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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

A STUDY OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE THEODORE AHRENS TRADE SCHOOL OF KENTUCKY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of Master of Arts

Department of Education

by

Norma Eugene Theisen

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AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
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A STUDY OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE THEODORE ARRENS TRADE SCHOOL OF KENTUCKY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	1
Purposes of the study	1
Mr. Theodore Ahrens and Miss Ethel Lovell	111
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND THE PLACE OF THE THEODORE AHRENS TRADE SCHOOL IN ITS GENERAL SCHEME. . .	1
Ahrens Trade School as an illustration of the aims of vocational education in Kentucky	1
The progress of vocational education in Kentucky	7
Vocational education as a national movement	13
II. BEGINNINGS: THE HERITAGE FROM THE PRE- VOCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS . . .	21
The establishment of the Prevocational school	22
The cooperation of the Consumers' League in establishing the Prevoca- tional School	24

CHAPTER

PAGE

The problem of the Prevocational

School 31

The Vocational School 36

III. THE FOUNDING OF THE THEODORE AHRENS

TRADE SCHOOL 50

The gift for a new trade school 50

Preparations for expansion 55

Additional gifts 58

Construction of the new plant 63

Dedication of the trade school 68

IV. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT: AHRENS SINCE 1926. . 74

Growth and organization 74

Later physical expansion 87

Ahrens and national defense 91

Conclusion 100

BIBLIOGRAPHY 103

PREFACE

PREFACE

I. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The main body of this thesis is an account of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School of Louisville, Kentucky, from its beginning to the present time. Chapters II, III, and IV are entirely devoted to the origins, growth, and development of this institution. The investigation covers the period of years from 1913 to 1941.

In making the study it has been attempted to point out the two-fold function of the Ahrens Trade School in connection with the community of Louisville: first, in the case of the individual student who seeks specialized training for the earning of a livelihood; and second, in the case of the city's business and trade organization which is benefited by an adequate source of well-equipped workers. The fact that this value is recognized by the community is demonstrated by attention to the assistance and cooperation of various city organizations in maintaining and improving the school.

Chapter I has been used to introduce the account by relating the Theodore Ahrens Trade School to the trend of the vocational education movement in the state of Kentucky and in the nation as a whole. The development of that movement has been indicated in order to show how

the Louisville trade school fits into its general scheme. No attempt has been made, however, to do more than provide the background against which the local institution might be viewed in a clearer light. In doing so, of course, many details have been eliminated which would have been necessary if a fuller account of national vocational education had been called for.

Some confusion may be caused by the frequent mention of the Prevocational and Vocational schools unless their place in this discussion is pointed out at the beginning. The Prevocational School was the first attempt to provide vocational and trade education for Louisville pupils. Established in 1913, it was called by this name until 1918 when it became known as the Vocational School. The Theodore Ahrens Trade School is the outgrowth of these institutions, receiving its present name following Mr. Ahrens' first gifts (in 1924-25) to expand the Vocational School.

The Theodore Ahrens Trade School is an integral part of the Louisville Public School system. It is a three year senior high school, enrolling over one thousand students in its regular and related courses. Many factors and persons have contributed to its present status of importance as an educational unit. Two of these persons have had such a unique place in its history

that it seems advisable to call attention to their special contributions in the part of this preface which follows.

II. MR. THEODORE AHRENS AND MISS ETHEL LOVELL

In the story of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, Mr. Theodore Ahrens, the founder, and Miss Ethel M. Lovell, the administrator, stand in the forefront of those contributing to the influence of that institution.

About fifteen years ago Mr. Ahrens said to the Louisville Board of Education: "I am interested in bettering the condition of the youth of Louisville. I want to do something for the boys and girls, who, upon leaving school, must engage immediately in the task of earning a livelihood." These words were followed by prompt and effective action. The result was the founding of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, involving the eventual gift of over a half million dollars. The established institution now memorializes the vision of a man whose accomplishments provide an example of real citizenship.

Born in Baltimore on September 21, 1859, the son of Theodore and Mary Nebel Ahrens, Mr. Ahrens was educated in the public schools of Louisville. At the age of thirteen he was given his first employment in his

father's brass foundry at a wage of seven dollars a week. His business career was a record of steady advancement and increasing responsibility. At the age of twenty one he received a partnership in the plumbing and steam-fitting business of Ahrens, Walker and Ryan. In 1885 he joined his father and Mr. Henry Ott in conducting the brass work foundry. In 1894 the Ahrens and Ott Manufacturing Company embarked on the making of enameled ware and soon was among the leaders in the field. In 1900 the business was consolidated with the Dawes & Myler Company, the Standard Manufacturing Company, and six other plants, with Mr. Ahrens at the head of the new organization.

Mr. Ahrens was a self-made man, with a very extensive education in the conditions and affairs of men, in the great school of experience. He was a tireless worker with many and varied interests occupying his attention. Under his guidance the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company became a great organization. Nevertheless, he was also interested continuously in public welfare, both educational and recreational.

The Louisville trade school which bears Mr. Ahrens' name is not the only evidence of his interest in vocational training. In 1925 he told his associates that he proposed to establish and endow a professional

v

chair in Plumbing, Heating and Ventilating at the Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The announcement was epochal for the industry and was so acclaimed in trade journals and newspapers throughout the country.

The reasons which prompted his making possible a trade school for the city of Louisville were made plain by Mr. Ahrens. At the time of his initial gift for its establishment, he said that during the half-century he had been in business he had become aware of the need of standardized courses for boys and girls planning to enter trades. He expressed the opinion that apprenticeships were haphazard in their training and wasteful of time and energy on the part of employees, and he pointed to the need of trained recruits in mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, electric installation, printing, masonry, and among women for dressmakers, milliners, and other occupations.

Mr. Ahrens' interest in athletics was responsible for a special contribution to make possible a gymnasium for the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. An excellent gymnast in his youth, he retained his admiration for exercises of the gymnasium type long after he himself had given them up. When the plans for the school had been drafted, they were submitted to Mr. Ahrens. "There's

the gymnasium?" he wanted to know. Upon being told that the funds he had provided were sufficient for the school only, he asked what a gymnasium would cost. When \$50,000.00 was suggested, he agreed to give the additional amount.

On June 12, 1938, Mr. Ahrens died at the age of seventy eight, a man marked by his business genius, his wide travel, and his great philanthropy. He left in Louisville two monuments to his achievement--the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company and the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. It is in his relation to the latter institution that he becomes important in the pages of this story.

Miss Ethel M. Lovell, the other of the two prime factors in the development of the Ahrens Trade School, is still the head of that institution, as she has been from its beginning. Miss Lovell occupies a somewhat unique and highly honorable position in the educational development of Louisville. Although a woman, she was the first teacher of manual training and had the first wood workshop in the public schools of this city.

Miss Lovell has ever been an intense student of the vocational in education. While engaged in her classroom Miss Lovell's talents were recognized by a group of local club women, promoters of advanced

education, who sent her to Chicago for a period of study. Upon her return she was made principal and instructor of the Prevocational School, first established here in 1913-1914. Miss Lovell was the leading spirit in devising the plan upon which this school was operated.

A few years later this school became the Louisville Vocational School, which name was held until the Theodore Ahrens Trade School became its successor in 1926.

Miss Lovell studied at Chicago, Wisconsin, Louisville and Columbia universities. She is a member of the national, state, and Louisville educational associations and is also actively affiliated with the American and Kentucky vocational associations. Her civic interest has been manifested by her connection with the Woman's Club, the Altrusa Club, the Women's City Club, and the Business and Professional Women's Club.

Miss Lovell's aim has been, in directing the development of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, to fit the school to meet the needs of the community as well as of the individual students. To this end she has not emphasized mere bigness in the institution nor tried to stimulate increases in the size of its enrollment.

These have come, but they have been regulated so as to meet the demands of employers for workers where they have been needed. Any other course, according to her philosophy, would have meant an oversupply of workers in certain occupations and consequent, avoidable, idleness of trained employees. To prevent this, she has maintained constant contact with industrial and business directors and her school has accomplished admirable results in helping graduates of the courses at Ahrens in obtaining and retaining employment.

Having had so large a share in the development of the present system of vocational education here, Miss Lovell is held to be an authority of high rank. It is not to be doubted that under her direction the Ahrens Trade School has reached an advanced stage of civic usefulness.

From the facts which have been presented it is clear that the educational institution dealt with in the following pages owes much to the various services of both Mr. Ahrens and Miss Lovell. It is not intended, however, that these facts should obscure the many and valuable contributions which others have made to the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. Some of these will presently appear in their connection with the origin and development of the school as studied in the chapters which now succeed this preface.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND THE PLACE OF THE THEODORE AHRENS TRADE SCHOOL IN ITS GENERAL SCHEME

Ahrens Trade School is one of the hundreds of trade schools which have sprung up all over America during the past quarter of a century. It is an expression of a movement which has entered into national education since 1900. The importance of the school will be better understood if it is considered in its relation to state and national growth of vocational education. The succeeding chapters will deal with Ahrens as a particular institution. Here, however, it seems wise to point out briefly its background and the way in which the school illustrates the aims and growth of vocational education.

I. AHRENS TRADE SCHOOL AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE AIMS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY

Inasmuch as Theodore Ahrens Trade School carried out the aims of the Kentucky program of vocational education--with but a single major exception--it might be well to notice what those aims are. The exception mentioned is in the case of agricultural education, which is somewhat outside the province of Ahrens, since the

latter is a city school and primarily interested in the training of city children.

Vocational education in Kentucky has four general divisions--agricultural education, trade and industrial education, home economics education, and distributive occupations education. Each of these has made continued and substantial gains in usefulness and influence as the need for them has been increasingly demonstrated.

Vocational education in agriculture includes planned instruction for all-day pupils in high school classes, for young men on the farm 16 to 24 years old in part time classes, and for adult farmers in evening classes. Since the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, our main point of interest in this study, does not teach agriculture for reasons already observed, it is sufficient merely to mention this subject as a part of the state's program. The other three divisions are treated below, and it will be seen how each of them occupies an important place in the course of instruction at Ahrens Trade School.

The groups served by Kentucky's program of vocational home economics are day-school pupils (girls and boys), out-of-school youth, and adults. The work for each group is based on the needs and interests of

the group as determined by careful surveys of homes and community.¹

In vocational home economics Ahrens provides the usual training in sewing and cooking with many interesting variations. Millinery, for example, is available not only to regular pupils but also to older girls who desire to learn a trade. These girls see, handle, and work with attractive materials which they turn into equally attractive, practical products. Baking classes, too, have drawn numbers of students, including employees of bakeries.²

The attention of the state program to distributive occupations is also followed by Ahrens Trade School. Distributive occupations are those followed by workers directly engaged in merchandising activities, or in direct contact with buyers and sellers when (a) distributing to consumers, retailers, jobbers, wholesalers, and others, the products of farm and industry; (b) managing, operating, or conducting a commercial service or personal service business, or selling the services of such a business.

1. H. W. Peters, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Frankfort, Kentucky, June 30, 1939, p. 130.

2. See page 85 of this thesis.

Education for those engaged in the distributive occupations is a new phase of the state-wide program of vocational education. The plan was inaugurated only after the beginning of the school year 1937-38. During 1938-39, however, more than 1,100 persons have been enrolled in classes in distributive occupations throughout the state. The program is designed to meet the needs of two groups: First, evening classes for adult workers in a retail or wholesale business; Second, cooperative day programs to train high school boys and girls for store service work.³

Distributive occupations are prepared for at Ahrens in the course on salesmanship and related studies. Training is given in the following branches: store organization, store system, study of merchandise, study of different types of customers and store service. Practice work in selling is required of students while still in school. This is secured in two ways--in the sales room in the school, and in the different department stores in the city, where managers make arrangements for the students to do part-time and special sales work. The school salesroom contains counters similar to those used in retail stores, and effort has been made to render the

S. H. W. Peters, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Frankfort, Kentucky, June 30, 1939, p. 136.

project more practical than theoretical. When Fourth Avenue department stores have felt the need of better trained help, they have appealed to Ahrens, and groups of girl employees, released from their duties in the stores for a couple of hours during a slack period of the day, have taken courses in salesmanship.

The third and final aspect of Kentucky's vocational education program is also one with which Ahrens is vitally concerned. Trade and industrial education, as the name implies, has to do with preparing people to engage in trades and industries. Trade and industrial education offers the following types of training or instruction:

1. Pre-employment training to persons 14 to 18 years old who expect to enter the field of trades and industries. This type of service to youth is known (1) as the all-general industrial school or class.
2. Supplementary, preparatory, or cooperative part-time instruction to persons 14 to 18 years old who have entered upon employment. The three kinds of schools or classes in this division are: (1) the trade preparatory, (2) the trade-extension, (3) the general continuation school or class, the time being as small as 144 hours a year or as much as 540 hours a year, depending on the type of organization and type of setup. The latter is known as a cooperative part-time school or class.
3. Supplementary related information to employed persons 16 years old and over who may find it most convenient to seek such instruction in the evening or other hours when not at work.

The industrial education program is governed by

certain regulations set forth in a State Plan for Vocational Education. Under these regulations:

1. All classes are set up below college level.
2. They are under public supervision and control.
3. The courses of study are ample and practical for the purpose and types of instruction intended.
4. The local community shares in the cost of instruction.
5. The teacher is a practical person chosen from the industry.
6. Such teachers are trained for the job of teaching before or during the first years of service.

