man had given more thought and study to this question than he--in fact, it had for years been a great desire of his to see the public schools of Montgomery County placed on a higher plane.⁵⁶ It was reported by the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle:

No more will parents be considering where their sons or daughters will attend school, but will know that in Clarksville, their home town, is one as good as can be found anywhere, and under the general supervision of Professor Harned, with a corps of teachers, some of whom are already known and others whose reputation has preceded them, will feel certain of receiving such instruction as will serve them for life.⁵⁷

The new Clarksville High School building opened on November 21, 1907, with Mr. S. L. Smith as its Principal. There were 135 pupils enrolled. A reception and open house

⁵⁵Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, June 8, 1907, p. 1.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

were held that afternoon, and the building was spoken of in the highest terms by all who saw it. By February, 1908, Mayor M. C. Northington announced that the number of students enrolled had increased to 150 pupils. He said the County Court had adopted the high school as a county high school for the present year, and that 48 county pupils were attending. It was noted that the people of the county were asked to appreciate the fact that the city erected the building without cost to them and had agreed to furnish county pupils with all the educational facilities of the school at a very low cost. The total cost of the high school was \$44,000.⁵⁸

The State Board of Education met on December 6, 1907, for the purpose of distributing among the counties entitled to receive it, the fifty thousand dollars provided for in the Legislative appropriation. The members of the board present were: Governor Malcolm R. Patterson, Chairman, State Superintendent R. L. Jones, Secretary, Professor P. L. Harned, Clarksville, L. Brooks, Jackson, W. S. Jones, Memphis, A. L. Todd, Murfreesboro, and J. H. Kirkland, Nashville. Montgomery and Cheatham Counties were among those entitled to the appropriation. In order to share in the distribution of funds, the respective counties had to make a forty cent school assessment, a two

⁵⁸Ibid.

dollar county poll tax, and had to make their privilege and ad valorem taxes as much as the State would allow. To those counties which had met these requirements, the fund was appropriated on a per capita basis in direct proportion to the scholastic population and in proportion to the value of taxable property.⁵⁹

Professor P. L. Harned, on his return from the meeting in Nashville, reported that Montgomery County would receive \$1,172. He stated that this sum would be a welcome addition to the public fund of the county and would greatly aid in the purpose for which it was appropriated of enabling the county schools to hold longer terms more nearly equal to those held by the cities. There were fifty-eight counties entitled to participate in the \$50,000 distributed and Montgomery County received next to the largest amount.⁶⁰

Plans for an educational rally were announced in a letter written by Professor Harned to the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle on August 27, 1908. The letter stated:

May I state the educational rally to be conducted in Clarksville on Monday, October 21, is the most important meeting of the year. People differ in matters of Church and State, but our public school system is a great common institution in which all our children come for training for life's work, hence every father and mother should be interested in its

⁵⁹Ibid., December 6, 1907, p. 1.

⁶⁰Ibid., December 20, 1907, p. 1.

development. There is no reason why the public schools of Montgomery County should not give the children of the county every advantage needed, nor why these children do not deserve as good opportunities as those provided for the children in other states. If parents will only cooperate in the movement already begun, our educational system will be much improved.

In this educational meeting your presence is needed and your cooperation is earnestly solicited. What is the loss of one day from the farm or store or shop if you can help to improve the public school system and your children get the benefit of improved conditions without one cent more of tax levy?

The City Board of Education has directed me to have in readiness for this meeting the magnificent auditorium of the High School on Greenwood Avenue, and to give in their name, a cordial invitation to the citizens of Montgomery County to meet here at 10:30 o'clock for the purpose of improving the county schools and if I may write a sentence more, I want to appeal to every father and mother in behalf of the children of the county to come and take an active part in the proceedings.⁶¹

Professor P. P. Claxton appeared as guest speaker at the rally. He stated his desire to have some resolutions adopted which had been passed throughout the State at the other educational rallies. After this, the assembly converted into a mass meeting and Professor Harned was made Chairman.⁶²

According to the Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, Professor Harned was also fairly active in politics during the year 1908. It was reported that P. L. Harned from District 12 was appointed along with others from the

⁶¹Ibid., August 27, 1908, p. 1.

⁶²Ibid.

district to serve as a General Committee on Arrangements at the Democratic rally and free barbecue held at Scales Grove near Clarksville on November 2, 1908 where Governor M. R. Patterson closed his campaign for re-election.⁶³

After the death of Senator Edward Carmack, P. L. Harned was appointed by Mr. Merritt Johnson as Chairman of the Committee for Memorial Services for the late Senator in Clarksville.⁶⁴

On April 21, 1909, at a meeting of the City Board of Education, Professor Harned was re-elected Superintendent of City Schools for the ensuing term. The newspaper report made the following statement concerning Professor Harned:

Professor P. L. Harned is recognized as one of the ablest educators in the State and his election will be pleasing news to his friends not only in this city, but throughout the State. Under his management the schools have steadily increased in efficiency and attendance.⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., October 23, 1908, p. 1.

⁶⁴Ibid., November 12, 1908, p. 1.

⁶⁵Ibid., April 22, 1909, p. 1.

