

**“FROM WRETCHED EMPLOYMENT TO HONOURABLE PROFESSION”:
THE CHANGING IMAGE OF TEACHERS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ONTARIO**

By

Geoffrey James Booth

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Theory and Policy Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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ABSTRACT

At the turn of the nineteenth century, schooling in Upper Canada was, for the most part, haphazard and unsupervised. Yet, in less than a century, the province could boast of a free, universal and compulsory system of state-run education which ranked among the best in the world. This transformation was due in large part to the ability of Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Schools for Upper Canada during much of the period, to alter public perceptions of teaching. Ryerson’s hope for a professional corps of teachers enjoyed considerable success. However, changing social and economic conditions, combined with the practical experience of teachers, altered the trajectory of Ryerson’s initial vision. Through the reminiscences of superannuated teachers writing at century’s end, this paper shows that teachers’ view of themselves did not necessarily parallel the one constructed by Ryerson, or any other bureaucrat.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the vision, encouragement and support of my family, friends and numerous volunteer readers, this work would never have come to fruition. In particular, I would like to recognize the assistance received from my parents, Gordon and Geraldine, my partner and best friend, Julianne Ecclestone, and her parents, Tony and Marie. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Linda Bonenfant, volunteer reader for the Ontario Audio Library Service, Trent University, for her timely transcription of a daunting assortment of archival material, without which this work would not have been possible. In addition, I gratefully acknowledge the advice and encouragement of committee members David Levine and Hesh Troper, and the work of friends Elizabeth Harfenist, Pat Serafini, Jane Casey, and staff and volunteers at PAL Reading Services and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, for the time and effort they contributed to this project.

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INTRODUCTION

The word “teacher” evokes many stereotypes in popular culture. Notions of the “school marni” and the strict severe schoolmaster are perhaps the two most popular icons which the modern-day media have employed to characterize turn-of-the-century teachers. From where do these images come and why are they so enduring? Further, do they have any historical credibility? Are they, in fact, accurate portrayals of the teaching profession as it was in the late nineteenth century? What function did these images play in helping to form a corps of educational professionals who became an integral part of the educational state, as it developed in Upper Canada?

This paper will argue that popular images, while often idealistic, were a necessary, if often unpredictable, force in the creation of a centralized and professional educational bureaucracy in Ontario. By examining the development of education during the early, middle and late nineteenth century, this paper will show that popular beliefs changed toward those who taught in Upper Canada. Initially, teachers endured the negative scorn of most Upper Canadian settlers, who perceived them as inept idlers and charlatans. As the century progressed, calls for educational reform waxed and waned, but little in the way of real change occurred until Egerton Ryerson became Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada. Drawing upon his earlier experiences and the social challenges which confronted him and his contemporaries, Ryerson proposed a teaching model which stood in stark contrast to what many Upper Canadians

believed about the individuals who taught in their communities. From this position, Ryerson and other school promoters succeeded in reshaping early-nineteenth century notions of the teacher to fit their vision of education and its place in the dynamic social structure within which they found themselves. For them to succeed in this endeavour (at a time of political democratization and demographic sea change), it was critical that formal institutions such as education become bridges of stability between the upper and lower classes. If this was to be, then public acceptance of, and respect for, teachers must be firmly established.

Ryerson worked tirelessly to build a centralized educational bureaucracy whose policies reflected the dominant class values of the period. This in turn had a significant impact upon the criteria used by Education Department officials to discern a *good* teacher from a *bad* one. By the early 1870s, however, Ryerson's waning political influence and the numerous social changes which were taking place resulted in the emergence and subsequent endorsement of newer educational ideas. Thus, while Ryerson was able to lay much of the initial foundation for the pattern of education in general, and the teacher icon, he could not foresee or control forces which modified and recast his vision of what should constitute an *ideal* teacher. In addition, as teachers themselves evolved professionally and developed critical self-awareness, they in turn began to interpret educational policy, to suit their individual and collective needs both inside and outside of the system. Thus, exploring the evolution of the icon in Upper Canada during the nineteenth century also reveals a change in social attitudes toward teachers and their emerging profession.

At first glance, it might seem logical to compare icons with "reality". However,

semantics aside, this is an impossible task. First, historians have abandoned definitive history, in favour of shedding light upon manageable (and hopefully, representative) facets of their chosen topic. In the case now before us, some chronological and geopolitical parameters are super-imposed, to more sharply define the area of interest. This study limits itself to teachers and their profession in nineteenth-century Upper Canada.

This has been done for several reasons. First, we witness the formation of the educational state, from its rude beginnings in the Constitutional Act of 1791, through to the development of a bureaucracy embracing free, universal and compulsory education. Second, the period marks a shift from rural-agricultural to a more urban-commercial, then industrial society in Upper Canada. The resulting uncertainty this caused among many so-called reformers informed their thoughts and actions as they began to lay the foundation of the social institutions that would govern the province. Teachers played a pivotal role in this transformation and it is only by considering their emerging status that we appreciate how important it was that public attitudes toward teachers had to change, to facilitate their participation as agents of the state. Finally, because teachers were present at the initial stages of formal state education in Canadian history, their experiences, coupled with the work of school supporters, became the framework that would be adopted as the educational model for much of the western provinces.

Because the teacher icon is itself a dynamic commodity, it defies convenient historical categorization. The icon(s) exists and is shaped by the elements around it, which by their very nature makes them difficult to grasp for more than an historical moment. Historical “reality” is, at best, a reconstruction of what is, in the final analysis, an incomplete and thus distorted representation of the past. The dilemma facing anyone

studying the intricate and complex web of relationships that link icons to individuals is that too much or little emphasis may be made of any of the delicate strands which formed these interactions. Further, we must also understand that even though much of what has been written about Ontario's education system tends to dwell upon the teaching profession's reaction to an increasingly-bureaucratized and centralized institution, teachers themselves had a considerable degree of discretion in their day-to-day classroom activities, thanks in large part to the initial inability of educational bureaucrats to monitor and measure desired standards of conduct and curriculum. It is, therefore, no easy task to recover and reconstruct the professional and personal lives of nineteenth-century Ontario teachers, let alone to compare them with the icons discussed at the outset. Still, through an examination of official reports and the recollections of teachers themselves, we can appreciate the expectations placed upon the fledgling teaching profession, and how these in turn helped to augment, reinforce and/or modify existing popular notions of teachers.

Much of what is known about institutional history of education in Ontario is contained in the annual *Ontario Educational Reports* issued by the Department of Education, and material in the *Documentary History of Education*, compiled by J. George Hodgins, official librarian and historian for the department, and secretary to Dr. Egerton Ryerson, who has been credited with laying the foundation for a public system of education in Ontario. Much time and energy has been devoted to the study of these records. The more recent studies have been revisionist interpretations which attribute darker motives for providing mass education than the earlier optimistic school of

education history.¹

The voices of the teachers themselves are secondary, not so much because they were dismissed as irrelevant, but because the records left by them are few and scattered among the official documentation. The primary source upon which my analysis draws exists in the reminiscences of retired teachers found in Education Department correspondence and the personal papers of J. George Hodgins, both of which are currently part of the Archives of Ontario in Toronto.² In the 1890s, Hodgins sent circulars³ to all superannuated teachers and school boards in Ontario, asking them to recollect their teaching experience in the formal provincial system during its first fifty years of existence. Hodgins published a few responses in the ninth and twenty-third volumes of his *Documentary History*, leaving the remainder in Department files and among his personal papers, which were donated to the Archives in 1910. It is through these many personal memories that we develop a sense of a teacher self-image and how teachers simultaneously reflected, reinforced and/or refuted the *ideal* teacher being proposed by educational promoters like Egerton Ryerson. In the process, this collection also provides a contextual palimpsest upon which to examine the contradictory and complementary perspectives held by early education bureaucrats and the contemporary stereotypes which may have informed broader public opinion. Taken together, it is my hope to provide readers with a more accurate idea of what it was like to be a teacher in

¹ This view became very popular during the 1970s and 1980s. See works by Alison Prentice, Susan Houston, Robert Gidney, J. Donald Wilson and Bruce Curtis, cited in bibliography.

² The letters in Department materials have been catalogued and are available in "Local School Histories and Teaching Experiences", Series E 2 RG 2-87-0-1 to RG 2-87-0-113. The entire file has been transferred to microfilm – Ref. # MS 914, Archives of Ontario (hereafter, AO). Future references to these collections are indicated by name and file number. The letters found in the "Hodgins Papers: Responses of Superannuated Teachers" have not been catalogued and are located in three files, referenced F 1207 MU 1378. However, I have included lists of names and article numbers for both, to provide some consistency. Note also that some records appear in both record groups. See Appendix A

nineteenth-century Ontario.

³ See Appendix B.

