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**EDUCATION PRESCRIPTION
AND DISREGARDED SIDE EFFECTS**
Gilded Age Education Reform in Oregon

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Oregon, as the rest of the United States, faced tumultuous years following the Civil War with ever changing definitions of the American ideal and the definition of citizenship. Education became just one way of defining and shaping the population, and became a battleground for morality, a definer of class, and a justification for bureaucratization and paternalistic practices in Oregon. Education was strongly debated, and many would agree with the editor of the Willamette Farmer, who observed in 1887: “We believe the education of the young is necessary as a correction of many existing and many possible evils.”¹ Oregon’s upper and middle classes perceived themselves as the moral and intellectual ideal in a time of transition and destabilization of American society following the Civil War and leading up to the Progressive era. These perceptions coupled with racism and classism to transform positive intentions into conditions of paternalistic control, and resulted in many Oregon communities having to cope with an education system pulled out of their hands over a relatively short period of time.

By examining the effects of the reform process and community resistance in Oregon, there is a progression where reforms came to fruition and shaped community perceptions, leading them to either work to facilitate or to hinder education reform. Oregon had a diverse population that would have viewed education reform from different perspectives. Each stage and facet of reform faced push-back and often the issue was less about whether or not reform was needed, but what reform should look like and who should be in control. By looking at these reforms through the perspective of the different communities a number of issues come to light. Examples of rural reactions to a highly urbanized view of education, Native tribes forced inclusion in western education, the impact on urban minorities and the poor, and the resistance and restriction placed on private schools are just a few examples of side effects of the reform movement in Oregon. The reforms imposed upon these communities shaped later educational ideals, and began a dramatic shift in control out of the hands of the local communities.

Starting in the early half of the 19th century, “Christian Ideal of True Womanhood,” defined by historian Barbara Miller Solomon as “piety, purity, obedience, and domesticity,” began

¹ “Compulsory Education,” Willamette Farmer (Salem, Or.) 1869-1887, March 04, 1887, 4.

to expand to impact social reform, clashing with Jeffersonian ideals and rugged individualism to create contradicting interpretations of what it meant to be an American.² As a part of the frontier, Oregon pioneer life differed drastically from the East, and shaped a very different progression of education. Where much of the East was working to reform already existing institutions, Oregon barely had anything to reform. Historian, Elliot West points out the irony of western education reform in the later half of the 19th century, where schools were few, but “literacy rates among youngsters over the age of ten was . . . slightly above that of New England . . . that took great pride in the spread of learning.”³ West credits home instruction for this, stating, even “far less affluent mothers and fathers somehow found time for instruction.”⁴ Even with such scattered evidence of the early years of western settlement, West argues that for some students, home instruction “would be their best.”⁵

Despite the success of home instruction, most parents desired publicly funded education, and multiple attempts were made in the early years of Oregon settlement, leading to the common use of “term” or “rate” schools.⁶ These schools were the primary means of education throughout the Oregon territory until around 1854, and could be classified as “private or semi-private” as the teacher would charge a rate, usually on a per term basis.⁷ These schools would be the ones criticized in the early years of the reform movement. While some teachers were better than others, most communities were so desperate they would take the best educated individual they could find, which when combined with the transient nature of pioneer life, as West pointed out, left many schools without consistent teachers.⁸

² Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 25.

³ Elliot West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 180.

⁴ West, 181.

⁵ West, 180.

⁶ West, 188; Elois E. Charlesworth, “The Beginnings of Elementary Education in Oregon,” Mss 709, Oregon Historical Society. ca. 1930-1950, 14.

⁷ Charlesworth, 15.

⁸ West, 188-93.

While parents desired consistent education for their children, they could not have comprehended the transformation education was going to undergo over the coming years. The growth of progressive ideals within Oregon society, especially when it came to education, which were based on the growing, “Romantic vision of childhood [that] encouraged the notion that children needed to be sheltered,” as Steven Mintz illustrated in his work on American Childhood.⁹ Mintz argues the development of this Romantic view was tied to the sharply dropping birthrates in the nineteenth century, falling “to five per family by 1850 and to just three in 1900,” as a result of the growing middle class, “regarded their children not as sources of labor but as ‘social capital’ requiring substantial investments of time and resources.”¹⁰ Goals of protecting childhood, transformed into protecting children, ironically led to an intense regulation of children’s lives.¹¹ The true irony, Mintz points out, is that the same time “period that freed middle-class children from work and allowed them to devote their childhood to education also made the labor of poorer children more essential to their families well-being,” which would lead to even harsher reactions by the upper and middle classes heading towards the end of the nineteenth century, often demonizing these families.¹²

LOOKING BACK

Primary sources from education reformers include newspapers, scholarly works, and government documents, are the main sources available from this era, and almost exclusively represent the voice of reformers; a voice of power. By looking at the reformers intentions through their own words to accurately represent their voice, their passion and desire to help is evident, but so is their ingrained classist and racist outlooks. Even within the reforming class, voices of opposition argued against the progressive nature of education reform, or disagreed with the manner in which education reform was being undertaken. The primary source documents leave us with a broken narrative of education reform in Oregon, where we cannot fully understand the

⁹ Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 76-77.

¹⁰ Mintz, 77.

¹¹ Mintz, 92.

¹² Mintz, 92.

impact of the reforms on the various communities directly affected. Primary sources from the communities are rare in comparison to the surviving voice of urbanized reformers. However the sources that are accessible provide insight that allows us to pull a deeper understanding of education reform and its impact on communities such as Native American tribes, rural communities, private schools (including denominational schools), and the small African American community primarily located in Portland, out of the otherwise limited sources.

Childhood in Oregon was undergoing a radical transformation that challenged rural views, and centered on a primarily urban middle-class experience. Contemporary scholars studying sociology and psychology reimagined childhood and education and joined with reformers to dictate the proper American way. These scholars had some valid ideas regarding educational practices for children, however the application of their scholarship in a highly classicized and racist society resulted in educational improvements for some and educational stagnation and even decline for many others, as evident in Oregon. Over a fifty year period, from the 1850s to around the turn of the century, education in Oregon was transformed to regimented and professionalized institutions with compulsory attendance, graded elementary schools replacing small schoolhouses, and public high schools opening their doors to largely urban middle-class students; a prescription of bureaucratic control and homogenization of culture.¹³

The scientific views of history that were prominent during the Gilded Age reflected strong beliefs during extended periods of time that informed how people would view those events in the future. Educational theorists writing during this period placed their mark on the spectrum of educational evolution, and viewed their work as the next logical step in the history of education. Herbert Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral & Physical*, published in 1861, led the way in applying his Social Darwinist views to educational theory and practice. Spencer proposed encouraging children to associate learning with pleasure versus pain, and he argued against corporal punishment; however, the innate racism in his work underlines the true nature of his

¹³ Oregon Department of Education, *A Report on Oregon Schools: 1832-1960*, (Salem, OR: State Library Building, 1960), 23.

ideologies.¹⁴ His Social Darwinist ideology ascribed hereditary advantages to the dominant races and he explained negative traits as the product of racial evolution versus cultural preference or social disadvantages.¹⁵ His racist construct, however, inspired educational reformers in the Gilded Age in Oregon, who often reflected these views within their treatment of minorities, such as Native Americans, and the urban and agrarian poor.

Gilded Age intellectuals were highly influential during this energized time of middle-class reform. John Dewey became a household name among the elite when discussing education and childhood; however Dewey purposefully never prescribed best practices for education due to his belief that how children learn is nearly impossible to measure with any sort of concrete test.¹⁶ Dewey's views on education and democracy were often misconstrued when put into practice by contemporary reformers.¹⁷ Dewey was understood to regard social control as a form of social engineering to shape what kind of adults get turned out of the education system, but as Larry Hickman explained, "in Dewey's lexicon, social control involves a progressive reconstruction of habits, including institutions, through the application of carefully controlled experimental processes."¹⁸ Education was not supposed to be a strictly mandated system that would generate specific outcomes. Despite this, Dewey and Spencer became heroes of the education reform movement throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries that focused on standardization and a military-like structure.

The Progressive era would continue to build on the foundations established during the Gilded Age, and it was not until the 1970s that Gilded Age education reform would come under criticism. Milton Gaither pointed out in his historiographical work, "The Revisionist Revived: The Libertarian Historiography of Education," the trends preceding this shift that looked to sociology and the humanities to explain the complex series of events that transformed the nation,

¹⁴ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral & Physical*, (Paterson, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1963), 160.

¹⁵ Spencer, 214.

¹⁶ Herbert M. Kliebard, "Dewey's Reconstruction of the Curriculum: From Occupation to Disciplined Knowledge," in *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect*, ed. David T. Hansen (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 118.

¹⁷ Kliebard, 118.

¹⁸ Hickman, 72-3.

particularly education and childhood during the Gilded Age, but remained relatively uncritical.¹⁹

Douglas Sloan then captured a major shift in the way historians began to view educational history when he stated in 1973:

Approaches to the history of education have been affected by a growing disenchantment with the performance of schools, a painful and reluctant recognition of the racial biases in American education, an assessment of the educational potency (and the dangers) of the mass media, and an increasing awareness of the educational activities of many non-school agencies.²⁰

Sloan was among a line of historians who began to take the wind out of the sails of the relatively narrow interpretation of the heroic education model within the United States, pushed by Gilded Age intellectuals and Progressive historians.²¹ Slightly earlier historians, such as Bernard Bailyn and L.A. Cremin began to question more traditional narratives that were starting to fall out of popular acceptance in the 1960s and early 1970s.²² This transition encouraged archival evidence, and shifted the focus away from the study of education as a “‘formal pedagogy’ or a self-contained social system.”²³ Historians began to find evidence in Oregon of a reform movement that was not as heroic as previously depicted.