In the story of Theodore Ahrens Trade School, gathered from the facts which follow this chapter, it will be seen that the school fully meets all these regulations in its status as an institution of vocational education. The lines immediately following, however, will suffice to indicate more briefly the manner in which Ahrens fulfills this particular aim of the state program.

Trade and industrial education are provided for in the following types of work: cabinet, machine, sheet metal, plumbing, electrical--both house wiring and motor--masonry, carpentry, mechanical drawing, composing, press room, bindery, etc. Model factory conditions have been carried out in the construction of the various shops.

Night school classes provide opportunities for those already out of school and employed who, however, need further instruction. Classes for journeymen plumbers are an example. In these⁴ mathematics, science, and shop drawing are subjects covered, with practical work in problems of the trade. Drawings are made and complete layouts in plumbing fixtures are sketched.

The foregoing facts are not intended to provide a complete account of the courses and activities of Theodore Ahrens Trade School. They are here mentioned merely to point out how the school carries out three major aims of the Kentucky plan for state-wide vocational education--namely, home economics, distributive occupations, and trade and industrial education. In accordance with the purpose expressed at the beginning of this chapter, the two sections following describe the background for Ahrens Trade School--the general scheme of vocational education in state and nation. Viewed against this background Ahrens may be seen in truer perspective, not as merely an isolated educational unit, but rather as part of a larger educational movement which is steadily gaining in influence and momentum.

II. THE PROGRESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY

America today is one of the foremost of industrial

4. See page 86 of this thesis.

nations. Among the other nations of the world few can compete with it in the quantity and quality of industrial products. Even after the domestic wants have been satisfied, America can produce to such an extent that foreign markets can be supplied, if not dominated.⁵

Naturally, tremendous changes have accompanied America's rise to this position of industrial power. During the four and one-half centuries since 1492 our country has reached a place comparable, if not superior to that held by the more advanced of the nations of Europe. These changes have been felt in all spheres of America's activities. Industry, politics, religion, philosophy, and social life have evolved in an amazing manner. It is hardly to be wondered, then that education has also felt and reflected the impact of this rapid national development:

The changes in education have been deeply rooted in the changes in industrial life and scientific thought. . . . The fact that the person must be a wage earner, a fact often overlooked by academic systems of education, is a keystone of modern education. The trend in American life has been toward industrialism, consequently the trend in education has been toward training in industrial pursuits.⁶

Kentucky, like other states of the Union, has endeavored to keep pace with this growing need for

⁵ William P. Sears, Jr., The Roots of Vocational Education (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1931), p. v.

⁶ Ibid., p. v, vi.

vocational education. R. H. Woods, State Director of the Division of Vocational Education, has expressed the goal of his department in the following words:

Vocational education in Kentucky is an integral part of the public school system. The vocational aim is by no means the only aim of education. We in vocational education realize there are other outstanding aims of education that relate to the fundamental activities of our present-day life, without the aid of which vocational education could not accomplish its purposes.

.....

Vocational education is not of one kind or of one procedure. Though training for a specific vocation or group of vocations, it has for youth all the essential qualities of progressive guidance. It assists young men and women in progressively adjusting themselves to vocations. It would be impossible to carry on vocational education without incorporating in it a large measure of vocational guidance. Vocational education does not cease when youths leave the day school, but offers a continuing education through its part-time and evening courses for young men and women and for adults, respectively.⁷

The first vocational education below college level in Kentucky, under any of the Federal acts, was in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act having been passed in February of that year. Thus the first annual reports to the Kentucky Division of Vocational Education were for the school year of 1917-18.⁸

In 1918, the Division of Vocational Education in

⁷ R. H. Woods in the Commonwealth of Kentucky Educational Bulletin, Vol. VII, No. 3 (Frankfort, Kentucky: State Department of Education, May 1939), p. 111.

⁸ H. W. Peters, Ibid., p. 110.

the State Department of Education was established and a Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture was appointed. Thus began a work that with State and Federal funds has expanded into a service broad in scope.

The State High School Inspector in his report for the year ending June 30, 1919, had this to say:

The State Board for Vocational Education, as soon as it was organized, designated the University of Kentucky as a training school for white teachers and the Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute as the training school for colored teachers desiring to equip themselves for any one of the three vocations indicated in the Smith-Hughes law. Eight schools applied to the Board for the privilege of establishing Smith-Hughes work in vocational agriculture for the remainder of the school year ending June 30, 1918. Six of these schools qualified and were reimbursed. Three or four schools qualified for work in vocational home economics at the same time, and two for trades and industries. For the school year ending June 30, 1919, twenty-three schools qualified for work in Smith-Hughes vocational agriculture, twelve in vocational home economics and two schools for work in Smith-Hughes vocational trades and industries.⁹

Figures are available to show the steady increase, in recent years, in the number of students attending trade and industrial classes in Kentucky. These, indicated below, cover the four year period from 1935 to 1939:¹⁰

9. Commonwealth of Kentucky Educational Bulletin, Published by the Kentucky Department of Education, Frankfort, Kentucky, Volume VII, No. 10, December, 1939, pp. 22-23.

10. H. W. Peters, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Frankfort, Kentucky, June 30, 1939, p. 49.

School Year	Day-Trade Classes	Part-Time Classes	Evening Classes	Total
1935-1936	1,281	1,171	473	2,924
1936-1937	1,176	1,777	177	3,130
1937-1938	1,514	1,537	747	3,798
1938-1939	2,210	1,865	950	5,025

During the same period the major developments in trade and industrial education were the establishment of centralized vocational schools, part-time programs in miscellaneous occupations, and evening extension training. Two state vocational schools were established; one for white students, the Mayo State Vocational School at Paintsville, and the other for Negroes, the West Kentucky State Vocational Training School at Paducah. Central Kentucky had a potential centralized vocational school with the opening in 1939 of a trades department at the Lafayette High School in Fayette County.¹¹

Louisville, of course, is large enough to furnish students for every department of study in its Ahrens Trade School, with sometimes a waiting list added. Among the smaller towns however, several communities have instituted cooperative part-time classes in Miscellaneous Occupations to give occupational training to students of

11. Ibid., p. 50.

high school age in the occupation available in the community. It is impossible to set up shops in a school for such occupations as are carried on in a small town. There are not enough people employed at each trade in any one year to warrant a class. Therefore, a cooperative arrangement is made between school and commercial shops whereby the learner or apprentice acquires the skills on the job and the related technical information in the school. Time is also arranged for the student to complete the regular high school subjects necessary for graduation.¹²

These facts about vocational education in Kentucky, while not affording a finely detailed account of its program, do nevertheless present the framework of the state plan into which the Theodore Ahrens Trade School fits as a single educational unit. For that reason their inclusion has been considered relevant to the present discussion. In turn, vocational education as a national movement appears worthy of the same degree of attention. The next few pages are devoted to a brief review of its development and progress, motives and aims.

12. Ibid.

III. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The foundation of vocational education in the United States has been in the process of formation since the beginning of this century. Few indeed, says J. C. Wright, of the 25,000 teachers, supervisors, and administrators now employed in this field of education had any large part in the laying of the corner-stone of this educational structure, which now enrolls more than one million students in the public schools of our country.¹³

During the pioneer days it was necessary to develop a philosophy and fundamental principles of administration that would stand the test of the years to follow. When the National Vocational Education Act was passed by Congress it embodied much of the philosophy and experiences of those early pioneers.¹⁴

Today, teachers, administrators and lay citizens alike are interested in the applications of federal legislation and state plans for vocational education. The report of the Douglas Commission,¹⁵ the pioneer

13. J. C. Wright, Editor's Preface: F. Theodore Struck, Foundations of Industrial Education (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1930), p. xiii.

14. Ibid.

15. A commission on Industrial and Technical Education was appointed in 1905 by Governor William L. Douglas of Massachusetts. The commission was composed of nine persons representing various occupational pursuits. Its purpose was to investigate the need for education in the different grades of skill and responsibility in the various industries in the Commonwealth. Ibid., p. 84.

work of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education and the efforts of later associations, all contribute to the theory and practice of industrial education as we know it at the present time.¹⁶

However, the moving force which has brought industrial and trade education into being is the modern development and growing complexity of industry itself. Stemming from the Industrial Revolution of the past century, the modern factory system is a major root from which vocational education has developed. The phases of the Industrial Revolution which can be considered of major influence include (1) the use of power driven machinery in industry, (2) the division of labor, (3) the shortening of the hours of labor, (4) the increase in per capita wages, (5) the entrance of women into factory labor, (6) the development of scientific research in industry, and (7) the problem of factory management and administration.¹⁷

Perhaps the most evident change in industry caused by the Industrial Revolution was (1) the change from hand production to machine production. This required a change in the training of workers for

16. Ibid., p. xli.

17. Ibid., p. 279.

positions in industry. To meet the needs of the new industries, the private trade schools arose. Many were founded after 1880. These include the New York Trade School (1881), the Philadelphia Builders' Exchange (1890), and the Baron de Hirsch Trade School (1891).¹⁸

The division of labor mentioned above (2) as a contributing factor in the development of trade schools, refers to the specialization of occupations in industry which became necessary because of the intricacies of modern machinery. In order to provide operators skilled in the use and knowledge of complex and highly specialized machinery, the factories themselves established training schools. The vestibule schools, the foremanship training programs, and the corporation schools are off-shoots of this impulse. The schools of the General Electric Company, the Westinghouse Electric Company, the New York Central Railroad, and the Yale and Towne Manufacturing Company are concrete evidence of the fact that industry itself has been vitally interested in vocational training.¹⁹

The shortening of the hours of labor (3)

18. Ibid., p. 280.

19. Ibid., p. 281.

constitutes a further root from which vocational education can be said to have sprung. With the reduction of hours from fourteen to eight per day it became evident that workers could engage in further education during their spare time. The first efforts to provide such opportunities were along the lines of evening schools including, among others, those conducted by various cities, the Young Men's Christian Association, and by the factories themselves. These early evening schools attempted to carry on the general education of their students, while those of today have widened their scope so as to include, in addition, specialized courses of a vocational character.²⁰

Another feature of the present industrial system is (4) the higher wage paid to industrial workers. This is a means by which individual workers may seek further education. The New School for Social Research in New York City, the trade extension schools, and the evening and part-time engineering colleges throughout the country are institutions which cater to the needs of the more affluent workers.²¹

The entrance of women into industry (5) has

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 282.

intensified the problem of industrial training. The ease with which automatic machines can be tended, the short hours of labor, and the tempting wage have been instrumental factors in luring women into the factories. The factory schools, the trade schools, and the continuation schools have broadened their scopes so as to include facilities for the training of women. The Manhattan Trade School for Girls and the Boston Trade School for Girls, among others, are the result of women's advent into industry.²²

Scientific research in industry (6) has created the demand for research workers both of college and sub-college grade for positions in industry. The birth of modern science can be traced back to the rationalistic era which occurred about the time of the French Revolution. After that time, however, science took a new turn. The influence was away from pure and theoretical studies, and toward the fields of engineering and applied science. The American colleges were not slow in seeing that the directive agents for the industrial world must be technically trained experts. After the third quarter of the nineteenth century engineering schools grew up throughout the country. For research workers of less than college grades,

22. Ibid.

junior research workers so-called, the factory schools have assumed the major part of the burden. The General Electric School is a fine example of this type of institution.²³

The problem of factory management and administration (7) has been cared for largely by the colleges of engineering of the United States in their departments of industrial engineering. The University of Louisville, the University of Cincinnati, New York University and the Georgia Technical Institute are examples of the many engineering schools which have attempted to supply industry's demand for leaders of ability and training. The schools mentioned realized the shortcomings of theoretical training and have carried on their work by means of the cooperative system of training. The students spend their time between the school and the shops, studying under college conditions, and working on real jobs in a true factory atmosphere.²⁴

Legislation, both national and state, has been increasingly favorable to vocational education. Many agencies have joined in the demand for Federal aid. To mention the most prominent campaigners one must include

23. Ibid., p. 283.

24. Ibid.

industry, labor, the engineering societies, the fraternal associations, educators, parents, industrial workers, and social workers. The result was the passage in 1917 of the Smith-Hughes Act and the creation of the Federal Board for Vocational Education. The results of this piece of legislation have been the improving and developing of countless vocational schools. The 1930 report to Congress of the Federal Board for Vocational Education states that there are 1,066,000 pupils enrolled in vocational courses approved by the Federal Board.²⁵

Vocational education has to-day become a vital part of the training necessary to fit young people for life in an increasingly complex age:

. . . In a society such as ours, based upon an industrial economy whereby the greater portion of the population engages in pursuits of an industrial, commercial, agricultural, or professional nature, it is reasonable to expect that the public schools, the great forces of social control, will assume the responsibility for training these people for their place in the social structure.²⁶

The Theodore Ahrens Trade School is an interesting example of the answer evolved by American public schools to meet these expectations. In the preceding pages it has been regarded as a unit in a state program.

25. Ibid., p. 290.

26. Ibid.

as a single expression of a national movement. In the pages to follow it is to be looked upon as an individual institution, and its history, character, and community influence ^{will be} carefully examined.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS: THE HERITAGE FROM THE PREVOCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

The school now known as The Theodore Ahrens Trade School was in existence more than a decade before the expansion which accompanied Mr. Ahrens' financial gift late in 1924. It was established in 1913 and was called first the Prevocational School. After the introductory years of its career the name was changed to the Louisville Vocational School. By the latter name it was known at the time when Mr. Ahrens became aware of its possibilities and decided to enlarge the scope of its services.

