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The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1969
Education, history

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

FRONTIER SCHOOLS: A REFLECTION OF THE TURNER HYPOTHESIS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

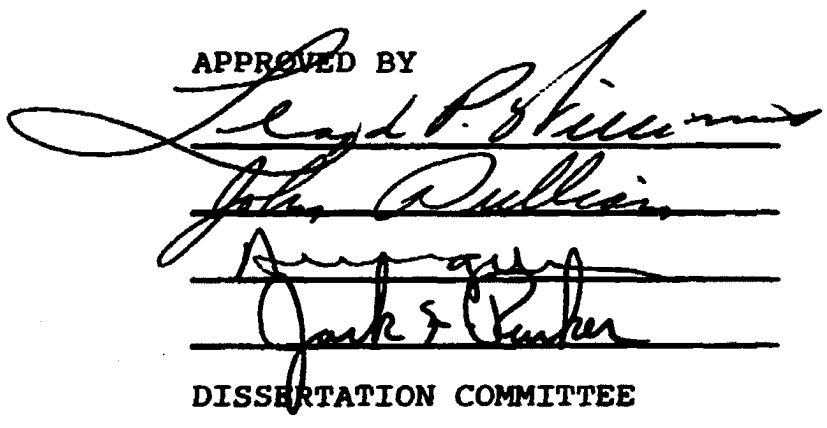
CLINTON BOYD ALLISON

Norman, Oklahoma

1969

FRONTIER SCHOOLS: A REFLECTION OF THE TURNER HYPOTHESIS

APPROVED BY



DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

For

Claudia, Janice, Beth Ann, and Kathleen

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to a number of persons who aided in developing this dissertation. Lloyd P. Williams, David Ross Boyd Professor of History and Philosophy of Education, directed the study and gave encouragement, time, and numerous helpful suggestions. Professor John Pulliam of the College of Education critically read each of the preliminary drafts and suggested a number of improvements. Professor A. M. Gibson of the History Department, in spite of a leave of absence during the time that this study was being completed, gave generously of his time. Appreciation is expressed to Professor Jack Parker of the College of Education for his encouragement and his numerous courtesies.

My wife, Claudia, typed each of the chapters several times, read with a critical eye, and maintained unfailingly good spirits. Particular appreciation is expressed to Beryl Hamilton of Wichita, Kansas, who helped to develop my interest in both education and in frontier history.

PREFACE

This work explores the significance of the frontier experience on the development and practices of schools in seven middle western states. To aid the reader, a short synopsis of each chapter follows.

"The Frontier Hypothesis and Educational History" contains a statement of the frontier hypothesis and a discussion of the controversy surrounding it. The impact of the theory on American historiography and on other spheres of American thought is reviewed, and the positions of some of the major critics and defenders are examined. The application of the theory to frontier education, including a short review of the literature, concludes the chapter.

"Intellectual and Literary Activity on the Frontier" is concerned with the cultural milieu in which the schools developed. Various stereotypes of the Westerner and the heterogeneous nature of society on the middle western frontier are explored. Anti-intellectualism, including the role of religious fundamentalism, is examined, and the quantity and quality of literary and intellectual activity is surveyed.

"Desire and Disdain for Education" contrasts the criticisms, foreign and domestic, regarding the frontiersman's

unconcern with educational opportunities with the enthusiasm and pride that many Westerners exhibited in their schools. The views and efforts of the New Englander, Southerner, and immigrant toward education on the middle western frontier are contrasted. Attention is given to the leadership role of the clergy in education.

"The First Schools on the Frontier" is concerned with the forced innovations in schools established by the early settlers. The subscription schools, the makeshift buildings, the limited curriculum, the often ill prepared teachers, and school discipline are described. Educational opportunities at the secondary level on the frontier are discussed.

"Tradition and Innovation in Education" explores the conflicts between the advocates of classical and more utilitarian curriculums. The perpetuation of the traditional classical curriculum in the middle western academies and early high schools is stressed. Attempts at reconstruction of the courses of study, including manual labor schools and Pestalozzian reforms, are investigated.

"The Windfall of Public Lands" reviews the land grants from the national domain to education, and consideration is given to the effect of the land grants on western educational thought. The inconsequential amount of income from and the mismanagement of school lands is discussed. Competition between schools and railroads for both land grants and the use of proceeds from the public lands is studied.

"The Struggle for Tax Supported Schools" contains a review of the legislation leading to free common schools in each of the seven states studied. Impediments to a quick acceptance of free public schools as a result of the physical and economic burdens of the frontier are suggested. The competing forces in the public school campaign are examined, and the relationship between the movement in the Middle West and the national common school revival is explored.

"The Significance of the Frontier on Middle Western Schools" suggests the changes that might be anticipated if education reflected the frontier hypothesis. Attention is given to the affect of the frontier experience on innovation in curriculum and educational organization, and on the democratization of the schools. The chapter is concluded with recommendations for further study.

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FRONTIER SCHOOLS: A REFLECTION OF THE TURNER HYPOTHESIS

CHAPTER I

THE FRONTIER HYPOTHESIS AND EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

The most productive, bitter, and sometimes humorous, debates among American historians have been conducted over the controversy surrounding the significance of the frontier experience in American history. American historians are now in the third generation of the controversy. From 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner read the paper which was to be of paramount importance for American historiography--"The Significance of the Frontier in American History"--at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, until his death in 1932, the frontier thesis was accepted almost without challenge as the answer to the enigma as to the cause of the distinctiveness of the American character.

Following Turner's death, and for a generation thereafter, the denunciations of the thesis were as complete and devastating as had been the acceptance before. In the present decade, according to a warm supporter of the hypothesis, the "attitude is still one of doubt, but scholars in

a variety of fields are increasingly showing a willingness to test aspects of the thesis, rather than accept or condemn it as a whole."[1]

The elements of the thesis which were important for the purposes of this study are stated below: The experience of three hundred years of people continually returning to a more primitive environment by moving into a frontier region has been one of the most important factors in producing a distinctive people in the Western World--the American. The modifications required in tools, ideas, and institutions because of the demands of the new environment; and the work and skill required to garner the fruits of the abundance which the frontier possessed, but gave grudgingly, transformed the European in the frontiersman. The characteristics of the frontiersman, not all of them attractive by any means, became the most distinctive of American traits.

Among the western characteristics was a vociferous equalitarianism which had the virtues of an insistence on democracy and which allowed rapid upward social mobility, but which also resulted in rudeness, disregard or indifference for the conventions of civilization, and an abhorrence of outside control. In order to conquer the wilderness, the frontiersman was driven to hard work, and because it payed, it became a habit and a virtue, and leisure a vice. The

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[1]Ray Allen Billington, America's Frontier Heritage (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), xii.

result was a coarsening of the Westerner; he came to honor materialism, and failed to develop an appreciation of the aesthetic. The riches of the frontier in the form of minerals, timber, furs, or land led to exploitive and wasteful use of the natural resources of the continent. The existence of the wealth and the lack of societal restraints on its appropriation by individuals resulted in a mobile population and a restless energy as men sought to get their share.

As the frontiersman faced the challenge of new problems on new frontiers, he was forced to experimentation and innovation. The result was an inventive and pragmatic personality which habitually accepted the new when it demonstrated practicality, and readily discarded the old.[2]

The Frontier hypothesis has strongly, if not always desirably, influenced thought in America.[3] For most twentieth century Americans, or at least for those who considered the sources of their culture at all, it was the explanation of

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[2]The statement of the hypothesis was developed from a number of sources including: Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier, Robert E. Riegel, America Moves West, and Ray Allen Billington, America's Frontier Heritage.

[3]Influence, as used in this study, is defined as a believable and reasonable connection between a possible cause and modifications or changes in the actions of those with the potential to be affected. The historian's decision that influence is entitled to credence is a critical, but subjective, balancing of probabilities based on the evidence available to him.

"Everyman's History of the United States."[4] Its generalizations have guided leaders in many fields--businessmen, intellectuals, and educators, politicians, and diplomats--in their conception of the American character and the role which the nation should play in the world. American expansion abroad has been explained by the bizarre combination of materialism and democratic idealism which developed on the frontier. William Williams maintained that Turner's interpretation did much to Americanize and popularize the heretofore alien ideas of economic imperialism and the White Man's Burden."[5]

Turner may have also influenced the political and diplomatic decisions of Woodrow Wilson. They were close friends and roomed at the same boarding house at Johns Hopkins during the late 1880's. Perhaps Turner was also an intellectual roomer in the White House during the Wilson administration. Wilson's New Freedom program was an attempt to return from the corporativeness of twentieth century America to a more simple era of individualism which characterized American life before the end of the frontier. The slogan which rationalized America's participation in the First World War: "To Make the World Safe for Democracy" may have also been

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[4]William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," Pacific Historical Review, XXIV (1955), 380.

[5]Ibid., 385.

influenced by Turner.[6] Harvey Wish suggested that Turner's influence enriched Wilson's five volume, A History of the American People. Wilson acknowledged, according to Richard Hofstadter, that everything that he wrote on the interpretation of American history came from Turner. Wish advised, however, that not even the generous application of Turner's ideas could "save Wilson's historical writings from mediocrity."[7]

Several historians have found influences from the Frontier thesis in the debates over the wisdom of the New Deal. Merle Curti explained that Franklin Roosevelt justified social services on the grounds that they were to replace the earlier equal opportunities that existed on the frontier. And, Roosevelt's opponents countered that this sort of collectivism was in conflict with America's frontier heritage of individualism and self reliance.[8] Williams saw the NIRA and AAA as legislative measures which were based on the idea that the frontier had disappeared.[9] In giving a rationale for New Deal measures, Roosevelt was quoted: "Our frontier

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[6] Ibid., 388.

[7] Harvey Wish, The American Historian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 185.

[8] Merle Curti, "Frederick Jackson Turner," Wisconsin Witness to Frederick Jackson Turner, comp. O. Lawrence Burnette, Jr. (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1961), 193.

[9] Williams, 389.

has long been reached, and there is practically no more free land. . . . There is no safety valve in the form of a Western prairie."[10]

The sophisticated debunkers of the 1920's accepted the Turner thesis and assigned it a prominent place--along with puritanism, pragmatism, and the commercial spirit--among the forces that had corrupted American culture. It was even held responsible, by Van Wyck Brooks, "for barbarizing and distorting Mark Twain's genius."[11]

The Cold War struggles have not escaped the influence of the thesis. One of Truman's major foreign policy speeches was entitled, "The American Frontier." The Truman Doctrine, according to Williams, was a statement that America's security and well being depended on "the successful execution of America's unique mission to defend and extend the frontier of democracy throughout the world."[12]

A continuing engrossment with the frontier heritage was seen in the late President Kennedy's program for America, The New Frontier. There is a popular affection for the frontier which is expressed by including the term in the name of all sorts of new programs, developments, and products. There are new frontiers in science and new frontiers of space,

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[10]Richard Hofstadter, "Turner and the Frontier Myth," American Scholar, XVIII (Autumn, 1949), 436.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Williams, 392.

the Southwest is a new industrial frontier, and the advertisers have many products which are on the new frontier of their kind.

As indicated above, a remarkable aspect of the controversy over the validity of the frontier thesis was the small amount of criticism it evoked in the first thirty years of its existence. Frederick Paxon suggested that it was almost without precedent that such a fundamental new philosophy could be accepted without resistance.[13] This oversight on the part of American historians was corrected in the thirty years after Turner's death.[14]

Fulmer Mood, in his excellent biographic essay on Turner, emphasized Turner's devotion to the concept of democracy. This was illustrated in Turner's 1884 commencement oration at the University of Wisconsin which was concerned with the democratic legacy. In his university extension work, and his attitude toward his survey courses in American history which were introduced by the statement: "particular attention will be paid to those . . . topics best suited to promote intelligent performance of the duties of citizenship."[15]

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[13]Frederick L. Paxon, "A Generation of the Frontier Hypothesis," Pacific Historical Review, II (1933), 45.

[14]For a catalog of criticisms beyond the scope of this paper the reader should examine Gene M. Gressley, "The Turner Thesis--A Problem in Historiography," Agricultural History, XXXIII (October, 1958).

[15]Fulmer Mood, "The Development of Frederick Jackson Turner as a Historical Thinker," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXIV (1943), 294.

Perhaps Turner's experience in the Portage community, his "rebellion" against the "germ theory" and his in depth examination of American history led him to believe American democracy to be a legacy of the frontier experience. According to Turner, "the most important effect of the frontier has been the promotion of democracy here and in Europe."[16] In 1920 he wrote:

> American democracy was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the Susan Constant to Virginia nor in the Mayflower to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier. Not the constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people, made the democratic type of society in America for three centuries while it occupied its empire.[17]

In 1934 Benjamin Wright began the assault on Turner's viewpoints that the frontier was the cradle of American democracy. Wright concluded that the Westerners were imitative, not creative, in their choice of political institutions at both the state and local level.[18]

Wright's objections can be summarized as follows:[19]

1. The written constitution, its length, scope, method of adoption and amendment process was copied from the East.

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[16]Paxon, 47.

[17]Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1921), 293.

[18]Benjamin F. Wright, Jr., "Political Institutions and the Frontier," Sources of Culture in the Middle West, ed. Dixon Ryan Fox (New York: Appleton Century Company, Inc., 1934).

[19]Ibid., 35-39.

2. Western bills of rights represented no genuine change in political ideals.

3. Forms of government including the "cumbersome bicameral municipal council crossed the Alleghenies."

4. Western states secured no broader suffrage than attained in several of the eastern states, particularly Pennsylvania in 1776.

5. Western states did tend to have a more democratic process in minimum qualifications for office holding.

Rather than more democratic political institutions developing in the West, Wright saw temporary adjustments of institutions to meet the needs of primitive living, and pointed out that the primitive frontier era was of short duration. Turner's findings also were faulty, according to Wright, because he generalized from the Middle West experience. In Louisiana, free land resulted not in democracy but in slavery. In Utah, it produced oligarchy, and the hacienda system in parts of the Southwest. Wright asks what are we to gain except misunderstanding, "by an ungracious exclusion of Locke and Milton and Montequieu . . . of Adams, Jefferson, Otis, Paine, and Madison from a share of the credit"?[20]

George Pierson, writing in 1942, gave a testimonial to the historians' debt to the Turner Theory: ". . . it would seem small-minded to forget or to depreciate the inspiration that these essays originally offered to

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[20] Ibid., 36.

historians."[21] He then heaped on the criticisms:[22]

1. Turner never stated his interpretations clearly and succinctly. He failed to give proof or even a sufficient quantity of evidence.

2. He failed to give sufficient consideration to the diversity of opinion on the frontier. The frontiersmen supported Henry Clay, an apostle of the National bank, but they also supported Andrew Jackson, "whose views on the banks were almost unprintable."

3. Turner's use of the term frontier is too broad to have meaning. It is used for an area, population, a process, as well as for natural resources.[23]

4. He failed to show that other frontiers result in a similar move toward democracy.

5. He failed to give sufficient emphasis to the importance of commerce in the development of 19th century America.

6. Turner was too much of a geographical determinist. He failed to give sufficient responsibility to human origins and peculiarities in the development of unique American characteristics.

Pierson found a great deal of internal inconsistencies in the Turner hypothesis. Turner's frontier led to nationalism and to sectionalism; the frontier was an area of innovation but the same poorly adapted solutions were tried over and over, the problem of distributing land was a good example; the

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[21]George W. Pierson, "The Frontier and American Institutions," New England Quarterly, XV (June, 1942), 247.

[22]Ibid., 238-252.

[23]According to Fulmer Mood, Turner used the term "land" as did the economists of his day. Francis Walker in his Political Economy meant by "land" not only areable land but also pasture, timberlands, water privileges, building lots, mining properties, and wood lots. Mood, 323. See also Hofstadter, 438.

frontier is materialistic and yet the frontier experience led to idealism.

Carlton Hayes, writing in 1946, was particularly concerned that in giving the American frontier credit for the growth of democracy we had minimized our ties of kinship with the rest of the world and particularly with Europe. Writing at the beginning of the Cold War, he was, perhaps, overly fearful of a return to isolationism and super-nationalism. He held the Turner thesis responsible for obscuring the fact that our language, religion, culture and concepts of liberty and constitutional government are a part of the common heritage of Europe.[24] He pointed out that the founding fathers knew and made great use of their knowledge of European civilization in framing basic documents of government.

He suggested that the early American statesmen and particularly the diplomats provided for independence and a growth of democracy as a result of realistic foreign policies based on intimate knowledge of the relationship between the United States and Europe.[25] Actually, according to Hayes, all European nations have experienced a frontier which has led to distinctiveness, but this has not resulted in lasting effects which destroyed their common European culture.[26]

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[24]Carlton J. H. Hayes, "The American Frontier--Frontier of What?" American Historical Review, LI (January, 1946), 204-205.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., 207.

Hayes examined a number of cultural entities that western nations hold in common including the Greco-Roman heritage and the Judeo-Christian "traditions of individualism, of limitations on the state, of social responsibility, of revolt and revolution."[27]

Richard Hofstadter also found fault with democracies' origins on the frontier. "Turner's dictum, "American democracy came out of the American forest," proved to be a questionable improvement upon the notion of his predecessors that it came out of the German forest."[28] He suggested that Jeffersonian and Jacksonian upsurges of democracy can be better understood in terms of social classes than in terms of conflicts between East and West. He pointed out that Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in his Age of Jackson not only did not use the frontier thesis in explaining Jacksonian democracy, but gave a crucial role to the eastern supporters of Jackson.[29]

Like Hayes, Wright, and other critics, he asked why the frontier experience did not operate to establish democracy on other frontiers.[30] A. L. Burt answered this objection by looking at the Turner thesis at work on the frontiers

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[27] Ibid., 208-209.

[28] Richard Hofstadter, "Turner and the Frontier Myth," American Scholar, XVIII (Autumn, 1949), 438.

[29] Ibid., 439.

[30] Ibid., 438.

of New France, Australia, and New Zealand. He reviewed the arguments of Benjamin Wright who suggested that the move toward democracy was not a part of the French experience in Canada.[31] Instead, Wright saw feudalism, theocracy, and autocracy adjacent to the British colonies. Here, according to Wright, we see "the impotence of the frontier to emancipate the individual."[32] This is a "superficial contradiction" according to Burt, and it should have been answered immediately. Turner could plead infirmity of age, according to Burt, but his disciples "might be charged with infirmity of mind."[33] Rather than a feudalistic society, Burt found that the French developed the same sturdy independence of the individual that we find in the frontiersman further south, in spite of the difference in their social and institutional backgrounds.[34] The coureur de bois invaded the interior of America and gave to New France "a priceless boom--the spirit of liberty."[35] The feudalistic seignorial system was completely altered by the new world environment. The obligations

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[31]Burt generalized from Wright's article "American Democracy and the Frontier," Yale Review, XX (Winter, 1931).

[32]A. L. Burt, "If Turner Had Looked At Canada, Australia, and New Zealand When He Wrote About the West," The Frontier in Perspective, ed. Walker D. Wyman & Clifton Droeber (1957), 60.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., 61.

[35]Ibid., 62.

of the habitant were few and it was ". . . not uncommon for the lord of the manor, his wife, and his daughters to toil together in the fields of the French colonies. Such was the leveling influence of frontier life."[36] Even his name reflected his frontier spirit, according to Burt; technically a censitaire, the farmers of New France refused this label of servility and were called habitants. "North American conditions had emancipated him from feudal bondage!"[37] Australia's experience was different largely because physical geography did not allow for small yeoman farmers.[38] New Zealand, on the other hand, had what Australia lacked, a combination of soil and climate that provided an environment for agricultural settlements throughout the country, so that a democratic pattern close to that of the United States was developed.[39]

On the promotion of democracy by the frontier, Frederick Paxon, a historian so often in Turner's corner, tended to agree. "I am disposed to believe that this is sound, and that whatever influence the frontier had had worked in this direction."[40] Paxon, however, could not suggest that the

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[36] Ibid., 63.

[37] Ibid., 64.

[38] Ibid., 75.

[39] Ibid., 76.

[40] Paxon, 47.

frontier was the sole or even the principle cause of the development of our present democracy. He pointed out that the non-frontier countries have also made steady progress toward the democratic idea and that it seems to go hand in hand with the industrial revolution. Democratic social legislation to protect the individual in an industrial society has been more rapid in the cabinet governments of Europe according to Paxon. The frontier contributed what he called an inverted democratization, "that worked by leveling the exceptional man down, rather than by lifting the common man up."[41] He made the observation that American democratic liberals "have as often been the grandsons of the eastern rich as the offsprings of the proletarian fringes of our society."[42]

One of the most interesting attempts to test the Frontier thesis in practice was made by Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick who reported their findings in the Political Science Quarterly in 1954. The authors first used two housing projects established by the Federal Housing Administration, Hilltown and Craftown. Craftown was fairly well organized and constructed by the federal government. There were no particular problems that motivated cooperative effort on the part of the residents. Hilltown, however, went through

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[41] Ibid., 48.

[42] Ibid.

a time of troubles. In the first place the construction of the housing was slovenly; a great deal of work was needed to keep the units livable. There were no schools, churches, grocery stores, or a fire or police department. The area was gerrymandered so that the township where the housing project was located was without a local government.[43] The inhabitants of the project formed a number of committees and associations, and a township board was set up. Volunteer police and fire departments as well as a local court were established. The people organized a cooperative store, an ambulance squad, and a nursery child care center. Pressure was applied on the bus company and the state government to improve transportation, streets, and schools.[44] The result was wide participation, a sense of individual competency, and a shared tradition in the community. The intensity of the time of troubles tended to link the "pioneers" and later-comers together.[45] The authors suggested that Turner has stated the undeniable fact--that an organic connection exists between American democracy and the American frontier."[46] His failure was in not establishing a "conceptual framework" to test his hypothesis.[47]

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[43]Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier," Part I, Political Science Quarterly, LXIX (1954), 327.

[44]Ibid., 328.

[45]Ibid., 329.

[46]Ibid., 330.

[47]Ibid.

The authors proposed such a framework. The necessities, as they developed them, were a period of problem-solving, a homogeneous population, and a lack of structure for leadership.[48] They believed that these factors were present on the frontier and that there were the same democratic results. That is, there was wide-spread meaningful participation, awareness of community problems, and a sense of personal competency.[49]

Earl Pomeroy both criticized and challenged writers of western history. He stated that they have traditionally elevated a "romantic fascination" with the West to a social science.[50]

He was critical of their analysis of the effects of the frontier environment on western institutions and society. He suggested that they choose the time and place which verified their theses, and as a result they have created their own West. They have tended to ignore western cities and other conditions or situations which did not reinforce their stereotypes; rather than the homogeniuty described by some western historians, Pomeroy declared that "different Wests often lived side by side on the same street."[51] He argued

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 335.

[50] Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLI (1955), 580.

[51] Ibid., 582.

that western historians have too often uncritically relied on travelers' accounts which have tended to describe the colorful, the preposterous and low comedy on the frontier. One problem with using these accounts as source material, according to Pomeroy, was that the travelers knew the popularity of earlier accounts and they often reinforced the stereotypes in order to gain an audience.[52] Rather than radical and innovative, Pomeroy pictured the West as basically conservative: ". . . most attempts to illustrate the western spirit by referring to large and purposeful institutional innovations are likely to break down."[53]

Pomeroy challenged the western historian to explain the current West which is much more like the East than it was when Turner wrote and to enlarge his outlook to use the materials from fields other than history. He also urged more study in particular areas of western history, including education.

This study was, in part, a response to the urgings of historians such as Earl Pomeroy, Ray Billington, Merle Curti, and, indeed, Turner himself in "Problems in American History" to continue to test the Turner Hypothesis by examining various regions and institutions in the light of that theory. Curti cautioned that "less is to be gained by further

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[52] Ibid., 595-596.

[53] Ibid., 583.

analysis of Turner's brilliant and far-ranging but often ambiguous presentations than by patient and careful study of particular frontier areas in the light of the investigator's interpretation of Turner's theory."[54] Pomeroy appealed for "a fuller story of western literacy and education, confined within neither the buffoonery of Hoosier Schoolmaster types nor the desiccated annalistic and eulogistic framework of most college histories."[55] Billington was quoted above on the third generation of historians of the thesis: "Scholars in a variety of fields are increasingly showing a willingness to test aspects of the thesis, rather than accept or condemn it as a whole."[56]

The purpose of this study was to expand the continuing critical inquiry into the Turner Hypothesis by exploring the significance of the frontier experience on the development and practices of America's public schools. This study examined the effects of the social and physical environment of the West on education, described the degree to which frontier schools reflected western life and ideas, recounted the effect of European and eastern influences, and analyzed the receptivity of frontier schools to innovation. The scope of the study was limited, for the most part, to the Old Northwest,

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[54]Merle Curti, The Making of an American Community (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1959), 2.

[55]Pomeroy, 593.

[56]Billington, xii.

and, in order to better see the contrast between settlers largely from the Northeast and the South, to Missouri and Kansas.

There have been few systematic efforts to analyze the development of schools on the frontier in terms of the frontier thesis. The best known general history of the development of education in the United States, which was published in 1919 when the frontier thesis was becoming the central one among American historians, does not mention Turner or the frontier thesis.[57] Later histories of education relate the frontier thesis to the development of education in the West in a summary manner if at all.[58] The authors of state histories of education, even those concerned with the western states, have chosen not to make their analysis in terms of the frontier thesis. Even such an excellent state educational history as that of Jorgenson's, in which a chapter is devoted to "Educational Thought on the Frontier," did not deal directly with the influence of the social and physical

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[57]Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919).

[58]True of such popular textbooks as R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953); Newton Edwards and Herman G. Richey, The School in the American Social Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963); H. G. Good, A History of American Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956); and Adolphe E. Meyer, An Educational History of the American People (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957).

environment of the frontier on educational thought, nor was the Turner thesis mentioned.[59]

Turner took a limited cognizance of the effect of the frontier on education and presented a view more balanced than that of some of his followers. He commented on the limited educational and cultural opportunities among the forest "choppers" and hunters, but cautioned that throughout the West there were centers of enlightenment and refinement.[60] He recognized that even under the most limited pioneer conditions, influences were present from the westward moving products of the New England culture, German and other immigrant intellectuals and artists, and even Southerners representing the best of their civilization. He argued that the ratio of newspapers and periodicals to the population in the North Central States, which was about the same as in Massachusetts and higher than in New York, was evidence of the intellectual interest and literacy of the rural Westerner.[61]

Turner was proud of the educational achievements of the frontiersman in his native Middle West. He submitted

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[59]Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956).

[60]Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Children of the Pioneers," The Significance of Sections in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932), 271.

[61]Frederick Jackson Turner, "Contribution of the West to American Democracy," The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920). And The United States, 1830-1850: The Nation and its Sections (New York: Peter Smith, 1950), 342.

that the establishment of a system of common schools was one of the pioneers' most significant accomplishments. The land grants for education were important, according to Turner, but more important was the settler's, especially the New England settler's, belief in the value of education. As a result of that commitment, the Middle West had caught the New England States and the Middle States in both expenditures for education and in school population. He wrote in 1903, that the system of public schools in the West had produced a "larger single body of intelligent plain people" than anywhere else in the world.[62]

Turner found the schools in the Middle West to be in accord with his hypothesis in terms of democratization which resulted from the frontier experience. He credited the system of public education with providing for vertical mobility among the intellectually able to a greater degree than even the medieval Church. He described the system as a "magnificent piece of machinery for conserving the solidarity and democracy of the nation."[63] He praised the Middle West because "nowhere else has democracy so completely embodied its educational ideals."[64] Turner saw democracy in action in tax supported

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[62]"Contributions of the West," 267; "The Democratic Education of the Middle West," World's Work, III (August, 1903), 3755-3756.

[63]"Democratic Education," 3754.

[64]Ibid.

education from the lower common schools through the university which helped to give the same experiences to all classes of society. One of the major differences between education in the Northeast and in the Middle West, according to Turner, was that in the Northeast the sons and daughters of the wealthy were sent to privately endowed academies which accentuated distinction among the social classes while in the Middle West children of all classes tended to attend the public high school. As further evidence of the western democratic spirit in education, he discussed the example of Oberlin which admitted both Blacks and women in the antebellum period.[65]

A second aspect of his hypothesis which Turner treated, to a limited degree, was the relationship between innovation in education and the frontier. He recognized that the classical studies remained the core of the curriculum in western secondary and higher education, but believed that the practical interest of the West asserted itself in the manual labor movement and in the emphasis on science, especially the applied sciences. He expressed little doubt but that the classical studies and humanities had "suffered somewhat by the dominant practical interest of the West."[66] He further suggested that the movement across the country toward greater

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[65] The United States: 1830-1850, 337.

[66] "Democratic Education," 3758.

emphasis on professional training of all kinds in the universities came largely "from the land of the pioneers, the democratic states of the Middle West."[67]

Allen O. Hansen's monograph on the College of Teachers was a pioneer venture in interpreting the educational experience of the West in terms of the Turner thesis. Hansen used Turner's five stages of frontier life in his description of frontier education. Each of the types of frontiersman had his own attitude concerning education which suggested the heterogeneous nature of the West. The most indifferent group toward education, according to Hansen, was the migratory hunters and herders. Hansen's monograph is concerned largely with the last--the stage of scientific agriculture and manufacturing, as this was the stage within which the College of Professional Teachers operated.[68]

Hansen saw the inventiveness and resourcefulness of the West as described by Turner. The West, unlike the East, was not fixed in habit, custom, or institution. Indeed, the dominant spirit in education, according to Hansen, was one of progress. The western educational leaders wanted to create a new, more distinctively American education.[69]

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[67]"Pioneer Ideals and the State University," The Frontier in American History, 283.

[68]Allen Oscar Hansen, Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley, Journal of Educational Research Monograph, ed. B. R. Buchingham, No. 5 (Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill., 1923), 7, 21, and 45.

[69]Ibid., 8, 59, and 66.

One of Hansen's themes was that the western educator was bent on bringing order to the excessively individualistic attitude which had been created by the frontier environment. They wanted to develop schools which would engage in "nation building." The innovative spirit of the Westerner coupled with his desire to welcome the challenge of a rapidly expanding democracy, and yet bring order and a sense of unity to the section, resulted in a concern with curriculum reconstruction.[70]

The members of the College of Teachers were men of action, as was characteristic of the West. They felt free to develop a set of objectives for the schools, and to demand standardization which required a state system of education. Hansen credited the College of Teachers with constructing a curriculum which challenged the old classical training. In spite of impediments to change, including the prevailing concept of faculty psychology, the practical demands of life in the West, in Hansen's view, provided a powerful incentive for change to a more scientific and experimental attitude in school curriculum and methodology.[71]

Merle Curti, a former graduate student of Turner's and until his recent retirement, Frederick Jackson Turner

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[70] Ibid., 39.

[71] Ibid., 17, 54, and 94. The debate between the advocates of the classical curriculum and a more utilitarian course of study was covered in Chapter V.

Professor of History in the University of Wisconsin, interpreted the western educational experience in terms of the frontier thesis. In The Social Ideas of American Educators, first published in 1935, the West was described as sectionally self-conscious. It demanded a school system which was expressive of its "peculiar spirit." The Westerner, according to Curti, insisted on a democratic, universally inclusive, tax-supported school system which was responsive to the practical and utilitarian needs and values of his society.[72]

An interest in the practical application of science in the curriculum, in the Pestalozzian methods because of their "spontaniety and concreteness," and in textbooks better suited than the "effete and undemocratic" eastern ones to the western character were used as evidence by Curti of the Westerner's desire to institute an education better suited to his needs.[73] As suggested by the enthusiasm for Pestalozzian pedagogy among some western educational leaders, an interest in finding an educational system suited to western circumstances stimulated an interest in new educational ideas. Examples given by Curti were the interest in the western states in the Stowe report on the Prussian system which had

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[72]Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1963), 64-65.

[73]Ibid., 65-66.

been commissioned by the Ohio Legislature in 1836, and the New Harmony experiment in Indiana.[74]

Curti recognized, however, the diversity in motivation and attitude among the frontiersmen. The ideals expressed by educational leaders were frequently not realized: migratory frontiersmen in the first stage of settlement, especially, often had an anti-education attitude, and the economic plight of the frontiersman sometimes motivated opposition to tax-supported schools. In addition, the grandiose programs for education in the West were sometimes propaganda used to attract settlers.[75] Turner also made this point: "The legislature of Iowa enacted a very liberal and advanced school law, which, however, was intended rather to attract immigration than to be enforced.[76]

In The Making of an American Community, Curti used Trempealeau County, Wisconsin as a case study to test his interpretation of the Turner thesis as it related to the connection between democracy and the frontier.[77] Trempealeau County's native born population was largely from New England and the Middle Atlantic states, but most settlers in the period to which the concentrated study was given, the 1860's and 1870's, were foreign-born.

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 65-68.

[76] "The United States, 1830-1850," 337.

[77] Curti, The Making of an American Community.

In general, Curti found that the history of the County supported the Turner thesis. There was a democratic sentiment that was expressed in community helpfulness for common goals, in a high degree of social equality even between the foreign-born and a budding social elite, and in an attitude that the unlettered man of practical experience was as valuable to the community as the products of book learning.[78]

Curti devoted a chapter to "Educational and Cultural Opportunities" in the County. He found that educational interests were often outweighed by the material and by the pressing practical problems of the frontier.[79] Educational conditions were, during the pioneer period extremely poor, but, according to Curti, conditions as bad existed in some eastern states, and the frontier was not entirely to blame.[80]

In his examination of educational opportunities, Curti was particularly concerned with his interpretation of Turner's theory which suggested that there would be inequality in school attendance between different economic and national groups at the beginning, but if the frontier led toward equality of opportunity, these differences would become less pronounced as time went on. From his study of the

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[78] Ibid., 139.

[79] Ibid., 383-386.

[80] Ibid., 387-389.

school documents, he found that there were differences in school attendance based on occupation, income, distance from school, residence (rural or urban), home land of the immigrant, and the language spoken in the home. In general, he concluded that there was a positive relationship between the length of residence of a particular group in the County and the percentage of children attending school from that group.[81]

He suggested that democracy existed in the school as educational opportunities, such as existed, were open to all regardless of class or nativity. The educational democracy in Trempealeau stretched as far as the local "university." Galesville University, which was never more than a secondary academy, was open to everyone, regardless of sex, national origins, or degree of previous preparation.[82]

Walter Prescott Webb saw the frontier as the major force in developing the institutions of the Occidental World; education, of course, was not excepted. The building of "the little red school house" by the local community of the West was used by Webb as an example of the democratic, individualistic, and independent institutions which developed in the frontier environment, and which have disappeared with the frontier to be replaced by a less democratic corporate

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[81] Ibid., 391-404.

