

CHAPTER ONE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN INDIANA

The development of public education policy in Indiana is characterized by seemingly rapid progresses and difficult setbacks. The establishment of statewide education policies, as well as the implementation of school policies in local districts, was accomplished only after intense political debate, much legislative action, and the tireless efforts of many reformers devoted to the development of statewide public education in Indiana. National and regional education philosophies certainly influenced the manner in which educational policy developed at the state level. Within the state, ideas about the proper role of the local community also influenced the way state lawmakers approached and constructed policy. As a result, Indiana's early policies pertaining to public instruction ultimately reflected many national and regional trends while also retaining characteristics unique to the state of Indiana.

This chapter examines the development of education policy in Indiana. This examination includes a discussion of Indiana's shared educational legacy as part of the former Northwest Territory, the ratification and consequences of the state's first and second state constitutions, and the establishment of school policies and institutions through the end of the nineteenth century. An examination of the broader history of education—at national and regional levels—helps explain the unique factors which contributed to the history of Indiana's education policies. Within the state of Indiana, native and immigrant Hoosiers worked to establish beneficial opportunities for children to learn in environments where few opportunities existed previously.

A number of these idealistic reformers were responsible for advocating for the constitutional provisions which established a public school system and structure, and for lobbying for the enactment of specific legislation to establish and maintain school institutions and policies. Gender, race, relative geographic location, and religion affected each student's individual educational experience. In addition, many factors shaped the type of education a child received in Indiana, including the wording ultimately selected for inclusion in the state's constitution, the operating practices of state bureaucratic offices, and the degree of local or state regulation of individual school corporations around the state.

National and Regional Trends in Nineteenth Century Education

The movement to establish statewide public schools in the United States, led by a number of common school advocates and reformers, originated in the early nineteenth century and, like many other movements and voluntary associations during that time period, constituted a response to larger changes in national culture, including industrialization and urbanization.¹ Though not necessarily condemning the larger forces which created social problems such as illiteracy, many reform-minded activists believed public education could cure the harms seemingly caused by rapid changes in society. Many reformers were influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, which focused on

¹ A number of monographs describe the development of education and the political landscape in the United States and the Midwest during the nineteenth century. See: Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); Henry Clyde Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies Before, During and After the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963); David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780 -1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); William Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

education as enforcing common sense and bringing about self-improvement. In addition, the reformers were influenced by Romantic ideals that maintained the child was inherently good.²

Most education reformers during the early nineteenth century may be generally characterized as white and of British descent, Protestant, and relatively mobile geographically.³ According to Tyack and Hansot, most of the reformers were usually professionals by occupation and were solidly positioned as part of the emerging middle class.⁴ Furthermore, Tyack and Hansot note that while public school movements were generally decentralized, focusing on reform in specific areas, most individual reformers were linked to larger, national currents through membership in voluntary associations and shared ideologies.⁵ One such association that often linked reformers and their ideologies across regions was the American Sunday School Union, which brought many reformers to Midwestern states.⁶

Though often geographically decentralized or disconnected from one another, education reformers throughout the nation tended to advocate for the same policies during the time period of the mid-nineteenth century. Those policies generally included state-wide taxation for funding public schools, standardized curriculum, graded schools, and standardized training for teachers through organizations such as Normal Schools and

² Reese, *America's Public Schools*, 16–25.

³ *Ibid.*, 16; Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*, 45.

⁴ Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*, 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 53–54.

⁶ Grover L. Hartman, *School for God's People: A History of the Sunday School Movement in Indiana* (Indianapolis: Central Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), 7–38; Paul Theobald, *Call School: Rural Education in the Midwest to 1918* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 24–26.

Teachers' Institutes. As Tyack and Hansot explain, "Americans had rarely lacked enthusiasm for education. What the common-school crusaders did was to translate that quest . . . into support for a particular institution, the common school."⁷ By the mid-nineteenth century education reformers across the nation seemed to share the same agenda for improving public education.

The development of a public education system in Indiana reflected national and regional trends in terms of political and social changes during the early- to mid-nineteenth century. The history of education policy development in Indiana is perhaps most closely tied to the development of schools in states of the Northwest Territory states—in particular Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan which share common borders with Indiana.