In the Louisville Vocational School the city of Louisville found a ready made foundation for the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. The latter is referred to as an outgrowth of the Vocational School with complete accuracy. It inherited from its predecessor a principal,¹ a building site, and a large proportion of its faculty members. Also, its ideals and purposes were developed along the same lines that the Vocational School had followed. With this relationship in mind,

1. Miss Ethel M. Lovell (See Preface, p. iii, vi)

the reasons for discussing the Prevocational and Vocational Schools become clear.

I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL

In the First Report of the Louisville Board of Education, covering the period from January 1, 1911, to July 1, 1912, the needs of the Louisville school system are listed.² There were twelve needs cited, and of these the eighth was "the establishment of a technical or vocational high school." Through the cooperation of the Consumers' League of Louisville the year 1913 saw the first steps taken to meet this need. The importance of the role played by the Consumers' League will presently receive due consideration. It was the initiative and energy displayed by that organization which were primarily responsible for the organization of the Prevocational School.

The Prevocational School opened in 1913 at the Madison Street School, Seventeenth and Madison Streets. Mr. Roman T. Brom in his thesis, The History of the Public Secondary Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, gives the following sketch of its early activities:

² First Report of the Board of Education of Louisville, Kentucky (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1913), p. 10.

What is now the Theodore Ahrens Trade School had its beginning in the Prevocational School that was organized in 1913 at the Madison Street School to meet the need of some seven hundred to one thousand pupils who were leaving school every year at the age of twelve. The purpose of the school was three-fold. First, it was to ground the pupil in the fundamentals of an academic education. Second, it was to give him an insight into several trades and occupations. Third, it was to help him to choose a vocation wisely. To accomplish these three purposes the following were included in the course of study: printing, drawing, book-binding, woodwork, mechanical drawing, practical arithmetic, spelling, history, and commercial geography. The twenty-one boys and eleven girls who enrolled the first year were taught by one academic teacher who was paid by the Board of Education, and one shop teacher who was paid by the Louisville Consumers League.

The following September, the school was moved to the annex of the Administration Building on Eighth Street. The school covered so thoroughly the seventh and eighth grade course of study that after the completion of two years work in the Prevocational School, any boy or girl could be recommended to the regular Senior High School of the city. This often happened for many of the boys and girls renewed a liking for school and were desirous of continuing their studies.

In 1915 the school again moved, this time to the building just vacated by Male High School on First Street between Chestnut and Walnut. It is still at this location although the building has been remodeled and annexed to so much that it does not seem to be the same building.

Boys and girls continued to come to this school in such numbers that in 1916 it became necessary to require them to have finished the sixth grade before they could enter.³

3. Roman T. Brom, The History of the Public Secondary Schools in Louisville, Kentucky; (unpublished Master's Thesis, the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1936), pp. 77, 78, 79.

II. THE COOPERATION OF THE CONSUMERS' LEAGUE IN ESTABLISHING THE PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL

The part played by the Consumers' League of Louisville in the establishment of the Prevocational School has already been suggested. Its interest in industrial reform and in problems such as child labor naturally led to consideration of the need for vocational education. In an article especially written for the Anniversary Number of the Louisville Times, December 31, 1909, Helen Murray Randolph describes the beginnings of the Consumers' League and its aims as follows:

Destined to work some striking reforms, and to enlist the intelligent cooperation of the great army of women shoppers, the Kentucky Consumers' League was established in 1900. Its primary object was to improve conditions among the garment makers, to abolish in so far as possible the "sweat-shop" system, and to have appointed factory inspectors to insure light and sanitary conditions for the makers of all stitched garments. This reform has been helped along by the increased demand of "consumers" that garments purchased by them in the stores bear "the Consumers' League label."

While the first energies of the league were directed toward this end, inevitably other needed reforms which could best be brought about by the women who purchased the garments and who were served by various salespeople have been accomplished.

. . . When more comprehensive legislation looking to compulsory education and child labor was passed, the league worked in harmony with the

truant officers and cared for the child while it attended school. Recently the Child Labor Association has taken over this branch of the work of the Consumers' League, but previous to that time the Consumers' League cared for nineteen children and expended more than \$1,000.⁴

Whether or not it was this initial problem of truancy coupled with child labor which turned the mind of the Consumers' League toward the need for industrial education, action toward that end was not long delayed. The Outline of Work of the Consumers' League of Kentucky, listing its main accomplishments from its beginning in 1900 to the year 1924, notes that in the period 1902-4 the League assisted in passing the Child Labor Law and the Compulsory Education Law and amending them at many sessions of the Legislature. It cooperated, 1906-8, in enforcing both, by working with the truant officers, visiting the homes of truants, and supplying shoes and clothing necessary to return them to school. The Outline notes, further down the list, its responsibility for the first vocational school in Louisville five years later, after eight months of preliminary work in selecting an instructor and visiting many cities for information regarding such schools.⁵

4. The Louisville Times, December 31, 1909.

5. The Outline of Work of The Consumers' League of Kentucky. (A mimeographed sheet, March 13, 1924)

The particular interests which carried the Consumers' League toward the establishment of the Pre-vocational School are reflected in excerpts from the Minutes of the League's meetings. Significant examples of these follow below:

October 27, 1910

.....

Several suggestions were made and discussed--namely--That in spring, merchants be requested to pay not less than \$6 to girls 18 and over.

That Louisville needs a school for training clerks.

That merchants be asked to outline courses of training and have this work handled by the Louisville Business Women's Club.

Mrs. Halleck was authorized to consult others working along the lines of Industrial Work. . . .⁶

Annual Meeting, December 6, 1910

.....

A new committee called Committee on Industrial Education was decided upon and Mrs. J. B. Judah appointed chairman. . . .⁷

Board Meeting, February 7, 1911

.....

As the Business Woman's Club is planning to take up all kinds of educational work, and one branch is to come under the head of industrial training--and as Mrs. Halleck is asked to take charge of this branch--she asked for volunteers to serve on her

6. Minutes of Consumers' League Meeting,
October 27, 1910.

7. Ibid., December 6, 1910.

committee and was anxious to have it composed of members of the Consumers' League. Our present need stated was to give children between 14 and 16 years of age--who get permits--some preparation by at least a few weeks' training, which puts them in a position to demand better wages.

The sense of the Board was that it would like to undertake the work in connection with the Business Woman's Club, and that they were willing to leave details in the President's hands as to action to be taken before the next meeting. . . .⁸

Board Meeting, March 27, 1911

.....

A motion that Mrs. Halleck shall take up the Industrial work in connection with the Business Woman's Club was carried.

There were recommendations following discussion of this work to the effect that all classes of Educational work--Domestic Science, etc., must be on the same basis--also that Domestic Science as well as Salesmanship be installed at once at the Business Woman's Club. . . .⁹

Called Meeting, March 20, 1913

.....

Mrs. Harry Bishop, Chairman of the Committee on Industrial Training, outlined some work she felt the League could do cooperative with the Board of Education. . . . Industrial Education must be compulsory and must have publicity and legislation if possible. . . .¹⁰

Board Meeting, April 15, 1913

.....

The Chairman of the Industrial Training Committee, Mrs. Bishop, stated that the building of the Board

8. Ibid., February 7, 1911.

9. Ibid., March 27, 1911.

10. Ibid., March 20, 1913.

of Education has four (4) vacant rooms that may be used by a certain number of children on the point of leaving school, giving them industrial training by skilled industrial teachers. Suggested that Consumers' League must try and interest citizens of Louisville to make this work possible. . . .¹¹

Board Meeting, October 10, 1913

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Mrs. Harry Bishop, Chairman of the Industrial Committee reported the successful launching of the Prevocational School, under the joint auspices of the Consumers' League and the Board of Education. Of the \$2,000 necessary to finance the undertaking for a year, \$1,000 is in hand. The two teachers . . . Mr. Bacon and Miss Lovell. . . .¹²

This record clearly indicates the continuous and energetic efforts of the Consumers' League along educational lines, finally resulting in the opening of the Prevocational School. However, the records of these meetings of the League often hint at, rather than actually reveal, the real activity directed toward the founding of the new school. More detailed information is found in the printed program used at the dedication exercises of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, and use is made of this information in paragraphs immediately succeeding.

The Industrial Education Committee of the Consumers' League was the mainspring of that organization's

11. Ibid., April 15, 1913.

12. Ibid., October 10, 1913.

educational effort. This committee's work was motivated by the feeling that there was an urgent need for specific training of the young worker. Such training, it was held, would give him a greater value to industry, to society and to himself. "Greater efficiency before asking a higher wage" became the slogan of the Industrial Education Committee.

This Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Harry Bishop, made a survey of trade and vocational schools from New York to Wisconsin, during the period when founding of the Prevocational School was being prepared for. An advisor, Frank Mitchell Leevitt, from the Industrial Education Department of the University of Chicago, was brought to Louisville to survey the community and make recommendations concerning courses to be offered. After study and consideration, plans were developed for a very small beginning. A definite aim controlled these plans: the training for a specific trade with carefully correlated academic subjects.

By permission of the Board of Education, the children to receive training during the first year of the school's existence¹³ were selected by the Consumers'

13. See page 21 of this chapter.

League Committee. These young people had to be fourteen years of age and over, and as far advanced in school as the seventh grade. They were also chosen for their interest in an early entrance into wage-earning occupations. In order to obtain pupils fulfilling these qualifications, names of children who had expressed a desire to leave school and go to work were secured. Many homes in all parts of the city were visited before the final group was formed. Thirty two boys and girls composed the initial class.¹⁴

The Board of Education also allowed the Consumers' League Committee to select the teachers to be assigned to the school. Mr. Louis A. Bacon, at that time Supervisor of Manual Training and Domestic Science in the Louisville School System, was selected for the shop executive at a salary of \$2500, paid by the Consumers' League. Because of her attitude toward education and her contact with other educational experiments,¹⁵ Miss Ethel M. Lovell was chosen as the other instructor.

With the establishment of the school assured, the interest of the Consumers' League did not lessen;

^{14.} Ibid. The number of students was doubled the following year.

^{15.} See pages vi, vii.

there are several further indications to the contrary. The importance of that interest it has been the aim of this section to point out: without it the beginnings, at least, of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School would not have been the same.

III. THE PROGRAM OF THE PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Some light has been shed on the plan and purposes of this school by Mr. Brom's remarks quoted in Section I of this chapter.¹⁶ The report of its director, Mr. Bacon, in the Second Report of the Board of Education¹⁷ furnishes additional facts. He prefaces his account by explaining the selection of the school's original location at the Western Departmental School, Seventeenth and Madison Streets. A good many children in this neighborhood had applied for labor certificates and been refused because of their failure to present satisfactory proofs of age or scholarship. It was felt that such children would be in a position to appreciate the facilities that the proposed class would afford. A second reason was

16. See page 23.

17. Second Report of the Board of Education of Louisville, Kentucky (Gross Parsons & Hambleton, Louisville, Kentucky). From July 1, 1912 to June 30, 1913, pp. 62-63.

that there were two rooms available at Western Departmental School which could be prepared for use at little expense. Finally the manual training shop could be put at the disposal of the prevocational class a part of each week.

The purpose of the work, as stated by Mr. Bacon, was three-fold: to ground the pupil in the fundamentals of an academic education; to give him an insight into several trades and occupations; and to help him to choose wisely a vocation.

The curriculum at this time included printing, book-binding, woodwork and mechanical drawing, practical arithmetic, spelling, history and commercial geography. During the week one-half the time was spent in the shop, the other half in the classroom. The regular school hours were observed but much voluntary work was carried on after the close of the school.

Attention to Louisville's educational experiment soon spread beyond local limits. Frank Mitchell Leavitt and Edith Brown in their book, Prevocational Education in the Public Schools, published in 1915, devote a section to the Louisville school. By the time when they wrote, the school had already found different quarters in the annex of the Administration

Building at Eighth and Chestnut Streets. A clear conception of its status in this period of its growth can be gained from their description:

Eighty pupils, forty girls and forty boys, are accommodated in the present plant, and there is a waiting list of applicants from which vacancies are promptly filled. To the printing, bookbinding, and cabinet-making have been added electrical wiring for boys and trade sewing for girls. The printing which includes composition, proof-reading and presswork, is open to both boys and girls.

The program of the school is planned on a half-time shop schedule, with the other half devoted to academic work which parallels that of the regular seventh and eighth grades.

Great freedom is given the pupils in their choice of shop courses, and opportunities are provided for making changes when any good reason develops for doing so. As a result their interest in the school is so great that many pupils remain after finishing the eighth grade, being anxious to continue their chosen work as long as home conditions permit.

The school is not intended for mentally deficient pupils, but for those boys and girls whose circumstances and conditions are such that they are likely to leave school early. A number of sixth-grade pupils who are thirteen years of age have been admitted for various reasons, and for this particular group there is always an open door. The average age of the pupils is fourteen years and eight months, and the average grade is the seventh. The size of the classes is limited to sixteen pupils, and the shop instructors, with one exception, are practical trades people.¹⁸

Proceeding to comment in detail on more specific courses of instruction, the authors comment that much of

18. Frank Mitchell Leavitt and Edith Brown, Pre-vocational Education in the Public Schools (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1915), pp. 212, 213.

the work given is on a commercial basis and all is eminently practical. An early circular of the school is quoted by Leavitt and Brown as follows:

Work has been sent to the printing class by the Board of Education, the Parent-Teacher Associations, Social Centers, and many philanthropic and civic organizations. The work done for the Board of Education and the money received from outside jobs are credited to the class on the books of the Board of Education. The following is a partial list of the jobs done:

Parent-Teacher Association notices, dodgers, tickets, letter-heads, envelopes	9,920
Principal's notices.	3,650
Supervisors' outlines or bulletins	1,250
Board of Education circulars	30,500
Consumers' League notices.	2,400
Louisville Educational Association notices and tickets	1,800

In five months, from September to February 1, the class made 91,500 impressions.