[82] Ibid., 404-409.

structure.[83] Webb argued that the West acted as a great windfall to education, as it did in so many other areas because of its wealth in the form of land. Beginning with the states formed from the Northwest Territory, at least one section of land from each township was set aside to support education. This, plus the additional land grants in the nineteenth century, according to Webb, resulted in public education becoming a possibility. It provided a practical means to support a system of free schools as the public lands, ultimately 1.85 billion acres, provided for a school subsidy without imposing taxes--at least for a time.[84]

Two cultural historians, Louis Wright and Arthur Moore, differed widely on the effect of the frontier on education. Arthur Moore, in his study of frontier Kentucky, found that the western environment acted as a corrosive on the imported culture. Education on the frontier suffered, according to Moore, not only because of limitations in taxable resources, but because the West had declared its cultural independence from the common cultural heritage of the East and Europe.[85] In examining the anti-intellectual bias of the pioneer in western legends and literature, Moore found

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[83]Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), 287-288.

[84]Ibid., 393-405.

[85]Arthur K. Moore, The Frontier Mind (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1957), 240-241.

a flavor of Rousseau and the enlightenment about the frontiersman. He was a child of nature, who found wisdom by the study of nature rather than through scholarship. Moore used as an example the romantic novels on the legendary Kentuckian by Emerson Bennett, who contrasted the cultured, sentimental, over-refined, and incompetent scholar with the noble illiterate. Bennett had one of his characters of the latter variety say: "I spect picturs and poetry is well enough in thar places, in some old finiky settlement, whar they sleep in featherbes and git skeered at thar shadders; but out yere thery're no more use nor wings is to tadpoles."[86]

A fear of political conservatism and aristocracy among the Westerners, for whom political liberalism and a leveling quality were cardinal principles, may also have played a role in the disdain for schooling. The champions of education, according to Moore, were too often tainted with the badge of the aristocracy.[87]

Wright, on the other hand, has been one of the chief proponents of the interpretation that the Anglo-Saxon tradition, rather than the frontier experience, was the most important element in the development of the American culture. He insisted that the struggle of the pioneers in the wilderness was to "reproduce the best of an older culture which the

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[86] Ibid., 218-219.

[87] Ibid., 234-236.

settlers in a new country remembered and treasured."[88] He recognized the impact of the primitive and the illiterate on the frontier education, but argued that a numerical minority was successful in maintaining the classical tradition. The schools, according to Wright, "were potent instruments in transmitting to the frontier the older cultural traditions of the Anglo-Saxon Eastern seaboard."[89] The desire for duplication rather than originality, especially of the New England experience was evident in the early log colleges of the 18th Century where Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric and theology formed the basis of the curriculum and was little changed one hundred and fifty years later along the Pacific Coast.[90]

Educational historian, Kenneth Lottick, in a number of publications argued that the Turner thesis did not apply to the settlement of the Western Reserve or to Ohio generally. Rather, the persistence of New England traits or characteristics in the Western Reserve resulted in it being more New

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[88]Louis B. Wright, Culture on the Moving Frontier (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), preface.

[89]Ibid., 59 and 223.

[90]Ibid., 42 and 153.

England than New England itself.[91] The movement of the population in that area was in the ordered patterns of the New England township, not in the waves of settlement pictured by Turner.[92] The physical appearance of the towns from the Commons to the churches and the architecture of buildings, public and private, were in the image of old New England. The reproduction of New England in the West with its Puritan values was "a far cry from the dictates of the rough and ready, materialistic, and transforming frontier as viewed by Frederick Jackson Turner."[93]

According to Lottick, the academy movement, the development of the high school, the popularity of the teachers' institutes, the spread of seminaries and normal schools, the use of school lands for the support of education, the idea of state-wide systems of taxation to support a state system of education, and a "belief in formal education as a necessity for the preservation of the social order" in Ohio all

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[91]This theme is developed by Lottic in his doctoral dissertation at Harvard: "A History of the Development of Education in Western Reserve," 1951, which was published in 1964 by the Royal Publishing Company of Dallas. See also "Curricular Offerings in the Early High Schools in Ohio, The High School Journal, XXXI (March-April, 1948); "New England Transplanted," Social Studies, IL (October, 1958); "Culture Transplantation in the Connecticut Reserve," Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, Bulletin, XVII (1959); and "The Western Reserve and the Frontier Thesis," Ohio Historical Quarterly, LXX (1961).

[92]"New England Transplanted," 174.

[93]"The Western Reserve and The Frontier Thesis," 53-57.

had precedents in the educational achievements of old New England; they were not indigenous "as Turner would have us think."[94]

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[94] Ibid., 49, and "Curricular Offerings," 62.

CHAPTER II

INTELLECTUAL AND LITERARY ACTIVITY ON THE FRONTIER

The nature and quality of educational institutions which develop in a society, especially in one which is pluralistic and democratic, reflect the spirit and aspirations of that society. Before an examination of education on the middle western frontier is undertaken, a review of the cultural milieu in which the schools evolved is in order.

In Turner's view, the frontier environment represented a "gate of escape" from the past. The notions of Europe and the East gave way to new intellectual traits which were more practical, materialistic, and coarse, and less literary and aesthetic. He pictured a people too occupied with the practical pursuits of subduing a wilderness and providing for the physical necessities of life to concern themselves with literature and the arts.[1]

The amount and quality of literary activity and intellectual interests on the frontier have been concealed by two legends concerning the frontiersman. One depicted him

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[1]Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 37 and 38. And Frederick Jackson Turner, The United States, 1830-1850 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1935), 347.

as the noble savage of Rousseau. In the works of Chateaubriand, Blake, Byron, and to some extent, Alexis de Tocqueville, the frontiersman was obscured by a romantic haze in which he, free from the restraints of society, became an innocent and natural child in a primeval wilderness.[2] The other picture of him, as misleading and less complimentary, was painted by egocentric, and often hostile, Easterners and Europeans who had little but contempt for the illiterate and dirty backwoodsman.

Generalizations concerning the ignorance and lack of interest in education among the frontiersman stemmed, in large part, from the accounts of foreign travelers to the West. Those travelers were not always perceptive of the real desires and ambitions of the settlers, and as suggested in the previous chapter, they may have been prone, on occasion, to cater to the demand for colorful stories and to the prejudices of their readers. James Flint, after commenting on the superstitions of the inhabitants of Ohio, wrote:

> A suspicion arises that the culture of the mind is much neglected, but unfortunately the position is established by . . . direct evidence. During my very short stay in this place, I have seen persons applying to others to read the addresses on packages of goods, or letters, and the sign-boards of merchants.[3]

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[2]Ralph Leslie Rusk, The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), 2-5.

[3]James Flint, Flint's Letters from America, 1818-1820, Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, IX (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 153.

William Faux in his visit to Ohio at about the same time quoted one of the local inhabitants:

> There is more ignorance, sir, in the state of Ohio than in any other part of the union. Not many are able to write their names, and in the thinly settled parts of Kentucky, ten dollars will procure you the life and blood of any man. Negroes, you see, are here in Ohio equal, and placed at the same table with whites. I knew a party of whites who last year in Kentucky roasted to death, before a large log fire, one of their friends, because he refused to drink. . . . No legal inquiry took place, nor indeed, ever takes place amongst Rowdies, as the back-woodsmen are called.[4]

A Baptist missionary from New England found conditions as bad on the frontier settlements of Illinois and Missouri. He complained that the people "were stupid, listless and apparently indifferent to everything." He lamented that only a few could read and the "name of a single missionary on earth" was unknown to them. Yet no schools had been established and a "half-savage life appeared to be their choice."[5]

In tracing the roots of anti-intellectualism in the United States, twentieth century historians have not ignored descriptions such as those above. Merle Curti maintained that anti-intellectualism increased in the West, and that the frontier experience was one of the factors most closely associated with that movement. He believed that the Westerner acknowledged that a little learning of a practical nature was

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[4]William Faux, Memorable Days in America Being a Journal of a Tour to the United States, 1823, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, XI (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 178.

[5]Rufus Babcock, (ed.), Forty Years of Frontier Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck, D.D., Reprinted by the University of Southern Illinois Press, 1965, 122.

necessary, but asserted that the whole folklore of the frontier disparaged learning and glorified folk heroes of action and physical power such as Mike Fink, Daniel Boone, and Paul Bunyon.[6] Richard Hofstadter, perhaps the best known student of the phenomenon, in Anti-Intellectualism In American Life, did not deal directly with the influence of the frontier experience among the numerous and interrelated causes of that characteristic. He did suggest, however, that the settlement of the West as generation after generation threw off the trappings of civilization did add a quality of primitiveness to American life which was closely allied to the growth and development of anti-intellectualism.[7] He also pointed to examples in which a western identification with its accompanying symbols of virility and action, as opposed to bookishness and learning, aided candidates for public office. Andrew Jackson, a hero of the West, was aided by the anti-intellectual sentiment in the contest between

> John Quincy Adams who can write
> And Andrew Jackson who can fight.[8]

And a later politician, Theodore Roosevelt, who had at least some claim to intellectualism, was aided in gaining public

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[6]Merle Curti, "Intellectual and Other People," American Historical Review, LX (January, 1955), 263-264, and 270.

[7]Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Vintage Edition, 1966), 49.

[8]Ibid., 159-160.

in education and in the arts, often demonstrated great resentment of generalizations such as the one above. John Foote argued that foreigners misrepresented the devotion of his countrymen to the "almighty dollar," and that they had so constantly lamented that stain on the national character that the people themselves believed it. He argued that although that form of idolatry existed in all civilized countries, it was less prevalent in America than elsewhere.[12] But, the effort among pioneer families to provide for the physical necessities of life was exhausting and the scarcity of money required them to be cautious about supporting institutions, including education, which upset the precarious balance of their economic lives. The practical demand for survival resulted in an attitude among many frontiersmen that the knowledge of greatest value was that which helped to create "a plentiful supply of the necessities of life."[13] Parents in the midst of the struggle to feed their families not surprisingly found a rifle more useful than a pen and it a greater accomplishment "to be able to scalp a squirrel at one hundred paces than to read the natural history of the animal in the picture book."[14]

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[12]John P. Foote, The Schools of Cincinnati, and Its Vicinity (Cincinnati: C. F. Bradly, 1855), 11.

[13]Alexander Majors, Seventy Years on the Frontier (Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company, 1893), 28.

[14]C. C. Carter, "Frontier Sketches: The Schoolmaster," Illinois State Historical Society, XXXII (June, 1939), 208.

The man who had learned from books was considered by the Westerner to be less able to wrestle with the difficulties of pioneer life than the man who could actually conquer those problems by knowledge gained from practical experience.[15] Logan Esarey called those who best possessed the knowledge and skills to farm under the frontier conditions, "The Pioneer Aristocracy," and suggested that they were as expert in their field as any other aristocracy of record. They furnished the leadership for and "represented the best in pioneer society."[16] The pioneer aristocrats were "loud and boastful" Jacksonian Democrats and were devotees of the protestant camp meeting religions of the assorted varieties. They supported education according to their own lights, but were suspicious of "book larnin" that went much further than the three R's. Craftiness and immorality seemed to be too often related, in their eyes, with literary culture.[17]

The pioneer aristocracy never supported the schools in spite of expressions of appreciation of education, according to Esarey, because of the exotic, classical atmosphere of the seminaries, academies, and colleges which was out of place on the frontier. Education did not attract "their

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[15]Edwin Godkin, "Aristocratic Opinions of Democracy," North American Review (January, 1865), 218.

[16]Logan Esarey, "The Pioneer Aristocracy," Indiana Magazine of History, XIII (1917), 271.

[17]Ibid., 275-276.

earnest support because none ever cherished their ideals or attempted to teach their science, philosophy or skill."[18] And, those who attempted to carry the classics to the frontier in the academies and seminaries were occasionally subjected not only to the ill will and spite of the frontiersman, but were threatened with physical violence as well: "thar goes that darn'd high larn'd but what gits nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents of the people's eddekashin money for larnin ristekrats sons high flown words--gimme that 'are stone and I'll do for him."[19]

The "noble savage," the illiterate corn pone and bear eating backwoodsman, and the "pioneer aristocracy" as frontier types failed to suggest the diversity among the people who populated the middle western frontier. The population was anything but homogeneous; it included clergymen and prostitutes, speculators and farmers, drummers and butchers. There were Blacks who had escaped through the underground railroad, a German Hebrew scholar who lived in a rude hut with his books and his Stradivarius violin, and a number of renowned European scientists at the colony in New Harmony. The three major streams were the New Englanders flowing down the "Congregational River"; Southerners, many of them second

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[18] Ibid., 273.

[19] Baynard R. Hall, The New Purchase or, Seven and a Half Years in the Far West, 1843, ed. James Albert Woodburn, Indiana Centennial Edition (Princeton University Press, 1916), 325.

or third generation frontiersmen from Kentucky and Tennessee, who moved into the river valleys of the Old Northwest and across Missouri into eastern Kansas; and European immigrants who brought with them multifarious languages and backgrounds.

Turner saw the diversity and the antagonism among the "bowie knife Southerners," "cow-milking Yankee Puritans," "beer-drinking Germans," and "wild Irishmen" that populated the middle western frontier.[20] He believed assimilation, or better, the creation of a new type, the American pioneer, resulted from the social intercourse among the various groups on the frontier. He recognized, however, that the New Englanders carried men, "institutions, and ideas into regions which far excelled the area from which they came, in size, in productiveness, and ultimately, in political influence."[21] He contrasted the Yankee community spirit with the Southerners' devotion to individualistic democracy, and found in the Middle West that New Englanders' "colonizing land companies, the town, the school, the church, the feeling of local unity, furnished the evidences of this instinct for communities."[22]

The New England character and its institutions did not remain unchanged as New England expanded into the West.

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[20]Turner, The Frontier in American History, 349.

[21]Frederick Jackson Turner, Significance of Sections in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 11.

[22]Turner, The Frontier in American History, 347.

In part, change resulted because those who moved West tended to be the more discontented, the poorer, and the more radical. In addition, a composite character emerged when the New England frontier joined the southern frontier. A new middle western society was produced neither Southern nor Puritan, yet bearing traces of each.[23] The school, church, and township system were compromised. As examples, county forms of local government were generally accepted, the school became coeducational and its classical emphasis modified, the church generally became more liberal and divorced from politics. In spite of some accommodations to frontier conditions, the New Englander helped to check the uncivilizing forces of the frontier.

The New Englanders transplanted to the frontier frequently retained an ethnocentrism which not only caused them to want to hold their culture and institutions, but also to convert others to what they considered their superior virtues. The Yankee was told to "mingle freely and unsuspiciously with his neighbors," and while not sinking his manners to their level, strive to bring up their habits, by successful example, to the New England standard.[24] He was told that exemplifying Yankee discipline to other frontier families was "a sacred

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[23]Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, The Expansion of New England (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 192, 219, 260, and 261.

[24]Richard Lyle Power, Planting Corn Belt Culture (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1953), 16.

duty which parents owe to their children and to society."[25] Teachers who were considering moving from Massachusetts to Indiana were urged to aid their country by helping to develop in the New England fashion "the foundations of the institutions of learning that are springing up throughout this western land."[26] The aggressiveness of the Yankee was not always appreciated by the southern settlers. A Frankfort newspaper man editoralized: "Query--Would it not be proper for the people of the western states to instruct their representatives in Congress to pass some law to prevent the further importation or admission of Yankees, west of the Allegheny."[27]

Descriptions of the exemplary qualities of settlers on the middle western frontier from New England, in contrast with those from the South, began with the early chroniclers of the settlers in Ohio. Jacob Burnet heaped praise on the New Englander for his "good old customs and steady habits." They waited only until after a shelter had been erected for their family before organizing a church and a school which the inhabitants almost to a man sustained, because of their

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[25] Prairie Farmer (April, 1848), 123, quoted in Power, Ibid.

[26] Boston Cultivator (November 27, 1852), 380, quoted in Power, Ibid.

[27] Frankfort (Kentucky) Commentator (March 2, 1820), quoted in James Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture, Ohio Historical Collections, IX (1938), 39.

veneration for "religion, literature, and morality."[28] Gershom Flagg during his trip to southern Ohio in 1816 observed that the inhabitants of that section, who were largely from the southern and middle states, were the "most ignorant people," he had ever seen. But the Vermonter was persuaded that the settlers from Connecticut, who were found largely in the northern part of the state, were "more enlightened."[29] Edmund Flagg saw the virtues of the New Englander in Illinois. Not only was slavery disallowed, but civic improvement and the "universal diffusion of intellectual, moral, and religious culture" formed the grand strategy of the states' public policy.[30] The explanation for the success and virtue of a prosperous farmer in Hamilton County, Ohio, who gave his land to provide an endowment for free schools, was explained by John Foote: "he brought with him the frugal, laborious, temperate and prudent habits" of a New Englander.[31]

The Southerners in the Middle West, on the other hand, have been pictured as undesirable. A recent study of

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[28]Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-Western Territory (New York: Appleton and Co., publishers, 1847), 44.

[29]Letter from Gershom Flagg to Ozariah Flagg, November 12, 1816, ed. Solon Buck, Transaction of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year, 1910. Publication Number 15, 143.

[30]Edmund Flagg, The Far West: or, A Tour Beyond the Mountains, 1836-37, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, XXVI (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906).

[31]John Foote, 13.

education in Indiana described them as poor whites, "frequently descendents of bond servants," and as representatives of "lowest rank of citizens."[32]

Traditionally then, the New Englanders have been pictured as the advocates of enlightened civilization, including good schools, while the Southerners have had the reputation of illiterate rustics and bear-meat eating vulgarians, who were contemptuous of book learning. In part however, what may have been reflected in descriptions such as those above was the northern backgrounds of the chroniclers of the attempts to create a western civilization.

The other major group of settlers on the middle western frontier were the foreign born.[33] Aside from their educational interests and contributions, the immigrants acted as a necessary leven to the often brutally practical and materialistic domestic frontiersman. As just one example, the Germans in Milwaukee, the German Athens, formed choral societies and a symphony orchestra in the first half of the nineteenth century. Under the direction of Hans Balakta, Haydn's "Creation" was performed by an orchestra of one hundred and thirty instruments in 1851.[34] The city, because of

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[32]Andrew A. Sherockman, "Caleb Mills, Pioneer Educator in Indiana" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg, 1956), 17.

[33]Educational activity among immigrant groups was treated in Chapter III.

[34]Kate Asaphine Everest, "How Wisconsin Came By Its Large German Element," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XII (1892), 323.

the German influence, had "amateur theaters, literary societies, political clubs, military companies, and a refined society."[35]

An interesting sidelight to the effects of the immigrants on western intellectual history was the enthusiasm for Hegelian philosophy among the citizens of St. Louis. G. Stanley Hall, in 1879, decried the lack of interest among Americans in general and Westerners in particular to the study of philosophy. But he found a major exception to the neglect among many citizens of St. Louis. William T. Harris, Superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools and later United States Commissioner of Education, edited the Journal of Speculative Philosophy which was devoted largely to Hegel. While recognizing that the large number of Germans residing in St. Louis increased the likelihood of Hegelian interests, he also believed that Hegel had an almost natural appeal to the men of that western city. Hall's article published fourteen years before Turner delivered "The Significance of the Frontier," suggested some of the same characteristics--pragmatism, a desire for freedom from restraint, and an openness to new ideas--that Turner described in the frontiersman:

> The inference that in a more than poetic sense thought is creative and man is the maker of the world, is not merely congenial, but to a certain degree spontaneous and irrestible. Again there is such a pleasing sense of liberty in the perpetual recurrence of dialectic

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[35] Ibid.

> alternatives, and yet of security, inspired by the regularity with which the beats and clicks of the triadic engine are heard, and above all there is such a largeness and scope in the formula of Hegel. . . . Where every thing is an open question is pleasing to feel that 'all progress is advancement in the consciousness of freedom.' . . . these causes, aided by the influences of reaction from a severely practical and business life, have awakened the faculty of philosophy to a most hopeful and inquiring receptivity.[36]

Traditional accounts of the major anti-intellectual forces in the West include the evangelistic religion which permeated the frontier. The itinerant preacher, full of fear and suspicion of "book larnin," as a device of the devil to seduce godly men and women, seemed to be an almost indigenous frontier character. Reading anything except the Bible was regarded as so sinful that even the distribution of reading material in the form of religious tracts by circuit preachers was frequently condemned by their more fundamentalistic fellows. When the question of tracts and "good books" was brought to one country exhorter, he replied, "Tracts! What are they but printed snares for the soul! There was no printing-office in Eden--oh no!"[37]

In the first stage of the frontier it may well have been true that religious sects succeeded in direct ratio to their emotional appeals and in inverse ratio to their

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[36]G. Stanley Hall, "Philosophy in the United States," Mind: A Quarterly of Psychology and Philosophy, IV (1879), 100.

[37]James Hall, Legends of the West (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby and Company, 1853), 272-273.

intellectual appeal.[38] At any rate, emotional oratory, political or religious, was welcomed on the frontier. Lincoln said that when he heard a preacher he liked "to see him act as if he were fighting bees."[39] The combination was exemplified by excerpts reproduced below from a contemporary account:

> There's some folks . . . what thinks preachers must be high larn'd, afore they kin tell sinners as how they must be saved or be 'tarnally lost; but it ain't so I allow--(Chair thumped here and answered by a squawk below)--no! This apostul of ourn what spoke the text, never rubbed his back agin a collige, nor toted about no sheepskins--no, never! (thump! thump! squawk and two grunts.) . . . No! I don't pretend to no larnin whatsomever, but depends on the sperit like Poll; . . . O! ho-o-ah, how happy I am to raise my poor feeble-ah, rying-ah, voice-ah, and spendin my last breath, in this here blessed work; a warnin, and crying aloud; o-oh!-o-ah! repent, repent, poor worldins and be saved, or you'll all be lost, and perish for-ever-an-dever-ah.[40]

Such a one was Lorenzo Dowe, a preacher highly popular at frontier camp meetings. He was a man of limited intellect, but of striking appearance, because of "his outlandish exterior, his orang-outang features, his beard that swept his age breast," and "the piping, treble voice, in which he was wont to preach what he called the gospel of the kingdom."[41] More famous was the Methodist circuit rider, Peter Cartwright.

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[38]Rusk, 46.

[39]Dixon Wecter, "Instruments of Culture on the Frontier," Yale Review, XXXVI (Winter, 1947), 243.

[40]Baynard Hall, The New Purchase, 172-173.

[41]The Western Monthly Magazine, II (April, 1834), quoted in Rusk, 49-50.

In his Autobiography, he forcefully defended the illiterate Methodist preachers against the Eastern trained "sapient, downy D.D.'s."[42] He cautioned that while he did not wish to undervalue education he was sickened by the sight of many of the educated ministers, and they reminded him "of lettuce growing under the shade of a peach tree" or of "a gosling that had got the straddles by wading in the dew."[43] Besides, "Christ had no literary college or university."[44] Frontier Protestant evangelists of several denominations could have given their amen to the following words of Cartwright:

> I would rather have the gift of a devil-dislodging power than all the college lore or Biblical institute knowledge that can be obtained from mortal man. When God wants great and learned men in the ministry, how easy it is for him to overtake a learned sinner, and, as Saul of Tarsus, shake him a while over hell, then knock the scales from his eyes, and, without any previous theological training, send him out straightway to preach Jesus and the resurrection. . . . God will qualify him for the work if he never saw a college.[45]

The outbursts against the theologically trained ministers from the East by the uneducated circuit riders may have been motivated, in part, by fear of the changes that were taking place in the West. As the population grew on the frontier, there were more demands for stationary churches, and

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[42] Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, ed. Charles L. Wallis (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 267.

[43] Ibid., 64.

[44] Ibid., 267.

[45] Ibid., 265.

the circuit riders, who seldom spoke more than a few times to one group before moving on, were often ill suited to the stationary church. The ill-trained preacher "of scant intellectual equipment" might well be "preacher out" within a short period if the circuit system was replaced.[46]

Among some groups, such as the Baptists, the bias against educated ministers was not uniquely western, but prevailed among the denomination generally in the early nineteenth century.[47] However, the fear of salaried and educated ministers, which seemed to many frontiersmen to go hand in hand, was especially strong among Baptists with origins in Virginia and the Carolinas, where their ancestors had been subjected to tax-supported ministers sent from England.[48] The anti-mission movement developed among this group on the frontier and had its greatest strength where school and other "usual cultural influences" were lacking.[49] This "hardshell" group went so far in condemning all "inventions" of men that they rejected fellowship, according to a frontier Baptist preacher in Illinois and Missouri, with missionaries, Bible

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[46]Elizabeth K. Nottingham, Methodism and the Frontier: Indiana Proving Ground (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 76.

[47]William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists 1783-1830 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 36.

[48]E. G. Lentz, "Pioneer Baptists of Illinois," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 34, 128.

[49]Sweet, 66-67.

societies, Sunday schools, and temperance movements.[50] John Mason Peck, Baptist leader in education and missionary endeavors on the frontier, said that some of the ignorant, hard-shell preachers "were as afraid of a dictionary as of a missionary."[51] Some Baptists, in Indiana, objected so strongly to "human learning" that they hoped to prevent their children from being taught to read anything except the Bible.[52]

Religious fundamentalism, with its accompanying fear of worldly learning, was strong enough in Indiana to prevent the incorporation of the New Harmony Educational Society. The petition for incorporation failed in the senate of that state by a fifteen to four vote in 1826. Will Monroe, an early historian of the Pestalozzian movement in the United States, blamed the "religious bigotry" of the senate for the defeat of the bill.[53] Religious tolerance and "opposition to narrow dogmatic and sectarian instruction" characterized the educational leaders of New Harmony, but, charges of atheism were widely believed in the state.[54]

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[50] Ibid., 206.

[51] Lentz, 128.

[52] T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 103-104.

[53] Will S. Monroe, History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States (Syracuse, N.Y.: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1907), 52-53.

[54] Ibid.

The changes in religious institutions which took place on the frontier to a high degree supported the frontier thesis. There was a deterioration in intellectual and aesthetic standards of the religious bodies as they crossed the mountains. Even the Presbyterians, who did more to provide educational opportunities in the West than any other major denomination on the frontier, degenerated to a lower cultural level. In Cincinnati, Presbyterian ministers helped to lead the fight against the theater, the Cincinnati Academy of Arts, and, indeed, looked on "the arts and creative scholarship" as sinister "stepping stones to aristocracy and anathema to religion."[55] T. Scott Miyakawa made the sad comment that in the West there was a "virtual elimination . . . of whatever liturgical and aesthetic heritage Calvinism once had."[56]

Methodism in its intellectual and aesthetic qualities likewise suffered in the frontier environment. John Wesley's intellectual interests were wide. He read five languages and his bibliography of over 400 titles included works in diverse areas from theology to poetry and grammar to medicine. He also was interested in music and for part of his life practiced on the flute regularly.[57] Yet, on the frontier his followers frequently objected to secular music and literature.

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[55]Miyakawa, 102.

[56]Ibid., 103.

[57]Ibid., 106 and 112.

Even the Methodist educational leaders and bishops, who vocally supported the need for schools on the frontier, had little,

> . . . if any, appreciation for the arts and many types of literature, including much that was most significantly religious. Education was narrowly conceived, with no place for the imaginative, aesthetic, and spiritually creative aspects of life or for efforts to probe into the ultimate issues of life, or for real challenges to their naively simple image of the world.[58]

The real question does not revolve around whether western churches were more fundamentalistic and anti-intellectual than their eastern counterparts, but whether the religious influence acted to broaden or narrow the intellectual and aesthetic horizons of the Westerner. If it did nothing else, religion gave the frontiersman, who often had his vision dimmed by the continual hard physical labor, the isolation from his fellows, and the poverty of his cultural environment, an emotional outlet and an opportunity to enlarge his views by contact with others. But ministers and religious denominations on the frontier did more than that.

Methodist circuit riders, such as Peter Cartwright, fumed against the need for a theologically educated ministry. But they were also responsible for bringing much of the reading material which existed on the frontier, as they were not only the preachers, but as agents of the Methodist Book Concern, they were the book sellers as well. Cartwright wrote

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[58] Ibid., 113.

that he "firmly believed, that it was a part and parcel of a Methodist preacher's most sacred duty to circulate good books wherever they go among the people."[59] Even though the books distributed were usually of a religious character, they helped to develop the habit of reading among the frontiersman. Furthermore, the prejudice against a theologically trained clergy did not necessarily imply a disinclination to support elementary education for the children of the West. Cartwright, in the 1830's, served in the Illinois legislature, where he exhibited a strong interest in school legislation and served as chairman of the education committee. And oddly, in view of many of his criticisms of academic training in theology, he helped to found both Illinois Wesleyan University and McKendree College.[60] Another frontier Methodist evangelist, James Finley, cautioned parents not to curse and embarrass their children by failing to provide educational opportunities for them. Throughout his Autobiography, he urged support for the schools and argued that religion, education, and patriotism were inseparable:

> Every good man, every lover of his country, every bad man ought to use his influence to encourage and sustain, with his property and by the education of his children, every effort to banish the cursed monster ignorance from our happy country. A man may boast of his patriotism, and his exceeding great love of our free and happy institutions, but if he neglects to

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[59] Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, 187.

[60] Ibid., Introduction, 8.

> lend his aid to the work of education, he does most emphatically contradict, by his conduct, his profession, and like all other men, may justly be branded with the disgraceful appellation of hypocrite.[61]

The legend of the ignorant frontiersman contemptuous of book learning had its origin in contemporary accounts. Timothy Flint wrote that the frontiersmen were not a reading people and brought few books to the frontier. Moreover, the few men with literary tastes were soon caught up in the excitement of money making possibilities.[62] James Flint wrote that not only were books scarce, but almanacs and romances served as reading matter more frequently than anything else.[63]

The West was much more complex than these generalizations suggested. The conception that almost all western settlers were so involved in practical, money making, materialistic pursuits that they were without interest in books and reading was inaccurate. Youths growing up on the frontier often had a great hunger for books as the story of the book borrowing young Lincoln illustrated.

Banta commented on the craving for reading material among the boys of Indiana in the 1840's.[64] There was a

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[61]James B. Finley, Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern for the author, 1855), 41.

[62]Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), 185.

[63]James Flint, Flint's Letters from America, 153.

[64]D. D. Banta, "The Early Schools of Indiana," Indiana Magazine of History, II (1906), 131.

scarcity of books among many families in the early stages of frontier life. One pioneer reminiscing about his boyhood in the Shiloh neighborhood of Indiana wrote that most likely all of the books "excluding Bibles, hymn-books, and spelling-books, owned by the neighborhood could have been packed in a bushel basket."[65] But most families, even those in the poorest circumstances, brought a few books with them to the frontier, and at least a few fortunate Westerners possessed extensive libraries.[66] The story of young Lincoln not only revealed the scarcity of books in the Lincoln family, but indicated that others in the community possessed books to lend.[67] The number of private libraries was larger, of course, in the urban centers of the West. There were a number of impressive private libraries in St. Louis, including the extensive ones of Auguste Chouteau and John Mullanphy. Some of the French in the colonial period had large collections of books and papers in their homes, as well.[68] Howard Peckham, in an attempt to dispel the myth of the illiterate frontiersman, argued that "books were companions as frequently as dogs, and

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Carle Brooks Spotts, "Development of Fiction on the Missouri Frontier," Missouri Historical Review, XXVIII (April, 1934), 204.

[67] Howard H. Peckham, "Books and Reading in the Ohio Valley Frontier," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIV (1958), 649.

[68] Margaret McMillan and Monia Cook Morris, "Educational Opportunities in Early Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (April, 1939), 308.

sometimes as frequently as the rifle or ax."[69] He wrote that even the explorer's pack or pocket sometimes contained a volume or two, and illustrated his point by reciting the experience of the Boone brothers and another hunter, John Stuart, who spent a winter camped in the wilderness of central Kentucky in 1769, passing the time by reading aloud from Gulliver's Travels.[70]

An interest in reading was indicated by the brisk book trade in the Ohio Valley during the pioneer period. Lexington, Kentucky, had 700 inhabitants and six merchants selling books in 1788, and in 1803 the first regular book store was opened in that city. There were a number of book shops in Cincinnati in the 1820's and as early as 1796 when the town had a population of only 500, two merchants were advertising books among their other wares.[71] In the frontier newspapers, only land sale advertisements occupied more column space than book-sellers lists.[72] Furthermore, a good part of the reading material on the frontier was printed locally. The western newspapers frequently published or reprinted bound volumes and acted as the retailer as well in

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[69]Peckham, 651.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid., 652; W. H. Venable, Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Co., 1891), 53-55.

[72]James M. Miller, The Genesis of Western Culture, Ohio Historical Collections, IX (1938), 147.

the beginning. But by 1805, publishing in the West had become important enough to justify the organization of an association of printers and booksellers. Ohio publishers had produced 500 titles by 1820; Indiana 601 books, pamphlets, and broadsides by 1835; and Illinois 474 titles by 1840. And by the latter date the western presses were printing half a million bound volumes annually.[73]

Another phenomenon in the West which suggested an interest in intellectual and cultural activity among a sizable minority of the inhabitants was the establishment of subscription and circulating libraries. The first library in the Northwest Territory was organized in 1796 at Belpre, in what was to become Ohio. Originally called the Putman Family Library, it was organized as a joint stock venture with shares priced at ten dollars each. It was later renamed the Belpre Farmers Library.[74] Also in Ohio, in Ames Township, the famous "Coonskin Library" was organized in 1803. It was officially named the "Western Library Association in the Town of Ames." Because of a lack of cash with which to buy books, the organizers, many of them farmers, agreed to trap furs the following winter and donate them to the association. The furs sold in Boston for $70.00 and with the help of one of the founders of the Ohio Company, Manasseh Cutler, the money

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[73]Rusk, 69-71; Venable, 43; Peckham, 653.

[74]Venable, 135.

was invested in fifty-one books. Ephriam Cutler, a son of Manasseh, was the first librarian of the "Coonskin Library." One of the subscribers, Thomas Ewing, wrote that he contributed ten coonskins which was all of his "hoarded wealth" but he considered it well spent as the books were to him "like an almost unbounded intellectual treasure."[75]

In Cincinnati, attempts were made to establish a subscription library in 1802 and periodically thereafter until one was opened with three hundred volumes in 1814.[76] St. Louis also had difficulty in establishing a library. The plans for the St. Louis Library Company were developed in 1819 and pleas were made in January and December of 1820 for funds for book purchases. But they were unsuccessful and the company was dissolved. However, a library was opened in that city in 1824, and by the following year, it had over a thousand books and nearly two hundred shareholders.[77]

Smaller towns were successful in organizing libraries quite early. Franklin, Missouri, had one by 1820, and in Madison, Wisconsin, which had just been platted in 1811, twenty-four men, nearly every man in town, subscribed five dollars each to the Madison Society Library.[78] By 1812, there

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[75]Quoted in Miller, 151. See also Wecter, 246, and Peckham, 655.

[76]Rusk, 68.

[77]McMillan and Morris, 315; Rusk, 69.

