

SHELDON HALL

FUNCTION

Sheldon Hall was officially opened for public use in 1912, and was a reflection of the administration of Principal I.B. Poucher who worked with Dr. Edward Sheldon and carried his legacy on after his death. Sheldon Hall was originally opened for the entire State Normal and Training School, giving it a permanent location for the school to grow. Presently, the Admissions Office, Oswego Children's Center and the Office of Development are in this building. There are also classrooms and a residential wing of the building.

NAMESAKE

Sheldon believed that the "reared in the country, where all could read and write, and where all were comfortable, though none were learned or rich, the ignorance and misery of the city poor seemed like a very revelation of heathendom." It was during Sheldon's time spent with the poor of Oswego, that he persuaded his colleagues to start the "Orphan and Free School Association," which would give a home to the orphans, and offered free school to the poorer children of Oswego. It was in the winter of 1848 that Sheldon became schoolmaster of his first school. Sheldon nurtured a relationship with these students in his "Ragged School." During the week, he was their schoolmaster, and on Saturdays he would visit each of these students at home to make sure that they were not "suffering for the necessities of life." In May of 1850, he undertook a private school in the Old United States Hotel, and in the following year he applied to be Superintendent of Public Schools in Syracuse.

As the Superintendent of Public Schools in Syracuse, during his two and a half years in which he held this office, he consolidated, graded, and organized the lower schools, brought together various ill-kept collections of books into a central library, and published the first annual report of the city which resulted in the foundation of one of the finest high schools in the state of New York.

In May 1853, Sheldon began his permanent residence in Oswego and became the first Superintendent of Schools in Oswego after "The Free School Part of Oswego" was awarded the budget they needed to open schools. The schools were organized; Sheldon began to reflect on their curriculum and method; and to fresh and practical insight, they seemed not to meet the actual needs of human nature. It was not until he visited Toronto and saw a collection of teaching appliances from the Home and Colonial School in London that he began to develop his earlier teaching methods. Dr. Sheldon filled his classroom shelves with colored balls and cards, bright-colored pictures



of animals, building blocks, silkworm cocoons, cotton-balls, specimens of pottery, and glass. He believed that "children should learn to know forms, colors, weights, the commoner facts, and relations of their own bodies and the material world — not just as names, but as objective realities."

In 1860 appeared a distinctly Pestalozzian lines based program. This program contained conversational exercises, moral instructions, physical actions, and employments, lessons on form, color, size, weight, and number, animals, human body, common objects, gymnastics, singing and drawing, as well as reading, writing, and spelling. Sheldon described that the purpose of this program was too "educate the senses, and awaken a spirit of inquiry."

Sheldon's work and life all center about the beloved Oswego School whose destinies he molded from 1861 to the day of his death. The Oswego School during all that time stood as an experiment station in the Pestalozzian Method, and as a group of vigorous and original personalities, all working with wonderful devotion to their leader. During his time as Principal of the Oswego Normal School, it had become the State Normal and Training School, and was demanding the majority of Sheldon's time. He resigned as Superintendent of City Schools and devoted all of his time to being a Principal in September of 1869.