Most scholars agree that the Northwest Ordinances, particularly the 1787 version encouraging the development of education, were foundational in the evolution of education policy in Indiana.⁸ The memorable language of the Ordinance emphasized the importance of education by stating "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."⁹ The federal ordinance stipulated funding for education through land grants and revenue derived from taxes. However, the movement toward developing a comprehensive policy regarding education did not in general occur until the time of

⁷ Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*, 28.

⁸ Richard G. Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892); Carl F. Kaestle, "Public Education in the Old Northwest: 'Necessary to Good Government and the Happiness of Mankind,'" *Indiana Magazine of History* 84, no.1 (1988): 60–74; Paul H. Mattingly and Edward W. Stevens Jr., eds. "...Schools and The Means of Education Shall Forever Be Encouraged" (Athens: Ohio University Libraries, 1987); Theodore Calvin Pease, "The Northwest Ordinance 1787," in Ralph Gray, ed., *Indiana History: A Book of Readings* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994): 53–58.

⁹ Northwest Ordinance (1787), art. 3.

statehood in each state of the former territory.

Upon the advent of statehood, the development of public education policy in the four Midwestern states of Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana followed a similar path. Characterized largely by fits and starts, early legislative efforts to develop policies that would adequately support public education were usually ineffective or struck down by a court soon after their enactment. While the early education histories of each of the four states tended to emphasize the unique development of its state's educational system, in fact, the four states largely mirrored one another.

Ohio was the first state to gain statehood and begin enacting laws and policies relating to education. Admitted to the Union in 1803, the state passed its first school law in 1821, which divided the state into school districts and established school committees as local governing bodies for each district. In 1825, additional legislation established taxation as the method for raising funds to support the public school system.¹⁰ Two education associations founded in Ohio, the Ohio College of Teachers and the Western Literary Institute, were influential in the development of school policy. The 1837 law, which centralized school districts under the State Superintendent of Common Schools, is most notable. It led to further provisions stipulating oversight of schools at the township, county, and state level.¹¹

Ohio ratified a second constitution in 1851 to replace its 1802 constitution. The 1851 Ohio constitution included specific language outlining the structure of public

¹⁰ J.E. Bradford, *Education in the Ohio Valley Prior to 1840* (Columbus: F.J. Heer Printing Company, 1918), 43; Edward A. Miller, "History of the Education Legislation in Ohio from 1803 to 1850," *Ohio History*, 27, nos. 1 and 2 (1918): 21.

¹¹ Allan Hansen, *Early Educational Leadership in the Ohio Valley* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 7–20; Kenneth V. Lottich, "Educational Leadership in Early Ohio," *History of Education Quarterly* 2, no.1 (1962): 52.

education in Ohio, but the drafters were reluctant to include any language which provided for a strong executive or centralized authority. Thus, according to historian Edward A. Miller, “more than one-half of the school legislation between 1851 and 1900 was devoted to the enactment of special acts which granted authority for the most trivial matters of school administration.”¹² Still, the early laws ultimately provided the framework for public education in Ohio, and the 1851 constitution officially incorporated and expressed the state’s commitment to education.

For Illinois, which attained statehood in 1818, the first significant education legislation was the Free School Law of 1825. The law provided for “free-of-charge” common schools, open to white children between the ages of five and twenty-one. The provision also established that school districts be operated by a board of trustees and dictated that two percent of revenue received by the state department of treasury, as well as a small portion of the interest derived from that revenue, would go to schools.¹³ The 1826–1827 General Assembly subsequently “cut the heart out” of the measure by revoking the provisions which had established taxation to fund the common school, instead determining that funds for education may only be raised through voluntary taxation.¹⁴

Between the late 1820s and 1854, little effectual policy was passed regarding public education in Illinois. In 1854, however, the office of State Superintendent of

¹² Miller, “Education Legislation in Ohio,” 88.

¹³ John Pulliam, “Changing Attitudes toward Free Public Schools in Illinois, 1825-1860,” *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1967): 192; John Cook, *Educational History of Illinois: Growth and Progress in Educational Affairs of the State from the Earliest Day to the Present, with Portraits and Biographies* (Chicago: Henry O. Shepherd, 1912), 32–35.

¹⁴ Lottich, “Educational Leadership in Early Ohio,” 193.