[78]Ibid., 315; Peckham, 656.

were ten libraries in Ohio and two in Indiana. The movement grew rapidly in the following decades; Ohio, alone, had 160 libraries by 1840.[79]

The practical nature of the frontiersman, as described by the Turner theory, would indicate that utilitarian or instructional books would be most popular in western libraries and in the publications of the western presses. Only in part was this true. The first book published west of the Alleghenies was Volume Three of Modern Chivalry.[80] And the first volume of original verse published in Missouri was printed as early as 1821.[81] While the Cincinnati publishers produced hundreds of thousands of school textbooks, the Eclectic texts were especially important; they also printed material "of every description."[82]

Of the books printed by the publishers of the Ohio Valley during the pioneer period, 29 percent were almanacs and gazetteers, religious books accounted for 23 percent, instructional books for 17 percent, and "literary works" for 12 percent. The other 19 percent were miscellaneous works--

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[79]Peckham, 657.

[80]Wector, 247.

[81]McMillan and Morris, 314.

[82]Avery Craven, "The Advance of Civilization into the Middle West in the Period of Settlement," Sources of Culture in the Middle West, ed. Dixon Ryan Fox (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1934), 63.

history, music, "sensational" stories, and scientific treatises (published largely by the Press at New Harmony).[83] In the libraries of the West, both public and private, literature, history, and essays on politics and economics made a strong showing. The most popular subject in frontier libraries, however, was religion.[84]

Newspapers, as Europeans sometimes observed with distaste, were the standard reading fare on the frontier. The first newspapers in the territories of the Middle West, with the exception of Wisconsin, were established quite early: The Centinel of the North-Western Territory in Cincinnati in 1793, The Illinois Herald in 1814, The Michigan Essay; or The Impartial Observer in 1809, the Indiana Gazette in 1804, the Missouri Gazette in 1809, and the first newspaper in Michigan, The Green-Bay Intelligencer not until 1833, and then as only a semi-monthly.[85]

By 1840, according to the Sixth Census, there were 354 western newspapers, or one newspaper for every 12,000 inhabitants.[86] Whereas in 1810, the western newspapers amounted to only about 10 percent of those printed in the country, by

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[83]Peckham, 660.

[84]Venable, 138-142; McMillan and Morris, 314; Peckham, 658-659.

[85]Rusk, 135-143.

[86]Ibid., 156.

1840 they made up 25 percent of the total number.[87] There was hardly a town on the middle western frontier which did not have a printing press to publish a newspaper, a few pamphlets, and occasionally a volume.[88] Most of the newspapers were weeklies and many had but a small number of subscribers and financial disaster was usually their fate. The Missouri Intelligencer in 1823, as an example, had only 400 subscribers in a region of 5,000 voters.[89] But the number of subscribers was far below the number of newspaper readers, as it was common on the frontier to pass a newspaper around among friends and neighbors.

Western editors were also frequently men of exceptional ability, as exemplified by Amos Kendall, George D. Prentice, and Duff Green. They were also frequently men of passionate partisanship and much of the space was devoted to political controversy which on occasion resulted in violence and assault.[90] Yet, many of the frontier newspapers encouraged the literary interests of the Westerners by carrying a poetry column, usually local, in each issue. The Centinel of the North-Western Territory, in its first issue, printed

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[87]Wector, 247.

[88]Miller, 81-82.

[89]Hattie M. Anderson, "The Evolution of a Frontier Society in Missouri," 1815-1828, III, Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (October, 1938), 26.

[90]Rusk, 150-152; Anderson, 25-26.

a rhymed invitation to its readers to contribute "a scrap of poetic lumber."[91] Verses on the two passions of the West, politics and religion, were most popular in "The Parnassiad," "Seat of the Muses," or "Political Asylum," as some of the newspaper sections were called.[92]

An extensive literary activity in the West was revealed by the enormous number of periodicals published during the frontier period. Before 1860, there were around one hundred periodicals of a literary nature alone, not including those of a sectarian or professional character. In addition, there were others devoted to politics, medicine, education, and agriculture, as well as such diverse subjects as Masonry and anti-Masonry.[93] Many of the periodicals enjoyed only an ephemeral life; but they were forced to compete with European and Eastern magazines, and their very existence in an area of sparse population and limited economic resources was remarkable. In spite of the short life span of many of the western journals, there were forty-one periodicals, not counting newspapers or weekly journals, being published in 1840.[94]

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[91]Miller, 88.

[92]Esarey, 151-152; Wecter, 247.

[93]A partial list of the literary periodicals published in the West may be found in Venable, 124-125. A more comprehensive bibliography of newspapers and magazines published on the middle western frontier makes up Chapter III, in Rusk, II.

[94]Rusk, 202.

Nearly all of the literary periodicals were edited by men who were trained in the classical tradition.[95] However, most attempted, to some degree, to harmonize the content of their journals with the sentiment and to the sectional self-consciousness of the West. John Foote, editor of the Cincinnati Literary Gazette, in his first volume stated that the aim of the paper was "to be useful rather than original."[96] And in the same year, he printed a number of poems written in Ohio and Kentucky in Latin.[97]

Two of the best known editors of western literary journals were Timothy Flint, editor of the Western Monthly Review, 1827-1830, and James Hall, editor of the Illinois Monthly Magazine--later after a move from Vandalia to Cincinnati, the Western Monthly Magazine, 1830-1836. Both emphasized literature which had been written in the West. Hall, especially, tried to make the West conscious of itself. He not only differentiated western character traits from eastern, but defended the Westerner against detractors, both eastern and European.

> I am continually amused in these regions with the inquiries, which are constantly proposed to me, touching our Western world. True, we meet with people in the cities, and on the beaten routes of travel, who are tolerable informed, respecting the country. But the mass of the Atlantic people have

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[95]Esarey, 154.

[96]Venable, 67.

[97]Esarey, 154.

> less exact knowledge about us, than they have about the Chinese. The people from the eastern cities, who visit Washington, while Congress is in session, are astonished beyond measure, when they see a western member on the floor. That he should know how to stand gracefully, and make gestures, and speak the king's English, and pursue a connected train of thought and reasoning, and talk away, like a Philadelphia lawyer, is matter of infinite wonderment. Most of the people imagine a western backwoods man to be a kind of humanized Ourang Outang, like my lord Manboddo's man, recently divested of the unsightly appendage of a tail.[98]

The publications reviewed above in no way exhausted the intellectual activity of the middle western frontier. The American lyceum in the Midwest, as elsewhere, was not only an educational institution and a source of entertainment, but a force which nutured the public school movement as well.[99] At the local level, lectures, discussions, debates, and scientific experiments were the usual activities. The first local lyceums were organized by Josiah Holbrook in Massachusetts in 1826. The movement grew rapidly, and by 1831, the National Lyceum had been formed as a coordinating body.[100] The lyceum movement was imported to the West shortly after its founding:

> The lyceum system never presented itself to my view with so much grandeur or importance as since my visit

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[98]Timothy Flint, Western Monthly Review (1828), 88, quoted in Esarey, Ibid.

[99]For the activities of the lyceum in behalf of the common schools see Chapter VII.

[100]Cecil B. Hayes, The American Lyceum: Its History and Contribution to Education, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education, Bulletin No. 12, 1932, xi.

> to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee, in each of which State meetings or conventions of the friends of education have been held, and measures adopted to organize State lyceums, and to extend the system through the whole community.[101]

The popularity of the lyceum was greatest in the areas settled by New Englanders. Sixty local groups had received state charters in Ohio by 1845, and the movement became strong in Michigan, especially in the Detroit area, after the opening of the Erie Canal. An Indiana lyceum was organized in Indianapolis in 1832, but it was short lived. Carl Bode suggested that the movement in Indiana was stunted by narrow sectarianism and indifference to education.[102] The Illinois State Lyceum was formed in 1831, but real growth waited until the influx of New England settlers. Wisconsin and Kansas were settled after the national organization expired (1839), but local groups were formed in both states. There were a handful in Wisconsin by 1845 and a few in Kansas in the early 1850's. Although a lyceum was organized in St. Louis as early as 1832, the movement was not popular in Missouri or in the South generally.[103]

During the 1840's, the promotion of common school education as an objective of the lyceum became less important;

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[101] Josiah Holbrook, Letter to the corresponding secretary of Massachusetts Lyceum (January, 1832), quoted in Hayes, 10.

[102] Carl Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 90.

[103] Ibid., 88-98, 163, and 180.

the movement developed into a professional lecture system, and finally degenerated, toward the end of the century, to a circuit system for entertainers. In the 1850's, with improved rail transportation, eastern orators or celebrities found a lucrative market for their talents behind the lyceum lecterns in the Middle West. However, the sectional pride of the Westerner and his desire to develop a distinctive culture led to frequent complaints, especially in the press, against the use of so many eastern speakers. The lyceums balanced their programs with more home grown orators after the middle 1850's. Easterners found that if they were to be successful, remarks about the rapid economic and cultural progress of the region were necessary, and criticisms of the "mighty West" were almost certain to be considered offensive.[104]

Cincinnati took the lead in creating organizations for the propagation of knowledge, including a "Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge," which was concerned with promoting science, literature, and the arts; unfortunately it was short lived. More successful were the Academy of Natural Science, The Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers, and the Ohio Mechanics' Institute all of which were formed in that city before 1840.[105] The latter

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[104]David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum 1850-1870 (East Lansing Michigan State College Press, 1961), 18-21.

[105]Foote, 44-45, 54-58, 81-88, and 91.

organization, formed in 1828, illustrated the western combination of a faith in popular education coupled with at least a trace of anti-intellectualism. The founders of the Institute were critical of men educated in Greek and Latin, but "ignorant of everything else."[106] They listed as the chief objective of the Institute, the elimination of "the evils of popular ignorance." It was largely concerned with promoting education above the common school level for workers and artisans because "the poor should be as well educated as the rich, and thus remedy, as far as practicable, the evils that arise from the influence of the (so called) educated men."[107]

On a lesser scale, in communities throughout the West, organizations such as literary societies, singing schools, and debating clubs were formed to help satisfy the intellectual and aesthetic cravings of the populace. The incongruity of western society was suggested by the names chosen for the literary societies such as The Athenean Delphian Society, of Athens County, Ohio.[108] Often the school building served as the hall for those activities. Sometimes provisions were made for the use of the buildings by state law, as in the Kansas law:

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[106] Ibid., 81.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Miller, 143.

> They [the school boards] are hereby authorized to open the schoolhouse for the use of religious, political, literary, scientific, mechanical or agricultural societies belonging to their district, for the purpose of holding the business or public meetings of said societies, under regulations as the school board may adopt.[109]

In Madison, Wisconsin, during the 1840's, a small building served to shelter at the same time a public and a private school, as well as the village debating club which met there in the evenings to "wisely discuss questions that had puzzled sages since the time of Solomon."[110] In many cases, the school directly sponsored programs which had, at least, some intellectual, as well as entertainment, value. Although the most popular school sponsored activity for the community, the spelling bee, belonged almost wholly to the latter category. The seminary in the small village of Georgetown, Illinois, held an annual exhibition which lasted for several days. Frontiersmen from as far away as thirty miles came to hear and see the "essays, declamations, orations, and plays."[111] As there were no accommodations in the village, they brought food, cooking utensils, and bedding with them and camped out during the period.[112]

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[109]Chapter 125, Session Laws of 1876, Kansas State Historical Society Collections, VIII (1903-1904), 193.

[110]Reuben Gold Thwaites, Historical Sketch of the Public Schools in Madison, Wisconsin (Madison: M. J. Cantwell Book and Job Printer, 1886), 19.

[111]Charles Ben-Ulyn Johnson, "The Subscription School and the Seminary in Pioneer Days," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 32 (1925), 57.

[112]Ibid.

Another intellectual activity, of sorts, extremely popular in the West was public oratory, especially in the form of fourth of July speeches, political discussion, or debates among clergymen on theological questions which sometimes went on for days at a time. Even though sustained by liberal quantities of liquor, the endurance of the audience was "almost past belief." Bombastic, spread eagle language was most appreciated.[113]

In summary, the West was made up of a heterogeneous collection of the sensitive and the crass, and the learned and the ignorant. The practical matters of clearing the land and building canals and other internal improvements before establishing art galleries and financing symphony orchestras was not only natural, but necessary. But in spite of the pressing physical needs of the frontiersman, there was a surprisingly broad range of intellectual and literary activities. The restricted and often synthetic involvement of the rural and small town Middle Westerner in the second half of the twentieth century may well suffer in comparison with the direct participation of many of the frontiersmen.

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[113]Esarly, 145.

CHAPTER III

DESIRE AND DISDAIN FOR EDUCATION

A fear and suspicion of book learning among the primitive backwoodsman was manifested in a disdain for schooling, or at least for the luxury of learning, that went beyond the three R's. The formal education considered necessary by the products of the school of experience was limited to the reading of the Bible and the country newspaper, and an understanding of the preacher and the stump speakers, neither of which was usually a severe test of literacy.[1] And sometimes even the limited ideal was not attained. In Indiana, a disturbed missionary wrote to his society:

> Ignorance and her squalid brood. A universal dearth of intellect. Total abstinence from literature is very generally practiced. Aside from Bro. Wilder and myself there is not a literary man of any sort in the bounds. There is not a scholar in grammar or geography, or a teacher capable of instructing in them, to my knowledge. There are some neighborhoods in which there has never been a school of any kind. Parents and children are one dead level of ignorance. Others are supplied for a few months in the year with the most antiquated and unreasonable forms of teaching reading, writing and cyphering. Master Ignoramus is a striking

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[1]Earl W. Hayter, "Sources of Early Illinois Culture," Illinois State Historical Society, Transactions for the Year 1936, 93; and Logan Esarey, "The Pioneer Aristocracy," Indiana Magazine of History, XIII (1917), 283.

> facsimile of them. They are never guilty of teaching anything but "pure school-master larnin." Of course, there is no kind of ambition for improvement; and it is no more disgrace for man, woman, or child to be unable to read than to have a long nose. Our own church the other day elected a man to the eldership who is unable to read the Bible. I don't know of ten families who take any kind of paper, political or religious, and the whole of their revenue to the Post Office Department is not as much as mine alone. Need I stop to remind you of the loathsome reptiles such a stagnant pool is fitted to breed. Croaking jealousy; bloated bigotry; coiling suspicion, wormish blindness; crocodile malice! . . .[2]

Foreign travelers in the frontier Middle West were prone to criticize the settlers' indolent lack of regard for the education of their young. Adlard Welby decried the "strange neglect" of the frontiersmen of Vincennes, Indiana, of their schools. A brick building had been constructed in the settlement for a public school in keeping with the terms of a philanthropist's will, but it had "suffered to go to decay and no master . . . [had] been provided."[3] Fortescus Cuming, on his tour of the West, found a similar situation in a small village which had a school that was in session only when a teacher was available. Cuming reported that when he visited the village in 1807, the school had been vacant for

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[2]John U. Parsons, letter to the American Home Missionary Society, February 20, 1833, quoted in Andrew A. Sherockman, "Caleb Mills, Pioneer Educator in Indiana," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg), 61.

[3]Adlard Welby, A Visit to North America and the English Settlements in Illinois, 1821, Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, XII (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 237.

some months.[4] Maximilian, Prince of Wied, commented that "in the country the young people grow up without any education, and are, probably, no better than the Indians themselves." He noted that the sixteenth section which had been assigned to help the schools was not always applied to that purpose.[5]

There were, of course, domestic critics who made similar observations. William Johnston described a small village in Illinois which had, among other enterprises, two blacksmiths, two harness-makers, and one wagon-maker, but possessed neither a church nor a school; he theorized that both were needed, especially the church.[6] Schoolmen were among the critics. Superintendent Kilgore of the Madison, Wisconsin, Public Schools in the 1840's complained:

> At this time the principal citizens of Madison cared more about keeping down the tax rate, selling village lots and initiating eastern swells into the celebrated order of One Thousand and One than they did about the public schools. Indeed, it was asserted publicly that a few thousand dollars invested in an effort to establish the Madison Female Academy on a permanent basis would do more to raise the price of village lots and

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[4]Fortescus Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, 1807-1809, Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, IV (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 35.

[5]Maximilian, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834, Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, XXII (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 179. For the mismanagement of the school lands see pages 133-136.

[6]William J. Johnston, Sketches of the History of Stephenson County, Ill., 1854, reprinted in Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 30 (1928), 298.

> secure a better class of people for the future city of Madison than any amount of money expended in building school houses and providing teachers for the public schools. This to me was the worst kind of heresy, and I fought it publicly and privately to the best of my ability.[7]

He was also unhappy about the irregular attendance and the "habitual tardiness" of the students, the lack of interest among the parents and clergymen of the village regarding education, and the fact that more than half of the children were not attending school at all. Of the latter group of children, he observed, "as far as they are concerned [we] might as well live in Central Africa as in the capital of Wisconsin."[8]

A similar complaint about lack of community and parental support for education in the West was voiced by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Kansas, H. D. McCarty, in 1864. He compared a father's treatment of his colts with that of his children. McCarty related how the father made periodical round trips of ten miles each to check on the condition of his colts, their pasture, their special feeding and watering, while his children attended a one-room school in despicable condition without facilities for learning, health, or even an outhouse. McCarty wrote that he simply wished to state that the

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[7]Reuben Gold Thwaites, Historical Sketch of the Public Schools of Madison, Wisconsin (Madison: M. J. Cantwell, Book and Job Printer, 1886), 46.

[8]Ibid., 39.

> . . . owner of those colts and the father of those children, has never been into that schoolhouse to inquire after comfort, health, or mental food daily dealt to his offspring. The latter part of the summer we chanced to ask "Who teaches your school?" His reply was that he did not know, he believed her name was Parker, but he had no time to look after school matters.[9]

The anti-intellectual quality of some frontier minds was exemplified by a Michigan pioneer who mused about his boyhood school and decided that there could be too much as well as too little "of mere schooling to get the best practical results for the individual and for society . . . certainly, all excess does harm."[10] Those with a classical view of education dispared of this devotion of many Westerners to materialism and a "doctrine of college-utility":

> Only show that a school, an academy, a college, or, a church will advance the value to town lots--bring in more consumers--create a demand for beef, cloth, pepper and salt, powder and shot; then, from the vulgar plebeian dealing in shoe leather, up to the American nobleman dealing in shops, and who retails butter and eggs, we shall hear one spontaneous voice in favour![11]

The materialistic bias, which Turner believed to be a characteristic of the Westerner, did act in some instances

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[9]H. D. McCarty, "Colts vs. Children," The Kansas Educational Journal (1864), reproduced in C. O. Wright, "100 Years in Kansas Education," The Kansas Teacher, LXXI (February, 1963), 15

[10]Edward W. Barber, "Recollections and Lessons of Pioneer Boyhood," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections, XXXI (1902), 217.

[11]Baynard R. Hall, The New Purchase or, Seven and a Half Years in the Far West, 1843, ed. James Albert Woodburn, Indiana Centennial edition (Princeton University Press, 1916), 401.

as a detriment to education. Solon Robinson in a plea to western immigrants to hire able teachers and to establish good schools, complained that in the past money had been more important to so many frontiersmen than the education of their children, that many western communities were without schools or teachers for whole terms.[12]

In Leavenworth, Kansas, the town fathers, plagued by the border troubles of the 1850's, ran off the free-stater teacher and then decreed that a school was not necessary to their prosperity and did not replace him.[13] The wealthier settlers were often opposed to tax supported schools in Kansas. According to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, their attitude was, "Why should I educate the children of the poor man any more than clothe them? I have educated my own children, and I think that every man should do the same."[14] This point of view was at variance with the frontier thesis which suggested that the poor, ignorant backwoodsman

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[12]Solon Robinson, "To Western Emigrants--No. 2," Albany Cultivator, (December, 1840), VII, 192, reprinted in Solon Robinson, Pioneer and Agriculturalist: Selected Writings, ed. Herbert Kellar, Indiana Historical Collections, XXI (1936), 149.

[13]Lloyd C. Smith, "Territorial Common Schools in Kansas," Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, Bulletin of Information, No. 24 (1924), 32.

[14]Issac T. Goodnow, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1863-1870, 11, quoted in Earle E. McKown, "A Survey of the Historical Development and Growth of Schools in Johnson County, Kansas," (unpublished Masters' thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, Kansas, 1935), 39.

would be the one to oppose the establishment of schools. However, the situation was sometimes reversed. During the struggle to establish high schools, an editorialist for the Indiana School Journal complained that "A standard argument with those who oppose high schools is that they are paid for by the taxes of the poor for the benefit of the rich--that only the rich can send to them.[15] The economic motive and the desire for material acquisition was an obstacle to the establishment of good schools on the frontier, but the same was true in the American culture generally.

Examples of the frontiersmen's neglect in providing for the education of their young, especially in the first stages of the frontier, are numerous. However, in view of the physical and economic difficulties of surviving on the frontier, and in view of the weakening of the discipline and restraints imposed by the older societies left behind; the eagerness of the pioneer to establish schools was, on the whole, both remarkable and admirable.

The devotion of the Westerner to education was often exaggerated, as well as underestimated, in contemporary accounts. As an example of the former, Henry Ward Beecher, in 1859, described the commitment of the westward moving pioneers to education and culture with the following hyperbole: "They

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[15]Editorial in Indiana School Journal, 1878, quoted in Olis G. Jamison, "The Development of Secondary Education in Indiana Prior to 1910," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford Junior University, 1935), 211.

drive schools along with them, as shepherds drive flocks. They have herds of churches, academies, lyceums; and their religious and educational institutions go lowing along the western plains as Jacob's herds lowed along the Syrian hills."[16] Another writer in the same decade declared that the people of the new territories in the Middle West were more interested in the establishment of schools than any other people at any other time in history.[17] In what was unquestionably an overstatement, A. D. Van Buren argued that not only was the enthusiasm for "schooling" on the frontier among both students and the people of the settlements in general greater than the supply, but there was better attendance and more interest in study by the student, and more effective teachers than in later periods.[18]

The pride, and boastfulness, of the frontier people toward their accomplishments in education was commented on (and often disparaged) by travelers in the West. A traveler visiting Lebanon, Illinois, found the local seminary to be the center of the "heart and soul" of every inhabitant, and everything not connected with its welfare was deemed

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[16]Address by Henry Ward Beecher, 1859, quoted in Dixon Wecter, "Instruments of Culture on the Frontier," Yale Review, XXXVI (Winter, 1947), 246.

[17]John P. Foote, The Schools of Cincinnati and Its Vicinity (Cincinnati: C. F. Bradley, 1855), 228.

[18]A. D. P. Van Buren, "The Log Schoolhouse Era in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XIV (1887), 288.

insignificant. He complained that all one could hear was "The Seminary! The Seminary! I defy a traveller to tarry two hours in the village without hearing rung all the changes upon that topic for his edification."[19]

John Foote insisted that the most remarkable things about early Cincinnati were its appreciation of the importance of education and the establishment of schools both public and private in that city.[20] He went on to suggest that glory would come to the young states of Wisconsin and Minnesota because of their support for education which would be "in strong contrast to the disgrace which Missouri has brought upon herself by not reckoning the foundation of such establishments as among the first duties of American States."[21]

Across the middle western states the same sentiment in often almost the same words was expressed, as in the following from Illinois: "the goose quill pen was but three years behind the pioneer's axe."[22] A good education may have consisted only of being able to read, write, and add, but the frontier sentiment was that those who criticized the efforts

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[19]Edmund Flagg, The Far West: or, A Tour Beyond the Mountains, 1836-1837, Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, XXVI (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 256.

[20]Foote, 225.

[21]Ibid., 228.

[22]Rose Moss Scott, "Early Schools and Churches of Edgar County," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XIV (October, 1921), 386.

to establish schools classified themselves as antagonistic to good government.[23]

In Indiana, in spite of the difficulties in establishing a life in the wilderness, Timothy Flint argued that "it ought to be recorded to the honor of the people, that among the first public works in an incipient village, is a school house, and among the first associations, that for establishing a school."[24] In fact, the author found too much zeal in the establishment of colleges and other schools. The result was quantity with not enough resources for quality: "While the most enlightened nations in Europe are content with three or four universities, we have at least 50 colleges in the western country."[25]

In reviewing the early educational history of Wisconsin, W. C. Whitford wrote: "We might proceed in the enumeration of instances, in which private and public schools were started in every village, and on nearly every two miles of the settled territory, until you were weary in examining the particulars."[26] A contemporary account of one of these log

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[23] Ibid., 387.

[24] Timothy Flint, The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley, Vol. I, Second edition (Cincinnati: E. H. Flint and L. R. Lincoln, 1832), 386.

[25] Ibid., 406.

[26] W. C. Whitford, "Early History of Education in Wisconsin," Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, V (1869), 336.

cabin schools in the wilderness with only five students in attendance when it opened suggested the interest of the settlers in re-establishing the institutions left behind: "How pleasant and suggestive was the sight, to see this young spirited lady, here in the woods, her only visitor the Indian, endeavoring to imbue the tender mind with practical truths!"[27]

Even in rural Missouri, which writers further north used as an example of the tragedy that resulted when education was neglected, there was a general interest in schooling among the American pioneers:

> The remote settlers, contrary to what would be supposed from their situation, are not only shrewd and intelligent, but also far from illiterate.--The most trifling settlement will contrive to have a schoolmaster, who can teach reading, writing, and some arithmetic. Very different from the good natured, but un-enterprising creole, who does not know a letter of the alphabet.[28]

The local histories written by county superintendents for the Columbian History of Education in Kansas often, for whatever they are worth, start with a statement such as the one from Winfield:

> Hardly had the echoes of the axe of the first settler of 1869 died away, when the public-spirited citizens of Winfield, with that unity of purpose which was a

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[27]A. J. Lawson, "New London, and Surrounding Country," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, III (1857), 481.

[28]Henry Marie Brakenridge, Views of Louisiana: Together with a Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri River in 1811, 117, quoted in Hattie M. Anderson, "The Evolution of a Frontier Society in Missouri, 1815-1828," III, Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (October, 1938), 31.

> marked characteristic of the early residents, set about establishing a school, where their children might enjoy the facilities for an education.[29]

Nineteenth century chroniclers of educational progress in Kansas were careful to remind their readers that they came to Kansas to combat slavery and to build for freedom, and that churches and schools were their instruments to accomplish those goals. In a speech of welcome to Governor Reeder, the first territorial governor, the sentiment was expressed: "We come with the open Bible, and the open spelling book. Our purpose is to place the one upon the pulpit of a free church, and the other upon the desk of a free school."[30] Those laudable motives, in the eyes of many Kansas educators, were best given expression by Whittier's "Song of the Kansas Emigrants":

> We cross the prairies, as of old
> The Fathers crossed the sea,
> To make the West, as they the East
> The homestead of the free.
>
> We come to plant the common schools
> On distant prairie swells,
> And give the Sabbaths of the wild
> The music of their bells.

Edward Everett Dale, a former student of Turner, argued that most parents, including nearly all mothers, who went to the prairie frontier had a "haunting fear" that their children would grow to adulthood in ignorance. He maintained that the eagerness of the settler to provide for schools as soon as his

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[29] Columbian History of Education in Kansas (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1893), 113.

[30] Ibid., 130.

land was occupied and a shelter erected was "little short of pathetic."[31]

The heterogeneous character of the Westerner disallowed easy generalizations concerning his attitude toward education. As well as a farming and an urban, there was a mining frontier which throughout at least the Trans-Mississippi West, according to A. M. Gibson, showed a similar pattern of ". . . disdain for learning, and contempt for religion. . . ."[32] Whereas Gibson found that the Tri-State lead mining region of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma was retarded in providing for schools as compared to the surrounding agrarian area; Lloyd Jorgenson found that the inhabitants of the lead mining region of Grant County, Wisconsin, were among the most willing of the states' population to tax themselves for education.[33]

Generally, the traditional accounts which suggested that support for schools was greatest in areas settled by New Englanders were accurate. They argued that the crux of the differences between the views of the settlers from the two regions was that the New Englander believed in community

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[31]Edward Everett Dale, "Teaching on the Prairie Plains, 1890-1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIII (1946), 293-294.

[32]A. M. Gibson, "A Social History of the Tri-State District," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXXVII (Summer, 1959), 182.

[33]Ibid., 188; Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), 41-42.

responsibility for the education of their children, whereas the Southerner looked on education as a private affair. The Southerner, if he supported the establishment of schools at all, was interested in tuition rather than tax supported institutions. This was the position taken by John Foote in 1855:

> The early immigrants to Ohio from New England, considered schools and churches as among their first wants--those from Pennsylvania considered them the last--while those from New Jersey, and the few from Maryland, Virginia, and the other southern states, had their views of education fixed upon so high a scale that nothing less than colleges, or seminaries of the highest class, could claim much of their attention, or seem to require any extraordinary efforts for their establishment.[34]

An early educational historian of Ohio, commented on the limited amount of knowledge parents wanted for their children in southwestern Ohio--to read the Bible, write tolerably legibly, and enough arithmetic to prevent them from getting cheated when they sold their crops and livestock. He suggested, however, that conditions were much better in the sections settled by New Englanders. They too wanted a utilitarian education, but they were not so myopic in their view of what constituted utility.[35] The same characteristics of the various groups were later described in American education history textbooks, including Ellwood Cubberley's Public

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[34]Foote, 35.

[35]James J. Burns, Educational History of Ohio (Columbus: Historical Publishing Co., 1905), 21.

Education in the United States, 1919, which was the "standard text" for decades. Cubberley pictured the states of the Old Northwest as an educational battleground between the "poor whites" from the slave states, where religion "was by no means a vital matter, and where free schools were virtually unknown"; and the New Englander, who brought his worthy institutions, including the Congregational Church, common schools, "and the Massachusetts district system" with him.[36] Where the Southerners dominated as in Illinois, according to Cubberley, constitutional provisions for adequate tax-supported schools were impossible. The free school law of 1825 was recognized as the "best outside of New England," but was nullified in 1827 by the provision that a man could not be taxed for school support without his written consent. Even where the Southerners were not dominate, but evenly balanced as in Indiana, they could prevent the organization of a state system of schools. The Indiana Constitution of 1816 was the first in the nation to provide for a comprehensive system of public education from township schools through the university. But the mandate of the constitution could not be carried out, and a system of state supported schools had to wait until the influx of New Englanders after the completion of the Erie Canal. In Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin, the New Englanders were in the ascendancy earlier as revealed by the inhabitants'

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[36]Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 71-76.

greater zeal for both religion and education. As Cubberley saw it, the importance of the final conquest of the New Englander in the Old Northwest could "hardly be overestimated."[37]

The extravagant claims of the New Englanders concerning their accomplishments in public education did not go unchallenged. R. Carlyle Buley cautioned that no one element in the population could take the credit for educational advances in the Old Northwest.[38] Neither in the development of public opinion in the press and by letters to the editors, in the messages of the governors, in the votes in the legislature, nor in the willingness to give the schools financial support, did persons of New England nativity have a monopoly on a commitment to education. Buley wrote that statements such as the one by Cubberley above could "only be accounted for on the basis of complete ignorance of the subject."[39] He further pointed out that of the forty-three members of the Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1816, which approved the most far-reaching provisions for public education of any state, had only two New Englanders. And the legislature, which passed the free school law of 1825 in Illinois, had less than a dozen members of New England nativity.[40] Neither illustration of

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[37] Ibid., 74.

[38] R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, II (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1951), 360-361.

[39] Ibid., 361N.

[40] Ibid.

the Southerner's devotion to a tax supported system of education was very telling, however, as the educational mandate of the Indiana Constitution was not carried out by the legislature, and the Illinois Act of 1825 was abrogated two years later and damned as a Yankee proposal.

John Pulliam's study of education in Illinois was also less critical of the southern influence than were many older accounts.[41] Early Illinois was dominated by Southerners, but cultural values varied widely among the migrants from that region. The largest number were poor and illiterate; however, there was a smaller "ambitious, influential, and energetic" group which furnished an enlightened and liberal leadership at a time when New Englanders were but a small minority of the population.[42] As an example, Governor Edward Coles--Virginian, former private secretary to Madison, and correspondent with Jefferson--could hardly be fitted into the stereotype of the illiterate and shiftless backwoodsman from the frontier South.[43] Pulliam found an aversion among many Southerners to the pretentions of the Yankees which manifested itself in the emaculation of the law of 1825. In spite of the southern origins of the law, its opponents damned it as

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[41]John Pulliam, "Development of Free Common School Education In Illinois from 1818 to The Civil War," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1965).

[42]Ibid., 31 and 56.

[43]Ibid., 33-34.

"Yankee" because free school laws which taxed one man to educate the children of another were found only in New England at that time.[44] Hatred of Southerners among New Englanders must not have been too great, however, as they elected them to public office throughout the state.[45]

The argument for New England leadership in the establishing of education was sustained, in part, by the experiences of the border states that were settled primarily by Southerners. Missouri provided for a tax supported system of elementary schools by the Geyer Act of 1839, but the provisions of the law were irregularly enforced.[46] The southern influence was quite evident at the secondary level in that Missouri relied heavily on the private academies rather than on the publicly supported high schools through most of the nineteenth century.

In bleeding Kansas, the pro-slavery Southerner and the free soil New Englander co-existed without amicability or, on occasion, battled in the 1850's. A historian of education in the territorial period of Kansas, L. C. Smith, was unwilling to simply give the New Englander credit for the establishment of the common schools. He did suggest that support from New England enabled Lawrence to start superior schools from

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[44] Ibid., 62.

[45] Ibid., 66.

[46] C. A. Phillips, "A Century of Education in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XV (1920-21), 305.

the beginning, whereas Leavenworth relied more heavily on private and tuition schools as was typical among the pro-slavery element, as they were from the South and thus accustomed to those "kind of schools while in the New England States the people were used to 'Free Schools.'"[47] He further stated, however, that in spite of the Southerners' tradition of private schools, after migration to Kansas, they became "almost as favorable to free schools as the settlers from New England."[48] One of the champions of the free school movement, as an example, was the pro-slavery editor of the Leavenworth Herald, who editorialized that "the cause of education should by all means receive the earnest attention of our legislature. It is a subject second to none in importance."[49]

In spite of some support and occasional leadership among the southern born in the Middle West for public education, the New Englander played the crucial role in the development of the common schools in that area. The nativity of the inhabitants was most likely of more importance than the influences of the frontier environment in the kinds of educational institutions that developed. Contrast the development of the tax supported common schools in the Old Northwest with those that characterized the Old Southwest, where the

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[47]Smith, 27 and 32.

[48]Ibid., 49.

[49]Leavenworth Herald, July 14, 1855, cited in Smith, 32.

population was more homogeneous in that most of the settlers were from Virginia and the Carolinas. There both elementary schools and colleges were scarce. The academies financed by religious denominations, tuition fees, or subscription; and clinging to the classical curriculum were the typical instrument of education.[50] The Old Southwest lacked the leven of the New Englander's sense of community responsibility for the education of its young, which was a prerequisite to a public school system.

