

NPS Form 10-900-b  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

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A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

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Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania

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B. Associated Historic Contexts

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(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Pennsylvania, 1682-1969

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C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR



H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation 1 - 6  
Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

I. Major Bibliographical References 1 - 4  
(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

***Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Pennsylvania, 1682-1969***

***Introduction***

This context statement focuses on public schools at the elementary and secondary levels, addressing National Register of Historic Places criteria of significance A, B, and C. It addresses the history of private, religious, and trade schools only to the extent that their history intersects with the history of public schools. It does not address the history of kindergarten and pre-school or higher education. The types of properties associated with this context are one-room schoolhouses; multi-room elementary schools; and multi-room secondary schools. Included within the latter two types are various unattached auxiliary structures such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, cafeterias, and vocational educational buildings, which in some schools resulted in campus-like developments.

Schools are among the most pervasive and significant institutions, on every level, in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States. Education occurs in a variety of contexts – including the home, workplace, library, and museum – but schools assume the primary responsibility for imparting formal knowledge to young people in modern society. The built environment of schools reflects the history of education and school reform – the process through which the people and governments of Pennsylvania have continually reshaped schooling to meet changing social, political, economic, and cultural needs. Although school architecture is often only loosely tied to the curricular and administrative practices of education, nonetheless the design and development of school buildings generally reflect school designers’ and developers’ visions and expectations for education and its role in the community and society. The principal goal of preparers of National Register nominations for school buildings in the area of Education should be to articulate how those resources reflect important developments in the philosophy, administration, and practice of education.

A word about terminology: In education as well as other realms of American life, the word “public” has meant different things to different groups of people in different eras. Today, public schools are tuition-free schools funded by taxpayers and open to all young people living in a given district. In the nineteenth century, the specific term for such schools was “common schools.” Before the middle of the nineteenth century the term “public schools” applied more broadly to schools open to students from more than one religious or ethnic group or sex.

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Alternately, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century “public schools” generally referred to pauper or charitable schools attended by children from poor families. The narrative below employs the term “public schools” for periods after the mid-nineteenth century, using more specific terms to describe different sorts of schooling in the earlier periods.

The narrative of this context statement is divided into four periods, during which schools in Pennsylvania addressed different sets of evolving social, economic, and cultural goals:

1) 1682-1818 – Colonial and Early National Pennsylvania

This is the era before common school systems developed in Pennsylvania. Schools were important institutions of colonization. The many diverse groups of European settlers in Pennsylvania founded educational institutions, usually tied to their churches. Germans, English, and other colonists used schools as vehicles for cultural preservation in the New World; and they sometimes came into conflict when English educators attempted to impose their school systems upon other ethnic groups. In Pennsylvania’s cities, early charitable schools aimed to mitigate the troubles of growing urban poverty. Generally, schoolhouses of this period followed the patterns of residential and sometimes religious architecture, with elite academies modeled after elegant Georgian or Federal style homes, wood frame one-room schoolhouses in agricultural regions, and log cabin schoolhouses on the frontier.

2) 1818-1867 – The Rise of the Common School System

During this period, common school systems developed first in Philadelphia and then, following the common school act of 1834, across the state. Many Pennsylvanians opposed publicly funded schools; but for their proponents the common schools represented a necessary institution of a democratic society, promising to create a literate and informed electorate. Additionally, common schools addressed major changes in the labor market, training young people in basic literacy and arithmetic necessary to participate in a rising wage labor economy in which apprenticeship was declining. By the end of this period, the state system of public education had become a mature bureaucracy. Also, a distinct hierarchy of schools had emerged. A few high schools in urban settings offered an advanced curriculum in ornate buildings, two- or four-room schools with simpler curriculums developed in working class neighborhoods or mid-sized towns, and one-room schoolhouses served the children of farmers and miners in

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less populated rural regions. Their builders employed a variety of architectural styles, ranging from elaborate Italianate and Gothic forms popular among elite architects of the period to simple vernacular construction.

3) 1867-1930 – The Long Progressive Era

The period between the end of the Civil War and the Great Depression was the era of great systematization in public education, and in American social and economic institutions in general. School curriculums expanded in the face of rapid industrialization, corporate reorganization of the economy, and the rise of the professions. Progressive reformers profoundly impacted education, inspiring schools to take a stronger role in the social lives of students and their communities through programs in public health, home economics, physical education, and Americanization for the great waves of immigrants arriving during this period. Rapid urbanization and the administrative consolidation of many rural school districts made this the most active period of school construction in American history. Following more general trends in public architecture, new schools were commonly built in American and European historical revival styles of architecture.

4) 1930-1969 – From Depression to District Reorganization

The Great Depression altered the context of school reform and school building, as the Works Projects Administration and Works Progress Administration funded the construction of many new schools. Ultimately, the Depression and World War Two halted most school building. When it picked up again in the late 1940s, Americans had adopted new ways of life that fundamentally altered the context of schools and their architecture. Automobile suburbs boomed in the postwar period, and large sprawling schools served by fleets of buses became the norm in both suburban and consolidated rural districts. In Pennsylvania's cities, schools became the focus of Civil Rights, desegregation, and urban renewal campaigns. Like other public and commercial buildings, schools were built according to art deco and modernist designs. The narrative ends in 1969, when school districts across the state were reorganized into the geography that they mainly retain today.

Each of the sections below explores themes including ethnicity and religion; school reform agendas; urban, rural, and suburban contexts of schools; the evolution of state law, policy, and

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administration; curriculum and pedagogy; and architecture. Each section surveys first Americans' and Pennsylvanians' broad expectations for education and its roles in society during the given period; then the evolution of laws, administration, and educational practice; and finally the design and development of school buildings in the era. Readers should pay particular attention to the links between Pennsylvanians' evolving visions and expectations for education, the curriculum they instituted in schools, and the buildings they erected to carry out their educational programs. Although the connections between these visions, practices, and architecture were sometimes loose, they nevertheless hold the key to understanding the significance of school buildings within the history of education.

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### ***I. Schools in Colonial and Early National Pennsylvania, 1682-1818***

Schools were key institutions of colonization and internal improvement in North America, from the elite academies of urban seaports to the log cabin schools on the frontier. In colonies such as Puritan Massachusetts, schools helped regulate colonial society according to the goals of centralized political and religious power structures. In the open, tolerant province of Pennsylvania, schools addressed – and sometimes exacerbated – the challenges of building a culturally diverse society.

In the colonial era, schooling was far less widespread than in later eras, and the young people who did go to school spent far less time there than children of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, schools played vital roles in colonial Pennsylvania. Elite academies, usually in or just outside the larger cities and towns of the colony, trained the ministers, lawyers, and merchants who became the civic, political, and economic leaders of the province. Outside Philadelphia, Chester, Easton, and other early cities, the agricultural hinterland of the Delaware, Lehigh, and Susquehanna Valleys was settled largely by Germans who hailed from myriad religious sects. The schools they built were usually tied to their churches, and they helped maintain these communities' ethnic and cultural identity through education. In the colony's interior, Scotch-Irish settlers founded schools as one of the few communal institutions that helped "civilize" the frontier and build cohesive communities in otherwise sparsely populated regions. Back in Pennsylvania's growing cities, elite social reformers founded charitable schools for the urban poor, initiating a pattern wherein school reform emanated principally in response to the economic and social problems that generally surfaced first in cities. Except in the more specialized academies, the curriculum of nearly all these schools was quite simple, focused on literacy and arithmetic – the basic requirements of the era's craft-based and agricultural economy. The architecture of schoolhouses reflected the home-based economic life of the colony as well as its civic organization around churches and meetinghouses. Thus most school *houses* in early Pennsylvania adopted the appearance of residential and religious architecture.

Education figured prominently in William Penn's vision for his province. His first Frame of Government in 1682 stated "That the Governor and Provincial Council shall erect and order all public schools."<sup>1</sup> The following year, the proprietor's *Fundamental Laws of the Province of*

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in J.P. Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania* (NY: Arno, 1969), 33. Where not noted, the details of Pennsylvania's educational history in this report derive from this book and, beginning in 1834, the reports of the state superintendent of common schools.

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*Pennsylvania* directed that “all persons having children shall cause such to be instructed in reading and writing, so that they may be able to read the Scriptures and to write by the time they attain to twelve years of age and that then they be taught some useful trade or skill.”<sup>2</sup> In 1689 Penn directed Quakers in Philadelphia to establish a “Publick School,” for which he subsequently provided charters.<sup>3</sup> Yet government played only a minor role in early education in Pennsylvania. Penn’s *Fundamental Laws* regarding education were not enforced, and provincial authorities took no formal steps to mandate school attendance.

Churches led the way in the foundation of the province’s seventeenth- and eighteenth-century schools.<sup>4</sup> In Philadelphia, the central Quaker Meeting used schools to address the challenges of a fast-growing, increasingly diverse city. The Meeting appointed a committee of Overseers of the Schools, whose primary mission was the religious education of Quaker youth, though they also aimed to teach basic literacy and morality to a limited number of non-Quaker poor. In 1689, the Meeting hired George Keith as schoolmaster and rented a simple house to accommodate both his family and the school. When Keith complained of this building’s “straightness” the following year, the Meeting rented a larger house. In 1697, the Meeting fit up the second floor of the meetinghouse on Fourth Street to accommodate the growing number of pupils. Four years later it erected a purpose-built schoolhouse on an adjacent lot. This building served its purpose for four decades, until in 1744 the overseers commissioned a new building, 60 x 35 feet and two stories high with a raised cellar. According to early twentieth century educators Louise and Matthew Walsh, “This quite pretentious building was not to be finished entirely at this time. The plan was to enclose all of it and finish the interior as the size of the school demanded.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in William Kashatus, *A Virtuous Education: Penn’s Vision for Philadelphia Schools* (Wallingford: Pendle Hill, 1997), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Both modern day Friends Select School and William Penn Charter School trace their origins to this mandate. Carol Brown, ed., *A Friends Select School History* (Philadelphia: Archway, 1989); Kashatus, *A Virtuous Enterprise: William Penn’s Charters of ye Publick School founded by Charter in ye town and County of Philadelphia in Pensylvania, 1701, 1708, 1711* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, nd).

<sup>4</sup> Howard Emrick, *The Role of the Church in the Development of Education in Pennsylvania, 1638-1834* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1959); H.W. Tyson, *Lutheran Education in Pennsylvania, 1638-1834* (MA thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1923); Charles Maurer, *Early Lutheran Education in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1932); Frederick Livingood, *Eighteenth Century Reformed Church Schools* (Norristown: Pennsylvania German Society, 1930); Jean Cavell, *Religious Education among People of Germanic Origin in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Lancaster: Pennsylvania German Society, 1929).

<sup>5</sup> Louise and Matthew Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania* (Indiana, PA: Grosse, 1930), 70. See also, Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 49; Thomas Woody, *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania* (NY: Teachers College, 1920), 65; Kashatus, *A Virtuous Education*.

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Over the course of the eighteenth century the Meeting established a multi-tiered system of Quaker schools in and around Philadelphia. The central school was attended almost exclusively by Quaker children, who received a classical education including Latin as well as English reading, writing, and mathematics. A girls' school taught basic literacy and proper etiquette. Several neighborhood primary schools and a school for free blacks offered a basic curriculum of reading and writing. In 1771, the Meeting's Committee on Education of the Negroes successfully lobbied for a schoolhouse to be built adjacent to the city's almshouses – a sign of the status of African Americans in the city. Eleven years later, Quaker schoolmaster Anthony Benezet took charge of the Negro School and addressed this stigma by bringing its classes into his own house. According to Quaker historian William Kashatus, “Regardless of the school, the curriculum was ‘guarded’ in that all students were required to read Quaker literature and attend a weekly Meeting for Worship.”<sup>6</sup> In 1800, the Quakers founded another institution at the top of this system, the boarding school at Westtown in Chester County, modeled after the Society of Friends' Ackworth School in England.

While British Quakers from the English Midlands formed the largest group of European migrants to Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century, by the second quarter of the eighteenth century Germans fleeing war and religious intolerance had become the province's main immigrant group. Representing myriad Protestant sects – Reformed, Lutheran, Moravian, Mennonite, Amish, Schwenkfelder, Dunker, Seventh-Day Baptist, Economite, and Separatist - the Germans represented a diverse society in themselves. Lutherans and Reformed congregations typically migrated in groups, accompanied by a minister with some training or experience as a schoolmaster. Schools in the New World would be critical for Germans' cultural preservation, according to Louise and Matthew Walsh, “because of the constantly increasing number of these sects and the hair-splitting distinctions in interpretation of the Scriptures that formed the bases of new beliefs. This education was distinctly religious, and was usually carried on by the pastor or religious leader, and was conducted in the pastor's home or in the church.”<sup>7</sup>

The vast majority of Germans settled in the hills beyond Philadelphia, pushing back the frontier and clearing Penn's woods to create a rich farming hinterland. Mennonites erected a one-story log meetinghouse that doubled as a school as early as 1706; and for decades they continued to

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<sup>6</sup> Kashatus, *A Virtuous Education*, 4. See also, Walsh and Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 70-73.

<sup>7</sup> Walsh and Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 55.

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build these multi-purpose buildings throughout Lehigh and adjoining counties. Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg, the father of the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania, arrived in 1742 and set about offering Sunday services in a Philadelphia carpenter shop, a barn in Providence, and a small church of rough logs erected in New Hanover. During the week, he staffed the schools of these three communities. "I have to teach from necessity," he wrote in 1743, "One week I teach school in Philadelphia, the next in Providence, and the third in New Hanover."<sup>8</sup> Within a year, Providence boasted a wooden schoolhouse and the Lutherans in New Hanover constructed a schoolhouse with apartments for the schoolmaster next to the church. In 1746, the Moravians in the town of Bethlehem completed a two-story schoolhouse, a more urban building than the one-story log structures characteristic of eighteenth-century settlements of German farmers in eastern and south-central Pennsylvania.

Some historians have cast the Scotch-Irish immigrants who settled on the "wildest" edge of the North American frontier as the least civilized of colonial settlers.<sup>9</sup> But their school systems were among the most advanced – or at least the most "public." In Pennsylvania they frequently followed the eighteenth century Scottish laws stipulating that schooling for all children should be funded through a communitywide tax. The Presbyterian Church supplied many of their minister-schoolteachers and organized the construction of log or frame schoolhouses next to their churches. (Other frontier schoolmasters occupied cabins that had been abandoned by settlers moving further west.) The Congregationalists of Connecticut who settled in the Wyoming Valley in the 1750s brought a similarly "public" system of free schools. By the 1770s townships in northeastern Pennsylvania had established districts with schools supported by a general fund or property tax and offering a common education for all classes.

Fueled by the produce of its rich agricultural regions, Pennsylvania became the "breadbasket" of the Atlantic world in the mid-eighteenth century, home to a booming and increasingly diverse economy. Civic leaders, most prominently Benjamin Franklin, responded by founding institutions such as the American Philosophical Society, the center of American Enlightenment science, and the College, Academy, and Charitable Schools of Philadelphia. The latter institution addressed both the expanding opportunities for a highly educated professional class of merchants, lawyers, and teachers as well as the educational needs of a growing population of urban poor. Though headed by Anglican Reverend William Smith and housed in an abandoned

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 131-132.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (NY: Oxford UP, 1996).

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church school, the College and Academy (which later became the University of Pennsylvania) was a secular institution. In his "Idea of the English School Sketch'd out for the Consideration of the Trustees of the Philadelphia Academy," Franklin expressed his belief that schools should offer a vernacular (as opposed to religious) education, with courses including grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking, rhetoric, history, natural and mechanical history. "The merchant may thereby be enabled better to understand many commodities in trade," he wrote, "the handicraftsman to improve his business by new instruments, mixtures and materials; and frequently hints are given of new manufactures, or new methods of improving land, that may be set on foot greatly to the advantage of a country."<sup>10</sup> The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians soon founded their own academies, staffed by ministers educated in Northern Ireland. Though their curriculum included "Moral Philosophy," "Evidences of Christianity," and "Natural Theology," they likewise offered a largely secular curriculum of advanced classical education.<sup>11</sup>

But academies were the exception among eighteenth-century schools, and the majority of children did not attend formal schools of any kind. Most were educated at home, on the farm, or in the workshop, attaining limited if any literacy. Most schools were small, sometimes starting out by teaching the children of a single family. The term typically lasted two-to-three months per year. Teachers were almost always men, usually young, inexperienced, and sometimes unable to find other employment – though most church schools had better-educated masters. Many teachers were itinerant, and their salaries were unpredictable since they were based on enrollment. In most communities, parents or guardians paid the schoolmaster directly, usually just enough to cover food, rent for the house where he lived and taught, and fuel for the stove.

The curriculum of most eighteenth-century schools consisted primarily of reading, though few books were available. Teachers taught students individually, not as a group. Discipline could be stern, according to late-nineteenth century Pennsylvania School Superintendent J.P.

Wickersham:

Instead of a rod on the back, a ruler on the hand was sometimes used; and in certain schools, for missed lessons, pupils were compelled to sit on a dunce block and wear a fool's cap or a pair of leathern spectacles. Petty punishments were common, such as snapping the forehead, twisting the nose, boxing or pulling the ears; and, sometimes, prolonged tortures were resorted to, like the following:

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<sup>10</sup> Reprinted in Thomas Woody, ed., *Educational Views of Benjamin Franklin* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1931), 125.

<sup>11</sup> Emrick, *The Role of the Church in the Development of Education in Pennsylvania*, 319-320; James Mulhern, *A History of Secondary Education in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1933).

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holding a book in the open hand with the arm fully outstretched, bending the body so as to touch a nail in the floor with a finger, standing on one foot, sitting astride a sharp-edged trestle, etc. Offending pupils were frequently frightened by strong epithets, such as 'dunce,' 'blockhead,' 'booby,' 'rascal,' etc.<sup>12</sup>

As the name suggests, the architecture of most eighteenth-century schoolhouses was for the most part a domestic architecture, paralleling the teacher's parental role as disciplinarian. This remained the case even when schools moved out of the teacher's home and into purpose-built structures. Some church schools resembled houses of worship, such as the Moravian seminary at Nazareth Hall in Bethlehem, with its central spire. The few boarding schools of the era, such as Westtown, were modeled after large country estates with auxiliary farm buildings, since they were effectively self-sufficient communities unto themselves. Elite urban schools, such as the Friends School of Philadelphia, took the form of large townhouses with a center hall and rooms on either side for different classes of pupils.

Like most vernacular architecture of the era, the plan, form, and building materials of schools varied by region. In Franklin and other farming counties, "The houses, or cabins, used for school purposes, were of the simplest structure, being built of logs, or poles, and the spaces between them filled with chips of wood, and plastered with mortar made of clay. The boards of the roof were generally secured by heavy poles extending from one end to the other. The chimney was built of sticks of wood plastered," and the furniture "consisted of benches, made of logs and split in two and hewn down to a proper thickness, supported by four legs." In rural Philadelphia and Chester Counties, stone schools were often built on an octagonal plan "The desks were placed around against the walls, and the pupils occupying them sat facing the windows. Benches, without backs, for the smaller scholars, occupied the middle of the room.... A desk for the teacher, a huge stove in the middle of the room, a bucket, and what was called the 'Pass,' a small paddle, having the words 'in' and 'out' written on its opposite sides, constituted the furniture of the room." In Clearfield and similar frontier districts, "The pioneer schoolhouse was built of logs, sixteen by twenty feet, seven feet in the ceiling, daubed with mud inside and out, a mud and stick chimney in the north end, and in the west, a log was left out, and the opening covered with oiled paper, to admit light; holes were bored in the logs and pins driven in, on which to nail a long board for a writing table, and slabs with legs answered for seats."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 208.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, 187-188.

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Schools grew as communities grew, and some that started out as church schools became “neighborhood schools” unaffiliated with any religious body. Some private community schools were erected by subscription, sometimes by lottery. By Wickersham’s estimate, by the 1830s some 4,000 schoolhouses had been built in Pennsylvania by way of volunteer contributions.<sup>14</sup> In most places, school buildings continued to double as churches while also accommodating town meetings, political gatherings, and local elections. Wickersham viewed this as a culturally unifying experience:

...as the people moved west into the Cumberland Valley, along the Susquehanna and Juniata and over the Alleghenies (sic.), intermingling socially and in business, out of common toils, common privations, common dangers and common interests, there necessarily came to be common schools. The churches in the early days were foremost in the work of education everywhere and always, but distinctive church schools were not numerous in the middle or northern counties, and very few of them were ever established in western Pennsylvania. Ministers founded schools in these sections of the State and taught them, but they rarely formed part of the church organization.... No movement in our whole history is of more significance than the process by which the neighborhood schools came to supply the educational needs of different communities, and frequently to displace other schools established on a narrower foundation, marking as it does the formation of a common bond of union and moulding of the population into a common nationality.<sup>15</sup>

However, this view belies the fierce inter-cultural struggle occasioned by the charity school movement that arose in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In 1753, Dr. William Smith, Provost of the Academy and College of Philadelphia, returned to his native London to raise money for the school and become ordained in the Church of England. There he addressed the recently formed Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge among the Germans in America, whose members in Pennsylvania included Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton, Chief Justice William

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>16</sup> For overviews of this movement, see John MacConnell, *Charity Education in Colonial Pennsylvania* (D.Ed. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1968); Samuel Weber, *The Charity School Movement in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Campbell, 1905).