Chapter III

FIRST STATE HIGH SCHOOL INSPECTOR, 1909-1914

In 1899 a law was enacted in Tennessee, usually termed the County High School Law, whereby County Courts were authorized to levy special taxes for the purpose of establishing and maintaining one or more high school in each county. The act was not mandatory. Public funds were not to be used and the high school under the law had to depend for its organization and existence upon action of the County Court.⁶⁶

When the General Education Bill was passed in 1909, the duties and powers of the State Board of Education began to increase. Under this act, the Board was empowered to grade high schools, to prescribe the minimum courses of study, to adopt regulations for disbursement of the high school fund, to issue licenses to high school teachers, and to employ a high school inspector. Another provision of this act was that eight per cent of the General Education Fund was to be used for the maintenance of high schools.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Acts of Tennessee, 1899, ch. 279.

⁶⁷Acts of Tennessee, 1909, ch. 264.

Superintendent Harned, at a meeting of the City Board of Education on July 10, 1909, tendered his resignation as head of the schools of Clarksville to accept the position as the first State High School Inspector. The term of the latter office was for four years, and the salary was \$2,500 per year plus expenses. Professor Harned was hesitant about giving up his work in Clarksville, and accepted the position "only after several months of consideration and at the solicitation of his friends who feel he will be enabled to do more effective work in Tennessee."⁶⁸

Upon his election as High School Inspector, Professor Harned made the following statement concerning his new position:

My first work will be to arrange a course of study to be pursued in the county high schools. At the last meeting of the State Board of Education a committee was appointed to do this work, and we must proceed rapidly in order to complete it before the time for beginning the high school term. Some preliminary work is necessary to be done, particularly such work as applies to a system of reports showing the per capita tax and high school tax. Upon these reports, the appropriation for the aid and maintenance of county high schools, as provided in the general education bill, will be based. The July distribution will be made as soon as the reports are received.⁶⁹

Professor Harned continued to live in Clarksville, but most of his time was taken up in looking after the high schools over the State. The Legislature appropriated

⁶⁸Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, July 12, 1909, p. 1.

⁶⁹Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, July 22, 1909, p. 1.

\$5,000 to set up an office on the second floor of the capitol between the senate chamber and the hall of representatives to be used by Professor Harned and the Board of Education.⁷⁰

The plan for the conduct of the high schools in Tennessee provided for three classes at such schools. They were divided into first, second, and third class high schools with four, three, and two year courses respectively. The courses for each class were arranged to provide for changing class as rapidly as the schools of the lower classes met the requirements of the upper classes. The course of study was also arranged so as to enable pupils of the schools of the lower classes to proceed uninterruptedly with their work in the event the schools they attended were elevated to a higher class, the work of the lower class schools counting as the initial work in schools of the higher classes.⁷¹

Courses of study for high schools were completed under the direction of Professor Harned and copies of the curriculum were prepared and mailed to the members of the State Board of Education for their approval or adverse action. The State Board of Education outlined four

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1909-1910, p. 262.

approved high school curricula:

1. An English and science course for pupils who did not expect to attend college, or who did not expect to take a college course which required a foreign language.
2. A Latin course for those who expected to take certain college courses.
3. A commercial course.
4. A manual training, agriculture, and home economics course.⁷²

The first two of these courses were devoted largely to the standard subjects: math, English, history, science, and Latin. The third course also offered academic subjects, but a modern language (German, French or Spanish) replaced Latin, and such subjects as bookkeeping, stenography, typewriting, commercial law, and commercial arithmetic were added. The fourth curriculum naturally stressed the subjects indicated by the title. Agriculture and home economics were required by law to be taught in all high schools.⁷³

In August, 1909, Mayor Northington of Clarksville received forms from the State Board of Education on which to submit a proposition for the location of a State Normal School. The State Board of Education had announced earlier that it would hear these propositions from the officials of the various counties which were competing for the sites of three State Normal Schools which were to be put in operation in 1910.⁷⁴

⁷²Ibid., pp. 263-264.

⁷³Ibid., p. 264.

⁷⁴Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, August 17, 1909, p. 1.

A meeting of Montgomery County citizens was called by Professor Harned at the court house on August 23, 1909, to discuss whether Clarksville and Montgomery County would take any definite action to secure the Normal School for Middle Tennessee. Professor Harned pointed out a number of advantages that would be derived by having the school located in Clarksville, both from a financial and an educational standpoint. He said that in order to have a chance to obtain the school, it would be necessary for the county to issue \$100,000 in bonds, and the city to issue \$50,000 in bonds. While this might seem to be a large amount of money to some, Professor Harned concluded that it was almost certain that the money expended in the city and county from this source would amount to more than \$150,000 annually.⁷⁵

Speeches advocating speedy action of the City Council and County Court were made by Professor Harned, Judge Tyler, C. R. McMurray, M. C. Northington, A. L. Peay, H. Whitfield, Dancey Fort, R. H. Pickering, and W. A. McFall. A motion was made which requested that the Mayor call a meeting of the City Council that might consider the bond issue, while Mr. Peay made a motion to name as many as ten men from the county to attend the meeting of the City Council.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Ibid., August 23, 1909, p. 1.