CHAPTER ONE

“A WRETCHED EMPLOYMENT”

Education in Upper Canada at the turn of the nineteenth century was an uneven enterprise, consisting mostly of sectarian-centred or privately-funded schools. Even prior to the Constitution Act of 1791, however, recently-arrived United Empire Loyalists had begun to demand schooling for their children.¹ The first record of a school operating in Upper Canada was in Fredericksburg in 1786, but by 1800, several private schools were in operation. An Act was passed in 1807 which set aside Crown land for a grammar school in each district, but this action was intended as a means of providing education for the children of the fledgling upper-class in the colony, whose progeny it was assumed would one day preside over the affairs of government and business.² The fact that these state-funded schools were intended for children of the colonial elite soon caused political rifts between the appointed governor and Legislative Council and the elected Legislative Assembly. Education simply reflected larger social divisions in Upper Canada. Despite the colony's recent creation, its fledgling elite made every attempt to cling to and emulate the customs of the Mother Country. Likewise, this situation affected teachers and the duties that were expected of them in the new colony. Unlike the United Kingdom, which had established grammar schools for the well-to-do, the fledgling elite of Upper Canada often resorted to either private teachers, or sent their sons away to be educated. At the

¹ See J. G. Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher: A Historical Account of Progress, 1800-1910*, (London: Gage, 1967), p. 1.

turn of the nineteenth century, there was little to encourage the development of a similar system of education in Upper Canada. Squabbles between the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly over how to divide and disperse grant money for schools produced political deadlock, resulting in little government action on education after 1807.

As more families settled the area, however, demand increased for some kind of publicly-funded system, in the form of subsidies or grants to help defray the cost of hiring a teacher. The elite nature of the grammar schools excluded most newcomers, who usually found that they could not meet the financial and social pre-requisites for attendance there. This led to the creation of more than 200 private schools, catering to the largely-rural and isolated settlements which were springing up along the Great Lakes. A subsequent act, passed by the Assembly in 1816, provided a government grant (not exceeding 25 pounds) for any community that was prepared to meet certain criteria.³ Subsequent attempts by members of the colonial elite to subvert the spirit of the Act failed and by the 1820s, education in Upper Canada remained almost entirely in the hands of local communities.

But in spite of demands for public education, it appears that most settlers believed that with few exceptions, teachers were at best, a necessary evil, and at worst, charlatans and slugabeds. For children of the rich, they were mere providers of the knowledge necessary for future leaders of the Province, who required literacy in order to be able to govern “with enlightenment and devotion.”⁴ Imparting these qualities to others presupposes a fair degree of formal education on the part of the instructor and, as there

² Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 1.

³ These included holding a public meeting to discuss the question, electing three trustees to hire, dismiss and provide accommodation for teachers, and select textbooks from a prescribed list. Grant money was

were no institutions in existence in Upper Canada which could furnish this educational standard, one might assume that when the schoolmasters were being considered for hire, whether it be private, or in one of the aforementioned state-subsidized grammar schools, reputation and educational qualifications were an asset, if not an outright requirement of employment. This, however, was the exception, rather than the rule. Aside from some notable scholars such as John Strachan, later the archbishop of Toronto, most instructors proved deficient in both the educational background and maturity necessary for competent instruction. This, along with the inferior social status accorded teachers, cast them and their craft in a rather dim light. As Althouse concludes, this “could not fail to bring upon the teacher contempt, not only because of his academic and professional limitations, but also because of his inevitable subserviency to an ambitious class and sect.”⁵

Teachers could expect to be treated with the same disdain by most of the pioneer settlers with whom they came into contact. For one thing, education for the vast majority of Upper Canadians was a much less formal exercise. While there were some common schools established by the early 1800s, most children still received what rudimentary education they could from parents, or at Sunday School, if there happened to be one nearby. Teachers in the common schools generally made their living by boarding around⁶ with local families, collecting meagre wages or payment in kind. One contemporary observer commenting on the state of education in Upper Canada in 1818 noted that “[t]he great mass of the people are at present, completely ignorant, even of the

available only to those schools with a minimum enrolment of 20 pupils. See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 2.

⁴ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 1.

⁵ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 3.

rudiments of the most common learning. Very few can either read or write...”⁷ The calibre of teachers, it seems, was not much better. Teachers at this time tended to be people for whom teaching was not an occupation of first choice. Among them were transients, hoping to make some money on their way to another place, or those who had already failed in that attempt. “Most of the Common Schools were staffed by persons of very slender scholarship, of doubtful morals, and of such feeble mentality that they were unable to cope successfully with the strenuous conditions of frontier life.” One observer even characterized them as “the worthless scum... of every other country.”⁸

Thus, teaching in early nineteenth-century Upper Canada carried meagre social status. The images of the period portray teachers as targets of ridicule, rather than purveyors of knowledge. If they are to be properly understood, however, these less-than-flattering comments need to be placed in some historical context. First, education at this time was not deemed to be an essential factor contributing to the success of young men. Fundamental literacy and numeracy skills certainly aided an individual in his quest, but more important considerations were “physical strength, determination and natural shrewdness”.⁹ This perception in turn prescribed a limited role for teachers. Their services were considered to be a secondary consideration, thus demand—and wages—remained low. People who could make a better living doing other things were likely to do just that. All of these factors conspired against any individual who might be considering this career move. “A teaching post was commonly regarded as the last

⁶ As we will see in Chapter Three, contrary to the universal condemnation which this practice received from educational officials, some teachers reported that they had enjoyed the experience. See pp. 83-85.

⁷ Comments of E. A. Talbot, circa 1824. Quoted in Althouse., p. 4.

⁸ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 4.

⁹ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 5.

refuge of the incompetent, the inept, the unreliable.”¹⁰

Thus, although upper- and lower-class views of teachers differed in perspective, they were, on the whole, similarly negative. Hence, in Upper Canada at least, there emerged a socially accepted and shared attitude disfavouring teaching as a whole, and teachers in particular. Given their meagre wage and the insufferable conditions of employment, it should come as no surprise that so many teachers ended up reinforcing, rather than challenging, the stereotype. After all, if a teacher were treated unfairly, or cheated out of wages, the only legal recourse open to him or her was to sue, and this no doubt was far more trouble than it was worth in such frontier conditions.

Only a handful of the responses to Hodgins’ circular pre-date the 1830s. Of those that do, all are submissions of town officials with whom Hodgins also communicated.

J. M. Wills, secretary to the school board in Aurora, wrote to Hodgins in March of 1894 that, according to “the oldest Inhabitant” of the town, the first two teachers employed at Machells Corners (later Aurora) were retired army officers, neither of whom stayed very long.¹¹ Still, that teachers were employed at all demonstrates that, despite their bad reputation, there remained a steady, if limited, public demand for education. And it should be noted that some districts were operating well-established schools as early as 1803.¹² On the whole, however, public support for teachers remained at a low ebb for much of the first half of the nineteenth century. This would constitute one of the major challenges to face educational reformers like Egerton Ryerson as they strove to convince others that popular perceptions of teachers and teaching were, in fact, misguided.

¹⁰ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 5.

¹¹ AO E2 RG 2-87-0-70, J.M. Wills.

THE EARLY LIFE AND CAREER OF EGERTON RYERSON

Much has been written about the motives for Ryerson's educational reforms, however, it is not the intent of this discussion to pass judgment or second-guess its intent or outcome. Rather, the focus here centres upon how Ryerson's attempts at creating a system of free, universal and compulsory education in Upper Canada necessitated a change in public perceptions about teachers, one that countered the negative stereotype by proving that, in reality, it was not teachers themselves who embodied these traits. The first step in this process was the creation of a new teacher icon. Ryerson had to raise the image to a professional status, so that conditions—and NOT the individual—became the culprit. His efforts, buttressed by the maturing bureaucracy he oversaw eventually reshaped the popular image of the teacher in Upper Canada. By first proposing an *ideal* teacher, based on his own experience and what he observed in other countries, Ryerson demonstrated that the negative image of teaching was not germane to the profession, but merely the result of neglect on the part of both government and the public at large. Ryerson's image of the ideal teacher in Upper Canada was by necessity forced to adopt many faces, in order to accommodate and reflect particular aims at different times during the early years of state education in Upper Canada. But it ultimately succeeded in turning popular perception in favour of the teacher as a professional, whose expertise and integrity made him or her worthy of public respect.

The teacher image which grew out of the Ryerson years represented a hybrid which not only reflected his familial roots and experiences as a young man, but also the

¹² Not surprisingly, this was established by the Rev. John Strachan. See AO E2 RG 2-87-0-77, C. J. Watral.

larger socio-political environment which characterized his times. This does not suggest that Ryerson alone was responsible for what happened to schooling in Ontario during the nineteenth century; rather, it recognizes the influence he and many other school promoters wielded in determining what would eventually crystallize as the educational bureaucracy in the province.

Ryerson was an omnipresent influence in the evolution of the system, from his appointment as assistant, then chief superintendent in 1844, until his retirement in 1876. By tracing his career and social surroundings, one develops critical insights into the metamorphosis of the teacher icon and Ryerson's central role in presenting these images to the public. The periods studied in the remainder of this chapter cover Ryerson's early life, his first career as a Methodist preacher-turned-reformer, ending with the political events which would put him in a position to implement his vision of education. They would eventually place him at the apex of educational bureaucracy in Upper Canada, an entity which would slowly but surely centralize, professionalize and bureaucratize education in the province. Each period contributed to Ryerson's vision of what should constitute the ideal teacher, and would continue to inform his action in the educational arena until his retirement.