Public Instruction was founded. Two years later, the first elected superintendent, William H. Powell, took office. Finally, in 1870 the state of Illinois ratified its second constitution, which included a provision establishing a common school system available to all children in Illinois.¹⁵

In Michigan, the first significant school policy was adopted in 1827, prior to official statehood. The 1827 law placed the responsibility of educating children upon the residents of each school district through taxation. The school law of 1827 also identified the school district and board of trustees as the localized form of school governance, but established an Office of Superintendent of Common Schools to ensure the proper monitoring and management of school lands, particularly in regions of the territory where the population had not grown large enough to support a school district and board of trustees. While the 1827 law was thorough and progressive for its time, public opposition to the law rendered it largely ineffective.¹⁶

In 1835, Michigan drafted and began developing a school system under its first constitution.¹⁷ The constitution mandated a local school system in each district, which would operate for at least three months per year, and provided for a superintendent of public instruction. The provision did not require the school system be free to students, and public opposition to tax-funded schooling prevented the realization of a statewide

¹⁵ Illinois—Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *The Sesquicentennial: One hundred and Fifty Years of Illinois Education* (Springfield: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1967), 5.

¹⁶ Harvey Tappan, *School Law and a History and Description of the Education System Michigan* (Port Huron: Sherman Printers, 1889), 26; Floyd Russell Dain, *Education in the Wilderness* (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1968), 133.

¹⁷ Michigan did not receive official federal recognition as a state until 1837.

free school system.¹⁸ Michigan rewrote its constitution in 1850, providing for a free school system in the state but left the actual implementation of the system to the legislature.¹⁹ The constitution provided a deadline date of 1855 by which the legislature must establish a free school system. It was not until 1869, however, that the Michigan legislature actually enacted legislation to that end. Still, the educational provision contained in the 1850 constitution was significant because it established for the first time that Michigan would provide a statewide tax-supported public school system.²⁰

The initial efforts of state education reformers in Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan reflected the values and agendas of reformers nationwide during the nineteenth century. Legislation emphasized statewide systems funded mostly by tax revenue. While many of these first efforts were ultimately rendered ineffective or weakened, these efforts laid the foundation for public schooling in these areas also testify to ideas and commitment of reformers in each state.

Education in Indiana and the Role of Education Reformers

Public education policy in Indiana took a course of development similar to that in the states of Ohio, Illinois and Michigan. Indiana did include a provision for education in its first constitution, enacted in 1816, upon establishing statehood. Many late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century historians have addressed various aspects of the

¹⁸ Tappan, *School Law*, 28; Willis F. Dunbar, *The Michigan Record in Higher Education* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 49–50; John L. Reigle, *Day Before Yesterday: An Autobiography and History of Michigan Schools* (Minneapolis: T.S. Denison and Company, Inc., 1971), 163–169.

¹⁹ Daniel Putnam, *The Development of Primary and Secondary Public Education in Michigan: A Historical Sketch* (Ann Arbor: George Wahr, Publisher and Bookseller, 1904), 26.

²⁰ Charles R. Starring and James O. Knauss, *The Michigan Search for Education Standards* (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1969), 1–14.

complex development of the Indiana school system.²¹ These histories provide valuable insight into the actual practices and shape of Indiana's education system and how it is both similar to and unique from other state histories.

The provision in the 1816 constitution, although encouraging the development of common schooling, deferred the adoption of effectual policy until a later, unspecified date. The next effective movements for comprehensive, statewide public educational policy did not occur until the 1840s. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, a series of events confirmed the public's—or at least a significant portion of the public's—belief in the efficacy and necessity of state-funded education.²²

Between the first and second state constitutions, education in Indiana was hardly uniform, and it was certainly not freely available. Typically, a child's education could only be obtained primarily through private initiatives. One private education alternative was the Hoosier Sunday School. Several national Sunday school movements emerged and gained popularity during the nineteenth century including the American Home Missionary Society, the American Sunday School Union, the American Bible Society, and the American Tract society. While earlier histories suggested that New England reformers and missionaries were responsible for the development of the Sunday school in Indiana, Grover Hartman, historian of the Indiana Sunday School movement, notes that

²¹ In addition to Boone, *History of Education*, see: Fasset A. Cotton, *Education in Indiana: An Outline of the Growth of the Common School System* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1904); Charles W. Moores, *Caleb Mills and the Indiana School System* (Indianapolis: Wood-Weaver Printing Company, 1905); Otho L. Newman, "The Development of the Common Schools of Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 22, no. 4 (1926): 229–276; James Woodburn, *Higher Education in Indiana* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891); James Smart, *The Schools of Indiana and the Men Who Have Worked in Them* (Cincinnati: Wilson, Hinkle and Company, 1876).