⁷⁶Ibid., August 24, 1909, p. 1.

A meeting was held at the court house that night and Professor Harned made a statement outlining the benefits the city and county would accrue from a Normal School. He said there could be expected an average attendance of from 500 to 800 students for ten months of each year, which with the donations from the State would create an annual expenditure in the county of more than \$150,000 to be spread among all classes of people. Besides, he said, it would enable the schools of Montgomery County to be supplied with better teachers which were badly needed, that the school would be permanent, and if the people did not take advantage of the opportunity to locate the school in Clarksville, they might never have another such opportunity.⁷⁷

The City Council unanimously passed a resolution at the conclusion of the above remarks by Professor Harned to secure the location of the State Normal School in Clarksville. The Council also provided for the appointment of a special committee to go before the County Court to request the issuance of \$100,000 in bonds for this purpose.

In an interview with a Leaf-Chronicle reporter on August 25, 1909, Judge Tyler remarked that locating the Normal School in Clarksville was of the greatest importance to the people, both of the town and county. He said the additional burden of taxation would not be heavy and that

⁷⁷Ibid.

a ten cent levy would pay the interest and establish a sinking fund to retire the bonds, that Montgomery County had a jail levy of five cents which would not be needed after the next year, and therefore, an additional levy of five cents on a hundred dollars would be all--over the present rate of taxation--that would be required.⁷⁸

It was announced in the Leaf-Chronicle on September 1, 1909, that the City of Clarksville finally offered \$75,000 and Montgomery County offered \$100,000 for the location of the Normal School. An option was also secured on the Dunlop residence on Madison Extension which was turned over to the State Board as a possible location for the school.

Professor Harned and Austin Peay spoke at a mass meeting at the court house to explain the necessity for the extra \$25,000 bond issue for the City and both men were appointed to serve on a committee to take charge of the work regarding the Normal School, along with M. Savage, Dancey Fort, Judge C. W. Tyler, and Mayor Northington.⁷⁹

On October 12, 1909, a committee consisting of Professor Harned, H. D. Pettus, Mayor Northington, Austin Peay and Dancey Fort went to McKenzie, Tennessee, to meet with the State School Board to accompany them to Clarksville

⁷⁸Ibid., August 25, 1909, p. 1.

⁷⁹Ibid., September 1, 1909, p. 1.

for the purpose of inspecting Clarksville's proposed site for the Normal School. The board was composed of Governor M. R. Patterson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, R. L. Jones, and others. When the Clarksville committee and the members of the State Board arrived in Clarksville, it was estimated that a crowd of over 10,000 greeted them. Governor Patterson said he was glad to be in the home town of Professor Harned who had done so much for the public schools of Montgomery County, and hoped and believed that Professor Harned would accomplish much ground work in his new field of labor, that of State High School Inspector.⁸⁰

The claims of Clarksville for the Normal School were presented to the School Board on October 15, 1909. Professor Harned made a "very earnest appeal" and closed the argument for Montgomery County citizens. However, the majority of the State Board selected Murfreesboro as the proper place to locate the Normal School. Rutherford County and the municipality of Murfreesboro offered the proceeds of \$180,000 of bonds and the board was guaranteed that a sewer system would be inaugurated in the City of Murfreesboro before the school was located and ready to begin work. The bid by Murfreesboro and Rutherford County was about equal to that of Clarksville and Montgomery

⁸⁰Ibid., October 12, 1909, p. 1.

County and was greater than that of any other municipality bidding for the Normal School in Middle Tennessee.⁸¹

The first meeting of the joint county and city high school board met on May 17, 1910. The board organized by electing Judge Tyler as Chairman. Professor Harned was elected principal of the joint high school. At the time of this meeting, it was not known whether Professor Harned would accept the position. He was in East Tennessee at the time and had been notified of his election, but had not replied when the Board met. The Board stated that if Professor Harned did accept the position it would be a personal sacrifice, but that this was Professor Harned's native county and he felt a deep interest in it.⁸²

However, Professor Harned notified the Board that he would not accept the offer to serve as principal. He informed the Board that to accept the position would require a sacrifice he could not afford to make because he was holding a higher position than the one offered him, was drawing a higher salary, and his term of office was for four years, while the term for principal was only for one year. Mr. Foust of Owensboro, Kentucky, was then elected principal.⁸³

⁸¹Ibid., December 1, 1909, p. 1.

⁸²Ibid., May 18, 1910, p. 1.

⁸³Ibid., June 29, 1910, p. 1.

Chapter IV

POSTMASTER IN CLARKSVILLE, 1914-1921, AND STATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INSPECTOR, 1921-1923

Professor Harned, as High School Inspector, toured the state to give advice and lend assistance to the high schools until 1914.⁸⁴ He was then appointed Postmaster in Clarksville and served in that capacity until 1921.⁸⁵

Clarksville had a Second Class Post Office at the time and the Postmaster was appointed by the Congressman who represented his district. In the case of Professor Harned's appointment, United States Representative Joseph Byrns, Sr., represented the Congressional District in which Montgomery County was located, and he sent Professor Harned's name to the President, who in turn, asked for confirmation of the appointment by the Senate.⁸⁶

⁸⁴State of Tennessee, Department of Public Instruction. First Annual Report of the Inspector of High Schools, 1911.

