Society perpetuates the culture through education. Schools today, as well as in the past, socialize the young to know and understand their culture. This process was of extreme importance on the Western Reserve as the new settlers fought the dual enemies of evil and barbarism. To the Reserve, and then to other areas in the West, Yankees attempted to bring what they commonly viewed as their superior ideas of religion, "the Congregational, or at times Presbyterian, Jehovah." Wherever a Yankee population moved, it brought with it the "twin sisters" of New England religion and education, and an army of Yankee schoolteachers, the key to the promotion of their ideas.

The teachers often came to an area very different from the one that they had known. The Connecticut Western Reserve was bounded on the north by Lake Erie; on the south by forty-one degrees north latitude; in the east by the Pennsylvania line; and in the west by a line parallel to and 130 miles west of the Pennsylvania line. The Ohio Land Company had purchased this wilderness land for speculation. The closest areas of civilization were Canandaigua, New York and Pittsburgh. Descriptions of the early life in the settlements resemble those of other pioneer groups. They told of physical hardships, hard work, and privation. The lack of luxuries was endured as the pioneers carved a life for themselves that they modeled after the customs and habits of New England. The towns of Hudson, Burton, and Oberlin developed with the New England look and a strong messianic and evangelical spirit.

The settlers traveled in families or in town groups, although now and then an individual set out alone to see what was there. Usually there was a spirit of mission and a strong desire to promote education. A church and a schoolhouse were built as soon as there were enough people and a clearing:

   Education was deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of these people as was their love for liberty and independence . . . nowhere in as large and thickly settled country are the people generally so moral and well behaved as on the Reserve, and no place where education is so general among the people.  

So it was the idea of saving the West for God that brought the Yankees west, and the fear of the devil keeping them from learning to read the word of God that promoted education.

Education proved to be contagious, and "learning like rum, created an appetite which could feed only on more of itself." The Yankee grammar schools led to the development of academies, seminaries for women, colleges, teacher institutes, and schools for the blind and deaf.

There is the belief that the Yankee migration and contribution has not been as appropriately documented as that of other immigrant groups. History of the National Period in America tells the story of the immigration and movements of the Asians, Germans, Scotch-Irish but not of the often carefully orchestrated settlements and resettlements of the New England Puritan. "Why did they leave the New Canaan where they had tamed the savage forest and learned to live with the savage weather?" In order to understand the influence that the Yankees had on civilizing this country, we will look first at the unique nature of their religious beliefs. The next step will involve tying this unique belief to education and then to the complex nature of
the schoolmaster and schoolmarm. There is no doubt that the Yankee schoolteachers, with their strong evangelical spirit, fashioned the moral makeup of the citizens of the United States more than any other single group. It is also true that the stereotype of the Yankee schoolmarm set the standard for teacher behavior for about one hundred years or more.

The schoolmarm from the East is a stock character in stories about the Old West. Her genteel poverty, unbending morality education, and independent ways... moral, self-sacrificing, discreet, dedicated to the welfare of children, and capable of bringing out the best in men. She is unconcerned with personal goals and needs.  

The rationale for the movement west has often been tied to the self-sacrificing nature of the Puritan. At the same time, we know much of the Yankee ingenuity and resourcefulness which resulted in the development of a merchant class in America. Much has also been said of the Yankee superiority in religious terms. The constant search for perfection combined with the desire to see if the grass was really greener on the other side of the mountain brought the New Englanders west. Despite accounts of geographer Jedidiah Morse on the poor land quality and tales of massacres by the Indians that appeared in the Boston Gazette, the migration continued. They left behind poor land, an undesirable climate and heavy taxes for the New Canaan, establishing towns that were governed much like the New England towns that they had left.

