



## **Citation for this collection:**

MSS 179 Robert H. Richards, Jr., Delaware oral history collection, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

## **Contact:**

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library  
181 South College Avenue  
Newark, DE 19717-5267  
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)  
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec>  
[askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **Terms governing use and reproduction:**

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law.

Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

## **A note about transcriptions:**

Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

DR. CORA A. PICKETT  
RETIRED LANGUAGE TEACHER  
SUPERVISOR, WILMINGTON, DELAWARE, SCHOOLS  
DEAN OF GIRLS, WILMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, P. S. DUPONT HIGH SCHOOL

Interviewed by:  
John H. Gauger  
July 19, 1966

Transcribed by:  
Marie McNulty

DR. CORA A. PICKETT

PERSONAL HISTORY

Primary school - Kansas City schools

Bachelor of Arts - Oberlin College

Master's Degree - University of Chicago

Doctorage - University of Pennsylvania

Dean of Women - Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan

Language teacher in Park College, Parksville, Missouri

1917 - Wilmington High School Latin Department

Dean of Girls at P. S. duPont High School and super-

visor of Language classes for Wilmington School District

1954 - Retired

Enjoys opera - good pianist - painter of scenes

CORA A. PICKETT

This interview is with Dr. Cora A. Pickett, retired language teacher and supervisor in the Wilmington, Delaware, Public Schools, and Dean of Girls at the P. S. duPont High School. The interview was conducted on July 19, 1966, by John H. Gauger.

Doctor Pickett: The differences between the old and the new education are very numerous. Each time has its own advantages. We speak today of Head Start as if it were some new thing, especially arranged for underprivileged children. I don't think its very new, for I had the advantage of a head start myself which I will tell you about briefly. My sister, four years older than I, had gone to school a very short time when she realized that the little children of the neighborhood were very much interested in learning about their letters. And so when she came home from school every day she would gather us around her and teach us a little bit about the letters. When she was away from home, I would say to my mother: "D-O-G, Mama, what does that spell?" And she would tell me. And then there would be another word and another. One day I went to her crying and asked her if she knew the little girl who had fallen out of the window and hurt herself. She didn't know what I was talking about. She said: "You're just imagining it." "No, the little girl fell out of the window and hurt

herself." She couldn't find out anybody in the neighborhood, but she asked me again where I had heard about it. I carried to her the newspaper of the night before where I had read a little notice of a child that had fallen out of the window. I had learned to read without my mother's knowing it. She told my father, but he didn't believe it so he put me on his knee and had me read backwards because he was sure I had memorized it. But when he found I could read he decided it was time for me to do reading that really had some purpose to it. Well, I was three years old at that time. As soon as they would let me into the public schools at five, I was put in the chart class. My father took me there, but stayed for a little while to listen to the children read and talk. As soon as I sat down and got out my book which was the first reader, although we were not supposed to learn how to read at that time, I raised my hand. The teacher wondered what the little new girl wanted; and I marched up to the front of the room, made a bow to the children, and started in with the assigned reading at the end, toward the end of the book, and read it all way through, made another bow, and went back to my seat. That was the proper procedure for the Sunday School entertainments in which I had taken part, and I supposed that was the way a school was conducted. That was my beginning, but I didn't stay in the chart class but another half hour or so. I started in then to the upper class of the first grade.

The Kansas City Schools where I was attending had only seven grades instead of the eight that we have here, and then high school was from the first to the fourth grade, making

eleven years in all. By having gained a year by learning to read by myself, I had only ten years before I went into high school.