At the end of the job, the job envelopes contain copy, proof, revise, preproof, and finally three copies of the job. On the wall are time-cards showing each child's record upon each part of each job. Proof-reading is accentuated for the girls. A good proof-reader in Louisville may command from \$15 to \$20 a week, and many places are filled by women. High upon the walls stands a time-clock, by means of which the time spent upon each job is computed by the unit system in use in factories.

The printers of the city have taken a generous interest in the work. A visiting printer happened to find the shop busy turning out an order for twenty-six thousand envelopes for the School Children's Thanksgiving Fund. The time-card showed fifteen hundred envelopes struck in an hour and a half. The wastebasket showed only nine spoiled envelopes. This record for time and

waste he declared would stand comparison with more experienced labor.¹⁹

Still further changes had taken place in the work and accommodations of the Prevocational School by the time Mr. Bacon gave his periodical account of its progress in the Fourth Report of the Board of Education, covering the year from July 1, 1914, to June 30, 1915. Several points of his account are noteworthy. The school had been moved once more to still other and larger quarters in the old Male High School Building, on First Street, near Chestnut. The first and second floors of this building had been rearranged to meet the new requirements. The school would now accommodate 120 pupils; the maximum number was enrolled, and there was a waiting list.

Mentioned by Mr. Bacon as one of the tasks undertaken by the school was the placing of children, as soon as they were prepared to go to work, in satisfactory positions. With the increasing enrollment this project was becoming more difficult, but with the help of the Ben Franklin Club, the Consumers' League and the Employers' Association many of the children

19. Ibid., pp. 216, 217.

had been provided for.²⁰

By the time of The Fifth Report of the Board of Education Miss Lovell had been made principal of the Prevocational School. Enrollment was up to one hundred and forty, with increased facilities for handling students giving promise of still greater growth.

After-school activities, for the first time, are mentioned in this report. The school day of five hours was so full that organized play had to come in the afternoon. A school chorus and a folk-dancing class for girls were being formed. Classes in piano and violin instruction were being organized and teams for sports were in prospect.²¹

Among these student activities, one of the most noteworthy was the student council. The council was organized by the school and consisted of a chairman, secretary, and a representative from each group of pupils. This body met weekly with the principal, and

^{20.} The Fourth Report of the Board of Education. From July 1, 1914, to June 30, 1915 (Printed by the C. T. Dearing Co., Louisville, Kentucky), pp. 91, 94. Mr. Bacon left Louisville later to enter the automobile business in Indianapolis and was at last report head of a boys' school in east Connecticut.

^{21.} The Fifth Report of the Board of Education. From July 1, 1915, to June 30, 1916, pp. 232-233.

to this meeting were brought problems and suggestions.²²

The Penny Lunch was established in the Prevocational School during the school year of 1916-17. The Director of Penny Lunches arranged to have food prepared in a central kitchen and transported in a thermos container, thereby saving the expense of kitchen equipment. The cafeteria plan of management was carried out by the girls in charge and the lunchroom proved a "social asset."²³

In this same year a large number of pupils were enrolled in what was called the "vocational group." All of these pupils had completed the eighth grade and wanted definite trade preparatory courses. Most of them had made definite choice of shop course and looked forward to early employment in the trade elected. The work of this group attracted the attention of employers, but, according to Miss Lovell, so intent were those young people upon the work planned that not infrequently one heard the reply, "I want to complete my work here."²⁴

The year 1916-17 was the last during which the name "Prevocational School" was used. The quality of

^{22.} The Sixth Report of the Board of Education,
From July 1, 1916, to June 30, 1917, pp. 96-97.

^{23.} Ibid. The words quoted are those of Miss Lovell.

^{24.} Ibid., p. 96.

educational achievement attained in the period from 1913 to 1918 may perhaps be most favorably indicated by this quotation from one of Miss Lovell's annual reports:

One of the most gratifying developments noted was the increased number of pupils who found more education worth while and so entered high school. The name Prevocational is certainly justified when by the course offered, pupils are led into one of two logical channels--high school and desirable employment. One boy, who had earned three dollars a day during vacation, returned to school stating that he needed more education.²⁵

IV. THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

In 1918 the Federal Smith-Hughes Act was passed. The purpose of this act was to promote Trade and Industrial Education of less than college grade. It provided an appropriation for salaries of teachers of trades, home economics, and industrial subjects in the schools provided that an equal amount was furnished by the local school funds. To qualify under this act the school day of the Prevocational School was lengthened to six and a half hours, and the name of the school was changed to the Louisville Vocational School.

This change was accompanied by quickened growth and development in many ways. The Part-Time Class

25. Ibid., p. 96.

became a new feature of the curriculum, with employers sometimes sending their "junior help" to attend school for two hours daily (8:30-10:30) without loss of pay.²⁶ New equipment was acquired and new courses continually being opened to students.

To meet a popular demand the Commercial Course was opened in 1918. The growth of this department was steady. Shorthand, Typewriting, Bookkeeping, Comptometer Operating, and Filing, were gradually included. This work, with the related academic subjects, including English, Commercial Geography and Economics offered a well balanced course for the training of efficient office assistants.

The rapid growth of the electrical industry, affording attractive and profitable employment to young workers, led to introduction of that department of study at the Vocational School. The educational content of the trade is such as to provide a broad instruction field, and the electrical department of the school was designed to furnish as nearly as possible practical working conditions encountered in the trade. The work offered gave students the opportunity to make

^{26.} The Seventh Report of the Board of Education.
From July 1, 1917, to June 30, 1918, pp. 130-131.

installations and see actual results. As a result, students completing this course have been readily absorbed by the industry.

Salesmanship was another important course to be developed. Merchants becoming more and more careful in the selection of workers, there existed a need for instruction in salesmanship. Instruction was given in the following branches: store organization, store system, merchandise, types of customers and store service. Practice in selling was required of students. This was secured in two ways--in the sales room of the school and in the department stores of the city. Managers arranged for students to do part time work and special sales work.

Enrollment grew steadily in the years following 1918, and the guidance feature of the work done at the Vocational School grew in proportion:

Many young people have visited the school to learn what it offered and what recommendation would be made for the solution of their problems. Adults have conferred with the principal frequently when endeavoring to plan readjustments in their business or industrial life. The guidance of students into a choice of work for which they show the greatest inclination or aptitude often points a turning point in character development as well as in practical accomplishment. A girl whose mother had insisted upon a commercial course for her daughter, found new joy when at last she was placed in the dressmaking department where her whole attitude towards study was changed and remarkable progress

noted. A boy whose parents were quite determined that he should become a skilled mechanic is now pursuing his high school course with industrial chemistry as his objective. Misfits in industry mean a lower type of citizenship and life minus satisfaction.²⁷

The work of the night school is mentioned for the first time in the Principal's report to the Board of Education for the school year of 1921-22. In that year the night school had an enrollment of three hundred and ninety-five students. Courses were offered in English, arithmetic, penmanship, bookkeeping, stenography, typewriting, millinery, dressmaking, English for foreigners, and Americanization for those who had applied for citizenship papers. For a number of these classes there was a waiting list.²⁸

The waiting list referred to indicates that the facilities of the school were being strained to meet the growing demands for its services, and such was indeed the case. There were many requests for new courses to be offered. The industrial growth of the city and the increasing number of opportunities for trained youth were responsible for this state of affairs. The year 1922-23 brought an increased number

²⁷. The Tenth Report of the Board of Education, From July 1, 1920, to June 30, 1921, pp. 90-91.

²⁸. The Eleventh Report of the Board of Education, From July 1, 1921, to June 30, 1922, pp. 74-75.

of calls from employers for graduates of this school. In some departments the requests for graduates exceeded the number available.²⁹

During the school year of 1924-25 the Vocational School reached a high peak in its achievement. The average daily attendance at the school in this year was 303.³⁰ Early in 1925 a meeting of the Altrusa Club was held at the Vocational School, and the facts disclosed in connection with this meeting indicate the sort of institution the school had become and the heritage which Theodore Ahrens Trade School was shortly to receive from it.

This session of the Altrusa Club was held in January, 1925. Forty business and professional women, representing as many industries in Louisville, spent an evening at the school, visiting the night classes and becoming generally acquainted with the varied activities. Much information regarding the function of the school was gained from this investigation and from comments made by Miss Lovell in her speech to the

29. The Twelfth Report of the Board of Education, From July 1, 1922, to June 30, 1923, p. 55.

30. The Thirteenth Report of the Board of Education, July 1, 1923, to June 30, 1924, p. 31. In this same report salary of the principal was reported as \$2,750, salaries of teachers as totalling \$31,001.27, and salaries of clerks and stockman as \$550.00.

visitors. The meeting resulted in a strong resolution warmly commending the work of the school, and urgently recommending that other club groups in the city, particularly those which were represented in Louisville industries, should likewise visit it in the interest of a wider knowledge of the school.³¹

Miss Lovell's speech on this occasion to the Altrusa Club is noteworthy for its compact summary of the origin, aims, and achievements of the Vocational School. She explained that the work then being done in the school originated with a group of local women connected with the Consumers' League soon after the inaugural of the policy of taking schools out of politics. Those women, she said, considered the question, "What does Louisville offer in practical aid to those who must early enter into the occupational life of the city?" and the first step in the establishment of vocational education was the answer. The next step, what trades to offer, was taken after an expert investigation of industrial conditions here led to a survey which was made of those industries in which trained help was most sorely needed.

Miss Lovell said further that the response to

31. The Louisville Post, January 22, 1925.

the course of work given in the school had exceeded the capacity for training:

. . . The building is open morning, afternoon and night to students seeking to become trained and efficient in the crafts and trades which interest them. The younger boys and girls attend the regular daily school sessions in the morning and early afternoon, some taking part-time courses. The afternoon classes, 3 to 5 o'clock, are mostly part time, and the evening classes are exclusively for employed young men and women. 1213 students were enrolled in the various classes last year during the two terms, and already 860 names are on the enrollment books for this term.³²

The crafts and trades mentioned by Miss Lovell were brought to public notice by the excellence with which they were taught at the Vocational School. In book-binding for instance,

For the fourth consecutive year, The Theodore Ahrens Trade School, successor to the Louisville Vocational School, has been honored by being awarded first prize in a national bookbinding contest conducted by the Employing Bookbinders of America. Miss Ethel Lovell, Principal of the school, learned in a letter she has received from E. W. Palmer, chairman of the organization's Educational and Vocational Committee.³³

Since 1926 was the first year in which the institution was known by the name used above, the three previous awards must have come during the time the term Vocational School was in use.

32. Ibid.

33. The Louisville Times, October 28, 1926.

The importance of such an award is better understood when it is observed that vocational schools from all over the country were entered in the contest, samples of bookbinding work having been sent from the various schools to Chicago where the National Association of Employing Bookbinders was in convention. An educational committee, composed not of teachers but real craftsmen, was selected to judge the samples of bookbinding on exhibit. The contest, held annually, was instituted in order to stimulate greater interest in the binding craft in America, as bookbinding as an art has been gradually dying out in the United States, and much of the work during recent years has had to be sent abroad.³⁴

In the department of art, a Louisville newspaper had this to say regarding an art exhibit of the Vocational School held late in 1924:

The art exhibit which the design department of the Vocational School has been holding the last few days, has attracted a great deal of interest and admiration among those who have seen it. Every line of art work is represented in the display. Scarce of unusual design and perfection of finish, bowls, boxes, calendars, quaint novelties, leather book ends, many of which cannot be found in local stores, and a host of other articles of real beauty are among the things on exhibit.

³⁴. The Louisville Post, December 19, 1924. Mr. Charles P. McGuire had charge of the bookbinding department of the school at the time of these awards.

The school has taken none of the work outside to be finished. The electric, woodwork, bindery departments, etc., all assist in finishing the articles when their help is needed.

Not only craft work but commercial designing is on exhibit. The dressmaking designing was of special interest.³⁵

It was an institution of this sort which attracted the attention of Mr. Theodore Ahrens. His gift to the school, intended for its expansion and development, was announced late in 1924. In the spring of 1925, while plans for this expansion were in the making, he visited all the shops and classrooms of the Vocational School and on leaving, commented, "I find you are doing just what I am talking about." It was a thrilling day for the teachers and pupils, parents and patrons who had so earnestly endeavored to make the most of the opportunities presented when the Board of Education announced that Mr. Ahrens had given two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a new trade school.³⁶

This gift and the announcement of the plans for the Theodore Ahrens Trade School did not mean that an

35. Ibid., December 20, 1924.

36. Louisville Civic Opinion, October 17, 1925. (This journal was a weekly publication printed in Louisville for the nine years between 1921 and 1930, and finally suspended because of lack of advertising support. The publication was founded by John E. Hahn. Edward Gottschalk was publisher at the time of its suspension, with Alfred J. Strauss as editor. It was not published for profit and had as its aim the betterment and progress of Louisville.)

and had been put to the career of the Louisville Vocational School. On the contrary, it meant that, under its new name, the school would carry on with new avenues of opportunity opening before it as a result of Mr. Ahrens' generosity. Those who had been instrumental in establishing the first vocational training in Louisville were far from unready to recognize this fact. Commented the Louisville Civic Opinion: "Coming at this time the gift will be most gratifying to the retiring president of the Board of Education , who, with Mrs. Harry Bishop, was greatly instrumental in the establishment of the Vocational School."³⁷

The Consumers' League, parent of the Vocational School, in its annual meeting held at the school in April, 1925, commended the generosity and vision of Mr. Ahrens. In addition, the change in the institution's name to honor its new benefactor was endorsed at this meeting.³⁸ Mrs. Reuben Post Halleck, the president of the Consumers' League had even previously expressed the

³⁷. Ibid., December 27, 1924.