Libertarian Revisionism played a key role in continuing the dialogue of Gilded Age reform, and sheds light particularly on national trends that can be seen in Oregon.²⁴ Revisionists, like Michael B. Katz, played a key role in forming criticisms of reformers and work toward recognizing the “historically marginalized voices,” starting with *The Irony of Early School Reform* published in 1968.²⁵ Katz argues that the “reform effort [was] spearheaded by the socially and intellectually prominent concerned for the preservation of domestic tranquility and an ordered, cohesive society,” a fight taken up by middle-class parents, of which the “goals [were] formulated with scant regard to the indigenous culture, even the aspirations, of the working-class

¹⁹ Milton Gaither, “The Revisionist Revived: The Libertarian Historiography of Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 4, (November 2012): 489.

²⁰ Sloan, 241.

²¹ Sloan, 261-2.

²² Sloan, 240-41. Sloan refers to Bailyn and Cremin as critical in forming the early criticisms of education that kick-started the wider movement of dethroning heroic education, and complex view of education.

²³ Sloan, 240.

²⁴ Gaither, 489-90.

²⁵ Gaither, 488.

groups to be reformed."²⁶ While focusing on Massachusetts, Katz analysis is directly applicable to the Oregon reform movement that began about twenty years after the eastern states.²⁷ Katz stops short of other Libertarian Revisionists who have strongly argued that public education is the downfall of American freedom.²⁸ There is some evidence that public education was viewed in these sort of terms in Oregon, and was expressed by working class families and even influential elites, such as Harvey Scott, the editor of a popular conservative newspaper, *The Oregonian*.

David B. Tyack is one of the most prominent historians that continued the line of criticism of education in the United States, with particular focus on the Gilded Age and Progressive eras.²⁹ Tyack points out the subaltern groups, finding their voices within the archival record, who lacked access to resources needed to a bring about change or have control. Tyack's conclusions are informative, because after 50 years of a reform movement that idealized a military-like structure, by 1915 educational ideals held by the "socially and intellectual prominent," to borrow Katz phrase, were no longer in line with that structure.³⁰ Tyack and others speak to an idea of reform that centered on standardization that works to build citizens out of students, and assimilate various minority populations.³¹ In Tyack's work "Bureaucracy and the Common School," where he focuses on Portland, he points out that despite the contemporary ideals that had been expressed by Herbert Spencer and John Dewey, "in the actual organization of the schools . . . schoolmen of the nineteenth century tended to favor simple military or industrial bureaucratic models in which uniformity of output and regularity of operation took precedence over functional differentiation."³² This essentially argues that despite the ideals of the reform

²⁶ Katz, 213-4.

²⁷ Katz, 214.

²⁸ Gaither, 489-91.

²⁹ David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

³⁰ David B. Tyack, "Bureaucracy and the Common School: The Example of Portland, Oregon, 1851-1913." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn, 1967), 495-8.

³¹ Evident in both Tyack's publications used for this thesis, and pointed to in the proliferation of citations in the various secondary sources.

³² Tyack, "Bureaucracy and the Common School", 476.

movement, the application fell to more simplistic and controllable means for those who would be enforcing the reforms within the new bureaucratic model.

There are important cultural factors that shaped the way reform was viewed and how it would be implemented within the developing bureaucratic model. Janice White Clemmer highlights this in her dissertation on 19th century Native American education in the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon.³³ Clemmer spent a great deal of time analyzing how missionaries and then Reservation Agents viewed Native American culture, and therefore saw the “standardization” of education according to middle-class, white ideals as necessary to their futures.³⁴ Reform efforts were directly designed to strip these marginalized groups of their heritage in efforts to homogenize the population as quickly as possible.³⁵ David Wallace Adams argues that education was the final answer to the Indian question, in reference to boarding schools he states that if Indian children were “removed from the savage surrounding of the Indian camp and placed in the purified environment of an all-encompassing institution, [they] would slowly learn to look, act, and eventually think like their white counterparts.”³⁶ Wallace argues that, “the white man had concluded that the only way to save the Indians was to destroy them . . . They were coming for the children.”³⁷

In contrast to the Native American experience, Elizabeth McLagan’s *A Peculiar Paradise* considers the experience of African Americans in Oregon, with considerable focus on the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³⁸ McLagan includes examples detailing attempts to integrate African American children into Oregon schools, and the common negative response by the majority white population.³⁹ McLagan is one of the few historians who have taken the discussion of Oregon history regarding race out of Portland, and her analysis considers the broader context

³³ Janice White Clemmer, *The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon: Nineteenth Century Indian Education History*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1980), 29-31.

³⁴ Clemmer, 32-3.

³⁵ Clemmer, 32-3.

³⁶ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 335.

³⁷ Adams, 337.

³⁸ Elizabeth McLagan, *A Peculiar Paradise: a History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1980).

³⁹ McLagan, 72-80.

of racial attitudes about African Americans in Oregon. Matching McLagan's examples with other sources including *Perseverance* by the Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers and the few primary sources available provide at least a partial narrative of the African American experience during this time period.⁴⁰ The bureaucratic system built during this reform movement provided footholds for African American access to education, despite the deep-seated racism in Oregon and strong segregationist attitudes that had tried to keep them out.⁴¹

The struggles of these marginalized groups to retain their heritage and group identities were further expanded by postmodern interpretations, as historians began to analyze how these reforms were meant to take away the identities of subaltern groups. As centers of power moved farther away from their own communities, barriers such as language, literacy, and proximity limited these groups' access to the tools of influence, such as newspapers, needed to affect change. The process of bureaucratization could be looked at as an intentional way of restricting access to power to those within the dominant culture, even if that did not actually equate to the majority of the population. The postmodern lens deepens criticisms of the system, but by focusing on the larger groups, it often overlooks individuals' intentions. Good intentioned reformers are swallowed within postmodernism as it paints the dominant culture as the intentional bad guys by focusing on the power of culture over individuals.

While the current study would not go so far as to blame public education for the downfall of Democracy, the forced implementation of reforms that imposed middle-class ideals on a largely agrarian and urban, working-class majority supported a more oligarchical structure of education where legislators and professionals were in near-complete control. Aptly put by David Wallace Adams, "as an instrument for fostering social cohesion and republicanism, no institution had been more important in the spread of the American system," than education.⁴² The social and intellectual elites were able to shape Oregon as a whole through homogenized education

⁴⁰ Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers, *Perseverance: A History of African Americans in Oregon's Marion and Polk Counties*.

⁴¹ Thomas Alexander Wood, "First Admission of Colored Children to the Portland Public Schools," *Recollections*, Mss 709, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

⁴² Adams, 335.

facilitated through legislation and professionalization. While criticizing the reform process and the influence of the blatant classism and racism in Oregon, it is important to recognize how a bureaucracy could provide avenues for change for socially marginalized groups. Reforms that served to restrict the control of some communities, such as rural and Native American communities, opened doors for others, like African American communities, to gain access to education in Oregon.

Oregon faced a collapsing sense of rural community, larger gaps in urban education, discrepancies between social and racial groups, and a nearly complete destruction of Native American culture and tribal affiliations. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the good intentions of reformers and the source of their ideas, as well as to point out how those ideals were put into practice within a society. New ideals came into prominence during this time that completely altered what it meant to be American. Shifts from Jeffersonian ideals of hard work and negative government, to rugged individualism and capitalist ideas of superiority changed the meanings and roles of success, education and government. Theories like Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism, exalted those in power and helped to provide "scientific" justification for consolidation of power, racism and classism: if you were not successful in the free market it was no one's fault but your own, and it could likely be traced to either your moral or hereditary inferiority.⁴³ This perspective of success was aimed at adults, however, there was a growing awareness of a different status for children among the social and intellectual elite and developing middle-class.

THE NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

Child labor was a reality of industrialization in the United States. Often African American children and immigrant children worked in factories and mills, often in dangerous and unhealthy conditions. All over the United States, families living in urban areas had to resort to any means necessary to keep their families afloat. Historian, James Marten argued that "perhaps fifteen to twenty percent of working-class families took in [non-relatives] as boarders," into their "two-

⁴³ H. Warren Button and Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr, *History of Education and Culture in America*. Second ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), 188.

room cold water flats,” that already contained families of around eight people.⁴⁴ These conditions often made school a non-reality for children who were needed to help support their families, and were surrounded by larger, often rougher urban communities centering around work and taverns.

There is ample evidence to support a shift in the U.S public attitude towards childhood during the Gilded Age. A growth in orphanages, particularly in the eastern states, shows a change in the status of children from small adults to a dependent child incapable of providing for himself.⁴⁵ This trend would be short lived among early pioneers, such as Tabitha Moffat Brown, who looked to take in orphans from the Oregon Trail.⁴⁶ Humanitarians and reformers began to declare specific rights for children at the turn of the century, heading into the early twentieth century. These rights were based on the new middle-class ideals of childhood and included things like a child’s “right to play and freedom from repressive adult responsibilities.”⁴⁷ These declarations of childhood came in response to social conditions that put children in real and perceived danger. The Industrial revolution had created jobs that were initially viewed as not only a way of making women and children economically useful, but as methods for teaching children the “moral value of industriousness.”⁴⁸ The middle-class identified a moral decline within the lower classes, and saw it as a danger to the future generation of Americans, and education became the magic-fix-all prescription.

A number of factors shaped education reform and childhood ideals during the Gilded Age in America. Shrinking family sizes, shifting familial roles, and the growing prominence of the middle-class view of childhood, changed how Americans viewed the role and responsibility of education.⁴⁹ Middle-class parents began to view childhood as a special time for development.

⁴⁴ James Marten, “Family Relationships,” in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family*, vol. 5, *In the Age of Empire*, ed. Colin Heywood (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 36.

⁴⁵ Iris Culver Meadows, *Concepts of Child Nature in American Life and Education: 1800-1900*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1951), 397.