You would perhaps wonder why that was possible. The grades had certain characteristics that we don't have nowadays. I think that you are wanting to know what characteristics I found in my youth that are somewhat different from what we have now. I am sure that we had less time to play in the schools. At least the play was not a part of our schooling; and yet, I can't remember any day in school that I did not have fun with the things that I was learning. Fun with the lessons. I didn't have to learn my ABC's for I knew them before I went to school, but I have since found that in the years--well, within twenty years--that pupils in high school who couldn't use a dictionary satisfactorily because they had never learned their alphabet. They didn't know how to look up words. Well, we knew that before we went to school; and if we hadn't learned it then, we learned it very soon in the very first grade. In other words we were learning basic techniques from the very beginning. We learned our numbers, too, very easily and quickly, because that was from the very first part of our work in school. I can't remember the time in grade school, at least, where a part of every day wasn't given to the adding of figures for quick addition, quick and accurate addition. Perhaps we would be through with our lessons for the day ten minutes before the bell would ring, and the teacher would write perhaps ten or fifteen numbers on the board, and we would take turns seeing how fast we could add them, and how accurately. It was fun;

it was part of the games of the day. But it was an excellent drill, and it went later into what we call mental arithmetic. You don't have that in the schools today at all, but I can remember in one of my regular years in grade school that we would have such questions as this: What would be the interest on \$5,000 for 10 years, 3 months, and 10 days, at 4-1/2 per cent. Can you imagine children today doing that sort of thing in their minds. They would not only want to use pencil, or perhaps refer to one of the machines that are so useful today. That was not the only thing that we had drill in. We, from the very beginning, were drilled in sentence structure. I learned grammar when I was in the first, second, and third grade. So there was no question about what a subject or a predicate was or what indirect objects were. We knew that from the very beginning. I can't remember the time that I didn't know those things. And parsing sentences, and above all, diagramming--to put in pictorial form the things that we have learned. Just as a pasttime one afternoon in school, I had gotten through with what I was doing at the moment, I diagrammed the *quianathanatopis*(?) from beginning to end. That was perhaps a little bit unusual, but I loved that sort of thing. But I was not unusual at all in knowing the grammar. We were taught these fundamentals from the very beginning, and that was why when we got a little bit further along we didn't have any trouble with the grammaretical part of our lessons. That's why, perhaps, I was somewhat intrigued by Latin, when I received instructions there in high school.

Another thing we did in grade school that we don't nowadays is to have spelling twice a day. Nowadays a teacher will gather into one column the words that most of the pupils have misspelled during the week, and then on Fridays there will be one grand spelling lesson with the words that have been misspelled. We had spelling twice a day--oral spelling in the morning with perhaps a spelling match to make it particularly interesting, written spelling in the afternoon. If you missed a word, the person who spelled it right would pass above you in our oral lessons, and perhaps go up to the top of the line. In my own teaching, I changed that a little bit because, naturally, all the best spellers would be at the top and the poor spellers would be at the bottom and lose their interest and ambition. About once a week we turned our classes topsy turvy, and the poor speller in the class was at the top. Sometimes these people who ordinarily had no motivation for studying would spend a lot of time in trying to keep the place at the top of the class. Of course, they wouldn't keep it long; but they liked the motivation, and pretty soon they would be down at the foot again, and another week had passed and they would have another chance. That kept them all on their toes. I thought it was a rather good invention in which I was rather proud of, and my class would outspell some of the others in spelling. We had a spelling book that they don't have any more, Reed's Word Lessons. You may remember it. I remember particularly the very last page of the book in which they were a lot of Latin roots and Latin prefixes and suffixes. I learned the



meaning of those and then it was natural to look for those roots in words that I came across in my reading, and would guess at the meaning of them, and then look them up in the dictionary to see if I was right.

That procedure down in the fifth and sixth grades was what started me on my Latin career. We had drills every day in multiplication. That, too, was a game, but it was still a drill. So, to summarize it in one statement, I think that the drills that we had in every lesson every day that were so conducted that they were childish competition, that was just like so many games, I think that was the basis of what I considered a very good primary education which the Kansas City schools offered me. They offered it in ten years instead of twelve! And I think we were better ready for high school and college in ten years-- I should say eleven, for I had skipped one--eleven years than they are today in twelve. However, they were things that we lacked; but the technical mastery of the fundamentals, I think that was the real avoidance of superficial education in later years.