³⁸. The Courier-Journal, April 15, 1925 . . . However, in this same meeting Mrs. R. P. Halleck, the re-elected president of the League, suggested the retaining of the word "Vocational" in the new name. Mrs. Halleck asked that the school be called "The Theodore Ahrens Vocational and Trade School." A recommendation to that effect was later presented to the Board of Education.

thanks of her organization for what Mr. Ahrens had done.³⁹

It was not only the adult citizens of Louisville who looked forward with pleasurable anticipation to the increased educational opportunities to be afforded by the opening of the Ahrens Trade School. There were those even more directly concerned, boys and girls of high school age, especially those already enrolled in the Vocational School, who were beginning to be affected by the prospect of the larger building and equipment. In January, 1925, a group of these, girls then enrolled in the Vocational School, gave a "book" party for the purpose of starting a library for the new building to be constructed. More than a hundred books were contributed.⁴⁰

And so the Vocational School came to an end, not of its history, but of the second period of its development. Beginning as the Prevocational School in 1913 with two teachers and thirty two students, it had grown to the stage where, in 1925, it had a faculty of nineteen and a student body, including all departments, of

39. The Louisville Post, January 24, 1925.

40. Ibid., January 23, 1925.

one thousand, two hundred and eleven.⁴¹ In the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, and with Miss Lovell continuing as principal, the spirit and achievements of the Vocational School were to be preserved and intensified.

41. The Courier-Journal, April 15, 1925.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDING OF THE THEODORE AHRENS TRADE SCHOOL

I. THE GIFT FOR A NEW TRADE SCHOOL

"Theodore Ahrens, Louisville capitalist, president of the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company, has presented Louisville with a Christmas gift of \$150,000 to be used to establish a trade school in the city."¹

These significant words, appearing in The Louisville Post of December 24, 1924, made known to citizens of Louisville the act of civic-mindedness and generosity which was to make possible the creation of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. The gift, the largest ever presented to the Louisville schools, had been announced the previous night in resolutions adopted by the Board of Education. These resolutions read as follows:

Resolved, That the Board of Education, on its own behalf and on behalf of the citizens of Louisville, accepts with profound thanks and a deep sense of gratitude, the splendid gift of \$150,000 for a trade school, made to this board by Mr. Theodore Ahrens, an outstanding, broad-minded, generous member of this community.

The board, while mindful of the great value and worth of the property thus generously bestowed, appreciates no less the liberal public spirit

1. The Louisville Post, December 24, 1924.

which prompted the great gift, and which makes possible the educational development, along industrial lines, of numberless persons who stand in need of the helpful training which this school will supply.

The board cannot too strongly express its sincere appreciation of Mr. Ahrens' great generosity and kindness, and assures him that this school, founded by him, will ever stand as a lasting monument to his good name and a blessing to the industrial life of the city.

Resolved, further, That the school, when established, be named and known as 'The Theodore Ahrens Trade School.' ²

Mr. Ahrens' gift was made as the result of a letter written to him by Dr. Albert B. Weaver, member of the Board of Education.

"I got \$150,000 for writing one letter."

Dr. Weaver said, "not for myself, but for this and the coming generations. And we are going to build a monument to Theodore Ahrens, not of cold marble in Cave Hill nor of any brass statue on any of our streets or in our parks; but a real live trade school that will turn out mechanics for the different trades and make citizens of our young men who would otherwise be loafers."³

Back in 1924 when the idea of a trade school first was brought to the attention of Mr. Ahrens, the cost of such an institution struck the bathtub magnate

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

as prohibitive, according to correspondence in the hands of Dr. Weaver.⁴

"I felt that Mr. Ahrens would be interested in such a project and I wrote to him about it," Dr. Weaver said. "I also brought the matter to the attention of a friend, J. W. Oliver, former Louisville newspaperman and then vice president of the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company.

Dr. Weaver pointed out to Mr. Ahrens that many boys and girls leave school after the sixth and seventh grades, wholly unfitted to earn a living, and explained that the city had no funds for the construction of a trade school.

"Cave Hill is full of monuments which are of no use to either the living or the dead," the dentist wrote to Mr. Ahrens.

"Some day you will come to the Pearly Gates and Saint Peter will ask: 'What's your name?'

"'Theodore Ahrens,' you'll say. 'Are you the Theodore Ahrens who gave the school to Louisville?' Saint Peter will ask. 'Well, come on in, Mr. Ahrens, you're blocking traffic out there.'"

A few days later a reply was received from

4. Ibid.

Mr. Ahrens, who then was in Pittsburgh as president of Standard Sanitary:

Pittsburgh, Nov. 5, 1924

Mr. Albert B. Weaver,
Vice President,
Board of Education,
Louisville, Ky.

My dear doctor:

Our mutual friend, Mr. J. W. Oliver, has shown me your letter of November 2nd. You suggest that I provide the funds to build a suitable Trade School Building in the City of Louisville. You know of course that I am greatly interested in the subject, not only to provide proper training for plumbers' apprentices but for all the other building trades as well. To build and equip such a school, however, is a bigger project than I am able to undertake. I have no idea as to just what would be required but imagine it would cost anywhere around \$150,000.00 or \$200,000.00. That is a more ambitious project than I am able to consider, although your letter reads mighty well and makes me regret that I am unable to do so.

I would like to talk this matter over with you again sometime when I am in Louisville.

Perhaps we could between us work out some plan by which your idea could be carried out. Assuring you of my continued interest in the matter, I am

Very truly yours,

Theo. Ahrens

On its face, the letter appeared to be a polite refusal, but Dr. Weaver was heartened by a paragraph in which the manufacturer expressed his wish to discuss the matter further. And when, a couple of weeks later,

Mr. Ahrens telephoned Dr. Weaver that he was in Louisville and wanted Dr. Weaver to lunch with him, the latter accepted the invitation eagerly. The rest is history, the history of the Ahrens Trade School.

The manner in which the Louisville Board of Education responded to Mr. Ahrens' philanthropy has already been noted. The city newspapers, as well, reflected the praise given him by the general public. Said the Louisville Herald:

The purpose of Mr. Ahrens was to fill a gap in our scheme of education, to make good a lack not easily to be met by the existing sources of school revenue, and it was what he found in other great cities and what he learned of its utility and value which prompted him to become identified with a trade school for Louisville.

Mr. Ahrens is eminently of those who make this world of ours, this everyday, thus humdrum world, a wholesome place in which to live. He believes in the future.⁵

It was clear, also, to the Louisville Times, that the institution visualized by Mr. Ahrens would be of great advantage, not only to the individual student, but also to industrial Louisville:

Theodore Ahrens' gift of \$150,000 toward establishing a trades school here is a forceful expression of a successful man's idea of what is needed in the training of youths who wish to fit themselves for work in the industrial world . . . The Ahrens school is intended to be truly

5. The Louisville Herald, April 11, 1925.

preparatory. Its graduates should be able to qualify immediately for places on the payrolls of Louisville's factories.

Opportunity is the chief offering of America to its citizenship. The Ahrens school will give opportunity to the skillful and the ambitious. It will remove the necessity for apprenticeship through years of poor pay and costly mistakes . . .

The school should be increasingly useful, for as Louisville grows, the demand for trained workers in the mechanical field will become more pressing. The placing of great industrial units here will increase as Louisville's advantages become more widely recognized. Industry seeks centers in which skilled workers are available. The fact that Louisville is schooling large numbers of experts will be an attraction for investors here.⁶

II. PREPARATIONS FOR EXPANSION

Early in 1925 the Board of Education got down to work, planning and investigating, laying the groundwork of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School. The school had been conceived and planned with the purpose of fitting into the industrial needs of Louisville. The first step taken by the representatives of the Board of Education was a study of the industrial situation of the city, made with the help of a committee of the Board of Trade. In mapping out the courses offered and in obtaining the best equipment, the cooperation of manufacturers, builders, trades unions and others

6. The Louisville Times, December 24, 1924.

was sought. A thorough survey was made in order that the school, when completed, would be able to meet increasing employment demands as forecast by the growth of population. The following quotation illustrates the aims and accomplishments of this survey:

Industrial employment statistics have been turned over to the Board of Education by the Board of Trade and Associated Industries of Kentucky for use in formulating plans for the trade school to be built by the . . . fund made available by Theodore Ahrens, president of the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company.

The report made to the Board of Education represents the result of a questionnaire sent many plants as to number of skilled employees, names of trades represented, number employed at each, approximate number of trained apprentices with from two to four years trade school training.

Seventy-four industries are represented in this survey summary, including establishments as follows: Fifteen printing, three lithographing, two engraving, twenty furniture and allied lines, six machinery manufacturing, two stove foundries, four stone and tile plants, six clothing and textile plants, one harness concern and nine miscellaneous plants.⁷

A joint committee of the Louisville Board of Trade and the Louisville division of the Associated Industries of Kentucky held a meeting a few days after the time of the above mentioned report. At this meeting it was resolved that courses in bricklaying and plastering be included in the curriculum of the

7. The Louisville Times, April 16, 1926.

trade school. The committee conferred with Mr. Byron W. Hartley, superintendent of schools, and Mr. R. E. Daugherty, superintendent of manual training in the city schools.

The joint committee turned over to Superintendent Hartley information obtained in a survey of apprenticeship and employment conditions in Louisville factories.

This covered many types of employment in 200 industrial concerns. The committee voted to continue as a permanent organization for the purpose of cooperating in the successful conduct of the school and aiding in the adsorption of students by industries after graduation.

The Louisville Master Plumbers Association was another organization which promised hearty support to the Board of Education in equipping and maintaining the school. This group, like Associated Industries, adopted resolutions thanking and praising Mr. Ahrens for his generous gift to establish a trade school.⁸

Mr. Ahrens himself, not satisfied merely with providing the necessary means for the institution, gave liberally of his time and effort during the period of careful planning. Early in January of 1925 he, in

8. The Louisville Herald, January 10, 1925.

company with Mr. Hartley, the school superintendent, and Mr. J. M. Colley, school architect, left for a trip to a number of cities in the North and West to study trade schools and other phases of educational work. The trip, lasting between a week and ten days, included visits to the trade schools of Milwaukee, Grand Rapids and Minneapolis. The possible influence of this trip is reflected in Mr. Colley's later decision to pick the best features of trade schools in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Grand Rapids, and to combine them in Louisville's project.⁹

III. ADDITIONAL GIFTS

Probably as a result of investigation undertaken by Mr. Ahrens, he became convinced that his original donation was not sufficient to give Louisville the kind of school that he had in mind. At any rate, on April 10, 1925, announcement was made by Dr. Weaver, President of the Board of Education, that Mr. Ahrens had added \$100,000 to his original gift of \$150,000.¹⁰ In a letter to Dr. Weaver, Mr. Ahrens, then visiting in California, said that he had inspected several of the

9. The Louisville Post, April 10, 1925.

10. Ibid.

huge trade schools in California and felt that the original amount was not enough to give Louisville the school she needed. At the time Mr. Myrick Colley, school architect, was already working on his plans for the school, and changes were necessitated by the additional gift. Dr. Weaver said that the \$100,000 was unsolicited and, like the first amount, was a voluntary contribution on Mr. Ahrens' part for the benefit of Louisville's future employees and the industries themselves.

It might well have been supposed that \$250,000 would be the limit of Mr. Ahrens' generosity to the new trade school. However, the end had not come, even yet. In May, 1926, while the building was being constructed on First Street between Walnut and Chestnut, the Finance Committee of the Board of Education made known still another gift, this time of \$50,000, with which to install a gymnasium in the Theodore Ahrens Trade School.¹¹

Mr. Byron Hartley, superintendent of schools, said that in making the donation for the gymnasium Mr. Ahrens felt the school would not be complete unless the students received a physical as well as technical

11. The Louisville Herald-Post, May 29, 1926.

training.¹² He expressed regret, according to Mr. Hartley, that the city of Louisville was not able financially to carry out such a program in all of the schools in the city, as he regarded physical training just as essential as mental and technical education.

This expression of concern for the physical well-being of school children was characteristic of Mr. Ahrens. His daughter, Mrs. Karl H. Lang, in commenting upon her father's views, said that he "never considered an education complete unless the body was also perfect. He spent his youth on the gym floor of the old German Turngemeinde. In those days more than now Turners furnished its members both physical and mental training and stimulation. Naturally, he would not consider a school complete unless it had a gym. He really was horrified when he realized there was not a gym in the school."¹³

The additional \$50,000 for the gymnasium made a total of \$300,000 given for the erection and equipment of the trade school which was to bear Mr. Ahrens' name, being by far the largest donation ever made by one individual for the betterment of education in

12. Ibid.

13. Quoted from a letter of Mrs. Karl H. Lang written to the author in November, 1940.

Louisville.¹⁴ The school was, at the time of this third gift, planned to be ready for the reception of students at the beginning of the term in September (1926), and the work on the gymnasium, made possible by the latest generous gift of the founder, was to begin as soon as the board could let a contract.