Egerton Ryerson was born March 25, 1803, in the town of Vittoria in the Long Point settlement at Lake Erie. The Ryerson family saga typified the experience of many other United Empire Loyalists, who left the United States following the American Revolution. Egerton's father, Joseph, aged 15 at the war's outbreak, had signed on as a despatch runner, and by war's end had been awarded a Lieutenancy in the New Jersey

volunteers. He took advantage of a British offer of free transportation and a land grant in New Brunswick, but soon after followed his older brother Samuel to Upper Canada, settling on approximately 600 acres in the newly-surveyed County of Norfolk. Growing up here affected Egerton Ryerson in two important ways. They were his mistrust of the United States and his exposure to Methodism. These experiences would guide and shape many of the decisions he would make later in his life, both in and outside of education.

Given the Loyalist heritage of most Upper Canadians at the time, it is not surprising that many settlers harboured a deep suspicion of all things American. In the Ryersons' case, however, this animosity stemmed more from events surrounding the War of 1812 than from any family history. In the years between 1783 and 1812, some Loyalists had mixed feelings toward the United States. Many—Ryerson's father and uncle among them—had been born there and still claimed relatives who had stayed on after the Revolution. They were aware of the arguments which had raged over independence and several looked back fondly upon the years they had spent earning a living there. Some, in fact, had even returned during that time, having been overwhelmed by the pioneer hardships they had endured in the wilderness of Upper Canada. The result was that many of these settlers were neither self-consciously nor defensively Loyalists.¹³ The War of 1812 put an end to this ambivalence. The British mustered troops to defend the colony, which had the effect of reawakening loyalty to the Crown. Egerton Ryerson's experience in this regard was profound. On May 15, 1814, his Aunt Amelia, widow of Samuel who had died of tuberculosis two years earlier, had had the farm put to the torch by an invading force of American soldiers. The experience of the war left many Upper Canadians—Egerton Ryerson among them—feeling mistrustful of and vulnerable to,

American influence in their lives. This would play a large role in determining the manner in which he would assemble his vision of education nearer century's end.

In contrast to Ryerson's adherence to the Crown and all that it embodied, was his conversion to Methodism. At the time, the Church of England weighed heavily in elite colonial affairs and it was expected that respectable families should also be Anglicans. Conversely, those espousing dissenting views, exemplified in faiths such as the Baptist and Methodist denominations, were considered religiously inferior, and were just as often suspected of republican sympathies. This belief arose because these denominations had very large followings south of the Colony's border, which made them guilty by association with the American cause.¹⁴

Methodism, once affiliated with the Church of England, had been separated from the Church because of founder John Wesley's move to ordain ministers and organize a distinct religious hierarchy, a strategy meant to protect the Methodist vision from withering away upon his death. However, Wesley was unable to control his American ministry, and its leaders soon developed a unique hybrid, which proved to be better suited to the needs of the New World.¹⁵ The change was hugely successful, and by the early 1800s, Methodism was making its mark upon the frontier settlements of Upper Canada. Travelling preachers rode on horseback through new settlements, expounding Methodist teachings to people for whom the Established Church often represented a distant inaccessible entity.

Methodism's direct contact with individuals, coupled with its rejection of formal

¹³ Clara Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), p. 14.

¹⁴ "Increasingly after the War of 1812, the Methodists were suspected and denounced in the violent, bitter press disputes of the day, accused of having American sympathies and of being under American influence." Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 27.

ritual in favour of spontaneous passion, struck a chord with many Upper Canadian pioneers. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, few settlers had the time or the means of regular attendance at a formal house of worship. Families had to clear and plant crops, in order to survive their first winter; thus, spiritual matters were usually the concern of an individual or family, rather than a formal church. Methodism fit this lifestyle to a tee. Saddlebag preachers could enter a small community and conduct services in fields, barns—anywhere people could gather to receive the gospel.

Methodism's success in Upper Canada was attributable in large measure to Francis Asbury, a founding member of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. Asbury lobbied for a rule forbidding Methodist ministers to stay in any community longer than six months, in favour of traveling the continually-expanding frontiers of settlement, to promote the cause. Asbury had pleaded for this to keep Methodist preachers from shirking the extremely-difficult circuit travel for the relatively-comfortable surroundings of towns and villages.

In spite of what some observers may have said about them and their tactics, the circuit-riding preachers did achieve in large part what they had set out to do—save souls with their message. “Their methods were crude, their message was stripped to the bare essentials...But they succeeded.”¹⁶ Amelia Harris, Ryerson's cousin, recalled vividly the effect these individuals had upon the Long Point Settlement:

Too much cannot be said in praise of the early ministers... they have every privation and fatigue, praying and preaching in every house where the doors were not closed against them—receiving the smallest pittance for their labour.... Their sermons were very loud, forcible and energetic... They encouraged an open demonstration of feeling amongst their hearers—the louder, the more satisfactory... [T]heir lives bore testimony to

¹⁵ For more information, see Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 15.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 22.

their sincerity.¹⁷

Following the War of 1812, Methodism's association with Yankee sympathies, real or otherwise, became greater cause for concern.¹⁸ In a society still struggling to lay the foundation of a British-style social hierarchy, this association soon took on even more significance. The fledgling Upper Canadian elite sought to reconstruct English society and this in part required the pre-eminence of the Anglican Church.¹⁹

Ryerson converted to Methodism, following his eighteenth birthday, although it had been clear for some time that his sympathies lay there. All of his older brothers had done the same before him, as had his mother, Mehetebel; however, his father Joseph was altogether a different story. After many years of hard work, the senior Ryerson had finally achieved some degree of status and wealth in his community and along with this British colonial respectability came the social expectation that one would lend unfaltering support to the Established Church. As one source notes, in Joseph Ryerson's duties as high sheriff, he regularly "entertained the officers of the Crown, many of them (having been) old war companions..."²⁰ After learning of his son's formal conversion to Methodism, Joseph presented him with an ultimatum: recant or leave the family home. Ryerson chose the latter and went off to teach near Hamilton until labour difficulties on the farm forced his father to reconsider.

Central to Methodism's teachings was the recognition that people needed to be

¹⁷ Quoted in C. B. Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson: His Life and Letters*, Vol. I (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1937), p. 5.

¹⁸ "Loyalty to the Crown and the menace of republicanism must have been constantly in the mind and on the tongue in the Ryerson home." Quoted from Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 3.

¹⁹ "They preferred, they needed, for their perilous security, to march, as they believed the stars to march—"rank upon rank, the army of unalterable law"—they expected, in fact craved, clergymen whose conviction of the truth and fitness of Anglican doctrine was total and totally matched by a sense of the dignity and security of the Anglican Church Establishment." Quoted from Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 28.

²⁰ Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson: His Life and Letters*, Volume II, (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1947), p. 195.

educated, in order to benefit from what was being imparted to them. In response to her son John's request for advice on proper teaching methods, Susanna Wesley wrote the following:

In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their Will and bring them to an obedient temper... Whenever a child is corrected, it must be conquered; and this will be no hard matter to do if it be not grown headstrong by too much indulgence. And when the will of a child be totally subdued and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many follies and inadvertences may be passed by... [W]hen (the conquering of will) is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason and piety of its parents...²¹

As we will see, hints of this approach appeared much later, when Ryerson began to articulate his educational vision.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ryerson at 20 was well educated for the standards of his day. He was able to achieve this education for two reasons. First, his father's farm was only about a half-mile from the district grammar school. Second, Ryerson's brother-in-law James Mitchell (later to become a judge) was in charge there, and his father and uncle were trustees of the school. The day after his father had issued his ultimatum, Ryerson left home, working as an "usher" at the district grammar school, where he remained for two years as a student teacher. Apparently his father could not, or would not, use influence to force him out of the school. After returning home at his father's request a year later, Ryerson eventually left once more and studied Latin and Greek at the Gore District Grammar School in Hamilton. He began keeping a diary, which he appears to have devoted almost entirely to religious reflection.²² Following a

²¹ Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 15.

²² Ryerson kept a diary from 1824 to 1832. As noted by Hodgins, "These voluminous diaries and journals [were] full of details, chiefly of Dr. Ryerson's religious experience..." Quoted in Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 7.

severe illness during the winter of 1824-1825, Ryerson accepted an offer to substitute for his sick brother as a circuit-riding preacher. Thus ended his formal education.

He traveled the Niagara Circuit, preaching at camp meetings and other gatherings.²³ In September, Ryerson attended the annual Methodist Conference and was assigned the York and Yonge Street circuit, which he shared with another man. It was here that Ryerson first came to match wits with the influential Church of England archbishop John Strachan. Strachan controlled the Colony's most influential clique, known as the "Family Compact". The Compact was an informal but tightly-knit inner-circle of the colonial elite which exerted immense political and economic influence in Upper Canada from approximately 1815 to 1840. It controlled the appointed Legislative Council in government, and fostered ties with other elite interests through patronage and affiliations.

During a sermon Strachan delivered on July 3, 1825, he leveled attacks upon dissenting Christian denominations, taking particular aim at Methodism. He labeled Methodist preachers as "American in origin and sympathies, as ignorant persons who had forsaken their proper callings to preach what they neither understood nor cared to learn."²⁴ Strachan also argued that the Church of England should be given a large grant, in addition to exclusive enjoyment of the Clergy Reserves, in order to counteract Methodist influence, "and to enable an Established Church to maintain the loyalty of Canada to the Crown".²⁵ Ryerson was asked to respond and countered with a 12,000-word rebuttal which was published in *The Colonial Advocate* on May 11. In it, Ryerson

²³ By Ryerson's own recollection, he delivered sermons 29 times every four weeks during this period. See Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 11.