In this last quarter of the twentieth century, a new explanation of the migration has been suggested. The men who moved west are viewed as religious pioneers exploring new territory, adventurers, critics of the old order or shrewd business men. Women have not been accounted for in this way. Their romantic and religious fervor has been recognized, but Polly Welts Kaufman, in Women Teachers on the Frontier, speaks of empowerment. This empowerment came from Protestant evangelical religion. For the first time, women could travel west alone and be in charge of their own destiny. Flora Davis Winslow would say in explanation of her desire to teach for the National Board of Popular Education:

I teach school because I wish to be independent and not beholden to my friends for a livelihood. I go West to do the will of my Heavenly Father.

Now women also might deal with their restless spirit in an acceptable way.

With a heart yearning to do and suffer... [I] Desire to visit Western Country to see something of the world we live in.

While the reasons for the migration were multiple, their religious belief appears to have more unity, if not simplicity. The Protestantism practiced worked toward conversion and, hence, salvation. "Nevertheless, perfection should be the aim of all. A lower aim will not suffice." The population on the Reserve was of the "same origin and alike opinions, and tastes and habits."

Those who came founded institutions, passed laws, and structured society around commonly shared religious beliefs. The quest for perfection plus the commonly held desire to build a New Canaan to better serve God found an answer in education. Lyman Beecher set the pace in his Plea for the West:
We must educate! We must educate or we must perish by our prosperity. If we do not, short from the cradle to the grave will be our race. If in our haste to be rich and mighty, we outrun our literary institutions, they will never overtake us; and only come up after the battle of liberty is fought and lost . . . .

With all deliberate speed they set about to build a church and school in each community. This school, as it does to this day, was to reflect the common culture.

The common culture of Yankee New England has been given a great deal of credit for shaping the behavior of those who settled Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and points west. The influence of this group seems to have gone far beyond expectations and numbers. Despite some local and contemporary criticism of this domination of politics as well as education, evidence does support its contribution if not its superiority. It is the assumption of this paper that further research and knowledge of those New Englanders who educated the children (and often the young adults of the Reserve and the West and South) inspired the next generation to accept many of the teachers’ ideas and make them a permanent part of American morality.

A survey of the existing literature on teachers will find that "no generalizations can safely be made regarding teachers: like politicians, preachers, or speculators, they were 'critters' of various stripes." Carlyle Buley goes on to describe the low esteem in which teachers were held in the Northwest in this time period. Is it really that teachers and the vocation of education were not highly regarded or that the record of what teachers actually accomplished was not faithfully recorded by the historians of the time period? There are an equal number of complimentary statements. For example, "The men teachers were of the first order, they all were university men and generally in transition for the ministry." Teachers’ institutes, vehicles for inservice and training, are advertised and described. The training of future teachers for service with the National Board of Popular Education has been more clearly placed in historical perspective by Polly Kaufman. Catherine Beecher and Governor William Slade helped to prepare 1,000 women for work in the common schools of the West. In their own words we hear from a few of the 250 who actually left a written record about their teaching experiences. Something so important to the development of the republic as education needs additional study.

If there is a class in the country whose influence exceeds that of all others, which is now in a position to do more in the country than all others, it is the teachers in the common schools.

The study may begin with the most unique contribution of the Yankee culture, the American Public School, or Common School. By 1830, only Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York had established free public school systems. This concept of a state system of education came to Ohio from New England and was put in place by Yankee men, Nathan Guilford, Caleb Atwater, Samuel Lewis, Calvin Stowe, and Harvey Rice, to name just a few. Using public lands set aside for schools, another New England idea, these men provided leadership in building a school system that matched their Yankee ideals. Some were superintendents in the schools of Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus. Samuel Lewis was the State Superintendent of Education in Ohio. A few owned education journals that were widely distributed in the state. Joined by migrants from Western New York who were well imbued with an evangelical spirit, these men won a victory for the New England elements in establishing the state school system in Ohio.