²² Boone, *History of Education*, 96–102.

nearly all early-nineteenth century Sunday Schools in Indiana originated with Hoosiers.²³ Hartman does observe, however, that the “staying power” of the Sunday school in Indiana was largely due to the efforts of the larger, eastern-based organizations. Hoosiers often teamed with these groups and many Hoosier Sunday schools benefited by obtaining materials from these organizations to supplement or create their own libraries. Hoosier Sunday schools provided both moral and curricular instruction for communities. Oftentimes, Sunday schools preceded the establishment of both churches and public schools in a community.²⁴

Reform-minded Hoosiers played the predominant role in the establishment and continuance of the Sunday school movement. Calvin Fletcher and Benjamin Harrison both served as teachers at Hoosier Sunday schools.²⁵ In the case of Caleb Mills, it appears that his involvement in the Sunday school allowed him to experience first-hand the apparently neglected condition of education in the Midwest. During a brief leave of absence from graduate studies at Andover Theological Seminary, Mills pursued a tenure of service for the American Home Missionary Society. He credited this experience with compelling him to return to Indiana as a teacher after graduation.²⁶

Perhaps due in part to the less-involved role of the state government in Hoosier education, it was not unusual for institutions of education in Indiana to have

²³ Grover L. Hartman, “The Hoosier Sunday School: A Potent Religious/Cultural Force,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 78, no. 2 (1982): 217.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15–27.

²⁶ Moores, *Caleb Mills*, 382.

denominational affiliations.²⁷ Historian James Madison notes that nineteenth century colleges such as Hanover College, Franklin College, Asbury College, and Notre Dame University were connected to major religious denominations.²⁸ Wabash College, started in the 1830s as a manual training and teachers' college, was founded and staffed by alumni of Andover Theological Seminary. Indeed, a commission to teach at this college brought Caleb Mills back to the Indiana wilderness in 1833.²⁹

While privately-funded and religiously-affiliated schools did operate during the years between the two state constitutions, public education failed to flourish. Otho Lionel Newman notes that the language of the first constitution establishing an education system, "as soon as circumstances will permit," was largely responsible for a lack of a public school system. Newman notes that pioneer residents of Indiana were simply not ready to establish such a system. He explains, "They were too busily engaged in building homes, in clearing the land, in providing food and other necessities for their families, and in protecting them and their property . . . the people were not yet ready for the luxury of an education."³⁰ Certainly, the harsh demands of pioneer life relegated education to a luxury. Lack of necessary funds to finance school buildings, teachers, and curriculum also added to the factors working against a public and uniform school system in the Indiana counties.

²⁷ Timothy L. Smith, "Uncommon Schools: Christian Colleges and Social Idealism in Midwestern American, 1820-1950" in *Indiana Historical Society Lectures 1976-1977: The History of Education in the Middle West* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978): 3-72.

²⁸ Hanover College was founded by Presbyterians, Franklin College was founded by Baptists, Asbury College was founded by Methodists, and Notre Dame University was founded by Catholics. James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1986), 110.

²⁹ Andrew A. Sherockman, "Caleb Mills, Pioneer Educator in Indiana" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1954), 67.

³⁰ Newman, "The Development of the Common Schools," 234.

Caleb Mills first publicly engaged the lackluster condition of Hoosier education in an 1846 address to the Indiana General Assembly, as “One of the People.” In his address, Mills pointed to the disappointing results of the 1840 U.S. Census, which showed Indiana to be ranked quite low in terms of literacy compared to the rest of the United States. Mills’ first message was followed by an increased amount of activity regarding the state’s education system. In 1847, reformers held a common school convention which called for the centralization of the schools including a state superintendent. In 1848, the General Assembly issued a referendum on the issue of common schools. A majority of Hoosier voters supported the establishment of a three-months-per-year state school system. In response to the referendum, the Indiana General Assembly enacted the School Law of 1849. The practical effect of the law simplified an otherwise complicated network of school supervisors.³¹

In 1851, a new constitution was ratified in Indiana which again expressed support for common education. The new constitution established the basis for a common educational system, but left the specific features of education policies to subsequent sessions of the General Assembly. As a consequence, the School Law of 1852 established a common school fund and a State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Interestingly, that law was very similar to the 1825 Illinois school law—in particular the methods of raising funds in order to establish the school system. Much like in the state of Illinois, the Indiana measure would require the passage of subsequent laws in the 1860s and 1870s to reinforce and effect the original provisions of the 1852 school law.³²

³¹ Val Nolan, “Caleb Mills and the Indiana Free School Law,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 49, no.1 (1953): 81–90; Boone, *History of Education*, 87–128.