⁸⁵Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, p. 521.

⁸⁶M. L. Hester, Marion Street, Clarksville, Tennessee, born December 9, 1889, postal employee from 1911-1960, personal interview, February 14, 1974.

The Post Office building was on South Second Street where the Clarksville Department of Electricity is now located. The Assistant Postmaster was Mr. C. L. Williams. Other workers at the Post Office included six rural carriers, five city carriers, five clerks, a special delivery carrier, two janitors, one substitute rural carrier, one substitute city carrier, and one substitute clerk. Mr. M. L. Hester, who worked at the Post Office from 1911 until 1927 as a clerk, and thereafter was promoted to Assistant Postmaster in 1927 and retained this position until his retirement in 1960, stated that Professor Harned was an excellent Postmaster and "whatever he did, he did it well."⁸⁷

During Professor Harned's tenure as Postmaster in Clarksville, he continued to be very much involved in educational activities over the state and was Chairman of the State Board of Education from 1915 until 1923.⁸⁸ He was out of town much of the time pursuing these educational interests; however, Mr. Hester stated that Professor Harned did not neglect his duties at the post office, but always discharged them in a most efficient manner, sometimes working late into the night.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Philip M. Hamer, ed., Tennessee, A History, Vol. IV, p. 521.

⁸⁹M. L. Hester, personal interview, February 14, 1974.

A letter written by Professor Harned to Governor Rye on February 21, 1915, gives an indication of Professor Harned's interest in education and his desire to become Superintendent of Public Instruction:

. . . I want to make a most respectful suggestion for your consideration; that as soon as you can decide who is to be State Superintendent he be given notice of your intention in order that he can prepare a few bills for the conservation of public school activities and general improvement of the system.

It is true I have a job. For this I am indebted to one man - Congressman Byrns. He has voluntarily told me if I prefer the State Superintendency he would be perfectly willing for me to leave the post office if I would give him a week's notice before any public announcement is made, so that he could have my successor appointed before any applicants announced for the post office. Were I to be selected for State Superintendent, I would thank you for private advice a week or ten days before you want to make public announcement. To protect Mr. Byrns I have not let it out at home that I would be an applicant for State Superintendent.

Should you desire endorsements from home I will furnish you the number of endorsements you want and from the persons you name, excepting probably two to whom I would not go. I can give our judges, school people, county officers, etc. Further, I can furnish you all the endorsements you want and from nearly every county in the State - if you desire them let me know the number you want and give me a week to collect them. Most of my endorsements have been sent me voluntarily.

I am told by reputable school men from every section that ninety per cent of the school people want me for State Superintendent. I personally know a large majority of the leaders are for me.

As to my ability - that is a matter for others to say. With the cooperation of the school people I am sure I can accomplish as much as would be reasonably expected.

. . . I will state that I began twenty-eight years ago as a country school teacher at \$25 a month and have been teacher, county school superintendent, city superintendent and high school inspector since my beginning. I also served eight or ten years on the State Board of Education. I have filled every position except State Superintendent.

. . . I am told that some have said that I am not an original Rye man. This is true. Judge Gholson thought of making the race and I had agreed to manage his campaign.

When he decided not to make the race I immediately took up your cause. N. H. Dye of the Nashville Tennessean can tell you that he and I are wholly responsible for the county's being for you in the convention. He called me over the telephone. I met him in Clarksville at night. He told me we were defeated for certain. Clarksville men had men riding in the county to bring in the Preston men and stack the convention. The morning of the convention I went out on the street, met the county men as they came in and carried the organization by seven votes. In addition to this the campaign cost me individually more than twelve hundred dollars. I would not mention this but for the report that I was not an original Rye man.

. . . As soon as you care to take this matter up I shall be glad to go over the situation in person.⁹⁰

At the time the above letter was written, Mr. Sam Thompson was the Superintendent of Public Instruction, having been appointed to replace Mr. J. W. Brister, who resigned from the position to accept the Presidency of West Tennessee State Normal School.⁹¹ However, Governor Rye did not appoint Professor Harned, but instead appointed Mr. S. W. Sherill to be Superintendent of Public Instruction. Governor Rye had promised in his campaign speeches of 1914 to take the schools out of politics.⁹²

⁹⁰Gov. Tom C. Rye Papers, Manuscript Section, State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, Box 7, Folder 2, 1915.

⁹¹Nashville Banner, May 10, 1913, Sec. 2, p. 1.

⁹²Ibid., September 17, 1914, p. 7.

A controversial act concerning education was passed under Governor Rye. Under this Act, the Governor could appoint three additional members to the State Board of Education which then had six members. Another important provision of the Act was that the State Board of Education would elect the Superintendent of Public Instruction instead of the Governor appointing him to this position.⁹³

The above-mentioned bill was reportedly a move to take the schools out of politics, but many did not consider it as such. The Nashville Banner reported:

The alleged reason for the passage of the bill is that it will take the educational department out of politics. To anyone who knows anything about politics this would seem amusing absurdity.