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Allen, Ben Franklin, frontier negotiator Conrad Weiser, and Smith himself. “Incredible numbers of poor Protestants have flocked from divers parts of Germany and Switzerland to our Colonies, particularly to Pennsylvania,” he told the home office of the Society. “Their melancholy situation, through want of instructors, and their utter inability to maintain them, with the distressing prospect of approaching darkness and idolatry among them” moved Smith to support the Society’s plan to send English instructors to educating Germans to incorporate them as English citizens, conform to English manners, and in the words of late nineteenth-century University of Pennsylvania education professor Martin Brumbaugh, “To hold them steadfastly to the cause of England in the event of war with France.”<sup>17</sup>

While most German settlers in Pennsylvania ignored the efforts of this charitable society, printer Christoph Sauer of Germantown lashed out against its plans to take away his fellow Germans’ language, national identity, and religion. Through his newspaper, he broadcast the accusation that Smith and his Society were attempting to rob Germans of property and make them servants of the English. Trustees of the Society purchased a German printing house and in Franklin’s shop published 2,300 copies of a paper in opposition to Saur’s tracts.<sup>18</sup> They appointed local trustees for Lancaster, New Providence and Skippack, Reading, Easton, and New Hanover; and opened twelve schools for boys. The school at Lancaster, opened in 1755, taught English, German, Latin, and Greek. The Germans were “at no loss for English schoolmasters,” remarked the English Rev. Alexander Murray, a member of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, “yet they choose to send their children rather to German schools, which they have everywhere in great plenty.” Murray even admitted the Germans “seem to be abundantly well provided in [their own] teachers of one denomination or another.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Saur’s ongoing campaign made many Germans hostile to the schools of the Society, and the French and Indian War soon forced three to shut down. As the Society’s leaders split on the question of Independence – some with Franklin on the Continental side, some with Justice Allen remaining loyalists – the entire system was abandoned.

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<sup>17</sup> M.G. Brumbaugh, *An Educational Struggle in Colonial Pennsylvania* (1898), 6-7. See also, Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 65-74.

<sup>18</sup> William Smith, *A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of the Charitable Scheme Carrying on by a Society of Noblemen and Gentlemen in London, for the Relief and Instruction of poor Germans, and their Descendents, Settled in Pennsylvania, and the adjacent British Colonies in North-America* (Philadelphia: Franklin & Hall, 1755).

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Levi Oscar Kuhns, *German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: Holt, 1901), 145.

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Independence changed everything about American education in theory, but in practice it changed very little. In the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the Continental Congress mandated schooling as a means of fostering a united national culture and society out of thirteen colonies whose populations each had very different ethnic and religious compositions. The Pennsylvania state constitutions of 1776 and 1790 provided for pauper education, stipulating, “The Legislature shall, as soon as conveniently may be, provide for the establishment of schools throughout the State, in such a manner that the poor may be taught gratis.”<sup>20</sup> From its start, the new state government thus attempted to regulate the poor through schools, which would in theory instill habits of industry and thrift among pauper children who would become self-sustaining adults, no longer in need of charitable aid from the state. The Legislature passed Pauper Education Acts in 1802, 1804, and 1809, yet they had little impact since most families were reluctant to declare themselves as paupers and thereby subject themselves to the authority of local overseers of the poor. Private subscription schools still abounded, and churches like the Presbyterians continued to establish log cabin schools on the frontier.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1776 and 1818, the Commonwealth did not erect a single school building. Instead, it made use of parochial and private schools, paying the tuition of a limited number of poor children in attendance. The legislature also chartered 51 academies across the state between 1784 and 1818. In the early national period, Americans viewed institutions such as schools and libraries as “internal improvements” (this term became synonymous with roads and canals by the 1820s). Like other private ventures of public significance chartered in the early republic, the legislature (and often individual legislators) had a stake in their success. Nearly all of these academies were granted between \$1,000 and \$5,000, and some received 500 to 5,000 acres of public land – generally with the stipulation that the schools instruct between 4 and 10 poor children for free. This was the story of Germantown Academy (1784), Pittsburgh Academy (1787), Reading Academy (1788), the Academy and Free School of Bucks County in Newtown (1794), Union Academy in Easton (1794), Chambersburg Academy (1797), York Academy (1799), Wilkes-Barre Academy (1807), Harrisburg Academy (1809), Gettysburg Academy (1810), Erie Academy (1811), Allentown Academy (1814), and Lebanon Academy (1816).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Constitution of 1790, quoted in Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 259.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, John Hobson, *Prospectus of a Plan of Instruction for the Young of Both Sexes, Including a Course of Liberal Education for Each, Dedicated to the Parents of those Children whose Tuition the Author has Superintended during his Residence in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Hogan, 1799); “Cannonsburg’s Log Cabin Preservation Project,” adapted from an article by James Herron, Jr., in *Jefferson College Times* (December 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Walsh and Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 90-91, table 2.

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Virtually all urban centers in the state developed academies, which drew boarding students from surrounding communities. Their student bodies consisted largely of the sons of merchants, lawyers and judges, and other affluent citizens seeking a classical education in Latin, English, and mathematics that prepared them for careers much like those of their fathers.

For the lower rungs of Pennsylvania society, the legislature also chartered such institutions as the German Lutheran and Reformed Charity Schools in Philadelphia (1789). An increasing number of charity schools, mostly in Philadelphia, addressed the dangers of rising urban poverty. Teaching the rudiments of literacy and arithmetic, these schools targeted the children of new immigrants and low-paid workers, attempting to fill an educational vacuum among the working classes as wage labor increasingly replaced the apprenticeships and indentures that previously trained – and fed, clothed, and often housed – young men and women in their teenage years. In the 1790s, Quakers expanded their century-old efforts to educate the poor through such promotional organizations as the Sunday School Society of Philadelphia and Anne Parrish’s Society for the Free Instruction of Female Children.

The state-run school systems that dominate American education today ultimately grew out of the efforts of these social reformers. From Buffalo to Baltimore, local philanthropic societies organized the first large-scale schools open to the public at the dawn of the nineteenth century. Philadelphia Quakers, led by Thomas Scattergood, were at the forefront of this movement, founding the Society for the Establishment and Support of Charity Schools in 1801 and the Association of Friends for the Instruction of Poor Children (also known as the Adelphi Society) in 1808. This last institution started separate schools for boys and girls and instructed some 3,000 children over the next decade, and its Adelphi School would become the model for the city’s early common school system. Like contemporary schools in New York and Boston, it employed the “monitorial” (or Lancasterian) system of British Quaker Joseph Lancaster, wherein a master teacher trained older pupils, the monitors, who in turn taught the other students. This allowed for comparative evaluation of the students and educational mobility for those who made most progress. It also proved a cost-efficient way to provide the non-Quaker poor with basic literacy and moral teachings based on the scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *A Sketch of the origin and progress of the Adelphi School in the Northern Liberties* (Philadelphia: Meyer and Jones, 1810); Kashatus, *A Virtuous Education*.

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But the challenges of urban poverty were more than philanthropic societies could address on their own. In a letter to fellow Quaker Governor George Wolf, Adelphi School manager Roberts Vaux called Philadelphia a “sore on the body politic, causing the problems of illiteracy, crime, poverty and rioting.”<sup>24</sup> Indigent children, Vaux wrote elsewhere, were allowed to “wander about the streets and wharves, becoming adepts in the arts of begging, skillful in petty thefts and familiar with obscene and profane language.”<sup>25</sup> In 1817, in the midst of a painfully cold winter that left many poor families without enough fuel and food to survive, he and fellow Quakers founded the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Economy. As a complement to its temperance, anti-prostitution, and prison reform campaigns, the Society advocated free education for all Philadelphians as a means to combat poverty and vice. A well managed system of public schools should, they believed, instill in its pupils both healthy habits of personal discipline and the basic skills of literacy and arithmetic necessary for employment in respectable occupations. Vaux’s Committee on Public Schools felt “reluctantly and sorrowfully compelled to declare, that from its first establishment to the present time,” the state system of pauper schools had “been not only injurious to the character of the rising generation, but a benevolent fraud upon the public bounty.”<sup>26</sup> In 1818, therefore, Vaux and his colleagues pushed through a state act to create the school district of Philadelphia, mandating the erection of schoolhouses, hiring of teachers, and the formation of a Board of Controllers. This initiated the rise of the common school system in Pennsylvania.

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<sup>24</sup> Roberts Vaux to Governor George Wolf (October 9, 1832), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Wolf Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Roberts Vaux, *Fifth Annual Report of the Controllers of the First School District of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Board of Controllers, 1823), 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Report of the Committee on Public Schools to the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Public Economy* (Philadelphia: Merritt, 1817), 5.

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Union Schoolhouse, Whitemarsh, Montgomery County  
1773

*When he died in 1770, Samuel Morris, a justice of the peace and overseer of nearby Plymouth Friends School, left money to erect a building and pay a teacher's salary for this, one of the first free schools in Pennsylvania open to students of all social classes and religions. His will stipulated that everyone living within a 1.5 mile radius of his estate, Hope Lodge, could attend the school free of charge. Its architecture follows prevailing trends in late eighteenth century Quaker meetinghouses, with a gabled roof, modest ornamentation, a small arched window over a simple porch at the school's entrance. In 1792, local residents incorporated it as the Union School and supported its continued operations through public subscription. In the early nineteenth century, an addition on the north side of the building (at the right in this photograph) made room for the teacher's living quarters. The Union School operated until 1936. A trust fund created from Morris's estate in 1773 still supports educational programs in Whitemarsh and adjacent Whitpain and Upper Dublin Townships.*

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John McMillan's Log Schoolhouse, Washington County  
c.1780, rebuilt c.1787 (moved to the campus of Jefferson College in Canonsburg in 1895)

*One of the oldest school buildings west of the Allegheny Mountains, this log cabin was typical of frontier schoolhouses, which were basically indistinguishable from (and sometimes doubled as) frontier homes or churches. Upon his graduation from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1772, newly ordained Presbyterian minister John McMillan set out to serve families and seek candidates for the ministry in this frontier region. Beginning c.1780, he began this log cabin "academy," although he struggled to attract a steady supply of pupils when the nearby Pittsburgh and Washington Academies were chartered in 1787 and the cabin burned down about the same time. However, both of these new academies folded quickly, and McMillan rebuilt the building that survives today. When the Canonsburg Academy opened in 1791, he sent his students there; and he and his descendants used the log cabin as a workshop and farm building. This pattern of inconsistent use, periodic abandonment, and reuse is characteristic of early log cabin schoolhouses on the frontier. Jefferson College, which grew out of the Canonsburg Academy, considered the cabin its predecessor school, and in 1895 the college moved the building to its campus.*

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Federal School, Haverford, Delaware County  
1797

*Built on land donated by Philadelphia merchant Alexander Symington, this fieldstone schoolhouse closely resembles the domestic architecture of late eighteenth century rural southeastern Pennsylvania. It operated as a one-room elementary school until 1872.*

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Loller Academy, Hatboro,  
Montgomery County  
1811

*This elegant Federal style school was erected in 1811 with funds provided by the estate of Robert Loller, a former member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Its substantial size and prominent clock tower, which contains a clock made by noted Philadelphia engineer and clockmaker Isaiah Lukens, were common architectural features among elite academies. Following a common pattern discussed in the following section, it served as a private academy until 1848, when it became a mixed public-and-private school with local pupils attending for free while students from outside of Hatboro paid tuition. In 1873, it was converted to a fully public school within the district of Hatboro. Like many other academies and community schools, it hosted lectures and debates attended by residents of surrounding townships in Montgomery and adjacent Bucks County. It remained a public school until 1960, though it has retained its function as a lecture hall and meeting place for civic organizations.*

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Sodom Schoolhouse, West Chillisquaque Township, Northumberland County  
c.1815

*One of several octagonal schoolhouses in Pennsylvania, the Sodom Schoolhouse is named for the village in which it stands. Like other Scotch-Irish communities in the Commonwealth, this upper Susquehanna Valley hamlet invested in a neighborhood school well before the state's Common School Act of 1834. Local tavern proprietor and public official Lot Carson donated most of the building materials to erect the limestone school. It served students within a three mile radius, and attendance in the nineteenth century averaged between 40 and 60 pupils, sometimes reportedly serving as many as 100 students. Until 1858, it accommodated Methodist services on Sunday, and local residents later used it for political party caucuses and elections, following a common pattern of early schoolhouses as multi-use buildings. It remained a school until 1915; in 1961 it was restored and acquired by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.*

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## ***II. The Rise of the Common School System, 1818-1867***

The Pennsylvania legislature passed its landmark Free School Act in 1834, yet the common school system did not grow up overnight. This era witnessed a gradual development of state-funded common schools, starting with the first school district in Philadelphia in 1818 and building on the preexisting systems of academies, religious and subscription schools. Under the 1834 law, free schools were neither obligatory nor well received by many taxpayers and communities. Ultimately, however, this and other states' laws institutionalized the increasingly popular notion that public schools were vital for the welfare of American society. And like other government programs that formed in the nineteenth and twentieth century, it also institutionalized an enduring tension between state and local control over education.

As Pennsylvanians confronted the effects of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration in the mid-nineteenth century, they looked to a system of common (i.e., state-sponsored free) schools as vital for the social and economic life of the state. The flowering of American education *preceded* – and indeed served as a prerequisite for – the boom in industrial employment in the North, enabling communities from metropolitan Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to the mining and manufacturing towns across the state to cope with the decline of apprenticeship and the rise of wage labor.<sup>1</sup> Although many historians have decried the monotony and “dumbed-down” nature of factory work compared to earlier craft labor, much manufacturing work actually required basic literacy and arithmetic. In the absence of apprenticeships for all children, common schools filled this need, offering a simple curriculum focused on the “three R’s.” Mechanics institutes and trade schools arose to train young and aspiring workers in specialized skills such as drafting and more advanced mathematics, and some common schools also developed technical curricula. This gradual separation of work and education from the home led school architecture gradually away from the domestic forms that previously predominated, though in rural areas where farming long persisted as a family business schoolhouse buildings generally retained their house-like forms.

For social reformers, schools were equally important for keeping young people off the streets of growing towns and cities, and for “Americanizing” the Irish and German immigrants arriving during this period. Schools were key institutions in the well-regulated society envisioned and built by nineteenth century Americans, especially in the older states of New England and the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987), 13.

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Middle Atlantic regions.<sup>2</sup> During this same period when the legislature passed its early common school laws, state senators and assemblymen were busy chartering and funding penitentiaries and asylums to regulate the poor, infrastructure such as canals and later railroads and telegraphs, and water and gas works to support the growth and safety of towns and cities. Just as canals and railroads helped Pennsylvanians compete for national trade and transition to an industrial economy, the schools helped mediate the great transition from apprenticeship to wage labor. The common schools promised to help make the Commonwealth's children – including many immigrants and children of immigrants – into productive citizens able to support themselves, contribute to the economy, and participate in the social and political life of a state and a nation just two or three generations old.

Like local and state leaders in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, Pennsylvanians founded myriad schools in the early nineteenth century. They followed a variety of organizational models, from paternalistic charitable institutions controlled by elite, usually urban reformers to more localized and democratic efforts characteristic of small towns and rural areas. But by the time of the Civil War the ascendant state bureaucracy managed to establish itself as a mature, dominant, pervasive force in education across the state. The meaning of “public” in “public schooling” coalesced around that system and its free, open schools funded by taxpayers, administered by the state but largely controlled by local authorities.

As in the colonial and early national eras, Pennsylvania developed a hierarchy of schools in this era – despite the statewide system that ultimately pervaded all communities in the Commonwealth. In their curriculum, the common schools generally reflected local labor markets and class divisions, as cities and large towns with diversified economies offered a wider spectrum of graded courses and were the first places to start high schools. In rural agricultural and mining communities, and in the working class neighborhoods of cities, children generally had access to just an elementary school education, most often in one- or two-room buildings where pupils of different ages studied together. This hierarchy was reflected in the architecture of schoolhouses, which ranged from elaborate high schools to working class schools resembling industrial buildings (where their students would presumably go to work) and small one-room schoolhouses.

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the legal and administrative history of this well-regulated society, see William Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996).

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Statewide public education for the masses flowered in the Northeast in the 1830s and 40s. Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Connecticut developed systems of “common schools” to mediate the growth of industrial towns and cities. For Barnard, factories contained the seeds of society’s undoing – moral corruption and political unrest. The mills and boardinghouses of towns such as Lowell, Massachusetts, or the myriad mining and factory towns of Pennsylvania attracted farmers’ daughters from the countryside and immigrants from Europe, creating new patterns of work and residence. Barnard and Mann cast education for the whole population as the great problem of the day, the key institutional strategy to reorganize New England’s working classes as industrialization remade the economy. The factory system of low-skilled labor did not give young people the valuable craft skills and knowledge that apprenticeships once did; and in their view public education should step into this vacuum. At the state level, Pennsylvanians largely followed New Englanders in common school reform, and the key figures in pushing statewide school laws through the Pennsylvania legislature – Samuel Breck and Thaddeus Stevens – were both born in New England. However, at the local level, public schooling developed out of preexisting efforts to found academies and charitable schools that, with the exception of migrant communities from New England in northeastern Pennsylvania, were generally home-grown.

The fight for free schools echoed the clash between English and German colonists in the previous century. Many Pennsylvanians resisted paying taxes to send their children to state-controlled schools, especially in communities that had already established their own educational institutions. Preexisting academies, neighborhood subscription schools, and religious schools had to decide whether they would join the new public system or remain separate; and for a time the legislature continued to fund many private schools. By the 1860s, however, the state public school bureaucracy was firmly established, with a modicum of curricular and even architectural standards.

As in the colonial era, the urban problems that inspired social reformers to found free schools struck first in Philadelphia. The state’s First School District, led by Roberts Vaux and his fellow Controllers, was not “public” in the contemporary sense of a school system for all children. Instead it operated more as a charitable organization, with a volunteer board of overseers and a student body of poor children. Joseph Lancaster himself, who arrived from England in 1818, served as the first principal of the Model School erected by the Controllers in one of the city’s early mill districts. In this and other early schools in the district averaged about 350 students per paid teacher, making full use of the Lancasterian system of monitors instructing younger pupils

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individually or in small groups. By 1820, Vaux reported a total enrollment above 5,000, though attendance was by no means regular.<sup>3</sup>

With its simple brick façade, gabled roof, and small belfry at one end, the three-story Model School resembled nearby mills. The Catherine Street School, built by the Controllers in a more prosperous section of the city two years later, had a façade of brick panels, marble framing the main entrance, a dentilled cornice with parapet, and a large cupola topped by a weathervane, mixing the elite architectural forms of classical revival townhouses and public buildings. In 1827, they purchased the Washington Octagon School, a one-room fieldstone building erected thirteen years earlier by private subscription in the rural northeastern section of Philadelphia County. This architectural distinction between public schools for the urban working class, the middle class, and rural communities initiated a pattern that would continue in Philadelphia and across the state for the rest of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Although no other state-chartered school districts were created before 1834, other cities also founded charitable free schools. In 1822, civic leaders in Lancaster instituted the Lancasterian system, and according to J.P. Wickersham “teachers came from a distance to acquaint themselves with its methods of instruction.”<sup>5</sup> Around 1829, an English teacher from Philadelphia started a Lancasterian school at New Castle; in 1830 town leaders in Milton erected a schoolhouse for the same purpose; and a similar school opened in Columbia. In 1831, social reformers in Pittsburgh founded the African Education Society to serve that city’s growing African American population. And communities across the state continued to organize academies and neighborhood or subscription schools.

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<sup>3</sup> *First Annual Report of the Controllors of the Public Schools of the First School District of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Board of Control, 1819); *A Digest of the Acts of Assembly Relative to the First School District of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Pierson, 1843); Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 284-287; Joseph McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania, 1801-1835, and its Debt to Roberts Vaux* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 193-195; Kashatus, *A Virtuous Education*.

<sup>4</sup> This theme is explored in George E. Thomas, “From Our House to the Big House,” *Journal of Planning History* vol.5, no.2 (May 2006). See also, Domenic Vitiello, “Re-Forming Schools and Cities: Placing Education on the Landscape of Planning History,” *Journal of Planning History* vol.5, no.2 (May 2006); Franklin Edmunds, *A Chronological List of the Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia* (1934).

<sup>5</sup> Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 469. See also, William Riddle, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of School History in Lancaster, Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, 1905).

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As Pennsylvania experienced rapid industrialization with the development of coal mines and steam power in the 1820s, skilled craftsmen as well as leaders of the mercantile and manufacturing classes founded mechanics institutes to keep abreast of technological change and educate mechanics in basic science and technical drawing. The nation's leading mechanics institute was the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia. Its founders sought to adapt education "to the pursuit of that class of... citizens engaged in the prosecution of Manufactures and the Mechanic and useful Arts, by means of Popular Lectures on the Sciences... providing a Museum of Machines, Models, Minerals and Natural History, the formation of a Library of Reference and circulation."<sup>6</sup> The Institute's Committee on Instruction organized lecture series on chemistry, mechanics, and other branches of applied science. It offered night classes in technical drawing to apprentices and journeymen, and it spawned a school for women in the textile and garment trades that would become the Pennsylvania School of Design for Women (today Moore College of Art).<sup>7</sup> Other early vocational schools included the Manual Labor Academy of Germantown (1829) and the Agricultural School founded at Bolton Farm near Bristol, Bucks County (1830). Most of the students at these schools hailed from the middling classes of mechanics and yeoman farmers who could pay their entrance fees and could find their children jobs upon graduation.