⁴⁶ Jean M. Ward, “Tabitha Moffat Brown (1780-1858),” Oregon Encyclopedia Project. http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/brown_tabitha_moffat_1780_1858_/#.U46ixxZH1FI (accessed June 4, 2014). Tabitha Moffat Brown founded the Oregon Orphans' Asylum and School at Tualatin Plains in 1848.

⁴⁷ Meadows, 400.

⁴⁸ Meadows, 400.

⁴⁹ Marten, 20-7.

Insurance claims from the 1900s reveal this shift away from seeing children as necessary family contributors to precious persons for their own sake.⁵⁰ Not to say that parents loved their children less before this time, but during the Gilded Age it became socially acceptable, even within legal claims, to have a right of compensation based on emotional pain versus economic loss in the wrongful death of a child.⁵¹ While this middle-class view was undoubtedly expanding, most people were still urban and agrarian working class in outlook and experience.

Working class families were concerned with economic survival, and these concerns did not fit well with the new ideals that were pushed upon them by the managerial, bureaucratically focused middle-class reformers. The realities of life for urban and agrarian workers made living the middle-class ideal not only impractical, but often undesirable. These workers lacked residential stability due to overly competitive working conditions and chronic unemployment.⁵² Marten argues that, “the boom and bust nature of capitalist economies and the absence until well into the twentieth century of any sort of government safety net, meant that even skilled workers were only a major injury or sudden business [downturn] away from insolvency and homelessness.”⁵³

Parents raising their children in such uncertainty saw more value in skills training than formal education, and relied on earned incomes from their children’s labor to assist the family during difficult times. The lack of similarities between the values of the working class and those of the influential social and intellectual elite and middle-class brought many reformers to the conclusion that inadequate parenting and moral laxity were the true causes for the dire circumstances of children and families.⁵⁴ Oregon reformers, among others, saw formal education as a way of saving children from the “moral disorder of the ‘disorganized families’” and the uncivilized immigrant, minority and lower class cultures.⁵⁵

EDUCATION IN OREGON

⁵⁰ Marten, 28-9.

⁵¹ Marten, 29.

⁵² Marten, 36.

⁵³ Marten, 36.

⁵⁴ Marten, 36-7.

⁵⁵ Marten, 36.

Oregon, like many states, faced uncertain times, socially and economically during the Gilded Age. As a part of the West, Oregon faced many compounding challenges. While dealing with issues similar to other parts of the country, Oregon had an interesting combination of unique Western influences and factors that shaped the views of education and childhood. Along with many of the general trends of the Gilded Age, Oregon's population nearly doubled every ten years between 1850 and 1910.⁵⁶ While remaining largely rural, cities in Oregon grew rapidly during this time period as well. In order to establish a publicly funded high school, a school district population of 1,000 students was required.⁵⁷ In 1869 Portland was the only area to reach this level, but Astoria, Salem, and Eugene all expanded greatly and were the next cities to gain public high schools around 1890.⁵⁸ Oregon faced intense racism and growing classism during the Gilded Age, and these factors shaped education reform. While influenced by nationwide trends, Oregon's path to modern education was paved with resistant communities, racial and class misconceptions and stigmatization, and rural-urban discrepancies.

In every way, states were in constant competition during this time period. Primary sources reference the status of other states, whether neighboring or from the East, in comparison with the status of Oregon. Technological innovations, including the expansion of the railroad, allowed for quicker and easier communication among members of the growing managerial class, which focused intensely on efficiency, progress, and standardization. This was a challenge in the West as geographically larger states grappled with issues of a sparse rural population. Families were often separated by many miles, complicating efforts to include them in proposed reforms.

Rural education is a topic especially relevant to the development of Oregon education and reform. Prior to 1899 in Oregon, rural education primarily consisted of one-room schoolhouses, each with a wide range of ages.⁵⁹ An example provided by West, "James Bushnell of Oregon presided over two small children and 'a wild and frolicsome set of boys,' all nearly

⁵⁶ Barry Edmonston, "Oregon's Major Population Trends," in *Oregon Outlook* (April 2003): 1.

⁵⁷ Oregon Dept. of Education, 20.

⁵⁸ Oregon Department of Education, 20.

⁵⁹ Oregon Dept. of Education, 22.

grown,” illustrates this pattern in Oregon.⁶⁰ Starting in the earlier half of the nineteenth century and gaining momentum throughout the mid-1800s, rural education reform movements began to change the landscape of community, education and control. The destabilizing nature of large immigrant influxes combined with general movements of rural peoples to urban settings caused significant shifts in rural social and political life. Before this time, rural communities relied on schoolhouses as community centers for the otherwise dispersed population.⁶¹ Schools were controlled by the communities, who decided on teachers, subject matter and locations.⁶² There was little to no certification required to teach, and despite popular stories that depicted rural life as harsh, corrupt and tyrannical with no opportunity for individual advancement, the communities were often more collaborative than hostile.⁶³

In Oregon, reformers began the process of professionalizing and standardizing education in 1854 with the appointment of county school superintendents.⁶⁴ Prior to the 1850s and 60s rural communities organized their own schools. In an account by Rufus Smith (b. 1842) of his Oregon education in 1856, he describes the overwhelming number of scholars, over seventy in total, wanting to attend school in Monmouth, a town with “six houses in it two of them is stores and the other four is dwelling houses.”⁶⁵ Smith describes the sort of classes he had been taking at the school house, providing an early example of Oregon rural education. Rufus Smith was the nephew of Ira Frances Marion Butler,⁶⁶ one of the founders of Monmouth College.⁶⁷

In a report by the Oregon Department of Education, early schools were described as often “crude,” and were generally run on a subscription basis.⁶⁸ “As no public funds or taxes were

⁶⁰ West, 197.

⁶¹ Tyack, 15-7.

⁶² Tyack, 17-8.

⁶³ Tyack, 16-8.

⁶⁴ Oregon Department of Education, 21.

⁶⁵ Rufus Smith and Issac Smith, "Letter to Matilda Smith from Rufus Smith and Isaac Smith" (1856). Transcripts of Butler Family Letters. Paper 80.

⁶⁶ Brittney Teal-Cribbs, "Butler Family Biographies" (2013). Butler Family Descendants' Biographies. Paper 11. <http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/butlerbios/11>

⁶⁷ Monmouth College is now known as Western Oregon University, but was also the Oregon State Normal School during this time period.

⁶⁸ Oregon Dept. of Education, 17-8. Subscription is another way of describing “term” and “rate” schools.

available for operating schools, parents who wanted their children to attend school had to pay their share of the costs,” usually around “5 to 10 dollars per pupil per quarter.”⁶⁹ Under the Territorial Law of 1850, districts were empowered to establish school districts on their own and determined how to raise funds to maintain the schoolhouses and materials.⁷⁰ Starting with the counties, control of education shifted from local communities to the state government.

By 1860, the governor served as the Superintendent of Public Instruction, establishing him as the ultimate authority on Oregon education. Never meant to be a permanent arrangement, the first Superintendent of Public Instruction was appointed in 1872, and became a four year elected position.⁷¹ According to the Oregon Department of Education Agency History, “In 1887 [the superintendent] was designated, in conjunction with the Board of Education, as the final arbiter of all questions and disputes concerning the interpretation of school laws,” confirming its position of control and authority.⁷² With the state having complete legal control over education, it still had to gain real control over its dispersed population.

In 1890, Oregon made education compulsory.⁷³ While compulsory education may have been on the books, the law had been reduced to a dead letter by 1895, and reform minded individuals continued to try and push parents into the system. County superintendents and school boards wrote in to the Superintendent of Public Instruction asking to clarify their responsibilities. Just one of the numerous examples in the Oregon State Archive, the school board for Elk City wrote in asking for clarification of their “duty in regard to compelling parents to send children to school,” if “they claim to be teaching them at home.” There is here evidence of some disagreement between the school board and the county superintendent in this case, as the parents had already been to the “superintendent and that he was satisfied they were doing their duty.”

That the board felt it necessary to go over their county superintendent’s head hints to this

⁶⁹ Oregon Dept. of Education, 17-8.

⁷⁰ Oregon Dept. of Education, 19.

⁷¹ Oregon Department of Education. "Agency History" Oregon Department of Education. <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2012> (accessed June 1, 2014).

⁷² Oregon Department of Education, “Agency History.”

⁷³ Oregon Department of Education, 22.

continued power struggle.⁷⁴ Despite the laws in place, rural communities in Oregon, like many other areas of the U.S, did not accept these changes outright.

David B. Tyack's *One Best System* quotes "an angry teacher" from Oregon, writing about how bureaucrats were taking control of public education: "By degrees there is being built in our state a machine among the 'aristocratic' element of our profession that . . . will make [teachers] serfs, to be moved about at will of a state superintendent of public instruction through lieutenants, county superintendents."⁷⁵ While finding teachers for schools was becoming less of a problem, parents no longer had control over who was teaching their children nor the content, which may have allowed for greater occupational mobility in an evolving economy, but it simultaneously damaged communities by removing direct involvement in education.⁷⁶ Control remained a crucial issue throughout the Gilded Age in Oregon.

Education was viewed widely as a vehicle to build civic identity and national independence.⁷⁷ Reformers saw education as a way to perpetuate their ideals on a whole generation, expanding the middle-class ideal beyond their traditional routes. Primary education was relatively common. Even in rural areas, children at least had limited access to basic education through community organization. Reformers looked to control and regulate education. State sponsored, standardized public education served as a means to shift control away from local communities to regulate the education of their own children, and place it into the hands of newly established state agencies and professionals.

Many community organizations started working to influence education to suit their own ideologies as the Gilded Age progressed and education became a major topic of discussion. The Oregon State Grange was just one group who came to advocate for education reform, but for their own purposes and the goals of the organization. At the sixth annual session of the Oregon State Grange in 1879, education was an important topic within the "Master's Opening" address, with

⁷⁴ School Board District No. 36 to George M. Irwin, June 15, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

⁷⁵ Tyack, 24.