The gymnasium thus made possible was to be equipped for use as an auditorium, and the basement of the new unit was to house the school lunchroom.¹⁵

In accepting and acknowledging the gift, the Board of Education adopted resolutions as follows:

"The Board of Education again has occasion to express to Theodore Ahrens its sincere thanks and gratitude for the deep interest he has manifested in the public schools of the city and the splendid generosity which has accompanied that interest.

"The gift of \$50,000 which he has just made, and which the board has gratefully accepted for a needed gymnasium at the trade school which bears his name, and which was established by his magnificent donation of \$250,000, makes it possible to give to the students of that institution proper physical development and diversion along with their other practical training.

"The gift is the more significant and the more appreciated and valued since it will enable the board to round out and complete in proper form the full work of those who may enter the trade school.

14. Not even excepting that of T. Coleman duPont who made possible the duPont Manual Training High School--
The Louisville Post, December 24, 1924.

15. Civic Opinion, June 12, 1926.

"The board therefore, for itself and on behalf of the citizens of Louisville, and more particularly on behalf of the present and future youths and children of the city who are to be the direct beneficiaries of this most generous gift, extends to Mr. Ahrens, whose liberality in aid of the public schools exceeds that of any other member of the community, its warmest thanks and appreciation."¹⁶

The Louisville press expressed similar comments:

The second additional \$50,000 presented by Theodore Ahrens to the local Trade School will make it a completely rounded institution. This gift is to provide a gymnasium, which Mr. Ahrens properly observes should be a part of every school building in the city. The sum advanced by Mr. Ahrens for this school now totals \$300,000, which amounts to ten cents (\$.10) on the tax rate, if paid for out of current levies. Without taking into consideration the school's incalculable value to the community as the years roll by, this is a way of visualizing the direct financial benefit to every taxpayer resulting from this benefaction. It amounts to a substantial discount on every tax bill.

But for Mr. Ahren's generosity it is certain that a Trade School for Louisville would have been many years delayed. It is therefore not only an instrument for individual education, but a factor in hastening the community's progress. The growth of a great city is, after all, mainly dependent on the public spirit of a few, and it would be difficult to name a way in which this spirit can be more finely reflected than in advancing the cause of education. Mr. Ahrens' example should serve as an inspiration to the civic pride of other outstanding citizens.¹⁷

And so, through the liberality of one of its citizens, an exceedingly useful institution of learning was to be developed for the city of Louisville, a school

16. The Louisville Herald-Post, May 29, 1926.

17. Ibid., January 1, 1926.

devoted primarily to the teaching of the trades and one of the comparative few of its kind in the United States. Established on First Street between Walnut and Chestnut, it was located on a site already rich in traditions in Louisville's school life. As previously noted, there had been already before it the Girls' High School, the Louisville Male High School, and more recently the Louisville Vocational School. A better spot in points of location and historical interest could hardly have been found.

IV. CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW PLANT

Contracts for construction of the plant to house the Theodore Ahrens Trade School were awarded by the Board of Education at a meeting on the night of October 6, 1925. These contracts totaled \$245,410.¹⁸ They did not, of course, include the amount for the gymnasium, since it has been seen that Mr. Ahrens' gift to provide for a gymnasium was a separate one, coming at a later date.¹⁹ The amount was also exclusive of approximately \$10,000 required for heating and ventilating the building:

18. The Louisville Courier-Journal, October 7, 1925.

19. See p. 59 of this thesis.

The contracts call for completion of the new building by October 1, 1926, but members of the board said last night they expected it to be ready for occupancy when school opens next September.²⁰

In order to provide ample grounds for the building, the Board of Education had purchased forty feet additional frontage adjoining their property on First Street.²¹ This made a total frontage of 178 feet.²² Two dwellings which had occupied the forty feet additional and the front of the old Vocational School were to be wrecked to clear the site for the new trade school.

The building of the Vocational School thus being in the process of demolition was four and a half stories in height with a stone front. It was one of the oldest educational buildings in Louisville, and was originally built for the Louisville Girls' High School, but was later used as the Louisville Male High School.²³

Four of the fourteen rooms of the old building were to be torn away to make room for the new structure

20. The Courier-Journal, October 7, 1925.

21. Ibid., October 9, 1925.

22. Ibid., October 7, 1925.

23. See p. 63 of this thesis.

with classes continuing in the remaining old quarters while the project was under way. The old portions were finally to be remodeled for classrooms. It was intended by the board to raze the latter at a future date when there should be sufficient funds to construct additional wings.²⁴

As planned by Mr. Colley, the school architect, and Miss Lovell, the plant was to be "U" shaped, being built around the portion of the old Vocational School just mentioned. The south wing extended back 90 feet from the street and the north wing extended back 200 feet to the alley. The new building was of fire resistant construction, faced with glazed brick and trimmed with Bedford stone, and contained the administration offices, some class rooms, and the shop wings.²⁵ It consisted of three floors: ground floor, first floor, and second floor, the ground floor being slightly under the sidewalk level. There were three entrances off First Street, one large main entrance and two smaller flanking entrances. The whole building was of modern commercial design, indicating both the industrial type of work and the educational activities being conducted therein.

24. The Courier-Journal, October 7, 1925.

25. The Louisville Herald, April 22, 1925.

A comprehensive picture of the Ahrens plant at the time of its completion appears in the program of its dedication exercises, December 1, 1926. Under the heading "Facts About The Theodore Ahrens Trade School" appeared an explanation of features of the building and its equipment. From this explanation is drawn much of the information in the following paragraphs.

The new plant was designed to accommodate 600 students. Equipment alone cost nearly \$100,000 with each shop and work room fully equipped with the very latest machinery. Model factory conditions were carried out in the construction of the shops. The greatest amount of room was devoted to the shops, but classrooms were provided for related academic instruction.²⁶

The building was finished on the interior in a fully utilitarian manner, materials being used which are easily cleaned and therefore strictly sanitary. All corridors, toilet rooms, etc., were lined with glazed brick wainscot and had terazzo floors. The shop rooms were lined with a glazed tile carried clear to the ceiling. All walls and ceilings of the building, except

²⁶. Civic Opinion, June 12, 1926. Shops were provided for the following types of work: cabinet, machine, sheet metal, plumbing, electrical--both house wiring and motor--masonry, carpentry, mechanical drawing, composing, press room, bindery, sewing, millinery, design, business and salesmanship.

the shop rooms were left with concrete exposed.

The ground floor of the building contained locker rooms and toilet rooms for both boys and girls and shops for sheet metal work, building trades, cabinet work and machine work. The first, or main floor, contained the administrative suite, sales room for displaying products of the school, sewing and millinery rooms, bindery, press room, linotype room and composing room.²⁷ The second, or top floor, contained the mechanical and architectural drawing room, electric shop and plumbing shop, and four rooms for the commercial departments. The building was equipped with a freight elevator for handling all heavy materials used in the shops.

A complete flexible system of electric wiring was installed throughout all shop rooms with brass outlets in floors and columns, so that a machine might be set at any point in the building and connected to the electric current without tearing up any of the floors or walls. This provision was made so that changes in the shops might be made to keep abreast of the rapid changes in the industrial world.

All shops were equipped with two rooms with

²⁷. Interesting features were three linotype machines, a cylinder press and bindery folder--Ibid.

specially built tool cases, lockers, racks, bins, etc. Gas and water connections were provided at convenient places in all shop rooms.

The building was completely equipped with new furniture and the latest type of modern machinery. All machines in the building were individually motor driven, thereby eliminating overhead shafting and belting, and reducing all possibility of accident to a practical minimum.

It was in such a plant as this that Louisville's new educational unit was to be housed; from this account of its facilities and equipment it may be seen that every preparation had been made to house it well. The public first saw it in its completed aspect on the occasion of the dedication exercises on December 1, 1926, and it is an account of that occasion which now follows.

V. DEDICATION OF THE TRADE SCHOOL

The time for the dedication of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School was chosen to coincide with the Convention of the National Education Association in Louisville. Many visitors from the convention were present at the exercises on December 1, 1926, and the new building was much praised by many of the visiting authorities in

vocational training.²⁸ Dr. C. A. Prosser, director of the Dunwoody Institute of Minneapolis, was the guest of the Louisville Board of Education and the chief speaker at the dedicatory exercises.

Mr. Leland Taylor, President of the Board of Education, presided over the program. The acceptance message, addressed by the Board to Mr. Ahrens, was expressed in the following words:

The Board of Education, on its own behalf and on behalf of the citizens of Louisville, accepts with profound thanks and a deep sense of gratitude, the splendid gift of \$300,000 for a Trades School, made to this Board by Mr. Theodore Ahrens, an outstanding, broad-minded and generous member of this community.

The Board while mindful of the great value and worth of the property thus generously bestowed, appreciates no less the liberal public spirit which prompted the great gift and which makes possible the educational development, along industrial lines, of numberless persons who stand in need of the helpful training which this school will supply.

The Board cannot too strongly express its sincere appreciation of Mr. Ahrens' great generosity and kindness and assures him that this school, founded by him, will ever stand as a lasting monument to his good name and a blessing to the industrial life of the city.²⁹

The program which was presented on this occasion

²⁸. Sixteenth Report of the Board of Education.
From July 1, 1926 to June 30, 1927, p. 10.

²⁹. Program of the Dedication. Theodore Ahrens
Trade School, December 1, 1926 Pages unnumbered

was as follows:

Invocation Dr. Joseph Rauch

Selection Louisville Male High School
Orchestra

Address Miss Ethel M. Lovell, Prin-
cipal of Theodore Ahrens
Trade School

Address Mr. Theodore Ahrens

Address Harry Pitzer, Pupil of
Theodore Ahrens Trade School

Address Mr. Byron Hartley, Superin-
tendent

Group of Songs Louisville Girls' High School
Glee Club

Address Dr. Charles A. Prosser,
Director, Dunwoody Institute,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Inspection of the School

One of the highlights of the program, of course, was the comment made by Mr. Ahrens in regard to his gift to the city's educational life. "I am glad to pay back, in part, what Louisville and the public schools did for me fifty years ago, when I was taking up my life work," said Mr. Ahrens.

"I was denied the opportunity of vocational training, and all my life I have felt the lack of thorough systematic training in the trade which I selected for my life work," he continued. "I am glad,

therefore, to give the younger generation of the city a better chance than I had in the days gone by.

"Another reason for this school is the fact that the old apprentice system is largely a thing of the past. Skilled workmen are at present making \$1.25 an hour and are too busy to give much time to teach young workmen, and so this school is needed for their training.

"I hope that the school is only a beginning and that it will soon be necessary to double it, and in the near future that the Board of Education will find it necessary to build another similar school devoted to training girls and women alone, so that Louisville will have two schools of this type, one for men and boys and the other for women and girls. Let me say again this is only a beginning."³⁰

Possibly no better estimate of the importance of this dedication can be found than in the editorial comment of the Louisville press on the following day. One example of this comment is quoted in full:

With the dedication exercises of Wednesday night, the Theodore Ahrens Trade School takes its rightful place among the exhibits of the city's educational resources. Almost we had written that it takes first place.

30. The Courier-Journal, December 2, 1926.

At the same time it stands forth panoplied and prepared among those evidences of a discerning and constructive generosity of which, until very lately, Louisville had but few.

To Theodore Ahrens, modest, retiring, self-effacing to a fault, the Herald-Post tenders every expression of that high appreciation which must fill those who have for years had the best interest of the schools at heart and have labored, with voice and pen, tirelessly and continuously to bring the plant controlled by the Board of Education closer to the ideals and aims of its members. The Ahrens Foundation fills a gap in the scheme.

It does so under auspices of most uncommon advantage, since the planning in all the elaboration of its many details, has been undertaken by the benefactor himself, a man thoroughly well equipped with the requisite knowledge and abreast of the latest developments in that line.

When it was found that the original gift would not suffice to carry out the intentions of Mr. Ahrens in all their comprehensive amplitude, he gave additional funds at once and the completed institution stands in its highly specialized class the equal of any in the land.

Just what such schools have meant to other cities--the case of Cincinnati occurs to us right away--cannot easily be grasped all at once.

Just what the Ahrens School is going to mean to Louisville is immediately evident in the many applications for enrollment. As the months and years pass by still the wonder will grow that ever the education of our young men and women can have been thought complete without it.

Mark Dec. 1, 1926, with a red letter.

Let it stand henceforth and for all time to come rubricated in the calendar of the School Year.

And regularly and piously, let it be set aside as a day for appropriate exercises in which the forethought no less than the liberality of Theodore

Ahrens receive their just and proper due.³¹

Praise of Mr. Ahrens and of the school he had founded were forthcoming from every quarter at the time of its dedication. When editorial and oral praise had exhausted itself, the form of poetry was resorted to as well. A poem entitled The Theodore Ahrens Trade School appeared in the Herald-Post on December 4, 1926. Authorship was not credited. One of its several verses will serve as an example of its sentiment:

Ah, generous city builder no vain thought
Inspired this gift and now may roof and rafter
Proclaim his praise who reached the goal he sought
Then turned to aid the toilers who came after.³²

The complete institution was now ready for the function which its founder and his co-workers had envisioned for it.