The other major stream of settlers to the West were the immigrants. The foreign-born were an important element on every frontier in the Middle West. By 1850, in the North Central states, they numbered 640,000 and accounted for nearly one-eighth of the population of the area. For some "native Americans," the very presence of these aliens seemed to make public schools necessary in order to assimilate them, and to inculcate in them American values and virtues. John Foote argued the necessity of quickly developing a system of schools in order to produce "a homogeneous and united people," because there were dangerous reformers and "ignorant fanatics" with "heated fancies and disordered imaginations" among the immigrants, including Fourierites, Socialists, Spiritualists, and an influx of Mormons and other domestic "fanatical settlers."[51]

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[50]Dixon Wecter, "Instruments of Culture on the Frontier," Yale Review, XXXVI (Winter, 1947), 250.

[51]Foote, 229.

They brought with them dangerous new doctrines in religion, politics, and morals, including notions of free love. Foote's plea was that "the fortification against these enemies, that disturb our peace, are our school houses."[52]

Aside from xenophobia, there was apprehension, among some Westerners, concerning an influx of illiterate immigrants, who would neither attend nor support the schools. On the whole their fears were not well grounded. Caleb Mills, Superintendent of Public Instruction in Indiana, argued that the high degree of illiteracy in his state was not a result of the foreign population. He wrote that adult ignorance was

> . . . almost exclusively native, and not foreign, as was stated by a correspondent of Zion's Herald of May 17, 1843. As an evidence of his want of information on this point, I would state that in his own county and two adjoining counties, there are 16,791 adults of whom 3,423 are unable to read and write . . . [and] are ignorant of the simplest rudiments of learning. This is not French or German ignorance, for there is not, to my knowledge, a single settlement of either of these races in those counties.[53]

Merle Curti found, in his carefully researched case study of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, that the highest percentage of school attendance was among English-speaking, foreign-born groups. Native-born Americans were next, followed by non-English-speaking immigrants. But generalizations concerning interest in education were difficult because of the number

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Letter to the Boston Recorder (March 21, 1844), reproduced in Sherockman, 95.

of variables. A greater percentage of the latter group were farmers who had, in all the groups, a lower attendance rate, perhaps in part, because they tended to be further from the schools. In all cases, the rate of school attendance increased with length of residency in the county.[54]

Throughout the frontier, before tax supported schools were organized, the immigrants demonstrated their concern with education by establishing schools in their settlements. In Ohio, six hundred French settled at Gallipolis in 1790; they soon established an Academy which was a positive influence for education in that locality for decades.[55] The Welsh established a community northwest of Cincinnati in 1796, and had opened a log schoolhouse by 1808. That small community of Paddy's Run by the end of the nineteenth century had produced one hundred and five teachers. The devotion of the Welsh to education has been characterized as one of the most wholesome influences in "the shaping of character in the Ohio Valley."[56]

Belgian immigrants in their settlements in Wisconsin established school buildings of hewed logs almost immediately upon arriving. According to one of their pioneer teachers, in spite of grave economic troubles and vast distances for

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[54]Merle Curti, The Making of an American Community (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 391-404.

[55]Willis L. Gard, "European Influence of Early Western Education," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXV (1916), 23-24.

[56]Ibid., 26-28.

the children to walk, both attendance and support for the schools were excellent.[57]

The same interest in education among immigrants was evident on newer frontiers further west. One of the first projects among the Swedish settlers at Stotler, Kansas, was the building of a school which opened in 1874. The school seemed to have combined the functions of the school as the social center of the community, as was usually true in rural America, with the folk high school of Scandinavia:

> It was the scene of many happy events in the eighties and nineties. There were singing schools, which met at the school and which attracted large crowds of young folks. Then there were night schools in which various subjects were taught. There were also literary meetings, which were the highlights of social life. It is said that young folks within a radius of eight or ten miles would wind their ways to the Stotler school for "Literary."[58]

Since there were not graduation exercises, some students at Stotler continued to attend until they were twenty-one, or even older.[59] This was fairly common on the prairies of the middle border, where mature German and Russian immigrants attended school to learn to speak, read, and write English, "and recited sociably with small girls five or six years of age."[60]

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[57]Xavier Martin, "The Belgians of Northeast Wisconsin," Wisconsin Historical Collections, XIII (1895), 382-386.

[58]Marie Olson, "Swedish Settlement at Stotler," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, IV (May, 1935), 161 and 162.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Anna Bemis Butler, "Early School Experiences in Nebraska--The First School at Sulton," Nebraska History, XXIII (1941), 211.

The situation in Missouri was different in that there were a sizable number of Europeans in the territory before settlement by the westward moving pioneers from the United States. The early European inhabitants of Missouri were Spanish and French. During the period of French control, the limited number of schools were either private or under church control, with the priests, including some from Kaskaskia, responsible for the teaching. Major Amos Stoddard found only two schools supported by public authority when he took control of Upper Louisiana. They had been established by the Spanish, and the curriculum was limited to that language and arithmetic.[61] Especially among the wealthy, there were a number of educated persons of French ancestory in Missouri, as well as a number of impressive private libraries.

European influences on education in Missouri continued into the nineteenth century because of the students who were sent to Europe for their education and because of the number of teachers in private schools in Missouri who had, or claimed they had, European training. The daughters of John Mullanphy, as an example, stud ed in Ursuline convents in France, and his son attended the Jesuit College in Paris for four years and spent an additional four years in England at

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[61]Amos Stoddard, Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana, 308-315, cited in Margaret McMillan and Monia Cook Morris, "Educational Opportunities in Early Missouri," Part II, Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (July, 1939), 478.

Stoneyhurst.[62] Private schools were more popular in Missouri than in any of the other states of the Middle West. But Timothy Flint's skepticism concerning the "puffing" qualifications of teachers, who advertised in frontier newspapers, was probably warranted.[63] Many claimed that they were fresh from European pedagogical successes; as an example, Christoph Frederick Schewe impressively announced that he had "been a professor in the Lycee Academy at Paris."[64] Another advertised that he was "in the habit of teaching in some of the first institutions in Europe and America."[65]

The immigrants were not a homogeneous group, in any sense, but concern for the education of their children was as great among the bulk of them as among the settlers as a whole. For at least a few, lack of educational opportunities was an important consideration in their decision to return to their homeland, as indicated by the pathos in the excerpt below from a letter which a German wrote, after his return from Missouri in 1837:

> Evervone, who contemplates migration to America, must abov. all consider very carefully the very important matter concerning his religious services and the education of their children. . . . Those who may smile with

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[62] McMillan and Morris, 317-318.

[63] Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston: Cummings Hillard, and Company, 1826), 186-187.

[64] Missouri Gazette, January 11, 1809, quoted in McMillan and Morris, 318.

[65] Ibid., October 20, 1819.

> pity at this remark, do not understand me. But let them come into the loneliness of the American forests and they will at once understand me, unless they are indifferent to all holy things. I admit, that the lack of church service and of school instruction for my children were some of the causes for my return to the fatherland.[66]

Windfalls for American education as a result of European immigration to the Middle West included acquaintance with European educational reforms among some of the immigrants, and especially among the German intellectual refugees, a concept of education as a responsibility of the state.[67] In Illinois, the German and Scandinavian farmers, with a heritage of church sponsored education, "were not among the first to lend active support to the public school idea."[68] However, German intellectuals, including the refugees of The Revolution of 1848, supported the free public school movement.[69] By 1850, the foreign-born in Wisconsin amounted to about a third of the states' population; about one-half from the British Isles and Canada and one-third from Germany. In the Constitutional Convention of 1846, the foreign-born delegates were among the strongest supporters of a solid article on education. One of the delegates, Dr. Francis Huebschmann, was a leader of the politically important Milwaukee Germans. In advocating

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[66]Nicholas Hesse, "German Visitor to Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XLI (April, 1947), 304.

[67]An examination of experiences with European educational reforms on the frontier was included in Chapter V.

[68]Pulliam, 210.

[69]Ibid.

a system of free public schools, he said: "Political equality and good schools will make the people of Wisconsin an enlightened and happy people. They will make them one people."[70]

The effect of the foreign-born population on education took some strange twists; one pioneer teacher in Indiana found that his "pretty good" knowledge of Latin and Greek was not much of a recommendation for a school teacher. But his speaking knowledge of German was much more impressive to the county superintendent of schools--not for teaching modern languages--but to help get the Republican superintendent re-elected in a region settled by Democratic German Catholics.[71]

A last group whose efforts in support of education cannot go unnoticed were the clergymen. By no means were all of the frontier ministers the illiterate, uncouth, and emotional exhorters pictured by the Halls. Many were men of superior intellectual achievements who gave energy and enlightened leadership to education and to the cultural life of the West generally. Among them were the Presbyterian, David Rice; the Methodist, Francis Asbury; John Mason Peck, a Baptist; Congregationalists--Caleb Mills; Calvin Stowe, John D. Pierce, and the Beechers; and a number of talented

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[70]Jorgenson, 62.

[71]Harvey R. Wiley, "The Education of a Backwoods Hoosier," Indiana Magazine of History, XXIV (June, 1928), 90.

Unitarians, including Ephraim Peabody, James Freeman Clark, and William H. Channing.[72] As an example of their endeavors, John M. Peck, a Baptist who came to frontier Missouri and Illinois from Connecticut, not only founded schools in both states and an academy in Illinois. He published appeals for good common schools and crusaded for them everywhere that he preached. He helped to organize and drew up the plan for The United Society for the Promotion of the Gospel and Common Schools which was formed in St. Charles County, Missouri, in October of 1818.[73] The work of the society embraced Missouri and Illinois and was designed to promote "common-schools in the western parts of America, both amongst the whites and Indians."[74] Peck both suggested the success of his program and revealed a prejudice which permeated his Memoir when he wrote that within three years from its founding the United Society had established "fifty good schools . . . in Missouri and Illinois, where common nuisances, with drunken, illiterate Irish Catholics at the head, had before existed."[75] Peck may have been guilty of some of the "puffing" which Flint labeled

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[72]Rusk, 50-51.

[73]St. Louis, Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser, October 30, 1818, reprinted in Missouri Historical Review (July, 1936), 417.

[74]Rufus Babcock, (ed.), Forty Years of Frontier Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck (1864), reprinted by the University of Illinois Press, 1965, 108.

[75]Ibid., 109.

as a western trait, but, according to one historian of education in Illinois, he "contributed more to the growth of educational institutions on the Illinois frontier" than anyone else of his denomination.[76]

Another example of a Yankee minister, who led in the struggle for the establishment of schools on the frontier, was that of Caleb Mills. He was born in New Hampshire and educated at "rigidly Puritan" Pembroke Academy, Dartmouth University, and Andover Theological Seminary. In 1834, he was sent to Indiana under the auspices of the American Home Missionary Society. Just before leaving for the frontier, he wrote that his thoughts were concerned with "the subject of common schools, and the best means of awakening a more lively interest in their establishment in the western country."[77] Those concerns never left him. His biographer wrote that Mills could not write or deliver a sermon without continual reference to "the intellectual and moral culture" and the interdependence of "education and religion."[78] He not only served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Indiana, but until his death in 1879, he directly influenced every important piece of school legislation in the state.[79]

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[76]Pulliam, 89.

[77]Letter from Caleb Mills, March 18, 1833, quoted in Richard G. Boone, A History of Education in Indiana (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1892), 94-95.

[78]Sherockman, 93.

[79]Boone, 94-95.

Another Congregational minister from New Hampshire, who became the "founder" of his states' public school system, was John D. Pierce of Michigan. He, like Mills, was a missionary under the auspices of the Home Missionary Board. Pierce served as the first State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Michigan, and was the chief architect of the public school system of that state.

These examples of leadership in western education by clergymen were only a few of the numerous ones which might be cited. Ministers frequently served as presidents of state and local teachers' associations. In Wisconsin, where the office of the local superintendents of schools was a part-time lay position, it was often filled by clergymen. Jorgenson's summary statement that in Wisconsin, "the entire educational enterprise was . . . permeated by the religious influence," accurately reflected conditions in the Middle West generally.[80] An explanation for the phenomenon was given by James Hall in 1835:

> . . . the business of education falls naturally into the hands of the clergy. It comes legitimately within the sphere of their duties. They are fitted for it by the nature of their studies and pursuits; while liberally educated men, in other professions, could only become qualified for the business of tuition by the sacrifice of their other avocations. Those avocations are too lucrative and honorable to be abandoned by men of talents, for the humble and precarious calling of teacher or professor.[81]

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[80] Jorgenson, 122-124.

[81] James Hall, Legends of the West (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby and Company, 1853), 206.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST SCHOOLS ON THE FRONTIER

One of the most important ideas in the frontier thesis was that institutions were changed as the abrasive of the frontier constantly wore away the culture which the pioneers brought with them. Men were forced to change, to innovate, in order to adjust to the peculiar demands of a new environment which necessarily lacked and was unable to support the institutions which were left behind.[1] In the first stages of settlement with the accompanying low density of population, education, as other institutions, was forced to adapt itself to the limitations of the environment.

Opportunities for the education of the children of the first white families in an area of new settlement were usually non-existent except where Indian schools in forts or missions had previously been established. The first school which whites attended in Ohio was in such a fort or post school at Marietta. It was conducted by Major Anselm Tupper in a blockhouse during the winter of 1789-1790.[2] Often the

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[1]The theme was fully developed by Walter Prescott Webb in The Great Plains and The Great Frontier.

[2]D. C. Shilling, "Pioneer Schools and School Masters," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXV (1916), 38.

Army chaplins acted as teachers in these post schools. However, in 1824 at Fort Howard in Green Bay, the school which was built just outside the walls of the fort was taught by a discharged soldier.[3] In the 1830's, in the fort at Prairie Du Chien, non-commissioned officers conducted the school and received fifteen cents a day extra pay for this duty.[4]

Following the War of 1812, Robert Stuart of the American Fur Company on Mackinac Island opened a boarding school in the trading post for the daughters of the fur traders and their Indian wives.[5] The missionary school at the trading post at La Pointe, Wisconsin, was attended by the children of both Indians and whites.[6] The first schools which whites attended in Kansas were the Indian mission schools. The Shawnee Mission School in Johnson County was established in 1830, and was attended by a few white children who lived in

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[3]W. C. Whitford, "Early History of Education in Wisconsin," Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, V, Part III (1869), 330. Also see Albert G. Ellis, "Fifty-four Years Recollections of Men and Events in Wisconsin," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, VII (1876).

[4]Ibid.

[5]Elizabeth Therese Baird, "Reminiscences of Early Days on Mackinac Island," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XIV (1898), 22-23.

[6]Reuben Gold Thwaites, "The Story of Chequamegon Bay," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XIII (1895), 418.

the vicinity until it closed in 1854.[7] The first school for whites was not opened until 1858, and then in an old Indian meeting house.[8]

During the period of sparse population, and before local government and local taxing power was established, schools from Ohio to Kansas, in the tradition of frontier democracy, were generally cooperative affairs established by voluntary efforts. These were the subscription schools in which parents with children in school shared the cost of the teacher's salary; the fee was often collected by the teacher from each parent. The schools, although voluntarily organized and not usually supported by any tax money, were not operated by teacher entrepreneurs, but were community projects.[9] In some cases, a part of the teacher's salary was paid from the interest on the sale of public land. As a result, a "semi-subscription, semi-free" school system operated.[10] Usually a contract between the two parties was drawn up and signed. The example below was signed at Youngstown, Ohio, in 1818:

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[7]Earle E. McKown, "A Survey of the Historical Development and Growth of Schools in Johnson County, Kansas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1935), 35.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), 7.

[10]Owenetta Edwards, "Early Schools and Teachers in my County," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXIV (April, 1931), 13.

> This article between the undersigned subscribers of the one part and Jabez P. Manning on the other, witnesseth: That said Manning doth on his part, engage to teach a school at the schoolhouse near the center of Youngstown for the term of one quarter; wherein he engages to teach, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and English Grammar: and furthermore that the school shall be opened at 9 O'clock A. M. and closed at 4 P. M. of each day of the week (Saturday and Sunday excepted) and on Saturday to be opened at 9 and closed at 12 O'clock A. M. And we, the subscribers, on our part, individually engage to pay unto the said Manning $1.75 for each and every scholar we subscribed, at the end of the term; and we furthermore engage to furnish, or to bear the necessary expense of furnishing, wood and all other things necessary for the use of the school.
>
> Furthermore, we do engage that, unless by the 6th day of April of the present year the number of scholars subscribed amount to thirty-five, that the said Manning is in no way obligated by this article.
>
> Furthermore, we allow the said Manning the privilege of receiving five scholars more than are here specified.
>
> J. P. Manning
> (Subscribers)[11]

Inflation seemed to take its toll as the frontier moved westward. In 1830 at Vandalia, Illinois, John Russell was teaching reading at $2.50 per quarter, but writing and arithmetic were fifty cents extra.[12] Some of the teachers in subscription schools in Kansas following the Civil War were receiving $2.50 a month for each student.[13] Often the parents

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[11]Reproduced in Shilling, 42.

[12]R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840, II (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1951), 335.

[13]Jackson James Austin, "A Short Educational History of Labette County, Kansas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers' College of Emporia, 1937), 22.

could not afford the stipulated cash, and a lesser amount was paid for each child as a result of "dicker."[14] The teacher was sometimes obligated to accept produce in lieu of cash: he might be asked to accept "bear bacon, buffalo steak, jerked venison, furs, potmetal, bar iron, linsey, hackled flax, young cattle, pork, corn," as well as tobacco or whiskey.[15] Too, each family was responsible for furnishing firewood of specified length and quality.

In addition to the fees, each family was frequently obligated to board the teacher, sometimes for a week or more at a time depending on the number of students enrolled in the school. Normally, because of the isolated frontiersman's desire of sociability rather than an imposition, the visit of the teacher to the students' homes was regarded as a major happening and many preparations preceeded his appearance.[16] Undoubtedly, the teachers also had an opportunity to observe much that was instructive, amusing, and interesting in these frontier homes.[17]

The minimum length of the school term was usually three to four months, although younger children might attend

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[14]A. D. P. Van Buren, "The Log Schoolhouse Era in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XIV (1887), 286.

[15]Shilling, 41.

[16]Van Buren, 286.

[17]Charles Ben-Ulyn Johnson, "The Subscription School and the Seminary in Pioneer Days," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 32 (1925), 55.

for a longer period.[18] The terms were flexible enough to allow older students to attend for a few weeks in the "off season" from the farms.[19] Since there were not graduation exercises or grading into classes, students occasionally attended irregularly until they were twenty-one or older.[20] Conversely, in some of the early schools, there was such a scarcity of students of school age that children of four or five attended in order that there would be enough students to support a school.[21]

An immediate problem of the school in the wilderness was, of course, a building. The difficulty was solved in a variety of ways. Subscription as well as some of the first tax supported schools were sometimes held in the cabin or house of the teacher. Barns were used; occasionally old forts were converted; in Waynesville, Indiana, a retired distiller kept school in a blacksmith shop; and in at least one place, the school was conducted in a former smokehouse.[22] In others, "the rudest log hut was erected, a stick chimney put up, a

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[18]McKown, 47.

[19]Buley, 344.

[20]McKown, 48.

[21]Austin, 62.

[22]William J. Johnston, Sketches of the History of Stephenson County, Illinois (1854), reprinted in Transaction of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 30 (1923), 303. And D. D. Banta, "The Early Schools of Indiana," Indiana Magazine of History, II (1906), 45-47.

broad fireplace made, rough benches and seats arranged" and the school was in business.[23] These first crude buildings were often constructed with voluntary labor from the citizens of the community. In 1858, in Labette County, Kansas, the first school was built in a week:

> The people agreed to meet and go to work on Monday morning, which they did with such success that by Saturday night they had a house, 22 by 24 feet square, floored with puncheons, seated and desked with the same, covered and lined with shaved clapboards: door and window fastenings were of boards cut with a slip saw; and on Sunday it was dedicated in order. On Monday, Joseph C. Henery commenced a school by the month.[24]

The school building was, in most cases, a community center in the rural West. It provided a place for meetings of all kinds, for sociables, dances, community parties, spelling bees, the "literary," and on Sunday morning the church. In Madison, Wisconsin, as an example, a small brick school house was built with public funds in 1845. A partition was placed in the center, and a public school was conducted at one end and a private school at the other. On Sunday, the building was used by the Methodists as a church, and later by the Baptists and the German Methodists. Because it was one of the few public buildings in town, it was also used for

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[23]Van Buren, 286.

[24]Nelson Case, History of Labette County, Kansas (Topeka: Crane and Company, 1893), 181, quoted in Austin, 19.

political and other public meetings.[25] In Kansas in the 1860's and 1870's, citizens were asked to vote on bond issues for the construction of schoolhouses even though the schools operated through subscription rather than from tax monies.[26]

On the prairies, the primitive log huts gave way to equally primitive sod school houses, even in some cases to large dugouts, or in fortunate instances to a stone building.[27] These methods of dealing with the adverse circumstances of the frontier were considered expedients for the moment. The hope was, as soon as possible, to organize local school districts, to levy taxes, float bonds, and to build permanent structures. E. E. Dale described these more adequate buildings:

> It [was] usually a frame wooden structure about twenty by thirty feet. It was furnished with a table and chair for the teacher, and ten or twelve long benches for the pupils. Near the center was a large stove, often of sheet iron, which kept the room reasonably comfortable in winter. There was a blackboard but seldom any maps, charts, or other teaching aids. Sometimes an enterprising teacher would provide a few pictures for the walls or three or four mottoes proclaiming such worthy sentiments as Education is Wealth, or Knowledge is Power. Outside was a large pile of wood replenished from time to time by some philanthropic citizen and an axe and chopping block.[28]

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[25]Reuben Gold Thwaites, Historical Sketch of the Public Schools of Madison, Wisconsin (Madison: M. J. Cantwell, Book and Job Printer, 1886), 27.

[26]Austin, 80.

[27]Edward Everett Dale, "Teaching on the Prairie Plains, 1890-1900," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIII (September, 1946), 295.

[28]Ibid.

If the building was often crude and primitive, so was the furniture and equipment. The children were called into the room by a rapping on the window; not only was there an absence of school bells, blackboards were usually not to be found either.[29] In some cases the school had neither desk nor chairs, and the students were forced to sit on flattened logs with pegs for legs.[30] In many of the frontier schools, there was not a recess, and small children rode these logs for as long as five hours, without a back rest for their spines.[31] Sometimes these primitive schools had only a partial floor which formed a sanctuary for snakes. One former student in such a school remembered that he and his fellows were so afraid of snakes that they wouldn't hang their feet down and as a result became dreadfully exhausted humped up on the benches all day.[32] The teacher was outfitted with "his cherry ruler, whip and penknife; the pupils with their few textbooks, supplemented with slate and pencil, a writing book made from foolscap, in which was a Holland quill."[33]

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[29]Van Buren, 295.

[30]Austin, 56.

[31]Logan Esarey (ed.), "The Pioneers of Morgan County: Memoirs of Noah J. Major," Indiana Historical Society Publications, V (1915), 350.

[32]John Spilman, "History of Sylvan School, Lawrence County, Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, L (October, 1955), 33.

[33]Van Buren, 295.

Readin, writin, 'rithmetic, spelling, a little geography, and a very little grammar made up the curriculum: "A Webster's spellin book served for both readin and spellin."[34] Writing lessons normally consisted of copying in homemade ink (Maple bark for black and pokeberry for red) a phrase written by the teacher at the top of a sheet of foolscap. Often a worthy maxim such as "Evil communications corrupt good manners," was chosen as the material to be copied.[35]

Spelling was emphasized, or perhaps over-emphasized, as it was an end in itself and the meaning of words was sometimes unknown to both pupils and teacher. It was not only the core of the curriculum, but in the form of spelling matches it furnished an important source of entertainment for the community, before the organization of competitive team sports. The Hoosier Schoolmaster accurately reflected the Westerner's stress on spelling: "Words were made to be spelled, and men were probably created that they might spell them. Hence the necessity for sending a pupil through the spelling-book five times before you allow him to begin to read, or indeed to do anything else."[36]

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[34]Oliver Johnson, 179.

[35]Edward W. Barber, "Recollections and Lessons of a Pioneer Boyhood," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections, XXXI (1902), 221.

[36]Edward Eggleston, The Hoosier Schoolmaster, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), 17.

A standard curriculum was indeed difficult; the often unprepared teacher was forced to rely on textbook instruction. Yet each child brought his own books from home. Books were thus anything that might be available: the New England Primer, Websters' Elementary Spelling Books, or the Complete Little Arithmetic.[37] The Bible was often used as it was the only book that all the students could easily acquire. The children brought books that had been used by older brothers and sisters in the former homes. Some observers saw an advantage to the conglomeration; the children could, at least, enjoy the variety of each other's stories.[38]

Because of the financial hardships of the frontier, it was an imposition to require parents to buy a new series of books for each new set of offspring which started to school. When one pioneer teacher asked the children to buy the same textbook, an irate father arrived and bellowed before the entire school: "I paid three big dollars for that book and only five years ago and one year it ain't been used and Eddie he says he can't use it no more and has to have a new one like what other boys have and I won't have it no matter what!"[39]

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[37]Michael Bossert, "Early Schools of Franklin County, Indiana," Indiana Magazine of History, XXVI (September, 1930), 227-229.

[38]Anna Bemis Cutler, "Early School Experiences in Nebraska--The First School at Sulton," Nebraska History, XXIII (July-September, 1941), 213.

[39]Ibid.

The situation was not always any better above the elementary level. On the opening day of classes at a newly established frontier seminary, the teacher asked if the students had the necessary books and Baynard Hall recorded the following conversation:

> "I've got 'em--"
> "Me too--"
> "Master--Uncle Billy's to fetch mine out in his wagin about Monday nixe--"
> "Father says he couldn't mind the name and wants them on a paper--"
> "Books!--I never heern tell of any books--wont these here ones do, Master?--this here's the Western Spellin one--and this one's the Western Kalkelatur?"
> "Mr. Clarinse--I fotch'd my copy-book and a bottle of red-ink to sit down siferin in--and daddy wants me to larn bookkeepin and surveyin."[40]

Many of the subscription schools were "loud schools," or as they were called in some of the border states--"blab schools."[41] The amount of noise generated as the students recited was believed to indicate the extent of learning which was taking place. One student later wondered if the teachers believed that "the mind could not act unless the tongue was going, or . . . [if] the tongue going was the only evidence that the mind was acting."[42] The simultaneous reciting often

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[40]Baynard R. Hall, The New Purchase or, Seven and a Half Years in the Far West, 1843, ed. James Albert Woodburn, Indiana Centennial edition (Princeton University Press, 1916), 323.

[41]Thomas C. MacMillan, "The Scots and Their Descendants in Illinois," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 26, (1919), 47.

[42]Richard Malcolm Johnston, "The Goosepond School," The American Frontier: A Social and Literary Record (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), 282.

resulted in a frightful uproar, as each student attempted to make as much noise as possible. One former student of a loud school somewhat wistfully remembered a girl with the power to drown everyone else out: "When she opened up, you'd just as well lay your book down."[43] A Spencer County, Indiana, teacher, while his students recited with all of their lung power, habitually "drew forth his trusty fiddle and played 'Old Zip Coon,' 'The Devil's Dream,' and other inspiring profane airs with all the might and main that was in him."[44]

In Lawrence County, Missouri, all of the schools were "loud" until 1847.[45] And, in Morgan County, Indiana, loud schools predominated until about 1835. The change to silent schools, with their "funeral" like atmosphere, created uneasiness among students, who begged to be allowed to study aloud.[46]

Another area of forced innovation for the Westerner was in the selection of teachers for the frontier schools. Teachers adequate in terms of training, experience, personality, or even morals, were rare on the frontier; and the backwoodsman and his children had to go along with whomever was available. However, teachers were of the same extraordinary

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[43] A Home in the Woods: Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences of Early Marion County, Indiana Historical Publications, XVI, No. 2 (1951), 180.

[44] Banta, 137.

[45] Spilman, 32.

[46] Esarey, 352.

diversity that characterized the western population as a whole. Graduates, fresh from eastern colleges, and semi-illiterates, foreign and domestic, exemplified the contrasting qualifications. Many of the early teachers were foreign adventurers--Irish, Scottish, or English.[47] John Mason Peck, a missionary to Missouri and Illinois in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and a vocal anti-Catholic, complained that "not a few drunken, profane, worthless Irishmen were peramulating the country, and getting up schools; and yet they could neither speak, read, pronounce, spell or write the English language."[48] Fortescue Cuming in his tour of the West in the first decade of the nineteenth century came upon one of the schoolmasters in the wilderness and described him as "an Irish looking old man, with silver grey locks and barefooted, his whole appearance and that of the cabin which was the school, indicating but little encouragement for the dissemination of knowledge."[49] Such a one could have been the almost legendary Irishman named

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[47]W. W. Venable, Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley, (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Co., 1891), 191. See also Banta, 83.

[48]Rufus Babcock (ed.), Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck D.D. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1864), reprinted by Southern Illinois University Press, 1965, 123.

[49]Fortescue Cuming, Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, 1807-1809, reprinted in Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, IV (Cleveland: The Arthur Clark Co., 1906), 213.

Halfpenny who was conducting school in what was to become Illinois as early as 1785.[50]

But, the often unprepared foreigner; the pioneer youth who was hired because he was a trifle more ambitious and had a little better understanding of the three R's than his fellows; and the domestic "ignorant strapping" bully who had the muscle to keep the frontier rowdies "in a state of subdued sulkiness," were forced to compete with New Englanders full of missionary zeal.[51] Henry Fearon noted the New England background of the Cincinnati teachers in his visit to the West in 1817, and suggested that they were the "schoolmasters in the western country generally."[52] To these sons and daughters of the puritans, New England was the land of God's people and trans-Appalachia was a pagan wilderness. Their theology recognized little difference between "Catholic and cannibal."[53] Western self-consciousness was occasionally revealed in expressions of resentment of Easterners brought in to teach: "We want teachers raised up from among our own

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[50]John P. McGoorty, "The Early Irish of Illinois," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, Publication No. 34 (1927), 60-61.

[51]Florence Walton Taylor, "Culture in Illinois in Lincoln's Day," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society (1935), 133; Reuben Gold Thwaites, Historical Sketch of the Public Schools of Madison, Wisconsin (Madison: M. J. Cantwell, Book and Job Printer, 1886), 13.

[52]Henry Bradshaw Fearon, Sketches of America (London: printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), 228.

[53]C. C. Carter, "Frontier Sketches: The Schoolmistress," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXII (September, 1939), 386.

people, teachers acquainted with our habits, customs, and modes of life. . . . Imported teachers will not answer this purpose."[54]

In the earliest stages of the frontier schools, most of the teachers were men. Some of the early travelers in the West noted that it was rare to see a woman teacher. On the Indiana frontier in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the prevailing sentiment asserted that "it wasn't a woman's job, any more than milkin a cow was a man's job. Then agin it took purty much of a man to handle the big boys and girls,"[55] and occasionally critters even more dangerous, as in the case of a teacher in a log cabin school who started one day's work in the classroom by strangling a wildcat with his bare hands.[56] The same prejudice against women teachers existed two generations later on the Kansas frontier. The Topeka Capital recounted the story of a group of squatters who had built a school house and then had a meeting to hire a teacher. There was a motion to employ a "lady teacher," but this idea was vigorously opposed by a former teacher, who "knew the impossibility of a lady teaching school." He warned,

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[54]William H. Underwood, Belleville (Illinois) Advocate, February 18, 1857, quoted in Robert G. Bone, "Education in Illinois Before 1857," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, L (Summer, 1957), 126.

[55]Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences, 175.

[56]Dixon Wecter, "Instruments of Culture on the Frontier," Yale Review, XXXVI (Winter, 1947), 244.

"My God, the boys would catch her up in their arms and kiss her to death."[57] The motion lost. Characteristically, the decision was then made to hire a local man, who had a bad heart and was unable to do manual labor.[58]

In some western communities however, the hiring of women teachers was advocated because, with the growing opportunities in the West, the prevailing wage was insufficient to attract men. In Illinois, at the middle of the century, it was customary for men to receive two dollars per student per week and women a dollar and a half. Some communities employed men as teachers in the winter and women in the summer.[59]

In the 1830's the Ladies' Association for Educating Females believed it better to educate frontier girls to teach than to import teachers from the East, as they were more adaptable to the frontier people; and because "Eastern teachers seemed to have only matrimony on their minds."[60] This problem became acute in Illinois in 1847 and 1848 when thirty-four "refined, comely, young Eastern women" were imported to teach, but so attracted the men of the community that thirty-four

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[57] Topeka Daily Capital, March 12, 1905, quoted in Lloyd C. Smith, "Territorial Common Schools in Kansas," Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, Bulletin of Information, No. 24 (1924), 25-26.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Margaret King Moore, "The Ladies Association for Educating Females, 1833-1837," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (June, 1938), 171-172.

[60] Ibid., 178.

schools "were hard put to find teachers to replace them."[61] Many of the young women who went to the West, however, were bent on "doing good," not on finding a husband. C. C. Carter suggested that, on the whole, they were careful of three things: their clothes, their money and their reputations.[62]

One of the problems related to the frontier schoolmaster (and to teachers in general) was that too often teaching was considered a temporary expedient. Fledgling attorneys were especially prone to keep school while they prepared for their profession. John Nash in Iowa and Henry Baird in Wisconsin set up schools in courtrooms to support themselves while they "read law."[63] Beginning attorneys continued to teach after they had been admitted to the bar; a local school historian dismissed one with, "he was not a teacher; he was a lawyer and taught school for lack of something better to do."[64]

The status of the teacher was low and many were ashamed of their profession. James Porlier, regarded by some as the first teacher in Wisconsin, considered clerking in a

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[61]Taylor, 133.

[62]Carter, "The Schoolmistress," 388.

[63]E. G. Ellis (ed.), "Memoir of Hon. Henry S. Baird," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, VII (1876), 429. And, "A Selection from the Autobiography of John A. Nash," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XIII (April, 1915), 226.

[64]H. W. Wells, The Schools and Teachers of Early Peoria (Peoria, Ill.: Jacquin and Co., 1900), 63.

store to which he devoted much of his time, as a more "dignified occupation" than teaching.[65] Teaching was frequently considered a part-time occupation. An eighteenth century teacher in Cincinnati advertised that in addition to keeping school, he wrote deeds and indentures "on reasonable terms."[66] The first teacher in Brownsville, Illinois, supplemented his income by building flatboats and floating cargo to New Orleans; he was admired as a jack-of-all-trades in his community.[67]

As indicated by contemporary accounts, many, if not the majority, of the first generation of frontier teachers in the Middle West were ill prepared nere-do-wells. Many had the Westerner's penchant for constant travel. They were described, not as men looking for a permanent location in which to settle, and make a reputation, but "they was more of a rovin class."[68] D. D. Banta referred to them as a variety of tramps and homeless fellows who traveled around the countryside looking for a job.[69] Typical was one of the first teachers in New Haven, Illinois. He was a Methodist preacher, who appeared one day from "somewhere," taught for a while,

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[65]W. C. Whitford, "Early History of Education in Wisconsin," Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, V (1869), 325.

[66]Venable, 97.

[67]Waller, 75.

[68]Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences, 175.