⁷⁶ Tyack, 22-5.

⁷⁷ Sandin, 93.

A.P. Shipley of Oswego stating, “Organization, Education, Co-operation” were the steps necessary for the success of the Grange over the coming year.⁷⁸ There is an increase over the next few years in the amount of emphasis the Grange placed on education, particularly public education, in the Annual Sessions. Only two years later, R.P Boise advocated for direct action by Grange members, urging them to take the issue to the State Board of Education, as their “children must be educated, and in them should be taught the elementary principles of scientific agriculture.”⁷⁹ Advocating for curriculum reform was a less controversial goal than the larger institutional changes, but it provided an element of control for organizations that looked to foster their identity within the next generation, in many ways relatable to the plight of the middle-class.

Standardization was one of the many means to gain control over education. T.C Aubrey, the editor of the *Heppner Weekly Gazette* in Eastern Oregon, made an excellent point regarding the education needed and certification tests teachers were required to take in order to teach: “as though any portion of time passed within the wall of a college is an absolute standard of measurement determining the quantity of lore [sic] capable of being stored away within the walls of the human brain.”⁸⁰ Aubrey goes on to point out individuals who became distinguished and well respected with little professional training or certification, making the point that a degree does not a teacher make, but “is only evidence of a good beginning.” Aubrey is a vocal minority within the general discourse on education; however the message is representational of many of those who wrote into the Superintendent of Public Instruction requesting his help and for exceptions to be made after the introduction of certification tests for already established teachers.⁸¹

Rural towns would soon see Training Schools developing throughout the Willamette Valley directly following this time period; however, in 1895 the first Training School would be introduced in Monmouth. A community located just 20 miles from Oregon’s capital, Monmouth

⁷⁸ A.P Shipley, “Master’s Address,” *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Session of Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry*, (Portland, OR):1879, 7.

⁷⁹ R.P Boise, “Master’s Address,” *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of Oregon State Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry*, (Portland, OR):1881, 8.

⁸⁰ T.C Aubrey, “Educational Column” *Heppner Weekly Gazette*, June 13, 1889, 4.

⁸¹ Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

had developed as a small rural town, with a Christian College, one of the first colleges in Oregon. Monmouth College, the school founded by some of the earliest families, had only recently become publicly owned and renamed Oregon Normal School in 1882.⁸² As Kyle Jansson, an active member of the local history community, notes, Monmouth “experienced the tensions inherent among private businesses, religious interests, and a public university,” in a small town.⁸³

A concerned parent and community member in Monmouth, R.M. Smith, wrote to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, George Irwin in May of 1895 requesting his opinion on a proposed merger of the Normal School and the public school in Monmouth. The Normal School wanted to “use the public school as a training school,” which Smith argues is not only against the law, but is “not to the best interest of the public school.”⁸⁴ This would mean closing down the public school currently in place, and opening a school on campus that would be managed by the Normal School.⁸⁵ The most significant issue brought up by Smith was that the children would be taught by students of the Normal School, which seemed to go against the community’s desires for experienced teachers, and transferred all the control over the public school to the newly converted state facility.⁸⁶

In an attempt to find out more about the individuals involved with this issue, through census research, it appears very likely that R.M Smith is the same Rufus Smith mentioned previously. While the evidence is not definitive, if R.M. Smith is in fact Rufus Marion Smith, much more can be pulled from his letter to Irwin.⁸⁷ As a member of one of the founding families

⁸² Kyle Jansson, “Monmouth,” Oregon Encyclopedia Project. <http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/monmouth/#.U46wLxZH3II> (date accessed: June 3, 2014).

⁸³ Jansson, “Monmouth.”

⁸⁴ R.M Smith to Supt. George Irwin, May 29, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

⁸⁵ F.C., “Monmouth Normal Notes,” *Oregon City Enterprise*, October 18, 1895, 1.

⁸⁶ R.M Smith to George M. Irwin.

⁸⁷ Using ancestry.com, I completed general searches for a twenty year span surrounding the letter, with any event in Monmouth, Polk County, Oregon. Rufus Marion Smith was the only viable candidate, as the only other two individuals I could find with the initials R.M, last name Smith were under the age of 18, one being Rufus’ son, Roy. I confirmed these findings by doing a search through the Oregon State Archives Early Oregonians database, once again, Rufus Marion Smith was the only viable candidate. Western Oregon Universities archive has digitized a letter from the 14-15 year old Rufus, and comparing the two letters, there are a number of similarities despite the near 40 year separation. While I cannot guarantee that R.M. Smith is Rufus Marion Smith, I feel relatively confident that it is highly probable.

of Monmouth, Rufus Marion Smith would have been likely a well-respected community member. This shift in power would have been intimately felt by someone like Rufus Marion Smith, going from having some influence to being brushed aside by state officials and professionals.

Smith warned that a petition had been signed, they had “consulted the best attorney in the state,” and contacted superintendents from other states in order to fight this proposed merger. The group was planning on presenting the petition in June at the annual meeting of the Board of Regents.⁸⁸ Smith was so passionate about this issue, that the letter was a consolation for not being able to meet with Irwin at his home. Smith was well-composed and honest with their desires regarding Irwin’s response.⁸⁹ While unable to locate any direct response from Irwin to R.M Smith, Superintendent Irwin indirectly responded to Smith via a response he made to an earlier letter from John J. Higgins who was in charge of the Public Schools. In April that year, Irwin expressed approval for the plan to merge the Normal and Public schools. Irwin did advise Higgins that it would be proper to consult parents and the wider pool of taxpayers before moving forward on the plan.⁹⁰

P.L Campbell, the president of the Oregon Normal School in Monmouth, was also intimately involved, as he wrote to Irwin to ensure that he had his support and was covering his bases to fight against the “opposition.”⁹¹ Campbell attempted to outline the major points of the opposing group, reiterating many of Smith’s arguments against the merger, but ultimately could not remember all of them. The letter begins with a near intimidating scene, as Campbell states that “Our Friends, the opposition, waited on me last night and notified me that they intended to carry the training school question into the courts,” implying that the opposition was very familiar to both Campbell and Irwin with the term, “our friends.”⁹² He concludes the letter by observing, “were it not for a few who are persistently agitating the matter, everything would go smoothly,”

⁸⁸ R.M. Smith to George M. Irwin.

⁸⁹ R.M. Smith to George M. Irwin.

⁹⁰ George M. Irwin to John J. Higgins, April 25, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

⁹¹ P.L. Campbell to George M. Irwin, June 11, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

⁹² P.L. Campbell to George M. Irwin.

after brushing off most of the opposition's concerns as ignorant.⁹³ R.M. Smith's letter appeared very well prepared, and many of the concerns his group presented seemed entirely legitimate, but with Irwin on the side of the Normal School, and as the ultimate authority of legal issues regarding education, it is not surprising the opposition failed in their efforts, and by October 1895 the *Oregon City Enterprise* reported that, "The state normal school is in its transition year. . . The public school of Monmouth has been turned over to the state as a training school for the normal. Each member of the senior class will teach forty minutes each day during the entire senior year."⁹⁴ Despite Campbell's insistence that the community would retain control of the public school via the Board of Regents, this article implies otherwise.

The *Independence Enterprise*, published in Monmouth's neighboring town, provides additional context for this discussion. On April 18th, 1895, the *Independence Enterprise* published an article on the proposed merger, mostly citing the positive aspects of the merger.⁹⁵ Less than a month later, on May 9th, the *Independence Enterprise* published the results of the first vote on the matter. The paper clearly favored the merger, allowing the Normal School's President and a Professor Buckham five sentences supporting the merger, and only six words in reference to the opposition.⁹⁶ R.M. Smith wrote his letter of opposition shortly after this vote, and no further mention of the issue appeared in the newspaper. This is just one example of a community attempting to fight back against the growing education machine, where local community voices were drowned out by professional voices.

In significant contrast to the majority experience in Oregon, as represented by the rural community of Monmouth, African Americans were being kept from education, not forced into a new system. Educating African American children under developing legislation would mean spending more money. As evident in the original constitution of Oregon from 1859, African Americans, among other minorities were not welcome. Despite exclusion laws and intense racism, African American families worked to make a home for themselves in Oregon. As

⁹³ P.L. Campbell to George M. Irwin.

⁹⁴ F.C., "Monmouth Normal Notes."

⁹⁵ "Public School and Training School," *Independence Enterprise*, April 18, 1895, (Independence, OR), 2.

⁹⁶ "Monmouth," *Independence Enterprise*, May 9, 1895, (Independence, OR), 2.

Elizabeth McLagan points out, “Many had come with white families and chose to remain,” and while “some lived in the rural areas of Oregon . . . by the turn of the century 70% were living in Portland.”⁹⁷ Other minorities included Native American tribes, with five reservations established in Oregon as of 1885. Minority groups maintained limited access to the system of change throughout the Gilded Age.

Oregon has come a long way in the last few years to face the deep-seated racism that has marked a large part of Oregon’s history. Racist legislation and actions were common and reoccurring. African Americans in Oregon faced a complete lack of legal status in Oregon until the 1920s. Generally used as a means to control population growth and behavior, African Americans were technically not allowed to live in the State of Oregon, but were not actively kicked out.⁹⁸ An African American community developed around the Portland metro-area, with a population of 192 in 1880, growing to 775 by 1900; with some families living in more rural areas.⁹⁹ Quintard Taylor speaks to the African American experience in the West in his book, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, and argues that,

Despite their small numbers, black urban westerners established churches, fraternal organizations, social clubs, newspapers, and literary societies. These fledgling nineteenth-century institutions and organizations immediately addressed the spiritual, educational, social, and cultural needs of the local inhabitants.¹⁰⁰

This would be the case in Portland. The demand for public education for African Americans in Portland had almost as much to do with principal, as they were paying taxes that funded public education, as it did any sort of need, as the community often cared for itself.

