CHAPTER THREE

Part III: Changing Faculty and Leadership

Jane Leonard had announced in November of 1919 her “intention of severing her active connection with the school at the end of that school year.” The Trustees told her that she would have a home in the school as long as she wanted to remain there and encouraged her to continue her active involvement in alumni affairs, even offering her secretarial support to assist her in her correspondence with former students. Leonard remained at the school as preceptress emeritus and continued to be involved in the lives of ISNS students.

That is not to say that Leonard restricted the remainder of her life to work at the normal school. With women finally granted the right to vote, Leonard moved from talking about politics to fully participating in them. In 1922, she was drafted as a candidate for the 27th congressional district in “recognition of her effective work in opening the ballot box to the womanhood of America.” Leonard reported that she hadn’t sought the nomination, but that her friends “insisted she permit her name to be used.” When the election began, she actively campaigned at venues from women’s club meetings to county fairs. Always the teacher, she gave particularly stirring speeches to women’s groups, urging them to take advantage of their right to and bewailing the fact that in women were not participating to the degree that they ought in the political process. She did not win the election, though she did well. She received more votes than the Democratic candidate had gotten in past and future elections.

Leonard’s Death

On April 6, 1924, at the age of 83, Jane Leonard died in her sleep in her rooms in Sutton Hall. Her funeral was held in the ISNS chapel where she had so often spoken to students and where her portrait hung.
At the service, friends and colleagues spoke of her dedication, charm, and significance. When the service was over, her body was taken to the train to be transported to her final resting place. Students from the normal and public schools in the area lined the route of her funeral procession to bid her a final good-by.

Her passing was the end of an era for the school, but Miss Leonard was not the only longtime faculty member that would say good-bye to ISTC during the period. Working toward Teachers College status required the institution to have instructors with college degrees, something some of the longtime faculty lacked. In some cases, those without these minimum qualifications were forced to retire.

A report submitted by Keith in January of 1926 to the Trustees dealt directly with the process of the forced retirement of long serving instructors, what Keith referred to as an “uncertain and agitating situation.” With the Administrative Code of 1923 a process had been set in motion to standardize titles, salaries, and wages of those employed by the state resulting in what Keith called a “Qualification-Salary Schedule” which listed qualifications and corresponding salaries. When this schedule, which required at least an undergraduate degree, was applied to their faculty and administrators, twenty individuals, some long serving, high ranking faculty and administrators, were found wanting. While many of those lacking credentials were young, had not been there long, and could make plans to teach elsewhere, three long serving, high ranking, women were on the list.
One of the women terminated was Jean McElhaney, the Director of the Art Program since its inception. Widely known and well-regarded, she had been a leader in art education not only on campus, but across the state and had helped develop the Art curriculum for all of the Pennsylvania normal schools.

According to the state Director of Art Education, she “had done more for public school art work in this state than any other women.” Though Keith recognized her as “a superior teacher of art,” he felt that because she did not have an undergraduate degree the school could not continue to employ her. Keith suggested she give up the directorship of art, stay for a year to train her successor, and then retire. When she retired, the Penn said that her retirement would leave a vacancy that “would not soon or easily be filled.”

But two female administrators who also lacked adequate training, Keith felt, were too important to the school to do without. Hope Stewart, Dean of Women, did not have an undergraduate degree. She had been there for 27 years, and though the report found that though her academic preparation was “desultory and inconsistent,” her experience, particularly working with Jane Leonard, was as valuable as college degrees.

Also essential was Jeannie Ackerman, the Director of the Training School. For many years, Ackerman had supervised and developed the program there, overseen the professional training and placement of hundreds of student teachers, and had developed a large network of trusted contacts in the teaching profession across the state and across the nation. She knew the student teachers, and the school directors knew her. Ackerman’s “work was outstanding” and she was
someone, regardless of her educational qualifications, the school should fight to keep. On his list, Ackerman was the most valuable employee in the list of 20. Keith recommended that Stewart and Ackerman, be allowed to keep their jobs until they were 62.

**New Leadership: From Keith to Foster**

Though Keith had masterminded the development of the school to a teachers college, he was not at the helm to witness the first graduate and its change of name. John Fischer was an ISNS alumni and member of its Board of Trustees from 1915-1926. In this capacity, he had worked with Keith and seen him deal well with the challenges that faced the school during the Great War and the transition from normal school to teacher’s college.

When Fischer was elected the Governor of Pennsylvania in fall of 1926, he asked Keith to join his administration as the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In February of 1927, Keith resigned to accept the post. He was replaced by Dr. Charles Foster.