[69]Banta, 85.

and then mysteriously disappeared to "somewhere."[70]

The academic credentials of the first teachers in the wilderness were often severely limited. In 1856 the School Examiner of Monroe County, Indiana, complained: "We have teachers in our own county that don't know whether we live north or south of the equator, or whether the world turns to the east or west."[71] A teacher during a job interview in frontier Des Moines in 1851 was asked his feelings about fractions. He answered "that he did not believe in them, and if he could have his way, they would be taken out of the arithmetics." He secured the job.[72] The letter reproduced below gives an indication of the preparation and motivation of one frontier teacher:

> To Mr. John Lawe & Mr. Louis Grignon,
> GENTLEMEN,--as I have mentiond to you boath, that I intend to keep school being the onley means for a Liveleyhood. I shall concider it a great Obligation if you will favour me in obtaining Scholars, which I promise to do & act faithfully my duty as a school Master toward them &c.
>
> Respectfully, Gentlemen your
> J. Bte. S. Jacobs.
> Green Bay, 17 October, 1820[73]

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[70]Waller, 73.

[71]James Albert Woodburn, "James Woodbury: Hoosier Schoolmaster," Indiana Magazine of History, XXXII (September, 1936), 235.

[72]John A. Nash, "A Selection from the Autobiography of John A. Nash," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XIII (April, 1915), 201.

[73]"Early Schools in Gren Bay," a collection of documents in Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XII (1892), 455.

Communities too often hired as teachers those who were unable to do anything else. A historian of education in Ohio asserted that teaching was regarded as a kind of pension, necessary because "county infirmaries" were not available.[74] He complained that schools in Southwestern Ohio "were taught by crippled, worn-out old men and women physically unable to scotch hemp and spin flax, or constitutionally opposed to exercise." Generalizations, such as the one above may well be too severe, and other impressions are available.[75] However, for the most part contemporary evidence supported the conclusion that the early frontier teacher was not only frequently incompetent, but, in addition he was often hired because there was no other way in which he could support himself.[76]

A classic description of abysmal ignorance among frontier teachers was given by Baynard Hall. As usual with Hall,

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[74]James J. Burns, Educational History of Ohio (Columbus: Historical Publishing Co., 1905), 21.

[75]A. Haines in "Historical Sketches of Public Schools," wrote about the same area in Southwestern Ohio. He suggested that the settlers tended to look on the "primitive schoolmaster" as a scholar, even a "prodigy of knowledge." Quoted in Shilling, 49.

[76]The frontier teacher was often described as lame. Examples may be found in: Waller and in Charles Ben-Ulyn Johnson, "The Subscription School and the Seminary in Pioneer Days," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society (1925); the teachers of Johnson County, Indiana, were classified as "the one-legged teacher, the lame teacher, the teacher who had fits, the teacher who had been educated for the ministry but owing to his habits of hard drink, had turned pedagogue, and the teacher who got drunk on Saturday and whipped the entire school on Monday." Banta, 87.

the reader was left to determine if the conversation was in any way accurate, or if it was simply a parody. A teaching applicant indicated his qualifications:

> "I can teach sifring, reading, writing, jogger-free, surveying, grammur, spelling, definitions, parsin--"
> "Are you a linguist?"
> "Sir!"
> "You of course understand the dead languages?"
> "Well, can't say I ever seed much of them, though I have heerd tell of them; but I can soon larn them--they aint more than a few of them I allow?"
> "Oh! my dear sir, it is not possible--we--can't--"
> "Well, I never seed what I couldn't larn about as smart as any body--"
> "Mr. Rapid, I do not mean to question your abilities; but if you are now wholly unacquainted with the dead languages, it is impossible for you or any other talented man to learn them under four or five years."
> "Pshoo foo! I'll bet I larn one in three weeks! Try me, sir--let's have the furst one furst--how many are there?"
> "Mr. Rapid, it is utterly impossible; but if you insist, I will loan you a Latin book--"
> "That's your sorts, let's have it, that's all I want, fair play."
>
> Accordingly, I handed him a copy of Historiae Sacrae with which he soon went away, saying, he "didn't allow it would take long to get through Latin, if 'twas only sich a thin patch of a book as that."
> In a few weeks, to my no small surprise, Mr. Solomon Rapid again presented himself; and drawing forth the book began with a triumphant expression of countenance:--
>
> "Well, sir, I have done the Latin."
> "Done the Latin!"
> "Yes, I can read it as fast as English."
> "Read it as fast as English!!"
> "Yes, as fast as English--and I didn't find it hard at all."
> "May I try you on a page?"
> "Try away, try away; that's what I've come for."
> "Please read here then, Mr. Rapid"; and in order to give him a fair chance, I pointed to the first lines of the first chapter, viz: "In principio deus creavit caelum et terram intra sex dies; primo die fecit lucem," &c.
> "That, sir?" and then he read thus, "in prinspo duse creevit kalelum et terum intra sex dyes--primmo dye fe-fe-sit looseum," &c.

"That will do, Mr. Rapid--"
"Ah! ha! I told you so."
"Yes--yes but translate."
"Translate?!" (eyebrows elevating.)
"Yes, translate, render it."
"Render it!! how's that?" (forehead more wrinkled.)
"Why, yes. Render it into English--give me the meaning of it."
"Meaning!!" (staring full in my face, his eyes like saucers, and forehead wrinkled with the furrows of eighty)--"MEANING!! I didn't know it had any meaning. I thought it was a DEAD language!!"[77]

Not in the case of Mr. Rapid, but in the locally controlled schools of the frontier, teaching positions were often awarded on the basis of friendship, rather than as a result of qualifications or ability.[78] Even after attempts to certify teachers on the basis of examinations, the scarcity of teachers resulted in restraint on the part of the examiners. E. E. Dale described an instance in which a young teaching applicant was required to take a test in bookkeeping. With time running short, he failed to balance his book by $37.50. But his paper was marked 100 percent after "in desperation he wrote on the short side, Cash to Balance_ _ _ _$37.50."[79] The Superintendent of Doniphas County, Kansas, in 1867, asked

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[77]Hall, 268-270. There were, of course, many instances in which the teacher was qualified, but the interviewer left something to be desired. One prospective teacher, proud of his knowledge of Latin and Greek, asked the local school official which language he wanted taught, "McGuffy's reader and 'rithmetic" was the answer. "Source Material of Iowa History: Pioneer Reminiscences of Wapello County," Iowa Journal of History, LVII (October, 1959), 340.

[78]McKown, 68-69.

[79]Dale, 299.

a few very elementary questions and then told the teaching applicants, "Now, girls, if you will make me a real nice bow, and say, 'Thank you,' I will give you each a certificate for 12 months."[80]

A common affliction among frontier schoolmasters expecially among the Scottish and Irish, if reminiscences and contemporary accounts are accurate, was a propensity to intemperate use of alcohol. School officials in Indiana complained about teachers who brought their daily bottle of whiskey to school with them.[81] In an Illinois school, a "happy-go-lucky Irishman," seldom sober, was replaced by another teacher who, unfortunately for the school subscribers, preferred "booze" to teaching.[82]

In early Illinois, it was an unwritten law that a schoolmaster should not drink during school hours. However, one teacher, saved from dismissal by his popularity in the community, cached his bottle in the "squirrel hole" of a sycamore tree which he visited each recess. The students, aware of his frequent trips, reported him to the school directors who passed by unanimous vote the resolution below:

> We the directors of Dist. No. __ find you guilty of drinking whisky while on duty and restrict your

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[80]Frances E. Katner, "Doniphas County," Columbian History of Education in Kansas (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1893), 125.

[81]Woodburn, 235.

[82]Waller, 73.

> indulgence to one small drink at each recess and two at the noon hour, and that you are to take no vengeance on the 'scholars' that appeared as witnesses against you.[83]

Unfortunately, the Green Bay teacher, whose letter requesting scholars was reproduced above, was also a devotee of the jug, as exhibited by excerpts from a second letter written to his patron a year after the first:

> Green Bay 26th November 1821.
>
> Dear Lawe,--Your note in answer to mind of the 25th inst pleased me mush, as it maid me cum to my right sencess; in one part of my letter to you I returnd you thanks for your favour towars me, and in another part that you abused me. I did not mean to say so, it is a mistake on my part. I ment to say that you repremanded me several times. . . . I mentioned I would be quite happy if you would send your children to school and I should charge you onley one Dollar per Child instead of two--and about minding receiveing person with spirits and Whiskey, I was half drunk and I maid Ceremonies to get quite so.
>
> To Forgive my errors
> Respectifully yours
> J. Bte. S. Jacobs.[84]

Peck described a schoolmaster, Irish as usual, who not only generously inbibed "cherry-bounce" (a mixture of whiskey and honey), but allowed half of his students to drink so much that they became "orful sick." Some were not sober enough to walk home from school, and some required a doctor's attention. Peck reported with satisfaction that justice reigned in this

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[83]C. C. Carter, "Frontier Sketches: The Schoolmaster," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXII (June, 1939), 228.

[84]"Early Schools in Green Bay," 456-457.

case as the indignant parents fired the teacher.[85]

It may well be that the incongruity of the drunken schoolmaster was so striking that they have been remembered and their exploits chronicled while their more numerous, pedestrian, and sober peers have been more often forgotten. It should also be remembered that heavy drinking was common among all classes on the frontier, and professional people from doctors to politicians imbibed freely of the liquid corn or cherry-bounce. One writer frostily warned that while he would not apologize for the "drunken, trifling teacher," he insisted that, in all fairness, judgements of the frontier schoolmaster's behavior must be in the context of the moral standard of his time.[86]

The mis-treatment of students at the hands of a drunken teacher was a real possibility as revealed by the behavior of a Mr. Goff who taught in a log schoolhouse in Michigan in 1816. One of his former students described his behavior:

> Every afternoon about recess time, he having by this time exhausted his half pint flask of whisky, would detail one or two boys to go to a grocery and get it refilled, giving them a sixpence for the purpose, and woe to the boy that tarried by the way to test the quality of its contents. Every afternoon he would become so drunk as to require the support of his chair while standing up to apply the rope to the back of some boy or boys. The rope was knotted at each end. His habit was to double up the rope and throw it with

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[85]Rufus Babcock (ed.), Forty Years of Frontier Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck D.D. (University of Southern Illinois Press, 1965), 124.

[86]Shilling, 47.

> almost unerring aim to the boy, who had to carry it back to the master, and receive a roping across his back and shoulders.[87]

Mr. Goff's school was forced to close after the boys rebelled as he was going to beat one of them, and "piled onto him like an enraged swarm of bees, with fisticuffs, kicks, pinching, biting, sticking pins and awls into him." Other students held the door closed, but a group of carpenters who had been working in the area were brought by the old drunk's wife. They forced themselves into the room and saved him, but not the school.[88]

The diversity of experiences on the frontier was exemplified by the variation in discipline to which school children were subjected. Conditions ranged from some approaching anarchy in which timid teachers lived in desperate fear of parents, children, or both; to teacher controlled despotisms in which children were victims of cruel and unusual punishment which rivaled the worst excesses of medieval barbarism.

An Englishman visiting the United States in 1819, complained about the flagrant misbehavior of the western child; he was especially upset with the swearing, independence, and general disobedience to authority of any kind. He placed the blame on the prevailing condition in which teachers were not

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[87]B. O. Williams, "My Recollections of the Early School of Detroit that I Attended from the Year 1816 to 1819," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, V (1882), 547.

[88]Ibid., 548.

allowed, by parents, to whip the children.[89] Another traveler, Henry Fearon, in frontier Ohio at about the same time heard similar complaints from teachers.[90] The lack of discipline among both young and old was often blamed on the spirit of individualism and freedom which existed among the Westerners.[91]

In many frontier schools such punishment as was administered was of a mild variety--sitting in the girls' section, wearing the dunce cap, or staying in at recess were used across the frontier, as well as in American schools everywhere. Marshall Barber, a student in early Kansas, remembered only a few cases of corporal punishment in the school which he attended, and recalled the use of a democratic device by which older boys acted as a jury to determine guilt in cases of serious infractions.[92] A Wisconsin teacher reported that he didn't resort to whipping except when the older boys "tried to whip him."[93]

In other cases, however, Pete Jones' dictum in The Hoosier Schoolmaster--"No lickin, no larnin" was scrupulously

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[89]James Flint, Flint's Letters from America--1818-1820, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, IX (Cleveland: The Arthur Clark Co., 1906), 107.

[90]Fearon, 228.

[91]Carter, "The Schoolmasters," 223-224.

[92]Marshall A. Barber, The Schoolhouse at Prairie View (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1953), 28-29.

[93]Jorgenson, 141.

followed. The need to beat the hell out of children fitted in nicely with many teachers' Calvinistic concepts of total depravity. A former student in the Illinois schools of the 1840's complained that "our teachers seemed to be employed for their ability and disposition to use the birch rather than for any other reason."[94]

Among the most cruel modes of punishment used in frontier schools was one which required a student to stand on one foot and hold his finger an inch from the floor. When his muscles weakened and his finger touched the floor, his bent back would be beaten with a whip.[95] A rather common punishment in the early western schools was feruling on the palm of the hand with a ruler, sometimes until blisters arose.

In the spirit of frontier justice, parental avengement could be swift and unyielding. A Detroit teacher in 1816 rushed across the river into Canada after having been given an hour to leave the territory or be run through by a sword. He was accused of beating the bodies of children until they were black and blue, throwing an open penknife at a student, and boxing a six year old on his ears hard enough to knock him from his bench and permanently damaging his hearing.[96]

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[94]Bessie Black, "Green Vardiman Black, 1836-1915," Transactions of the Illinois Historical Society, Publication No. 38 (1931), 79.

[95]Van Buren, 313.

[96]Williams, 548.

Educational opportunities at the secondary level on the frontier were usually limited to private schools, academies, and seminaries. The differences among these institutions were often blurred. Schools conducted in a rented room with five students and a pennyless teacher sometimes operated under the exalted name--academy. In practice, the terms academy and seminary were used interchangeably, with a school for girls more likely to be incorporated as, or named, a seminary. After 1830 the terms seminary and institute were used more frequently than academy.[97] The lines were blurred likewise among elementary, secondary, and higher education on the frontier. Most of the academies and seminaries offered instruction for everyone from those wanting to learn to read to those wishing to pursue college level work. A Catholic academy in Missouri in 1818 cautioned, however, that "none will be received before he can read at least tolerably well."[98]

Private schools were found along the urban frontier from Ohio to Kansas, and taught anything that anyone could conceivably want to learn from higher mathematics, surveying, and Latin to elegant penmanship, the latest fashionable dances and landscape painting. The newspaper advertisements often promised more than they could conceivably deliver. Timothy

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[97]Buley, 338-339.

[98]Hattie M. Anderson, "The Evolution of a Frontier Society in Missouri, 1815-1828," III Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (October, 1938), 34.

Flint scorned the "puffying advertisements."

> These founders of new schools, for the most part, advertise themselves from London, Paris, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and have all performed exploits in the regions whence they came, and bring the latest improvements with them. As to what they can do, and what they will do, the object is to lay on the collouring thick and three-fold. A respectable man wishes to establish himself in a school in those regions. He consults a friend, who knows the meridian of the country. The advice is, Call your school by some new and imposing name. Let it be understood, that you have a new way of instructing children, by which they can learn twice as much, in half the time, as by the old ways. Throw off all modesty. . . . In short, depend upon the gullibility of the people. . . . Hebrew they would communicate in twelve lessons; Latin and Greek, with a proportionate promptness. These men, who were to teach all this themselves, had read Erasmus with a translation, and knew the Greek alphabet. . . .[99]

Disgusted with the wild claims of some of the private schools, a Cincinnati newspaper editor wrote "that it was possible to teach any language--Hebrew, Esquimaux, or Carraboo--in three hours; the secret was inoculation, as in smallpox, at 12½ cents per language. In event of war with China the army could be inoculated and be speaking Chinese instanter."[100]

The private schools were more numerous in Missouri than in the other states under consideration for several reasons: the French, and to a lesser degree the Spanish, traditions which had preceeded the western moving American; the existence of older, established cities, particularly St. Louis;

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[99]Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), 186-187.

[100]Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, September 3, 1819, quoted in Buley, 338.

and an American settlement largely from those of southern customs rather than New Englanders. Missouri parents of means especially preferred to educate their daughters in private schools, and such schools for "young ladies" were common.[101] Many of the schools emphasized, along with the academic courses, such feminine subjects as ornamental needlework including, "cunterpanes, ladies dresses, caps, handerchiefs, toilets, and samplers of the latest fashions."[102] Typical was the advertisement of a Mrs. Gay in 1820 who "respectfully informed her friends and the public" of the opening of her school "for Young Ladies." She wrote of "her determined zeal to render every exertion in her power, and [of] her qualification as an instructress . . . to give general satisfaction and to share a portion of public patronage."[103]

Aside from the small pretentious private schools that were unjustifiably named academies, the seminaries or academies of the middle western states were usually controlled by religious denominations, frequently Presbyterian.[104] They

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[101]Margaret McMillan and Monia Cook Morris, "Educational Opportunities in Early Missouri," Part II, Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (July, 1939), 478.

[102]Missouri Gazette, March 6, 1818, quoted in McMillan and Morris, 480.

[103]Ibid.

[104]The Plan of Union (1801) between Congregationalist and Presbyterians for western missionary work did not seem to lessen competition for denominational control of schools. See Louis B. Wright, Culture on the Moving Frontier (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), Chapter III.

were normally incorporated by the territorial legislature or later by the state.

In Ohio, Muskingum Academy of Marietta was organized in 1797.[105] And, by the middle of the nineteenth century most likely every township in the state had had an academy at one time or another although "many had only an ephemeral existence."[106] Between 1803 and 1850 one hundred and seventy academies, seminaries, "high schools," and institutes were incorporated in that state.[107]

By 1846 in Indiana, 1106 students were attending the thirty-one seminaries, all of which were "solely secondary schools."[108] The publicly supported high school did not have general acceptance in Indiana until the 1880's, and the seminaries received some public funds as each county had a trustee to collect fines to help support their local seminary.[109] In Illinois, 125 educational corporations were chartered between

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[105]W. W. Boyd, "Secondary Education in Ohio Previous to the Year 1840," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXV (1916), 129.

[106]Kenneth Lottick, "Curricular Offerings in the Early High Schools in Ohio," The High School Journal, XXXI (March-April, 1948), 63.

[107]Edward A. Miller, "History of the Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1803 to 1850," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXVII (1919), 97-101.

[108]Olis G. Jamison, "The Development of Secondary Education in Indiana Prior to 1910," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford Junior University, 1935), 46-53.

[109]Ibid., 165 and Buley, 340.

1818 and 1848. Among the religious denominations, the Presbyterians led in the establishment of schools, but Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational churches were also active in establishing academies and seminaries.[110] Some academies in Illinois, including a few uncharted private ones, received state aid. The source of assistance was normally the income from the lease of the public lands. Township funds for common schools were also occasionally used to support an academy.[111]

The academy was less popular in Michigan, partly because there were not provisions for incorporation until 1839 and partly because the first Superintendent of Public Instruction, John D. Pierce, was vigorously opposed to both private and denominational academies and colleges. According to John Springman, the academy had for the most part disappeared in Michigan by the 1850's.[112] In Missouri, with its southern traditions, academies modeled after the English public schools remained the chief means of a secondary education throughout the nineteenth century. They were organized in Cape Girardeau

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[110]W. G. Walker, "The Development of the Free Public High School in Illinois During the Nineteenth Century," History of Education Quarterly, IV (December, 1964), 268-269.

[111]Ibid. Also see Paul E. Belting, The Development of the Free High School in Illinois, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XI (October, 1918), 298.

[112]John C. Springman, The Growth of Public Education In Michigan (Michigan State Normal College, Ypsilanti, 1952), Minc., 39-42.

County as early as 1820, and by 1850 there were 200 of them with an enrollment of around 8,000 students.[113]

In spite of the growing acceptance of the publicly supported high school, there were a number of academies in Kansas, especially in the eastern part of the state. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians were the chief sponsors, although some were organized as joint stock companies.[114]

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[113]C. A. Phillips, "A Century of Education in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XV (1920-21), 308-309.

[114]Columbian History of Education in Kansas, 81-95.

CHAPTER V

TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

The recurring problem in frontier historical interpretation which was insufficiently stressed in the frontier thesis was the diversity in the pluralistic society of the West. The variety of alternatives for courses of study in the frontier schools prohibits simple generalizations concerning the struggle between advocates of utilitarian and classical education. From the beginning of settlements in the Trans-Appalachian West, schools were established and supported which gave abundant opportunity for study of manifestly practical subjects such as bookkeeping, surveying, and navigation; yet the desire to perpetuate the classics was evidenced by as many, and probably more, schools devoted to instruction in Latin and Greek.

There were several forces operating on the frontier to perpetuate the traditional classical curriculum. The classical studies were continually reinforced by the pattern of migration which brought to the Middle West immigrants who were products of the classical curriculums of the gymnasia and universities of northern Europe.[1] A major influence was

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[1]Walter R. Agard, "Classics on the Midwest Frontier," The Classical Journal (December, 1955), 109.

the denominational colleges, many of them little more than secondary schools. Walter Agard wrote: "The dominance of Greek and Latin in the courses of study of the frontier colleges seems to us now almost incredible. However small the faculty may have been, there was inevitably a teacher of Greek and one of Latin."[2] Not only were the colleges themselves important, but the preparatory departments often closely resembled the colonial Latin Grammar school with its narrow classical course. Turner was himself a product of this type of education. In 1877, he entered the Greek Class in the Preparatory Department of the University of Wisconsin, and the next year enrolled in the Ancient Classical Course of the University proper.

The first schools established in the West frequently were absorbed with the classics. The first school established in Cincinnati opened its doors in 1790; the next year Francis Dunlevey was hired to teach the ancient languages and higher mathematics.[3] By 1792, it was reorganized as an academy, and "asserted its educational orthodoxy and dignity by drilling backwoods boys in mathematics and Latin grammar."[4]

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[2] Ibid., 105-106.

[3] D. C. Shilling, "Pioneer Schools and School Masters," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXV (1916), 39.

[4] W. W. Venable, "Education in Cincinnati," History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio (Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson and Co., 1894), 97.

One observer visited a school in a primitive settlement of the lead mining region of Wisconsin in 1834. He was surprised to find the "country boys" of the area studying Greek and Latin along with the more common primary subjects. He reported that the teacher "made them read and parse for my benefit in Cicero's Orations and Homer's Illiad."[5]

The frontier academy, though it had a broader curriculum than the Latin grammar school, was a class institution, dominated by aristocratic ideas which outlived the Revolution and, to a high degree, survived the frontier.[6] Even on the primitive frontier where books and equipment were lacking, the academies attempted to perpetuate the classical curriculum with its doubtful suitability for life in a wilderness. The languages--Latin, Greek, and Hebrew--formed the core of studies for the academies until at least the first half of the

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[5]Theodore Rodolf, "Pioneering in the Wisconsin Lead Regions," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XV (1900), 344.

[6]By the Massachusetts law of 1647, each town of more than one hundred families was required to hire a schoolmaster to give instruction in Latin and Greek. The Latin grammar schools were class schools which served the few who needed preparation in the classical languages for admission to Harvard, Yale, and other "colonial" colleges. The academies which developed about the middle of the eighteenth century were designed to meet the needs of a growing middle class for a more practical education. Although such courses as mathematics, history, and modern languages, including English were normally offered in the curriculum of the eastern academies; they often became social class conscious and stressed the classical languages. They may be considered transitional between the Latin grammar school and the public high school.

nineteenth century and sometimes far beyond.[7] The curriculum of the academies was, for the most part, not a subject for debate; it was rather "prescriptive and dogmatic."[8] In the Indiana seminaries the typical curriculum included three to four years of mathematics and Latin. Greek and French were important, but received somewhat less emphasis, and little stress was placed on literature, history, and science. In some cases, academies stressed the ancient languages to a greater extent in the post-Civil War period than they had earlier. As a larger portion of middle western youths were able to attend colleges, some academies with general academic offerings began to at least supplement their regular curriculum with more classical studies in order to prepare their students to meet college entrance requirements.[9] Vocal and instrumental music, normally subject to additional tuition, were generally offered, and drawing and painting were available in many of the seminaries. Occasionally a more vocational subject such as shorthand was included in the course of study. But commercial offerings remained limited. Albert Mock, in his study of 136 different academies, found that only

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[7]Paul E. Belting, The Development of the Free High School in Illinois, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XI (October, 1918), 330.

[8]Olis G. Jamison, "The Development of Secondary Education in Indiana Prior to 1910," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Leland Stanford Junior University, 1935), 47.

[9]Albert Mock, The Mid-Western Academy Movement, (Mimeographed by the author, 1949), 94-95.

11 percent of the academies were offering shorthand and only 4 percent business or commercial arithmetic in the immediate post-Civil War period.[10]

The classical emphasis of the academies was not surprising in that ministers were often owners as well as faculty members, and reflected the kind of education that they had themselves received.[11] The Rev. James B. Finley, educated in the backwoods of Kentucky in an academy founded by his minister father, assured his readers that he had "tasted the sweets of classical literature."

> I enjoyed the advantages of a thorough drilling in Latin and Greek, and even now I can repeat whole books of the Aeneid of Virgil and the Illiad of Homer. I could scan Latin or Greek verse with as much fluency as I can now sing a Methodist hymn. . . . I am not sorry that I was educated in classical literature, but I am sorry that I was not first well grounded in my vernacular.[12]

The academies, on the other hand, often gave lip service to a more utilitarian education: "the dissemination of useful knowledge should be the only object contemplated."[13] The proprietors of the academies devoted considerable space in their advertisements to the practical nature of their

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[10] Ibid., 96.

[11] Belting, 331.

[12] James B. Finley, Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley (Cincinnati: Printed at the Methodist Book Concern for the author, 1855), 113-114.

[13] Session Laws, I, State of Illinois, 48, quoted in Belting, 292.

curriculum, and as time passed the program of studies did tend to become more utilitarian.[14] The Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies at Hope, Indiana, in the 1870's, as an example, offered a domestic economy course with the objective "that our Daughters may be as Corner Stones, Polished after the Similitudes of a Palace." Catherine Beecher's Domestic Economy was the textbook. Listed below are a few of the many topics treated in the course:

Difficulties peculiar to American women
Remedies for the preceding difficulties
Healthful food
Healthful drinks
Early rising
Preservation of good temper in a housekeeper
Care of domestics
Care of infants
Washing, starching, and ironing
Whitening, cleaning, and dyeing.[15]

The influence of the denominational schools were mixed. Many of the schools helped to perpetuate the classical tradition, some acted to reduce its influence, and others banned classical studies outright. This opposition was especially true, of course, in the more fundamentalistic schools where the classics were thought to be in direct competition with the absolute truths of the Bible.[16] The enmity at Oberlin became so intense in the 1840's that there were student petitions "for the elimination of Latin, the substitution of Church Latin for Plautus, Seneca, Livy and Horace, and even

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[14]Belting, 331.

[15]Mock, 98-99.

[16]Agard, 105.

a public burning by students of many classical texts."[17]

The classicists acknowledged that "parts of the classics might be immoral," but insisted that they were "generally virtuous." The demand for replacing the classics with the Bible was met with the argument "that the Bible was essentially moral while the classics were aesthetic."[18] Perhaps this was, however, not a very telling argument on the frontier.

Allen O. Hansen brought into focus the debate between the classicists and the proponents of a "scientific" and utilitarian education on the Ohio Valley frontier. The need to dispense with the anachronism of a curriculum based on Greek and Latin to meet the needs of an undeveloped country was a hot issue in the decade of the 1830's among the members of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. The arguments for a classical core of studies, even for children living in a wilderness, were familiar ones. Not only were classical languages "dignified and venerable," they were "systematic, philosophic, and elegant." All great writers were classicists, and, of course, since English was largely derived from Latin and Greek, knowledge of the latter

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[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] Allen Oscar Hansen, Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley, Journal of Educational Research Monographs, No. 5 (Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill., 1923), 76.

languages was a necessity for a complete understanding of English.[19]

William T. Harris, the Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis and later United States Commissioner of Education, contended that since our cultural heritage came chiefly from Greece and Rome, only through the study of their languages could our heritage really be intimately known and appreciated.[20]

The persistence of the classics in the Middle West may be seen in the curriculums of the first high schools of that region. John Stout found a remarkable similarity between the courses of study of the eastern and the western high schools, and found the roots for both in the English Classical School of Boston. As an example, the curriculum for Baltimore, Maryland, and Columbus, Ohio, in 1851 are almost identical. One interesting difference was while Baltimore offered ancient and modern languages, Columbus offered only Greek and Latin as foreign languages.[21]

Stout reproduced lists of representative courses of study in selected middle western high schools in the 1860's and 1870's.[22] Admittedly this was for some cities after the

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[19] Ibid., 74.

[20] Agard, 106.

[21] John Elbert Stout, The Development of High-School Curricula in the North Central States from 1860 to 1918 (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1921), 17.

[22] Ibid., 22-27.

frontier phase was over, but there was little evidence that the frontier experience had acted to change the traditional secondary course of study. Utilitarian or "practical" subjects with the exception of an occasional course in bookkeeping were nonexistent. Among the schools studied only Leavenworth, Kansas; Waterloo, Iowa; and Columbus, Ohio, allowed a student to graduate without a study of Latin. In Leavenworth, Latin and the modern languages were optional. In Columbus and Waterloo, German could be substituted for Latin. It was perhaps significant that two of those three cities were on the western fringe of the region studied.

Cincinnati had a course of study which emphasized the classics the most; it also was the only city to include art in the curriculum--drawing and "freehand" drawing. Chicago required two years of Latin with Greek as an option; Oskalossa, Iowa, required three years of Latin as did Madison, Wisconsin; and Jacksonville, Illinois, required both Latin and Greek for three years, except in the normal course. In the North Central region as a whole, between 1816 and 1918, there was little or no change in the number of schools teaching Greek or Latin.[23]

The Ohio School Report which listed curricular offerings of the high schools of that state was not established until 1854, after the primitive frontier experience was over.

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[23] Ibid., 190.

Yet Kenneth Lottick in his study of the early high school curriculum from 1853 to 1914 found three periods of curriculum development in Ohio. The first which lasted from 1853 to 1885 was classified as a period of classical or traditional offerings, the period from 1885 to 1910 was characterized as scientific or exploration, and not until after 1910 did vocational or utilitarian subjects become predominate.[24]

It was not until 1873 that a uniform course of studies for college preparation in the high schools of Indiana was suggested. The requirements included: ". . . four books of geometry, algebra to the general theory of equations, Latin grammar, Latin prose composition, Caesar's Commentaries (two books), Virgil (two books), or an amount of Latin that shall be equivalent thereto."[25] Indiana University was given a major share of the responsibility for the development of a uniform curriculum for the high schools of the state. The University wanted the students well disciplined in the classics so that the high school and the University courses of study would be in harmony.[26] In 1873, a minor victory was celebrated by those who wished to weaken the classical emphasis in the high schools, as the University, over the protest

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[24]Kenneth Lottick, "Curricular Offerings in the Early High Schools in Ohio," The High School Journal, XXXI (March-April, 1948), 67.

[25]Richard G. Boone, A History of Education in Indiana (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 305.

[26]Jamison, 203-204.

of the president, agreed to admit students who had credits in advanced mathematics, but not Greek.[27] The utilitarian spirit of the frontier had great difficulty in overcoming the inherited secondary curriculum. Olis Jamison maintained that the Report of the Committee of Ten of the National Education Association in 1893 was the greatest influence toward a more flexible, practical curriculum in Indiana.[28]

In the 1870's there was at least one high school in Iowa, the Guthrie County High School, which did not require a study of any of the classical languages, even in its college preparatory department. It did offer three years of Greek and four of Latin, however, as well as German and French.[29] Unfortunately for the anti-classicists a new principal, who was a firm believer in the study of Latin, was hired in 1879, and the curriculum was considerably altered. Latin reading including Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil became a part of the preparatory course of study.[30]

The first high school in Olathe, the county seat of Johnson County, Kansas, was established in 1874. The students were required to choose between an English and a Latin course, but once the choice was made they could not change without

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[27] Ibid., 204-208.

[28] Ibid., 206.

[29] Lawrence Andrew Logan, "History of the Guthrie County High School," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, XXI (October, 1931), 117-118.

[30] Ibid., 98.

beginning all over again and making up everything missed in the second curriculum.[31]

In Kansas, a meeting of the State Teachers' Association at Topeka in 1897 formed a committee, consisting of the state superintendent and city high school principals, to prepare a uniform course of study for recommendation to the state's high schools. Among the recommendations were four years of foreign languages with Latin, Greek, German, or French the suggested ones. For the most part the recommended curriculum was quite traditional, but did include business courses: bookkeeping, shorthand, typewriting, commercial law, and commercial "geographing," as well as a group of subjects listed as Manual-Training, including free-hand drawing, geometrical drawing, joinery and woodwork for boys, and sewing and dressmaking for girls.[32] Implementation of the vocational subjects was slow. In Labette County, as an example, vocational subjects were not offered in any of the high schools until 1916.[33]

Not only ought the frontier experience to have lessened the influence of the classics, educational and business

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[31]Earle E. McKown, "A Survey of the Historical Development and Growth of Schools in Johnson County, Kansas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1935), 52.

[32]Ibid., 53-54.

[33]Jackson James Austin, "A Short Educational History of Labette County, Kansas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers' College of Emporia, 1937), 102.

leaders in the nineteenth century, east and west, were campaigning for a more utilitarian curriculum. In spite of these forces, the cultural baggage of the classics had remarkable staying power on the middle western frontier. Turner, himself, recognized this: ". . . the statistics of studies in the public schools show that the study of Latin . . . among the students of the Middle West is pursued quite as generally as in the East."[34] For the most part students, especially at the collegiate level as evidenced by student editorials and letters, were favorable in their reaction to classical studies.[35] The persistence of the classics was, of course, not necessarily a negative factor in the life of the western pioneer. Agard summarized his conclusions regarding their influence in this manner:

> From the evidence here presented we may draw two conclusions: that the classics served to bring intellectual and aesthetic values into the brutally pragmatic Frontier; and that they helped keep vital the tradition of Western Europe, supplementing the ones forged by the challenging new environment. . . . Finally--perhaps most ironic of all--one of the strong bastions of the classics today is that part of the United States which used to be the Midwest Frontier, and in which they seemed so incongruous an element a hundred years ago.[36]

The generalizations above concerning the persistence of the classical curriculum in frontier secondary schools and

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[34]Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Democratic Education of the Middle West," World's Work, III (August, 1903), 3759.

[35]Agard, 107.

[36]Ibid., 109-110.

colleges did not imply that the traditional curriculum enjoyed overwhelming support by the Westerner. But it did indicate the durability of inherited traditions and institutions in the face of the inertia of the bulk of people in a society, even in a frontier society.

There was great antipathy toward an education based on the classics among many Westerners; and the pragmatic spirit in the West allowed experiments which would have been much more difficult in an older, more firmly established, and thus more rigid society.