Interestingly enough, given Oregon’s history of discriminatory laws, disputes about education for African American children had just as much to do with money as it did racism. Taxes became a legal ground for parents to demand education for their children. As early as the 1860s African American families “were assessed a property tax to pay for the education of the

⁹⁷ McLagan, 79.

⁹⁸ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 193 (table).

⁹⁹ Taylor, 194.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, 194.

city's children," but their children were barred from entry.¹⁰¹ The Salem African American community went on to build their own school in 1867, but Thomas Alexander Wood, a minister in Oregon from 1862-1904, recalled in his 1890s autobiography his role in their acceptance, and that, for Portland, they focused their argument on a legal basis for admittance.¹⁰²

Thomas Alexander Wood wrote a section entitled the "First Admission of Colored Children to the Portland Public School," speaking to the way in which educational legislation and taxation played a crucial role their efforts.¹⁰³ Woods writes that the Directors originally tried to deny the 16 children due to financial reasons, claiming, "If we admit them, then the next year we will have no money to run the schools."¹⁰⁴ They proceeded to offer the colored community the \$2.25 per student that is allotted by law, which was declined as it would not be sufficient for the community to actually establish a separate school house. In the end the Directors were going to be forced by legal action to admit the colored school or provided them with a separate school in which the Board of Directors opted to rent "a suitable house . . . at the expense of the school fund. And the colored people were made happy."¹⁰⁵

In the mid-late 1890s, African Americans fought against the racism that worked to maintain their position as inferior to whites. Taylor argues that through protest community bonds were forged, and would lead to larger organizational efforts over the coming decades.¹⁰⁶ Groups such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, formed "to promote their common goals of self-education, high moral character, and the education of women and young girls."¹⁰⁷ Issues of morality and views of capability had been used to justify the paternalistic control that reformers would use against the African American community, but by representing themselves as educated and moral individuals, steps could be made to regain control and move towards equality.

¹⁰¹ Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers, 20.

¹⁰² Wood.

¹⁰³ Wood.

¹⁰⁴ Wood.

¹⁰⁵ Wood.

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, 196.

¹⁰⁷ McLagan, 120.

In the same way that African Americans worked to regain control, later so would Native Americans in the 1960s and 70s.¹⁰⁸

While most education was organized through state and local government in Oregon, Native American education was largely funded by the Federal government as a stipulation of many treaties.¹⁰⁹ Early education of Native Americans was the assumed responsibility of Methodist missionaries, who typically had already established missions in hopes of converting the “heathens” to the Christian faith. The Federal government commonly included education in treaties and with some procedural organization, but there were no stipulations as to what the children were supposed to be learning.¹¹⁰ Postmodern historians, such as Janice White Clemmer, David Wallace Adams and Andrew Fisher have worked to identify the true intent and impact of U.S governmental policy regarding the education of Indian children. With few sources from the communities, historians have to look for the narrative within scattered and fragmented documentation and the documents of the oppressors. Fisher boldly stated in *Shadow Tribe*, that, “the U.S government subjected Native Americans to an intense program of religious instruction, educational training, and land reform designed to destroy their cultures and absorb them into the dominant society.”¹¹¹ While some may think this an exaggeration, contemporary writers used relatively similar terminology to describe policies aimed at the Indians.

The American ideal of individualism legitimized efforts to destroy communities in the name of education and civilization. It was to the benefit of the individual to be educated, and in the case of the Indian, J.B Harrison, a scholar studying the state of Indians, argued in 1887, “he will probably, in most cases, do more to ‘lift up his tribe’ by keeping himself up, out of the squalor and disorder of savagery, than he can accomplish by going back to the reservation.”¹¹² Harrison continues, stating:

¹⁰⁸ Fisher, 146.

¹⁰⁹ Bengt Sandin, “Education,” in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family*, vol. 5, *In the Age of Empire*, ed. Colin Heywood (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 93.

¹¹⁰ Clemmer, 29-31.

¹¹¹ Fisher, *Shadow Tribes*, 121.

¹¹² J.B Harrison, *The Latest Studies on Indian Reservations* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1887), 148.

the theory of all missionary work, in both the churches and schools, is that nothing but Christianity can elevate the Indians; that there is no hope for them in either education or civilization, except as these are employed as instruments of the Gospel of Christ.¹¹³ Adams expands on the role of Christianity in the education of Native Americans, arguing that the “philanthropic movement drew its moral energy from the reformers’ quest to create a Protestant America.”¹¹⁴ To fully embrace Christianity and simultaneously civilization, individuality and personal responsibility were required as part of a larger ethical code, according to Adams.¹¹⁵

Reformer perspectives on the negative influence of family on the development of children were never more obvious than in their concerns regarding the education of Native American children. Boarding schools and reservation schools often pointedly undermined Native American culture by “Americanizing” the children.¹¹⁶ By forcing students to adopt Western dress, hairstyles and the English language, proponents of government-sponsored Native American education looked to “[impose] the new middle-class familial ideal on Native Americans.”¹¹⁷ Particular examples in Oregon are widely available. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, for example, faced cultural extermination at the hands of formalized Gilded Age education. Fisher asserts that on-reservation boarding schools “although small and ill-equipped in comparison to the major industrial schools . . . using a mixture of military discipline, vocational training, and academic instruction . . . worked to ‘kill the Indian and save the man’ within their students.”¹¹⁸

Indian Agent John Smith worked to *educate* and *civilize* children from the Warm Springs Reservation in the 1860s, and numerous correspondence and reports illustrated the type of prejudices that shaped educational practices, not only of Native Americans, but of other undesirable minority groups.¹¹⁹ Agent Smith gushes over the improvements of pupils at the

¹¹³ Harrison, 133.

¹¹⁴ Adams, 23.

¹¹⁵ Adams, 23. Adams connects Christianity to the civilizing mission stating that, “embracing Christianity meant embracing an entire ethical code which included, among other things, the principle that an individual was responsible for both his economic and spiritual self.”

¹¹⁶ Marten, 38.

¹¹⁷ Marten, 38.

¹¹⁸ Fisher, 141.

¹¹⁹ Clemmer, 67-69.

reservation agency schools, often commenting on how surprisingly well the “Indian children, with even not such good facilities for learning, equal, if not exceed, white children in progress.”¹²⁰ Throughout Janice W. Clemmer’s analysis of nineteenth century Native American educational history, there is a common thread of assumed racial inferiority and the unquestionably civilized nature of white culture. Not only were schools necessary for the civilizing of the Indians, but boarding schools were preferred as they kept the students away from the “demoralization and degradation of an Indian home [that] neutralizes the efforts which are directed to advancement in morality and civilization.”¹²¹ While the goals of the U.S government’s involvement in Native American education during the Gilded Age suggests a firm investment, there was still a disconnect between goals and funding. Comparing the costs of educating 49,000 Rhode Island students to the total amount of government appropriations to educate a nearly equivalent number of Native American students, reveals a six to one ratio.¹²² Steven Mintz adds to that statistic, that while, “it cost between \$6,000 to \$10,000 to kill an Indian [it took] only \$1,200 to educate a child at a boarding school,” highlighting the ways in which reformers made choices based on everything but the desires of the community.¹²³

Native parents remained reluctant from the early years and on into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to send their children to the newly established reservation schools, and attendance and participation were always wavering.¹²⁴ In many of the *Quarterly Reports of Indian Schools* from Siletz Oregon, there is inconsistent attendance, a field provided specifically to mark run-aways, and had a list of over 20 “orphans” that lived at the Boarding school year round, “at work on school farm.”¹²⁵ While many parents saw the benefits of their children learning to read and write, they were not ignorant of the missionaries’ efforts to convert and Americanize their

¹²⁰ Clemmer, 70.

¹²¹ Clemmer, 79.

¹²² Clemmer, 97-8.

¹²³ Mintz, 171.

¹²⁴ Clemmer, 32-3.

¹²⁵ Lydia L. Hunt, *Quarterly Report of Indian Schools*, September 30, 1893, Box 22, Folder 1, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Records, 1855-1955, Mss 442, Oregon Historical Society.

children.¹²⁶ J.B Harrison, among others, believed that, “if the Indians are not improved and enabled to become self-supporting, they will inevitably seriously increase the pauperism, and the vicious and evil tendencies of all kinds,” making the work on the reservations of apparent social importance.¹²⁷ The missionaries saw the need for salvation in their pupils, and their negative views of Native American culture and religious practices was transferred to and expanded upon by later government educators sent to the reservations for the benefit of the “Indians”.

Various Indian agents all authored reports and submitted them for the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year of 1885*. There were five Indian agencies in Oregon with reports: Grande Ronde, Klamath, Siletz, Umatilla, and Warm Springs.¹²⁸ The authors all reported on their own work to their superiors on the progress within each reservation. The civilizing mission implicit in the reports, shows a general desire to paint a positive picture of U.S - Indian relations, with the U.S. as the saviors of a savage race, who are bringing civilization and Christianity to what would otherwise be a “worthless, ignorant, and superstitious lot of people.”¹²⁹ A seasoned Indian Agent of the Klamath Reservation, Linus M. Nickerson concluded his report and his career with such a sentiment, stating: “I found them just emerging from their savage state, many of them imbued with the idea that it was impossible for them to advance much further.”¹³⁰

Alonzo Gesner, U.S. Indian Agent from the Warm Springs Agency strayed from the others in how he viewed the audience and in his purpose for writing the report.¹³¹ While most of the agents were looking to impress their bosses, Gesner was focused on restating issues that he had previously attempted to have addressed by the federal government.¹³² Gesner even goes as far to call out other agents for their common practice of “want[ing] to make things look well for

¹²⁶ Clemmer, 32-3.