The surest way to drag the educational department into politics is to place the election of the Superintendent into the hands of the State Board of Education. The inevitable manipulation, log rolling, and favor swapping surround the selection of a superintendent by a Board.⁹⁴

The Banner continued its attack on the State Board bill:

The educational bill which passed the Senate yesterday is pronounced by those who have examined it closely as being one of the most completely loaded bills of the session.

The broad open fact that it provides for the partisan packing of the State Board of Education was discussed in the Senate but provisions of still more importance were passed over unnoticed. It is not

⁹³Acts of Tennessee, 1915, Ch. 116.

⁹⁴Nashville Banner, May 6, 1915, p. 8.

believed that many members of the Senate discovered some of the remarkable provisions of the bill.

Among the important provisions of the bill were the following: First, it authorized the State Board of Education to elect the Superintendent of Public Instruction; second, to make sure that no future Democratic administration for years to come can make changes in the educational department, it authorizes the governor to appoint three new members on the State Board of Education; third, it provides that the State Board of Education shall not elect its own chairman, but he shall be designated by the governor; fourth, it empowers the Board to fix the salary of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This is a neat way of arranging for the salary to be increased, a thing which the legislature directly refused to do a few days ago in the appropriation bill; fifth, it delegates to the State Board of Education the legislative prerogative of securing the term of office of the State Superintendent. Under the provision, the Board can fix the official term of the State Superintendent at four, six, or eight, or even ten years as it may see fit.

If there are any aspiring gentlemen in Tennessee who entertain the hope of ever gracing the office of State Superintendent, this bill will afford them but small encouragement.⁹⁵

This bill was repealed in 1919 and the appointment of the state superintendent was returned to the governor.⁹⁶

"Anti-administration forces viewed the measure as a direct blow at P. L. Harned, Chairman of the State Board of Education, and one of the governor's [Roberts] strongest political opponents, who was reportedly slated to succeed

⁹⁵Ibid., May 7, 1915, p. 3.

⁹⁶Acts of Tennessee, 1919, Ch. 11.

S. W. Sherrill as the board's choice for the state superintendency."⁹⁷

Professor Harned was still the Postmaster in Clarksville at this time. However, two years later, in 1921, he was appointed to serve as Elementary School Inspector for the State and continued in this position until 1923.⁹⁸ Professor Harned served under J. B. Brown, who was Superintendent of Public Instruction under Governor Alf Taylor.

During Professor Harned's term as State Elementary School Inspector, a new Course of Study for Elementary Grades was prepared.⁹⁹ This was not an effort to revise the course prescribed by law, but rather it was an attempt to provide teachers with suggestions which would help them in teaching the various grades. This study contained a brief outline of work for each of the elementary school subjects, suggested methods and devices, lists of available teaching materials, and extra-curricular programs suitable

⁹⁷Andrew David Holt, The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, 1903-1936. (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938), p. 299.

⁹⁸Philip M. Hamer, Tennessee, A History, p. 521.

⁹⁹Public Schools of Tennessee, Course of Study for Elementary Grades, 1921, p. 3.

for the various grades. The actual subjects prescribed for elementary schools had not been substantially revised since 1891.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Acts of Tennessee, 1891, Chapter 132, provided: "In every primary school shall be taught Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography, History of Tennessee, the Constitution of the United States, Vocal Music and Elocution, or the art of public speaking may be taught therein . . ."

Chapter V

STATE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, 1923-1933

P. L. Harned was appointed by Governor Austin Peay to serve as his Commissioner of Education. This account of Professor Harned's appointment was given in the Nashville Tennessean:

. . . P. L. Harned is from Clarksville, the home of the governor. Indorsements by the thousands of Professor Harned have been made. It is significant that there was no other applicant for the position.¹⁰¹

The Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle reported "that Mr. Peay in selecting Professor Harned, did it simply because he recognized in him the one man in the state best fitted by experience for the important post."¹⁰²

The new Superintendent immediately began work on the General Education Bill of 1923, which eventually wound up being thirty pages long, and which recommended, among other things, a codification of school laws. After a lengthy battle, however, the Bill was defeated.¹⁰³

The failure of the General Education Bill to pass in 1923 was reported in the Nashville Banner as follows:

¹⁰¹Nashville Tennessean, Feb. 1, 1923, p. 1.

¹⁰²Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle, Feb. 1, 1923, p. 1.

¹⁰³House Bill No. 910, House Journal, 1923, p. 663.

. . . Harned's scheme for a school system was never read to the membership. One bill which had been scheduled to be the excuse for a large amount of oratory, the general education bill, which was prepared for the purpose of putting the ideas of the state school administration into legal form, died a premature death in the House of Representatives Friday afternoon when its consideration was postponed indefinitely.¹⁰⁴

Dr. Andrew Holt concluded that the failure to pass the General Education Bill was not due to the lack of power of the new governor, but rather that Governor Peay placed top priority the passage of other measures.¹⁰⁵ Harned and the other educational leaders were aware of the fact that if their programs were to succeed, the Governor's support would be needed, and they set out to obtain his backing.