The enmity toward the traditional studies was revealed in contemporary accounts of frontier society. Timothy Flint criticized the numerous young men on the frontier who in idleness and with arrogance flayed Greek, Latin, and indeed all classical learning.[37]

Baynard Hall was disgusted with students who were not interested in the "high larn'd things" and wanted to "larn Inglish only, and bookkeepin, and surveyin, so as to tend store and run a line."[38] Hall quoted his colleague, Clarence, on the lack of interest in classical learning: "I am now in an incorporated classical and mathematical academy at the

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[37]Timothy Flint, Recollections of the Last Ten Years (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), 77.

[38]Baynard Hall, The New Purchase or, Seven and a Half Years in the Far West, (1843), (Indiana Centennial edition, ed. James Albert Woodburn, Princeton University Press, 1916), 324.

capital of a boastful little state . . . I have only three pupils professedly studying even Latin! and that only to understand law-terms! The rest are literally in the R. R. R. and jogerfree!"[39]

Along with the Halls, Flint, and others striving to keep ancient learning alive, powerful voices in the West were raised in support of a more practical education. One was that of Solon Robinson of Indiana, who was one of the best known agricultural writers of the anti-bellum period. He campaigned for an education that would:

> . . . be USEFUL. Not a piano, French, Spanish or flower daub education, but one that will make the men scientific farmers and mechanics, and intelligent public officers and acting legislators, and the women fit to become honored and husband-honoring wives of such citizens . . . .[40]

The members of the Western Literary Society and College of Teachers, who furnished much of the leadership in frontier education, reflected a diversity of attitude and belief which characterized Westerners in general. There were among the members many who believed that Western Civilization and a school curriculum based on the study of Greek and Latin were indivisible. However, the effect of the organization as a whole was to encourage the development of a curriculum

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[39] Ibid., 399.

[40] Solon Robinson, "Where Did He Get His Education," Albany Cultivator (September, 1838), reprinted in Solon Robinson: Pioneer and Agriculturalist, Hebert Andrew Kellar, (ed.) Indiana Historical Collections, XXI (1936), 93.

better suited to western needs. The reconstructionist-minded members insisted that, although they opposed a classical education, they favored a liberal one which liberally imparted practical knowledge and enlarged and liberalized the mind.[41]

Among the suggestions for a reconstructed curriculum, which would have greater utility, were a substitution of modern languages for the ancient and the introduction of natural science into the schools. The reasons for emphasizing the study of modern foreign languages included increased commercial and diplomatic relations with other nations, a need to "sympathize with the moral, political, and literary action of the European world," and to gain a knowledge of useful scientific discoveries especially those of France and Germany.[42]

Interestingly, the need for science in the school curriculum was not prescribed because of its utilitarian value, because it would aid students in preparing for their profession including farming. But rather science was to be studied for its salutary effects on general discipline, as it led to increased powers of abstraction and deduction. Because its study demanded accuracy, patience, and deliberation, it had a "salutary influence on moral feelings" and moreover in a

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[41]Hansen, 78.

[42]"Transactions of the Colleges of Teachers," (1839), 126-142, quoted in Hansen, 78-79.

form different from the arts it would develop aesthetic appreciation.[43]

In addition to such courses as mathematics, "so necessary to the business calculations of the world"; history, "the basis of obtaining a true moral sense and arriving at true standards of human conduct"; religious education; and the English Language were among the subjects advocated by some of the members. In spite of the frontiersmen's strenuous life, which gave little leisure for music appreciation, there was general agreement among the members of the Institute that instrumental and vocal music should be included in the curriculum of the common schools.[44]

Despite the vigorous physical exertion required for pioneer life, a plea was made:

> . . . for physical education on the ground of symmetrical development of the physique. It was contended that calisthenics would bring every part of the system into action, expand the chest, bring down the shoulders, make the form erect, give grace to motion, increase muscular strength, give a light and elastic step in walking, prevent tight lacing, restore the weak and distorted members of the system, promote cheerfulness, render the mind more active, and conduce to general health.[45]

The demand for a more utilitarian education may be seen in the appeals for agricultural education. Robinson in an address before the Union Agricultural Society asked:

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[43] Ibid., (1840), 182-189, and Hansen, 80.

[44] Hansen, 86.

[45] Ibid., 87.

> Where can you now send your children to learn to be farmers? Numerous schools and colleges exist, but what do they teach? Divinity, law, physic, and foppery!!! But where, and echo answers, where, are your agricultural schools? Do your common district schools even, ever teach the first rudiments of the first lesson, that civilized man must learn?--That is, to till the earth. What are your common school books? Is a treatise upon the most useful science in the world ever found in your school-room? Let my answer wound no man's feelings, for the fault is not his, but that of a faulty education.[46]

In 1835, a committee of the Western Literary Society reported on the question: "Ought Agriculture to be a branch of Common School education, and how shall it be introduced?" The committee affirmed that all branches of science should be provided for in the curriculum of the common school, and suggested that the need for agriculture to be regularly taught in the common schools was so manifestly evident that further discussion on the point was unnecessary. The committee further suggested that a polytechnic-type school with an experimental farm attached be established in each state under legislative supervision.[47]

The vogue of incorporating manual-labor institutes in the Middle West in the 1830's and 1840's indicated, at least on the surface, a movement toward a more utilitarian curriculum at the levels of secondary and higher education.

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[46]An address by Solon Robinson before the Union Agricultural Society at Chicago (April 28, 1841), reproduced in Indiana Historical Collections, XXI (1936), 228.

[47]"Transactions of the College of Teachers," 1836, 231-234, quoted in Hansen, 82.

The father of the manual labor movement was Johann Pestalozzi's one time associate Phillipp Emanuel von Fellenberg, who first developed his program at Hofwyl, Switzerland.

The manual labor idea seemed especially well suited to the American frontier, with its work ethic. One of its advocates, William Maclure, demanded a useful education for children which would omit all that was speculative or ornamental. There was a quality resembling Soviet polytechnic education about the emphasis on the study of mechanisms in the manual labor movement. Maclure insisted that the knowledge really needed by the young was related to how man could subdue nature, and make it serve his needs. Students would concentrate on a study of mechanical power, beginning with the lever, screw, and wheel. They would progress to a study of water power and practical hydraulics, and finally they would be introduced to more complicated machines used in industry, including steam engines.[48]

The practical knowledge gained in the classroom was only a part of the merit of a manual labor education, according to its advocates. The students, by engaging in physical labor in their schools, would not only help pay for the education they were receiving, but moreover, they would develop virtues and character that the idle could never possess. The Reverend George W. Gale, founder of one of the first manual

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[48]Belting, 341.

labor institutions in the United States, the Oneida Academy of New York, claimed the result of the system would "be to have the same hands become equally expert in handling the plow, hoe, ax, scythe, Virgil, Cicero, Euclid, and Paley."[49] In 1830, he wrote that it would "be to the moral world what the lever of Archimedes, could he have found a fulcrum, would have been to the natural."[50] He, obviously, did not have the same distaste for the classics as some of the other advocates of the system.

The manual labor schools were established first in the Northeast: Connecticut in 1819, Maine in 1821, Massachusetts in 1824, New York in 1827, and New Jersey in 1830.[51] However, the movement was short-lived in the East and was gone by 1840.[52] The movement spread to the Middle West during the decade of the thirties. In Ohio, the Ashtabula Institute of Science and Industry was established in 1831, Stephen Strong's Manual Labor Seminary in 1834, and the Fellenburgh Institute in Medina County in 1835. Also founded in 1835 was the Bishops Fraternal Calvinistic Seminary which required

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[49]R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840, II (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1951), 402.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 280.

[52]Belting, 340.

manual labor for both sexes.[53]

Before 1840 in Illinois, there were a number of the schools, including the Chatham Manual Labor School, the Burnt Prairie Manual Labor Seminary, and the Fayette Manual Labor Seminary. In Indiana the movement "spread like an epidemic" when it reached the state.[54] Often the schools in the rural areas were proprietorships or partnerships. Many of the institutes, private and public, later became colleges; among them the Indiana Baptist Manual-Labor Institute which became Franklin College, the Wabash Manual-Labor Seminary which became Wabash College, and the Knox Manual-Labor College in Illinois which became Knox College.[55] Missouri claimed the first manual labor high school which was established by Washington University in 1880.[56]

The western press, missionary societies, and educators were laudatory in appreciation of the manual school movement. The Illinois Intelligencer in 1830 praised the movement:

> The regulation among the Jews that every child should be taught some useful trade, was founded in wisdom and common sense. How far it would go to render

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[53]Edward A. Miller, "History of the Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1803 to 1850," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXVII (1919), 104.

[54]Boone, 75.

[55]Cubberley, 280

[56]Note in Missouri Historical Review, XXXIV (January, 1940), 236.

> industry honorable, how much useful information on the common occupations of life, would be diffused by the learned through the lower classes of society.[57]

When an Indiana Manual Labor Institute was proposed in 1835, the manual labor aspect was included "partly to disarm prejudices against students who might get 'uppity' ideas regarding work."[58]

It would be quite misleading, however, to use the popularity of the manual labor school movement in the Middle West as evidence that the secondary curriculum was in fact rapidly becoming more utilitarian. Often on the frontier, as elsewhere, there was very little in a name. The incorporation of a new academy as a manual labor institute or farmers' institute was an attractive way of giving lip service to the practical bias of the West, and was perhaps a device to disarm the anti-intellectuals.

Ray Allen Billington used the establishment of such a school to indicate that the frontier acted to nudge American education toward a utilitarian emphasis: "Traditionalists who tried to establish Wabash College in Indiana were told by the legislature that they would be granted no charter until the name was changed to Wabash Manual Labor and Teachers' Seminary."[59] Yet an examination of the program and curriculum

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[57] Illinois Intelligencer, October 30, 1830, quoted in Belting, 345-347.

[58] Buley, 407.

[59] Ray Allen Billington, America's Frontier Heritage (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 94.

of the school revealed that in spite of the change in name, it had been named the Crawford English and Classical High School until 1834, a traditional course of study was followed. The name was changed to Wabash College in 1839.[60]

Not only was the curriculum of the manual labor schools not normally radically different from other academies or colleges, often the manual labor idea in the institution was short-lived. Many of the farmers' academies were described by Boone as quite like other "high-grade" schools, with perhaps less emphasis on the classics.[61] The life span of the manual labor schools was exemplified by the Illinois experience. Eventually each of the Illinois colleges found that the students were indifferent to the manual labor plan of the institutions, and that aspect was normally abandoned within a short time.[62]

If the frontier influence acted to loosen the reins of tradition, western schools ought to have more readily, than their eastern counterparts, accepted innovations resulting from European educational reformers such as Johann Pestalozzi, Johann Herbart, Emanuel von Fellenberg and Friedrich Froebel.

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[60]Andrew A. Sherockman, "Caleb Mills, Pioneer Educator in Indiana," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg, 1956), 76. The program and curriculum of the school was found on pages 79-82.

[61]Boone, 75.

[62]Ernest G. Hildner, "Colleges and College Life in Illinois One Hundred Years Ago," Papers in Illinois History, 1942 (The Illinois State Historical Society, 1944), 26.

The ideas of these reformers should have had a natural appeal on the frontier as they stressed democracy, practical and social usefulness, and work experience.

The most significant attempt to bring Pestalozzian reforms to the American Middle West was Robert Owen's New Harmony experiment in Indiana which was patterned after that of New Lanark, Scotland. As Willis Gard described it:

> In the New Harmony venture we have a successful attempt to apply Pestalozzian principles to American conditions, furnishing a great impetus to the scientific spirit in our country and leading to a series of movements which had profound influence on education in the Ohio Valley and elsewhere.[63]

The educational leader and administrator at New Harmony was William Maclure, a Scottish geologist, who first came to the United States in 1806 to make a geological survey, and in the process earned for himself the title: The Father of American Geology.[64] Maclure, who spent seven summers with Pestalozzi and his followers at Yverdun, attempted to convince Pestalozzi himself to establish a school in Philadelphia. Pestalozzi, past sixty and unable to speak effective English, declined. But he suggested his former associate teacher, Joseph Neef, who later joined Maclure at an unsuccessful Pestalozzian school in Philadelphia and at New Harmony.[65]

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[63]Willis L. Gard, "European Influence on Early Western Education," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXV (1916), 30.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Will S. Monroe, History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States (Syracuse, N.Y.: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1907), 44.

In 1819 Maclure went to New Lanark, Scotland, to study Robert Owens' industrial and educational system. In 1824, after his unsuccessful attempt to establish a manual labor school at Philadelphia along the ideas of Pestalozzi and von Fellenberg, he joined Robert Owens' colony at New Harmony, and personally invested one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the project.[66] He hoped, through the introduction of the Pestalozzian system of instruction, to make New Harmony the center of American education. To accomplish this purpose he brought to New Harmony the aforementioned Joseph Neef. Neef, after the failure of the Philadelphia experiment, opened a school at Louisville, Kentucky, than a town of about five thousand people. This school was also unsuccessful, and Neef abandoned teaching and farmed until he received an invitation to New Harmony in 1824.[67] After the failure of the New Harmony experiment in 1828, he conducted schools in Cincinnati, and for six years in Steubenville, Ohio.[68]

Among other teachers which Maclure brought to New Harmony were: "Thomas Say, the father of American zoology,

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[66] Ibid., 44-50.

[67] Ibid., 108.

[68] Ibid., 72. According to Monroe, Neef's book, Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education Founded on the Analysis of Human Faculties and Natural Reason, Fitted for the Offspring of a Free People and of all Rational Beings, 1808, was the first work strictly on education in the English language written and published in the United States. Monroe, 77-78.

Charles Alexander Leuseur, the distinguished French botanist, Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, . . . 'the very first teacher of natural history in the west,' Gerard Troost, the Dutch geologist, and Madame Marie D. Frotegect and Phiquepal d' Arusmont, two Pestalozzian teachers whom Maclure had brought to Philadelphia from Europe."[69] Richard Boone recounted the accomplishments of this distinguished group of teachers in early Indiana with excitement: "What pioneer people were ever so blessed with genius and learning! It was a new Yverdun or Burgdorf on a Western frontier."[70]

Maclure's appeal to the practical, work-oriented Westerner was seen in his Opinions on various subjects dedicated to the Industrial Producers, 1831:

> It is more than probable, by the old spelling and hornbook system of five or six years' learning to read or write, and eight or nine years on Latin or Greek, it would be impossible to make children productive to themselves or others. The adoption of some system of education, limited to the useful, omitting all the speculative and the ornamental, is positively necessary to the success of such an undertaking. . . . When we abandon utility as the scale of value, we are adrift on the sea of caprice, fancy and whim, without either rudder or compass.[71]

In addition to the boarding school for older children at New Harmony, there was an infant school modeled after one at New Lanark. The colony "provided that children should become the

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[69] Ibid., 51.

[70] Boone, 80

[71] Belting, 341-342.

property of the community at the age of two years, when they were first received into the infant school."[72] A "School for Adults" which emphasized industrial training was also an integral part of the educational system at New Harmony.[73]

A sexually separate, but equal doctrine was followed at New Harmony. Belief was expressed in the equality of the sexes as "they were given the same kind of education in separate school-rooms."[74] The schools were established primarily for the children of the colony, but children came from as far away as Philadelphia and New York to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered in this frontier colony.[75]

The regimen at the New Harmony school was quite severe, according to Sarah Cox Thrall who reminisced about her experience there as a student:

> At rising the girls did the morning milking of the cows. The morning meal consisted of mush and milk. After breakfast they marched to school to military orders. At dinner we generally had soup, at supper mush and milk again. We went to bed at sun-down in little bunks suspended in rows by cords from the ceiling.[76]

It was not possible to calculate with any precision the ultimate influence of the New Harmony experiment on education in the upper Middle West. Gard was, perhaps, too enthusiastic when he wrote:

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[72]Monroe, 112.

[73]Gard, 32.

[74]Monroe, 112.

[75]Gard, 31.

[76]Monroe, 121-122.

> The men and women who caught their inspiration at New Harmony were scattered in all directions through the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. They became the instructors of the pioneer youth and thus spread broadcast the educational faith of Owen, Maclure, and Pestalozzi. They carried to their new homes an enthusiasm for free public schools organized along the lines advocated by Pestalozzi. It is quite impossible to correctly estimate the influence of this movement upon the spirit, the method, and organization of the public schools of the Ohio Valley.[77]

Murray may have been closer to the mark, when he suggested that European influences on elementary and secondary education were difficult to trace because European ideas at times simply "hastened native developments already under way."[78] Aside from the possible effect of the New Harmony experience on education in the upper Middle West, the experiment further suggested the variety of life possible on the frontier. For in this settlement on the fringe of the frontier, a cosmopolitan spirit existed as perhaps it did nowhere else in America.

> The backwoodsman in a coonskin cap rubbed shoulders with such famous naturalists as Alexander Lesueur, from France, and Gerard Troost, from Holland. Mechanics, artists, schoolteachers, scientists, farmers, ex-soldiers, reformers, all walked the streets of the little village on the Wabash.[79]

In addition to the colony at New Harmony, there were, of course, scattered throughout the West, disciples of Pestalozzi, who brought his influence to their schools. John

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[77]Gard, 35.

[78]John J. Murray, The Heritage of the Middle West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 13.

[79]David Dale Owen, Pioneer Geologist of the Middle West (Indiana Historical Bureau, 1943), 14.

Pulliam recounted the influence of George Bunsen (or Bunson), one of the little known followers of Pestalozzi on the prairie frontier.[80] Bunsen, a German, was a student of Johann Fichte at the University of Berlin. After taking time out to fight against Napoleon, he graduated from the University in 1819, and opened a boy's school in his native city--Frankfort-on-the-Main. He spent a summer in Yverdon training under one of Pestalozzi's assistants.

Bunsen came to the United States after the failure of the Revolt of 1833. He settled in Illinois as a pioneer farmer, and soon became a public school teacher in Shiloh. He was a member of the Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1847 in which he helped draft provisions, which were not adopted, that could have given to Illinois a complete system of public education. After serving as county school commissioner of St. Clair County, Bunsen opened a private school in Belleville to instruct in the Pestalozzian methods of teaching. He influenced early Illinois teachers not only by his school; but also by his contribution to Illinois Teacher in which he argued for proper teacher training and the need for a normal school; and by his tenure, without pay, as Belleville school superintendent.

The influence of Pestalozzi did not escape schools further west. Joseph Hertick, who had attended the Swiss

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[80]John Pulliam, "George Bunsen," Illinois Education, LVI (December, 1967), 164. See also the Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Illinois, 1882-1884, CXX-CXXIV.

common schools, came to America from Switzerland at the age of thirteen, and for a number of years maintained a private Pestalozzian school in Ste. Geneviere, Missouri, where he was deemed a "ripe scholar."[81] After 1868, William T. Harris, Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis was the leading exponent of the Pestalozzian method and spirit in the West.[82]

The interest in Pestalozzi in Kansas was indicated by the major address at the first convention of the Kansas State Teachers' Association. The President of Kansas State Agricultural College spoke on "The Object System of Education."[83]

Other contemporary European education movements which were tried in the West were Lancastrian and Sunday schools. Robert Raikes, a Gloucester philanthropist, developed the idea of providing both religious and rudimentary secular education for poor and working children on Sunday. In 1785, the Sunday School Society was formed in England, and shortly thereafter a number of such societies were organized in the United States.

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[81]Margaret McMillan and Monia Cook Morris, "Educational Opportunities in Early Missouri," Part I, Missouri Historical Review, XXXIII (April, 1939), 319.

[82]Monroe, 198.

[83]C. O. Wright, "100 Years in Kansas Education," The Kansas Teacher, LXXI (January, 1963), 22. As an example of the curious mixture of reform and tradition, the report of the state superintendent in Michigan (1861) suggested a course of instruction which included, among other things, "object lessons"; and Latin at the grammar school level as a college preparatory subject. Daniel Putman, Primary and Secondary Education in Michigan (Ann Arbor: George Wahr, Publisher and Bookseller, 1904), 98-99.

The movement was not as popular in the Middle West as in the East and Southeast, although John Peck estimated there were 375 Sunday schools in Illinois by 1830.[84] On the other hand, there is no direct evidence that any with the objectives of secular instruction existed in Wisconsin.[85]

Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster both claimed credit for the monitorial system which was developed in England in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The system was organized to give instruction in elementary reading, writing, and arithmetic to the children of the poor. The schools were usually pauper institutions, supported by philanthropy.

The system was characterized by a rigid, detailed curriculum and methods of near military precision so that monitors (students selected from the class above the one being instructed) could do the teaching and most of the classroom management.[86] As many as a thousand students could be instructed in one classroom, according to its proponents. Punishment was "frankly medieval," including such practices as the use of wooden shackles, and lifting boys "in a sack or basket to the roof of the school in sight of all the pupils."[87]

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[84]Belting, 495.

[85]Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), 92.

[86]Edward H. Reisner, The Evolution of the Common School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 250-253.

[87]Ibid., 255.

Lancastrian schools were organized in the large cities of the Middle West--Cincinnati, Detroit and Dayton--but were not widespread or popular. Both the Lancastrian and the Sunday schools had a pauper stigma attached to them which limited their acceptance in the West.

CHAPTER VI

THE WINDFALL OF PUBLIC LANDS

Walter Prescott Webb credited the frontier environment with all sorts of mutations and modifications in the attitudes and institutions of the Westerner. He believed that the wealth created by the bounty of the frontier provided a great windfall which made practicable a system of free public schools. The land in the public domain provided a subsidy without taxes, or without immediate taxation, and acted, according to Webb, as an entering wedge for governmental support for education throughout the western world.[1] The public lands did not provide such a subsidy.

The beginning of the policy by the central government of granting lands for education was contained in the Ordinance of 1785, which specified that section sixteen of each township in the Northwest Territory was reserved for education. The first land from the national domain actually granted for schools was to the Ohio Company by an ordinance adopted by Congress on July 23, 1787. The Ordinance provided for a grant of two townships for an institution of higher learning and

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[1]Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), 393-395.

one for the ministry. In spite of the often quoted phrase, "religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged," the ordinance of 1787 did not provide for educational land grants.[2] Beginning with the admission of Ohio in 1802, the sixteenth section of each township was granted by act of Congress for the support of the schools. Each of the states under study received the sixteenth section, and Kansas also received the thirty-sixth section in each township.[3]

In addition to the township school grants, other federal grants including salt lands, swamp lands, and grants of land for internal improvements were used by some states to aid the schools. The proceeds from the salt land grants, which from 1802 to 1875 amounted to 606,000 acres, were used by Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri to supplement their permanent school funds. Kansas appropriated the money for the University of Kansas, and Michigan used it to help support agricultural education. In the first grant of salt lands to Ohio, Congress did not specify the use to be made for the revenue.

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[2]Fletcher Harper Swift, Federal Aid to Public Schools, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Bulletin Number 47, 1922, 6.

[3]Beginning with California in 1850, the grant was two townships. Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico each received four townships. Excluding Alaska, the total granted in the township school sections amounted to more than seventy-three million acres. Ibid., 9-10.

However, when Indiana asked to be allowed to sell the lands, Congress stipulated that the proceeds should be used for education. In 1854, Wisconsin accepted 40,080 acres for the state university in lieu of a salt land grant.[4]

Nearly 11,500,000 acres of land were granted to nineteen states under the Distribution Act of 1841. The act did not provide that the funds derived from the land were to be used to support public education rather section nine of the act stated that the grants "should be faithfully applied to objects of internal improvement namely roads, railways, bridges, canals, and improvements of drainage."[5] Despite the provision, ten of the nineteen states that received land under the Distribution Act devoted part or all of the proceeds to public education including Wisconsin and Kansas of those under study. The Wisconsin constitutional committee on internal improvements in 1846, recommended that the grant be used to support public schools. Congress granted the request.[6] Congress refused, however, to grant a similar request from Kansas. Section seven of the ordinance which called the Wyandott Convention in 1859 proposed that the 500,000 acres granted under the Distribution Act "shall be granted to the state for the

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[4] Ibid., 10-11.

[5] Ibid., 11-12.

[6] Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), 60.

support of common schools."[7] In spite of the lack of Congressional assent, Kansas made constitutional provision to use the income from the sale of the land to augment the common school fund.[8]

The Missouri Constitutional Convention of 1845, over the objections of those who wanted to use the grants for river improvements, accepted a provision which would have granted the proceeds from the sale of the 500,000 acres to education and which would have required the legislature to establish free public schools. Unfortunately, the constitution was not ratified by the voters and provisions for free public schools were not provided for the children of Missouri until after the Civil War.[9]

In 1850 the Swamp Land Grant Act was passed. Fifteen states were granted a total of 64,000,000 acres under the act and supplementary legislation. All of the states included in

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[7]Edwin C. Maning, "The Kansas State Senate of 1865 and 1866," Kansas Historical Collections (1905-1906), 359-375.

[8]Article 6, Section 1, Kansas Constitution of 1861. Some school leaders have taken it for granted that the income derived from the land was to be used for school support. C. O. Wright, long time executive secretary of the Kansas State Teachers Association, wrote that "The federal government in 1841 had reserved certain areas of the public domain in the various territories for public education. These areas were to be administered by state legislatures." C. O. Wright, "100 Years in Kansas Education," The Kansas Teacher, LXXI (February, 1963), 19.

[9]Priscilla Bradford, "The Missouri Constitutional Controversy," Missouri Historical Review, XXXII (October, 1937), 48-49.

this study except Kansas received such grants and all used at least a portion of the proceeds for the support of the common schools. Wisconsin provided that 5 percent of the income from the sale of the swamp grant should be added to the permanent school fund and Missouri and Ohio allowed all of the proceeds to be used for education.[10]

The importance of the land grants in fostering free public schools in the West should not be considered only in terms of the amount of revenue produced from the sale or lease of the land. The very existence of vast quantities of land set aside for the schools affected western thought on common schools. The public grants sometimes had a detrimental effect as some frontiersmen believed that as a result of Uncle Sam's bounty, they were absolved from taxation or tuition:

> It was . . . democratically believed, and loudly insisted on, that as the State had freely received, it should freely give; and that 'larnin, even the most powerfullest highest larnin,' should at once be bestowed on every body! and without a farthing's expense![11]

Leaving aside the anti-democratic sentiment expressed in the quote, other contemporary writers blamed large permanent school funds for the lack of community support and effort in behalf of education. The sorry condition of Connecticut's schools, as an example, was believed to be a result of that

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[10]Swift, 13.

[11]Baynard Hall, The New Purchase or Seven and a Half Years in the Far West, 1843, Indiana Centennial edition (Princeton University Press, 1916), 321.

state's huge school fund.[12]

More important, however, the land grants "brought the topic of common schools constantly before legislators and people."[13] Some action on the part of political leaders was necessary to protect the land, and in the process their attention was, at least, directed to school matters. The first territorial legislature in Wisconsin in 1836, as an example, passed a bill to protect the timber on the school land from private appropriation. In the next session, legislation regulating the sale of the land and provisions "for organizing, regulating, and perfecting common schools" was passed.[14] Moreover, the very existence of the school lands was used by public officials in advocating establishment of a system of free public schools. Governor Dodge of Wisconsin in an 1847 address proposed that the sale of the sixteenth section and the 500,000 acres of land granted by Congress under the Distribution Act of 1841 made the establishment of common schools feasible.[15]

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[12]Newton Edwards and Herman G. Richey, The School in the American Social Order, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), 327.

[13]Edward A. Miller, "History of the Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1803 to 1850," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXVII (1919), 30.

[14]W. C. Whitford, "Early History of Education in Wisconsin," Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, V (1869), 338.

[15]Ibid., 340.

Governor James Brown Ray of Indiana, 1825-1831, used the grant of more than 608,000 acres which the state had received from the sixteenth sections in his pleas to the state legislature in support of a system of common schools. He estimated that the land was worth in excess of $1,216,000 and if properly invested would produce nearly $73,000 annually for a common school fund. He asked the general assembly to recognize that they had the means, but it remained with them to effect an educational system.[16] In 1826, he urged that immediate attention be given to the two township grants for the support of a public seminary:

> It must be admitted, that these lands subjected to our use for the best of purposes, although intrinsically valuable, are at present in a great degree, either wild, and covered with nature's rank, rich uncultivated growth, (as is to be feared are the minds of too many of our rising youth) or only so partially improved and tenanted, as to be of but trifling avail now, and of little promise to the future. The propriety is therefore respectfully submitted, of giving such permanency to the management or disposal of these various tracts, as will leave an immediate aid and spring to the high objectives they were designed to advance.[17]

The optimism of governors, delegates to state constitutional conventions, and legislators concerning the value and the income to be derived from the public lands may have been excessive, but it worked to the benefit of the schools as political

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[16]James Brown Ray, Message to the General Assembly, December 8, 1826, Governor James Brown Ray, Messages and Papers, Indiana Historical Collections, XXXIV, 91-92.

[17]Message to the General Assembly, December 8, 1826, Ibid., 181.

leaders were willing to support elaborate schemes for education in the belief that the proceeds from the land grants would defray the expense.

In terms of income for school purposes, the land grants were of minor consequence in the Middle West. Cheap and plentiful quantities of land characterized the frontier period. By the time land values had risen enough to be an important source of school revenue, much of the land was already under private or corporate ownership. Too, the management of the school lands by many state officials was haphazard, ineffective, and in some cases, criminal. Swift used such terms as "carelessness, mismanagement, diversion, theft, embezzlement," and fraud to describe the loss of potential school funds from the grants.[18]

Ohio not only set the precedent for the rest of the states in land grants for education, but in the mismanagement of the lands as well. C. L. Martzolff commented on the squandering of the "splendid endowment. . . . in short, it amounted to the embezzlement of its trust and its wards, the children of the state, have been deprived of the inheritance. The maladministration of the educational lands in Ohio is the darkest blot in her history."[19] Two circumstances were largely

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[18]Swift, 37.

[19]C. L. Martzolff, "Land Grants for Education in the Ohio Valley States," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXV (1916), 69.

responsible for the loss of potential income. The state lacked a central office to manage, oversee, and sell the lands; control resided with township officials.[20] And, more damaging, much of the land was leased, between 1810 and 1820, for ninety-nine years. In 1827, lessees were allowed to obtain title to the land by paying the amount of the original appraised value. The result was that land sold for $4.00 or $5.00 an acre which was worth ten times that amount.[21] The income from grants other than the sixteenth section also failed to bring in sizable amounts of revenue. Ohio received 25,000 acres under the swamp land grants of 1850, but received less than one dollar an acre from the sale of the land.[22]

Unfortunately, the same general situation existed in the other states of the Middle West. As late as 1850, according to James Bryant, member of the committee on education of the Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1851, the revenue from the school fund including the sixteenth section, university fund, surplus revenue fund of 1837, salt lands, and other miscellaneous sources amounted to only "two or three thousand dollars per year, to be distributed among ninety-one counties."[23]

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[20]Miller, 18.

[21]A. D. Mayo, "The Development of the Common School in the Western States from 1830 to 1865," Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1898-99, I, 363. See also Miller, 88.

[22]Martzolff, 70.

[23]Richard G. Boone, A History of Education in Indiana (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 144.

The largest amount to a single county was $81.37 and one county received only $3.70.[24]

Premature selling of the land often resulted in enormous losses. Chicago, as an example, by 1835 had sold all of her school land except for four blocks. The total selling price was $38,865 for land that was valued at $12,000,000 in 1860. The problem of premature selling and a lack of effective control was especially difficult in the states admitted before Michigan (1837), because the school lands were granted to townships rather than to the states. According to John Pierce, Michigan's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, the sixteenth section had been mismanaged by the townships throughout the West so "as to be of little worth to the cause of education," and the problem was compounded because the value of the section varied greatly from township to township.[25] He believed the best solution was to give the land in trust to the state. This was accomplished in Michigan by Issac Crary, the territorial representative, who helped to write the enabling act. He worded the document so that the school lands were conferred to the state rather than to the townships. Pierce believed that "the change in the form of conveyance of these sections seems not to have been noticed";

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[24]Mayo, 385.

[25]John D. Pierce, Address before the Pioneer Society of Michigan, February 3, 1875, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, I (1877), 40.

had they been, "no doubt the common form would have been substituted, and the lands given to the townships."[26] Be that as it may, thereafter the sixteenth sections were granted to the states.

The plundering of the school lands continued, however. The frontiersmen seemed to have an "insatiable greed" for cheap land, and the business interests supported a cheap land policy which would rapidly increase population. Under the terms of a Wisconsin law of 1848, a board of evaluation was created in each county which appraised the land at an average value of $2.78 an acre. But even the meager profits from the land sales were frequently lost when the state "invested" the funds by loaning $500.00 to anyone who would use a real estate mortgage as collateral. The secretary of state, treasurer, and attorney general formed a board to approve the loans. The land commissioner in 1861 described the action of the boards as a process of "lending money to men they did not know, taking as security lands they never saw, with no better evidence of their value than the appraisal of two men of whom they knew nothing."[27]

The efforts to preserve the land grants became a Herculean task in Kansas because, in addition to the problems of the western states generally, the common school advocates

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Mayo, 425.

were forced to compete with the railroads for a share of the public domain. Kansas received 500,000 acres under the Act of 1841 which was by the state Constitution "inviolably appropriated to the support of common schools."[28] Nevertheless, the state legislature in 1866 granted the land to four railroads.[29] The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Peter McVicar, attempted to carry the case on behalf of the schools to the Kansas Supreme Court which refused to hear it. Rather, the Court ruled that the distribution of the proceeds from the sale of the land was within the province of the legislature.

The political power of the railroaders was enormous in the sub-humid western states where rail transportation was an indispensable condition for prosperity, but the railroads were not always successful in their rivalry with educational leaders for the bounty to be derived from the public lands. The struggle was intensified as the lands set aside for Indian reservations were ceded, including such vast areas as the Osage reservation of 9,320,000 acres in southern Kansas, and as the pressure from an influx of settlers increased following the Civil War. Kansas was to receive sections sixteen and

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[28]Peter McVicar, Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1868, quoted in Wright, 22.

[29]For an account, by a former governor of Kansas, of the political struggle over the railroad grants, see George W. Glick, "The Railroad Convention of 1860," Kansas Historical Collections, IX (1905-1906), 467-480.

thirty-six of each township of the public domain for school support, but it was not clear if the lands ceded by the Indians following statehood were to be included.

After some of the choice land of the Delawares' and Cherokees' had been ceded to railroads without any being reserved for the public schools, McVicar elected to fight for the appropriate two sections in the area to be relinquished by the Osages.[30] In the spring of 1868, the negotiations with the Osages were started. From the beginning, McVicar was assured by both the Washington treaty commissioner, Col. N. G. Taylor, and the president of the Leavenworth, Lawrence, and Galveston Railroad, William Sturgis, that sections sixteen and thirty-six would be reserved for the schools.[31] However, when negotiations were completed, the treaty provided that more than 8,000,000 acres were to be ceded to the railway for 18 cents an acre, and no provision was made to reserve land for the schools. Sturgis argued that the state already had "more school land than she knew what to do with."[32] In spite of the frontier farmer's yearnings for rail transportation, the public outrage led to an extensive campaign of letters to

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[30]The following account of the attempts by the State Superintendent to preserve the land for the benefit of the schools was based on McVicar's address to The Kansas State Historical Society on January 19, 1892. Reproduced in Wright, 20-22.