What of the nature of the facilities and the newly established schools of Ohio and points west?
Much I might write about the experiences of this school, which had very little in them was disagreeable. The children were docile and teachable. Little by little, here as in other and later schools, I picked up bits of teaching knowledge through passing experiences. I had no occasion to use corporal punishment in this school, although I once made the mistake of coming very near it. But as I was not yet seventeen years old I may be partially excused.25

Not only was this woman very young (she began teaching in the schools of Eaton at fourteen), but she was learning on the job. It is to her great fortune that the students she found were "docile and teachable." Our teacher does not speak of having any problems with parents. An early journal documents the "Trials of Country Teachers": "an 'M.D.' in her district, who declares everything 'modern' in school instruction to be a 'perfect humbug.'" This doctor went on to complain about the students spending time practicing spelling words on a slate. The school directors met and decided that there was "no moral wrong" in the practice. In the view of the author of this article, "teachers are largely at the mercy of obstinate pupils and meddlesome parents . . . "26 So while the remaining accounts provide no definite agreement on the nature of the students or on the method of teaching, there appears to be consensus on the role of the parents. That "the youths were stimulated to continue industry, if not by example, by the constant interest and untiring efforts of their parents," but often "too much responsibility is thrown upon the teacher, and far too little assumed by the parent."27

Parents may not have been forgotten in the accounts that remain of socialization and education on the Reserve, but male teachers often suffered this fate. The feminization of the field of teaching took place in the nineteenth century, and one may recognize that the antebellum move by women into the primary school might have been viewed by some as a stampede or at least as a takeover. The reasons for this move hardly indicate takeover. In marriage or in teaching position, women continue to be subordinate to men in New England and the West.28 The increase in the numbers of women does not appear to have been based upon better teacher training, although this might be true, but rather upon their willingness to work for less and their perceived moral superiority.

This does not fully explain the limited documentation on individual male teachers. Leonard Fletcher Parker is an example of a male who is accounted for and whose biographer also tells of one of Parker's teachers. This young man:

... who was preparing for the ministry and used to go to the bank of the creek every noon, as the boys thought, to pray—so icily sober about it that there was no sympathetic response . . . such a man should preach to a congregation long it would become a mass of spiritual ice.29

The career of this unnamed young man was probably typical. Even though his students thought it wrong, he probably went on to become a minister as did so many other young men. Teacher was only a step in a career plan. Tracy Oviat, a well-known graduate of Western Reserve College, began his work as a teacher at Elyria High School, served as a minister, and became the first librarian of the Cleveland Public Library.30

Leonard Parker himself had a very different career. He became a teacher in a district school at the age of sixteen and, after many changes in emphasis, remained in education. Parker's first teaching job began at age sixteen when he went to work at the local district school. Leonard Parker admitted failure and left after two months. He had been unable to teach students who were his friends and were approximately his own age. His next teaching position at a school six miles from home also resulted in failure when Parker was unable to maintain discipline.
A marked change took place in the life of Leonard Parker when he decided to enroll at Oberlin College in 1845. Oberlin was not a normal schol, but the impact that this college had on teacher training on the Reserve is significant. Many have written about the long winter vacation that was unique to Oberlin. During this break, students taught in local schools, and Parker was no exception. He taught in a school started in Fitchville, Ohio, by a former Oberlin student and then went on to start schools in Florence and Birmingham. Parker’s pedagogic skills were further enhanced by the college classes he taught in the absence of the professors. 31

Oberlin College served to influence a deep interest in religion and foreign missions while assisting Parker to become a better teacher. He also met his future wife, Sarah Candace Pearce, at Oberlin, where she also was a student. "Her parents were of the original Puritan stock—the choicest New England type." Before she married, Sarah Pearce was a teacher and principal in Vermont and Ohio and worked at the Willoughby Female Seminary. Before finally moving to Kansas, the Parkers continued to work in education. In Brownsville, Pennsylvania, Parker took charge of the public schools where his influence was felt beyond Fayette County because of his efforts to organize teachers and his publications. 32