Shortly after the defeat of the General Education Bill of 1923, Professor Harned invited teachers and other school officials to meet with him in Nashville on May 23, 1923, "for the purpose of making plans for a study of the educational system of the state to determine the most pressing needs of the schools and how to meet them."¹⁰⁶ Out of this meeting came the outline for the General Education Bill of 1925. After Governor Peay won the Democratic

¹⁰⁴Nashville Banner, March 31, 1923, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵Holt, The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, p. 343.

¹⁰⁶Tennessee Educational Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 6, June, 1923, p. 1.

nomination in the primary of 1924, Harned called another conference, consisting of county superintendents and other educational leaders, where they spent a week discussing the proposed legislative program.¹⁰⁷

During the meantime, in an effort to obtain the Governor's favor and support, he had been invited to address the annual meetings of the Public School Officers Association¹⁰⁸ and the State Teachers Association.¹⁰⁹ That the school people were able to influence the Governor is reflected in remarks he made during his general election race in 1924. One of the main planks of his platform was "I am determined during the next two years that it shall become possible for every child in the state to obtain eight months schooling every year."¹¹⁰

Harned's General Education Bill was signed by Governor Peay on April 16, 1925;¹¹¹ however, a total of 277 amendments were added: fifty by the House Recess Committee on Education;¹¹² 156 in the House;¹¹³ and 121 by

¹⁰⁷Nashville Tennessean, March 22, 1925.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., Jan. 11, 1924, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹Bulletin, State Teachers Association, April 1924, p. 7.

¹¹⁰Alexander, Austin Peay, Governor of Tennessee, "Peay's Speech at Cookeville, Tennessee, Oct. 4, 1924," p. 66. (Kingsport: Southern Publishers, Inc., 1929).

¹¹¹House Journal, 1925, p. 1405.

¹¹²Memphis Commercial Appeal, March 13, 1925, p. 1.

¹¹³House Journal, 1925, p. 1049.

the Senate.¹¹⁴ Although the measure as passed bore little resemblance to the original bill, the main point remained intact, that of an equalization fund which would guarantee an eight-month school term to every county which would make a reasonable effort to secure it.

The General Education Bill of 1925 was generally misunderstood in the legislature. This was most likely because of its length. One of the legislators, after the final vote on the measure had been taken in the House, admitted: "I voted 'aye,' but I haven't the faintest idea what I am voting for."¹¹⁵ The Memphis Commercial Appeal summed up the situation:

The education bill was murdered in the house largely because it was misunderstood. It was little more than a codification of the school laws of the state since 1873, but its bulk was enough to scare everybody. What should have been done was to draw up in two or three short bills the new matter to be introduced and present them to the legislature.¹¹⁶

Professor Harned spent much of his time over the next two years trying to implement the new laws of the General Education Bill. He especially tried to convince the county courts to levy the required fifty-cent elementary tax in their respective counties so as to receive state money which would supplement the county's funds with an

¹¹⁴Senate Journal, 1925, p. 1237.

¹¹⁵House Journal, 1925, p. 1050.

¹¹⁶Memphis Commercial Appeal, April 6, 1925, p. 1.

amount sufficient to enable the county to run its elementary schools for eight months. He also worked on another educational program to be presented to the legislature in 1927.¹¹⁷

Hill McAlister, who had served as state treasurer under Governor Peay for three years, and had served in that capacity for four years prior to Governor Peay's election,¹¹⁸ opposed Governor Peay in the Democratic primary of 1926. But, even before Governor Peay announced he would run for re-election, McAlister began attacking the administration and criticized Professor Harned personally for the management of the public school system. In a speech in Murfreesboro on April 24, 1926, he leveled these accusations at Harned:

That he is using these great powers for political purposes is as plain as day, and every educator and friend of education is reluctant to disagree with this head politician on political matters for fear that retribution might be visited on his county schools for this exercise of independence.¹¹⁹

The Nashville Banner continued its attack on Harned:

Commissioner Harned is supposed to be head of the education department. He is virtually managing Peay's campaign for a third term. Indications are that he has laid aside his official duties and is devoting his

¹¹⁷Annual Report of Department of Education, 1925, pp. 23-24.

¹¹⁸Hamer, Vol. II, p. 763.

¹¹⁹Nashville Banner, April 25, 1926.

time to organizing the county superintendents, county boards of education and school teachers for Governor Peay.

. . . School inspectors and investigators at high salaries, and with heavy expense accounts are scouring the State visiting the different counties and localities, getting in personal touch with county superintendents and other school officials and working night and day trying to cement the whole fabric of the education system into a political organization.¹²⁰

Governor Peay's bid for renomination by the Democrats was based on his past record, and he was proud of the educational advances made under his administration.

The year before I became Governor, we had an 8 months term in 12 counties. The latest returns now show that this year we had an 8 months term in our elementary schools in 77 counties. The average school term during my administration has increased from 126 days to 152 days. The average term in the last 20 years increased from 116 days, or 10 days previous only.¹²¹

Regarding Hill McAlister's attack on Professor Harned, Governor Peay remarked:

You will remember what they told Lincoln about Grant using liquor. The President told them he was winning the war. They told you that the commissioner has taken our schools into politics. I tell you that he has given Tennessee a real school system. Our schools in politics? That is pure rot.¹²²

After defeating McAlister for the Democratic nomination by a narrow majority, Governor Peay easily won in the general election, carrying every district in the state for

¹²⁰Ibid., May 12, 1926, p. 4.