[31]This same railroad had received 125,000 acres from the land granted to Kansas under the Act of 1841, Glick, 487.

[32]Ibid., 21.

Congress in the hope of preventing ratification of the treaty. And, both the state attorney general and Superintendent McVicar went to Washington to lobby against ratification. They were successful, and Congress by joint resolution on April 10, 1869, after reserving sections sixteen and thirty-six, opened the Osage land to settlement. Sturgis angrily noted that "the treaty would have gone through slick as a pin if it were not for those confounded schoolmen in Kansas."[33]

Although the problem was more acute in the Trans-Mississippi West, the school forces in the older states also had to compete for public favor with those who insisted that prosperity depended on improved transportation facilities. In 1824, during controversies over internal improvements, Henry Clay's American Plan, and the presidential election; the economic interests of the Ohio settlers led to the development of a "canal party" in opposition to a "school party" in the legislature.[34] Twenty years later, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Samuel Galloway, complained: "The state funds are lavished, with a ruinous prodigality, upon measures of doubtful expediency, and many of our counties are vying with each other in a competition of skill and success in fleecing the people for all kinds of improvement except

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[33] Ibid., 21.

[34] Kenneth V. Lottick, "New England Leadership in Ohio Educational Leadership," Social Science (April, 1956), 103.

intellectual and moral."[35] The injustices to education were, in large part, a result of the greater political effectiveness of the petitioners for special privileges in regard to the exploitation of the school lands. They made their pleas heard, but the school cause was without such powerful advocates.

The threat from the railroads to sources of school revenues was not limited to competing for land grants, but involved attempted raids on the permanent school funds as well. The experience of Wisconsin in the late 1840's may be used to exemplify those efforts. The backers of the Milwaukee and Mississippi railroad campaigned and lobbied to secure loans from the proceeds of the school lands. Arguments were advanced that the very existence of a school fund could be detrimental to the interest of education as illustrated by the experience of Connecticut and Rhode Island.[36] The newspapers in the southern part of the state endorsed the plan of expending the school fund on a railroad because a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River would allow Wisconsin to reap benefits such as New York had received from the Erie Canal. The Potosi Republican editorialized:

> A safer and more beneficial investment to the interest of the State than this, could not be made . . . and the profits arising therefrom cannot fail to more than

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[35]Quoted in Mayo, 363.

[36]Henry Meyer Balthasar, "A History of Early Railroad Legislation in Wisconsin," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XIV (1898), 224-225.

> exceed the interest of the sum loaned, which interest is all that can be appropriated for the benefit of the schools.[37]

Editorialist from the northern sections of the state were not so friendly toward the proposal, however. They wrote of "vandal and sacrilegious hands" attempting to seize money held in trust for future generations; of swindlers and speculators who went to the capitol and "made speeches, ate oysters, and drank beer" and made every effort to get possession of that "sacred fund."[38] The directors of the railroad addressed a memorial to the legislation in 1850 outlining their proposition. Rather than to standing committees such as education and school lands, internal improvements, or even roads; the bill was referred to a select committee favorable to the proposition. It urged the authorization of the loan. However, the bill was ultimately defeated in the legislature by a forty-one to twenty-one vote.[39]

The picture was not completely dark. As the Wisconsin example indicated, the special economic interest groups were not always successful in exploiting or utilizing the school grants. And the mania for land speculation and the alloting of land grants to the railroads, in some cases for reasons however self-seeking, expanded educational opportunities.

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[37]Quoted in Balthasar, 226.

[38]Fond de Lac Journal and Sheboygan Democrat, February, 1850. Quoted in Ibid., 227.

[39]Balthasar, 228.

The establishment of schools was among the improvements advocated by some land speculators as a means of increasing the value of townsites. One frontiersman explained: "Proprietors of village plats and dealers in corner lots are shrewd enough to know that one of the most successful methods to give notoriety to an embryo town, and induce New England settlers, is forthwith to put in operation some institution of learning with a high sounding name."[40]

Land grants to the railroads in some cases eventually aided the public school campaign. The Illinois Central, as an example, contributed to the prosperity of business and farming which gave rise to increased migration from New England to the benefit of the public school forces as opposed to those supporting private academies.[41] Although competing with the schools for the juiciest hunks from the "Great Barbecue," the railroads, in their own economic self-interest, sometimes took a liberal attitude toward taxation for school purposes. The financial agent of the Pacific Railroad Company before an educational meeting in Topeka assured the schoolmen that the railroad wished: "to be taxed liberally for the establishment of schools all along the route, not from the idea of

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[40]Quoted in Jorgenson, 34.

[41]John Pulliam, "The Development of Free Common School Education in Illinois from 1818 to the Civil War," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964), 178.

benevolence, but as a financial investment, to be repaid in dollars and cents."[42]

Except perhaps in a psychological sense, it is difficult to agree with Webb's claim that the public domain acted as a windfall "by supplying a school subsidy without imposing taxes."[43] From the beginning of the period of settlement, public schools were possible only when the inhabitants were willing to tax themselves or depend on subscriptions. Federal aid in any of its forms: sale or lease of the sixteenth sections, income from salt lands, or distribution of federal surpluses was of minor importance in providing sufficient revenue to develop and maintain common schools. In Indiana, it was estimated that the sale of section sixteen even under the best circumstances would provide funds to maintain the schools of a township for less than three years.[44]

Nor, did the income from permanent school funds based on the sale or lease of the public lands grow to significant proportions in the generations to come. In the first state considered in this study, Ohio, the school lands, the "Irreducible Debt," by the beginning of the twentieth century

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[42]McKown, 39.

[43]Webb, 395.

[44]Michael Bossert, "Early Schools of Franklin County, Indiana," Indiana Magazine of History, XXVI (September, 1930), 219.

amounted to little more than one and a half percent of school income.[45] In Kansas, the last state under consideration to be admitted to the Union, by the middle of the twentieth century less than one half of one percent of the public school funds were from income derived from the school lands.

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[45]Lottick, 101

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE FOR TAX SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

The difficulties of Ohio in establishing a system of public schools was to be repeated in the other states of the Middle West. A nineteenth century observer characterized the early efforts to educate the children of the state as "shiftless and disheartening."[1] Two of the major problems in developing a uniform system of education were related to the democratic and individualistic character of the frontiersmen which often resulted in a prejudice against centralization and, as a result, a lack of effective overall control. The accompanying spirit of localism was also responsible for the permissive quality of much of the educational legislation.[2]

Ohio, again like most of the other states of the Middle West, did not suffer from a lack of legislation--there were eight school codes between 1821 and 1850. The acts of 1821 and 1823 simply allowed settlers to form districts and

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[1]A. D. Mayo, "The Development of the Common School in the Western States from 1830 to 1865," Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1898-99, I, 362.

[2]Edward A. Miller, "The History of Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1803 to 1850," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXVII (1918), 8 and 138.

to establish schools. The only provisions for a school tax required an approval by two-thirds of the voters in a county, and then the revenue could be used only for the construction of a building or to pay the fees of indigent children. The rate bill was used to support instruction.[3] The act of 1825 provided for a state wide ad valorem tax of one half mill, the proceeds of which were to be distributed to organized school districts. Edward Miller gave credit for "the great initial victory to New England ideas backed up by New England men."[4] Timothy Flint reported in 1832 that the tax "was at first discordant with the habits and likings of portions of the population. This odium of prejudice is weaning away, and the system is going into efficient and noiseless operation."[5]

The victory was, however, far from complete. The tax rate was much too low, and the requirement that school districts had to be formed before schools could receive tax revenues added to the problem of control and supervision. By 1839, there were approximately 13,050 school districts in the state.[6]

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[3]Ibid., 15-16. See also Lawrence A. Cremin, The American Common School: An Historical Conception (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951), 122-123.

[4]Miller, 17.

[5]Timothy Flint, The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley, I (Cincinnati: E. H. Flint and L. R. Lincoln, 1832), 408.

[6]Miller, 139.

The first state superintendent, Samuel Lewis, believed that the rural school financed by rate bills, the "humble allowance" from public revenues, and gifts from private persons were superior to those of the cities. In the cities and towns, the wealthy tended to patronize private institutions which left the common school to become more common and less desirable.[7]

Leadership in the battle for more adequate educational provisions in Ohio was furnished largely by the state superintendents and the teachers. The state superintendents usually attacked on two fronts. They spent much of their time traveling and speaking throughout the state in attempts to drum up public sentiment and support. In their speeches, they made liberal use of quotes from eastern educational leaders such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, and occasionally they were able to bring "eastern authorities" to the state: Superintendent Galloway's report of 1847 welcomed the visit of Henry Barnard, "who has promised to come . . . to labor in the good cause."[8] The second front consisted of lobbying activities with the legislators, who, Superintendent H. H. Barry described somewhat unkindly, as "the gentlemen who vote aye and no, read nothing, and think less."[9] Teachers and school officials also made use of the children to

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[7]Mayo, 379.

[8]Ibid., 361-363.

[9]Quoted in Mayo, 369.

prick the conscience of the community. On July 4, 1833, nearly 2,000 children marched in a Cincinnati parade to plea for better schools. However, the action lacked universal support among the teachers and a small number of them refused to march and "were dismissed for obstinancy."[10]

Some progress came in financial support for the schools with the law of 1838. A county school tax of two mills was required, district taxes for constructing schoolhouses were allowed, and a state tax was levied in order to establish an annual state school fund of $200,000.[11] However, the next year, the legislature provided that county commissioners might reduce the school tax to one mill and by 1847, the anti-school taxation sentiment was so strong that the commissioners were forbidden to levy a tax for school support in excess of two-fifths of a mill.[12]

The struggle for increased tax dollars had a seesaw quality about it. After the passage of the limiting provision of 1847, steady progress was made which culminated in the free school bill of 1853. Permissive acts were passed in 1847, 1848, and 1849 which allowed specified districts to

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[10]D. C. Shilling, "Pioneer Schools and School Masters," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXV (1916), 44. See also W. W. Venable, "Education in Cincinnati," History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio (Cincinnati: S. B. Nelson and Co., Publishers, 1894), 105.

[11]Cremin, 124, and Mayo, 360.

[12]Miller, 45.

levy taxes up to four mills and in 1850, all of the schools of the state came under that provision.[13] The notable victory of the school forces came with the free school law of 1853 which abolished the rate bill and provided for free schools for all of the children of the state. There were, of course, later set backs, especially in appropriation measures. But with the passage of the act, a half century after Ohio became a state, the principle was firmly established "that the property of the State should educate the children of the State."[14]

The reasons for the delay were to a high degree the same in all of the middle western states: selfish economic interests, sectarian strife, conflicts between the different educational traditions of the settlers. But the first superintendent of schools elected after the acceptance of the code of 1853 believed the frontier environment to be principally responsible for the slow progress: "Our history, until recently, was that of a pioneer people, subduing dense forests and bending their utmost energies to establish communication between frontier settlements and the open markets of the world."[15]

Indiana, under the terms of the Constitution of 1816, provided for a complete system of education from elementary

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[13]Mayo, 364.

[14]Ibid., 368.

[15]Superintendent H. H. Barry (1854), quoted in Mayo, 369.

schools to the university. Under state control and administration, it was to be free and equal to all and without a taint of the pauper school. In view of the later educational history of the state, the provisions of the Constitution were an empty promise, an expression of faith of a pioneer people, or a cruel joke perpetrated on the state's children. By the middle of the century, one child of school age in eight was illiterate, and only fifty thousand of the nearly three hundred thousand children of school age attended any sort of school.[16] With the exception of the southern states, including Delaware and Missouri, Indiana had the highest illiteracy rate in the nation.[17]

In the spirit of the frontier theory, a later state superintendent blamed the delay in the establishment of free schools on the difficulties of pioneer living:

> The people were busy felling forests and draining swamps, and making for themselves homes. They exhausted their time and their energy in providing for their families the necessities of life, and in battling with malaria and other prevalent diseases. So they had no leisure for the contemplation of educational problems, and the spiritual life had to wait.[18]

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[16]Richard G. Boone, A History of Education in Indiana (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 87.

[17]Table of Illiteracy of States--Census of 1840, reproduced in Boone, 88.

[18]State Superintendent's Report, 1905, 17, quoted in Olis G. Jamison, "The Development of Secondary Education in Indiana Prior to 1910," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford Junior University, 1935), 54.

The governors of Indiana from statehood expressed a greater faith in education than the majority of the legislators seemed to possess. They recommended education, not for its utilitarian or economic value, but largely because of its salutary effect on morals and good citizenship. As examples, Governor Johathan Jennings, in messages to the legislature, urged "the dissemination of useful knowledge" as "indispensably necessary as a support to morals and as a restraint to vice."[19] He characterized ignorance as "the offspring of despotism, and ruinous to the rights and liberties of mankind."[20] Governor James Brown Ray, in his messages to the general assembly, suggested that provisions for a free and equal education was the most worthy subject to which the legislators could direct their attention because there was no "more effective method of suppressing vice, and giving countenance to, and encouraging the principles of 'humanity, industry, and morality' . . . for 'ignorance is the footstool of despotism.'"[21] In a later message, Ray observed that "education made the Greeks good members of the commonwealth by

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[19]Governor Jonathan Jennings, Message to the General Assembly, November 7, 1816, Governors Messages and Letters, III, Indiana Historical Collections, XII, 34.

[20]Jennings, Message to the General Assembly, December 7, 1819, Ibid., 79.

[21]Governor James Brown Ray, Message to the General Assembly, December 8, 1825, Governor James Brown Ray, Messages and Papers, 1825-1831, Indiana Historical Collections, XXXIV, 91.

enabling them to acquire such arts and habits, as rendered their services available, in peace or war. . . . But here in this land of freedom more than anywhere else," he continued, "knowledge is our sword and shield--hence let us gird upon posterity this formidable panoply, and the republic is safe."[22]

Legislation in Indiana until the school laws of 1849 and 1852 was of limited value. A Seminary bill was passed in 1818 for the purpose of establishing a secondary school in each county to prepare students for the university. State support for them was but a "trifling" amount and tuition in the form of rate bills provided the meager income.[23] Almost half of the counties did not establish seminaries at all, some were organized and then abandoned because of the lack of funds or the lack of community support, and others were established shortly before the repeal of the Seminary Act in 1849.[24]

School laws of 1828 and 1833 provided for the sale of public lands in the various townships, the organization of school districts, and the permissive levying of local taxes. With few exceptions, the citizens refused to tax themselves to educate the community's children. The individualistic spirit was carried to the extreme in legislation in 1836 which allowed any householder to employ a qualified teacher

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[22]Ray, Message to the General Assembly, December 8, 1826, Ibid., 180.

[23]Jamison, 38.

[24]Boone, 56.

for his children and use a share of the school funds to support that "public school."[25]

The school system, or lack of it, became a major emotional and political issue in 1848. After a school bill had passed the House of Representatives and had been held up by the Senate, it was decided to submit it to the people for a popular vote. The referendum was to be submitted at the regular presidential election which was already frought with emotion over the Mexican War and the slavery issue. The opponents of the measure refrained from attacking the necessity of schooling, but denounced as subversive the concept of a state controlled and supported system of schools. After all, according to individualistic Hoosiers, the education of one's children was a natural right of the parent.

Social class conflicts and sectarian bias, as well as partisan politics, were factors in the election. For the most part, the vigorous opposition to the school bill, according to Boone, was from "the improvident, the needy, the hand-to-mouth laborer, and the ignorant."[26] Fear of the clergy was used to the advantage of the bill's opponents. They argued that "the bait is to give our children an education; the chief object is to religiously traditionalize them, and

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[25]R. Carlyle Buley, The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840, II (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 362. See also Boone, 34.

[26]Boone, 104.

then to unite Church and state."[27] Political and religious feelings rose to such heights that citizens who were normally "sober and reputable" came to the polls with firearms to intimidate the free school advocates.[28]

In the referendum of 1848, the counties split the vote on a north and south basis.[29] Fifty-three percent of the affirmative vote came from counties settled predominately by northerners, and 62 percent of the total negative vote was from the southern counties. The southern part of the state was largely populated by migrants from Kentucky, Virginia, and the Carolinas, which were states, according to Boone, with traditional policies that "excluded the ideal of a free elementary school system, or, indeed, free schools of any kind, except of the pauper class."[30]

The law of 1849, which resulted from the successful referendum, had serious weaknesses. It left to the voters in each county to annually accept or reject a local school tax; and in more than one third of the counties, the citizens refused to tax themselves to support common schools.[31] Another weakness of the bill was that it provided for rural

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[27]Quoted in Boone, 104-105.

[28]Boone, 103-104. See also Indiana School Journal, 1876, 298.

[29]A study of the law and the referendum campaign may be found in Boone, 112-128. Table of the vote by counties was on pages 124-126.

[30]Ibid., 108.

[31]Ibid., 152-153.

schools only, as it was assumed that private schools and seminaries would meet the educational needs of children in the towns.[32]

Shortly after the law of 1849 was passed, a new constitution was adopted in Indiana which required the legislature to "provide by law for a general and uniform system of common schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all."[33] The new constitution and the school law of 1852 which attempted to implement the constitutional provisions, according to a nineteenth century historian of the common schools, "stand out in the early western legislation on education as beyond question the most advanced and comprehensive of all the new states."[34] The law required that common schools be free, that township tax be levied for construction and maintenance of buildings, that state revenue be used for instructional purposes, and that careful management of all school funds be provided for.[35]

In addition to factors such as improvements in the economy, the growing influence of northern immigrants, and, perhaps, simply the maturing of the society; a reason for the shift in attitude which allowed for more progressive legislation was the effective leadership of a small group of

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[32]Jamison, 50.

[33]Indian Constitution of 1851, Article VIII, Section I.

[34]Mayo, 375.

[35]Ibid. See also Boone, 145.

schoolmen. Particular credit was given to the men who later became the first three superintendents of schools: William Larrabee of Maine, Caleb Mills of New Hampshire, and Samuel Rugg of New York. Educators, who had played a prominent role in the colony at New Harmony including Joseph Neef, William Maclane, and the naturalist, Thomas Say, also helped to arouse an interest in education. However, as a result of his speaking and writing on educational needs in Indiana from the time he reached the West as a young missionary under the auspices of the American Home Missionary Society, the most effective and influential warrior for public education in the state was Caleb Mills.[36]

Mayo, in his above praise of the "free school law" of 1852, was too enthusiastic as were many of the contemporary school advocates. Immediately after the bill was passed, local taxes were levied in a number of counties to build new schools, to improve the quality of instruction, and to extend the school terms. Shortly thereafter, several taxpayers' suits were brought against the townships. The plaintiffs argued that taxes could only be levied at the local level for building purposes. In the case that was adjudicated by the state supreme court, Greencastle Township vs Black, it was

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[36] Ibid. On the contribution of Mills' see Val Nolan, Jr., "Caleb Mills and the Indiana Free School Law," Indiana Magazine of History, XLIX (March, 1853), 81-90. See also Andrew A. Sherockman, "Caleb Mills, Pioneer Educator in Indiana," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburg, 1956).

decided that if local taxes could be levied to improve instruction "the uniformity of the common-school system would be at once destroyed" and control of the schools would pass from the state and the superintendent to the local authorities.[37] As a result of the decision, revenue for the support of instruction had to originate in the state legislature. There were rumors that free schools had been abolished altogether as a result of the decision, and some trustees abandoned their offices and dismissed the schools.[38]

The Greencastle decision continued the tradition in the state of promising much and producing little in public education. Because of the limited revenue provided by the state, the school term was reduced to two and one half months, and some schools could not exist even for that length of time. On the eve of the Civil War, about one fourth of the schools had been closed for lack of funds. Many teachers left the profession or the state. A writer in the Indiana School Journal commented that "it was unconstitutional to educate in Indiana, it was not unconstitutional to emigrate."[39] A law to allow local taxes for the support of instruction was not enacted until 1867.

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[37] Greencastle Township, in Putnam County, and Kercheval, County Treasurer, vs. Black, December 12, 1854, quoted in Boone, 155.

[38] Boone, 156.

[39] G. W. Hoss, Indiana School Journal, June 1885, quoted in Boone, 218.

Educational historians of Illinois have emphasized, to a greater degree than in the other states of the Old Northwest, the disparity in opinion between settlers from the North and the South regarding the need for tax-supported schools. Reference was not made to schools in the Illinois Constitution of 1818. The explanation given by historians of education was that "New England was far away" and the settlers followed what Turner called "the arteries made by geology."[40] The advent of New England common schools was retarded until immigration from the South was checked.[41] The northern victory came with the law of 1855 which provided for free schools and "represented the influx of people from New England."[42]

The school law of 1825 was, however, the most advanced in the Old Northwest and perhaps in the nation. The provision for a free, tax-supported system of education appeared foreign to the southern temper. Yet a majority of the legislature which passed the law were of southern nativity, and the chief architect of the bill was a Virginian, Governor Edward Coles, who had been a private secretary to Madison and a correspondent of Jefferson's. Coles published Jefferson's

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[40]W. G. Walker, "The Development of the Free Public High School in Illinois During the Nineteenth Century," History of Education Quarterly, IV (December, 1964), 266.

[41]Paul E. Belting, The Development of the Free Public High School in Illinois to 1860, Illinois Historical Society, (1919), 358-359.

[42]John Pulliam, "Changing Attitudes Toward Free Public Schools in Illinois: 1825-1860," History of Education Quarterly (Summer, 1967), VII, 194.

plan for an educational system for Virginia and, according to Belting, the law of 1825 was the first step in implementing a similar system for Illinois.[43] The law was criticized as "Yankeefied" by the southern frontiersmen and they were "wholly to blame" for repealing it.[44] The following amendment passed in 1827 destroyed its effectiveness:

> No person shall hereafter be taxed for the support of any free school in this state, unless by his or her own free will and consent, first had and obtained in writing.[45]

When the free school bill of 1855 was finally passed, most of the opposition was in the southern tier of counties.[46]

The southern position was that the educational system based on private academies and subscription schools should be left alone:

> We have got to hating everything with the prefix free, from free negroes up and down through the whole catalogues--free farms, free labor, free society, free will, free thinking, free children, and free schools--all belonging to the same brood of damnable isms; but the worst of all these abominations is the modern system of free schools. We abominate the system because the schools are free."[47]

In addition to the increase in the number of New Englanders, the shift in public opinion to greater support

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[43] Belting, 362.

[44] Ibid., 511.

[45] Illinois, Session Laws, 1826-27, 364.

[46] Belting, 512.

[47] Illinois Teacher, 1857, 77, quoted in Belting, 509.

of free school legislation in the 1850's was the result of a number of factors. Among the influences which inspired and goaded the Westerner to accept tax supported schools were effective leadership by politicians and educators, campaigns by teachers' organizations, an increasingly friendly press, publicity concerning the strides made by a number of eastern states, a belief that it was necessary to Americanize the influx of immigrants, the rise of labor organizations, a growing fear of parochial schools, and finally the spirit of equalitarianism associated with Jacksonian democracy.

Governor Coles and his successor, Joseph Duncan, were warm supporters of the common schools. The state superintendents, on the whole, believed that their major responsibility was to propagandize for increased financial support for the common schools with free schools, "free as the genial showers and sunshine of heaven," the ultimate goal.[48]

Educational conferences were influential in organizing the sentiment for free schools. Among the more important conferences were those held at Peoria in 1844, Jacksonville in 1845, Chicago in 1846, and Springfield in 1848. The Illinois State Teachers' Association, the Illinois Institute of Education, and the State Education Society, which published the the Illinois Teacher, were organized, in part, as a result

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[48]Illinois State Superintendent's Report, 1885-86, 166, quoted in Belting, 502.

of these conventions.[49]

These pressure groups were able to exert leverage on the legislature. As an example, the State Educational Societies' memorial to the legislature in 1841 was not only of major importance in convincing that body to consider a revision of school laws, but moreover many of the features of the memorial were enacted into law. However, the provision for the levying of taxes for school support had to wait until the law of 1855.[50]

Local groups were organized to support education in frontier Illinois, among them the Ladies' Education Society of Jacksonville which was founded on October 4, 1833. Its members claimed that it was "the oldest independent women's society in America."[51]

Among the literary forces supporting public education was The Common School Advocate which was "the first educational journal in Illinois and probably in the Mississippi Valley."[52] There were twelve issues of the Journal published

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[49]John Pulliam, "The Development of Free Public Schools in Illinois from 1818 to the Civil War," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1965), 178 and 240.

[50]Ibid., 170.

[51]Clara Moore, "The Ladies' Educational Society of Jacksonville, Illinois," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XVIII (April, 1925), 196.

[52]Quoted in Charles E. Peterson, Jr., "The Common School Advocate: Molder of the Public Mind," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, LVII (Autumn, 1964), 263.

beginning in January, 1837. The Advocate reprinted a good deal of material from European and eastern sources, including excerpts from the Cousin's report, the Report of the Edinburgh Infant School Societies, and reports from eastern superintendents of schools. The circulation of the Advocate included subscribers outside Illinois, and according to Charles Peterson, it aided in developing favorable public opinion for education in Illinois and to some extent in the Old Northwest generally.[53]

Predating the Advocate was Judge Hall's Illinois Monthly Magazine, 1827 to 1830. Although not devoted exclusively to education, it did include numerous articles on curriculum, textbooks, arguments for free common schools, and other topics related to education.[54] Belting suggested that Hall's periodical rather than the Advocate, "might well be called the first school journal of the state."[55] Hall also played an important role in organizing the educational conventions mentioned above.[56] The most influential journal, however, in support of common schools until 1854, when the Illinois Teacher appeared, was The Prairie Farmer, titled

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[53]Peterson, 266-268.

[54]The Illinois Monthly Magazine was discussed more fully in Chapter II.

[55]Belting, 486.

[56]Pulliam, "The Development of Free Public Schools in Illinois," 240.

The Union Agriculturalist from 1841 to 1843.[57]

The press aided in the public school crusade not only by favorable editorials, but by reprinting the speeches of educational leaders in the East such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard. A leader in the establishment of New York's common schools, DeWitt Clinton, was frequently quoted and his addresses on education reprinted in Illinois papers.[58] Articles about the successes of other states, especially if they had been dilatory in establishing free schools, such as Pennsylvania's enactment of a free school law in 1835, were used to shame the anti-school forces.

In Michigan the early educational leaders followed a policy which was at variance with the local and individualistic sentiments of the frontiersmen. The territorial legislature in 1817, during the absence of the governor, passed a bill prepared by Judge A. B. Woodward incorporating the Catholipistemead or University of Michigania. The law provided for a complete centralized school system in which the teachers at all levels were to be appointed by the governor and their salaries paid by the territory. Little was accomplished, however, in the development of a school system under the law of 1817 or the territorial statutes which

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[57] Belting, 487.

[58] Ibid., 485.

superceeded it.[59]

John D. Pierce, the "father" of the Michigan school system and the state's first Superintendent of Public Instruction, also favored a highly centralized system. Shortly before the Constitutional Convention of 1835 convened, Pierce and Isaac Crary, who was Michigan's first territorial representative to Congress and Chairman of the Committee on Education in the Constitutional Convention, met to discuss the future of education in the new state. Pierce later recalled their conversation:

> About this time, Cousin's report on the Prussian system, made to the French Minister of Public Instruction, came into my hands, and it was read with much interest. Sitting one pleasant afternoon upon a log, on the hill north of where the Court House of Marshall now stands, General Cary and myself discussed, for a long time, the fundamental principles which were deemed important for the convention to adopt, in laying the foundations of a new state. The subject of education was a theme of special interest. It was agreed, if possible, that it should make a distinct branch of the government, and that the Constitution ought to provide for an officer who should have this whole matter in charge, and thus keep its importance perpetually before the public mind.[60]

A. D. Mayo complained that Pierce viewed the state superintendency as the equivalent to that of the Prussian Ministery of Education in which the entire educational apparatus, including denominational and private schools, ought to be

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[59]Daniel Putman, Primary and Secondary Education in Michigan: A Historical Sketch (Ann Arbor, Mich.: George Wahr, Publisher and Bookseller, 1904), 6-10.

[60]John D. Pierce, Address before the Pioneer Society of Michigan, February 3, 1875, Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, I (1877), 38.

placed under the control of the superintendent. Mayo wrote, however, that "the good sense of the people of Michigan soon rejected the notion of a European continental minister of education presiding over the entire school affairs of a new American State on a salary of $500 a year."[61]

Mayo believed the Cousin's and Stowe's reports were of minor significance in contrast with the western states' indebtedness to the common school experiences of the Northeast. As finally developed, he saw nothing in the Michigan school system "that distinguished it from the American system as developed through the previous two hundred years."[62] The common school revival in the 1830's and 1840's was, perhaps, even more important. It was the good fortune of Michigan "that its birthday fell upon the year ever memorable for the establishment of the Massachusetts board of education and the appointment of Horace Mann as its secretary."[63]

The school law of 1827 which replaced the incongruous Woodward bill of 1817 provided for local control and was more in accord with western desires. But it also exemplified the continuity of educational legislation; the language of the provision which required "every township containing fifty families to support a school . . ." was almost identical with the Massachusetts law of 1647.

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[61] Mayo, 392.

[62] Ibid., 391.

[63] Ibid., 389.

Continuing influence came through the state superintendents of public instruction, each of whom until 1878 was born and educated in either New England or New York. John Pierce was born in Chesterfield, New Hampshire, and looked to that section for guidance. Soon after his appointment as the first state superintendent in 1836, he went to New England to discuss public school organization with a number of political and educational leaders, including presidents of Yale and Brown.[64]

Pierce, like other educational leaders in the West, frequently emphasized good citizenship as the major objective of a system of universal education. The following was from his first report as superintendent:

> Generally speaking, the child uneducated in knowledge and virtue is thoroughly educated in the school of depravity. And what is true of the individual, is true of the communities. Without education no people can secure themselves against the encroachment of power.[65]

Under his leadership the monthly Journal of Education was published to publicize the need for free, quality primary education. In the first issue of the journal, Pierce addressed himself to the parents:

> If it is your desire to see your children grow up, and be all that is amiable, and excellent, and of good report in moral and intellectual worth, . . . you will impart to your children all that instruction which may be

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[64]Pierce, 39.

[65]Quoted in John C. Springman, The Growth of Public Education in Michigan (Ypsilanti, Mich.: Michigan State Normal College, 1952), 26.

> required to inspire them with a proper sense of the real dignity of their rational nature, and the obligations founded in it, and lead them to a just appreciation of the rights and prerogatives of each individual of all classes and denominations of men.[66]

In spite of the efforts of Pierce and his successors, free public schools were not provided for either in the Constitution of 1835 or in the amended Constitution of 1850, although the latter did provide that free schools were to be established within five years from the adoption of the Constitution.[67] A system of free public schools was, however, not achieved until 1869. Pierce believed that the physical necessities of the pioneers in frontier Michigan were largely responsible for the lack of success: "The country was too new and too poor--houses were to be built, roads laid out and made passable, bridges and crossways to be constructed, mills and mill-dams to be erected, and farms to be laid out, cleared, fenced, and plowed."[68]

The school code of Michigan was adopted almost in its entirety by the first territorial legislature of Wisconsin in 1836 and ostensibly remained in effect, although modified almost annually, until statehood in 1848.[69] In fact, the

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[66] Ibid., 22.

[67] Article XIII, Section 4.

[68] Pierce, "Address before Pioneer Society," 41.

[69] W. C. Whitford, "Early History of Education in Wisconsin," Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, V (1869), 337. And Joseph Schafer, "The Origin of Wisconsin's Free School System," Wisconsin Magazine of History, IX (September, 1925), 32.

acts of 1839 and 1840 differed considerably from the Michigan Code. Part of the reason was the scarcity of copies of the Michigan statutes which not only left the legislators "somewhat at sea," but created problems for judges who were to use it as the basis for adjudication.[70]

The acts of 1839 and 1840 required the formation of school districts, the election of local officials to protect and lease the school lands and keep school records, repealed the rate bill, and provided for county ad valorem taxes not to exceed one-fourth of one per cent. A local district tax for school buildings and teachers' salaries was optional.[71] The acts differed from the early practices of Michigan and the eastern states in that they abolished the rate bill, property qualifications for voting in district meetings, and special treatment for the children of the indigent.[72]

The liberal provisions of the acts of 1838 and 1839 were abrogated in 1841 as Wisconsin took a giant backward step by adopting, almost verbatim, the current New York law. The school law of 1841 repealed the compulsory county school tax, limited the amount of taxes that could be levied for construction of buildings, required the approval of three-fourths of voters in a district before taxes could be levied

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[70]Lloyd P. Jorgenson, The Founding of Public Education in Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), 18.

[71]Whitford, 339, and Jorgenson, 18-20.

[72]Jorgenson, 20.

for teachers' salaries, restricted voting qualifications to freeholders or to those who had paid taxes the preceeding year, and authorized the use of rate-bills.[73]

Minor adjustments were made in the years following. In the 1843-44 session, after numerous petitions were received from local school districts, permission was granted to levy a district property tax up to one-fourth percent for instructional purposes. Petitions to increase the limitations on district taxes continued until 1848, when the legislature, for all practical purposes, granted districts the right to support schools completely by taxes.[74]

The most notable aspect in the move toward free schools in Wisconsin was that the impetus came from the local districts rather than from the state and that they, to a high degree, "developed in spite of the legislature."[75] The question arises--were the petitions requesting legislative grants for increased taxing powers from the districts settled by Northeasterners rather than by Southerners? Southport (Kenosha) was the first district in Wisconsin (1847) to provide for free schools and the town was "almost purely Yankee." According to a local census taken in 1843, there were 1,435 American born and 386 foreign-born inhabitants in Kenosha.

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[73] Ibid., 23-24.

[74] Ibid., 28-32.

[75] Ibid., 37.

Over half of the American born were from New York where agitation for free schools was then rampant, most of the others of American nativity had New England backgrounds. Only twenty-six of the immigrants were born outside the British Isles.[76]

The most liberal tax programs for school support were, however, in the mining district, especially in Grant County. From 1839 to the end of the territorial period, the maximum permissible county tax was levied every year. Local school district taxation was also high. As an example of the willingness of the people in that county to tax themselves for education, almost a third of the special legislative grants for permission to exceed the amount of the tax levy allowed by the general laws came from districts in Grant County which did not have 10 percent of the population. The mining district, including Grant County, was settled in large part by Southerners. In Lloyd Jorgenson's view "the thesis that free public education in Wisconsin had its origin and early development among the Yankees is therefore wholly untenable."[77]

Educational conventions in Wisconsin, as elsewhere, were held to plan strategy, and to propagandize for free schools. One of the first in the state was conducted at Mineral Point in the autumn of 1845. In October, 1846,

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[76]Schafer, 33.