³² Boone, *History of Education*, 143–152; Cotton, *Education in Indiana*, 174–177.

Indiana's specific education policies were in many ways similar to those enacted by other states of the former Northwestern Territory. Like the other states, many Hoosier education policies encountered much debate and opposition before they were implemented. Despite these shared characteristics of education history, early scholarship pertaining to common education in Indiana emphasized the uniqueness and advancement of the education policies established in the state.

An 1892 account of education in Indiana by Richard Boone described the singularity of the state's 1816 constitutional provision on education: "the attitude of Indiana upon the question of education as fixed in the Constitution is an honorable one." Boone observed that other states, particularly those in New England, failed to provide any clear precedent for establishing educational provisions, and that Indiana was very much alone in its determination to develop a proper educational policy.³³ James Smart, another early scholar of Indiana's educational history, explained in 1876 that Indiana boasted a unique instructional tradition. Smart writes of state policy, "Whilst we have profited much by the example of other states, our people have acquired strength, wealth, and intelligence by incentives and means which they themselves have originated."³⁴ It is probably a misstatement to call Indiana education policy trailblazing, as some early scholars have, but it would also be a mistake to call it derivative. Instead, Indiana is likely best understood as an active participant in a broader education movement occurring roughly simultaneously throughout the region of the former Northwest Territory.

³³ Boone, *History of Education*, 14–15.

³⁴ Smart, *Schools of Indiana*, 10.

The Hoosier Education Experience

While the establishment of the constitutional provision for a “general and uniform system of common schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all,”³⁵ certainly marked a watershed moment in Indiana’s education history, the actual features of this system did not always evolve smoothly in subsequent years. The idea of equal education open to all did not necessarily mean that all students shared the same educational experiences. Through the end of the nineteenth century, place of residence, gender, and race all influenced the actual experience of Hoosier students.

The 1852 School Law determined that education would be supported through state taxation and delegated the responsibilities of erecting school buildings and hiring school teachers to the township trustees. Some townships levied additional school taxes to supplement the monies raised by the state for education purposes. However, an 1854 decision by the Indiana Supreme Court struck down the townships’ authority to raise additional taxes for education. The next year, a revised school law stipulated that the local government could indeed raise special funds for school buildings and school equipment.³⁶ Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the legislature continued to pass laws granting local districts the ability to raise special taxes for school purposes, and the Indiana Supreme Court continued to find such measures in violation of the constitution. Finally, an 1867 law granted localities the ability to levy and use taxes in the same way as

³⁵ Indiana Constitution (1851), art. 8, sec. 1.

³⁶ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era 1850–1880*, vol. 3 of *The History of Indiana*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 467, 469.

state taxes for education. An apparent shift in sentiment saw the Indiana Supreme Court uphold the law in 1885.³⁷

A Hoosier scholar's place of residence was a significant determinant of the type of education he or she would receive. This was largely due to the fact that individual townships had authority to raise additional funds and had much discretion in the actual allocation of those schools funds. Emma Lou Thornbrough notes that by 1879, nearly seventy-two percent of students were enrolled in rural townships, while twenty-eight percent were enrolled in either town or city schools. Typically, the type of school building for rural school children was a one-room, un-graded schoolhouse staffed by a single teacher.³⁸

In contrast, the city school systems developing in the 1850s were typically larger and graded. The late 1850s and early 1860s were actually a time of setbacks for many city and town school districts, as many building projects were put on hold and funding diminished based upon the frequently-changing school laws and state supreme court decisions pertaining to the funding and appropriation in school districts.³⁹ By the 1860s, most city systems had recovered from those setbacks and began to experiment with more progressive methods of education. Rural school districts—many lacking the necessary student population and funds—were less likely to integrate progressive education methods.

³⁷ Thornbrough, *Ibid.*, 475.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 477.