¹²¹Alexander, "Speech at Trenton, June 26, 1926," p. 272.

¹²²Ibid.

the first time in Tennessee history.¹²³ Harned and the other education forces also won a victory, as Governor Peay devoted considerable space in his first message to the legislature of 1927 outlining the educational program he wished enacted into law.¹²⁴ One bill which was passed provided for the establishment of a normal school in Clarksville "for training of rural white teachers."¹²⁵

Governor Peay died on October 2, 1927, and education lost one of its staunchest supporters. The Public School Officers Association eulogized "his wholehearted devotion to the school progress of the State."¹²⁶

Harned and the other school people were optimistic that Henry H. Horton, who became Governor after Austin Peay's death, would be friendly toward education, partly because Governor Horton had been a teacher for seven years.¹²⁷ He was voted into the "school lobby," by the Public School Officers Association, and promised he would continue the policies of his predecessor in regard to the public school system.¹²⁸

¹²³Ibid., p. xxxiv.

¹²⁴House Journal, "Governor's Message to the Sixty-fifth General Assembly," 1927, p. 22.

¹²⁵Acts of Tennessee, 1927, ch. 50.

¹²⁶Nashville Tennessean, Jan. 11, 1928, p. 5.

¹²⁷Ibid., Jan. 12, 1928, p. 1.

¹²⁸Ibid.

While Governor Peay's statements regarding education had been specific, Governor Horton's remarks were of a general nature. The reason for this was most likely because Harned had no definite program for Governor Horton to sponsor. Most of Commissioner Harned's discussion, as presented in his annual report, dealt with changes he felt were necessary in the method of financing the public schools in Tennessee.¹²⁹

Commissioner Harned became more active in the political campaign of 1928 than he had in earlier ones because he realized the uncertainty of Horton's ability to hold the Peay political machine intact. He felt that the success of his prior educational programs had been due primarily to the strength of the political organization of which he was a part. Anti-administration papers continued their attack on Commissioner Harned for his political activities:

These scandals cannot be suppressed. . . The attempted conversion of the Department of Education into a political oligarchy, dominated by the offensive Harned, is another.¹³⁰

Despite these attacks, Harned was able to obtain passage of his program in the legislature. The most important item as set forth in his 1928 report, the change in

¹²⁹ Annual Report of Department of Education, 1928, p. 18.

¹³⁰ Nashville Banner, June 3, 1928, p. 6.

method of apportioning the school funds from a percentage to a budgetary basis, passed both houses of the legislature.¹³¹

Immediately after the adjournment of the legislature of 1929, Professor Harned actively began his fight for a system of school finances which would permanently solve the problem of a satisfactory school term and adequate salaries for teachers. This plan was discussed in the Commissioner's annual report of 1930 in which he stated:

In lieu of the present method of apportioning the elementary school fund, the State should assume the salaries of the elementary teachers in a fair ratio to the number of children to each teacher and the salary schedule established by the State Board of Education which is based on training and efficient service. This should apply to the elementary teachers of the country schools, the town schools, and give all the children of the State the same advantages in so far as an elementary education is concerned. This State fund should be apportioned by the Comptroller of the Treasury monthly during the period and it should be unlawful for a single penny of it to be used for any other purpose than the payment of the salaries of the elementary teachers for the current month . . .¹³²

Governor Horton approved of this plan proposed by Professor Harned, and they presented the plan to the State Teachers Association which also agreed that the State

¹³¹House Journal, 1929, p. 1373; Senate Journal, 1929, p. 892.

¹³²Annual Report of Department of Education, 1930, p. 17.

assume financial responsibility for a minimum elementary school term of eight months, based on a reasonable salary schedule.¹³³

No specific reference to the plan was made in Governor Horton's campaign speeches of 1930. He and the school forces quite possibly felt it better that the program not be made an issue because it might jeopardize the Governor's chances. It would appear their reasoning was based on the economic situation in Tennessee. By 1930, for the people had begun to feel the depression, and the inclusion of the issue that the state should assume responsibility for payment of teachers' salaries would have necessitated the Governor's proposing some means of raising revenue to support the school program, which would have met with public opposition.

Commissioner Harned, who had repeatedly been accused of using his influence with the school people to obtain their votes, although the exact nature of his participation in politics was never spelled out, became overtly active in Governor Horton's campaign. In 1930 Commissioner Harned set up political headquarters of his own in Nashville:

. . . In the gubernatorial campaign of 1930 the people of Tennessee witnessed the unseemly sight of a Commissioner of Education opening headquarters in a hotel in the capitol city of the State and throwing into a political campaign every resource at

¹³³Nashville Banner, April 19, 1930, pp. 1, 5.

his command, open and secret, as head of the public school system of the State, in order to perpetuate in power a devastating and defiant machine of which for years he has been an integral and important part . . .¹³⁴

Henry Horton was re-elected on November 4, 1930,¹³⁵ and by January, 1931, when the legislature convened, there were accusations of fraud and incompetency being made against the administration.¹³⁶ Even with the legislature in this ugly mood toward the administration, Harned's bill proposing that the state assume complete responsibility for financing an eight-month school term through payment of a minimum salary for elementary teachers was introduced;¹³⁷ however, the measure was never brought up for its third and final reading.