Preceding pages have shown its development from small beginnings to its achievement of a large capacity for the enrollment and training of industrial students. It remains to be seen only to what degree the Theodore Ahrens Trade School has realized the prospects anticipated at the time of its dedication.

31. The Herald-Post, December 2, 1926.

32. Ibid., December 4, 1926.

CHAPTER IV

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT: AHRENS SINCE 1926

I. GROWTH AND ORGANIZATION

The Theodore Ahrens Trade School, the new "service station for the vocations," as it was called,¹ was opened to students at the beginning of the school year in the fall of 1926. To the institution in that year and in those following, were to come hundreds of boys and girls, and men and women, all seeking preparation for the problems just ahead of them. Some were in search of the right line of work, some wanted skill in handling the tools of education, and some wished to use this education in making life more satisfactory and Louisville a growing, progressive city.²

The number of pupils enrolled in the trade school continually increased from year to year. During 1926-27, the first year of its operation, the enrollment figures were 617; the following year the number was 822, and in 1928-29 it reached 891.³ This growth kept up, until in

1. The Herald-Post, November 25, 1928.

2. Civic Opinion, October 17, 1926.

3. The Eighteenth Report of the Board of Education, From September 1, 1928 to August 31, 1929, p. 15.

1940-41, the latest year for which figures are available, the enrollment was 1287.⁴

In this respect the night school classes kept pace with the rest of the school. The Louisville Times found the heightened interest in the night school worthy of comment in October, 1927. In that year, the second of the school's history, the largest increase among all the night schools of the city was that of Ahrens Trade School, 759 enrolling as compared with 359 in 1926.⁵ That this trend has continued may be seen from the fact that the total night school enrollment for the year 1939-40 was 1089.⁶

So many phases of vocational study became desirable to add to the course of study, in view of this expanding enrollment, that Mr. Ahrens, after the school was opened, provided a gift of \$50,000 for work not at first included.⁷ This, with the gifts mentioned in the preceding chapter, brought his total contributions up to this time, to \$350,000. Even this was not to be the

4. From an interview with Miss Ethel Lovell, Principal, October 18, 1940. At end of term, June 1941, enrollment was 1472.

5. The Louisville Times, October 5, 1927.

6. Interview with Miss Lovell, October 18, 1940.

7. The Herald-Post, November 25, 1928.

final evidence of his interest, as will be noted later in this chapter.

The faculty of the institution, of course, grew as the student body increased in numbers. For the school year of 1926-27 it included twenty seven instructors. By 1940-41, however, there were fifty nine teachers, including Miss Lovell, employed at the Theodore Ahrens Trade School.⁸

In speaking of the organization and plan of the Theodore Ahrens Trade School, it should be emphasized that it is a free public high school. To enroll, a pupil must be at least fourteen years of age and must have satisfactorily completed the junior high school. Half of each day is devoted to a trade course, which the pupil may elect; the other half is devoted to related academic work and general academic subjects. The school is in session from 8:30 to 3:00.⁹

This unit in the educational system of Louisville was planned as a senior high school. It offers two, three, and four year courses, and meets the provisions of the Federal Smith-Hughes Act, which require three

8. Interview with Miss Lovell, October 18, 1940.

9. Roman T. Brom, History of the Public Secondary Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, p. 80.

hours of shop work and three hours of related academic studies. In addition to day operation, are the night classes. In the trades, unit courses in sequence are made possible--for example, in the masonry trade, unit courses are provided in concrete work, brick laying, tile setting, plastering, and painting.¹⁰

The department of night school classes has been a feature of the program at Ahrens since its beginning. At present it is held for four hours each week, for two hours each Monday and Tuesday night. The courses given are decided by requests made by the pupils. The amount of work given in the night school is determined by the amount of money allotted for this purpose by the Board of Education.¹¹

The school keeps a record of all pupils, graduates and withdrawals. On this permanent record of graduate students is recorded the usual matter found in such records, name, elementary school attended, Junior High attended, address, intelligence quotient, test results, date of birth, names of parents. Plainly spaced is also the department in which pupil is placed. On reverse side of this card are recorded subjects

10. Interview with Miss Lovell, Principal, October 18, 1940.

11. Ibid.

carried and grades earned in ninth grade of Junior High and space for the entire academic record while in trade school. A few blanks at bottom of this page are available for current social history. Upon graduation an auxiliary sheet is added to the record of each pupil. This is adjusted to hang over the permanent record card. On it is space for recording the employment history of the pupil, and also there appears on this auxiliary sheet a record of personal qualifications, such as initiative, scholarship, health, effort, etc. There are fourteen of these qualities listed.

The evaluation of these qualities is an evaluation arrived at by compiling the opinions of all the teachers who have taught the individual pupil. These opinions are recorded on individual slips and so are not biased opinions, no teacher seeing the opinion of another teacher.

Below this list is space for the photograph of the graduate. Prospective employers when requesting help are impressed by this record which they consider more valuable than the grades on the card. The inside of this auxiliary sheet is ruled and is used for confidential information received about the graduate.¹²

12. Ibid., November 26, 1941.

The faculty of Theodore Ahrens Trade School measures up to a high standard of educational ability and training. All teachers of academic subjects meet the same educational requirements as other teachers in secondary schools. All teachers of related (to trade) academic subjects must have a degree, in addition to trade experience in the line related to their subject.¹³

Shop teachers must have completed full apprenticeship in trade. Also they must have had journeyman experience in their trade, as well as a managerial (supervisory) or foremanship capacity.¹⁴

Students of this institution must do more than merely finish its courses if they are to merit its seal of approval. Miss Lovell has explained that the Theodore Ahrens Trade School "places no stamp on its products until its students have shown themselves worthy of more than mere graduation." As a guarantee of thoroughness, the student must have a minimum of three months successful experience in his chosen trade before a certificate is granted him.

Some students have attended the school on a part-time basis, giving half time to school and half to

13. Ibid., October 18, 1940.

14. Ibid.

a job. Such cases have always been given special attention and cooperation.

Many students through the school are working on a cooperative plan. When seniors are in the last term of the course, they are placed in shops. In the retail selling department all students are expected to work a minimum of 500 hours during their training program in selling. These are not placed on cooperative jobs until they have had fundamental work in the theory of retail selling, and as they develop in understanding of principles of selling, and their personality and judgment matures, they are placed on a part time program of selling. These part time pupils are placed in our leading shops. This means that by their time of graduation they have earned permanent positions. Whenever possible, the school will place second term seniors in part time shop jobs in line with their training, so that the school may know the student's progress and adjustment to a practical situation before leaving school.

Credit for work done in all shop departments is on a laboratory basis. In every trade shop the student works three clock hours per day. This time is in four forty-five minute periods and entitles the student to

two high school credits. Each single period class carried five days per week entitles the student to one high school credit. All students upon graduation must have earned 34 credits or 17 Carnegie units.¹⁵

The proportion of failures in the courses at the school is small, according to Miss Lovell. An effort is made to teach pupils some trade--if they are found not fitted for one, they are changed to some other course.¹⁶

In examining the organization of the school at the latest possible period of its growth, the academic subjects required in 1940-41 should be named. English is a required subject each semester for every pupil. Social Studies, too, is taken by each student--American History for the pupil of tenth grade level, Economics for the pupil of eleventh grade level, and "Democracy in the Making" for the twelfth grade pupil. Also on the required list are Science, Mathematics, Drawing, etc., whenever they are related to any particular trade being studied.¹⁷

The stress placed on the physical training

15. Ibid., November 26, 1941.

16. Ibid., October 18, 1940.

17. Ibid.

program has been elsewhere examined. It is necessary to mention here only that participation in Physical Education at the trade school is one hundred percent, which is to say that every one of the regular students is enrolled in one or more classes. Two periods a week are given to this activity, regarded as so vital to those expecting to go out into the business world. "Equal development of mind and body" was the slogan adopted by the school after the final completion and equipment of the gymnasium.¹⁸

The following is a copy of the course of study at the school in 1935. It comprised two years of work:

Bookkeeping	Science, Mathematics, Drawing, English, Social Science
Cabinet Making	Science, Mathematics, Drawing, English, Social Science
Commercial Art	Science, Mathematics, English, Social Science, History of Art
Commercial Course	Stenography, Typewriting, English, Bookkeeping, Commercial Law, Social Science
Drafting	Science, Mathematics (including advanced Mathematics), English, Social Science
Dressmaking	Textiles, Mathematics, Design, English, Social Science
Electricity	Science, Mathematics, Drawing, English, Social Science

18. The Herald-Post, March 29, 1928.

Machine Shop	Science, Mathematics, Drawing, English, Social Science
Printing	Science, Mathematics, Design, English, Social Science
Salesmanship	Textiles, Mathematics, Design, English, Social Science
Sheet Metal	Science, Mathematics, Drawing, English, Social Science

Chorus Music and Physical Education are required of all students. Electives: Glee Club, Orchestra.¹⁹

Two new courses were added in the school year 1941-42: Automotive Shop, including the study of automobile and airplane engines, and Welding, involving gas and electric training. The associated subjects belonging to both these courses were Science, Mathematics, Shop Drawing, English, Social Science.

In Chapter II much was said about the courses offered at the old Vocational School. These courses were retained in the curriculum of the Ahrens Trade School without any change except that made by the improvement in equipment and general facilities for study. Such studies as cabinet making, drafting, salesmanship, electric wiring, book binding and dressmaking had been a part of the Vocational School's course years before the Theodore Ahrens Trade School was made possible.

¹⁹ Roman T. Brom, History of the Public Secondary Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, pp. 80-81.

Reference has been made to these before and will not be needed here. Additional courses, however, were offered when the new plant opened, such as sheet metal work, plumbing, linotype operating, and millinery. Still others were made available later from time to time as the opportunity offered.

Each course was provided with a separate room fitted with the nearest possible reproductions of actual working conditions. Students in plumbing, for instance, worked in a room fitted up with booths to resemble the different compartments of a house. Every effort was made to render the project more practical than theoretical. Each member of the faculty was a skilled tradesman who had proved successful in his own line of work and who had taken courses in methods of teaching. All the academic work required was in direct relationship with the student's trade.

There are many useful examples of the way in which trade and academic subjects are correlated at Ahrens. Business English may be studied in coordination with courses in literature. Girls enrolled in the dressmaking classes learn how to remove spots from materials by investigating chemical ingredients. Efficiency and time-saving devices are two of the

most important problems to be solved by the mathematics class.

Miss Lovell has said in this connection: "Time saving devices for the simplest jobs are subjects for research all over the country. Psychologists are taking an active part in eliminating wasteful energy. Our young people are taught to take these problems seriously. And their importance is obvious in every day occupations. I have observed untrained workers engaged in a simple occupation like stringing tags using three times as much energy and time as necessary."

Millinery at Ahrens Trade School is an interesting illustration of the type of course open not only to pupils of the usual school age, but to older individuals who have not been adequately equipped to take their places in the work-a-day world, and who yet desire to learn a trade. While the student is learning this trade, she sees, handles, and works with materials which catch the eye with their color and brilliance and eventually develop into charming, practical products.

Classes in baking, conducted with the aid of a large array of baking shop equipment, were an innovation in 1929 which attracted considerable attention.²⁰ The

²⁰. The Herald-Post, March 15, 1929.

classes were held four days weekly and were sponsored by the Louisville Master Baker's Association with Joseph Kistler, a baker, as instructor. The bread and cakes and other products baked by the students were sold in the school cafeteria.

Another venture, connected with the night school, was unusual enough to evoke comment. This was a class for journeymen plumbers:

. . . The journeyman plumber, be it known to the uninformed, is to all practical intents a graduate in his school of training, which includes four years of work as an apprentice and the satisfactory passing of an examination required by the city and given at the City Hall for securing his license to do plumbing work. There is so much to be learned, however, in the vocation that large opportunity is afforded for improvement in a graduate school, and so a night class, or rather three night classes of about twenty men each, gather on certain evenings of the week for work at the Ahrens Trade School.

J. O. Williams is instructor. Mathematics, science and shop drawing are the subjects covered in the course, with practical work in some of the most intricate problems of plumbing activities. Drawings are made from all angles of the work. Complete layouts in plumbing fixtures are sketched by the night school students and some of these are as finished in appearance as an architect's drawing or a chart in physics.²¹

Such activities as these gave evidence that the educational program of the three "R's" had been broadened "amazingly" in Ahrens' varied studies:

21. Ibid., November 25, 1928.

Today the adult as well as the youth seeks a classroom to secure knowledge or training and the scope of education has broadened so amazingly that practically every occupation known to man can be learned in the classroom. Neither is it any longer a novelty to find father and son, or mother and daughter, enrolled in the same institution of learning.²²

II. LATER PHYSICAL EXPANSION

As the Theodore Ahrens Trade School developed and expanded in its educational services to the city of Louisville, its needs increasingly grew as well. Again, it proved to be the seemingly never-ending generosity of Mr. Ahrens which matched the occasion with funds to meet the need. In May of 1930, hardly five years after the institution had first opened its doors, there was announced an additional gift of \$300,000, bringing his donations to a total of \$650,000, and bringing the value of the technical school to an investment of slightly under \$1,000,000.²³

The Board of Education, in accepting the gift, agreed to provide the property on which to construct the addition, and authorized Samuel D. Jones, business director of the board, to purchase adjoining property

²². Ibid.

²³. The Courier-Journal, May 17, 1930.

to the north of the school site, at 546 South First Street, and proceed with tentative plans and specifications for the new building.