²⁴ Quoted in Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 23.

²⁵ Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 23.

not only defended Methodism, but also asserted that one could, in fact, be a Methodist and a British-Canadian patriot. In so doing, Ryerson challenged Strachan's preference for special status for the Anglican Church. Strachan firmly believed that if the Church of England were to withstand denominational dissent and prosper in Upper Canada, it must be given official status—in effect a union of church and state. Ryerson fervently disagreed, outlining his argument as follows:

When we see the heavenly affection which she [Christianity] infuses into the minds of men represented as nothing more than an attachment to a particular constitution or establishment, and those bonds of charity by which she embraces all mankind described as the principle which only unites colonies to “the Parent State”, to the unchristianizing of all other kingdoms who bow not to this political shrine: when we see the balm of her consolation, which the beds of affliction require to unite the distressed to their God and to prepare them to meet him in person, perverted to the sordid purpose of extending the influence of a favourite church; but above all, when we see that which is converted into a vehicle of preferment, a political tool, exhibited as a bright emanation from Heaven, the Church of Christ, founded upon Jesus Christ and his Apostles, we are sensible that the religion of the meek Saviour is made to bleed by a wound more fatal than those which are inflicted by the ravings of infidelity. She is attacked by the most dangerous of all enemies, one who lurks within her borders, shelters himself under her canopy, and feeds upon her benevolence.²⁶

While this rebuttal was written during the mid 1820s—almost twenty years before he was put in charge of public education in Upper Canada—it foreshadows similar arguments Ryerson would make against sectarian schooling in the Province.

In his first major confrontation with Strachan, Ryerson quickly found himself the reluctant champion of Upper Canadian reformers and the enemy of the colonial establishment. Strachan's position at the apex of the Family Compact made him a formidable opponent, but once Ryerson decided to fight rather than flee, he found he had

many allies who were prepared to support him.²⁷ Strachan's contention that the Church of England should constitute the official religion of the colony stemmed from a clause in the Constitutional Act of 1791, which set aside one-seventh of the land in each township for a "Protestant clergy", which Strachan claimed was synonymous with the Church of England, and that no other denomination should be permitted a share of the wealth generated by the Reserves. But by the end of the second decade of the 1800s, the presence of many other Protestant (and other religious denominations) brought increasing calls for an end to this ecclesiastical monopoly.²⁸ Meanwhile, Ryerson, someone whose family background and social status certainly would have pointed to membership in the network of the old Upper Canadian elite, found himself on the outside, at the forefront of an emerging reform movement, at a time when the colony found itself experiencing social, political, technological and cultural change.²⁹

The confrontation with Ryerson was one in a long list of disputes in which Strachan had involved himself. He had previously drawn fire from critics over his attempts to reform the educational system. In 1824, he oversaw legislation which created a colony-wide General Board of Education. This gave Strachan and his supporters effective control over land which had been set aside for schools in 1797. However, Strachan soon drew criticism for his attempts to use the General Board for sectarian purposes and in 1833, it was disbanded and the district boards of education were once more left to their own devices. While discussion on educational reform continued during

²⁶ Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, pp. 24-25.

²⁷ After briefly considering his options, Ryerson "devoted a day to fasting and prayer, and then went at [my] adversaries in good earnest." Quoted in Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 29.

²⁸ See R. Douglas Francis, et al., eds., *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*, (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1992), pp. 225-227.

²⁹ This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. See pp. 76-78.

the 1830s, it was increasingly drowned out by calls for political reform.³⁰

As mentioned earlier, Upper Canada was largely a creation of the United Empire Loyalists, who settled the area after the American Revolution. Following the Napoleonic Wars, there was a steady stream of immigration from the United Kingdom and other British colonies, lasting until mid-century.³¹ Between 1825 and 1834, York, incorporated as Toronto in the latter year, saw its population jump from 1,000 to 10,000. The new arrivals resented the control which the Family Compact held in the colony and throughout the 1820s and 1830s agitated for an end to the colonial oligarchy, in favour of responsible government. Egerton's brother George Ryerson also became involved in political reform, making two trips to London and presenting two petitions on behalf of the colony which called for an end to appointed rule and Strachan's exclusive claims to the Reserves.³² Egerton continued his attacks on Anglican privilege in his post as editor of the Methodist *Christian Guardian*, a position he lost briefly, but regained in 1833.

REBELLION AND REFORM

The 1830s marked a coming of age for Ryerson. He was becoming a well-known figure of reform, much like his contemporary, William Lyon Mackenzie. A brief comparison of the two reveals that although both fought on the same side initially, they did so for very different reasons. Both men were reformers. Both edited newspapers that called for an end to the transgressions of the Family Compact. However, the motives

³⁰ These reforms ranged from the establishment of elected, autonomous district boards, to centrally-controlled, appointed bodies to coordinate activities. See Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871*, (London: Althouse, 1988), p. 23.

³¹ "This constant stream of newcomers did not abate in any degree until mid-century at which time the population had reached almost a million." See E. Brian Titley and Peter J. Miller, "Education in Ontario in the Nineteenth Century", in *Education in Canada: An Interpretation*, E. Brian Titley and Peter J. Miller, eds., (Calgary: Detselig, 1981), p. 57. For more general social trends, see Chapter Three, pp. 77-78.

behind their respective stances were different. “To Mackenzie, the question was largely one of economic justice, to Ryerson, it was primarily one of religious equality.”³³ Still, there can be little doubt that what Ryerson saw happening in political circles must have concerned him. His agitation was certainly not for political revolt; rather, as the colony edged closer to rebellion with the likes of Mackenzie, Ryerson moved more towards defence of the Crown, reverting to his Loyalist tradition. When revolt appeared, Ryerson was clear on this point: “The precepts of the Bible and the example of the early Christians, leave me no occasion for second thoughts as to my duty, namely, to pray for and support the “powers that be”, whether I admire them or not and to implore the defeat of “fiery conspiracy and rebellion”.”³⁴

The rebellion and its aftermath once more re-ignited anti-American sentiment among many Upper Canadians. Although no direct threat was imminent south of the Great Lakes, the uncertainty created by political instability made it appear well-founded at the time. The War of 1812 had witnessed the burning of York and, following peace, British administrators took considerable pains to fortify their military establishments along the U.S. border, as well as improving domestic transportation and infrastructure, to lessen the colony’s traditional dependence on American routes. While these actions temporarily restored the confidence of Upper Canadians, their fears soon returned in the years following the Rebellion of 1837. Mackenzie, who in the aftermath had fled to the United States, helped organize the Hunters’ Lodges, which conducted American Patriot invasions into Upper Canada during 1838. While inflicting little real damage, the

³² These trips were made in 1828 and 1831. See *Sissons, Life and Letters*, I, pp. 31-37.

³³ *Sissons, Life and Letters*, I, p. 192. Mackenzie’s support of religious equality was not necessarily welcomed, and has been characterized as “unsettling at the least and at most, acutely embarrassing to Methodists.” See *Thomas, Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 61.

incursions were very effective in spreading anti-American sentiment among colonial settlers. They also gave observers like Ryerson pause to reflect upon how best to govern and educate the masses of recently-arrived people who continued to flood the colony after the Rebellion. Once more, conservative Tory and reformist Whig political philosophies posed two logical, but very different, solutions. The former suggested public regulation by way of authoritarian control. Reformist ideas leaned more toward a reconstruction of individual character by way of public education. The respective roles these two paths envisioned for the teaching profession were in some ways similar, but they required very different dispositions. In the first, the teacher became nothing more than a tool of social control, with little hope of enlightening those he or she taught. In this scenario, responsible government might prove disastrous.

Here, society was assumed by its very nature to be incapable of governing itself. In the second, the teacher was afforded more freedom in that he or she would be employed to inculcate self-reflection and logical reasoning, a much more elusive endeavour. Regardless of which path was chosen, public attitudes towards teachers would have to be made more amenable, if a system were to have any real chance at success.

Meanwhile, even though the colony had grown considerably by the end of the 1830s, the number of children who received even an elementary education remained low, at about four per cent.³⁵ A grim picture of the state of education was revealed in the report of the Education Commission of 1839. Charged with investigating the

³⁴ Ryerson to "a friend in Kingston", written December 5, 1837. Quoted in Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, p. 397.

³⁵ Source quoted is estimate of J. G. Hodgins, Ryerson's secretary. Cited in R. Douglas Francis, *Origins*, p. 229

mismanagement of state funds at King's College, the body also provided a glimpse of the reality of teaching during the last days of Tory educational policy. Along with the paltry number of schools and pupils to attend them, the commission reported that many of the teachers were "unfit for this responsible station from their want, either of literary or moral qualifications", which it blamed on low pay.³⁶ There was also grave concern over the physical state of the schools themselves and the unmonitored use of American textbooks. The Commission made several recommendations, two of which called for the establishment of model schools throughout the districts and the creation of a normal school to train teachers. Thus, there was an awareness that teachers were key players in any educational reform, and that the state had a responsibility to improve their lot. But most Upper Canadians did not make this connection. As has already been noted, their experiences with these people had usually been brief and less than positive.