The division between vocational and academic training was not so clear in the nineteenth century. When the state legislature moved to institute a system of common schools in the 1830s, a joint committee of the House and Senate headed by Senator Samuel Breck recommended that at least country schools, in communities where most young people would grow up to work as farmers, should mix the two sorts of education:

...by having small lots of land attached to a schoolhouse that shall be arranged for a work-shop and farming. With these, a teacher can be maintained by the labor of the boys, who may be made to work one hour and a half a day only, for that purpose. This will be the means of instructing and employing them, and laying the foundation of future habits of industry.<sup>8</sup>

However, the legislature's principal motives for a statewide system of common schools lay beyond vocational preparation – in the "moral and political safety of the people." Samuel Breck, a former congressman and "father" of the public school system in Pennsylvania, sought election

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<sup>6</sup> Memorial to the State Legislature (February 26, 1824), Franklin Institute, Minutes of the Board of Managers (1823-1831), Franklin Institute Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Nina de Angeli Walls, *Art, Industry, and Women's Education in Philadelphia* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> *Report of the Joint Committee of the two Houses of the Pennsylvania Legislature* (1834).

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to the state senate in 1833 for the express purpose of creating such a system. “In a republican government,” he proclaimed, “no voter should be without the rudiments of learning; for aside from political consideration, education purifies the morals, and lessens crime.... It is better to avert crime, by giving instruction to our youth, than punish them when men, as ignorant convicts.”<sup>9</sup> The early-to-mid-nineteenth century was not only a great era of school-building, but also an age of unprecedented prison construction, temperance movements, and anti-vice campaigns, mostly aimed at the growing classes of new immigrants and urban poor. Education was probably the most constructive of these efforts.

From the start, the state system of common schooling was characterized by a large measure of local control over decisions about administration, schoolhouse construction, and curriculum. Each county in the state would constitute a school division, and each ward, township, or borough within the county would form its own school district. Each district would elect its own school board. Section 8 of the 1834 Act to Establish a General System of Education by Common Schools stipulated, “It shall be the duty of the several boards of directors, to determine the number of schools to be opened in their respective districts; to cause suitable buildings to be erected, purchased or hired, for schools.” Section 9 gave local boards the authority to determine the mix of academic and vocational education in their communities:

Whereas, manual labour may be advantageously connected with intellectual and moral instruction, in some or all of the schools, it shall be the duty of the school directors to decide whether such connection in their respective districts shall take place or not; and if decided affirmatively, they shall have power to purchase materials and employ artizans for the instruction of the pupils in the useful branches of the mechanic arts, and where practicable, in agricultural pursuits.<sup>10</sup>

The responsibility – and even the option – to fund public schools was likewise devolved to the local level. “It is not to be expected that the public treasury is to bear the whole burden of the teachers’ salaries,” declared Samuel Breck.<sup>11</sup> The act required local districts to raise at least twice the amount they received from the state. The law passed in April 1834 and set local elections for school directors for the fall. These directors were to join with the county commissioners to vote on whether or not to levy a county tax for public schools, and if so, of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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what amount. Districts voting against a county tax would receive no part of the state funding for education.

Even with the promise of appropriations from the legislature, free schools for all children did not prove a popular prospect. Out of 987 districts in the state, 485 voted against a county tax or took no action on the question. Local tax collection ranged from \$280 in sparsely populated Union County to \$6,500 in urban Allegheny County, while county commissioners in many districts elected to appropriate the “lowest amount that’ll entitle to State appropriations.”<sup>12</sup> The new law found its strongest support in the northern counties, where settlers from New England and New York were accustomed to common schools. West of the Alleghenies most districts favored the law, as well. But in southeastern and south central Pennsylvania it met with staunch opposition.

These geographical differences paralleled ethnic, religious, and class divisions. The Scots-Irish of western Pennsylvania largely supported the law, as did the Methodists who had founded colleges but not primary schools. Quaker, Lutheran, Reformed, and Mennonite communities in the south and southeast voted against taxes for free schools, aiming to protect the interests of their preexisting schools and avoid paying for new public schools as well. Many elite Pennsylvanians of the Episcopalian, Quaker, and other faiths, whose children already attended academies, likewise saw little reason to tax themselves for services they did not plan to use. Germans, still concerned about cultural preservation, labeled common schools “Zwing Schulen” – forced schools, not free schools.<sup>13</sup> In their churches, newspapers, petitions, and at the polls, these communities rallied against the 1834 act, urging their legislators to go back to Harrisburg and overturn it. The *County Republican* in heavily German Lebanon editorialized, “Free schools are the hot beds wherein idle drones too lazy for honest labor are reared and maintained.... and the school tax is a thinly disguised tribute which the honest, hard-working farmer and mechanic must pay out of his hard earnings to pauper, idle, and lazy schoolmasters.”<sup>14</sup>

So great was the opposition to common schools that the State Senate did pass an act in 1835 to repeal the 1834 law. But in the House, Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Adams County, a

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<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and Superintendent of Common Schools, on the Subject of Common Schools* (Harrisburg: Welsh & Patterson, 1835).

<sup>13</sup> Emrick, *The Role of the Church in the Development of Education in Pennsylvania*, 317; Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 314-321.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Bruce Rismiller, “A History of the Lebanon Public School System to 1886” (Lebanon Valley College, 1959-60), 3-4.

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former teacher at the York Academy, delivered one of the most famous orations in Pennsylvania political history. “If an elective republic is to endure for any great length of time,” he declared, “every elector must have sufficient information, not only to accumulate wealth and take care of his pecuniary concerns, but to direct wisely the Legislature, the Ambassadors, and the Executive of the Nation; for *some* part of all these things, *some* agency in approving or disapproving of them, falls to every freeman.” Addressing the root of most opposition, Stevens cast education as the most important (and potentially most pervasive) public good:

Many complain of the school tax, not so much on account of its amount, as because it is for the benefit of others and not themselves. This is a mistake. It is *for their own* benefit, in as much as it perpetuates the government and ensures the due administration of the laws under which they live, and by which their lives and property are protected. Why do they not urge the same objection against all other taxes? The industrious, thrifty, rich farmer pays a heavy county tax to support criminal courts, build jails, and pay sheriffs and jail-keepers, and yet probably he never has had and never will have any direct personal use for either.<sup>15</sup>

Schools were thus cast as and came to be accepted as a vital part of the complex of institutions that made up a well-regulated society. For Roberts Vaux, Samuel Breck, Thaddeus Stevens, and fellow social reformers, common schools were vital for the maintenance of social order and public safety, the prevention of poverty, and for continued economic growth in Pennsylvania. As institutions that shaped the minds and morals of children in their formative years, they complemented the social reform activities of anti-vice societies, Sunday Schools and churches, and penitentiaries, poorhouses, and asylums – and hopefully the schools enabled students to avoid these last institutions. They provided the basic literacy and arithmetic their pupils needed contribute to the growing economy and participate in the political and cultural life of the state and nation.

The House defeated the repeal of 1835, and the legislature subsequently put more state funding into the school system. If Samuel Breck was the father of common schooling in Pennsylvania, Thaddeus Stevens would be remembered as its savior. By 1837, the state’s first Superintendent of education, Thomas Burrowes, could report that of the 987 school districts in the Commonwealth, 742 had accepted free schools and 3,384 common schools were in operation

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<sup>15</sup> *The Famous Speech of Hon. Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania in Opposition to the Repeal of the Common School Law of 1834* (Philadelphia: Stevens Memorial Association, 1904).

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(though not until 1874 did the last district in Pennsylvania accept the provisions of the Free Public School Act). They employed 2,428 male teachers and 966 female teachers and enrolled 150,838 students – a staggering increase of 118,294 pupils over the previous year. Still, the number of children in the state between the ages of five and fifteen was about 320,000. Average salaries for male teachers were \$18 per month, for female teachers \$12 per month. The average school term was just over four months, though this varied by district, and Pennsylvania would have no mandatory attendance law until 1895.<sup>16</sup> For students in agricultural regions in particular, the winter school term fit conveniently between the fall harvest season and the spring plowing and sowing season.

In 1837, the legislature appropriated \$500,000 for the erection of schoolhouses, and Superintendent Burrowes sent each district an engraved plan of the interior of a schoolroom to serve as a model for the arrangement of furniture. Many districts still rented buildings for schoolhouses, as in Pittsburgh where the common schools started out by renting four abandoned warehouses. In cities and towns where Lancasterian schools had been established in preceding decades, public school directors abandoned the monitorial system for a graded system with paid teachers. In 1838, the chairman of Lancaster's school committee asked his colleagues to "consider *quality* rather than the *cheapness* of the schools they are about to establish," condemning the monitorial system as "incurably defective and superficial" due to its reliance upon students to teach their peers.<sup>17</sup> Although the state did not legislate any particular curriculum, Superintendent Burrowes recommended a slate of reading, writing, grammar, composition, history, geography, arithmetic, and bookkeeping. The prevailing teaching method was a call-and-response system through which students memorized the facts printed in the textbooks or "readers" procured by their teachers. In the 1840s, subsequent superintendents encouraged more uniformity in school books, greater regularity of attendance, establishment of district libraries, and the founding of "normal schools" to train teachers. They also advocated that districts employ more female teachers – a significant cost cutting measure that inspired the rapid feminization of primary school teaching.

Between 1840 and 1850, the number of common schools in Pennsylvania jumped from 4,968 to 9,061. As most of the state's population was rural, most of these were one-room schoolhouses with a single teacher (often without formal training) and a mix of students of all ages. In large

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<sup>16</sup> *Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and Superintendent of Common Schools, on the Subject of Common Schools* (Harrisburg, 1837).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Riddle, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of School History in Lancaster*, 82.

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towns and cities, schools were generally graded, with two or more rooms, and enjoyed greater access to formally trained teachers. Many academies and neighborhood schools, especially in the northern and western parts of the state, opted to join the common school system. Often, their private trustees became the new public districts' elected directors and appointed overseers. Public school directors in small cities and towns commonly rented or purchased preexisting academies. The Lebanon Academy sold its building to the borough's school directors in 1852, on the conditions that the directors assume the Academy's debt, retain its schoolmaster and continue to house him on the building's second floor, and that "Scholars residing out of the Borough limits shall be admitted as heretofore into the Academy... by paying tuition according to the rates established by the By-laws regulating the Academy, the proceeds of which are annually to be applied to the payment of the salary of the principal of the Academy."<sup>18</sup>

Other schools remained private, though those that agreed to accommodate pupils without access to nearby common schools often received some funding from the legislature – a privilege affirmed in laws of 1838 and 1849, though beginning in 1843 the legislature began to reduce its appropriations to academies and colleges. Many German communities kept their schools private, and some like the Moravian school in Bethlehem ultimately became seminaries serving exclusively religious purposes. In the 1850s the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania began to form what in the next century would become the state's second-largest school system. Some charitable schools serving particular populations likewise stayed out of the state system, such as Stephen Girard's "college" for orphaned boys (a spectacularly well endowed institution). Technical education was offered by both public and private schools, from the public Artisan's Night School of Philadelphia (1849) to the private Duff's Mercantile College in Pittsburgh (1840). Elite academies, often run by Quakers or Episcopalians, rarely integrated into the state system. The early common schools were principally a system of primary education, and some academies offered quite advanced classical and scientific programs.<sup>19</sup>

In Pennsylvania's cities, the public schools themselves developed into a multi-tiered system that privileged some students over others. Divisions of social class became evident in the appearance of different public school buildings as well as in their stratified curriculum. The state's first high school, Philadelphia's Central High, was built in 1837. Its marble façade with a grand classical portico and rooftop observatory, designed by elite architect Thomas Ustick Walter, set it far apart

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Rismiller, "A History of the Lebanon Public School System to 1886," 37.

<sup>19</sup> See Domenic Vitiello, *Engineering the Metropolis: The Sellers Family and Industrial Philadelphia* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), chapter 2.

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from other schools in the state. Franklin Institute manager and former University of Pennsylvania chemistry professor Alexander Dallas Bache – fresh from a two-year tour of European schools in the service of Girard College – designed the curriculum and the administrative and disciplinary systems at Central. Early high schools in Pennsylvania’s cities could only accommodate a small fraction of their districts’ primary school graduates, and they therefore created a market for high educational credentials among the middle and upper classes. The small supply of high school graduates – initially all boys – helped maintain their privileged position in the labor market. These schools’ entrance examinations enabled their administrators to shape the curricular goals and programs in the lower schools, prompting even some mid-nineteenth century elementary schools whose parents and students sought advancement to the next level to “teach to the test.”<sup>20</sup>

Like common schools in general, high schools were opposed by local populations unwilling to use their taxes to pay for them. In 1849, when education advocates in Pittsburgh attempted to establish a high school, the “project failed at a popular election, but was revived in 1855 when the first high school was opened... with 114 pupils enrolled.”<sup>21</sup> In the meantime, the borough of Easton secured a special (though unnecessary) act of the legislature to establish a high school in 1850. Still, Pennsylvanians were slow to establish high schools. By 1869, the state’s cities were home to seventeen high schools – the same number as Michigan, which had a total population of just 750,000 compared to more than 2.9 million in Pennsylvania.<sup>22</sup>

The 1850s represented a formative period for the state’s educational bureaucracy. In 1850, the first state education convention met in Harrisburg, the result of educational associations and teachers’ institutes formed at the county level in the 1840s. In 1852 these groups coalesced into the State Teachers’ Association, and the Pennsylvania *School Journal* began publication, edited by Thomas Burrowes and published by the Lancaster County Educational Society. The school law of 1854 repealed earlier laws granting state education funding to private and parochial schools; and it gave districts corporate powers to borrow money, buy and sell property, and sue and be sued. The law required districts to establish separate schools for African American children “whenever schools could be so located as to accommodate twenty or more pupils.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market & the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988); Licht, *Getting Work*, 61.

<sup>21</sup> Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, *Annual Report of the Superintendent* (1949-1950), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Walsh and Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 150.

<sup>23</sup> Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania*, 505-506.

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And it added spelling, grammar, and geography to the standard curriculum, which previously consisted only of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The school term, set at three months by the act of 1834, was extended to six months. The Normal School Act of 1857 raised the bar for teacher training, transferring teachers' education from the old academies to specialized "normal schools." By 1865 each of these schools had received \$15,000 from the state.<sup>24</sup> Legislation of 1857 also removed the State Superintendent of education from the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, establishing a separate State Department of Common Schools. That same year, the National Teachers' Association (later renamed the National Educational Association) was organized at a meeting in Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup>

In 1855, the state bureaucracy took its most deliberate step yet to shape the architecture of common schools. In his annual report that year, the superintendent lamented the state school buildings in the Commonwealth, their lack of ventilation "save when the boys have assisted nature in her decaying process to open a breathe hole," the "desks and seats... too high even for adults," and the lack of "suitable out houses." The furnishings of schoolrooms left much to be desired, as well: "A few are supplied with black boards and physiological charts. No other apparatus. Many are destitute even of a chair." County superintendents from urban and rural districts alike were complaining of "no money to build with, and not sufficient to pay such wages as more convenient teachers demand." Among architects and builders, the superintendent grumbled, "there are but few, very few, that know how a building should be made and arranged for school purposes."<sup>26</sup> In Bedford County, one cold winter "the temperature was so low... that ink would freeze on the pen while students were writing. Rats chewed holes in the lard soaked paper that covered the windows."<sup>27</sup>

The legislature authorized the superintendent to commission a publication on school architecture, which he did from the Philadelphia firm of Sloan and Stewart, architects of the new Central High

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<sup>24</sup> C.L. Ehrenfeld, *Brief Story of the Founding of the Southwestern State Normal School at California, PA* (Lancaster: New Era, 1910).

<sup>25</sup> Francis Haas, "Public Education in Pennsylvania – Past, Present, and Future," in *The Superintendent Speaks: 6 Addresses by Francis B. Haas, Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1954), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Louise and Matthew Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 181-182.

<sup>27</sup> William Mowry, *Public Education in Bedford County, Pennsylvania* (M.S. thesis, Penn State University, 1955), 16.

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School and Girls' Normal School in that city.<sup>28</sup> Distributed to every district in the state, this became the manual – or pattern book – for common school design for the next generation, especially in rural districts where builders rather than architects were the norm. The act of 1848 had given school districts the authority to grade schools, and the State Superintendent subsequently recommended a uniform system of textbooks for each grade, but this volume actually showed local leaders how to grade their schools architecturally. Grading, the book told school administrators, is what set the free common schools apart from – and a step above – the pauper schools of earlier generations. The “Division of labor – that great promoter of modern improvement – no where applies more efficiently or productively than in the business of instruction,” it claimed. And “proper gradation of the Schools... is nothing more than that systematic division of labor which assigns to the same School and the same Teacher, all Pupils of the same or nearly the same class of attainments and studies.” Moreover, gradation promised to improve schools’ “moral tone,” as “Those who have merely passed the period of infancy must be treated differently from those who are approaching maturity. This commingling of the various species of discipline, which are unavoidable in a mixed School, is not only inconvenient, but to some extent injurious to both classes of youth.”<sup>29</sup>

Sloan and Stewart described and depicted graded and one-room schoolhouses alike, making detailed recommendations about their site selection, lighting, heating, ventilation, furniture, and apparatus – including what sorts of book cases, desks, globes, and science laboratory equipment to use. They offered districts a broad range of choices for rural, town, and city schools, from simple wood structures to more elaborate stone edifices with ornamental quoins and moldings, pediments and arches over prominent entrances, and prominent entry towers or bell towers denoting the school’s public function on the horizon – whether from across the fields of farming communities or on the skylines of cities and towns. For the interior of town and city schools, they recommended moveable partitions between classrooms that allowed several rooms to be combined for auditorium functions – a feature that Sloan included in his many commissions for schools in Philadelphia (this plan remained popular for only a few decades, as it made for particularly noisy conditions).

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<sup>28</sup> Harold Cooledge, Jr., *Samuel Sloan: Architect of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Burrowes, ed., *Pennsylvania School Architecture: A Manual of Directions and Plans for Grading, Locating, Constructing, Heating, Ventilating and Furnishing Common School Houses* (Harrisburg: Hamilton, 1855), 10-12.

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In their exterior designs, the architects were very much informed by their contemporary, A.J. Downing, whose landscape and domestic architecture pattern books were the model for this schoolhouse volume. Sloan and Stewart's chapter on grounds, paths, and tree and shrubbery planting closely followed Downing's recommendations for country (or early suburban) houses – only the athletic equipment suggested for schoolyard grounds set it apart. Following the prevailing trends in public and elite domestic architecture of the early and mid-nineteenth century, they depicted the facades of their model schoolhouses in the Italianate and Greek Revival styles. Common school architecture in the Greek Revival style was also popularized nationally by Connecticut's great educational reformer and state superintendent Henry Barnard, who wrote in his 1842 book *School House Architecture* that "every schoolhouse should be a temple, consecrated in prayer to the physical, intellectual, and moral culture of every child in the community."<sup>30</sup> Even for Pennsylvania's small one- and two-room schoolhouses, Sloan and Stewart recommended modest brackets and quoins that would set common schools apart visually from other simple wood or stone buildings and signal the building's identity as a public institution.

Where two or more rooms were possible, builders of village and town schoolhouses generally opted for two-story buildings that conformed to local domestic and public architectural forms. And innovation in schoolhouse design emanated not only from the state's metropolitan centers. In Williamsport, architect William Fink's three-story Noble Schoolhouse was among the first to provide for seating arrangements that allowed light shining into the classrooms to come from the left and behind the seated pupils, which became the standard until electrification transformed lighting in the early twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>

Following a common theme in architectural and planning history, Pennsylvania's nineteenth century school builders did not always follow the specific recommendations of their pattern books. Yet with the regular circulation of those books and model plans distributed by the Commonwealth, regional variations in schoolhouse design did begin to fade. More variation existed in their surroundings, as school builders tended to follow architectural models more than proscriptions for the paths and plantings of the grounds around them. Local building materials also made for differences, with brick and stone predominant in southeastern and south-central Pennsylvania, and wood frame buildings in the north, central, and western counties. Despite the

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<sup>30</sup> Henry Barnard, *School House Architecture* (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1842), 3.

<sup>31</sup> *100 Years of Free Public Schools in Pennsylvania, 1834-1934* (Harrisburg: Department of Public Instruction, 1934), 71.

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emphasis on grading and ornate buildings, most nineteenth century Pennsylvanians lived in rural districts where one-room schoolhouses were the only viable option. Beyond their varied materials, many one-room schoolhouses from Lehigh County to Erie County appear virtually identical in their architecture.

Architects and the state bureaucracy of the common schools in this period of their formation and expansion throughout the Commonwealth thus aimed for school buildings to express their democratic purpose. By creating a literate American society, the schools not only made possible an informed electorate – they also enabled Americans in different parts of Pennsylvania and the North to communicate with one another in a national polity and economy. Together with courthouses, town halls, post offices, and other government buildings, the architecture of common schoolhouses helped define what “public” meant in this era just a generation or two removed from the American Revolution. Through the common schools, the state affected people’s lives in new ways; but local control of school administration, teaching, and building persisted. As a result of local decisions, opportunities, and constraints, a distinct hierarchy of public schools and school buildings emerged. It generally conformed to the labor market, patterns of social organization, and ethnic and class distinctions within and between Pennsylvania’s diverse communities. Yet despite the great differences between public schools and their architecture, most school builders strove to erect public buildings.