¹²⁷ Harrison, 138.

¹²⁸ Authors of the other Agency Reports include: T.B Sinnott (Grand Ronde), Linus M. Nickerson (Klamath), F.M Wadsworth (Siletz), and E.J Sommerville (Umatilla).

¹²⁹ “Reports of Agents in Oregon,” in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year of 1885*, 175.

¹³⁰ “Reports of Agents in Oregon,” 166.

¹³¹ Ibid. 171-6.

¹³² Ibid. 172-3.

himself and Indian people,” and states that, “the progress of civilization is too frequently overestimated or overdrawn,” based on previous reports he had read and his own experience.¹³³

As Gesner comes to conclude his argument, his point on education becomes incredibly important when seen in the greater historical context:

. . . know that to educate a few of the Indian youth is nothing more than educated cruelty, for when the youth of the Indians have undergone a thorough education and training for years they fully realize their true condition in their semi-civilized state, and it is very humiliating and unpleasant for them to go back to their old ways of living among their people.¹³⁴

As the boarding schools would grow in size over the coming years, more and more children became isolated from their communities until they could no longer feel a sense of belonging within their own tribe, effectually destroying tribes within a single generation.

As the morality of the students was the focus within the “Indian Question,” the morality of teachers was a higher priority in white Oregon, as many came to see the ideal teacher as one “whose mental development does not exceed their moral status,” as described by Professor F. Long as a part of “A Pleas for Universal Education” in a column edited by the Polk County Teacher’s Association in 1895.¹³⁵ This sort of sentiment seems to exclude many individuals based on their lack of adherence to the dominant moral norms, despite ability or intelligence. There is a definite trend within reform writings to place morality before intellect, whether subconsciously in their writings or explicitly within their argument. Morality is often so closely tied to religion that religious affiliation entered the debate relatively early on.

A letter from the Superintendent George Irwin in 1895 had to provide some clarity on the moral requirements for educators. He wrote:

It is desired that good moral principles shall be culcated in our schools, and therefore Directors should look well to the moral character of the teacher. Not that he or she should

¹³³ Ibid. 171.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 173.

¹³⁵ F. Long, “A Plea for Universal Education,” *Independence Enterprise*, January 24, 1895, (Independence, OR), 4.

be a professed Christian, for there is much good morality found outside the Christian profession.¹³⁶

This speaks to an underlying association of morality with Christianity within the general population of Oregon. It does not take long, looking at Gilded Age documents, to see the emphasis and prominence of Christianity within the culture. Morality was largely defined by Christianity for those living in a highly Christianized time period. This emphasis on morality would influence nearly every step of the reform movement throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Denominational divides continually hindered state education efforts as many believed “that education should be left to the church,” while others felt it necessary for the state to take a leading role in education as “religion, morality and knowledge” are considered “necessary to good government and [the] happiness of mankind,” as stipulated within Oregon law.¹³⁷ The immigrant nature of the population also served to provide resistance to educational reform as a “large number of unmarried individuals . . . would not consent to taxation in order to assist other people’s children,” especially within the territorial years of Oregon’s history.¹³⁸ In an article entitled “Compulsory Education,” an author bluntly states why public and compulsory education is necessary, for “if we have permitted degraded and ignorant people to come here and have lost standing by it, we must educate their children and make them worthy of citizenship.”¹³⁹ The focus is not necessarily on providing education for the reformer’s children, but educating the “other” to ensure they do not bring down Oregon as a society.

These denominational divides would eventually play out between Protestants and Catholics, especially in Portland. St. Mary’s Catholic School in Portland was one of the state’s Catholic schools that faced opposition during the reform movement. In the collective memoir of

¹³⁶ George M. Irwin to T.W. Atkinson, February 4, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

¹³⁷ Elois E. Charlesworth, *The Beginning of Elementary Education in Oregon*. Mss 709, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, 14-5.

¹³⁸ Charlesworth, 14-5.

¹³⁹ “Compulsory Education.”

the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, *Gleanings of Fifty Years*, they wrote that in the process of gaining accreditation they faced “hostilities of the faction inimical to Catholic education,” but were still successful in their endeavor.¹⁴⁰ While morality was an important aspect of Catholic education, the religious faith of the students was openly discussed in contrast to the public education movement lead by generally protestant reformers. Within Catholic writings on education, religious instruction was openly and commonly used, while Protestants typically would phrase the same general concept as simply “moral instruction.” There is also a relatively consistent shape to religious versus moral instruction, where moral instruction is focused primarily on other people’s children, while religious instruction is a more internal use, especially as the Protestants used the terms.

The tension was not simply a perception of the catholic school, but was pointed at in an editorial in the *Evening Capital Journal*, entitled “Protestant Versus Catholic” from 1889. The author claims to represent the Protestant view on education, as well as the Catholic; however it is very apparent that the author is Protestant.¹⁴¹ The author spends the majority of the article explaining the Protestant stand on education, while devoting only two small paragraphs to the Catholic point of view. While generally the author states that the two groups agree on most aspects of education, they claim that Catholics do not believe that common schools should be maintained by the state. While all Christians, according to the author,

Desire so far as themselves are concerned, that the common schools teach religion, [Protestants] recognize the fact that compulsory religious instructions are unjust and unwise, and inconsistent with liberty, and do not insist on it in the public schools where objection is raised.¹⁴²

This provides a compromise within the Reform understanding, in that if they want compulsory education they cannot also have religious instruction, that is if an “objection is raised.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, *Gleaning of Fifty Years: In the Northwest 1859-1909*, (Portland, OR: 1909), 191-2.

¹⁴¹ “Protestant Versus Catholic,” *Evening Capital Journal*, (Salem, Or.), January 25, 1889.

¹⁴² “Protestant Versus Catholic,” *Evening Capital Journal*.

¹⁴³ “Protestant Versus Catholic,” *Evening Capital Journal*.

The author concludes that, “Protestantism therefore says to the state: Tax us as much as you need for common schools, but for the rest, let us alone, the country can take care of itself and better than you can do it.”¹⁴⁴ This stance essentially reserves higher education for those who can afford to pay, creating a continued track for middle-class managerial domination. Ultimately, the author argues that while Protestants and Catholics may view common schools differently, they for the most part agree that religious interaction is necessary and important, and that higher levels of education should generally remain private and religious, as is “suitable to the needs of Christendom.”¹⁴⁵ While early education was to be standardized and non-denominational, higher education was generally reserved for those of the Christian faith with the highest moral standing, as they would enter the world of professionals with power and education, to lead the next generation, maintaining control.

Education began to come under professional control in Portland earlier than most areas of Oregon, and was much more accepted by the largely middle-class supporters. Shifting from mostly private schools in the 1840s, to a time of experimentation with public education through the 1850s, culminating in the development of a “graded public school system” and “the establishment of a superintendent of schools [by] 1871.”¹⁴⁶ The first school building paid for at public expense was built in Portland in 1858, followed by the first public high school in Oregon in 1869.¹⁴⁷ Portland led the way in education reform, often predating legislation. Portland’s dominant middle-class later partnered with Salem to push reform down on a largely disagreeing rural population.

It appears that every organized group had some sort of opinion on education. There were few who may have advocated no need for reform and improvement, but the question continually came down to control. In 1880, Harvey W. Scott wrote within the *Daily Oregonian*, “Every close observer has taken note of the fact that under the modern tendency of the public school system

¹⁴⁴ “Protestant Versus Catholic,” *Evening Capital Journal*.

¹⁴⁵ “Protestant Versus Catholic,” *Evening Capital Journal*.

¹⁴⁶ Oregon Department of Education, 19.

¹⁴⁷ Oregon Department of Education, 21-2.

the taxpayers have been losing control of the management.”¹⁴⁸ To Scott this was a problem, to others, such as the professional ranks of education; this meant that education would no longer be at the whim of the local community.¹⁴⁹ As Tyack has pointed out, “Country people may have been dissatisfied with their school buildings and with an archaic curriculum, but they wanted to control their own schools.”¹⁵⁰ In response, reform-minded individuals claimed that opposition to “reforms in [the] school system,” “has generally arisen from the want of a thorough understanding of the facts and necessities of the case rather than from any lack of educational zeal,” as described in an editorial from the Salem publication, *Evening Capital Journal*.¹⁵¹ Issues of educational standards became a battleground between communities and reforms, as many rural communities wished to retain a “local scale of values,” but professionals and reformers worked to standardize education in an effort to provide “greater occupational mobility,” and a more progressive outlook.¹⁵²

Professionalization has been often viewed as a positive aspect of education reform during the Gilded Age, but the modes of professionalization and bureaucratization of education began to isolate the schools from their communities. While some historians are now recognizing the downfalls of such practices, reformers of the time viewed this separation of children from their more traditional boundaries of rural working class culture as a benefit to the individual and therefore a benefit to the country. Still a minority themselves, the middle-class felt pressure on both sides, as the majority of Oregon’s population was agrarian, and then there was the Oregon “Blue Blood” pioneering elite, who maintain a significant amount of control through the early part of the twentieth century. Often reformers have been cited as chastising the “barbaric” rural in language similar to descriptions of Native American and African American communities, which were always cast under a heavy shadow of inferiority. Despite the ideal of the yeoman farmer that

¹⁴⁸ Harvey W. Scott, “School Matters Again,” *The Daily Oregonian*, February 16, 1880.

¹⁴⁹ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 25.

¹⁵⁰ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 25.

¹⁵¹ “Educational History of OR,” *Evening Capital Journal*. (Salem, Or.) 1888-1893, March 01, 1893, 2.

¹⁵² Tyack, *The One Best System*, 25.

reformers claimed to be trying to save, they viewed rural communities as incapable of recovering on their own from the destabilizing effects of farming industrialization, immigration, migration and population expansion.¹⁵³ Only this elite group of professionals and experts could prescribe the remedy: bureaucratic control and standardization.