The first legislative attempt at reform was made in 1841, with the passage of a school act in that year. The act created District Councils, which were to oversee schooling, collect taxes and monitor teachers. But caught in a bigger political fray, the act lacked the financial backing necessary to implement it until 1843. In the interim, Assistant-Superintendent for Public Instruction Robert Murray conducted a tour of district schools and solicited input from local school authorities on school reform. The results revealed that there was great disparity among districts in schedules, textbooks, curriculum and organization.³⁷ They also reveal that public perceptions of the teacher as incompetent were not always supported in reality. "While there were many teachers

³⁶ Quoted from Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 46.

³⁷ Curtis notes one striking example of a school which not only drew up a written code of conduct for teachers and students, but directed that the rules be read aloud and posted in the schoolhouse. See Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, pp. 57-58.

relatively incompetent at transmitting the skills of literacy, there were at the same time many others who had been professionally trained, or who were highly educated.”³⁸ The comment suggests that some progress was being made in education, despite official inaction in political circles during much of the 1830s. These cases were, unfortunately, exceptions to the rule.

Murray tried to resolve the dilemma of inconsistency in teaching by enforcing one of the directives of the 1841 Act, which stated that government funding would only be provided for one teacher per district school—in effect forcing district councils to standardize the number of teachers and schools in their area. The move also placed teachers squarely in the public realm, with Murray likening the office of teacher to the property of a landholder.³⁹ The reality, however, demonstrated that this new status was largely illusory. Teachers wrote to Murray, criticizing the Act’s shortcomings, citing corruption of local authorities and the powerlessness of teachers to do anything about it. One of them, Henry Livesly, wrote Murray twice, describing his situation: “The existing system [was] so uncertain that teachers were changing places ‘oftener than a turn-pike-gate keeper.’ A teacher dare not take a house or buy a cow, for he knows not but he may be dismissed by the end of the week.”⁴⁰

For his part, Murray seemed genuinely interested in creating a strong, decentralized educational system. He argued repeatedly for the improvement of teaching in Upper Canada. By making teachers “respectable, efficient and independent”, Upper Canada could ensure the future of its young generation. “Everything done to improve the condition of teachers would tend ‘directly to advance... both civil and religious [sic] of

³⁸ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 61.

³⁹ Curtis, *Building the Educational State* p. 70

the province.”⁴¹ As it turned out, the Act was supplanted by the School Act of 1843, a piece of legislation created and guided through the Legislature without the input or assistance of Murray, who had, presumably, fallen out of political favour.

While the new school act did not specify rules for teachers and students, it did increase bureaucratic intelligence regarding what was taking place in school. It created district superintendent positions, to facilitate the gathering and communication of reliable information about each area, and teachers were relieved of the indignity of having to collect school taxes themselves. The act also increased the amount and availability of funds for education, which helped boost enrolments. The reports supplied by the district superintendents yielded many horror stories of teacher ineptness, but their main complaint was with the local school trustees who were often seen as incompetent to judge teacher qualifications. Meanwhile, events in the larger political arena resulted in the dissolution of the Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry, under whom the Act had been sponsored, and elections in October of 1844 resulted in the removal of Murray, in favour of the new administration’s educational champion—Egerton Ryerson.

Although Ryerson had earlier supported reformist causes, his defence of Governor-General Metcalfe against charges of political impropriety had landed him in a favourable position to pick up where Murray had left off. During the previous decade, Ryerson had been involved in various ways with Victoria College,⁴² and had recently written on the subject. In 1844, he outlined his vision to create

a fabric of Provincial Common School Education—of endeavouring

⁴⁰ Quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 72.

⁴¹ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p.72.

⁴² As a supporter and board member, he had raised funds for the institution during the 1830s, and was unanimously appointed its principal in September of 1841. For more information, see Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, pp. 578-580.

to stud the land with appropriate school houses— of supplying them with appropriate books and teachers— of raising a wretched employment to an honourable profession— of giving uniformity, simplicity and efficiency to a general system of elementary educational instruction— of bringing appropriate books for the improvement of his profession within the reach of every schoolmaster, and increasing the facilities for the attainment of his stipulated remuneration— of establishing a library in every district and extending branches of it into every township— of striving to develop by writing and discourses in towns, villages and neighbourhoods, the latent intellect of the country.⁴³

Having proposed his vision for a system of public education in Upper Canada, Ryerson now needed to give it substance. The Colony was not what it had been twenty years earlier, and change had resulted in political revolt. Public education therefore, must promote social stability amidst changing conditions, and to do that would require the transformation of the mass of Upper Canadians now confronted with representative government, from “passionate” dispositions, to ones governed by “reason” and “intelligence”. In choosing this path, Ryerson was poised to continue what Murray had begun, with one significant alteration—his system would be centrally administered and would, therefore, take its cues from him. If education and individual self-government were the ends Ryerson had in mind, then teachers were surely the primary means by which these aims would be achieved, and this meant that their social position must be elevated, publicized and bureaucratized. Ryerson found some concrete answers to his dilemma outside his home province.

After accepting the position of Assistant Superintendent in October 1844, Ryerson began an official⁴⁴ tour of several European countries, to investigate their systems of education, before returning a year later to report on his findings. He toured England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Prussia and Italy,

⁴³ Ryerson, taken from his defence of Metcalfe. Quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 99.

picking up ideas wherever he found them amenable to the Upper Canadian situation. He was attracted to the gentle but firm discipline exhibited in Prussian education, to the teacher training at the Edinburgh Normal School, and the organization of schools in Ireland. Public respectability for teachers became a cornerstone of Ryerson's vision very early in his career as chief superintendent. On his tours of countries with established facilities for training teachers, he had been impressed at the ensuing status with which teachers were treated. It followed then, that the lack of respectability accorded Upper Canadian teachers could be corrected by creating an institution to turn out competent, trained state professionals. He emphasized this in 1847 when he stated:

The best plans of instruction cannot be executed except by the instrumentality of good Teachers; and the State has done nothing for popular education, if it does not watch that those who devote themselves to teaching be well prepared... In all countries where School Teachers are regularly trained, the profession of teaching holds a high rank in public estimation.... Thus the infant and youthful mind of a country, by the law of public opinion itself, is rescued from the nameless evils arising from the ignorance and pernicious examples of incompetent and immoral Teachers.... School Teachers will respect themselves and be respected as other professional men.⁴⁵

He synthesized these ideas in *A Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*. The paper outlined theories explaining pedagogical method and the social importance of education, with particular emphasis upon the importance of inculcating respect of authority and responsibility for social order. Ryerson adopted the belief of Archbishop Whately of Dublin, who was also an Irish National Education Commissioner. Whately argued that "representative governments were imperiled by popular ignorance... If people were to be governed as 'rational beings,'

⁴⁴ It is not clear whether his expenses were covered by the Government, or Ryerson himself.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Thomas, *Ryerson of Upper Canada*, p. 104.

then the more rational they are made the better subjects they will be.”⁴⁶

Teachers played a central role in mastering this challenge. And, Ryerson took advantage of what he had seen in Europe to further define his vision of the ideal teacher. Drawing upon Prussian models, Ryerson proposed that “[g]ood teachers were never still and were never seated. They did not rely heavily on books because they had completely mastered course material...At the same time, the teacher could instantly connect the content of even the most abstruse school lessons to the practical existence of ‘the most ignorant man.’”⁴⁷

Ryerson truly believed that by improving the calibre and conditions of teachers, the political and social harmony which seemed to be slipping away from Upper Canada could be effectively restored, preserved and regulated. The first means of achieving this would come with his drafting of the School Act of 1846. As we will see, it would be another quarter-century before free, universal, compulsory education would come to Upper Canada, and another after that before the teacher as positive role model had fully taken shape.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 102.

⁴⁷ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 104.

CHAPTER TWO
“A GOOD MASTER”

Recalling his education in Upper Canada during the 1830s, one observer stated:

The school houses then were generally small and uncomfortable, and the teachers were often of a very inferior order. The school system of Canada, which has since been moulded by the skillful hands of Dr. Ryerson into one of the best in the world... was in my day very imperfect indeed... when the advantages which the youth of this country now possess are compared with the small facilities we had of picking up a little knowledge, it seems almost a marvel that we learned anything.¹

The aim of this chapter is to outline how the teacher icon—along with the educational system itself—was reshaped dramatically during the period from 1846 to 1871. Egerton Ryerson played a large part in transforming public beliefs about teachers. First, he used the legislative and political influence of his office to wrest the focus and control of education away from local communities and turn it to the purposes dictated by his department. Using successive School Acts, Ryerson defined and redefined his *ideal* instructor, in an attempt to elevate teachers to the status of respected professionals in their communities, equipped with the expertise (supplied by his office) necessary for the public to function in the emerging bourgeois culture. Ryerson was able to redirect criticism of his department’s initiatives by positioning it as a “neutral” force in the process. Ryerson employed the “neutrality of natural progress”—which he claimed was embodied in education as he defined it—to counteract and discredit resistance. However,

discrepancies between administrative theory and the actual practice of teaching in a region which was experiencing rapid and uneven economic development thrust unanticipated demographic change into the composition of the teaching profession itself, distorting and recasting Ryerson's initial educational vision, forcing him to accommodate these new and unforeseen realities.