Beginning in the post-Civil War era, the context and character of education in Pennsylvania and the United States would be transformed by the forces of the Second Industrial Revolution, Progressive reform movements, and dramatic shifts in rural and metropolitan life.

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Kinglsey School, Elk Creek Township, Erie County  
c.1850 (moved c.1870)

*This one-and-a-half story wood building was characteristic of mid-nineteenth century schoolhouses in the rural timber-rich regions of northern and northwest Pennsylvania.*

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Old Brown's Mill School, Franklin County  
1836

*Unlike many communities in south-central Pennsylvania, the residents of this section of rural Franklin County bought into the common school system early on. Fifty-one subscribers contributed funds to erect the schoolhouse, and Lazarus Brown, grandson of the area's first settler, donated the land. Built of local limestone, its central chimney heated both the ground floor classroom and second floor teacher's quarters. Its simple one-room floor plan was typical of schoolhouses in agricultural regions throughout the nineteenth century.*

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Birmingham School #1 (later Bedford School), Pittsburgh  
1850

*Opened in 1850 as Birmingham School #1, this brick schoolhouse became part of the Pittsburgh school district when the industrial town of Birmingham was annexed by the larger city in 1868. Like many mid- and late-nineteenth century schools in working class factory districts, its architecture both evoked the prevailing Greek Revival style of public architecture and resembled the form of nearby mills. And like many schools in the state, it was later renamed for a prominent local citizen, Dr. Nathaniel Bedford, a surgeon at Fort Pitt who donated the land on which the school was built. It remained an elementary school until 1958.*

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Institute for Colored Youth, Philadelphia  
1865

*Chartered in 1842, the Institute for Colored Youth was among the first schools in the United States solely for African Americans. In 1866, it moved to this building in the heart of black Philadelphia, where it was one of many charitable organizations that aimed to alleviate the poverty of blacks excluded from good factory jobs. One of the great ironies of African American history is that blacks had significantly higher rates of school attendance and graduation than whites, yet they remained excluded from the more respectable, decent paying parts of the labor market. Although the original architect is unknown, this Italianate building follows the double-loaded corridor plan recommended and employed by Samuel Sloan in other urban schools of the 1850s and 1860s. In 1903, the Institute for Colored Youth moved to Cheney, Delaware County, and the Philadelphia School Board purchased the building for use as a public school.*

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### ***III. Pennsylvania Schools in the Long Progressive Era, 1867-1930***

The period between the end of the Civil War and the Great Depression witnessed the systematic reorganization of the American economy, society, and public institutions. These efforts were led by a variety of reformers generally called Progressives, who urged the public and charitable sectors to respond to broad social problems. These reformers profoundly impacted education, inspiring schools to take a stronger role in the social lives of students and their communities through programs in public health, home economics, physical education, and Americanization for the great waves of immigrants arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe during this period. Rapid urbanization and the administrative consolidation of many rural school districts made this the most active period of school construction in American history. Following more general trends in public architecture, new schools were commonly built in American and European historical revival styles of architecture. Inside the schools, curriculums expanded in the face of the corporate reorganization of the economy, the rise of the professions, and the “Second Industrial Revolution” of steel, oil, electricity, automobiles, and applied science, which together remade the economy and built environment of North America.

It was in this period that education became a social science. “As all science is progressive, none is more so than that of education,” proclaimed the Committee on Revision of Studies for the Philadelphia district in 1868. “Those cardinal principles – *precision, gradation and uniformity* – which lie at the foundation of an extended and progressive educational scheme, have been disregarded, and the duty of a vigilant oversight neglected.”<sup>1</sup> This, in varying forms, would be the clarion call of school reformers for the next six decades, as they worked to create social and economic order in the face of often chaotic forces of a fast-changing society.

In its narrow definition, the Progressive Era began in the 1890s and ended in the 1920s, characterized by the rise of specialized professions, departmentalization of academic disciplines, and a widespread movement for systematic social, political, urban, and educational reform. Yet these trends – particularly in school reform – had their roots in the years immediately following the Civil War. Reconstruction was more than a program to reform the South; it also constituted a re-construction of American society and social institutions in the mold of the victorious industrial North. In the heavily industrial state of Pennsylvania, dominated by the Republican

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Committee on Revision of Studies, with the Graded Course of Instruction* (Philadelphia: Markley, 1868), 3-4.

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Party that led Reconstruction, this translated into new powers for school district bureaucracies to shape their communities' labor markets and built environments. In the state's largest school districts, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, those bureaucracies came to include staff architects who worked full time for the school board.

Yet, despite the push for standardization in educational administration, curriculum, and even architecture, Pennsylvania remained a culturally diverse state whose regional differences would prove difficult to erase even in the face of sweeping Progressive reform movements. Many Pennsylvanians opted out of the public school system in this era. Some sent their children to the burgeoning Catholic school systems of large and mid-sized cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Johnstown, and Erie. Many elite families opted for private academies, often run by Quakers or Episcopalians, especially in the early railroad suburbs of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Within the public school system itself, the distinct contexts of the Commonwealth's various regions maintained their own types and hierarchies. From the industrial metropolises and their suburbs, to the mining and mill towns of the anthracite, bituminous, and oil regions, to the diverse farming communities across the state, public schools ranged from academic high schools for the urban elite to vocational elementary programs for the working class to one-room schoolhouses in rural settings. In Lancaster, as late as 1868, some school directors and much of the public were still calling for schools in the city to teach in the German language only. (The school board decided upon a bilingual German-English school.)<sup>2</sup> As the United States experienced its most intense wave of immigration ever, between the 1880s and 1920s, the Commonwealth's cultural diversity only increased.

As in earlier periods of Pennsylvania school reform, much of the Progressive agenda in public education reform thus focused on managing this multicultural society. Lester K. Ade, a Progressive educator who became state superintendent in the 1930s, viewed "the school functioning as a medium of interpreting the social order as well as participating in the building of the same." For Ade and other public sector reformers, "The school is conceived... as a coordinating and controlling center where the pupil learns a democratic way of living by living in a democratic way. While this program recognizes the development of the individual, the greater emphasis is placed upon the individual as part of the social life of the Commonwealth."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Riddle, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of School History in Lancaster*, 257-271.

<sup>3</sup> Lester K. Ade, *The Program, Department of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg, 1936), 7.

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The diversity and continuities of Pennsylvania society notwithstanding, this period was marked by an impressive record of administrative reforms. Pennsylvania's school law of 1867 gave school districts powers of eminent domain in the selection of schoolhouse sites, initiating an era of unprecedented school construction. Over the next decade, with the help of the legislature, districts invested over \$20 million in new buildings. The law also moved beyond earlier, more "suggestive" laws to mandate specific changes in teacher training and certification, signaling the professionalization of that vocation, which by 1870 was thoroughly feminized. In 1870, the *Pennsylvania School Journal* was made the official organ of the Department of Public Instruction, bringing the heretofore semi-independent journal into the bureaucratic fold.

In 1868, Superintendent Wickersham secured the passage of a law targeting the 23 districts that remained outside the state public school system, offering to pay them all their forfeited appropriations back to 1860 if they established free schools within two years. This, together with the superintendent's intense lobbying, caused all districts to be incorporated into the state system by 1874. The new state constitution of that year stipulated "at least one million dollars be appropriated annually for the support of public education," ratcheting up the state's financial commitment to public schools.<sup>4</sup> In the 1870s and 1880s, school districts across the Commonwealth adopted increasingly systematic standards for promotion and graduation, including regular examinations and minimum attendance requirements. In 1893 the legislature passed the first compulsory law for free textbooks, and two years later it added the state's first compulsory school attendance law and required high schools to be developed in all districts. The length of the school term increased from an average of four months in the 1850s to more than seven months by 1900. Between about 1890 and 1910, the number of high schools in the state grew from just over 100 to nearly 1,000. Along the way, in 1903 and 1907, the legislature added minimum salary laws to staff these schools, in response to demands of the State Teachers' Association. All of these developments addressed – and buttressed – the efforts of legislators and social reformers to eradicate child labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

While the legislature set statewide policy, Progressive reformers at the local level invested their energies in individual districts. Founded in 1881 out of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing

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<sup>4</sup> Francis Haas, "Public Education in Pennsylvania – Past, Present, and Future," in *The Superintendent Speaks: 6 Addresses by Francis B. Haas, Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1954), 45.

<sup>5</sup> Public Education and Child Labor Association of Pennsylvania, *A Generation of Progress in our Public Schools, 1881-1912* (Philadelphia, 1914).

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Charity, the Public Education Association of Philadelphia supported the movement for professionalization in both the school district and its pupils. Like similar associations in other large cities, its members influenced the hiring of superintendents, the introduction of sewing into the curriculum for some 25,000 girls and cooking for those in the Normal School, the foundation of a Manual Training School, and establishment of a Chair of Pedagogy at the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> By 1926, the state would reorganize its normal schools into the State Teachers College, with a four-year program leading to a Bachelors of Science in Education with specializations in subjects ranging from art and music to industrial arts or library science. This marked the ascendancy of teaching into the ranks of the “higher” professions.

Throughout the post-Civil War decades, administrators worked to expand the curriculum of urban districts across the state, adding such subjects as bookkeeping, phonography (shorthand note-taking), telegraphy, and physical education to the standard curriculum. Rural districts changed more slowly, though where towns could support high schools, as in Allentown, York, and Altoona, they too taught new subjects. By the late 1860s, the high school curriculum in Pennsylvania included algebra, botany, chemistry, composition, rhetoric, drawing, and vocal music. In the 1870s they began to offer accounting and commercial law. These subjects addressed the rise of white collar sectors as well as new opportunities for women in the workforce. In an 1868 report advocating these subjects, one committee asked rhetorically, “How many females would then find an occupation who now have none, except that of teaching?” The expansion of physical education responded to the active public health movement and professionalized medicine of the Progressive era. Repeating a familiar mantra of the age, the same committee averred, “By inactivity of the body in study, there comes sluggishness in the flow of all the vital fluids, and an unhealthy state of all the muscles.”<sup>7</sup> While local reformers pushed and prodded individual districts, the state Department of Public Instruction regularly issued curriculum guidebooks to one-room, elementary, and high schools throughout the state. These curricular changes would ultimately lead to school buildings acquiring more specialized spaces and equipment such as gymnasiums, home economics rooms, “business machines” (typewriters), and laboratory apparatus. The Progressive push for public libraries, which constituted a movement in itself, also led to libraries in schools (these sometimes doubled as public libraries for the surrounding community).

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis Harley, *A History of the Public Education Association of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Public Education Association, 1896), Edmund James, *The Great Educational Need of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1889).

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the Committee on Revision of Studies, with the Graded Course of Instruction* (Philadelphia: Markley, 1868), 11, 58.

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The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a flowering of technical and vocational education in public schools founded expressly for these purposes. Historians of public education have generally portrayed technical schooling in these decades as a narrow movement, but in fact it was part of a much larger educational-industrial complex that included universities with new professional schools, private business and mechanical trade schools, and myriad corporations lobbying for public school programs to serve their changing needs for labor.<sup>8</sup> For Pennsylvania manufacturers such as Philadelphia's Coleman Sellers, schools were "a mechanism, the object of which is to shape, to mold, minds into usefulness."<sup>9</sup> The Centennial Exposition of 1876 featured displays on technical education in Russia and Germany, inspiring Superintendent Wickersham to visit Europe two years later. This sort of transatlantic transfer of knowledge and social practices characterized many areas of Progressive reform, from public health to civil service reform.<sup>10</sup> Pennsylvania's longest-serving Superintendent of Public Instruction in this era, Berks County native Rev. Dr. Nathan Schaeffer (1893-1919), was also deeply informed by European practice, having studied ethics and philosophy for two years in the leading universities of Germany.<sup>11</sup> In the 1880s, following prevailing trends in Germany, Pennsylvanians from Wilkes-Barre to Johnstown to Pittsburgh opened technical schools teaching wood carving, carpentry, and metal work for boys and garment design and embroidery for girls. The Showalter Acts of the legislature in 1913 provided state funding for agricultural, home economics, and industrial education in the public schools. And, responding to the rise of the corporate and consumer sectors of the economy in the early twentieth century, the Department of Public Instruction shifted the focus of its business courses away from bookkeeping and accounting, focusing more on preparing "retail distributive occupations such as general office clerks, typists, salespeople, and junior store employees."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Harvey Kantor and David B. Tyack, eds., *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1982); Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988). This interpretation has largely been echoed by labor and industrial historians, for example, Licht, *Getting Work*. For a broader interpretation, see Vitiello, *Engineering the Metropolis*; Andrew Dawson, *Lives of the Philadelphia Engineers: Capital, Class, and Revolution, 1830-1890* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Coleman Sellers' address in University of Pennsylvania, "Proceedings at the Public Inauguration of the Building Erected for the Departments of Arts and Sciences, October 11, 1872," University of Pennsylvania Archives, Richards Papers.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Walsh and Walsh, *History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania*, 243.

<sup>12</sup> Ade, *The Program*, 29.

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Even as they expanded their curricular offerings, public schools did not satisfy all groups in the state. When some school districts were slow to develop these offerings, private vocational schools were founded in many cities and towns. In Philadelphia, when local political bosses undermined the vocational plans of the central district and school reform advocates (as the “corrupt and contented” city devolved the power to appoint principals and teachers to ward bosses), private business and technical schools sprang up to take advantage of this relative vacuum.<sup>13</sup> A similar proliferation of commercial schools developed in Pittsburgh, while a smaller number of such schools opened in Easton, Harrisburg, Erie, and other small cities across the state. In company towns, usually outside these cities, the paternalistic proprietors of manufacturing firms sometimes opened their own schools as well as churches, hospitals, and other community institutions. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed the rise of the Catholic school systems of cities and towns across the state, which followed the public schools in their increasingly standardized curriculum and policies on personnel, attendance, grading, and exams. Catholic schools’ building campaigns in this era also paralleled the expansion of public high schools.<sup>14</sup>

Progressive public school reformers aimed at systematic reorganization of teaching, learning, and society. As cities and towns accommodated a flood of new immigrants and unprecedented industrialization, national educational leaders such as John Dewey and Theodore Sizer devised institutional responses to the increasing scale and complexity of metropolitan society. Addressing psychologists’ concerns about the distinct phases of youth, nursery schools and kindergartens extended schooling to younger children, while junior high schools confronted the problems of adolescence. Public school curriculums engaged community issues identified by social scientists, including health, home economics, and – especially in immigrant neighborhoods – Americanization. By the early twentieth century, the home economics program promoted by the Bureau of Public Instruction “rather than emphasizing only cooking and sewing,” administrators boasted, “covers work in personality and child development, home management, foods and nutrition, care, repair, construction and buying of clothing, family problems and relationships, and housing.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Licht, *Getting Work*, 67; Jerome Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Licht, *Getting Work*, 77

<sup>15</sup> Ade, *The Program*, 28.

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As Pennsylvania's cities and towns experienced rapid immigration of people from rural regions of the Commonwealth as well as Eastern and Southern Europe, educational reformers launched efforts to standardize curriculum across the state. In its 1912 *Course of Study for Elementary Schools*, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction declared:

The tendency towards centralization in the industrial world is one of the notable phenomena of modern times. Economic necessity has urged these great combinations to search out and to eliminate waste and to stop leaks. In educational circles, there is a greater need for organization and conservation, because the profits are computed in terms of human life and effort.... The need of some plan for the promotion of desirable uniformity is very apparent. Many communities of Pennsylvania have a large floating population. The average tenure of office in a given position by the teachers is very short, and statistics show that the average experience of teachers is but four years. These factors that tend to keep schools in a continual state of ferment may be neutralized in part by a uniform course of study.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond the schools' enhanced role in the labor market, the greatest concern of urban educational reformers lay in public health. In 1885, the state added physiology and hygiene as required subjects, focusing particularly on the effects of alcohol, narcotics, and other stimulants on the human system. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, visiting committees from such organizations as the Woman's Health Protective Association of Philadelphia regularly inspected schoolhouses and invariably found them lacking. In its 1897 *Report on the Hygienic Condition of the Public School Buildings of Philadelphia*, this association observed, at the schoolhouse at Sixth and Spruce Streets:

Into one room, 18 by 24, sixty-five pupils were found crowded, in many cases two sitting at a desk provided for one. The air in this room was extremely 'close' and was distinctly bad-odored in most of the rooms of the building. An alley on one side of the buildings was found to be in filthy condition and used as a place for slop-throwing and as a public urinal, though required as a passageway for some of the children.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *A Course of Study for the Elementary Schools of Pennsylvania Prepared by the Department of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg: State Printer, 1912), 1.

<sup>17</sup> S.H. Woodbridge, *A Report on the Hygienic Condition of the Public School Buildings of Philadelphia to the Woman's Health Protective Association of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1897), 6. For a more benign review of the

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At another schoolhouse, they found:

The air supply for heating purposes is drawn from the yard close to the privies, and four rooms on the first and second floor are unused because of the offensive odors from the vaults. The rooms on the third floor are used, but are not free from the stench, and windows are generally kept closed. When gas must be used for lighting, the condition of these rooms becomes almost intolerable. The 'yards' are practically nothing but alley-way approaches to the sanitariums. The basement is dark.<sup>18</sup>

In smaller cities, similar committees uncovered the same sorts of conditions. In industrial centers from Scranton to McKeesport, their reports documented schoolhouse hazards that made working conditions in nearby steel mills appear safe and clean by comparison. In Lancaster, a Special Committee on the Subject of New School Houses decried the crowded conditions of classrooms with pupils of different ages sitting on benches at shared desks. In its 1880 report, this committee declared:

There is no doubt... that the foundation[s] of disease and of moral, as well as of physical wretchedness, are often laid in the uncomfortable appointments, unequal temperature and vitiated atmosphere of public school rooms. We believe also that great advantages in regard to order, discipline and efficient work will result from having not only single rooms for the separate schools, but also single desks and seats for the scholars.<sup>19</sup>

These conditions and the public criticism of Progressive reformers inspired great public school construction campaigns in the cities and towns of Pennsylvania. Addressing a more particular urban health problem, at the beginning of the twentieth century Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia erected "outdoor schools" for children with tuberculosis, with floor-to-ceiling sashes that could be lowered on all sides, or sometimes on a roof.<sup>20</sup> In 1911, the state legislature mandated that school districts educate handicapped children.

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district's schools, see John Custis, *The Public Schools of Philadelphia: Historical, Biographical, Statistical* (Philadelphia: Burk & McFetridge, 1897).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Riddle, *One Hundred and Fifty Years of School History in Lancaster*, 323.

<sup>20</sup> *Pennsylvania and its Manifold Activities* (Philadelphia: Commission of the International Congress of Navigation, 1912), 264.

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Although the Progressive movement is usually cast as an urban crusade, perhaps its most pervasive administrative achievement lay in the consolidation of and booming attendance in rural schools across the nation. In Iowa alone, officials merged some 14,000 districts. The mechanization of farming, coupled with school calendars that allowed students to work in the fields during summer and after school, made high school both necessary and possible for rural teenagers. While many urban teens in the manufacturing belt of Northeastern and Midwestern cities and towns continued to abandon school for work, rural America became a sort of “education belt.”<sup>21</sup>

Beginning in 1897, the Pennsylvania legislature encouraged closing rural schools with regular attendance of less than ten pupils and transporting them to larger, consolidated schools. The Centralized School Act of 1901 further encouraged these trends, and the act of 1911 allowed school districts to underwrite students’ transportation and endorsed construction of larger, graded school buildings that separated students of different ages who previously sat together in one-room schoolhouses. The newly created Bureau of Rural Education within the Department of Public Instruction devoted itself to realizing these goals, working with rural districts to combine their operations in the name of administrative efficiency and grading. As Progressives launched rural road building campaigns and the automobile proliferated in the post-World War I era, bussing became a more viable option for even the most isolated districts. In 1919, the legislature required school district directors to discontinue one-teacher schools with average attendance of ten students or less, and it appropriated \$350,000 to cover up to half the cost of local transportation to “central” schools. By 1925, state funding for school transportation increased to 60-75% of those costs. This evolving legislation spurred increasing rural consolidation, providing both sticks and carrots for local administrators. In Bradford County, for example, eleven schools closed between 1912 and 1919, while 95 closed in the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> As in other consolidating districts, their pupils were bussed to larger schools on larger sites whose grading imposed a new, more hierarchical social order among rural youngsters.

Rural school consolidation responded in part to the great transformation of the rural North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As agriculture became increasingly mechanized

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<sup>21</sup> Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, “Human Capital and Social Capital: The Rise of Secondary Schooling in America, 1910-1940,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol.29, no.4 (1999), 683-723; Hal Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Mowry, *Public Education in Bedford County*, chart 1.

