

while in education it is always harder, other things being equal, to hold a large and somewhat heterogeneous community up to a high standard than a small and select one. One of the internal changes that worked against the school should be particularized.

For a century or more the schools were all town schools, and what is now known as the Township Unit System prevailed. There were no school officers as such, but the selectmen, assisted by the ministers, who were real school supervisors, carried on the schools under the laws, subject to the instructions given by the freemen in the town meeting. The typical New England town of the first period was a small concentration of population, with outlying farms and a piece of common land grouped around the church and schoolhouse. This organization tended strongly to intensify the internal life of the community, as well as to make it much more capable of resisting external attacks. Sometimes the public authority defined the circle within which houses must be built, as one or two miles of the meeting-house.¹

But when the increase of the colony and the down-

¹ W. B. Weedon, *Economic and Social History of New England*, Vol. I., pp. 282, 283, gives the following description:

"Next the meeting-house, locally and in the hearts of the settlers, was the common school. The location and definition of the Haverhill building, about 1670, for schools and for other uses of the community, was a type of the system. The house was placed on the common land, as near the meeting-house, 'which now is as may be.' It was to be used for schools and for a watch-house, and on Sabbath days for the entertainment, between services, of those who did not go home. It was in substance an 'annex' of the meeting on its social side. There they taught reading, writing, arith-