Harned and the educational leaders sought to arouse public sentiment, soon after the 1931 legislature adjourned, for their programs. In the Spring of 1932, the State Teachers Association gave Harned \$5,000 for the purpose of conducting a state-wide educational campaign. This campaign was to be patterned after the campaigns held so successfully in previous years.¹³⁸

¹³⁴Nashville Banner, July 6, 1932, p. 4.

¹³⁵Tennessee Blue Book, 1932, p. 96.

¹³⁶Nashville Banner, Jan. 7, 1931, p. 4.

¹³⁷House Journal, 1931, p. 369.

¹³⁸Minutes of the Tennessee State Teachers Association, March 24, 1932.

Speakers, composed of members of the State Department of Education, presidents of the teachers' colleges, and leaders of education in the different sections of the state held rallies for about a month in ninety counties.¹³⁹ However, these speakers drew such small crowds and little interest that the campaign was discontinued and half of the \$5,000 appropriated by the State Teachers Association was returned to it.¹⁴⁰

Commissioner Harned supported "Ham" Patterson as the administration's choice for Governor in the primary campaign of 1932.¹⁴¹ This campaign soon became a battle between Hill McAlister and Harned, in which McAlister directed his most abusive remarks against Harned, rather than Patterson:

I still believe that our public school system is part of a pernicious political machine, and that it is high time that the teachers and school boards be relieved from the necessity of following the leadership of the head of the system in every election or political contest in which he may become interested . . .¹⁴²

McAlister promised to do for the schools whatever the state's financial condition would allow,¹⁴³ but his

¹³⁹Tennessee Educational Bulletin, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1932.

¹⁴⁰Minutes of the Tennessee State Teachers Association, 1933.

¹⁴¹Nashville Banner, June 29, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁴²Ibid., May 30, 1932, p. 10.

¹⁴³Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 23, 1932, p. 7.

major promise with regard to education, and one which constituted a main plank in his platform was that, if elected Governor, he would take the schools out of politics.¹⁴⁴ McAlister also promised he would replace P. L. Harned, who was a recognized power in state politics, with a person who held at least a Master's degree, and whose interests were "primarily educational rather than political."¹⁴⁵

While Commissioner Harned had been the target for attack by certain anti-administration papers throughout the years, his political views had not been made public. However, the Nashville Tennessean reported on an address he made in 1932 to the county superintendents of Middle Tennessee, in which the Commissioner expressed his philosophy concerning the relationship of politics and education:

. . . P. L. Harned, State Commissioner of Education, flatly declared today that Hill McAlister, candidate for governor, is making demagogic utterances regarding the public school system.

"I am not asking you to vote for anyone," said Mr. Harned, "but I am asking you as friends of education to examine the claims of the candidates to get the facts for yourself before you are swayed by a demagog." "

"I challenge McAlister to show," said Mr. Harned, "that a single penny of the people's money has been misused or misappropriated during my term as state commissioner of education, or that one county was favored over another in the school apportionment or that my hand ever signed a teacher's certificate except

¹⁴⁴Nashville Banner, June 9, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

under the law. It makes no difference whether I go out of office this moment or not--no man has a right to misrepresent public education in this state. . . . The state commissioner declared that the teachers of the state have made progress by practicing sane politics, using the word politics in the sense that it is the science of government.

"All these advances have been the result of honest political work," he said. "Let them call us the 'school lobbyist,' but we are eliminating illiteracy in Tennessee. We have never lobbied for money. Tennessee has suffered because of the demagog and not the real politician."¹⁴⁶

After McAlister defeated Patterson in the primary, Harned threw his support behind Lewis Pope, who was running in the general election as an Independent.¹⁴⁷ Hill
McAlister was elected Governor of Tennessee by 9,570 votes.¹⁴⁸

Professor Harned resigned his position as State Commissioner of Education on January 16, 1933, before the new Governor had the opportunity to "fire" him.¹⁴⁹

Under Commissioner Harned's leadership, the following laws were enacted which provided:

1. An eight-month elementary school term for counties which would levy a fifty-cent elementary school tax.
2. A definite salary schedule for teachers in the elementary schools.
3. The codification of school laws.
4. The employment of a state architect.

¹⁴⁶Nashville Tennessean, June 30, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷Memphis Commercial Appeal, October 25, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸Tennessee Blue Book, 1933-34, p. 87.

¹⁴⁹Memphis Commercial Appeal, January 3, 1933.

5. An improved method of licensing teachers, supervisors, and superintendents.
6. Uniform system for the promotion of children in the elementary grades.
7. An extensive building program for rural schools, University of Tennessee, and the teachers colleges.
8. The conversion of the normal schools into teachers colleges.
9. The authorization of the junior high schools and higher standards for all high schools.
10. Budgetary rather than percentage basis for apportioning the state's public school fund.
11. Increased appropriations to all departments of the educational system.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Holt, The Struggle for a State System of Public Schools in Tennessee, p. 383.

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