Interviewer: When did you decide that you would like to teach?

Doctor Pickett: Well, when I was growing up there wasn't very much for a girl to do except to teach. She didn't have the opportunities open to her that girls have nowadays. And then the very fact that I felt that I had the mastery of certain essentials made me want to see what I could do to spreading it around a little bit. I had an advantage in mathematics, too, for in the seventh grade--that is the senior year in the grade

school--our principal knowing that we had a class that was rather small and filled with rather good pupils on the whole--average pretty high--our principal gave us an introduction to algebra. We went all the way through algebra ready for the more complicated equations, and then I started to high school and started it right over again. But because we had that foundation, we could just sail through algebra. The people who had come from our grade school were outstanding in the class in algebra because, once more, we had been given a head start. I'm a great believer in that old method that is being used today.

There were some other advantages in our high school. We had only half a day, half of the pupils left at 12:15 and the rest at 1:00. No lunch was served. In my own class--I don't care very much for science, and while I had physics and chemistry, that was rather uninteresting to me, and I didn't go into that very deeply, but I did enjoy the literary things, English and Latin, and was particularly interested in art on the side. But all the time we had left over in the afternoon and evening, I spent studying; and I think most of the children did. Nowadays, if a pupil studies two hours at home he has fulfilled his full duty. I must have studied anywhere from six to eight hours every night, but we all did. It was expected of us. We didn't have as many outside interests as they do now. We girls, at least, had no athletics except an occasional tennis game. There weren't any school parties at all. There were no sororities and fraternities until I was almost through; and I wasn't

interested in them anyway. But we had enough athletics walking to and from school every day, two miles each way, in good weather.

Then after graduating from high school, I taught for a while because I was very anxious to go to college; and my father wasn't well, and he wasn't able to send me. But after three years of teaching, I finally got to college and chose Oberlin College.

Interviewer: You didn't need any college training at that time to teach?

Doctor Pickett: We had it with all this technical fundamental education we received, and then in the pleasure that we got out of what we did. I don't remember anyone that hated school then as they do now, but that was because our interests were in school rather than outside.

I don't know what you're interested in as far as the college work is concerned.

I had by that time decided that Latin was my field, and so besides having Latin all the way through college, I took such things as archaeology, and topography, and monuments, of Rome, in particular, and the religious life of Rome, private life--everything of that kind that I could get hold of. And then I took a teacher's course in Latin and English.

Interviewer: You went to Oberlin College?

Doctor Pickett: Yes.

Interviewer: That was a quiet college at that time, wasn't it?

Doctor Pickett: Yes. The first co-educational college in the country.

As far as the outside activities at the college were concerned, once more I was more interested in education and getting ready for a career in education than I was just in having a good time. I did spend a good deal of time in YWCA work. I was head of the bible study in the YWCA my last year. We had some fifty people on my committees, and we directed the bible study, which was greater that year than it ever was before or since, the reason being that President King was the president at that time, of Oberlin, knowing that he was going to be abroad the next year, gave us extra attention. Usually he taught the senior students in what they call senior bible; but we were going to be deprived of that, and his own son was in our class. He, therefore, felt a little bit of personal interest in us and offered to teach a class in bible for the girls in our YWCA. That made it popular; and so, we had some I would say, sixty at least, classes in bible outside of school. And besides that I was house president of our dormitory. And because I was a year or two older by that time, having taught four years inbetween, than the usual freshmen, I got better acquainted with the faculty. I prized their friendship. I was old enough and mature enough by that time to appreciate it, and my friendships with the Oberlin faculty were some of the greatest experiences of my life.

We had a lot of fun too, such things as sugaring off. That to a western girl who hadn't seen a maple sugar tree was very interesting.

And having had red hair as a girl, I belonged to what was called the Radium Club. Nobody was permitted to join except those with red hair. I remember one picnic one Saturday afternoon when we all went out for a good time. We had to take a train up to the beach; and as we left the car, we heard an old woman say: "Well, if they ain't every last one of them got red hair." (chuckle) I suppose she thought we were some large family.