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and dominated by large-scale businesses, displaced farmers and their children moved to metropolitan centers in search of new opportunities. Although state authorities touted the public schools' vocational agriculture programs, by the 1930s they enrolled only 8,000 boys, 0.4% of all students in the Commonwealth.<sup>23</sup> The mass migration from rural to urban settings was paralleled by the proliferation of the telephone, radio, and mass distribution of magazines and catalogues, which brought urban culture to the countryside. Debates over school consolidation reflected rural Pennsylvanians' deep anxieties over the future of their communities and their children's prospects for success in declining agricultural communities and booming urban society. Like the road building campaigns that helped make it possible, school consolidation inspired fierce objections to the imposition of outside power and decline of local control.<sup>24</sup> Reflecting common fears and frustrations, one delegate at the 1916 convention of the School Directors' Association of Susquehanna County lashed out at both urban society and the rural folk who were joining it:

Our expensive universities are doing but little work for the laboring classes. If our workers are to receive the benefits of systematized scientific knowledge concerning the best methods of conducting their various trades and occupations, it must be brought directly to their own neighborhoods where the people work and live. The boy or girl that receives a university training does not often return to rural communities to live. All too frequently, instead of using his knowledge to uplift the home community, he goes to some city and forgets the people at home and instead of becoming a true producer upbuilding the Nation by means of his acquiring knowledge becomes a parasite, and it would have been better for the world if he had never been born.<sup>25</sup>

These sorts of anxieties about the loss of local rural identity, coupled with the fact that Pennsylvania remained a majority rural state in the twentieth century, encouraged the persistence of more than 9,000 ungraded, one-room schools that remained in the Commonwealth as late as 1924. A special issue of the *Pennsylvania School Journal* on new buildings that year explained, "There are... districts in Pennsylvania where road conditions, topography of the surrounding country, sparsely settled localities and financial limitations warrant the retention of the one-room

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<sup>23</sup> Ade, *The Program*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Barron, *Mixed Harvest*, chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> John Wilson, "Improvement of School Buildings and Grounds," address at the Convention of School Directors' Association of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania (1916), 6.

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school.”<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, the push for consolidation continued to emanate from Harrisburg, as the administrative reforms of the Progressive movement had lasting effects on the public sector. While consolidation efforts initially focused on agricultural communities, the decline of the coal and iron mining sectors of the state’s economy in the mid-twentieth century brought the same centralizing forces to bear on smaller mining towns that likewise lost population, tax base, and students.

The Department of Public Instruction and state legislature promoted uniformity not only in curriculum, but also in school building plans and, in the Edmond’s Act of 1921 and amendments of 1923, in state funding. These acts equalized the funding of teachers’ salaries based on each district’s population and began to base its appropriations to districts based on local wealth, as measured by property values. In the 1910s and 20s, Pennsylvania’s schools adopted the “Gary Plan” pioneered by Superintendent William Wirt of Gary, Indiana, which shifted elementary school students from a single classroom with a single teacher to a system wherein students moved between their “regular” teacher’s classroom and the specialized classrooms of their music, arts, and physical education teachers.

Despite this drive for standardization, Progressive educators called for new sorts of school architecture to reflect the broad societal shifts they addressed in their curricular reforms. For John Dewey and other educational theorists, according to architectural historian Amy Weisser, “the impassiveness of the standard classroom thwarted opportunities for student communication, curiosity, construction, and creativity.”<sup>27</sup> Dewey himself condemned:

...the ordinary schoolroom, with its rows of ugly desks placed in geometrical order, crowded together so that there shall be as little moving room as possible, desks almost all of the same size, with just space enough to hold books, pencils, and paper, and add a table, some chairs, the bare walls, and possibly a few pictures, we can reconstruct the only educational activity that can possibly go on in such a place. It is all made ‘for listening’—because simply studying lessons out of a book is only another kind of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Pennsylvania School Journal: Special New School Buildings Number* (December 1924), 9.

<sup>27</sup> Amy Weisser, “‘Little Red School House, What Now?’ Two Centuries of American Public School Architecture,” *Journal of Planning History* vol.5, no.2 (May 2006).

<sup>28</sup> John Dewey, *The School and Society; and The Child and the Curriculum*, ed. Philip W. Jackson (1900 and 1902; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 31-33.

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Dewey promoted experimental education in less rigidly structured classrooms, with moveable desks, natural light, blackboards and bulletin boards. He diagrammed his ideal school as, in Weisser's words, "centered around a library and reaching out to home, park, university, museum, library, and business through its rooms devoted to textiles, shop, kitchen, and dining. Experimentation in the work/classrooms led inward to scholarly research and outward to active participation in the community.... While the plan of the room loosened and expanded, the shell of the classroom and the school building differed little from those of the traditional school."<sup>29</sup> But this was an *ideal* model, realized holistically in just a handful of experimental schools in New York and Chicago. Dewey's architectural theories crept slowly into school design in the early twentieth century. More powerful forces in public school architecture came from the administrative and social reform wings of the Progressive movement.

In this era of unprecedented school construction, the state played an increasing role in local building. In 1912 the Department of Public Instruction established a Bureau of School Buildings. This office continued the practice of regularly issuing standard plans and specifications for one-, two-, three-, and four-room school buildings, and assisted in the design and development of larger urban or consolidated rural schools. As districts shifted from a system of elementary and high schools for grades 1-8 and 9-12, respectively, to a K-6-3-3 system with junior high schools, they effected a wholesale reorganization of their physical plants, as junior highs necessitated more specialized science and special-purpose classrooms.<sup>30</sup> The School Code of 1911 directed that school buildings meet specific requirements of construction above and beyond their nineteenth century predecessors, including mandatory provisions for natural lighting, floor space, air space, heating, ventilation, fireproof construction, fire escapes, and playgrounds. Between 1911 and 1916, nearly \$30 million went into school construction in Pennsylvania (not including the more independent, "first class" districts of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia).<sup>31</sup> One nod to local control came in a state law of 1914, which allowed district administrators to give their schools names instead of numbers (prior to this date, public schools were sometimes known by their place names, but according to state mandate they were supposed to all be numbered, e.g., Public School No. 4). Naming also supported schools' role in

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<sup>29</sup> Weisser, "Little Red School House, What Now?"; see also Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker, *The Child-Centered School: An Appraisal of the New Education* (Chicago: World Book Company, 1928), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Finegan, "The School Plant," in *Report of the Survey of the Public Schools of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Public Education and Child Labor Association of Pennsylvania, 1922), 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1928), 136.

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Americanization, as most schools were named after local or national war heroes, prominent political and cultural figures, and sometimes – in small towns dominated by single industries – after the founders and proprietors of major companies.

By 1924, the state and local districts combined were spending \$25 million per year on new and converted school buildings. For the interior of schools, the Bureau of School Buildings recommended expanded “book laboratories” for high schools, where expanding curriculums brought more books and periodicals; careful attention to the sanitary infrastructure of bathrooms, washrooms, and drinking fountains; and “scientifically constructed classrooms” with a precise color scheme: “The walls should be neutral grey or light buff; the ceiling ivory white; the base, which should be of cement, should be brown with a dark brown stripe below window sills,” all to encourage light, well defined, but not overly distracting learning environments. On the exterior, it called for landscaping that complemented the broader societal goals of Progressive public education: “a neatly trimmed and well-kept hedge will be an effective example to arouse and stimulate the civic and personal pride and the aesthetic sense of the whole community. Children will develop a taste for well-ordered and attractive surroundings both at school and at home.”<sup>32</sup> The state’s 1927 school law codified this recommendation in its requirement of a “proper” number of shade trees on schoolyard grounds. Like all such laws regarding building practices, this was applied unevenly in practice, as school building budgets and ambitions varied from district to district and different interpretations abounded regarding the “proper” number of trees.

School building expenditures reached an all-time high of \$40 million in the academic year 1927-28 (again not including activity in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia). Despite the persistence of one-room schools, with the expanding size of schools in most communities by the 1920s “schoolhouses” had become simply “schools.” By the 1930s school buildings had attained a high degree of standardization across the state, in urban and rural settings alike, with the main differences being in the scale of buildings. Following the prevailing trend in City Beautiful planning and design for public buildings in the early twentieth century, neoclassical facades alluded to the ideals of Greek democracy or the Roman Republic, while Colonial Revival designs referenced the nation’s heritage at a time when Americans were reconnecting with their colonial history. These were the dominant styles of the early twentieth century. Some school architects also employed elaborate Gothic and Romanesque Revival facades. In more affluent districts, schools – especially high schools – featured limestone and granite window sills, carved

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<sup>32</sup> *Pennsylvania School Journal: Special New School Buildings*, 11-12.

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monumental entrances, and sweeping staircases. But even in the most humble buildings, the language of neoclassical and Colonial Revival designs denoted a distinctly civic function.

These architectural trends were more than just a gesture, for public schools indeed accommodated a skyrocketing proportion of Pennsylvania's and the United States' children in the early twentieth century. Nationally, high school graduation leaped from 9 percent of all young people in 1910 to 40 percent in 1935, with generally higher rates in agricultural regions.<sup>33</sup> By the 1930s, Pennsylvania's 63,000 teachers taught more than two million students, and over sixty percent of eligible teenagers attended high school.<sup>34</sup> William Carr of the National Education Association wrote:

The average high school graduate has spent about 13,000 hours within the walls of a public school building. These 13,000 hours are potentially the most impressionable and valuable hours of his life.... Through this environment... the whole costly process of education may be encouraged or nullified. The school building is the tangible and visible evidence of the attitude of the public towards education.<sup>35</sup>

Since many children in the schools were foreign-born or first-generation Americans, educational reformers stressed the schools' role in fostering Americanization. This prompted an intensified emphasis on U.S. history, civics, and the Constitution in the state's elementary and secondary curriculum. Adult immigrants took evening classes in cooking and sewing, while the gymnasiums, auditoriums, and libraries of public schools were often opened to the wider community. With Prohibition in the 1920s, Superintendent Thomas March of Greensburg even proposed, "The school should endeavor to fill the gap occasioned by the loss of the saloon as a social center."<sup>36</sup>

Despite their massive construction campaigns, growing cities struggled to keep up with the growth in school populations resulting from the combined forces of immigration, the end of child labor, and rising high school attendance. Urban districts commissioned detailed studies "To find the extensity of the present use of the building" and "To find the possible maximum

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<sup>33</sup> Goldin and Katz, "Human Capital and Social Capital," 685.

<sup>34</sup> Ade, *The Program*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> William G. Carr, *The Architectural Record* (September 1935).

<sup>36</sup> Thomas March, "Using the Schoolhouse in Americanization," in Pennsylvania State Educational Association, *Report of Proceedings, Seventieth Meeting* (Lancaster: Pennsylvania School Journal, 1920), 95.

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utilization.”<sup>37</sup> One temporary solution lay in “platoon schools” that accommodated one shift of students in the morning and a second shift in the afternoon. Pittsburgh developed 47 such schools serving 36,000 students, roughly half the pupils in the entire district, by 1925. District administrators tried to mask their inability to build enough schools for full-day sessions, claiming “The platoon schools of Pittsburgh have not been organized primarily to solve the problem of a congested school population, although this purpose has, of course, been served.” Instead, they pointed to the benefit that “each activity is carried on in a room selected and equipped in harmony with the subject taught therein. Thus an atmosphere of nature or music or art is created that re-enforces the conscious efforts of teacher and pupils.... Under the traditional organization practically all of the school was closed away from the child with the exception of his classroom and one or two other parts of the building. The platoon school,” they declared, “opens all parts of the building to the child. In all of these movements the children are placed on their honor and made to feel responsible not alone for their own conduct but for the conduct of the group as well. Thus there has developed a true social and democratic situation.”<sup>38</sup>

This last objective was central to Progressive educational philosophy and “child-centered” curriculum. In a report on the “living curriculum,” one Philadelphia teacher explained how school buildings and their surroundings were incorporated into lessons on everything from science to civics:

Our older girls and boys have gained information concerning the operation of the school plant by visiting the boiler room with its huge furnaces, its complex system of controls, and its fascinating humidifier. Along with appreciation of the knowledge required to be an engineer and of the labor required of the fireman there are always surprised comments about the spotlessness of the rooms. ‘They keep the basement with all its coal and boilers cleaner than we keep our room.’ The child’s worth extends to the whole school....  
...children’s interests will soon lead them beyond the street bordering the school. The children and their families are served by the post office, and it becomes the objective of a walk. The firemen explain to an eager group the mysteries of the firehouse. The public library introduces children to the help and joy that it will give to all who accept its hospitality. The more distant shopping district which

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<sup>37</sup> “The Utilization of a Pittsburgh High School,” in *Pittsburgh Schools* vol.5, no.4 (March-April 1931). See also, *Survey of the Scranton Public Schools, 1918-1920* (Scranton: Board of Education, 1920); John Lozo, *School and Society in the City of Reading Relative to Recreation, 1900-1935* (Philadelphia, 1938).

<sup>38</sup> Pittsburgh Public Schools, *Super-Opportunities of the Pittsburgh Platoon Schools* (1925), 1-2.

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has the means of supplying a variety of needs is visited by a class to select the pumpkin that will soon have its interior cooked and eaten by the children and its exterior converted into a Jack-o'-lantern.<sup>39</sup>

As part of this “living curriculum,” Progressive educators also expanded the music and art programs of the public schools. By 1936, Superintendent Lester Ade could boast 900 art teachers in the state, primarily in urban districts. “A special effort is being made to introduce practical types of art education,” he declared, “not only with a view to increasing and stimulating appreciation of what is beautiful, but of creating beauty in school surroundings, home furnishings, town planning, as well as in personal appearance.”<sup>40</sup>

The nation’s great experiments in Progressive education would be tested, however, by the Great Depression, which also transformed the context of school construction. Pennsylvania boasted some 12,000 public school buildings by 1930, having spent close to \$230 million on construction since 1911 – in addition to the many millions of dollars expended in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.<sup>41</sup> Rural school consolidation would remain the predominant theme in the state’s farming communities in the coming decades. Yet patterns of school design and development in both rural and urban settings would fundamentally change in the post-World War II era, as suburban models of site planning and architecture would proliferate across the state. But first, in the 1930s, the Depression forced Pennsylvanians and their schools to focus on the more immediate imperative of recovery.

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<sup>39</sup> Ethel Coster, “The Child and the Environment,” in *Toward a Living Curriculum* (Philadelphia, 1940), 94-96.

<sup>40</sup> Ade, *The Program*, 32.

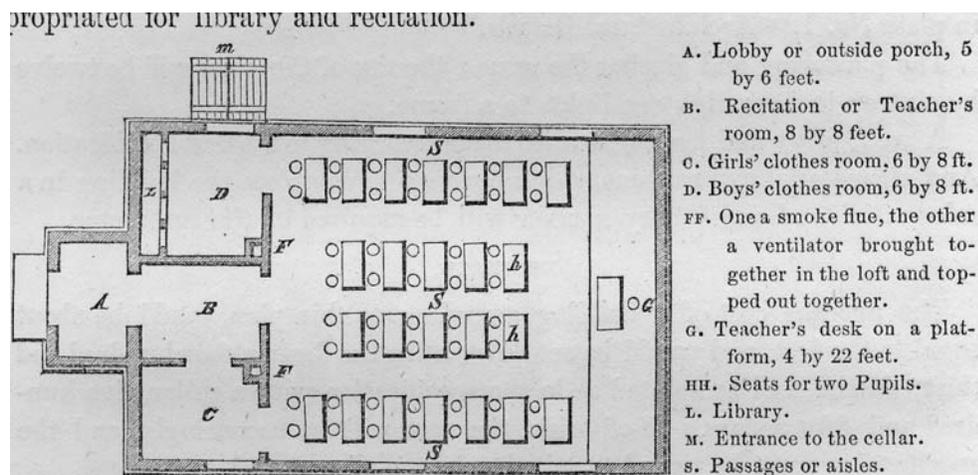
<sup>41</sup> *100 Years of Free Public Schools in Pennsylvania, 1834-1934* (Harrisburg: Department of Public Instruction, 1934).

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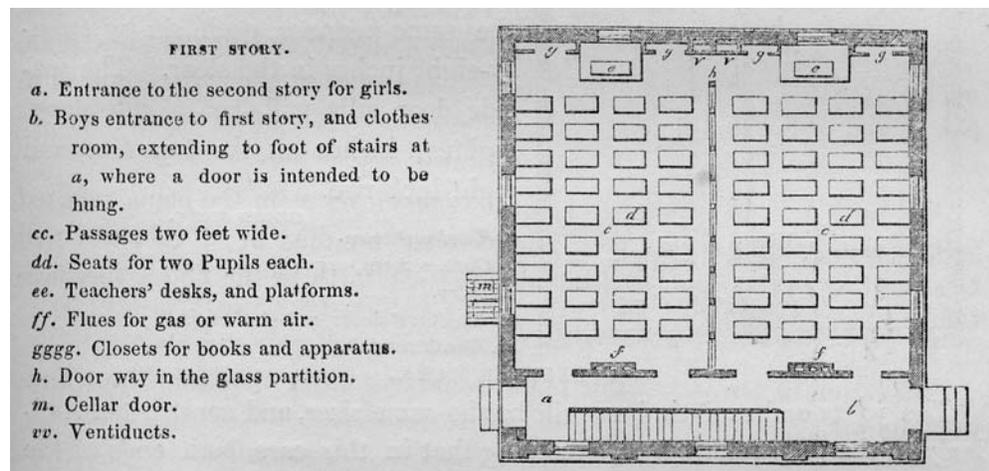
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Floorplan for a rural one-room school from Thomas H. Burrowes, *A Manual of Directions and Plans for Grading, Locating, Constructing, Heating, Ventilating and Furnishing Common School Houses*. Harrisburg: A. Boyd Hamilton, 1855, p38.



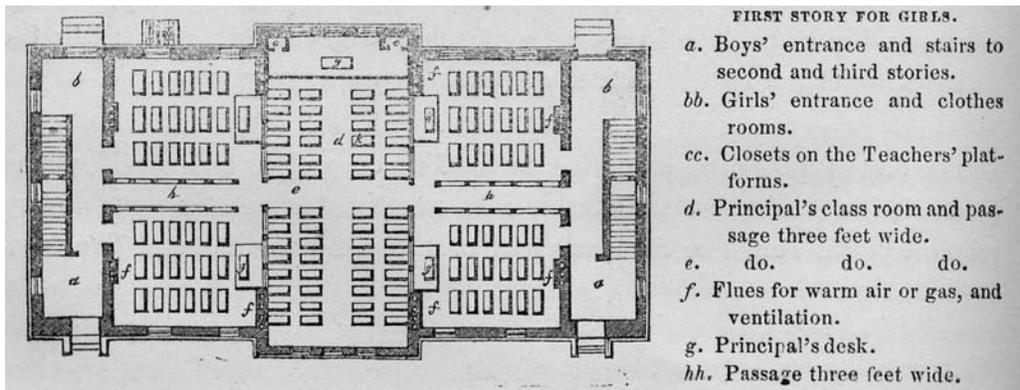
Floor plan for a two-story four-room school in a small town. Burrowes, p 83.

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Floor plan for a city school. Burrowes, p128.

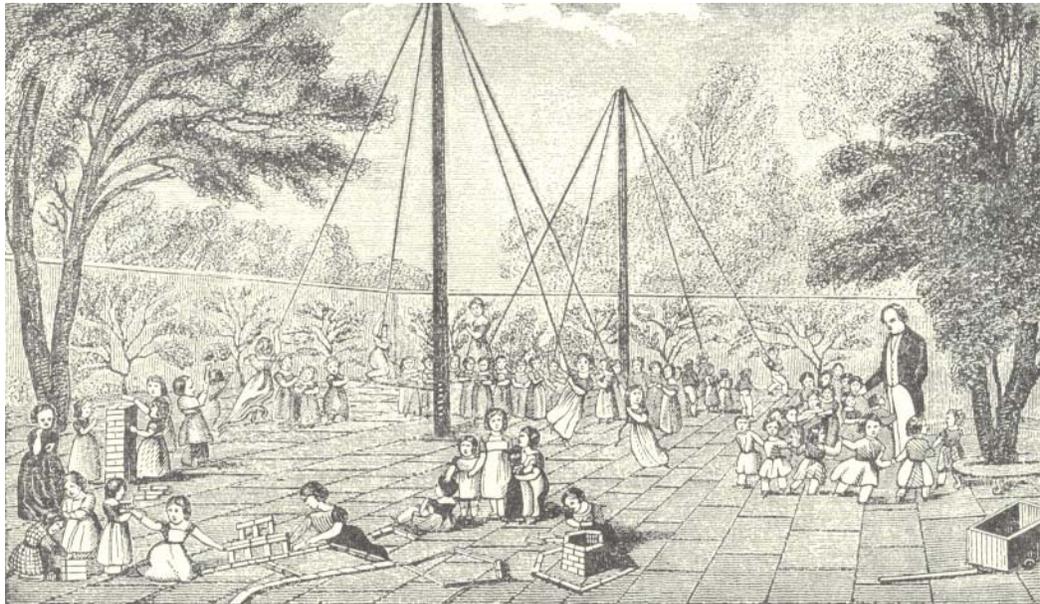


FIGURE 55. View of a play ground for an infant or primary school

From Jean and Robert McClintock, eds, *Henry Barnard's School Architecture*. Teachers College, Columbia university: 1970. rpt of 1848 edition, p211.