Oregon Pioneer culture had placed a great amount of power within the hands of community leaders, who often appointed teachers. However, this tendency could easily result in community disagreement and often left the teacher on unsteady ground.¹⁵⁴ Tyack refers to the “Rural School Problem,” and addresses the discrepancy between the common writings on the topic, typically from professional educators, and the alternative point of view, the community members. Contemporary descriptions of the state of rural education generally came from the growing organization of education professionals who looked at rural education as a problem to fix.¹⁵⁵ Concerned with a “preservation of domestic tranquility and an ordered, cohesive society,” reformers saw the rural and urban conditions as a disease to be cured.¹⁵⁶ The control of education belonged to the community versus trained and certified professionals, which created uncertain circumstances for Oregon’s future. The message such reformers sent to parents and children was, as Katz describes; “You are vicious, immoral, shortsighted and thoroughly wrong about most things,” “We are right; we shall show you the truth.”¹⁵⁷

With so much new legislation on education, there was a substantial amount of confusion on the rights and limitations of the newly empowered educational administrations. Many county superintendents and community members wrote in to Superintendent Irwin asking for clarification or his opinion on various facets of the law. In one response from Irwin, he had to clarify that the directors and teachers have no control over students outside of school, and implied that the issue was whether or not directors and teachers could force students to attend, or deny

¹⁵³ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 21-3.

¹⁵⁴ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 17-8.

¹⁵⁵ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 15.

¹⁵⁶ Katz, 213.

¹⁵⁷ Katz, 215.

students access.¹⁵⁸ Another individual by the name of W.B. Parsons was a director of a small rural school district, which faced a year with no children of elementary school age. They suspended the school, and were thereafter denied public school status, closing their access to funding due to this gap.¹⁵⁹ The law was not established with an understanding of the rural issues surrounding education, as some towns would only have a handful of school age children at any time, and be too far from the next town to join together as one school district. Transportation was a common issue addressed by parents to Irwin, and would remain a subject of debate for many decades.¹⁶⁰

The growing bureaucracy slowed down the work of communities to provide reasonable education for children. Prior to reform, if a community wanted to establish a school they could simply do so, and it would be paid for directly by the community. With reform, however, establishing new schools fell under the control of the school districts, and parents had to petition the county superintendent to have a school closer to their community. One such petition came to the desk of A.R Rutherford, the Linn County Superintendent, who wrote to State Superintendent Irwin offering his opinion that the petition lacked the required number of signatures but posed valid reasons for requesting a new school district. Almost half the students, Rutherford reported, had “to travel from 3 1/2 to 4 miles to reach the present school house,” and if the division of the school was approved “15 children would have the privilege of attending school,” who were not currently within a reasonable distance.¹⁶¹

Teachers in rural areas also felt a great deal of stress as new requirements were added for them to maintain their jobs, with little to no assistance provided to reasonably fulfill these requirements. Of the approximate 150-200 letters from 1895 to Superintendent Irwin, at least twenty-five percent were from teachers, administrators, concerned community members and even parents of teachers requesting an extension or exception to the recently established teacher

¹⁵⁸ Irwin to T.W Atkinson.

¹⁵⁹ W.B Parsons to George M. Irwin, June 7, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

¹⁶⁰ Common theme found within nearly six decades of archival records from the Oregon Department of Education, found within my research for this paper, as well as practicum work I have completed at the archives.

¹⁶¹ A.R Rutherford to George M. Irwin, June 3, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

certification requirements. One parent, E.W Garner, wrote to a fraternity brother, a Reverend Thomas Van Scoy who passed the letter to Superintendent Irwin, stating that his daughter Mary, “took the state examination for a state diploma, but unfortunately she did not know when the examination was to take place until the very day of its occurrence, and she was therefore in a very nervous state when she prepared her papers and was unable to do justice to herself.”¹⁶² Garner continues on, stating that Mary “has been teaching for between nine and ten years . . . and has been pronounced by two different superintendents as amongst the most successful of our teachers,” and asks for Van Scoy’s assistance in “ensuring her a certificate.”¹⁶³ This letter is illustrative of a number of issues within the developing system, one of which was that it was disorganized, where teachers received less than a days’ notice for their certification testing. Garner wrote to a friend and fraternity friend, and the letter ended up in the files of George Irwin which is also very informative, as it suggests the success of social networks in possibly bypassing new requirements. While I was unable to find out if Mary did secure her certificate, the existence of this letter is just one of the many examples of such requests.

The same trends that shaped Oregon certification efforts took hold within the federally managed reservations. In 1886 the U.S government formally recognized the ill-effects of alcohol within the Native American communities, and began to seek ways to rectify the situation.¹⁶⁴ Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs saw education as a way to prevent the continued use of alcohol and narcotics, and Congress required that Indian Schools had to teach about “the nature and effect of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, and their effect on the human system,” and required that within a year all teachers had to pass “a satisfactory examination in physiology and hygiene, with special reference to the nature and effect of alcoholic drinks and other narcotics,” so that it would be taught to the “schools under [their] control.”¹⁶⁵ J.B Harrison, an author from the 1880s who wrote *The Latest Studies on Indian Reservations* “with sincere interest and good-will,” wrote

¹⁶² E.W Garner to Rev. Thomas Van Scoy, letter, May 13, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

¹⁶³ Garner to Rev. Thomas Van Scoy.

¹⁶⁴ Dept. of Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Oct. 18, 1886.

¹⁶⁵ Dept. of Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Oct. 18, 1886.

that education of Indian children should be closely monitored and limited to “mostly elementary on the literary side, and predominantly industrial.”¹⁶⁶ As justification he argued that “it is not probable that any good would result from attempts to make scholars of many Indians,” and even if they show the ability they could not be expected to reasonably compete with white men, reinforcing racist views of Native American capabilities.¹⁶⁷ The examinations of teachers became standard in Oregon, and were part of the overall standardization effort that focused primarily on teachers during this time period.

For the standardization policies to be successful, the state and federal government had to gain control over education in general. This would lead to the growing role of publicly funded schools, and eventually to the legalization of compulsory elementary education. These were key components to the success of the reform movement as they generally forced parents to utilize the growing public school system, whether they disagreed or not. Compulsory education appeared to be tied more to the goal of educating and reforming the other children, while public education was about access for all.

These two aspects of the reform movement that were often combined by reformers but were often disputed within the reform movement. Public education was more widely accepted than the idea of compulsory education. However, reformers typically agreed that other people’s children should be under compulsory education legislation, especially immigrant and minority populations. Middle-class reformers and community leaders believed that through compulsory education the ill-effects of “the inefficiency of parent rule, ignorance, and intemperance,” could be overcome making reformatory education unnecessary in the future.¹⁶⁸ First common public schools had to be established to accomplish this goal.

The common school ideal was constantly under debate. In nearly all reform writings morality and religion play a key role in why people believed all children should be educated. Few

¹⁶⁶ Harrison, 146-7.

¹⁶⁷ Harrison, 147.

¹⁶⁸ Letter to the Editor. *The West Shore*. (Portland, Or.) 1875-1891, February 01, 1881, Page 23.

express the sort of opinion in writing that T.C Aubrey expressed in 1889, but it represents a view in contradiction to other reform proposals:

The object of common school is not to finish the student in any particular branch or branches of learning, but to equip the mind with fundamental facts and principals and elementary training that will unlock the gates that open into such knowledge as will make him more useful to himself and society, and more happy in the enjoyment of both.¹⁶⁹

This secularized view of education is rare for its time as Christian morality reigned. Many reformers would agree with the statement, but would add morality to the purpose, and emphasis the gates of knowledge's role in opening doors for the individual.

Many reformers saw the lack of access to education as a social issue that was the cause of incredible unrest within American society. For those who viewed their "object in life as a people and individuals . . . to alleviate suffering and discontent," education would be a logical step in working towards this goal.¹⁷⁰ In addition to elements of good will, the fight over education was a fight over the future of the country, as "it is truly said that in a republic the vote of the ignorant is more to be feared than the foreigners bayonet," which when viewed with the expansion of the vote occurring simultaneously, became a statement that resonated very strongly with those who had traditionally held that power: wealthier, white men.¹⁷¹

One prominent critic of reform proposals and a controversial figure of his own time, Harvey W. Scott of Portland, OR offered a radically different reactionary view of reform and progress. Coming from an early pioneer family, Harvey Scott was part of the social, economic, and political elite of one of Oregon's largest cities, and as the editor of Portland *Oregonian* for forty years was incredibly influential among the elite and within Oregon as a whole.¹⁷² While generally Scott was and is viewed as "combative, judgmental, blind to the corrosive effects of political corruption," by historians, he also represents a strong conservative and often reactionary voice in Oregon during this time period. Some historians would even come to see some relevant and accurate points within Scott's disagreements with reforms, which holds true for education as

¹⁶⁹ T.C Aubrey, "Education Column," 4.

¹⁷⁰ Long, 4.

¹⁷¹ Long, 4.