The four years at Oberlin were the happiest years and the most significant years that I have ever spent, I think. But I did study and study hard, and I think I studied a good deal harder than college students do now. I had less social life than they think necessary now, and yet I never had such a good time anywhere else in my life. I don't think I missed a thing, but still we studied.

And so I began teaching Latin out in Park College, Parkville, Missouri, and had a combination of college and preparatory school of teaching. I left then in order to go to the University of Chicago for my master's degree. So after three years of teaching there, I was at work once more in Chicago. That master's degree was very interesting, but once more I emphasized on Latin teaching, Roman life and Roman topography, and Roman interests of every kind. It led finally to interests in archaeology. If I had been a man I think I would have been an archaeologist.

Interviewer: Were there any women in the field at that time? In the archaeological field?

Doctor Pickett: No, I don't know of any. Of course, there

must have been some. But I was always intrigued by it, so I truly would have liked to have done it.

But I was a teacher, and I was seeking all the time ways in which I could widen the horizons of my pupils and so I was interested in neuistomatics(?) and inscriptions and things of that kind. I was in Chicago on a fellowship and a scholarship, which I had had to earn by hard work. Well, this was all the inspiration that led me a little bit later to work for a PH D. So teaching full time here in Wilmington and going to school on Saturdays and other times, I finally succeeded in finishing my PhD.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school on Saturdays?

Doctor Pickett: University of Pennsylvania.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Doctor Pickett: And then I spent one year, well in fact fifteen months, abroad studying in Rome in the American Academy of Classical Studies, and I traveled all over the known Roman world, North Africa and all over Italy and France so as to have as much knowledge of ancient Rome and the remmants left now of ancient Rome. That was a wonderful experience. I combined my interests in Roman religion with my interests in Roman archaeology. My thesis, therefore, was in finding everything that could be found out about the Temple of Quirinus in Rome which had never been studied before. I always tell that with a little bit of chargrin and almost shame because it isn't anything that ever did anybody any good. I don't think that it amounted to anything except to me to know a great deal about the Temple that Augustus had built on the Temple of Quirinus

and to find out from excavations and studies of other people where walls must have been and where the whole topography of the Quirinal Hill had been changed in the Middle Ages. It was fun; I enjoyed doing it, but I don't think anyone else ever profited from it besides me.

Interviewer: Have they ever thought of restoring it, rebuilding it?

Doctor Pickett: No, because it had been built on too many ways, but a great archaeologist of years ago had, in his monograph, located the Temple of Quirinus in an entirely different place. It pleased me very much to prove him wrong, and locate it properly, and find that recent excavations had made my decisions absolutely proof.

Interviewer: Why did you first come to Wilmington?

Doctor Pickett: Well, I had left my work in Park College to go to Chicago, and I wanted a different type of work from what I was doing there. So I joined a teacher's agency, and after writing to a good many schools I was finally successful in finding a place here. It was interesting because I was given my choice of being head of the Latin Department and being head of the English Department in the Wilmington High School. Well, I had spent more time in my Latin equipment than I had in English; although I had done both, so I chose Latin and started in here. Of course, now for the last twelve years I haven't been teaching at all, and for ever since '35 I taught in the P. S. duPont High School, but I have been here ever since 1917. So this is my home; I've been here much longer than anywhere else.

The defects of the old system, I think, may interest you as I have studied them through my many years of experience. I think the old education gave a good deal less general information than the present education does. We had few informational trips, for instance; and we didn't have very much study of current events. Now they spend a great deal of time, very wisely, I think, on current events.