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Gay Street School, Phoenixville, Chester County  
1874, 1883  
Col. Nathaniel M. Ellis, designer

*With relatively little taxable property but a large and growing population of young people, Phoenixville was among the towns that benefited significantly from the 1871 law authorizing school districts to float construction bonds. Engineer Col. Nathaniel Ellis, the General Agent for the Reading Railroad in this heavily industrial borough, incorporated the relatively new methods of circulating ventilation as well as gas lighting, fireproof construction, and a coal burning central heating system. Like nineteenth century school buildings in the factory districts of Philadelphia and other manufacturing centers, the Gay Street School resembles the mills of the era in its tall windows below segmented arches, its modest brickwork pilasters, plain gabled and flat rooflines, and even its central clock tower. Initially an elementary school with four rooms, it was expanded with ten more rooms in 1883 to accommodate high school grades; then again from 1911 until its closure in 1963 it served as an elementary school. In the late nineteenth century it also housed the Phoenixville school district administration offices.*

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Samuel Morse School, Pittsburgh  
1874  
Thomas Evans

*Like the Gay Street School in Phoenixville, the Samuel Morse School was erected with funds from a \$66,000 bond. Its plan included wide cross-shaped hallways on each floor, with stair towers at the end of each hall. It originally had thirteen classrooms, a teachers' room and principal's office on the first floor, and an auditorium on the third floor. This plan was typical of large elementary schools of the 1870s serving middle class neighborhoods. At the time of its construction, this South Side neighborhood of Pittsburgh was home to families of Scotch-Irish, German, and Welsh stock who lived in riverside and semi-rural estates. It served as a school until 1979; like other school buildings of this type in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, it was subsequently rehabbed as affordable housing for senior citizens.*

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Mooresburg Schoolhouse, Liberty Township, Montour County  
1875, rebuilt 1891

*This one-room brick schoolhouse in mountainous Montour County taught grades one through eight. Reflecting a widespread pattern, it has two outhouses and a coal shed, not pictured in this photograph. Rural communities across the state continued to use such one-room schoolhouses well into the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1920s Montour County schools began to merge into larger units; and in 1951 it became the first county to replace municipal school boards with a county-wide board. In 1964, the Mooresburg School became one of the last two one-room schools in the county to be consolidated into a larger school.*

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Milanville School, Damascus Township, Wayne County  
c.1880

*Like the designers of most late nineteenth century rural and small town schoolhouses in the state, the builders of the c.1880 Milanville School continued the patterns of picturesque Italianate and Gothic designs prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. The prominent belfry and simple brackets of this school signaled its identity as public architecture. The builders employed the dominant local material in this timber-rich region of northeast Pennsylvania.*

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New Enterprise Public School, South Woodbury Township, Bedford County  
1881

*The school directors in the southwest Pennsylvania village of New Enterprise erected this ambitious two-story brick schoolhouse at a time when one-room schools were the standard for such small communities. Students were divided into two groups in this elementary school, with first through fourth graders on one floor and fifth through eighth graders on the other. All students studied reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic; the older pupils also studied geography, history, physiology. During the summer, the building was used for normal school classes. In 1918 a new junior high school was built nearby, leaving only the first through fourth graders in this building. A decade later, they too moved to a new elementary school building. The New Enterprise school was subsequently used for vocational agricultural and shop classes during the day and Young Farmer classes in the evening, filling an important role in this dairy farming region. From 1957 to 1963, it accommodated junior high school classes. It was later used for storage and in the 1980s restored by the Northern Bedford County School Board.*

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Simpson Street School, Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County  
1892, John C. Smith, architect

*The first high school in Mechanicsburg, the Romanesque Revival Simpson Street School was designed by the prominent architect J.C. Smith from nearby Harrisburg. Following the work of America's leading Romanesque Revival architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, Smith designed high schools in Harrisburg and this one in Mechanicsburg with monumental features such as the prominent archway and arched windows over the entrance and protruding stair towers. These sorts of grand architectural gestures were common in important public buildings of the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Simpson Street School remained a high school until 1957, when it was converted to a junior high school; it closed in 1981.*

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5<sup>th</sup> Avenue High School, Pittsburgh  
1894  
Edward Stotz, architect

*Like most highly designed school buildings of this era, the monumental Victorian Gothic façade of this high school was intended to impress students' parents and the public – rather than performing any specific educational function. As only Pittsburgh's second high school, its ornate "academic Gothic" style also signaled that this was a building in which pupils were educated for middle class professions and even college. In its first year of operation, the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue School housed a normal school on its third floor, commercial classes on the second floor, and the administrative offices of the city's board of education on the first floor. In 1913 it was reportedly the first Pittsburgh school in which a cafeteria was installed. It operated as a school until 1976.*

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Charles S. Foos Elementary School, Reading, Berks County  
1902, 1921  
Mr. Head (1902), Edward Scholl (1921), architects

*This photograph of the 1921 addition to the Charles Foos Elementary School in the city of Reading shows a Classical Revival façade typical of public school architecture in this era. Its designer, Edward Scholl, was the leading architect of public schools in Berks County at the time. This addition enabled the school to offer an expanded curriculum heavily influenced by Progressive educational philosophy, with large classrooms lit by natural light, three “practical arts” rooms for subjects such as home economics and wood shop, a science lab, a gymnasium with boys’ and girls’ locker rooms, a library, auditorium, cafeteria, and first aid room. The Foos School also followed through on the Progressive call for schools’ integration into their surrounding communities, staying open after 4pm to accommodate meetings of civic groups and Girl Scout troops. From 1918 to 1938, it even housed a branch of the Reading Public Library.*

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Stevens High School, Lancaster  
1904-1905  
C. Emlen Urban, architect



Stevens High School, Lancaster, interior auditorium

*With its brownstone, Roman brick, and terra cotta façade and ornate plastered interior, the Stevens School is one of the grandest public school buildings in the state. Built at a cost of \$215,000, it was the most expensive public building in Lancaster in the early twentieth century. Designed by prominent local architect Emlen Urban as the city's first high school for girls, it represents a powerful statement about the increasing significance Progressive educators placed on the education of young women, who were becoming increasingly involved in the commercial labor market of the early twentieth century. It offered an advanced Progressive curriculum equal to that of any boys' school in the area, with chemistry, physics, and botany laboratories, a drawing department, gymnasium, elaborate auditorium, and a special room for commercial classes (and of course it had a cooking room for home economics classes). When it opened, it received mixed reviews – hailed by the New Era (December 22, 1905) as “one of the city's chief ornaments, and a source of unbounded pride,” yet also criticized as an unnecessary architectural extravagance by its detractors. In 1938, it became an elementary school.*

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George W. Guthrie School, Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County  
1915  
Robert Ireland, architect

*Built at the height of the anthracite coal boom and thus Wilkes-Barre's most prosperous period, the Guthrie School is one of the state's few Commercial Style public school buildings. It was built to accommodate 1,225 pupils, including vocational students and some with special needs. Eighteen classrooms housed 50 students each; a 25-pupil classroom was reserved for "backward children"; a manual training room for 150 boys; and a cooking and dressmaking department for 150 girls. In this heavily industrial city, vocational training addressed significant labor market needs – and the architect's choice of the Commercial Style reflected this important part of the school's purpose. Robert Ireland was an important Wyoming Valley architect who specialized in the design of schools and coal breakers. The Guthrie School is among Wilkes-Barre's earliest buildings erected with a reinforced concrete frame, which allows for the large classroom footprints and spacious windows. Its prominent architecture reflects the wealth of the city at the time – it was the public sector complement to a number of major new headquarters built at the same time by the city's major companies, including the Penn Tobacco Company (1912) and the Miner's Bank Building by the famed Chicago firm of Daniel Burnham & Company (1913).*

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Overbrook High School, Philadelphia  
1924  
Irwin Catherine, architect

*Many Philadelphia schools designed in the 1910s and 1920s by the district's resident architect, Irwin Catherine, employed this "academic gothic" style. This and similar large high schools served the growing working and middle class neighborhoods of the booming industrial city. The gothic façade contrasted with nearby factories, signaling the identity of this building as a public, academic institution. However, Overbrook High is most famous for its association with an individual student, as Wilt Chamberlain made its basketball team a national powerhouse in the 1950s.*

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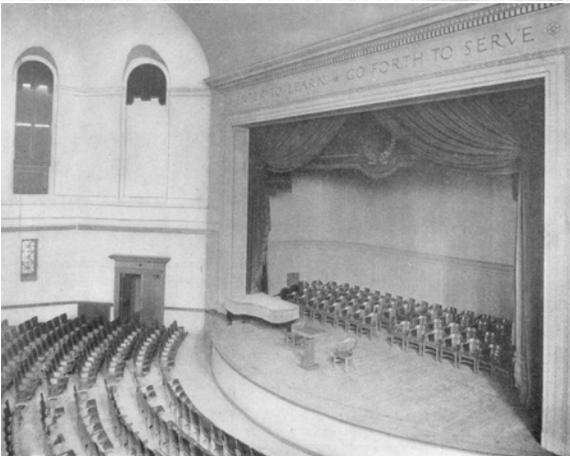
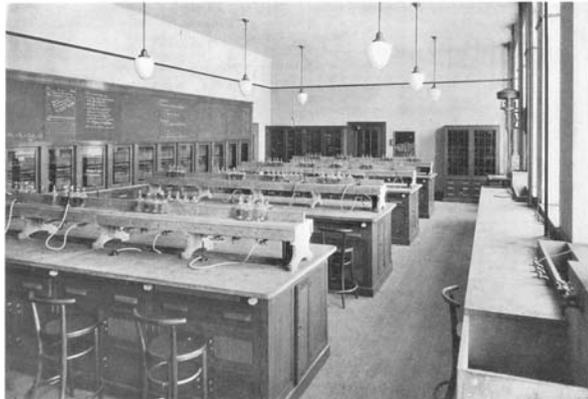


FIG. 225.—LIBRARY, SCHENLEY SCHOOL, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA.

By Edward Stutz, Architect

Schenley High School, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County  
1916  
Edward Stutz, architect

*At the time of its construction Schenley High school was nationally noted as a precedent-setting building. It incorporated the most modern and lavish of facilities and was controversially expensive at the time; it was the first school building in the country to cost over \$1,000,000. Its distinctive triangular shape created an interior plan with classrooms around the outer edge and a corridor along the inner edge of the triangle with stairs at or near the three corners. The special facilities included a greenhouse and competition length swimming pool. Schenley High School was a platoon school, a type of school advocated by William Wirt, the Superintendent of the Gary, Indiana schools in the 1910s. He advocated expensive and complete school facilities to accommodate large numbers of students who would rotate between classes in shifts, or platoons. He also advocated weekend and evening use of the school by the community, thus justifying the extra cost.*

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#### ***IV. From Depression to District Reorganization, 1930-1969***

The Great Depression sparked a reorganization of the institutions of American government, which over the ensuing decades transformed the landscapes of cities, suburbs, and rural regions across the nation. The New Deal included no major legislation for public education, but the public works, federal housing, and later federal highway acts of the 1930s through 1950s radically transformed the context and practices of building schools. The Works Projects Administration paid for a flurry of public school building in the 1930s. World War Two stalled virtually all construction – of schools and most everything else. And when homebuilding and school building picked up again in the late 1940s, federal housing and mortgage insurance policies of the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration directed investment and development to the suburbs. Beginning in the 1950s, the Federal Highway Administration supported this investment.

In Pennsylvania (and most other states), this spurred three basic trends in public school design and development. In new mass automobile suburbs, one- and two-story schools were built on sprawling campuses that mirrored the sprawling landscapes of residential subdivisions that surrounded them. As rural school districts continued the consolidation initiated at the turn of the century, they too followed the model of the suburban campus – only with longer bus rides for many of their students who lived farther from school. The Commonwealth's cities, most of which were built as manufacturing centers over the previous century, experienced the decline of industry and loss of middle class residents to the suburbs that was common to cities in the Northeast and Midwest following World War II. In urban Pennsylvania, from Allentown to Pittsburgh to Lancaster, deindustrialization and urban renewal shaped the context of school reform. In the state's largest cities, the Second Great Migration of African Americans from the South in search of the very industrial jobs that were disappearing created large inner city ghettos plagued by segregation, discrimination, and racial tension – in schools as well as housing and the labor market.

As Pennsylvania and the rest of the Rustbelt lost its once mighty industrial economy, its labor market shifted out of manufacturing and into services ranging from high paid professions such as medicine and law to low paid work in entertainment, hospitality, and retail. In the Cold War era, the American economy and society were increasingly organized around science and high technology, media and information, and mass consumption. The rationale, legislation, and practices of public education adapted to reflect these changes. The GI Bill and federal loan

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programs made college accessible to a vastly increased proportion of the population, catapulting most high schools into a college preparatory role. Curriculums evolved accordingly, as did the architecture of public schools. Some school campuses resembled college campuses, and many school buildings designed by modernist architects resembled the offices buildings and office parks where their students would work as adults. The standards for science laboratories rose, as labs were vital to the emerging knowledge economy based on university research sponsored by the federal Department of Defense and National Institutes of Health. Sadly, many urban schools built amidst the race riots of the 1960s came to resemble prisons, reflecting the concern for public safety in inner cities. From the Depression to the turbulent 1960s, therefore, public schools responded to the major social, economic, and urban/suburban upheavals of the era.

At the Citizens' Conference on School Recovery in 1934, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of free schools in the Commonwealth, Governor Gifford Pinchot admitted, "instead of a back-slapping centennial we have been having a sort of face-the-facts centennial." Compared with the rest of the nation, the facts in Pennsylvania schools were not so bad: "although 20,000 schools had to close through the United States during the depression, not a single school was closed in all of Pennsylvania.... And all the schools were kept going in spite of the fact that high school enrollment increased more than 55 per cent between 1929 and today."<sup>1</sup> This was made possible, in part, through cost savings that came out of teachers' pockets, as the Emergency Act of 1933 cut their salaries by 10%, saving the state some \$10 million.

The Depression accelerated many trends already at work in public education. In 1935, State Superintendent Lester Ade could claim, "Probably no period of four years has seen so many rapid changes having important implications for public education in Pennsylvania as the 1931-1935 span." The National Recovery Act of 1933 forced all children under sixteen years of age out of the labor force. "This regulation brought into the schools a new population of youth," who according to Ade, needed "a different type of treatment and a different type of curriculum than that afforded the regular pupils" who had been going to school all along. In addition, public school directors felt an added burden, as Ade related, "The past few years have brought on an unprecedented wave of crime in which the largest age group is nineteen. This brings further obligations and responsibilities on public education to help find a way to avert some of the

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<sup>1</sup> Gifford Pinchot, "The State's Responsibility for Education," *Proceedings of the Citizens' Conference on School Recovery in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1934), 7-8.

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present difficulties.”<sup>2</sup> Sadly, this burden would return following World War II as racial tension in Pennsylvania’s inner cities erupted in violence in the schools as well as the streets. Schools took on more than educational roles in the grand project of recovery, as they collaborated with churches, community centers, trade unions, and a host of social service organizations to provide recreational and work relief activities. This expanded their reach into the adult community of displaced workers and, as war broke out in Europe, prompted some observers to suggest “possible implications as part of a national defense program.”<sup>3</sup>

The Works Projects Administration stepped in to assist and make use of public schools in recovery efforts in the second half of the 1930s. This marked the federal government’s first ever major involvement in elementary and secondary school construction, and it paralleled the public housing and public works programs that would continue in the postwar era. In 1936, Superintendent Ade reported, “At the present time some 233 new building projects, looking toward improvement of the facilities for administering education in Pennsylvania, are in progress. These building developments involve a capital expenditure of \$50,000,000, more than one-third of which is being provided by the Federal Government.” This wave of construction was giving “employment to almost a quarter of a million workers, thereby removing thousands of families from Pennsylvania’s relief rolls.” Moreover, federal investment enabled the state to continue consolidating rural school districts. Ade counted more than 800 consolidated schools with an enrollment of nearly 200,000 (close to 10 percent of the state’s public school students), and almost 500 one-teacher schools closed since 1926. “Transportation service, which is an index to the progress of consolidation,” he stated, “has developed to such an extent that during the current year approximately 100,000 pupils are being conveyed to and from schools in some 3500 school buses.” This translated into larger school sites; of the 200 new sites chosen for schools in 1935-36, “practically all were more than two acres in size.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Public Instruction, *Our Public Schools: Four-Year Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1931-1935* (Harrisburg, 1935), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Work Projects Administration, *Education and Recreation Program for ALL the People, 1939-40* (Philadelphia, 1940); Carl Aretz, “The School and the Community,” in *Professional Proceedings*, Philadelphia Public Schools District Six (1939), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Lester Ade, *The Program: Department of Public Instruction, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Comprising Practical Philosophy, Present Program, and Advancing Frontiers of Public Education* (Harrisburg, 1936), 13-14. See also, Work Projects Administration, *Education and Recreation Program for ALL the People, 1939-40* (Philadelphia, 1940).

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Most of Pennsylvania's public schools erected in the 1930s shared features of Art Deco or similar early modern design. They range from extravagant buildings with sweeping entryways and florid parapets (usually in urban settings) to much more modest structures with a few simple Deco motifs above doorways and windows. These styles were popular among architects at the time, especially in commercial and public buildings. Some architectural historians argue that the adoption of such "pop culture" aesthetics reflected Americans' embrace of consumerism even in the public sector.<sup>5</sup> Surely, the lines between public and private space blurred in the twentieth century, as shopping centers came to be defined as "public space." Additionally, the Deco public schools followed other schools before them in mirroring the architectural forms of contemporary workplaces, including the Deco department stores, theaters, and office buildings of the era.

This modest wave of 1930s school development projects halted, along with virtually all building activity across the country, during World War II, which depleted school populations as older teens went to fight in Europe or the Pacific and to work in factories revived for war production. With the return of troops and the lifting of wartime limits on consumption in 1945, the United States experienced sharp inflation and a severe housing shortage that limited school districts' ability to afford the resumption of construction. Thus, between 1938 and 1948, very few public schools were built in Pennsylvania. By the time construction resumed, largely in response to the "baby boom" immediately following the war, the environmental context of school building in America had fundamentally changed.

As they took stock after the war, many districts found their school plants inadequate to the task of education in a modern, nuclear age. When the School District of Haverford Township in Delaware County surveyed its buildings in 1945, it identified particular faults in its "special classrooms" for science, home economics, and art, as well as in its "general service" facilities, the auditoriums, gyms, libraries, and cafeterias. This reflected fundamental shifts in educational practice initiated in the Progressive era, principally an increasing emphasis on experiential – as opposed to rote or passive – learning:

A generation ago, most elementary school programs consisted almost exclusively of the formal recitation based up on the subject matter of text books. Such schools needed buildings with little else except classrooms where children sat throughout the day at fixed desks arranged in precise rows.... great changes have taken place

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<sup>5</sup> For a review of early modern American architecture and its cultural meanings, see George E. Thomas, *William L. Price: From Arts and Crafts to Modern Design* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000).

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in the programs and methods of elementary schools.... Emphasis has been placed upon active rather than sedentary learning procedures. Children are given opportunity to work with things as well as facts and ideas.<sup>6</sup>

These shortcomings would be remedied through massive school-building campaigns from the late 1940s through 1960s. Nationally, the public spent over \$1 billion on public school and university buildings; and these expenditures doubled by 1960, and doubled again by 1970. In the early 1960s, one-fifth of all public construction in America was for schools – only federal highways received more public funding for construction. At the time, nearly half of the nation’s children attended a school built in the previous fifteen years.<sup>7</sup>

The big story in post-World War II schools is found in the sprawling, automobile, “sitcom suburbs.” Along with churches and shopping malls, public schools served as the principal centers of civic life in new suburbs where other community institutions had yet to develop. Parent-teacher associations and home-and-school associations provided forums through which suburbanites expressed their visions for society. Together these institutions enabled relatively homogenous, typically all-white, single-class automobile suburbs to promote and maintain a relatively cohesive (if sometimes contested) social order. For families in culturally diverse communities where the public schools did not promote their particular social interests or visions, parochial schools still served an important role. This was especially the case for Pennsylvanians who wanted their children to learn creationism rather than the evolutionary curriculum taught in increasingly robust public school science programs.

Public schools reflected and furthered major social and cultural shifts in the 1950s and 60s. Driving courses responded to the proliferation of automobiles. New media technology made movies, audio and film recording, and electronic music into the classroom and school auditorium. This emphasis on media and instructional technology was widespread, though perhaps nowhere more than at the Walt Disney Elementary School in Pennsylvania’s Levittown, in Bucks County. Built in 1955 as the first school in the United States named after the children’s entertainment icon (there would of course be more in California and other states), its walls were decorated with images of Disney’s most popular characters. The Disney School’s playground

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<sup>6</sup> Educational Service Bureau, *School Building Survey of the School District of Haverford Township* (Philadelphia, 1945), 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> Weisser, ““Little Red School House, What Now?”

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equipment included a Douglas Skyrocket jet test plane decommissioned from the U.S. Navy, which reflected another important theme in post-World War II public schooling.