³⁹ Harold Littell, "Development of the City School System of Indiana—1851–1880," *Indiana Magazine of History* 12, nos. 3 and 4 (1916): 200–206.

Most town and city districts practiced some form of graded schools, in which groups of students were divided into different grades based upon their apparent skill level, but no common system of grading was enforced across school districts or throughout the state. For instance, in 1857, Indianapolis divided its schools into primary, secondary, intermediate, grammar, and high school divisions. In 1866, Fort Wayne Schools established a system with eight graded divisions, including Junior and Senior Primary and Secondary grades as well as Boys' Primary and Girls' Primary grades.⁴⁰

Caleb Mills recognized the significant role of the local school district under the new constitution and School Laws, and noted it in his later addresses. Calling the school districts "little republics," Mills noted that, "Indiana has not been deficient in her duty as a State, and she now calls upon citizens every man to do his duty and the noble work of training the rising generation for God and our country will be effected."⁴¹

Mills in particular recognized the potential importance of the actual school building in which a child learned—as well as the strong and often divisive opinions about the appropriate school structure in different school districts. In his Civil War-era address, "Lecture on Popular Education," Mills gives an allegorical account of the differing opinions regarding a fictional school district's decision to erect a school building. In Mills' allegory, Elder Forethought notes that the exterior of the building should be aesthetically pleasing so it could also serve as the temporary town meeting house.

Colonel Wise suggested that it, "be as attractive and pleasant as possible to the children,

⁴⁰ Littell, "Development of the City School System," 302–303; See also: Kathleen A. Murphey, "Common School or 'One Best System'? Tracking School Reform in Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1853–1875," *Historical Studies in Education* [Canada], 11, no. 2 (1999): 188–211.

⁴¹ See Appendix A, page 162–163; lines 17–3.

both in side and out, and that all the connected association with this temple of science should be pleasing and delightful.”⁴²

In a similar manner, Captain Pinchpenny proposed the cheapest method of providing light and heat for building, using goose oil for light and reducing the number windows in the building. His motion is dismissed by Dean Countcost who notes that the long-term damage to a pupil’s eyes in such poor lighting is far more costly than the installation of glass windows. When it is time to determine the internal ornamentation of the schoolhouse, some support the backless benches for the students to sit on, at least, until Doctor Considerate informed the community, “it was very dangerous to confine children eight or nine hours daily to seats without backs. To say nothing about deep shoulders and crooked back.”⁴³

Lack of funds in a given school district not only affected the environment in which a child learned, but also the length of the school year. Inadequate funds with which to pay teachers resulted in shorter school terms as well as a disparity in school terms from district to district.⁴⁴ The prospect of hiring a teacher is also included in Mills’ allegory: Mr. Cheap notes he could hire his cousin, Master Simple, “for eight dollars a month and then the public money would be sufficient for a three months school.” Esquire Lovework aptly points out that “he always found cheap hands the least profitable on the farm and he did not see why the same principle did not apply to intellectual as well as manual labor.”⁴⁵

⁴² See Appendix A, pages 161–162, lines 18–3.

⁴³ See Appendix A, pages 165, lines 16–20 of this thesis.

⁴⁴ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 470.

⁴⁵ See Appendix A, page 167, lines 8–13.

Through this allegory Mills describes the debate he thought likely to occur in a typical Indiana rural school district. Mills suggested that competing values of financial appropriations and the perceived importance of schools in a particular district, while understandably present in different school districts, should not compromise the quality of education a student received or the environment in which it was received.

Another factor which contributed to a student's educational experience, and a topic Mills also addressed in his speeches, was a student's gender. Many well-researched studies describe the experience of women in other parts of the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁴⁶ While the Indiana constitution granted the benefits of a public education to females, beliefs about the proper extent of women's education in the mid-nineteenth century were not always supportive of equal academic attainment for women and men.