I had no experience in platform experience. I didn't learn to stand on the platform at school and make speeches to the entire congregation. We had no pupil responsibility either. Now the Student Council rather controls the student attitude and the student activities. I was over in P. S. duPont High School in charge of the Student Council for a good many years, and some of our best pupils were wonderful leaders; and their powers of leadership were allowed to develop in those years. We had nothing of that. We had no emphasis on learning about various careers. As I said before, there was nothing for a woman to do but to teach school or to go into nursing. I chose to teach school. In fact, there was one other place where I had to choose. I had always been very interested in music, piano playing. I had had some considerable taste for painting in water colors, and I wanted to go to college. I had those three doors open, and I had to choose. Well, I thought, wrongly, that I could pick up music any time and go on with it, but this was my one chance for a college education. And so, I earned my own way, in my teaching before I went to college. I decided on that. Well, I was right in my choice, but wrong in the reasons for it.



All the time I was studying in all the different places, I was seeking for wider horizons and open doors. I meant to teach, and I meant to be the kind of a teacher who would teach not merely technique, but something about the life and thought of the ancient which is so well worth knowing. But I don't believe that you can do much with that until you have a firm foundation, and so because of that, I saw to it that my pupils knew their declensions and conjugations and the grammar before they tried to go on to anything else. Not long ago I was asked to tutor a boy here in Wilmington who had had three full terms of Latin and was in the middle of his fourth term, almost through with two years of Latin, but he realized that he wasn't making it, and he was going to fail his fourth term. So I was asked to tutor him. I was perfectly appalled that first conversation with him that after a year and a half, in fact a half of the next term, of Latin studies he didn't yet know how to decline the first word in the first declension. He hadn't learned the first thing to learn in Latin. My pupils learned that in the first two weeks of school. He had been a year and a half or more and he still didn't have it. Of course he couldn't do Latin! You can't do anything without having fundamentals. You couldn't do diking(?) without learning something about addition and subtraction. You couldn't learn anything without basic fundamentals. And so I made up my mind that that was one thing that my pupils would know, and then they could work with it. And so, I took pains with the basic learning of Latin.

I think perhaps I did more of that sort of thing than most teachers do. But as soon as they once had that, then we could forget about it and read and enjoy what we were doing. I don't want a teacher to be merely a drill master, but I do think that that must come first. Then I like to open as many doors as possible. There is so much that is interesting in Roman life, Roman religion, archaeology, and ancient inscriptions that you can see now if you travel in Rome, and the antiquities. Those are all such interesting things. The defects of the old I mentioned before; but the advantages of the old come from this drilling, making the good foundation.

I do believe that people ought to study more than they do in the present schools. We used to study six to eight hours a day, but we did more in 11 years than they do now in 12, I really think. I think teachers and parents expected more of their children in years gone by.

And then one of the great differences in our children between now and years ago is the difference in their moral standards. I am very sure that there were higher ideals of conduct on the average in the years gone by than there are now.

It is true that the best pupils today are better than the best pupils perhaps of our day, but on the other hand we have more classes of people who are entering school. I mean more social classes. There are pupils now from backgrounds lacking culture. There are pupils now who learned that liberty means license. There are more people now who, if they can't have their own way, will force it. There are more people that will be antagonistic if they are expected to obey. We didn't have

that problem. I think it is one of the greatest problems of today, but fifty years ago, sixty years ago, people expected to obey; and if the teacher gave a command with a smile, they were willing to obey. I never had any trouble with the pupils not doing as I asked them to, and yet we never had any conflicts either. A smile goes a long way.

Today there are greater opportunities for pupils who have the proper preparation, greater opportunities in school. There are scholarships for the asking. There is money going wasted because the right kind of pupil doesn't come along. There is more money available for pupils because men and women are earning more money, and they are very glad to use it for their sons and daughters to go on to school, if the pupils are interested. There are fellowships everywhere that you can get if you are at all worthy. Of course, it costs more too. I suppose a year in college costs--doesn't it somewhere around \$3,000----.

Interviewer: Getting close to that, yeah.