The Cold War and the hot wars in Korea and Vietnam profoundly impacted education. Even before (and especially after) the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the U.S. government's heavy investments in the defense industry sustained many Pennsylvania factory towns. The increasingly high tech nature of defense and other industries, coupled with the space race and the arms race, inspired a sustained effort on the part of public educators to ramp up their science and technology curriculum. In primary and secondary schools, astronomy, chemistry, physics, and math became ever-more important subjects. With the fear of nuclear war, their basements became fallout shelters while air raid drills sent students and teachers cowering under their desks. The GI Bill, together with later federal grant and loan programs, afforded the middle and working classes unprecedented access to higher learning. This gave public schools a widespread college preparatory function that had previously existed almost exclusively in elite private academies and a select few high schools. Vocational education persisted, however, and in the post-World War II era it became largely the province of the public schools, as many old private trade schools serving the dying manufacturing economy closed and commercial or beauty academies transformed into junior colleges.

The architectural model for most schools of this era was decidedly modern. In the 1940s and 1950s, the architectural profession actively promoted new designs for institutions of public education. Architectural journals along with New York's Museum of Modern Art, pushed modern design for "the average American," and schools were an important part of this campaign. According to architectural historian Amy Weisser:

This initiative dovetailed with the federal government's support for suburban home ownership and helped make suburban school architecture a paradigm for the postwar period. All three major architectural publications, *The Architectural Forum*, *The Architectural Record*, and *Progressive Architecture*, printed special school issues in 1945, as the end of the war approached. From 1942 to 1946, MoMA circulated around the country a traveling exhibition, *Modern Architecture for the Modern School*. This was followed by *Modern Buildings for Schools and Colleges*, 1947 to 1951.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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Although the history of mid- and late-twentieth century school architecture has largely yet to be written, it was deeply informed by Modernists who designed most public schools, like other public buildings of this period, in large, rectangular volumes of reinforced concrete or brick marked by regular registers of windows intended to express the sober democratic purpose of the activity within their walls. Often, especially in the sprawling campuses of suburban and consolidated rural districts, new schools resembled the one-story factories, laboratories, and office parks that employed an increasing proportion of Americans. This departure from historic architectural forms, as in Modernism in general, signaled a widely held belief in the architectural profession that radically new built environments were needed to reflect the radically new technological, scientific, and economic basis of twentieth century society. Even urban and rural districts in Pennsylvania followed the suburban pattern of sprawling, one- and two-story mega-schools with simple brick and concrete facades where vast flotillas of yellow buses arrived every morning carrying children from miles around.

With separate buildings on large sites, elementary, junior high, and high schools in suburban, consolidated, and many urban districts became campuses. Parking and protection of students from traffic and nearby roadways became major issues in their design. In its 1959 “Principles and Criteria for Selection and Development of School Sites,” the Department of Public Instruction’s Bureau of School Buildings instructed, “In leaving the site [students] should pass through a safety zone before being confronted by traffic dangers.” Having thoroughly absorbed city planners’ belief in separating different land uses through zoning, the Bureau advocated:

The site should offer pleasant and healthful surroundings, free from obnoxious odors, dust or polluted air blown from industrial centers... kept away from business and industrial areas. The noise and confusion attending them are undesirable from the school’s stand point. Moreover, stores, filling stations and such are apt to give trouble as loitering places for pupils.<sup>9</sup>

Where undesired conditions required remediation, urban school reformers, still influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, proposed “education parks” to address the congested conditions of inner city “concrete jungles” – an idea that served the interests of both education and urban renewal. In Pittsburgh, for example, in the 1960s educational consultants found the district “planning large high school parks connected by walkways to existing middle schools.”<sup>10</sup> More of these

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Public Instruction Bureau of School Buildings, “Principles and Criteria for Selection and Development of Schools Sites” (1959).

<sup>10</sup> Corde Corporation, *Report on the Education Park* (Wilton CT, 1967), 9.

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education parks were planned than ultimately built. Indeed, responding to the urban riots of this era, some reinforced concrete Modernist schools of urban districts in the 1960s came to look more like foreboding prisons or fortresses with bars on their windows and plans that carefully controlled movement and access of pupils throughout the building or campus.<sup>11</sup>

A revolution in school construction finance enabled this building boom. Just as new federal housing agencies underwrote the boom in suburban homebuilding, in 1947 the Pennsylvania legislature established the State Tax Equalization Board to assume greater responsibility for public school finance. Two years later the legislature chartered the Public School Building Authority to coordinate school construction financing, and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court allowed the creation of municipal school construction authorities with the power to issue school revenue bonds. State subsidies for public education grew from \$30 million around 1940 to \$143 million in 1952 and \$174 million in 1954. In the 1950s, the Public School Building Authority accounted for some 85% of all public school construction in the Commonwealth, with local districts picking up the remaining 15%.<sup>12</sup>

While rural districts followed suburban development patterns – or new suburban districts followed the general pattern set earlier by consolidated rural schools – urban districts encountered their own special problems in the postwar decades. The Second Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities sparked white flight to the suburbs and marked segregation in cities. Despite the US Supreme Court’s ruling against segregated schooling in the 1954 *Brown vs. Topeka Kansas Board of Education* case, school boards in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh responded by creating separate “districts within the district” for blacks and whites. Where neighborhoods were home to both races, they built one school for African Americans and one for whites, and Catholic schools increasingly attracted working class whites who remained in the cities.<sup>13</sup> In Pittsburgh, public school enrollment, which had peaked at 118,000 in 1935, fell to 71,000 by 1950, which the district superintendent “attributed to a

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas, “From Our House to the Big House.”

<sup>12</sup> Butcher & Sherrerd, *Pennsylvania School Authorities* (c.1955); Francis Haas, “Public Education in Pennsylvania – Past, Present, and Future,” in *The Superintendent Speaks: 6 Addresses by Francis B. Haas, Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1954), 46-47; *Public School Building Subsidies* (Harrisburg, 1955), 3; Committee of Fifteen, *Education in Pennsylvania: Today and Tomorrow* (Harrisburg: PSEA, 1958).

<sup>13</sup> Michael Clapper, “School Design, Site Selection, and the Political Geography of Race in Post-War Philadelphia,” *Journal of Planning History* vol.5, no.2 (May 2006); Thomas H. Coode and John F. Bauman, *People, Poverty, and Politics: Pennsylvanians during the Great Depression* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981).

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lower birth rate, exodus of population to suburban areas, and the development of the parochial schools.”<sup>14</sup> In 1966, educational consultants in Philadelphia found 58% of public school children were non-white, while the 1960 US Census reported only 22% of the city’s total population was non-white. Some 35% of school age children attended private or parochial schools – a high for the state.<sup>15</sup> In the words of one historian of education, the “Three Rs of Philadelphia school politics” became “Race, Reaction, and Reform.”<sup>16</sup>

With great public expenditures on school building, suburban development encroaching on older rural communities, and racial conflict in cities, many taxpayers inevitably complained about school financing – especially for construction, which was the most visible expenditure. In 1960, the Governor’s Committee on Education “discussed the possibility of using standard plans for stock school buildings and rejected the idea. It did so because stock buildings are neither practical nor economical.” In addition to Pennsylvania’s varied terrain, the Committee noted, “Local building codes, trade practices and use of school buildings also vary widely. Climate is also a factor. It gets colder by several degrees as one moves up-state. Although this means little to the layman, to the school builder it means wide variation in heating contract work with in turn means added costs if plans are not drafted to accommodate local conditions.” These recommendations also proved politically popular in districts whose leaders and inhabitants viewed their communities as distinct from others in the state. However, the Committee did endorse the priorities laid out in a 1953 *Architectural Forum* special issue on economy in school building: “Number one on the list was ‘Combine small school districts into larger ones...’ and number two was ‘Abandon the too small high school.’ The most efficient construction of schools, like all else in education, depends upon school district reorganization.”<sup>17</sup> Rural school consolidation thus remained a major focus of the postwar era – a trend that reinforced, and was reinforced by, the increasing scale of school buildings and busing programs. Even in the “neighborhood school” system of Philadelphia, 30% of high schools erected between 1945 and

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<sup>14</sup> Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, *Annual Report of the Superintendent*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Corde Corporation, *Report on the Education Park*; see also, David Crane, *North Philadelphia School Facilities Study* (Philadelphia, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> Jon Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform: The Three Rs of Philadelphia School Politics, 1965-1971,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* v.120, no.3 (July 1996), 163-216. See also Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, *The Quest for Racial Equality in the Pittsburgh Public Schools: Problems, Principles, Practices, Plans* (1965); Hank Resnik, *Turning on the System: War in the Philadelphia Public Schools* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Governor’s Committee on Education, *Final Report* (Harrisburg, 1961), 37-38, 41.

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1960 were designed for 3,000 pupils or more, while 48% of elementary schools accommodated 1,000 students or more.<sup>18</sup>

In all, the Commonwealth funded some 3,300 public school building projects totaling about \$3.3 billion between 1949 and 1970.<sup>19</sup> This boom profoundly shaped the architectural profession itself. Amplifying a trend begun in the long Progressive era, many firms came to specialize not only in school design, but specifically in public school design, developing relationships with district administrators who often made up the overwhelming majority of their clientele.

The 1960s also marked a large-scale reorganization of the geography of school districts in Pennsylvania. In 1963, the legislature passed the School District Reorganization Act to make administrative sense of the patchwork of consolidated rural and new suburban districts that had developed in the postwar era. In the public debates over the Reorganization Act held in Harrisburg and across the state, enduring themes in school reform emerged. In thousands of hours of testimony, Pennsylvanians charged that the law would strip them of local control and identity. They told state leaders that, in their haste to impose a new order they had neglected the particularities of local topography and culture. Many cited the costs it would impose upon them for transportation and new land and buildings. However, the larger forces of fiscal and administrative reorganization largely won out, eradicating almost all of the last remaining small districts and the functionaries “whose only purpose,” the Act’s proponents charged, “is the perpetuation of their own dust-laden niches in the school system.”<sup>20</sup> For six years, communities across the state debated and negotiated with state authorities, until the reorganization was finalized in 1969, creating essentially the landscape of school districts that exists in the Commonwealth today.

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Of course, the design, development, purpose, and practices of public schools continued to evolve beyond the period of this context statement’s focus (1682-1969). The federal government has taken an increasing role in public education, mandating testing and performance standards tied to federal funding. Teachers have unionized to demand better salaries, benefits, and working

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<sup>18</sup> Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia, *Physical Standards for Philadelphia’s Public Schools* (Philadelphia, c.1962), 3.

<sup>19</sup> General Assembly Joint State Government Commission, *Public School Building Costs* (Harrisburg, 1970), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Legislative Journal of the Senate, State Library, 716; see also, Bureau of Budget Management records, PA State Archives.

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conditions, even as the membership of industrial and trade unions has plummeted in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Energy crises in the 1970s and early 2000s have placed financial burdens on districts that rely heavily on bussing and on families that drive their children to school.

Pennsylvania's recent educational history is marked by some great continuities, notably the tension between local control and state or federal influence, the persistent social and geographic diversity of the state's districts and communities they serve, and the shifting and contested meanings of "public" in public schooling. A state act authorizing the takeover of "underperforming" districts has been employed in the cities of Chester and Philadelphia, where school boards have been reconstituted by the legislature against the protests of local leaders who sought to retain control. In both cities, private educational management companies were brought in to manage some (in Philadelphia) or all schools (Chester). In the 1990s and early 2000s, national debates over the privatization of public education played out in Pennsylvania's adoption of charter schools. And after heated debate, state leaders rejected proposals for publicly funded vouchers that parents could use to send their children to private or parochial schools. In 2005, the small York County community of Dover gained national attention when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court heard a case in which the local school board had mandated the teaching of a modern version of creationism called "intelligent design" in science classes. To be sure, debates over the meaning of "public" and the roles of schools in society are open and ongoing.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, economic and geographic shifts have altered the landscape of Pennsylvania and its school districts. The crisis of deindustrialization and urban population loss deepened in the 1970s and 1980s, and through the end of the twentieth century the state lagged behind nearly all others in population and job growth. These trends notwithstanding, the Commonwealth's suburbs have continued to boom, consuming farmland and drawing residents from older cities and towns. This has placed further fiscal pressures on growing and declining school districts alike. Following cases in other states, both urban districts and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools have brought unsuccessful suits against the legislature, arguing that they have "special needs" that go unmet by state funding and their limited local tax bases.

These changes and pressures have impacted historic schools in a variety of ways. As larger schools have been built, smaller schools have been decommissioned and sometimes abandoned altogether. Many historic schools have been altered, added onto, or adapted to new uses ranging

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from condominiums to offices to museums. Finally, some have been restored and preserved as public schools.

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Murrell Dobbins Vocational School, Philadelphia  
1936  
Irwin Catherine, architect

*In the 1930s, Philadelphia School District architect Irwin Catherine abandoned the academic gothic style for Art Deco – a more modern style that reflected the growing consumer culture of corporate America. Built as a vocational school, Dobbins developed a curriculum to train machinists and factory workers in this working class industrial district of North Philadelphia. When white flight, deindustrialization, and the Second Great Migration of African Americans from the South made this a black neighborhood with relatively few job opportunities by the 1960s, Dobbins’ curriculum shifted towards programs in auto repair and other entry-level jobs in the service economy.*

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Letsche Elementary School, Pittsburgh  
1941  
Marion M. Steen, architect

*This 1941 Art Deco addition on a 1905 elementary school building was designed by Marion Steen, staff architect for the Pittsburgh School District. Named after former school board president George P. Letsche, it followed a very common naming practice for schools across the state.*

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Overlook Elementary School  
1925, 1950, 1957  
Abington Township, Montgomery County

*In suburban Montgomery County, curriculum and school design closely followed the larger modernizing educational trends. Music was added to the curriculum in 1890; a drawing teacher hired a few years later. A new high school was built in 1908 when the high school course was lengthened to four years with a curriculum that included college and business prep courses. Through the 1920s and 30s the district added new buildings for all levels of education. With post-war population growth the school district twice expanded the original school, including this 1950 wing of projecting bays to maximize natural light and air circulation. The school was demolished in 2001.*

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West Pottsgrove Elementary School, Montgomery County  
1940-1944  
Works Progress Administration

*One of few schools built in Pennsylvania during World War II, the West Pottsgrove Elementary School was funded by the WPA. Due to wartime labor shortages, students participated in the construction. Its design mixed nationally popular Art Deco motifs in cast concrete with masonry walls of local gray stone. Its sprawling two-story plan heralded the predominant pattern of post-war suburban public school architecture. From 1956 to 1958, the building served as a high school, but it was subsequently returned to service as an elementary school.*

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Walt Disney Elementary School  
1953-1955 Levittown (Tullytown), Bucks County

*As a leader in science- and technology-oriented public elementary schooling in the landmark mass suburb of Levittown, the Walt Disney School embodies the great forces of atomic-, space-, and media-age education in the “consumer society” of post-World War Two “sitcom suburbs.” As the first school in the nation to be named for Walt Disney, its 800 pupils in grades K-6 enjoyed a close connection to Disney and his characters, whose likenesses adorn the walls of the building. In their curriculum focused on science and technology, new communications media, as well as the Three Rs, the students were trained to be full members of a Cold War society. Designed by John S. Carver, a Philadelphia architect prominent in public school design in Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Disney School’s physical plant represents important developments in the creation and use of specialized rooms as well as the design of individual classroom spaces that supported this post-war public education.*

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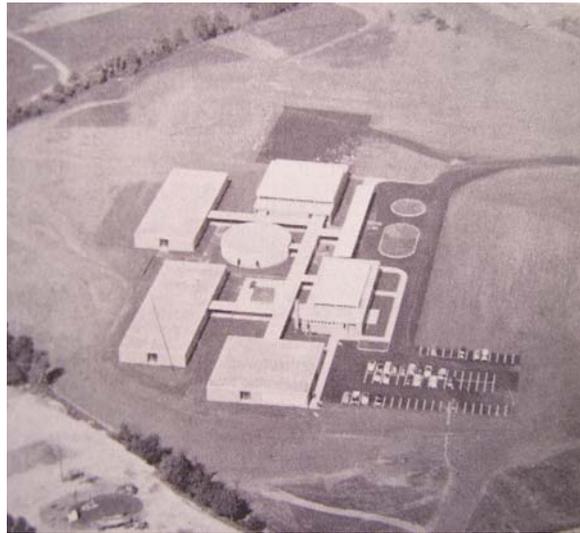
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C.E. Cole Junior High School, Berks County  
1956

*Constructed in 1956 on 32 acres of farmland, the campus consists of six one storey buildings laid out in an open "California" plan of separate buildings joined by covered walkways.. It had 26 classrooms, a library, cafeteria, office, health suite, faculty room, conference room, recreational facilities, tennis courts, and macadam play area. It had capacity for 750 students and 31 teachers. Photographs by Shelby Weaver Splain.*



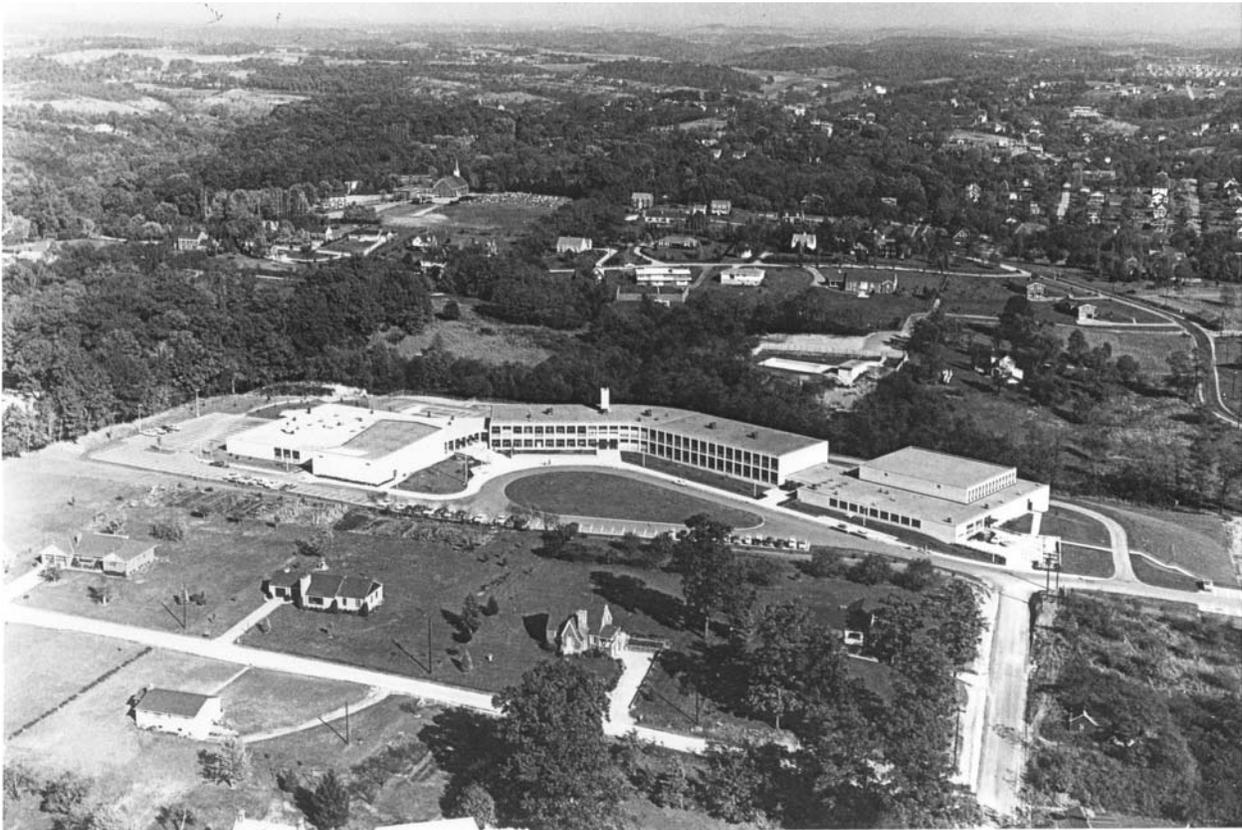
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Ingomar Junior High School, Allegheny County  
1959

*Built at a cost of \$2.5 million in the rapidly suburbanizing North Hills, the Ingomar Junior High school featured split-level classrooms, and a foyer large enough to be used for dances. It opened with a student body of 495, but reached maximum capacity of 1000 students the next year with the advancement of a large sixth-grade class.*

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Stewartstown Elementary School,  
Westmoreland County, 1970

*Constructed in 1970, the Stewartstown Elementary School reflects the Modern Movement in its architecture and the most modern approach to learning in its design. The school is an open-plan, with wall-less classrooms opening around a library on the second floor and a common learning area on the first floor. The aluminum clad building has minimal exterior windows, but inside, bright glass-lined halls look out onto a central courtyard. Classrooms have no doors and moveable accordion partitions permit variable spaces to be created. At its opening the school was praised for its multimedia learning facilities, library, and moveable partitions allowing teaching teams to work with students in groups of varying sizes. Originally the school enrolled over 800 students. It is scheduled for demolition in Fall 2007.*

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There are three common divisions of Pennsylvania school property types:

- 1) **One-room Schoolhouses:** single-room buildings.
- 2) **Public Elementary and Secondary Schools:** single buildings with more than one room.
- 3) **Public School Campuses:** multiple related buildings arranged to form a single educational complex; typically consisting of one or more classroom buildings, gymnasium, auditorium, and sometimes stadiums and administration buildings. Campuses also include landscape features such as playgrounds, fields, parking lots, paths, and plantings.

In every case pay attention to the landscape features of school properties – on campuses as well as in the case of single school buildings that may be surrounded by playgrounds, athletic fields, memorial plantings, and/or paths and parking lots.