The Ryerson era of Ontario education is generally said to have begun with the passage of the School Act of 1846. The Act introduced many changes to the existing system of education in Upper Canada. It was the first statute to define the duties of teachers. It also laid the groundwork for a normal school in Toronto and began a process of systematic intelligence gathering that would greatly enhance the education department's ability to monitor teacher activities and legitimate its institutional authority.

The Act was drafted by Ryerson and was for the most part a reworking of his *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction in Upper Canada*. Just before its publication, Ryerson wrote that he intended the 400-page document to "explain to all parties what I think, desire and intend" for education, adding that "I would not hesitate to resign my situation to-morrow, and take my place and portion as a Methodist preacher, if I thought I could be as useful in that position to the country at large."² The report had followed his European and American tours of schools in 1844 and 1845, and contained recommendations based upon what Ryerson considered to be the best of each system he had observed. He had previously criticized the School Act of 1843 for being too American, pointing out that it relied too heavily upon educational legislation from New York. Aside from his ostensible mistrust of American politics, however, Ryerson wished

¹ Canniff Haight, quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, pp. 366-367.

² Egerton Ryerson, *The Story of My Life*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1883), p. 410.

to correct what he perceived to be a central flaw of the New York approach. It provided for a fair degree of autonomy among local school agents, something Ryerson believed was unmanageable in Upper Canada.³ The status quo, he argued, left teachers and schools vulnerable to the parochial educational whims of their communities, the danger here being that there was little chance that he would be able to control and thus implement his educational vision.

[Where] The Government has no authority whatsoever to interfere with the doings of any County, Township or School district in Upper Canada.... There can be no Provincial System of Education.... where there is a completely independent power in each of the Schools in regard to both the books and regulations of the School—a subject over which the Government is not authorized to say one word.⁴

As far as Ryerson was concerned, there was a one-to-one link between centralized education and a “cheerfully obedient” population. An educational system without centralized leadership could very well result in a population lacking in self-discipline, and by extension, undeserving of functioning in a system of responsible government. Ryerson’s solution was to eliminate locally-based parochial control of schooling, improve and elevate the teaching corps to professional status, and set up a reliable supervisory/intelligence-gathering body to ensure that central educational directives would indeed be carried out.

The Act eroded traditional local control of schooling by strengthening the education office’s grip on funds it distributed to school boards, and by overtly making teachers delivery agents for a centrally-dictated curriculum, rather than tools of local

³ The Act of 1843, Ryerson claimed, “did not take into account ‘the differences between the workings of a democratic republic, and those of a responsible system of Government under a Constitutional Monarchy.’” (inner quotes from source). Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 113.

school boards. After detailing the duties of the Chief Superintendent, the General Board, district superintendents and trustees, the Act of 1846 turned its attention to teachers.

Their duties were listed as follows:

- First.* To teach diligently and faithfully, all the branches required to be taught in the School, according to the terms of his engagement with the Trustees, and according to the provision of the Act.
- Secondly.* To keep the daily, weekly and quarterly Register of the School, To keep and maintain proper order and discipline therein, according to the Regulations and Forms which shall be prepared by the Superintendent of Schools.
- Thirdly.* To have at the end of each quarter, a public examination of his, To hold School, of which he shall give notice, through his children to their parents and guardians, and shall also give due notice to the Trustees and any School Visitors, who may reside in, or adjacent, to such School Sections.
- Fourthly.* To act as the Secretary to the Trustees if they shall require it, in preparing the Annual Report: Provided always that he is a Teacher in such School at the time of preparing such Report as is required by the Act: Provided likewise, the District Superintendent shall have authority to withhold from any School Section the remainder of the share of the Common School Fund which has been apportioned to such Section, and which shall be in his hands on the first day of December of each year, until he receives from the Trustees of such Section their Annual Report, required by law for such year.⁵

Two items deserve further discussion. The first is the stipulation (mentioned twice) that all teachers were forthwith to be held accountable to the Department vis-à-vis the Act for their conduct. This in practice meant that even though local boards would still be responsible for hiring teachers, there would henceforth exist another and higher government agency to which school supporters, parents and others could now turn for advice, to lodge complaints, or clarify issues that had hitherto been confined to local jurisdiction. Second, the Act stipulated that teachers would now also be responsible in large part for gathering information about the state of education in their area, “according

⁴ Underline in citation. Quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 113.

to the Regulations and Forms which shall be prepared by the Superintendent of Schools". These two requirements, along with other clauses in the Act, constituted the first major attempt by Ryerson to extricate teachers from local control and place them squarely in the purview of his office. This, he hoped, would make it much easier to utilize them and the schools as "organs of systematic, national political socialization."⁶

The refocusing of the duties and loyalties of teachers also served other purposes. First, it redirected the power of initiative away from the teachers themselves, placing it firmly in the hands of the educational bureaucracy. With an effective bureaucracy, power could flow one way from top to bottom. A precedent had now been established wherein teachers would be expected henceforth to take their marching orders from above. As a result, it was expected that teachers would serve as state agents, rather than community representatives, in the schooling process. Second, their bottom-rung status in the emerging educational hierarchy ensured that teachers would not develop into a group of independent, autonomous professionals, which would make it difficult for their overseers to control their actions.

Moreover, the Act placed an inordinate amount of discretionary power in the hands of the Superintendent, Egerton Ryerson. This was not lost on critics of the bill. Francis Hincks put it bluntly: "The purpose of the new School Act is to increase the power of the superintendent..." But Ryerson responded that the power was necessary as much to remedy the problem of chaos in the system as it was, "to centralize power in the

⁵ Taken from J. George Hodgins, *Documentary History of Education for Upper Canada, VI*, (Toronto: Warwick & Rotter, 1897), p. 67.

⁶ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 113.

hands of the superintendent—that of the old, to leave it with the people.”⁷

During its first year, the Act also drew harsh criticism from other quarters, most notably from teachers and school officials. The main problem was in administering the tenets of a uniform law across a very diverse and unevenly-developed province. Some regions were commercializing and industrializing rapidly. Others lay at the frontier of settlement, as it continued to make inroads into the hinterland. Therefore, despite the Superintendent’s best intentions, implementation was uneven. It failed in some areas, while succeeding in others. In the former instance, conventional educational practice continued uninterrupted. Ryerson’s reaction to criticism of implementation was illustrative of what would become the familiar education office response to outside criticism. Local ignorance or incompetence—or both—was to blame.

[The Act] had operated with success in some districts, it was therefore plain that where it had not been successful there was something wrong “in the state of society, or in the administration of the law, or both.” There was not “sufficient educational intelligence” among the people to carry out the law effectively, and what was worse, the people apparently preferred their ignorant and barbarous ways. They really did not want to be improved.⁸

This strident position may be explained in part by Ryerson’s determination to have things his way, or no way at all. Just after being appointed chief superintendent, he wrote “if countervailing influences intervene which I cannot now foresee, and give success to the opposition against me... I would not remain in office a day... I would rather break stones on the street than be a dead weight to any government, or in any community.”⁹

⁷ This claim served as justification for Ryerson in many instances. For examples involving district superintendents, see Bruce Curtis, *True Government By Choice Men? Government Inspection, Education and State Formation in Canada West*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 129-131.

⁸ Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), p. 50. This paternalism is endorsed as political foresight in Althouse’s *The Ontario Teacher*. See pp. 34-36.

⁹ Ryerson, *Story*, p. 410.

Because of his seemingly opportunistic jump from the ranks of political reform to those of conservatism, he may have felt particularly vulnerable to attacks upon his department. Following the election of 1847, in which reformers won a majority, it was widely believed that he would be dismissed. Replying to a letter Egerton Ryerson wrote expressing this concern, his brother John brushed off the criticism, stating that “[a]ll the stir among the District Councils, and about the school law etc. are but the schemes and measures set on foot by the party for the purpose of compassing the great object in view of ousting the Superintendent of Education.”¹⁰ This partisan explanation may simply have been intended as a comfort, but it points to one more reason why Ryerson chose to confront and/or dismiss opposing views, rather than take them into account when reviewing his policies.

The School Act of 1846 also provided for the establishment of normal schools, whereby the educational system would furnish “proper and uniform training for all teachers.” Even though Ryerson viewed this as a long-range goal, he insisted that efforts begin as quickly as possible, since his visits to normal schools abroad convinced him that trained teachers would bring desired results more quickly, thus improving Upper Canadian education as a whole. More than this, however, Ryerson viewed state-sponsored teacher training as a way to ensure that the curricular and administrative goals of his department would be guaranteed from the outset. As he saw it, “the infant and youthful mind of a country, by the “law of public opinion itself” was to be “rescued from the nameless evils arising from the ignorance and pernicious examples of incompetent and immoral Teachers.”¹¹ Here, Ryerson was referring to those teachers who failed to

¹⁰ Ryerson, *Story*, p. 413.