Oberlin College made a great impact on the life of Leonard Fletcher Parker and several thousands of other young people on the Reserve. Parker dated the change in his ability to teach to the time when he was enrolled in the College. In fact, Stewart Holbrook has said the "Oberlin Collegiate Institute was to influence the culture of Ohio and the newer states in the West as perhaps nothing else before or since."33 This thoroughly Yankee settlement planned for and established an institution of higher education that would educate both men and women, and at least 2,064 women attended Oberlin from 1833 to 1860. Of this number, 82.2% or 514 are known to have been teachers sometime during their lifetime. 34

Rebecca B. Veazie was one of these women. She attended the women’s program from 1840 to 1843 but did not graduate. Her teaching career spanned her lifetime of 1814-1870 and took her to such places as Jamaica and the West. Her work for the American Missionary Association also took her to Virginia and Louisiana.35 Her family is certain that Veazie practiced her teaching by instructing younger students in the Prep School at Oberlin. While no records remain to document this teaching, it was known to be a common practice for upperclassmen to teach younger students.

"Solid Blocks or Pure Marble Best Represent Her" is the epitaph of an Oberlin graduate ('45), Mary Atkins Lynch. Her teaching career was constant from 1835 to 1882. Lynch’s Puritan ancestors came from England to Connecticut, and her father made the move to Ohio with a group of Connecticut emigrants. Mary Atkins attended Oberlin while she taught school. She is credited with founding Mills College in California, which she started as Benecia Seminary.36 Again, it can be said that her year at Oberlin made an impact on her missionary spirit, and it was probably at the Oberlin Female Moral Reform Society that she met her future husband, John Lynch.

While some of the teachers in this time period cited their college experience as the turning point in their teaching careers, others looked to the influence of individuals such as Mary Lyon and Catherine Beecher. Women from families of modest means enrolled at Mt. Holyoke from 1830 to 1850 (1,397), hoping to learn to teach so that each would be able to support herself until marriage. It was Lyon’s penchant for planning that students took from the school, and it was teaching that best fit a life plan for women. Much like the Oberlin women, 82.5% taught school even though for half of these the career was for a brief six-year period.37 Many of these women also taught in and founded female seminaries in the West and continued the Lyon
tradition for another generation. Lake Erie College is one of the products of the Holyoke dream.

The contribution of Catherine Beecher was much more complex, however. Beecher was among the first to recognize the power of the school in socialization:

Six hours every day are spent with teachers, whom they usually love and respect, and whose sentiments and opinions, in one way or another, they constantly discover. They are at the same time associated with companions of all varieties of temper, character, and habit . . . . The simple fact that a teacher succeeds in making a child habitually accurate and thorough in the lessons of school may induce mental habits that will have a controlling influence through life . . . . And when females are educated as they ought to be, every woman at the close of her school education will be well qualified to act as a teacher. 38

With the support of educators like Horace Mann, Henry Barnard and Samuel Lewis, Catherine Beecher made her plea of 1835, "An Essay on the Education of Female Teachers," a reality.

Catherine Beecher's plan was based upon the assumption that each New England town could send one to twenty laborers to do God's work in the West. This system depended upon a network of seminaries that trained teachers who would go West and South and train more teachers. Horace Mann agreed strongly with Beecher that women were "a divinely appointed ministry" in the "sacred temple of education." 39 The National Board of Popular Education was the vehicle used to accomplish this lofty goal. The 1,000 women, daughters for the first time in America of literate women, who had experienced a personal conversion to evangelical religion, joined the National Board. Women were recruited through lectures, newspaper articles and seminar visits. After a four-week training period in Hartford, Connecticut, volunteers were recruited to go west. Many went for reasons cited earlier: shortage of jobs, adventure, and the missionary spirit. Lucy A. Bicknell was one of the teachers from the Reserve who served the National Board. She was born in Windsor, Massachusetts, and lived in Lorain before attending Oberlin. Little is known of her teaching career except that she taught from 1849 to 1857 in the schools of Ohio, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Iowa. She did marry in 1857 and lived her later life in Cedar Springs, Michigan. 40 One can attempt to measure the significance of the National Board, Mary Lyon, Catherine Beecher, and Emma Willard by the impact they had on the transmission of the culture although the exact route of this transfer will never be fully known to history.