The American legacy of women's education is in some ways a complicated one. Benjamin Rush rather famously reflected on the course of female education in 1787. Rush stated that the responsibilities and values of the new republic necessitated that women have an increased and specific sort of education. For example, property ownership of husbands required women to learn to be "stewards and guardians of their

⁴⁶ Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980); E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40, no.1 (1988): 18-41; Martha Saxton, *Being Good: Women's Moral Values in Early America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

husbands' property."⁴⁷ Rush also acknowledged the influential role of women in raising children, stating that such a responsibility necessitates, "for the discharge of this most important duty of mothers." Finally, Rush maintained that women should be educated to instill the values of liberty and republic in their sons, since those sons would eventually influence the future of the republic.⁴⁸

Carl F. Kaestle writes that the conception of women's social roles in some ways encouraged education while also discouraging education in other ways. As her children's educator, the family's moral compass, and the guardian of a nation, the importance of having literate women able to aptly teach their children and prepare them for success seemed obvious. But the view of women's role as being necessarily tied to the home and family also discouraged the pursuit of activities, such as formal education, that would take her away from the home and divide her attentions.⁴⁹

In his speech, "Knowledge is Power," Caleb Mills enthusiastically supports the education of women, while not necessarily advocating the advancement of other social rights for women. Mills decries notions that girls are incapable of similar or equal mental exertion as their male counterparts, noting, "I have seen girls thirteen or fourteen years . . . solving algebraical problems at the blackboard that put their masculine classmates to the blush."⁵⁰ Mills also labels beliefs in women's intellectual inferiority as "heathenism," a "relic of barbarian times," and "unchristian." Finally, Mills implores, "Let us show our

⁴⁷ Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts upon Female Education, Accommodated in the Present State of Society, Manners, and Government, in the United States of America. 1787" in *Women's Voices, Women's Lives: Documents in Early American History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 193.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 84–88.

⁵⁰ See Appendix A, page 210, lines 12–15.

penitence for past errors and give proof of our future independence of the foolish notion, that our daughters must be educated, accomplished and married before they are out of their teens.”⁵¹

It is notable, also, that Mills appears to believe female education the singular goal for women’s social rights, suggesting that appeals for equal rights in areas such as voting were of less consequence. Mills writes that with a proper and thorough education a woman, “will make her influence felt at the ballot box, in the halls of legislation, on the bench and in the sacred desk, in a manner and to an extent far more effectual and happy, than she possible could under the guidance of . . . those self-appointed advocates of her rights and all their feminine associates.”⁵² In this way, Mills’ views reflect those of Benjamin Rush in 1787. A woman’s influence is found in her ability to influence her husband or children, who in turn would be responsible for influencing society as law makers and voters.

A final significant topic which affected a Hoosier’s public education experience, and a topic on which Mills was decidedly silent, was a student’s race. Prior to the 1851 Indiana constitution, African American Hoosiers, who made up roughly one percent of the Indiana population in 1850, were generally precluded from benefiting from the common education system through the strongly enforced Black Laws. The Black Laws pertaining to education required African Americans to pay taxes to support public schools, but kept their children from attending them.⁵³

⁵¹ See Appendix A, page 211, lines 9–12.

⁵² See Appendix A, page 207, lines 8–13.

⁵³ Maureen Anne Reynolds, “Politics and Indiana’s Public Schools during the Civil War Era, 1850–1875” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1997).

African American children were effectively banned from attending any public school between the years 1824 and 1869, and were forced to rely on limited means of private education. An 1869 Supreme Court case, *Cory v. Carter*, determined African Americans were not necessarily citizens of Indiana and were consequently not entitled to public services such as education. Separate schools for black students became the norm, continuing through the twentieth century.⁵⁴ As late as the 1920s, Indianapolis erected a high school specifically for the African American community.⁵⁵

Indiana's educational legacy during the nineteenth century was shaped by the state, regional, and national ideals regarding the proper function of instruction. While the first Indiana constitution, like many other constitutions of the former Northwest Territory, attempted to establish the importance of education, the task of actually disseminating such education was often championed by Hoosier citizens and immigrants, most with a private religious affiliation.

By the 1840s, many of these same individuals turned their attention to the state government and its role in improving the poor condition of Hoosier schools and education. Reformers like Caleb Mills called for a centralized and uniform state structure in which children would have the same opportunities for education. The 1851 Indiana Constitution included language supporting this idea, but in subsequent years it became apparent that factors such as race, gender, and the location of a school district would also

⁵⁴ Maureen A. Reynolds, "The Challenge of Racial Equality" in William Reese, ed., *Hoosier Schools Past and Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 174–177.

⁵⁵ *A Suggestion of the Purposes and Accomplishments of the Indianapolis Public Schools* (Indianapolis: The Board, 1925).

affect a student's experience. Caleb Mills, writing during this time period, recognized the importance of those factors and continued to call for educational reform.