

First Days

Jessica R. Eagleson wrote this account in 1945

How well I recall February 14, 1870.

What a memorable day it was for some of the students in the two higher classes of Public School 47—the famous Twelfth Street school over which Miss Wadleigh ruled with a rod of iron. On that day a new college was to be opened. Dr. Hunter was to be President and Miss Wadleigh his assistant.

I was one of the girls chosen by Miss Wadleigh, who being a strict disciplinarian gave us many instructions about our conduct en route to the new college, especially that we were not to look at any boys whom we passed.

We marched two abreast, with Miss Wadleigh leading, down to Fourth Street and Broadway and I have often wondered why we were not obliged to sing the Battle Hymn of the Republic, a great favorite of Miss Wadleigh, or chant some part of the multiplication tables which we did every day going up and down to our classrooms.

The new college building at Fourth Street and Broadway was occupied on the main floor by a celebrated carriage maker and used as a display room. The top floor was an armory where a regiment drilled and the college was on the center floor.

There was much confusion when we arrived there and we were able to find seats only in a corridor. From that point of vantage, we watched the men and women passing back and forth and decided that they must be the new teachers, and wondered which one was to be our class teacher.

Finally order came out of chaos. Classes were formed and I was placed in a room with students from other

Building at Fourth Street and Broadway



schools and for our class teacher we had Professor Gillet—a gentleman and a scholar, well acquainted with many subjects outside his assignment and whom we all adored.

That is the real birthday of Hunter.



THE LATE MISS WADLEIGH, FIRST SUPERINTENDENT OF THE NORMAL COLLEGE.

DR. HUNTER recalls *Miss Wadleigh*

Lydia F. Wadleigh, the Superintendent, was a very tall strongly built woman, of dark complexion, with exceedingly large black eyes and high cheek bones. Without disrespect I might say she was more masculine than half the men I knew. She was withal very womanly, and while exacting in the performance of duty was tender and motherly toward the girls. One day a young man wrote a note to one of the students asking for an interview at the corner of Fifty-ninth Street and Third Avenue. As the Woman Superintendent read this note (as she had a right to do under the rules governing the College), she turned to the young lady and said, "You retire to your classroom, I shall attend to this case myself." The time specified was eight o'clock in the evening. The youth undersized, dressed in his best, swinging a nice little cane and wearing neat little kid gloves, was patiently waiting at the corner, when prompt to the minute up stepped the tall lady, her face hidden behind a heavy black veil. "Ah! Thanks awfully"—said the dapper youth—but the lady threw back her veil and clutching him by the shoulder said in no tender tone, "Here I am. What do you want?" And as the fierce glance of those great black eyes smote him, he wrenched himself loose and ran off, exclaiming, "Oh, the devil!" It is safe to say that this little Adonis of the street corner never again tried to make an appointment with any of our students.