¹¹ Quoted from Sissons, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 97.

measure up to standards as defined by him and the Department of Education. In practice, this often led to a teacher being judged according to how he or she stacked up against the intangible but still present Anglo-Protestant cultural benchmark inherent in evaluation.¹²

A lot of material has been written regarding cultural bias in Canadian education, particularly during the past 30 years.¹³ Much of it focuses on the ways in which schools used official policy to legitimate cultural assimilation. However, presentist notions which second-guess motives run the risk of overshadowing, or eclipsing entirely, the motives of the perpetrator. At their simplest, Ryerson's goals for pedagogy were not viewed with such cultural suspicion at the time. He believed that the system should be free, universal, compulsory, and Christian. "For Ryerson, the schools were proper vehicles for the dissemination of Christian principles; these Christian principles were, however, virtually synonymous with Protestant values."¹⁴ Religion and morality were key to Ryerson's educational formula and, even though he insisted that these societal values could and should supercede any denominational interpretation, they were in fact inextricably linked with the norms of his day.

Ryerson made this abundantly clear when he began to flesh out the role envisioned for teachers. In his *Report on a System of Elementary Instruction*, he elaborately described what he believed should be the fundamental characteristics of a good teacher:

A good Master ought to be a man who knows much more than he is called

¹² This cultural ideology is explained in detail in Chapter Three. See pp. 74-78.

¹³ See for example, Aminur Rahim, "Multiculturalism or Ethnic Hegemony: A Critique of Multicultural Education in Toronto", in *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 18:3, (1990), 29-46; K. Mazurek and N. Kach, "Culture and Power: Educational Ideologies in Multicultural Canada", in *Essays on Canadian Education* (Calgary, Detselig, 1986), 161-181; Luigi G. Pennachio, "Toronto's Public Schools and the Assimilation of Foreign Students, 1900-1920", in *Journal of Educational Thought*, 20:1, (1986), 37-48.

¹⁴ J. Donald Wilson, "The Ryerson Years", in J. Donald Wilson et.al., *Canadian Education: A History*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall), p. 217.

upon to teach, that he may teach with intelligence and with taste; who is to live in a humble sphere, and yet have a noble and elevated spirit; that he may preserve that dignity of mind and of deportment, without which he will never obtain the respect and confidence of families; who possesses a rare mixture of gentleness and firmness; for, inferior though he be, in station, to many individuals in the communes, he ought to be the obsequious servant of none; a man not ignorant of his rights, but thinking much more of his duties; showing to all a good example and serving to all as a counselor; not given to change his condition, but satisfied with his situation because it gives him the power of doing good; and who has made up his mind to live and to die in the service of Primary Instruction, which to him is the service of God and his fellow creatures.¹⁵

This character description warrants a closer examination because it lays bare the essential elements of the values system and ideology in which Ryerson was immersed. Above all, Ryerson's perfect teacher was to be saintly in his altruism toward the profession. In spite of a superb education and accompanying prospects, this individual, in Franciscan-like metaphor, was to shun all selfish materialism in favour of the higher call of education. Otherwise, as Ryerson noted, he would never gain the public respect so necessary for him to achieve education's noble aims.

There is an omnipresent social message which very clearly puts this individual above the masses, as a pacifier for the unruly elements around him. His contentedness with his meek station in life personified the deference to authority which was so essential to the maintenance of social stratification. Indeed, it cast the status quo as both just and righteous. There was no need for teaching as a revolutionary act. At best, the teacher was someone who demonstrated to the lower ranks that their place in society was the normal order of things, and that they should be, like all good Christians, content to toil in the circumstances with which God himself endowed them. Ryerson's ability to infuse this notion of role model into his vision for education ensured its adoption in virtually all

aspects of the system as it developed. Morality, religion and values were intrinsically bound up in the bourgeois ideology of the state.

There is no way of measuring the degree to which Ryerson utilized Methodist doctrine in his early musing about teachers, but there are many parallels between it and the social circumstances of the Methodist circuit rider. The teacher's ability to meet adversity with gentle but firm discipline, coupled with a martyr-like predisposition to suffer ignorance ring true for both occupations. The comparison certainly would have answered the perplexing question of where in the social strata the teaching profession should position itself. To be considered professionals in the conventional sense would have put teaching alongside the realm of law and medicine, which, to say the least, would have caused discomfort among their members, particularly given the negative connotations it had heretofore carried. In addition, the traditional professions enjoyed a degree of autonomy and self-governance that Ryerson could simply not accept, were he to succeed in his cause. The world of the clergy—and a humble denomination at that—provided the perfect mixture of respectable social station and meek subservience to authority that would permit teachers to emerge as a distinct and honourable profession.

THE NORMAL SCHOOL & JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

After visiting teacher training schools in the United States and Europe, Ryerson decided that the Irish National School in Dublin would be used as the model for the new normal school in Toronto. To him, it seemed that this facility most closely fit the needs of Upper Canadian sensibilities, since Ireland's relation to Britain was similar, and its

¹⁵ Ryerson, *Introductory Sketches of the System of Public Elementary Instruction in Upper Canada*, (Toronto: Reynolds, 1848), pp. 56-57.

resources emphasized British, rather than national, allegiance. Whereas the Irish model was exclusively male, however, Toronto Normal was from its inception a co-educational institution. No official record has been found to explain the change, but as will be discussed later, it does suggest that there must have been enough initial interest in professional training shown by women to cause officials to change their policy.

Upper Canada's first normal school opened in Toronto in 1847, with a mission to uplift and standardize the quality of teaching. The official hope was that all headmasters in Upper Canada would require its certification, in order to hold office. It was also an ideal place to ensure that the values of "cheerful obedience" would be inculcated. Additionally, there were many objective benefits to public education which served similar social purposes. The superintendent himself argued that by training teachers, communities would keep them longer and they would be more efficient in instruction. Market demand for these well-trained professionals would boost wages, which in Ryerson's view would be more than compensated for by improvements in efficiency. But beyond these seemingly altruistic motives lay the necessity for the system to firmly restrict the power granted to teachers. "The security of the political order demanded that both what teachers were and what they might say be regulated by the educational authority." As Alison Prentice has observed: "The ultimate hope was that the first-class graduates of the "Normal" would not only become the educational leaders of their generation, but living examples of the status and financial rewards that could and should ideally accrue to the properly qualified teacher."¹⁶

Everything a student at normal school did was subject to moral judgment. Along with other documentation, prospective applicants had to submit a certified letter of moral

character, and then take an exam focusing on ethics and values. Once accepted, they could board only at residences approved by the School, and had to abide by a nine o'clock curfew. Most important was the demand for absolute sexual repression. Male and female students entered and left lectures by separate doors, they were forbidden to talk to one another inside or outside of school time and could not even write to one another, on threat of expulsion.¹⁷

This suffocating code of conduct proved too much for some students. Alison Prentice compiled statistics of the Toronto Normal School dating from 1848 to 1871. Her data show that of all reasons cited for non-completion of the Normal School session, "discipline-related problem(s)" ranked second among men and fourth among women.¹⁸ Thus, it appears that student teachers quickly found themselves subject to a new litany of social and moral requirements that doubtlessly discouraged or prevented many from embarking upon this career, or pursuing it any further.

But Ryerson's vision, once established, seems to have been embraced by those who persisted in their desire to teach. The anticipated rewards, both financial and social, must have been obvious. Despite the challenge created by the paucity of male applicants, the stifling moral expectations and its twenty-five per cent dropout rate, the school continued to hold up Ryerson's ideal teacher as the model to which all students should aspire. Proof of its ubiquity is found in the letters of some potential candidates. Jeremiah Gallivan, a Roman Catholic applicant and Irish National School graduate, was told that because of his denomination, he would have a very difficult time getting hired as

¹⁶ Prentice, *The School Promoters*, p. 162.

¹⁷ Prentice, "Friendly Atoms in Chemistry: Women and Men at Normal School in Mid-Nineteenth Century Toronto", *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J. M. S. Careless*, (Toronto: Durham Press, 1990), 301-303.

¹⁸ See Appendix C.

a teacher in Upper Canada.¹⁹ Philip How, already teaching in Orillia in the mid-nineteenth century, inquired whether his unorthodox religious beliefs would preclude his acceptance at the School.²⁰

The Normal School also demanded high academic and teaching standards of its instructors. In 1858, a young Englishman named Watts was recruited to be Second Master for Classics and English at the Model Grammar School. He came highly recommended and the Normal School administrators hoped he would prove “an able young teacher who might prove capable of leading the institution” one day. In reports that led to his dismissal shortly after his arrival, Watts was accused of being “defective as a classroom manager” and for instructing “without any energy, or animation, or impressiveness...”²¹

Toronto Normal’s exacting standards for instructors demonstrates the degree to which it also demanded excellence in all areas of its students’ education. This is not surprising, given the tremendous social responsibility its graduates were to undertake. The school saw teachers as the bulwark of orderly progress, and their dependability and long-term success in this endeavour was critical. “The teacher was to be the practical embodiment of the moral character sought by educational administrators in the population as a whole...The teacher was not simply exemplar, but also instructor, governor, manager in the schoolroom.”²²

One superintendent went so far as to declare that without the faith, a teacher stood little chance of either professional, or spiritual success. The Rev. J. John McLaughlin of

¹⁹ See Prentice, “Friendly Atoms...”, p. 291.

²⁰ How complained that “people were prejudiced against him because he did not believe that Sunday was the Sabbath. Prentice, “Friendly Atoms...”, p. 291..

²¹ In Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, pp. 217-218.

