

First Church History Role Fact Sheet: Horace Mann

1796: Horace was born in Franklin, Massachusetts and was the 4th of 5 children. He worked long hard hours on his family's farm because they were very poor. Most of his schooling involved memorizing and reciting sections of textbooks and the Bible.

1810: Brother Stephen drowned when he skipped church and Reverend Emmons, his Congregational minister, gave a sermon stating that Stephen had gone to hell in punishment. This harsh vision of his brother's fate turned Horace against traditional religion that emphasized human sin and God's punishment.

1816: Learned Latin and Greek and was admitted to Brown University as a sophomore.

1819: Excelled in studies of ancient literature, oratory, and debating and graduated. Horace started teaching the Classics at Brown.

1822: Began learning about the law in the Litchfield, Connecticut law school run by Judge Tapping Reeve. Horace read philosopher Tom Brown who claims that God created the universe which now ran by itself (like a clock) according to the laws of nature. Nature was good and man should learn to live his life in harmony with its laws. Humans caused evil in the world by creating governments that did not operate according to nature's physical and moral laws. Our job in life, then was to perfect society, so that human goodness and love could thrive.

1823: Graduates from law school and wants to be close to his mother in Franklin, but not too far from Boston. So moves to Dedham where the Norfolk county courthouse was. Horace joined First Church in Dedham and delivered the 4th of July address in the meeting house, a great honor.

1826: Had an active legal practice for Boston merchants and asked to deliver a memorial address at First Church commemorating the lives of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams who had both died on July 4th of that year. Adam's son, President John Quincy Adams attended and complimented Mann on his address.

1827: Active participant in Town Meeting and also served on the Dedham School Committee. Mann is elected as Dedham representative to the Massachusetts state legislature (General Court).

1828: Worked to create a Massachusetts mental health hospital to help mentally disturbed people who would be otherwise locked up in prison or allowed to become homeless. Mann also worked to create tax support for a railroad between Boston and Worcester passing through Dedham.

1830: Married Charlotte Messer, daughter of the president of Brown.

1832: Charlotte dies and Horace is too sad to stay in Dedham. Moves to Boston.

1834: Elected state Senator for Suffolk County; becomes interested in public education reform as a way to create love of country, skilled workers, social mixing of rich and poor, and democratic attitudes in young people..

1837-1848: Becomes State Commissioner of Education. Horace travels around the U.S. and Europe to learn about the best educational ideas. He used these ideas to pass laws to create the first state-wide elementary and secondary public school system with professionally-trained teachers, a well-organized curriculum, exciting hands-on instruction, and four teacher education colleges. His public education laws are imitated throughout the U.S.

1843: Marries Mary Peabody, a pioneer in Kindergarten education.

1848: Elected to Congress in place of John Quincy Adams as MA congressman. Is a major anti-slavery spokesman. Is an opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, fighting MA Senator Daniel Webster.

1852: Runs for Massachusetts Governor and loses.

1853: Becomes first president of Antioch College in Ohio. Make Antioch one of the first coeducational colleges and also the first to admit African-Americans in 1863.

1859: Delivers last commencement address with this advice: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." Later that year, dies of fever.

For more information, see the following URLs: <http://uudb.org/articles/horacemann.html>
<http://www.fags.org/childhood/Ke-Me/Mann-Horace-1796-1859.html>