Doctor Pickett: When I went to school, you won't believe it, but I went four years to Oberlin for a little less than \$800--four years of it--plus scholarships. But it happened that I won eight scholarships and that helped a good deal. And then I had a fellowship for Chicago, and it was already working when I went to the University. So, I can't say that that is quite a fair comparison; but at least that's all I had to earn and hardly get through Oberlin. There's plenty of jobs nowadays, but there aren't jobs unless you are prepared for them. Ambitious students can be prepared; ambitious students, I think,

can get a good job if they work for it. There are a few jobs ready now for dropouts and people with low ambitions; and so the greatest problem, I think, in the youth today is just that willingness to pay the price in effort to prepare for something that is worthwhile. Scientific achievements today demand preparation more than they ever did before, but the outlook is more promising now than it was in my day if you pay the price. But you need good judgment, high ideals, and to be a real man or woman you got to be willing to do some unselfish living, to work for others as well as for yourself, to keep your eyes wide open. The horizons are broad if you can only see them.

One of the rewards of teaching is seeing pupils grow into noble men and women ready to serve humanity and ready to give instead of to demand for themselves. And as far as teachers are concerned, one of the greatest rewards I know and think about, is for pupils of ten years ago, twenty years ago, thirty years ago to come or else will write letters to you, and thank you for the advice and counsel you gave fifty years ago, thank you for the basic training that you insisted on their having, and thank you for the broadened outlook and the broader horizons that you helped them to find fifty years ago.

Interviewer: Well, you did a lot of work with students when you were Dean of Girls--placement, getting them prepared for jobs, and so forth.

Doctor Pickett: Yes, that's what my job was, of course.

Interviewer: Finding scholarships--I mean, making the scholarships available to the girls, letting them know about it.

Doctor Pickett: Yes, that was part of my job. Once a year I invited in about 50 men and women who were outstanding in some profession or work here in the city who would come on one day and give a little summary of what their work meant, and how you got ready for it, and what the opportunities were. They would lead pupils or talk to pupils who had written beforehand giving me their preference--their second and third preference--besides their first, for careers, and then I would arrange them in two different hours in the morning. And they would hear two outstanding people of the community talk about their two choice careers. Once in a while, it wouldn't fit in the schedule I made for the day, so they would have to take their second and third choice, perhaps, instead of their first and second. But they learned in that way a lot of things about the different careers. In four years they would get perhaps eight different careers, or four, or just one, if they had decided by that time.

Interviewer: That's the best way to learn, from people who are doing it.

Doctor Pickett: I thought so. They haven't kept that going since I left. There's an awful lot of work about scheduling 500, 600, 800 pupils in just two periods a day for the choice professions for all of them. And then I noticed, too, that they weren't interested in, say, small jobs, electrical jobs. They would ask me to listen to a man who is an electrical engineer. They are always going to begin at the top. So I

had to prepare the speaker ahead of time, tell him what they wanted to know, but also tell them the careers along the ladder up to the place where he had arrived, because not all of them are going to get to the top.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. I wonder what conditions were like in Wilmington High School when you first came to it. Were there adequate facilities to teach and so on?

Doctor Pickett: Well, the laboratories were not as well equipped as the Kansas City laboratories were way back in my youth, but I know less about the scientific fields in Wilmington than I do literary fields because I wasn't particularly interested in scientific kinds.

Interviewer: But you had all the equipment you needed?

Doctor Pickett: I had all the equipment I needed finally. We didn't have reference books at first, but little by little I was able to get the reference books I needed for my classes. When I left to go over to the P. S. duPont High School, I left behind a very good selection of books that, if used, would make the Latin courses very interesting and a broadening experience, I felt.

Interviewer: I imagine quite a few of the teachers at Wilmington did not have college degrees, just as you hadn't when you started.

Doctor Pickett: Well, I think that most of these, the majority, had college degrees. I was the only PhD when I had mine. In fact, I think I was the only master when I first got mine among the teachers. I may be mistaken in that, but I know I was the

first PhD. Now I mean among the teachers; of course, there was an assistant in the executive field here who was a doctor.