Another path of transfer was through the many Ohio journals that attempted to assist teachers to improve instruction. One such journal was The Ohio Educational Monthly: A Western Journal. Articles dealt with ways to improve teaching:

A true teacher loves his work . . . . feels an interest in his pupils . . . . is always firm . . .

seizes every opportunity to add to his professional knowledge and skill. 41

The Teacher Institutes were a sample of a means for this improvement:

Summit County Institute -- The annual session of this institute was held at Akron during the five days commencing Oct. 29th. The exercises were under the direction of I. P. Hole, Sup't of the Akron Schools, and were eminently professional and practical in their character. Mr. Hole was ably assisted by T. W. Harvey, of Painesville, who gave instruction in arithmetic, geography, and the theory and
practice of teaching. Evening lectures were given by Pres. H. L. Hitchcock, of Western Reserve College, Hon. Anson Smyth, of Cleveland, Rev. Carlos Smith, of Akron, and Messrs. Hole and Harvey. About one hundred teachers were present. Thirty-three names were added to the Monthly's subscription list. 42

Another means of improvement in pedagogy and of transmission came through the development of public and private normal schools. Before 1840 there were no normal, or teacher training schools. By 1870, every northern state had at least one as well as academies and seminaries that trained and educated future teachers. Every state also followed the lead of Massachusetts and established a Department of Education.43 It would be of great significance to document the New England contribution here as well.

By 1870, we see a field that is in the process of change. In the growing normal schools and Teacher Institutes, students learned not only the art of pedagogy, but "the philosophy rather than the art, of social culture." This social culture was still Puritanical and spoke against instrumental education and for versatility that would lead to a continual ascent to improvement. 44

We see further change through successful feminization of the field. In Massachusetts in 1837 there were 3591 women teachers, and by 1848, this number had grown to 5510. Horace Mann expressed his pleasure in this "reform" because he believed, as did so many others, that women were better suited to the job. By 1870, the numbers had reached 74%, very close to the 85% figure we now use.45 While the West had not become so feminized, the figures for the increase in women in teaching were not far behind.

Colleges such as Oberlin, normal schools, academies and public high schools probably could not guarantee improved teaching or continued conversion of the new settlements to Yankee morality. "By the third decade of the nineteenth century, New England had come to regard the Northwest as a boundless meadow spiritually 'whitening for harvest.'"46 Who would be better able to carry out this crusade than teachers, especially the women who taught the masses in elementary schools.

Women may sigh through long years to come for the ballot-box, forgetting how large a share she has not only in the family, but in the schoolroom . . . . surely the votes of the women are deposited in every ballot-box in the land by every manly hand that has been led by feminine influences, at home or school to love justice and purity in high places.47

FOOTNOTES


3Ibid., 265.

4Holbrook, Yankee, 32-33.

5Hutchinson, Western, 270.
6Holbrook, *Yankee*, 74.

7Ibid., 297.

8Ibid., vii-2.


10Holbrook, *Yankee*, 35.

11Hutchinson, *Western*, 268.


15"Hudson Centennial Celebration: Hudson, Ohio, June 5, 1900." *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications* 9 (May, 1901), 325.


18Buley, *The Old*, 370.


32Ibid., 30-43.


37David F. Allmendinger, "Mount Holyoke Students Encounter the Need for Life-Planning, 1837-1850," *History of Education Quarterly* (Spring 1979), 40.


41"The True Teacher," *The Ohio Educational Monthly: Organ of Ohio Teachers' Association* 17 (March, 1868), 85-86.

42E. E. White, ed., *The Ohio Educational Monthly: The Organ of the Ohio Teachers' Association and the Commissioner of Common Schools* 15 (1866), 422.

44"The Institute-Teaching One Another," *The Ohio Educational Monthly: An Organ of Ohio Teachers' Association* 17 (March, 1868), 77.


47"The School Mistress," 611.