[77]Jorgenson, 42.

teachers from Wisconsin and surrounding states attended a regional convention in Chicago in which Henry Barnard was the featured speaker. In Madison on the eve of the Constitutional Convention of 1846, a common school convention, with a number of legislators in attendance, was held to prepare "the public mind for the establishment of a system of free schools, similar to that of Massachusetts."[78]

Public opinion, or at least publically expressed opinion including newspaper editorials, was almost unanimously in support of a strong article on education in the constitution. And the delegates to the convention agreed early in the session that a common school education would be provided for all at public expense.[79] There was surprisingly little controversy surrounding the free school provisions. It was supported by both rural and urban, and southern and northern delegates. The foreign-born delegates, almost to a man, voted in favor of the liberal provisions.[80] The delegates, in essential agreement on the educational article, spent their time arguing more exciting issues "such as banks, negro [sic] suffrage, elective judiciary, the death penalty, and the rights of married women in respect to property."[81] The

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[78]Quoted in Schafer, 43.

[79]Whitford, 341.

[80]Jorgenson, 52; Whitford, 342.

[81]Whitford, 342.

constitution failed to be ratified by a decisive majority of the voters; however, the educational provisions received generally favorable comment.[82]

The Second Constitutional Convention, which began deliberations in 1847 and was ratified in 1848, was equally free of serious opposition to free schools.[83] The Constitution provided that the schools "shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years, and no sectarian instruction shall be allowed therein."[84] There was a debate over the age limits of children in the public schools; one delegate, John Doran, argued that immorality might be fostered if mature persons over sixteen years old of both sexes were in the same classrooms, but another delegate countered that the argument was invalid as such "tendencies appeared at an earlier age."[85] It was decided that state funds would be expended for local schools "on the basis of the number of residents between the ages of four and twenty." The upper age level was believed necessary by a majority of the delegates because of the need for

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[82]Jorgenson, 63-67. Among the issues on which there was major opposition by the conservative Democrats and Whigs were ownership of property by married women, election of judges, limited provisions for "homestead exemptions," and state banks.

[83]Whitford, 342.

[84]Article X, Section 3.

[85]Jorgenson, 89.

immigrant youths to learn English, and to compensate for the educational deprivations of the earlier settlers.[86]

The school acts of 1848 and 1849 were passed to carry out the provisions of the new Constitution. The major weakness of the school system was a common one in the West. In a desire to provide for local control and educational "independence," isolated school districts, without sufficient central control, led to wasteful and ineffective use of the limited school revenues. Because of the variation in wealth, tax rates among the several districts in a county might vary from three to thirty mills.[87] Five years after the passage of the law of 1848, the state superintendent complained that each school district was a "separate, independent republic, accountable to no higher authority, and dependent upon none except in the matter of the examination of teachers and the annual receipt and expenditure of a small amount of money."[88]

Among the reasons for an early acceptance of free schools in Wisconsin were: the precedent established during the territorial period for tax-supported education, the people were, by statehood, accustomed to taxation for this purpose; the favorable and effective public speeches of Governors Dodge, Doty, Tallmadge, and Dewey which helped to gain public

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[86] Ibid., 88-90.

[87] Mayo, 416; Jorgenson, 99.

[88] Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1863, 112. Quoted in Jorgenson, 98.

support; the belief, not altogether realistic, that the school fund based on land grants would diminish the burden of taxation; the lack of political power among the parochial and private schools and the lack of wealth to support such schools; and the fact that a large majority of the settlers were young and had school-age children.[89] Many of the settlers had experienced or witnessed the operation of free public schools in the East and this was perhaps the "chief explanation," according to Jorgenson, for its early acceptance in Wisconsin.[90] A close relationship between educational leaders in Wisconsin and New England, as in the other western states, suggested the continuing influence of the East on education. The "most valuable feature," as an example, of the first report of Wisconsin's newly appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction, M. E. Root, was the publication of his correspondence with Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and a number of other "leading educators."[91] Both of these well-known educational leaders eventually went to the Middle West; Henry Barnard as President of the University of Wisconsin and director of teacher institutes and Horace Mann to Antioch College. In 1859, State Superintendent Lyman Draper, in his first report, welcomed Barnard, "as one who came like the wise men of the East to

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[89]Whitford, 344; Jorgenson, 92.

[90]Jorgenson, 93.

[91]Mayo, 416.

bear gifts of wisdom and prophecy to its children."[92] But Mayo doubted that his appearance or his resignation, in 1861, due to poor health, made much difference in the development of the state's schools, because Wisconsin was "so liberally endowed with able and practical leaders."[93]

Nothing approaching a workable public school system was established in Missouri until the school law of 1853.[94] The only provision for publically supported schools in the Constitution of 1820 was that ". . . the poor shall be taught gratis."[95] Earlier legislation had failed to adequately provide for a common school system. Under the terms of the act of 1825, county courts were invested with authority to see that at least one school was established in each township, but the provision was irregularly carried out. Conditions were so bad that as late as 1835, St. Louis was without public schools--"the streets swarmed with idle children and the public school lands laid unoccupied in the most populas [sic] parts of the city."[96] Governor Miller, in 1832, in his

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[92] Ibid., 420.

[93] Ibid., 421.

[94] Howard I. McKee, "The School Law of 1853, Its Origin and Authors," Missouri Historical Review, XXXV (July, 1941), 539.

[95] Article VI, Section 1.

[96] J. Thomas Scharf, History of St. Louis and County (1883), quoted in Edwin J. Benton "History of Public Education in Missouri, 1735-1764," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 1964), 40.

message to the legislature pleaded for a recognition of the States' responsibility for the promotion of education for all of the people. The legislature responded by asking his successor, Governor Dunklin, to appoint a committee to develop a comprehensive plan for Missouri's common school system. Dunkel exemplified the generalization that the western governors were often more inclined to support public school measures than the legislators. His public addresses and his messages to the general assembly, in large part, were attempts to create sentiment for tax supported schools. In his inaugural address, the first words relating to the program which he hoped to develop as governor were "the diffusion of knowledge by placing the means of its acquisition within the reach of all . . . "[97] Joseph Hertick, a Swiss immigrant and "disciple of Pestalozzi" who had founded the Asylum Academy at Ste. Geneviere, was appointed chairman of the commission. He issued a report which provided for, among other things, a state system under the supervision of a superintendent of common schools, the establishment of a teacher training seminary, a system of matching funds between the local school district and the state, and the appointment of local officials or county school commissioners to supervise the schools.[98]

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[97]Inaugural address, November 22, 1832, The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, I, The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1933, 225.

[98]Ibid., 342.

Dunklin submitted the report of the Hertich commission with the following appeal to the vanity of the legislators:

> . . . if the members of the general assembly are inspired with a laudable ambition of being distinguished, above all that have preceded them, should they be desirous of handing down their names to posterity, as public benefactors, let them establish a system of primary schools.[99]

The legislature was not responsive and only after "tremendous pressure" by Dunklin was a school bill passed. It provided for countywide taxation for school support, but only when the citizens in each county would approve it by a two-thirds majority.[100] Although its provisions were not incorporated immediately, the Geyer Act of 1839 and the school law of 1853 drew quite heavily from the Hertick report.

The legislature in 1839 passed a comprehensive school bill which was commonly known as the Geyer Act.[101] It made provisions for a complete system of education which would have compared favorably with those of any of the other western states. The act provided for the development of township, county, and state school funds. It specified the conditions under which the sixteenth section could be sold and made provisions for a permanent state school fund. The distribution of the money was to be based on the number of white children

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[99] The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, I, 292.

[100] C. A. Phillips, "A Century of Education in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, XV (1920-21), 299.

[101] Henry Geyer was a representative from St. Louis.

between eight and sixteen years of age in each district. The senate and house by joint ballot was to elect a state superintendent of common schools.[102] Benton suggested that it was not only influenced by the Hertick report; but as befitted a southern state, it was patterned after Jefferson's plan. The Geyer Act resembled Jefferson's program for Virginia in the idea of publicly supported schools for both rich and poor; one major university with free education, based on ability; but perhaps the major similarity was that neither plan was implemented.[103] The law ran to 30,000 words and was difficult to interpret and to administer and little was done by local officials to carry out the provisions of the code. The first appropriation of state money was not authorized until 1841, and the same year the office of state superintendent was abolished.[104]

As mentioned above, a state system of public education for Missouri was not established until the adoption of the law of 1853. Although it did not provide for completely free schools, in other respects it was as comprehensive as the school codes of the states of the Old Northwest. The major controversy in the legislature over the bill, concerned the Hickman amendment which provided that "twenty-five per

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[102]Phillips, 300.

[103]Benton, 41-42.

[104]McKee, 544-545.

centum of the state revenue shall be annually set apart . . . and shall be distributed annually for the support of organized schools."[105] The division on the amendment, which was accepted by a vote of ninety to twenty-one, was sectional in nature. Only three of the twenty-one who voted against the provision were from north of the Missouri River, and only four of the dissenters represented the larger counties.[106]

On the final vote for the bill as a whole, McKee found that it "was neither a sectional nor a political issue."[107] Senators and members of the House, representing the same region, often were on opposite sides of the fence. In both the northern and southern tiers of counties every senator either voted no or abstained, yet the representatives in the same sections voted for the bill, with one exception. The bill was both supported and opposed by Whigs, anti-Benton Democrats, and Benton Democrats.[108]

The Missouri newspapers helped to develop sentiment for the school law of 1853. McKee reported that "none of the sixteen Missouri newspapers for the year 1853 which are now in the files of the State Historical Society of Missouri was in active opposition to the act, and only a few failed to

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[105] Act of 1853, Article II, Sec. I.

[106] McKee, 548.

[107] Ibid., 550.

[108] Ibid.

manifest a positive interest in its adoption."[109] McKee suggested that the idea of state aid to Missouri's schools "ran parallel with and may possibly have had its origin" in the $3,500,000 dollars granted to railroads by an act of February 22, 1851.[110]

Free, tax supported public schools were not mandated in Missouri until after the Civil War. The Constitution of 1865 provided in Section 1 that "the General Assembly shall establish and maintain free schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in this state between the ages of five and twenty-one years."[111]

The free soilers flowing into Kansas in the 1850's carrying with them their Beecher's Bibles and their New England traditions portended well for education in Kansas. The pioneers of Kansas also had the advantage of organizing their educational institutions after the free school forces had achieved their major victories in the Northeast and in the Middle West. The potential for providing free, quality education for the children of the state was not realized, however. The slavery controversy which earned for the state the appellation--Bleeding Kansas--was followed by the Civil War and then by the long period of farmer's discontent and the

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[109] Ibid., 551.

[110] Ibid., 556.

[111] Phillips, 301.

agrarian revolts of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The first school law enacted by the territorial legislature of Kansas in 1855, "provided that schools, to be open and free for every class of white students between the ages of 5-21, should be established in every county."[112] But little was done to establish a school system because of the conflicts between the slavery and anti-slavery forces. In the midst of the bitter struggles, Kansas between 1855 and 1859 wrote four constitutions. All provided for some state aid to the common schools. The Topeka Constitution, 1855, provided for "a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state," but did not suggest that they would be free.[113] The Pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution, 1857, provided for free schools "as soon as practicable."[114] And the Leavenworth Constitution, 1858, required the legislature to establish "at the earliest possible period, a uniform system of free schools."[115]

The Wyandott Constitution was adopted in 1859 and became operative when Kansas was admitted to the Union in 1861.

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[112]Quoted in Earle E. McKown, "A Survey of the Historical Development and Growth of Schools in Johnson County, Kansas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1935), 39.

[113]Article VII, Section 2.

[114]Article XIV, Section 2.

[115]Article VIII, Section 1.

Under the Wyandotte Constitution, the legislature was challenged to "encourage the promotion of intellectual, moral, scientific, and agricultural improvement, by establishing a uniform system of common schools, and schools of higher grade, embracing normal, preparatory, collegiate, and university departments."[116] Although it contained provisions for the distribution of the income from the school lands, it did not provide for tuition free schools. School funds from the state were distributed to the school districts in proportion to the number of children in attendance. As a result, irregular attendance was a major problem. Even though the average school term in 1861 and 1862 was only a little more than three months, less than half of the children listed on the school records attended for a full term.[117] There were more than 200 districts organized during the territorial period, and, unfortunately, the number grew to 9,285 before the end of the century.[118] In 1863, the State Superintendent, Issac Goodnow, in support of consolidation noted that it was "far better for a scholar to walk three or four miles to a first-rate school than forty rods to a poor one."[119]

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[116]Proceedings and Debates of the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention, July, 1859, Art. 6, Sec. 2. Quoted in Emory Lindquist, "Kansas: A Centennial Portrait," Kansas Historical Quarterly, XXVII (Spring, 1961), 48.

[117]McKown, 42.

[118]Lindquist, 48.

[119]Quoted in Lindquist, 48.

A permissive district ad valorem tax supplemented the state funds. The tax was limited to one-half percent for construction of school buildings, one-half percent for teachers' salaries, and one-fourth percent for "blackboards and apparatus." For none of these purposes was the amount of revenue that could be raised by the tax sufficient.[120]

There were elements which were often lukewarm in their support for even these meager taxes, including the large land companies and many of the Southerners. As an example of the Southerners disinclination to tax himself for school support, the voters of Doniphan County, populated largely by Southerners, at a time when many of the pro-Union men were called away by the war, voted to discontinue the tax and closed the schools.[121] One of the groups most opposed to the district tax for education was the land companies which were often controlled from out of the state. The problem was explained, and the land monopolist chastised by the first State Superintendent, Issac Goodnow:

> One firm alone in New York owns 1,000,000 acres. On the average, these lands may have cost one dollar per acre. They wish to sell at five or ten dollars per acre. Upon what do they rely to raise the price of land from one to five dollars? It is the good farms that are being made around their quarter sections. Without these, the industrious settler and his

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[120] McKown, 39.

[121] Frances E. Katner, "Doniphas County," Columbia History of Education in Kansas (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1893), 125.

> improvements, the land would never increase in value. The schools and churches will increase the price of the lands greatly.[122]

Educational conditions in Kansas did not appreciably improve following the Civil War, chiefly because of the agrarian depression. The Panic of 1873 was followed closely by the grasshopper plague of 1874. Heavy debts, low prices, and periodic droughts added to the distress of the farmer.

The Greenbackers, Populists, and other groups formed to aid the "producing masses" were opposed to taxes on the farmer's land for any purpose, including the schools.[123] In the closing hours of the 1879 session, the Kansas legislature abrogated a one-mill state tax which reduced the annual school revenues by about one-half. That action initiated a drought in Kansas' schools which lasted for over half a century. From 1879 to 1937, when a state income tax was levied which provided some revenue for the schools, state aid to education was limited to small sums from the permanent school fund. A long time Executive Secretary of the Kansas State Teachers Association described the sixty years of educational drought: "Schools were local affairs with no real stimulus to rise above the simple requirements of neighborhoods . . . The

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[122]Issac T. Goodnow, "School District Tax" in Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1863-1870. State Printer, Topeka, p. 11. Quoted in McKown, 39.

[123]C. O. Wright, "100 Years in Kansas Education," The Kansas Teacher, LXXI (March, 1963), 16-17.

school years were short, the attendance haphazard."[124]

In summary, there were a number of factors working against the establishment of a tax-supported state system of public schools on the middle western frontier. Some of the problems were related to the drudgery of pioneering--the felling of forests, the draining of swamps, the building of houses, and the construction of transportation systems to get crops to market. Related to the need for internal improvements in underdeveloped frontier areas, the schools were forced to compete with special economic interest groups for the limited amount of potential public monies. And the usually severe economic plight of the frontiersman was compounded by periodic depressions, beginning in 1837, 1857, and 1873.

In spite of the democratic atmosphere of the West, there was an anti-democratic quality in some of the opposition to free public schools. The wealthy sometimes held the common schools in low esteem, "if not in absolute contempt."[125] An attitude, prevalent in the East, which regarded them as "pauper schools" for those who could not afford tuition in private institutions was common among the well-to-do elements in the population. Snobbery sometimes existed among the members of the college faculties toward tuition free schools. During the meeting of the Michigan State Teachers' Association

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[124] Ibid., 13.

[125] Putnam, 40.

in 1858, the desirability of free schools was debated. A professor from the University of Michigan argued that a public school fund injured the cause of education because if education cost nothing, it would be considered to be worth nothing. A Professor Hosford of Olivet College agreed: "Cheapen education to the zero point, and the masses will value it at zero."[126]

An attitude more in keeping with the individualistic and democratic spirit of the frontier, but one which retarded the development of a system of schools which could provide a measure of equality in educational opportunities throughout a state, was an attachment to localism. The insistence on local control resulted in a proliferation of semi-autonomous school districts which continues to plague those in the last third of the twentieth century who are striving for a uniform high quality of public education.

In spite of the obstacles, most of the middle western states had constitutional provisions for free public schools before the outbreak of the Civil War. Much of the credit for the accomplishment should go to a dedicated group of opinion makers--teachers, educational leaders, politicians, editors, and ministers--who gave leadership, organization, and publicity to the public school campaign. They labored not only as individuals in their respective professions, but also joined

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[126]Quoted in Putnam, 120.

together in educational associations such as the Western Academic Institute, formed in 1829, and its successor the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers.

The later organization was formed in Cincinnati in 1834, with state societies in each of the states west of the Alleghanies.[127] The major objective of the organization, according to Allen Oscar Hansen, was to reconstruct educational thought and means so that they might better "function in the new order of life peculiar to the West."[128]

Although much of the work of the College of Teachers consisted of fact finding concerning educational condition, the organization was also action oriented as "was characteristic of the West."[129] They ceaselessly agitated with men in power, contending for "universal, compulsory, state supported and supervised education."[130] As one example of their lobbying activities, in 1835, approximately a thousand pamphlets were printed and presented to western legislators. And a petition was sent to each legislator in the western states, excerpts of which follow:

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[127]By 1840, societies had been formed in eighteen states and two territories.

[128]Allen Oscar Hansen, Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley, Journal of Educational Research Monographs, No. 5 (Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1923), 17.

[129]Ibid.

[130]Ibid., 51.

> Resolved, that this College appoint a Committee of Three to draft a petition and present the same in the name of the "Western Institute and College of Professional Teachers," to each legislative body in the Western and South-Western States, early the coming winter, praying them to pass legislative enactments in behalf of Universal Education in their respective territories, do hereby humbly petition, in behalf of the great and all-important interests of the cause of Universal Education, sound morals, our national prosperity, happiness, and perpetuity, that it may please your body, in their wisdom, and zeal for the promotion of the best interests of the people of the State of _____, to adopt immediate and efficient legislative measures, providing for the universal education of all the free citizens of this state.[131]

The American Lyceum was another group consisting of both educators and laymen which helped to create a favorable atmosphere for the growth of the public schools. From 1826 to 1839, when the national organization was dissolved, the chief concern of the lyceum was the improvement of common school education.[132] That objective was written into the constitutions of town, county, state, and national lyceums: "The object of the lyceum shall be the advancement of education, especially in common schools, and the general diffusion of knowledge."[133]

The lyceums promoted agitation throughout the Northeast and the Middle West in behalf of the common schools.

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[131]"Transaction of the College of Teachers," 1835, quoted in Hansen, 56.

[132]The organization of the lyceum, its progress in the West, and its development into a professional lecture circuit are discussed in Chapter II.

[133]Article II, Constitution and By-Laws of the American Lyceum.

They sent memorials to county and state officials urging them to provide greater appropriations for the common schools and to establish teacher seminaries. They conducted local surveys of school-age children, provided lectures on educational topics, and advocated the formation of local teachers' societies. The educational emphasis of the national lyceum may be seen in the titles of its official journals which were the American Journal of Education from 1826 to 1829 and the American Annals of Education from 1830 to 1839. The American Lyceum sponsored, in 1839, the first national educational convention in Philadelphia.[134]

Educational conventions throughout the Middle West in the late 1840's and in the decade of the 1850's helped to develop cooperation among the school leaders in the various states in their free school agitation. One of the largest convened in Chicago in October, 1846. Eastern leadership and experience was sought by the delegates. Henry Barnard, Superintendent of Education in Rhode Island, was the major speaker at the convention and on the same trip, he spoke in both Milwaukee and Madison at other meetings of public school advocates.[135]

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[134]Cecil B. Hayes, The American Lyceum: Its History and Contribution to Education, United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education, Bulletin No. 12, 1932, 31-44; Carl Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 113-118.

[135]Shafer, 43.

Most of the middle western states also had the advantage of being admitted to the Union at a time of nationwide agitation for free public schools. By the middle of the nineteenth century, every state had established a permanent school fund and had, with the exception of Arkansas, experimented with, at least, permissive tax legislation for education.[136] During the 1850's and 1860's most of the states of the Northeast, as well as those of the Middle West had made constitutional or statutory requirements for free and universal systems of public schools. Dates of such provisions for selected states are shown in the chart below:

DATE FOR PROVISIONS FOR FREE AND UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS[137]

Northeast		Middle West	
Massachusetts	1827	Wisconsin	1848
Vermont	1850	Indiana	1852
New York	1867	Ohio	1853
Pennsylvania	1868	Illinois	1855
Connecticut	1868	Kansas	1861
Rhode Island	1869	Missouri	1865
New Jersey	1871	Michigan	1869

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[136]Cremin, 126-127.

[137]Adapted from Edward H. Reisner, The Evolution of the Common School (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), 341-343.

The forces which accelerated the public school movement throughout the nation resulted from the cultural, economic, and political changes of the first half of the nineteenth century. The beginnings of urbanization and industrialization created new problems of child labor, family disintegration, juvenile delinquency, and the need for development of new job skills. Labor organizations which accompanied industrialization were usually fact friends of the public schools. The labor press and the workingmen's conventions not only propagandized among union members the value of free public schools, but played an important part in selling the idea to the general public. From 1828 to 1831, the demand for free schools was "one of the most important planks" in the worker's platform.[138] As an example, the General Meeting of Mechanics and Workingmen in New York City, in 1829:

> Resolved, that next to life and liberty, we consider education the greatest blessing bestowed upon mankind. Resolved, that the public funds should be appropriated (to a reasonable extent) to the purpose of education upon a regular system that shall insure the opportunity to every individual of obtaining a competent education before he shall have arrived at the age of maturity.[139]

A growing national self-consciousness coupled with increasing immigration required public institutions for

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[138]Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1963), 90.

[139]Quoted in Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 126. Several other like resolutions adopted by labor organizations may be found in the same source.

Americanization. And, of major importance was the spirit of reform which characterized the United States in the 1830's and 1840's. Such phrases as "the rise of the common man" and "Jacksonian democracy" symbolized, not only the extension of the suffrage and broader political participation, but also a renewed concern for "the dignity of the human personality" that resulted in renewed struggles to improve the quality of life. The common school campaign was only a part of a broader social movement, which included peace, temperance, women's rights, anti-slavery, child labor and working conditions, as well as, reforms in penal conditions, imprisonment for debt, and the abolition of capital punishment.[140]

While recognizing the indebtedness of the middle western states to the changes in the climate of opinion that were taking place in the significance of leadership by eastern educators such as Mann and Bernard, the frontier environment should be recognized as being of genuine significance in the acceptance of the public school idea. The frontiersman was less hampered by traditional educational institutions and ideas; vested interests in the form of private and parochial schools were not as powerful. The growing democratic spirit in the East was, at least in part, attributable to the social winds blowing from the West. It was the frontiersman that

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[140]Discussions of the relationship of the common school campaign to broader cultural movements may be found in Cremin, Part I, 1-28; Reisner, 322-326; Curti, Chapter II; Cubberley, 101-115.

quickly accepted the idea that there was more virtue in a system of free public schools which gave to all an equal chance rather than in a system of private schools and academies which exhibited an air of social elitism. The Westerner who warmly accepted universal manhood suffrage and Jacksonian democracy was not without compulsion to accept greater equality of educational opportunity. The Westerner had faith in vertical mobility; he was an economic optimist who believed that his children would have even greater opportunities for wealth. In the election of 1840, the campaign slogan "from log cabin to White House" suggested the possibility of frontier youths rising to positions of influence and prestige if they were educationally prepared.[141]

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[141]Robert G. Bone, "Education in Illinois Before 1870," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, X (Summer, 1957), 129.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRONTIER ON MIDDLE WESTERN SCHOOLS

If education on the middle western frontier reflected the frontier hypothesis, more democratic, utilitarian, and innovative schools would have been produced. The democratic spirit of the West would have expanded the ideal of equal educational opportunities for all. Educational institutions rooted in class distinctions and the pauper school idea would have been diminished and coeducation fostered. The materialistic and pragmatic traits of the Westerner would have exacted a curriculum to better prepare frontier youths to take advantage of the opportunities existing in a potentially rich, but underdeveloped, environment. Innovations leading to a more utilitarian course of study and away from the rigid, traditional classical curriculum would have resulted. New or significantly altered forms of school organization would have been created in order to accommodate the changed social and physical conditions. Except in democratization, the frontier influence on education did not result in such clear-cut modifications.

The frontier experience did not produce the changes that might be expected because of the numerous influences which affected the developing social institutions. The Middle West in its pioneer period was, above all, a pluralistic society. The United States has acted only partly as a melting pot. In the same manner, the frontier environment acted only partly to fuse into one people the diverse elements which made it their home. The diversity was exemplified in the attitude of the Midwesterner toward the arts, literature, and education. Many of the frontiersmen, especially the first in a region, were coarse anti-intellectuals who were contemptuous and suspicious of learning and the learned. But the establishment of some kind of school in almost every township and the multitude of literary activities, including book publishing, the creation of libraries, and the organization of clubs and societies for the purpose of intellectual stimulation, belies anti-intellectualism as anything approaching a universal trait. It may well be that many of the frontiersmen were more sensitive to the possibility of being coarsened by the wilderness and made a greater attempt to cling to the trappings of their old culture than did their descendants.

It is difficult to discover any significant or lasting educational innovations which were the result of the frontier experience in education. There were temporary adjustments to frontier conditions for the first families in a wilderness.

Makeshift buildings, makeshift teachers, and informal democratic cooperation for organizing schools were required on the first stage of the frontier. But the hope was, as soon as possible, to form local governments, levy taxes, construct a regular building, and hire trained teachers. In structure and organization, the frontier failed to produce major changes in education. As the "cumbersome bicameral" legislative bodies crossed the Alleghenies, so did the inefficient and inequitable school districts.

There was only limited reconstruction of the curriculum in the nineteenth century Middle West. A practical education confined largely to the 3 R's to meet the simple demands of the primitive frontiersmen for literacy was considered sufficient in most of the subscription schools. But as the raw stage of the frontier blended into a more settled agricultural life and as cities and towns developed, the Midwesterner aspired to recreate the traditional, academic curriculum which had formed the basic study of the educated man since the medieval period. At the secondary level, especially, a major activity of youths in frontier schools was the incongruous task of conjugating Latin verbs. The classical emphasis in secondary education not only captured most of the academies (which were something less than the kind of democratic institutions which might be expected on the frontier), but later dominated the curriculum of the public high schools from Ohio to Kansas as well.

To emphasize the tenacity of the classical curriculum is not to say that the new environment, which was less subject to the inertia resulting from traditional practices, did not stimulate the acceptance of reforms, but to suggest the persistence of inherited institutions. The western press, many state legislators, and a sizable share of the members of educational organizations such as the Western Literary Institute and College of Teachers demanded a more practical education for the children of the frontier.

Experiments with more utilitarian curriculums were conducted. As an example, manual labor schools (which seemed to be a relevant type of education for a society with a strong work ethic) were still being organized in the West after the movement had ended in the East. But even in the West, the manual labor school was not as popular in practice as it was in theory. It was one thing for a state legislature to charter a manual labor seminary, and quite another to insure any real change in the course of study. Not only did the authority of tradition oppose such schools, but the middle western families who could manage to send their children to secondary schools were not always immune from the desire for the badge of aristocracy that knowledge of the ancient languages afforded. Certainly that situation was not unique to the West; almost everyone seems to see the need for technical and trade schools, but for someone else's children.

Pestalozzian reforms which emphasized the concrete rather than the abstract, excluded formal study of the ancient languages, and stressed science and nature study seemed especially appropriate for western schools. There were scattered Pestalozzian schools throughout the West and "object teaching" was advocated in educational periodicals, curriculum guides, and at teachers' conventions. But the heart of Pestalozzian as well as of other educational reforms for the West was New Harmony, Indiana, and that utopian community was, in an understatement, atypical of the middle western frontier. The real center of Pestalozzian education in the United States was Oswego, New York, under Superintendent Edward Sheldon, not on the frontier. In the area of curriculum reconstruction, the best that can be said is that the needs of the frontiersman gently nudged the schools toward a curriculum better suited to the new environment.

In the struggle for tax supported state systems of schools, New England leadership was more important than the influence of the frontier. In spite of an occasional leader of Southern nativity and excepting Missouri, the generalization that educational leadership in the Middle West was furnished by New Englanders is sound. Examples of outstanding New England born state superintendents of schools include Caleb Mills, John D. Pierce, and Issac Goodnow. Perhaps even more important, leadership for the common school movement in the nation generally came from New England schoolmen;

of particular importance were Horace Mann and Henry Barnard.

Although there were exceptions, taxes for school support were more cordially accepted in areas settled predominately by New Englanders. The long tradition in that region of a sense of common responsibility for the education of the communities' children was of major consequence in the establishment of public schools in the Midwest. The contrast between the frontier of the Old Northwest and the Old Southwest in providing schools for the children of the plain folk was related to the habits and customs of the people as well as to the physical geography. Severe economic difficulties on the frontier could negate the New England settlers' commitment to education as in the case of Kansas during the agrarian depression of the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

There was not a discernible pattern in acceptance of provisions for free tax supported schools in the states of the Northeast and the Middle West. Success was achieved in both sections during the 1850's and 1860's; and was likely due to the same forces. Among the elements which led to America's free common schools were the precedents established during the colonial period for public responsibility for education such as the Massachusetts laws of 1662 and 1667. The continuing American revolution by stressing the ideal of equal opportunity for all assisted the common school revival which was related to a host of reform movements during the

1830's and 1840's including the promotion of the interests of the weak, the insane, the poor, and the Black.

The changes taking place in the society, particularly urbanization and industrialization, helped to create a number of contradictory factors which advanced the free school campaign. The growth of industry attracted people from the farms to the city and increased immigration. Many political leaders and new industrialists feared social disorganization as an American proletariat developed; the anarchy of the French Revolution and the despotism of Napoleon were fresh memories. The common school could serve the interests of industrial leaders by inculcating into the children of the poor, moral values related to hard work and respect for authority, in order to have a stable and obedient work force. In like manner, schools could serve as an institution to create a common spirit of nationalism in a nation of immigrants. On the other hand, the growth of industrialization was accompanied by the rise of organized labor which demanded free school for the children of the poor as a means of escaping the burdens of poverty and improving the plight of workingmen.

Although the West benefited from the growing acceptance of the public school idea in the East, the economic and physical conditions of the frontier posed problems which were not shared by the older states. It was a remarkable commentary on the frontiersman's optimism concerning the future and

his energy that in spite of the toil required to fell the trees; bust the sod; build the fences, houses, and transportation systems; and provide for systems of government and law that the inhabitants of the middle western states had established state systems of public education as early as those of New England and the Middle Atlantic states. Not only was the labor of pioneering an obstacle to the establishment of schools, but individualistic and local sentiments engendered by the pioneering experience made the creation of state wide systems of education more difficult. Nor did the public lands compensate for the lack of ready wealth on the frontier. The land grants failed to provide a windfall for education chiefly because of mismanagement as well as low prices in a region characterized by large amounts of unoccupied land. The existence of the school lands was important in that provisions were necessary for their use and protection, and as a result the attention of the public and the legislators was directed to school matters. An overly optimistic view of the income to be derived from the sale or lease of the land also, on occasion, facilitated the passage of school legislation.

The frontier influence was apparent in one aspect of education in the West. The schools were more democratic than those of other sections. Educational opportunities, such as existed, were open to all regardless of social class or of sex. Not only were the elementary schools and almost all of

the early public high schools coeducational, often the academies were also, although there were sometimes female departments in both types of secondary schools. The West also took the lead in providing for coeducational facilities in higher education. Oberlin (1833) and Antioch (1853) were among the first private colleges to allow women to enroll, and the first three state universities to admit them were also in the Middle West.[1]

Class education was also less important on the frontier. The pauper school taint attached to tax supported schools which was prevalent in the East was much less evident in the West. The Lancasterian and Sunday schools although popular in the older sections because they gave an inexpensive education for the children of the poor had the stigma of chariety attached to them, and they received only a limited reception in the West. Parochial and private schools for general academic instruction were uncommon, except in Missouri where southern traditions were dominate, not only because of the limited number of persons with the financial resources to support them and because of the lack of concentration of members of particular religious denominations, but because they were contrary to the democratic spirit of the Westerner. The schools of the Middle West were different largely in that they were more democratic.

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[1]Iowa (1856), Indiana (1868), and Michigan (1870).

Except for enhancing democracy in education, the abrasive quality of the frontier was matched by the resistance of education to change. Education has traditionally been one of the most inflexible of institutions. In large part because of the shortsighted view that the objectives and content of the schools were fixed by the wisdom of the ancients, and in part because much of the irrelevancy in education has been most obvious to the young, who, at least until recently, have had little capacity to change it.

The influence of the frontier may not have been as decisive on education as on other institutions because it has traditionally been easier to separate education from other aspects of life. The unsuitability of old tools, building materials, and even laws may be readily apparent in a new environment; the unsuitability of school curriculum and organization may not be as obvious. In historical retrospect both tradition and technology have been more influential than the frontier in shaping the philosophy and the content of education in the Middle West.

This study attempted to apply the Turner thesis to the development of schools in seven middle western states. The extant literature on middle western schools consists largely of contemporary descriptions of buildings and equipment of particular schools and secondary accounts of the activities of governors, state superintendents, and other political and educational leaders in behalf of legislative

provisions and revenue measures for education. More restricted examinations of state and local school systems concerning the influence of the frontier on educational thought and practice are recommended. There is a need for more educational histories which test the Turner thesis in a limited geographical area as Kenneth Lottick has done with the Western Reserve of Ohio. It is also recommended that studies limited to particular segments of the frontier thesis as it relates to education such as democracy or innovation, either in curriculum or organization, be undertaken.

If generalizations with more authority are to be made concerning frontier attitudes about education, the educational historian requires more local case studies such as Merle Curti's The Making of An American Community which used the quantitative methods of the social scientist to examine in detail the social and economic structure, the patterns of leadership, and the educational and cultural opportunities in a frontier county. Curti gave a clear picture of the complexity of western society by analyzing the difference in behavior among groups which differed in ethnic background, occupation, place of birth, income, and length of residency in the county. This sort of information is necessary for many more western communities in order to ascertain and understand the attitudes of the variety of people who lived in the West toward both the value of education generally, and the type and quality of the schools which they wanted for their children.

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