***Registration Requirements for Public School Buildings in Pennsylvania***

The principal requirement for individual National Register nominations of school buildings under all Criteria in Pennsylvania is this: a particular school building must reflect important developments in the history of educational philosophy and practice, and it must retain integrity. For nomination of resources in association with this context, preparers should assess and explain the significance of specific schools in terms of the ways in which those schools are tied to the major movements in school reform, curriculum, administration, and pedagogy of the past. Preparers should draw explicit links between the role(s) of education in society and the particular community in question, practices of public schooling, and the design and development of the building(s).

When evaluating under the National Register Criteria, the school must be demonstrated to have significance at the local, state, or national level. A school may be considered eligible under one or more Criteria, but does not need to meet the registration requirements for more than one. Thus a school that is considered significant under Criterion A for its educational importance, but which lacks architectural distinction, may be eligible under Criterion A but not Criterion C. Likewise, an architecturally distinctive school building that is not demonstrated to reflect important trends or developments in

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Education may still be eligible under Criterion C. Similar possibilities hold for Criterion B and D.

In some cases, school buildings may be significant according to other National Register areas of significance. For instance, schools that housed seminal labor or other events may be significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History, though not necessarily in the area of Education. Consult the National Register Bulletins for guidance on evaluating under other areas of significance.

*One-room Schoolhouses*

One-room schools pose a particular challenge for evaluation. There were thousands of one-room schools in the state, some of which remained in operation well past the Second World War. While they are nostalgic, one-room schools are not necessarily significant. Some regions reflect particular habits in construction materials, such as stone or wood, but most one-room schools were simple structures with entry doors on the gable end and three or four windows along each side. To be eligible under Criterion A, a one-room school needs to reflect the interest of a community in local education. One-room schools constructed before the mid-19th century more easily demonstrate the importance of education to the community than those built after c.1860 when communities were required by state law to do so. The continued use of a one-room school is in itself not significant. The registration standards as outlined in the discussion below should be applied. A one-room school may be eligible under Criterion C if it demonstrates notable architectural or construction qualities, such as the Sodom Octagonal School, or design details such as the Milanville school with its picturesque styling, bracketed roof line and arched windows in the belfry. The interior of the school must be considered. Many one-room schools have been converted into residences, for example, and so have diminished integrity.

*Public Elementary and Secondary Schools*

By the mid-19th century, as public educational requirements grew more complex and the number of students increased, schools in both rural and urban areas grew more distinctive. In some rural areas with greater public support for education two- or four-room schools might be built, with a more varied curriculum, such as the two-room Paupack Consolidated School in Palmyra Township, Pike County. Schools in small towns and cities could be constructed of two to eight rooms, depending on the size of the local population, allowing for graded classes. The level of architectural detail and styling

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could vary from the prosaic to highly ornate but spaces in these schools were seldom distinguished by pedagogical purpose. Such schools generally had simple landscapes, with play areas for elementary schools and playing fields for higher grades' sports.

*Public School Campuses*

By the end of the 19th century, in the larger cities and metropolitan areas, schools were generally architect-designed and by the 1890s featured not only inspiring architectural design, but also highly specialized spaces geared toward specialized curricular and social needs. Such features included sanitary facilities, food services, auditoriums, science labs, gyms with locker and shower rooms, music rooms, libraries, machine shops, and dedicated sports facilities such as stadiums, playing fields, and pools. School district administration buildings might also be constructed as part of a school campus. Construction features emphasized quality materials, attention to detail, and impressive public spaces.

In all cases, one of the key character-defining features of late 19th and early 20th century schools, whether urban or rural, was the emphasis on natural light and fresh air: high ceilings and large windows to create a bright airy feeling that would foster a healthy learning environment. Therefore, schools with infilled windows and dropped ceilings suffer from diminished integrity and may not be good candidates for listing.

*Criterion A*

School buildings are not historically significant according to National Register standards simply because they housed the education of a town's young people at a given period in the past—even if a school was the only school that has ever educated the community's children. Similarly, school buildings erected simply because the law required it, or to accommodate population growth, with no new curriculum or changes in educational practice, are not necessarily significant under Criterion A in the area of Education.

In order to sort out whether a school meets the requirements for eligibility according to Criterion A in the area of Education, potential preparers should ask and answer the following sorts of questions:

What specific reasons did the school's developers (usually the school district), architects, administrators, teachers, and local residents give for building the school? What, if anything, did these reasons have to do with the prevailing visions of public education and its role in society? What was the "public" purpose of education at this particular school?

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How did schooling in this community respond to migration, race and ethnic relations, politics, and other major social forces affecting the community?

What was the school's curriculum? Where did it fit into the history of education in Pennsylvania outlined in section E of this MPDF? Did the curriculum reflect any pedagogical innovations of its time? How did it respond to the dynamics of the local or regional population growth and changes? Did the plan and other architectural features of the school and its various rooms/spaces specifically reflect the curricular goals of the school? If so, how?

What "statements" did/does the architecture of the school make about education? Do the plan/layout, façade, and other features of the school's design communicate specific ideas or aspirations about education, its public purpose and role in society?

If these questions can be answered in specific detail – and in ways that embody and reflect the significant patterns in the history of education surveyed in section E of this MPDF – the school is a likely candidate for nomination to the National Register according to Criterion A in the area of Education. If it is unclear specifically what the school's significance might be in the history of education in Pennsylvania it may not be a good candidate for nomination in this area.

***Criterion B***

In order to be considered significant under Criterion B in the area of Education, a school must be demonstrated to be directly associated with a person important in the field of education and the school must directly reflect how the person was significant. Schools simply named after well-known individuals are not eligible under Criterion B, even if the person was important for Education. For instance, the Thaddeus Stevens School in Lancaster may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of Education but it would not be eligible under Criterion B since Stevens had no role in the making of the school. Nor is a school eligible which was attended by a famous alumna, unless the individual is important for something accomplished at the school. Zebulon Pike, explorer for whom Pike's Peak in Colorado is named, attended a one-room school in Solebury, Bucks County, but the school is not significant for that connection. To be considered significant for Criterion B in the area of Education a person must have made demonstrated sustained contributions to or influence on educational practices or developments at the local, state, or national level. An individual such as a popular teacher, coach, or administrator would not be considered significant for Criterion B association.

***Criterion C***

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A school may be considered significant under Criterion C if it has distinctive architectural style, design, engineering, and landscape features demonstrating the important trends in school design and construction for the defined periods or developments outlined in Section E. A school may also be eligible under Criterion C if it demonstrates different building campaigns that reflect the evolution of school design, as long as the architectural and landscape elements are distinctive. Building additions and renovations that simply reflect growth of student population, changing code requirements, or that lack architectural distinction will not be eligible under Criterion C.

The plan, materials, design features, and landscape features of the school must clearly reflect prevailing ideas about curriculum, administration and the role of the school in the community.

***Criterion D***

In the past, eligibility of historic schools under Criterion D for Education has been mostly overlooked. Many schools or school sites have been disregarded due to a lack of features and low artifact counts (e.g. Catts, Cunningham, and Custer 1983; Catts, Shaffer, and Custer 1986; Peña 1982). Based on previous excavations of schools (both standing and demolished), school sites can contribute important information to the study of the material culture of education, of the diffusion of educational ideas and values from educational centers to the periphery, of the influence of local traditions on education, of the evolution of education through time, of gender in education, and of the use of space in educational complexes. School sites may contribute other important information to the study of education. In addition, school sites should not be addressed in a vacuum, but should be addressed in concert with historic and documentary evidence.

A school or school site may be eligible under Criterion D in the area of Education if the data provided contributes important information on the material culture of education. For example, April Beisaw and James Gibb (2004) give an overview of artifacts that have been or may be recovered from school sites. Comparing these artifacts to period catalogs, trade journals, patents, etc. can suggest the degree to which different schools kept up with changes in the ideology and practice of education. This information, in turn, can suggest the degree to which different communities considered education an important investment. Artifacts that represent new ideas and practices in education (e.g. architectural artifacts and educational hardware), when combined with historical documentation and a tightly dated site, can demonstrate how quickly new ideas diffused from educational centers.

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For a standing or demolished school that is not tightly dated, excavations may provide a date for the structure (Peña 1992, Beisaw and Gibb 2003), which, when compared to plan books of the time, can address the above question.

Aside from demonstrating diffusion, school sites may demonstrate the degree to which local cultural traditions were integrated into the broader educational traditions of the time. Addressing this information would require comparing the foundation to the plan books of the day, as well as comparing the information to the architectural traditions of the area. Differences in plan could reflect differences between the cultural traditions of an area and the dominant traditions as expressed in the plan books. In addition, artifactual information can suggest the role of extra-curricular activities in the educational system. For instance, Beisaw and Gibb (2004) have developed a hypothesis to explain the presence of domestic artifacts (e.g. ceramics) at school sites. They suggest that social and community events, such as recitals and concerts or benefit dinners, and gifting could explain the presence of these artifacts on school sites. A more robust database could either test this hypothesis or lead to the formulation of other hypotheses.

Finally, school sites may demonstrate the evolution of educational theory over time. Several sources indicate that schoolhouses were often built on the same property, and oftentimes on the same foundation as previous school buildings (Beisaw 2004, Beisaw and Gibb 2003, Beisaw 2003b). If these different building episodes can be isolated, they may yield important information about the evolution of education in a given community. In addition, if several schools from one community are excavated, their plans, when compared to period plan books, may demonstrate the degree to which the dominant culture subsumed regional variations.

Recently, some archaeologists have focused on examining gender differences in the archaeological record. For schools, records indicate that during the Victorian era schools were sometimes segregated by gender. At the Letchworth Park School in New York state, for example, boys and girls had separate play areas and privies (Bigelow and Nagel 1987). By the early 1900s, however, the Letchworth Park School abandoned this policy. Although it is probable that gender-based differences would be difficult to discern archaeologically, the archaeology of gender in education may contribute important information to the study of education.

One final area in which archaeology could contribute important information to the study of education is the organization of space outside the school. Previous excavations of school sites have attempted to discern play areas on school grounds (Catts, Cunningham,

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and Custer 1983; Peña 1992) and have addressed patterns of refuse disposal (Beisaw 2003a, 2003b, 2004, Bigelow and Nagel 1987). The former studies have been largely unsuccessful while the latter have yielded only redundant data: refuse dumping took place out of sight behind buildings. One study (Heberling, Raber, and Taylor 1996), however, examined a sheet midden for artifact concentrations and suggested developing a broad model for artifact deposition and use. This recommendation could eventually yield important information under Criterion D. In addition, since schools as institutions are subject to rules (Beisaw 2003b), artifact concentrations could yield data on how closely the rules were followed and whether rules differed in different regions, giving insight into local variation and cultural differences.

The above examples are not meant to be an exhaustive list of ways in which a school site could be eligible under Criterion D in Education; instead, they are meant to provide a limited overview of current research into the archaeology of schools and of data that these excavations have yielded. Other datasets could yield significant information about education. In addition, although several research topics pertain to demolished schools, material culture studies, organization of space, and gender-specific studies apply equally well to standing or demolished schools. Assessment of integrity should be based on the questions being asked and the level of knowledge for a particular region.

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For further reading, please consult:

<http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~abeisaw1/Main.html>.

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G. Geographical Data

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(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The context Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Pennsylvania, 1682-1969 for the MPDF Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania is based upon primary archival research, review of existing literature, field survey, and analysis of existing survey files at the Pennsylvania SHPO (Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).

Archival and primary sources were examined for information relating to local or regional developments in the theories, practices, and buildings related to schooling in the state. The history of education in the United States has a respectable body of study addressing the broad development of educational theory and applied pedagogical practices. Historical studies analyzing activities at the state or local level, however, tend to be much rarer. But over the last century, the educational profession has produced a large body of literature regarding pedagogy, administrative practices, school construction and the overall evolution of education as a profession—through numerous master's or doctoral theses, professional publications, policy studies and the like. Records at the Pennsylvania State Archives for the Pennsylvania Department of Education and its predecessors provide information about the establishment of a statewide administrative structure guiding the development of public schooling in the Commonwealth. The archives and libraries in the state university system (formerly Normal schools, then teachers' colleges) and the other numerous colleges and universities in the state all have records related to the subject. County historical societies occasionally hold information, such as photographs and old yearbooks, but holdings tend to be random. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania school districts and individual schools were poor archival records keepers.

The PA SHPO has records for over 1500 historic schools, almost entirely schools built before the 1920s. The files were studied to identify patterns in school construction, for type, material, size, and style. A new survey of twentieth century schools was conducted to discern similar patterns for school types that were not well-represented in the SHPO files. Fifty schools still functioning as schools, sorted by date and region for a representative distribution, were selected and documented. The date range for the survey was c1920 to c1970, ending with the time period when the state completed a decade-long district consolidation program.

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Based on the research and survey information several possible contexts were identified: public schools, private and parochial schools, trade and technical schools, community colleges, and colleges and universities. The primary importance of public education as a theme in Pennsylvania history resulted in this current context for Pennsylvania public schools from kindergarten through senior high school, through the entire period of the state's history. This context covers elementary and secondary schools that were publicly funded and free to all children of the community. Except where historical trends intersected, this context excludes private and parochial schools and institutions of higher education.

Although all regions across Pennsylvania followed the general developmental pattern and periodization identified in the historical narrative, because of the geographic, economic, and ethnic diversity of the state it was decided to keep the property types as simple as possible. Since curriculum and pedagogy are usually clearly reflected in the physical features of the school, property types are based on physical construction attributes. By limiting the property types to three—one-room school, multi-room school, and campus—it is possible to gauge how local cultural values were expressed regardless of whether the school is rural, urban, or suburban.

Standards of integrity were based on a combination of awareness of existing conditions and identification of key character-defining features for schools of each property type. All schools experienced change over time depending on their changing or continuing function. Schools adapted for reuse as offices or residences can show little change or can have dramatic alterations in windows, interior floor plan, ceiling height, decorative detail, and materials. Schools remaining in operation as schools will often have interior alterations in floor plan, ceiling height, and surface materials. Such schools will frequently see changes in fenestration patterns and windows. Large communal spaces such as gyms and auditoriums could be divided into new floors. They will likely have additions, sometimes quite large, that expand the footprint of the original building or even engulf it. By identifying key character-defining features of buildings and their associated historic landscapes it is possible to make reasonable decisions regarding the integrity of potential resources.

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***Statement of Integrity***

This Statement of Integrity discusses the seven categories of integrity as defined by the National Register, for each of the three Property Types (one-room school, multi-room school, campus) defined in this context. A specific discussion of integrity for Criterion D resources is also included.

***Location***

Integrity of Location refers to the requirement that buildings and landscape elements remain in their original location. Normally, a building loses eligibility if it has been moved, since it destroys the relationship between the property and its historic associations, unless the move itself is within the period of significance. One-room schools have occasionally been moved, sometimes for the purposes of education. In Pennsylvania there are a few instances of one-room schools relocated to new public school campuses and used for educational purposes. If the school can be demonstrated to have significance under any of the Criteria, and the original location and landscaping is not demonstrably important to the building's history, loss of integrity of Location may not compromise the eligibility of the resource.

***Design***

Design is the "combination of natural and cultural elements that create the form, plan, style, and spatial organization of a property." (See NR Bulletin How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. All quotations in the Statement of Integrity are drawn from this Bulletin.) It includes deliberately planned elements regarding the materials, decorative details, size, and arrangement of the resource, whether it is a building, a complex, or a landscape. For individual buildings, design includes elements such as siting, orientation, form, massing and proportion, fenestration, location of doors, roof types, and ornaments. Design applies to both interior and exterior elements. For schools, interior integrity of design refers to the presence of significant plan elements, organization of space, materials, and detailing characteristic of a given building type and/or use of space. In simple buildings such as one-room schools even small changes can compromise the integrity of design. Large schools or campuses can tolerate more alterations, but the essential character-defining features of the design must remain. For instance, 19th and early 20th century schools were built with many large windows and high ceilings, creating a light, open, airy effect considered healthy for students and effective learning. Alterations that remove or diminish this effect will certainly compromise the integrity of Design. Integrity of Feeling and Association (discussed below) will also be affected. Alterations, such

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as replacement of windows in original openings, may not compromise integrity if the original intended design effect is maintained; blocking in window and door opening or changing their location or size will certainly result in the loss of integrity. School buildings with interior and exterior alterations that illustrate the development of significant educational activities in the region do not compromise integrity because the alterations can contribute to significance based on change over time (keep in mind that the change over time must be demonstrated to be significant under one of the Criteria; change in itself is not automatically significant).

For campuses, the layout and the relationship of buildings to topography are important elements in Integrity of Design. The arrangement of the buildings, playing fields, playgrounds, and other landscape features to each other, as well as the fabric and location of boundaries, ornamental plantings, drives and parking lots are all elements to consider. It will be rare for historic vegetation to exist but the overall spatial arrangement should be present. The addition of new buildings to a campus or the expansion of individual buildings on a campus will affect integrity of design if it disrupts the visual or material relationship of the historic elements of the campus.

Integrity of Design also applies to the collection of buildings on a campus. A campus may contain a variety of different buildings and structures, including grandstands, administration building, power plant, maintenance building, field house, pool, and so forth. It may also contain a mix of contributing and noncontributing buildings and structures, but it is important that the campus adequately reflect its historic function and educational significance.

***Setting***

Integrity of Setting refers to the physical environment, that is, the character of the place where the property is located. A property may retain integrity of location but have lost integrity of Setting. Physical features of Setting can be natural or built, including vegetation, topography, built features, relationships between built features and open space. Elements of Setting must be considered not only within the boundaries of the property, but its surroundings as well. Integrity of setting with respect to school resources has two dimensions. Integrity of Setting must be present with respect to the school property's internal organization—the relationship of all elements of the property within its grounds, such a one-room school house and its play yard and outhouses. Integrity of Setting with respect to the school's surroundings must also be considered—such as its historic distance from and orientation to the road or its historic neighborhood (rural, urban, suburban) environment. What is important is that the sense of historic place is retained in some fashion. For instance a rural one-room school with a play yard

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and outhouses, originally built along the road on land donated by a local farmer and originally surrounded by farmland will have lost integrity of setting if it is now surrounded by modern landscaping and suburban subdivisions or other development with no visual buffers to set the school apart from its modern setting. An urban or suburban school originally built in a residential neighborhood will have lost integrity of the neighborhood if the neighborhood has changed in function—for instance from residential to commercial if the buildings reflect the change in function—but will not have lost integrity of setting if the neighborhood character is retained, even if the neighborhood buildings have been altered.

***Materials***

Integrity of Materials refers to the fabric of the resource or the key materials that were used in the design, construction, and decoration of the resource. Integrity of Materials is important for the interior as well as exterior of a building. Alterations such as covering siding with vinyl, covering terrazzo floors with carpet, replacing wood or metal windows with synthetics all represent a loss of integrity of Materials. Often loss of integrity of Materials is also associated with loss of integrity of Design. For instance, a 1920s school with an auditorium that is renovated in the 1970s with new seating, lighting, and acoustical wall materials will have lost integrity of both the original Design features and original Materials.

***Workmanship***

Integrity of Workmanship refers to the retention of craftsmanship that went into the construction of the resource. This generally involves such familiar skills as carpentry and stone or brick masonry involved with traditional construction. It also refers to the skilled use of technologies not associated with traditional craftsmanship such as work with reinforced concrete, steel frame construction, pre-fab methods and the like. Generally integrity of Workmanship will be compromised in serious rehabilitation campaigns that involve demolition and reconstruction of school buildings.

**Feeling**

Integrity of Feeling refers to the “Ability to evoke the aesthetic sense of a particular time and place.” This is an intangible quality, which depends to some extent on integrity of Design, Setting, Materials, and Workmanship. Sometimes continued use enhances the integrity of Feeling depending on the kinds of alterations the school or campus has experienced. Basically, the property needs to retain a sense of scale and activity characteristic for its period of significance.

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***Association***

Integrity of Association refers to the “direct link between the property and the... events and persons that shaped it.” Integrity of Association is closely linked to integrity of Feeling, Design, Location, Setting, and Materials. Integrity of Association does not depend on continuity of use. It does require that the property retain its physical features that convey its historic appearance. It must be located in the place where it acquired significance and be sufficiently intact to convey its significance to retain integrity of Association.

***Integrity for Criterion D***

To be eligible for Criterion D a site should have integrity of Location: the artifacts, features, etc., should be in their original location. Sites that consist of redeposited materials would likely not be eligible under Criterion D. Design, in the context of an archaeological site, represents the “intra-site artifact and feature patterning.” (See the NR Bulletin Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties.) For example, different activity areas should be apparent in the archaeological remains. Integrity of Setting generally does not apply for archaeological sites. Under Criterion D integrity of Materials would refer to things like artifact preservation and the level of disturbance to the site. For example, a site that was occupied by a school and was subjected to no other disturbance could be said to have integrity of materials. Materials and Workmanship would generally not apply to the information potential of a school site. Integrity of Association refers to the relationship between the data contained in the site and the topics outlined in the Criterion D registration requirements. It is important to keep in mind that the assessment of integrity should be based on the research questions being asked and the state of archaeological knowledge for that area or topic. For an area or topic that is poorly represented archaeologically, the standards of integrity may be less stringent.

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