Interviewer: Had you ever thought of going back to college teaching? Did you like the public school better?

Doctor Pickett: Well, I did teach in two different colleges, but my interest was in Latin and more and more the students were avoiding Latin in their advanced work, for Latin was not appealing to ordinary students, as much as science and mathematics were. When I taught first in college, I had one class with only two pupils in it. But I had another that grew from 10 to 25. That wasn't Latin either; it was Greek, Greek literature in English translation. But it was the same preparation that I have been speaking about that made it possible. It is such a rich field. Greek life and literature has no equal anywhere, well in the unique excellence. But if I had a daughter, I wouldn't want her to teach Latin; it's fading out.

Interviewer: That must be disappointing to you to see that many of the academic students are not taking Latin now.

Doctor Pickett: Well, it is a disappointment, but yet some of the best ones are still doing it. Mr. Talbot used to be the principal up at P. S. duPont High School, and he and I were always kidding about the fact, which was a fact, that the best students in the school were always Latin students. Almost always was the valedictorian of the class a Latin student. Sometimes he was a four year Latin student. Mr. Talbot was always telling me that only the best pupils in the school could stand four years of Latin. (chuckle) Well, I was always

insisting that it was the four years of Latin that trained them so well that they became the best.(chuckle)

Interviewer: Do you remember any teachers who were at Wilmington High School when you first came there? Any that seem to stand out in you mind now?

Doctor Pickett: Yes, Miss Nellie Sawin was a math teacher, I think. She had charge of the senior boys' room. Well, I had charge, for a while, of the senior girls' room. After some ten years or so I left that because I couldn't be head of the Latin Department and visit all the other teachers to be sure they were coming up to the best that they were able to produce and then teach more than five classes a day myself. By and by I found that I had to give up one thing or another, and it was suggested that I give up senior room. I was very glad to do that, for I was more interested in the teaching actually. By then I was promoted to head of the department, and was on a little different scale from what I had been before.

Interviewer: What about outstanding students that you have had? Quite successful later?

Doctor Pickett: I have had very interesting pupils. I had one class that was a picked class, selected for me because there were so many outstanding pupils in it. It was given to me the year that I came home from my 15 months abroad. Among them were Dr. John Munroe, the head of the history department in the University of Delaware; and Dr. David Platt, who is an outstanding physican of the city; and I suppose everybody knows Bill Frank of the Wilmington newspaper--The Morning News.



Every once in a while he puts something in his column about life in Wilmington High School, and there were many others too. I could hardly mention any without a long, long list.

Interviewer: The growth of education in Wilmington as you saw it progress--you saw P. S. duPont develop.

Doctor Pickett: Yes, I had a part in suggesting different possible changes in the original plans to make it more helpful and was able to go in and see my offices grow. At first we had all the language rooms in one wing, but that soon was impossible. I taught--how many years--from 1918 to 35--18 years in Wilmington High School, the old Wilmington High, then went to P. S. And I saw the new Wilmington High School grow up south of town. P. S. duPont was supposed to be when it was built to be one of the two or three of the finest buildings for high school students in the whole United States. Now there are a good many other schools that perhaps can be more highly praised than that, but it's a good school yet.

The district around it has changed very much. When P. S. duPont was first built the people in the immediate vicinity were almost all professional people. They have mostly gone to the suburbs, and the people formerly in the center of town have tended to going out to the outskirts. Just a little different class. I don't mean any less valuable in their way, but just a different class, not a professional class. I think the children of the professional classes are more apt to be interested in such as my field, Latin; and the people that are coming into the area now are perhaps interested in other fields more. At any rate, if that's the reason or not I couldn't say, but certainly Latin is not growing at present.