Mr. Jones indicated that actual construction of the building might be started within six or eight months, and that it might be completed within a year. Options on property north of the school, facing 175½ feet on First Street and running back 200 feet, were being worked out by Mr. Jones. The board authorized payment of not more than \$100,000 for the property, and he said that condemnation suits would be filed if prices were found to be beyond the price limit.²⁴

Actually, however, it was subsequently decided to invest this gift, and work on the new addition did not start until after Mr. Ahrens' death in 1938, even though plans for it were approved in late June, 1936, by the City Planning and Zoning Commission.²⁵ A Public Works Administration grant was being sought to assist with the work and this grant did not materialize until the later date. Acknowledgement was made by the Board of Education the latter part of June, 1938, of a Public Works Administration grant of \$159,503 for the

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., July 1, 1936.

construction of a three-story brick and concrete addition,²⁶ and the secretary of the Board of Education was requested to send formal notice of the grant to Mrs. Karl Lang, the late Mr. Ahrens' daughter.

The construction was to create a new wing of the trade school, three floors high and 170 by 200 feet. The cost, reported the Courier-Journal,²⁷ was \$354,000, and was to keep 160 men working for fourteen months.

The new building was a north wing of the group comprising the school. The first floor contained an auto mechanic's shop, a sales suite where products made in the school would be sold, three class rooms and lockers, storage and other rooms.

The second floor contained an electrical shop, three class rooms and a library, as well as storage, locker and other rooms. The third floor contained a drawing room, two sewing rooms, related arts room, a commercial art department and lockers, showers, storage and other smaller rooms.²⁸

Mr. Ahrens helped in preparing the plans, the

26. Ibid., July 1, 1938.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

board explained, and had given approval to the layout before he died. The plans were prepared by Alfred Weinedel, architect, and the engineering features by Warren and Ronald, engineers.²⁹

Work started on excavation for the addition in May, 1938, after Mrs. Karl Lang, daughter of the late Theodore Ahrens, turned the first shovel of dirt in exercises attended by Board of Education and Public Works Administration officials and civic leaders. Presentation was made by Building Inspector Erhart of the \$239,000 contract for the building to George A. Skelton, Sr., of the Skelton Construction Company.³⁰

So began the last act in the story of Theodore Ahrens' generosity to Louisville education--began with the chief actor having already completed his role in life.³¹ Behind him remains the Theodore Ahrens Trade School as his memorial. A lasting memorial citizens of Louisville agree, in a sentiment expressed by an

29. Ibid.

30. The Louisville Times, May 15, 1938

31. "In 1933 Mr. Theodore Ahrens' family presented to the school a portrait in oils of Mr. Ahrens. Even without this constant reminder, the boys and girls who have attended Theodore Ahrens Trade School will never forget this public spirited gentleman, who made so much possible for them in such a practical way." -- Roman T. Brom, History of the Public Secondary Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, p. 81.

editorial of a decade ago:

. . . Vocational schools, trade schools, instruction by experts in the handicrafts, knowledge of chemistry practically applied, building as well as architecture, how to lay a brick, plumbing, the harnessing of electric power, printing, and so forth, all these and many more have . . . become important spheres of education wherever the opportunity has existed.

For the most part, and in Louisville more particularly, such provision has had to come from private generosity rather than from the public funds.

First, and all but alone, in that noble dedication to the needs, that splendid response to the call of his fellow citizens, both of today and of tomorrow, stands Theodore Ahrens.

It was he who, in the first instance, provided the funds which made possible the erection of the fine plant already in existence. As its utility has more and more been demonstrated, as its place in the scheme of education has gained in importance, so likewise has the necessity of expansion.

Accepting that development as a duty, as a responsibility, Mr. Ahrens now comes forward in the most modest way in the world to duplicate his generosity.³²

III. AHRENS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

In the early summer of 1940 when the mechanized strength of Germany's military forces shattered the defenses of France, the democratic nations of the world became doubly alarmed for their security against aggression. The European conflict had proved already

³². The Louisville Herald-Post, May 18, 1930.

that industrial efficiency in the manufacture of planes, tanks, and other essential equipment in modern warfare was a factor in defense preparations at least equal to the mobilization of a nation's manpower. As a result of this development, the United States, aroused to deep concern over its position in world affairs, began to prime its industrial machine for a supreme effort to manufacture the materials of war.

The gigantic aims of this effort to produce machines and materials soon made clear the shortage of trained workers for the added demands of the defense program. Every available man was put to work, and the call was for still more as soon as hurried training could prepare them for a place in the industrial plants.

The vocational schools soon found themselves under the heavy responsibility of providing a large measure of this preparation. Ahrens Trade School was no exception. On the contrary, with the Dupont Powder Plant and the gun plant newly located near and at Louisville, respectively, it found its program greatly enlarged. In addition, the expansion of air training facilities at Bowman Field made its own particular demands upon the trade school.

These developments were made plain in an address

to the student body of Ahrens Trade School on November 1, 1940 by Mr. Barry Bingham, president and publisher of The Times and The Courier-Journal. Calling attention to the shortage of skilled workers, Mr. Bingham stressed the importance of vocational training in his message to the students.

Addressing approximately 1,000 boys and girls of the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the school gymnasium in a series of citizenship talks before city high schools, Mr. Bingham said:

"Talking to you as a business man I can't honestly say what wonderful business opportunities are going to be waiting for you when you get out of school. I can say, though, that there has never been a time when vocational training has been as important as now.

"Already there is a shortage of men skilled in some particular line and industry is searching for trained carpenters, electricians, plumbers, mechanics and radio technicians.

"These are days when every man can do more than make a living for himself. He can help build up his country by training himself for a job and doing it to the best of his ability.

"The skilled workman who can take a place in some vital defense industry is just as important to the Nation as the best officer in the Army.

"My guess is that we may be able to keep out of war if we make ourselves strong and united and we will probably be pushed into war if we stay weak and disunited."³³

33. The Louisville Times, November 1, 1940.

At the time of this speech Ahrens Trade School had already hit its full stride in cooperation with the training program of the Federal Government during 1940 and 1941. The training was of two types: (1) Supplementary--giving additional skills to men already occupied in mechanical trade, and (2) Refresher--for Works Progress Administration workers and unemployed who had had some previous contact with the trade in which they wanted training.³⁴

Civil Aeronautics, financed by the Louisville Junior Board of Trade, was taught by the auto mechanics teacher of Ahrens as still another feature of the school's participation in the national defense program. Following ten weeks of ground school, students making the highest grades on final examinations were awarded flight scholarships. The course was scheduled to open December 1, 1940. In the November preceding, thirty five students had already enrolled and a call had been made for additional registrants:

An additional registration period for men desiring to enroll in a civilian pilots training course is set for 7:30 p.m. Monday November 18, 1940 at the Ahrens Trade School, Russell Broadbans, Jr., of the Junior Board of Trade, announced today.³⁵

³⁴. Interview with Miss Ethel Lovell, Principal, October 18, 1940.

³⁵. The Louisville Times, November 16, 1940.

An additional note concerning this course appeared in the Times for December 14, 1940:

With about forty students enrolled, the Junior Board of Trade today called for fifty more to study in aviation ground school classes it is sponsoring at Ahrens Trade School.

The classes, started this week for persons without college training, are held from 4 to 6 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, said Russell Broadbent, Jr., 3341 Brownboro Road, Junior Board vice president.³⁶

Resting on the shop floor of the school early in December, students found two well-worn Army training planes, "washed out" of military service, but restored to new usefulness in training young student mechanics for places on airplane plant assembly lines.

Shorn of their wings, tachometers and altimeters, the planes were expected to be of "tremendous help" to the school in its automotive and aviation motor and sheet metal training courses, said Miss Ethel Lovell, principal.³⁷

Flown by Army pilots to Bowman Field from Tulsa, Okla., the planes' wings were removed before they were trucked to the trade school at 546 S. First. The wings were taken to the school, too, so they can be studied along with the fuselage by students in the sheet metal shop for an insight into construction details.

36. Ibid., December 14, 1940.

37. Quoted in the Louisville Times, December 7, 1940.

The motors are studied by young student mechanics in automotive classes.

The Army retained the altimeters and tachometers which show the motor's revolutions per minute, because there is a shortage of these instruments in the Government's big plane-building program, said E. O. Berg, E. Y. A. State supervisor of property. The instruments can be used successfully in new planes, he added, and would be of little value to shop students.

The planes were loaned to the trade school by the E. Y. A., which has been given title to them. In return, the school is providing E. Y. A. students with courses in mathematics and shop sketching and everybody concerned is benefiting from the "swap."

Their once bright colors now a faded blue and yellow, the 10 year-old, two-seat ships still bear on their sides white-painted inscriptions, "U. S. Army, Tulsa, Okla."³⁸

The tie-up between the National Youth Administration and Ahrens mentioned above resulted in the training of 200 young men in jobs essential to national defense. In their work experience shop at 117 Chapel Street one-half of this group welded, hammered, sawed, cut, filed and ground at one time--the other half, meanwhile, attending quieter classes at Ahrens Trade School where the theory back of the machines and their operation was taught.

This was the first National Youth Administration unit of its kind in the state, according to Robert K.

38. Ibid.

Salyers, State National Youth Administration administrator.³⁹ The plan was in keeping with the nationwide trend of training men for jobs in national defense fields. Furthermore, the practice of combining work experience with instruction relating to the type of job was the approved method of apprenticeship. Boys completing the course found work waiting for them in almost every instance. E. H. Terry, director of employment for the State National Youth Administration stated that the turnover in the work experience shop was as high as 25 per cent a month.⁴⁰

In one end of the large barn-like structure used for the work experience shop is the automotive department. Nearby is the sheet metal department where garbage cans, guttering, lockers and metal tables are made. At the opposite end of the room is the welding department and the machine shop. Dozens of expensive machines and rehabilitated machines are provided for the boys, who are closely supervised while they learn to operate the lathes, the tool and cutter grinder, the cylindrical grinder, the filing, sawing and polishing

39. Ibid., January 3, 1941.

40. Ibid.

machine, the drill press, milling machines, etc.⁴¹

Not only the young have sought Ahrens Trade School in preparing for the opportunities to work which the defense drive has brought. Molly Clowes in a Courier-Journal article of August 22, 1940, has described the unemployed, middle-aged men, who have been going back there to school, to brush up on the trades at which they earned a living before the depression. At that time there were 114 of them, forty-two recruited from the Kentucky Employment Service registration files and seventy-two from Works Progress Administration ranks. All had had some experience in trades which are useful in defense industry--sheet metal work, machine shop trades, carpentry, drafting. All of them were out of jobs when the new program began. Most had spent the last ten years drifting from one temporary job to another. They now, according to Miss Clowes, are working six hours a day and five days a week, striving to catch up with trades that left them behind. They are filled with hope for better times, even if war must bring them.⁴²

41. Ibid.

42. Molly Clowes, Article in The Courier-Journal, August 22, 1940.

The Works Progress Administration group is paid standard wages while learning. The other men must support themselves during the training period. The group is a carefully selected first draft of the men now urgently needed in heavy industry, but it represents only one part of the program. To special night classes three times weekly come other men, already at work, who are anxious for advanced training in their trades.⁴³

The response, according to Ahrens' principal, Miss Lovell, has been "magnificent." Miss Clowes quotes her further as follows:

There are 1,500 men who would gladly take this program. They are listed at the Employment Service office and are only too anxious to brush up on their skills. Unfortunately, they are not needed in defense industries and so we cannot include them in this program which the Federal Government is financing solely in the interest of defense preparations.⁴⁴

The program will continue indefinitely, so long as money from Washington comes to maintain it. Certain changes in schedule would be necessary during the regular school term, stated Miss Lovell, but arrangements would be made to have at least half the number of hours

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

available each week for these groups.

"It begins to look as though we'll run school on a twenty-four-hour basis," she said, "but the whole thing is so encouraging and the men are so heartened by the chance of work that none of us would mind that a bit. We'd be happy if we had a school twice as large as this one to put them in, and enough money to take every applicant."⁴⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

Important as the current issue of national defense is, it must, finally, not be forgotten that Ahrens is a school primarily for pupils of the high school level seeking means to prepare themselves for a future livelihood. It is a free public high school in which every pupil must devote half of each school day to a trade course which he may elect; one-fourth of the remainder is devoted to related subjects, including Shop Science, Mathematics and Drawing, and one-fourth to English and Social Studies. It is a school in which a high school diploma is awarded upon successful completion of three years work.

Ahrens Trade School is a school in which the

^{45.} Ibid.

course of study is decided by employment demand, and it is changed and developed in accord with industrial and trade advancement. The course of study listed previously as of the year 1935⁴⁶ has thus, in the school year of 1940-41, found it useful to add the department of Automotive Shop Study and to advance Plumbing to the status of a full department of study.

Ahrens is a school founded and maintained, as has been indicated, by people of generous motives of service. Mr. Ahrens in his philanthropy and Miss Lovell in her supervision have left their mark upon the institution. It is a school in which graduation does not mark the end of a connection; it is impossible for such to be the case where the policy of the school is to keep in touch with its students through questionnaires which seek information which will aid in keeping the student suitably and happily employed.

Ahrens is a school which was founded with the purpose of fitting students for their chosen occupation in life. Purposes of this thesis have been to show how, in the first place, it fits the plan of the national movement in vocational education, and also, indirectly, it has become an integral part of the

46. See pages 82 and 83 of this thesis.

industrial life of Louisville. To accomplish these purposes its history has been related, from its beginnings as the tiny Prevocational School of 1913 to the present year of 1941.

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