¹⁷² Lee Nash, "Harvey Scott," http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/scott_harvey_1838_1910/

well. He continues on to point out the machine being created came “to subdivide studies . . . so that poor people find it extremely difficult to meet the constant demand [for books and supplies], and even those who are not called poor do not fail to notice how expensive it is.”¹⁷³

CONCLUSIONS

Clear distinctions were made within the primary and secondary schools, that the development of high schools designed mostly for the benefit of middle and professional classes.¹⁷⁴ Oregon only required that school districts with more than 1,000 students provide secondary education, limiting higher education to urban areas with larger concentrations of students.¹⁷⁵ Primary school was the main requirement for compulsory education legislation, requiring children to attend school through the 8th grade. Secondary education opportunities did grow during this time period, but the location of early public high schools tended to be within upper-middle class neighborhoods, and generally could only be attended by middle-class children for social, economic and geographical reasons. Children from lower-class families and rural communities were extremely unlikely to continue their education past the 8th grade, if they even completed that far, and were often encouraged to enter productive work as soon as possible by their families and communities.¹⁷⁶ Despite reformers efforts to “sell education” to a widely suspicious and reluctant working and agrarian class, often they resulted in efforts to force education through these compulsory education laws.¹⁷⁷

Even within more controlled populations, such as the Native American reservations, compulsory education was never fully successful during this time period.¹⁷⁸ The Warm Springs reservation continued to resist and adapt to policies such as those that encouraged “religious persecution and compulsory education [that] had deep and often damaging effects on tribal cultures and identities.”¹⁷⁹ Reservation boarding schools had reporting forms that illustrate the

¹⁷³ Scott, “School Matters Again.”

¹⁷⁴ Sandin, 95.

¹⁷⁵ Oregon Department of Education, 20.

¹⁷⁶ Meadows, 398.

¹⁷⁷ Katz, 214.

¹⁷⁸ Fisher, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Fisher, 121.

generally understood resistance, in that they include runaway students as a figure that they work to track.¹⁸⁰ Adams concluded his book on Native American boarding school experience highlighting that despite efforts to destroy their Indianness, “ironically, the very institution designed to extinguish Indian identity altogether may have in fact contributed to its very persistence in the form of twentieth-century pan-Indian consciousness,” by students forming friendships over traditional tribal associations.¹⁸¹

Although education was publicly funded and compulsory by the end of the nineteenth century, the debate over education was clearly not over. Education styles differed from community to community, especially in terms of race and class differences. Reform ideology that took hold regarding the “Indian Question,” remained strictly focused on industrial, moral training for decades to come. Attempts to bar African Americans from education continued even after their presence was finally legalized in the 1920s, and rural communities still worked to maintain control on the district level against the county and state.

Paternalistic ideology was strongest in Oregon when it came to the Native Americans, with the public and government officials alike agreeing that, “if the Indians are ‘the wards of the nation,’ the nation should guard and provide for them, and should dispose and direct their affairs and interests as may be most just, wise and right.” The implication of a “ward” is that of someone who cannot take care of themselves, such as a small child or mentally handicapped. It is apparent the more one reads primary documentation, that white Americans truly believed that Native Americans were incapable of providing, speaking for, or making decisions for themselves, despite their existence prior to European/white settler arrival.

Reservation schools were often used to sort out the most able and brightest students and remove them from their communities completely, placing them in boarding schools such as the one in Forest Grove.¹⁸² Goals were achieved in stripping away the future leaders of the Native

¹⁸⁰ Confederated Tribes of Siletz Records (Manuscript), Mss 442, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

¹⁸¹ Adams, 336.

¹⁸² Clemmer, 96.

American tribes to convert them into a “finished product, fit for ‘survival’ in a civilized world.”¹⁸³ Many educators wished to prevent children from returning to their families during breaks as, “a return to their parents meant a relapse into the habits of savage life and very often the abandonment of moral and religious practices.”¹⁸⁴ Despite the near destruction of Native American culture during this time, efforts were made during the later parts of the earlier half of the twentieth century to recognize the cultural integrity and relevance of Native American tribes; however, by the 1950s many of these tribes were considered to be assimilated and their tribal status was ripped from them as their disease of barbarianism was cured through education reform and legislation.

Despite efforts to enforce compulsory education laws, there was never uniformity during the Gilded Age. Superintendent George Irwin wrote in a letter to a Jesse A. Bolden of Chicago, IL, that although Oregon had a compulsory education law on the book in 1895, “there are so many provisos, that it is today, a standing dead letter.” He goes on to say that although he has supported the compulsory education law, he admits that at this point in time it was necessary to “have some provisions, in order to remove from it its severity,” but at this point the necessity for the provisions nearly voided the law.¹⁸⁵ An editorial in the *Independence Enterprise* of the same month supports Irwin’s view of compulsory education, shaming parents who do not send their children to school, and observing, “it is a notorious fact that in almost every community there are a number of children who do not attend the public schools.” The author argues that, “it is a crime to neglect the moral and intellectual training of children,” and concludes, “the opportunities are offered without money and without price and all self respecting parents will take advantage of them.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Clemmer, 96.

¹⁸⁴ The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, 141.

¹⁸⁵ George M. Irwin to Jesse A. Bolden, March 18, 1895, letter, box 2, Superintendent of Public Instruction 1897-1899, Department of Education, Oregon State Archive, Salem, OR.

¹⁸⁶ *Independence Enterprise*, March 21, 1895, (Independence, OR), 3.

Despite well intentioned reforms, the most vocal opposition posed few alternatives to the route of reform taken in Oregon. The implications of a reform movement stemming from outside the communities that the proposed reforms primarily impacted include a devalued understanding of the local culture. While each community dealt with varying aspects of the proposed reforms differently, they had to adjust to outside influence on a fundamental aspect of community life and identity, education. Reform coming from legislation proved nearly impossible to fight, as the initiative-referendum policy was not introduced until later, meaning without political clout and influence, an individuals or group's voice was much harder to hear.

Concerned by what they perceived as moral laxity and linking those concerns with an underlying assumption that they were rooted in racial and class differences, reformers proposed reform that placed themselves on a pedestal. Their proposed solution of standardization begs the question of to what standard everyone else should be compared. Focusing on producing a system that largely benefitted their children, middle-class reformers, directly opposed the traditional reproduction of values associated with most communities, including some of the elite. By requiring certification, they attempted to assert an incredible amount of control over the quality and the demographics of educators sent out into Oregon. The implications of standardization and certification quickly professionalized a traditionally community based occupation, and made education an exterior requirement versus a strictly internal value.

Oregonians were constantly comparing their progress to that of other states, and would make justifications for their apparent lack of progress, such as, "if we had a more compact population, we would easily support a very good school system, even with our present limited resources," from the more liberal, *Evening Capital Journal* in 1893.¹⁸⁷ Not only were comparisons drawn between Oregon and other states, but comparisons between the Gilded Age and ancient history. By the social and intellectual elite viewing themselves as a continuation of the Renaissance, there were continued connections and comparisons made between the state of society at the time and their understandings of Greek and Roman history, leading to goals of surpassing, and moving forward instead of looking back. The role of education was understood

¹⁸⁷ "Educational History of OR." *Evening Capital Journal*.

by some as what,” made those people masters of the world of science, philosophy and letters,” according to an article in the *Independence Enterprise*.¹⁸⁸ Yet there remains an incredible amount of focus on the moral nature of education, and the benefit of a “systemized and synthesized educational system,” placing America among other great countries of the time, such as England, France, and Germany.¹⁸⁹

Public education allowed for greater control and impact by the state government and reformers, and definitively placed education in the realm of public discourse. Despite this, compulsory education ensured the success of the public education model in Oregon. With many still resistant to paying the taxes necessary to fund public education, compulsory education required all parents to either send their children to the public schools or provide them with a private education, encouraging more parents to send their children to the public schools. The consequences of failing to educate American children was very high in the eyes of reformers, as one individual wrote in 1895, “If America ever allows her public schools to degenerate the pessimistic prophecy of Harriet Martineau will come true. ‘The founders of the American republic . . . laid down a political program me too lofty for their descendant to perpetuate.’”¹⁹⁰

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs faced the reform movement with a good amount of opposition and resistance. Reports from the Indian agents point to the perceived potential of the Native Americans to become civilized, but also point out the resistant nature of the tribe, especially those who remained off the reservation. Despite the “success” of the reservation schools and the boarding schools, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have maintained their identity and remain active to this day. Native American culture has proven its resilience, although the harm done including the loss of language and many traditional arts is harder to recover than the sense of community.

Bureaucratization and legislation regarding education in a way assisted the African American community to gain access to education; however racism and the subsequent segregation left black schools mostly on their own, with limited funding in comparison to the

¹⁸⁸ *Independence Enterprise*, March 14, 1895, (Independence, OR), 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Independence Enterprise*, March 14, 1895, 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Independence Enterprise*, March 14, 1895, 2.

mainstream public schools available to white families. While rural communities and Native Americans faced intense paternalism in Oregon, African Americans faced intense segregation and were generally unwelcome and ignored. These communities would come to use the legislation passed in Oregon as well as elsewhere in the U.S to gain a voice and fight for equality and access to the public services that they were required to pay taxes to support.

Rural communities were actively involved in the process which in many ways made the sort of top down reform more difficult for the communities. Most communities had defined ideas regarding their version of education as well as the ultimate purpose, which was often to perpetuate the agrarian lifestyle for future generations. It did not involve a country to city trajectory that was often an underlying goal of education reform. Through the efforts to open opportunities for students, there was often a devaluing of the regional economy and rural life. While organizations like the Oregon State Grange worked to combat this shift by encouraging agricultural sciences, the decline of the yeoman farmer ideal has had lasting impact through modern times.

While attempting to do what was best for Oregon's children reformers managed to ignore the possible unplanned consequences of their actions, both positive and negative. Few reformers were focused on providing educational rights in Oregon to the African American community, but with legislation came legal arguments for their inclusion. The destruction of community was a consequence of not only educational reform, but a dramatic change in American society among an emergent middle class that was increasingly dominant but still uncertain of their place within the world. A focus on morality above intellectual pursuit stigmatized individuals who may not have subscribed to Christian ideals and it also forced educators to adhere to the new regulations or lose their ability to teach. American society following the Civil War and leading up the Progressive era set up the bureaucratic system that would enable the continued reform efforts into the twentieth century. Race and class boundaries were intensified and highlighted as the supposed differences between communities became the basis for many reforms. A prescription for paternalistic control and homogenization was written, and the history of education placed on a heroic pedestal that tried to mask the side effects too long disregarded.

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