The new Wilmington High School has been very lucky in having Mr. Fulmer all these years. I remember when he was dean of boys at Wilmington High, and I was dean of girls. We shared a room which had been a large classroom with a little temporary wall between the two offices with one window just at our elbow. And we had one telephone which we both had to use. When we weren't busy, if there was ever possibly a time, the little door would open; and we could talk back and forth through our little window. But we didn't have very much time to talk, for the Wilmington High School was on two sessions, in fact three sessions; and he and I were deans of the whole day, from about 7:30 in the morning until way after dark at night.

Interviewer: Mr. Wagner was principal at that time, was he?

Doctor Pickett: Mr. Wagner was principal for a little while, I don't remember just which years. I went back to Mr.

AT THIS POINT TAPE STOPS FOR A SHORT PERIOD

He had been principal for 32 years, Mr. Berlin. He was principal when I came and for some years afterward. In fact I lived with he and his wife. And then came a period when one principal after another was there for a short time. Mr. Wagner was principal for a few years, and then became assistant superintendent in charge of high schools. I've seen a good many principals come and go, a good many superintendents come and go, but Mr. Talbot was my principal for a longer time than anyone else.

I think the Wilmington schools have changed quite a little bit in the years. It's difficult for me to say very much about that, for I've been out of the school system for 12 years. There's been a good many changes since then, but I think all

of our superintendents have had their eyes and ears open in the attempt to make the schools live up to their best possibilities, and to grow with the changing ideals of the time. There have been some very good teachers here, some very good instructors. But like most places, they have had their weak spots, too.

One of the interesting experiments that we tried in Wilmington High School in the Latin Department was that of the Latin Club. We had a Latin Club at the Wilmington High School for several years. In fact, we had it until I left to go to P. S. duPont High School. At first the membership was about 35, but it grew until one year we had 160 members. The chief attraction was, of course, the Saturnalia, the Christmas program which centered around a dinner. We had the same kind of invitations that the Romans sent out to their attempted(?) guests. They were always scrolls and written in Latin. Of course, you wouldn't expect a Roman invitation to be in any other language; and sometimes the recipients wouldn't exactly know to what they were invited or at what hour they were expected to come. One girl made a mistake once because she didn't know enough Latin to realize just exactly when she was supposed to arrive. But usually they managed to get there in time for dinner. They were greeted at the door by hosts that were dressed in the old Roman togas, which we tried to imitate. They were dressed in the long white toga, of course, with the red bands which denoted the rank as plebian, or perhaps a senator. The Saturnalia had the same menu that they might have expected in Rome, except for one thing. We started with

the hors d'oeuvres, which, of course, did not have that name. The sliced eggs and celery and onions and radishes, everything of that sort, was found on one plate. The next course would have been fish, I suppose, and then the third course might have been called Cana, which stands for dinner. It was the main course. Our little menu had a notation at this point saying "Cana omissia," or we had left out the main course of this dinner. The next course would be vegetables very similar to what the Romans themselves used to have. The dessert was made up of candy and sweets of various kinds, little cookies, and nuts; and of course, according to the Roman style, the final course was an apple. We had great fun during the dinner also, for just as the Romans managed, we had entertainers all the way through. Sometimes it was a dancer or an athlete, or it might have been one of our own pupils who had dressed in the regulation toga who would deliver an oration which sounded like Cicerio orations against Cantalon(?). Everyone who could would recline at table, although our facilities were such that we were unable to carry this out very far. This was the main period of time spent at the Saturnalia, but we also had other meetings of the Latin Club too. Sometimes we would have a drama acted out by the members; perhaps the drama would be written by the students themselves, or they might of adapted some other writing to dramatic form. Sometimes we had papers written or an imitation of Roman music as far as we were able to guess what it was like. In every way possible we tried to use the Latin Club to accuentate the cultural side of our

study of Latin and make them realize a little bit about the Roman life. We had a great deal about Roman religion, and a good deal of interest in dramatizing the worship of the gods or dramatizing a Roman marriage or something of that kind. It was a great deal of fun; no two were ever alike, and yet every one was intended to be educational. And I know that every one was fun and enjoyed by the students.

END OF INTERVIEW