Williamsburgh district, was horrified to learn that “the larger number of schools in this Township [were] not opened and closed with prayer.” He then proceeded to damn all teachers who dared to educate the young without divine aid, saying:

I put little value on the services of that smart young man of engaging address and studied morality, who can walk into a school every morning and begin the labors of the day, without even imploring the blessing of Heaven to impart efficacy to the instruction about to be given. Such a man’s mind may be stored with the fruits of zealous research, and he may be fully competent to impart to others the full benefit of that research; but his acts proclaim to the world that his heart is dead and cold as that of a corpse to the real and vital interests of the pupils committed to his care, and that he is wanting in the very qualifications which are the primary characteristics of every real educator of youth.²³

Thus, while it seemed that the majority of Upper Canadians could not be trusted to manage their own political affairs, it seemed just as clear to many that teachers—the messengers of enlightenment—could not be trusted to carry out their function without regular and rigorous monitoring. Ryerson was well-aware that once out in the field, it would not be so easy to monitor the conduct of teachers. To improve monitoring, he greatly enhanced the authority of district superintendents after 1846. These department officials became responsible for determining whether teachers in their areas measured up to the ideal which had been crafted by Ryerson.

This was a major innovation. As late as the 1830s, very little by way of effective educational inspection existed in Upper Canada. In fact, public inspection as a concept of public administration did not really take shape until after the Act of Union in 1840.²⁴ However, the practice of inspection developed quickly from this point on, for a number of reasons. First, standardization of the economy, particularly in staples, put pressure upon government to ensure the quality and quantity of state goods. Second, as an

²² Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 218.

²³ Taken from *OER*, (1860), pp. 158-159.

emerging political and administrative entity, the ability of the Upper Canadian bureaucracy to assess the fate of central policy initiatives at the local level necessitated reliable and regular intelligence from that theatre of operations. Thus, standardized school inspection provided the Department of Education with a vehicle to impart and perpetuate its ideal of teaching and a variety of pedagogical practices, along with other habits deemed ‘necessary’ for the masses.²⁵ What is striking is that, although initially many if not most teachers came up against realities totally foreign to them, within a half century, their collective vision would come to dominate popular public beliefs about teachers and the profession. By gradually laying bare the activities of teachers in their communities, superintendents and other officials permitted the education system to officially enjoin and coerce them to adopt these behaviours.²⁶

Inspection during the 1840s revealed that much of the rhetoric emanating from the education office was unrelated to classroom-based practices. Prior to and even following Ryerson’s ascension, stories filtered back to central authorities that the state of education in general and teaching in particular, was well below standard. As one district superintendent noted in 1844:

I have also found in many remote parts teachers who, altho fairly qualified in other respects do not profess to be perfect in Syntax and as the neighbourhoods in which they are engaged are well satisfied with them and do not consider much grammatical accuracy essential, I imagine they might be allowed to teach...²⁷

²⁴ For further explanation, see Bruce Curtis, *True Government*, pp. 4-6.

²⁵ “Educational inspectors, typically respectable Anglo-Saxon men of property, were strategically placed to effect changes in structures and practices of government. They were placed to promote, and at times to enforce, their cultural conceptions, their moral standards, their sense of justice and their aesthetic sense as models for the rest of society.” Curtis, *True Government*, p. 7.

²⁶ This process of rule has been referred to as “panoptics” by French historian Michel Foucault, referring to state authority based upon the “making visible of activities of individuals, institutions or agencies to regulatory authorities.” Quoted in Curtis, *True Government*, p. 8.

²⁷ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p.85.

Still another reported that, when observing two teachers, “[t]he one was so ignorant of the English language that he blundered every two or three words in pronouncing to a pupil the words in a column of Mayor’s sp book. He could write tolerably. The other could neither read accurately nor write legibly...”²⁸

These school officials could dismiss incompetents. The problem was that, despite the considerable influence granted it in 1846, the Department of Education lacked the authority to regulate the salaries of teachers. This power still remained at the local level, in the hands of trustees, whose loyalty lay with the locality in which they lived. Consequently, while inspectors could dismiss incompetent teachers, the position would soon be filled by someone willing to work for the same salary, since it was the individual community which had to raise the lion’s share of funds required to hire a teacher.

Another strategy employed by Ryerson’s department was to publish a monthly journal which, among other things, repeatedly reinforced the ideal teacher stereotype. The *Journal of Education* began its run in 1847, and by law was required reading for all school board trustees and teachers.²⁹ The *Journal* ran regular features on educational practices in foreign countries, printed biographies (usually about military men), as well as offering tips on practical educational matters. But sprinkled throughout almost every issue were verbal pin-ups of the ideal teacher.

One submission from a certain Dr. Arnold in the July 1847 issue, entitled “Choice of a Teacher”, read: “What I want is a man and a Christian, and active man, and one who has common sense, and understands boys...He should have sufficient vigor of mind and thirst for knowledge to persist in adding to his own stores, without neglecting the full

²⁸ Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 85.

improvement of those whom he is teaching.”³⁰ An 1857 piece reminded teachers of their sacred purpose: “When we view the Lord Jesus surrounded by His disciples, and think of the meek and lowly One instructing them to learn of Him, we have then the most perfect example of what the true teacher is, what he does, and to what all his actions tend.”³¹

The *Journal* also warned readers against backsliding into ambivalence. The March 1847 issue cautioned its readers that “scholars will be as their Teachers. Place an incompetent and indolent person in the chair of the Teacher, and he will soon be surrounded by heedless drones for his scholars.”³²

The Normal School and the *Journal of Education* represented key elements in the Department’s efforts to publicize proper teaching techniques and teacher demeanor. Among the reminiscences of the 1890s, only one teacher made a direct reference to the usefulness of the *Journal of Education*. A Mr. P. Jordan, whose teaching career spanned 35 years, from 1849 to 1884, read it faithfully, and recommended it to other practising teachers. “I took the Journal of Education for several years... Every teacher should take a good Journal of education.” Jordan went on to attribute the state of education at century’s end solely to the efforts of Egerton Ryerson and the Department of Education: “The changes and improvements in our system of education are Marvellous.” [sic]³³ True, it is difficult to determine with any certainty the impact the Normal school and the *Journal* had upon the province’s teachers. However, it is reasonable to conclude that both were powerful forces in redefining the ideal teacher model.

²⁹ Susan Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 133.

³⁰ *Journal of Education*, 1, (1847), 213.

³¹ *Journal of Education*, 10, (1857), 6.

³² *Journal of Education*, 1, (1847), 89.

³³ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-163, P. Jordan. Several of the teachers’ letters contain spelling errors. They are transcribed here as written.

EDUCATION REFORM DURING THE 1850s AND 1860s

Some of the teacher reminiscences contain recollections of the state of education in Ontario at mid-century, and note that for the most part Ryerson's institutional reach remained illusory. The problem seems to have been that the Department's expectation of teachers in the field was at least initially, too uniform and theoretical. Local concerns and expectations simply eclipsed any predisposition a teacher might bring to a community and those who insisted on 'putting a square peg in a round hole' were usually frustrated. John McNamara, who had taught for seven years in Ireland prior to coming to Upper Canada where he taught another 17 years before retiring, remembered that "Trustees as a rule were very careless" about their duties and left him to fend as best he could in "poor, ill-ventilated conditions". He also recollected hearing similar stories from other teachers whom he said had been told "not to expect a cent" from trustees or parents for supplies. The typical response was "Well Master, do the best for them yourself."³⁴ Another teacher, arriving in Oshawa in 1857, was told to put away maps he had taken out and hung on his classroom walls because, according to one trustee, "the Ratepayers might not like such expensive playthings" to be displayed to students.³⁵ It was, after all, ratepayers who paid teachers' salaries. Over time, some teachers saw themselves as educational trailblazers who in spite of overwhelming odds, took Ryerson's message to the waiting masses. In looking back over his career, Arch J. McKinnon, a teacher from 1858-1879, offered some perspective on the matter: "[W]e

³⁴ AO, E2 RG 2 -87-0-48, John McNamara.

³⁵ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-62, William H. Scott.

old teachers bore the c.b. [sic] beast and burden of the day under terrible odds but in many cases came out victorious.”³⁶

In hindsight, it is perhaps not surprising that these teachers sided with Ryerson’s image of what constituted proper schooling. They were, figuratively speaking, his shock troops, many of whom were parachuted into insular communities armed with Ryerson’s educational gospel and precious little else. Even if they were returning to their own locales, the education office was now in the process of putting mechanisms in place to guarantee that its definition of teacher superceded that of local sentiment. Two main thrusts were made in this regard. First was the introduction in the 1846 Act of ‘school visitors’, replacing township superintendents who, in Ryerson’s view, had been the locus of too much local educational authority.³⁷ He sought to appease any ensuing criticism of their removal by creating the school visitors position which, he admitted during drafts of the Act, would carry little weight. “I have not proposed to give *Visitors and authority* other than that of counsel... Perhaps ultimately it may be advisable to give them more authority, as experience may suggest, but the country will not bear it at present.”³⁸ Ryerson also believed that by permitting ‘men of the respectable classes’ to visit schools in their locality, it would expedite the transformation of education along desired lines. Thus, visitors would do double duty, serving as free educational advisors and as an example of bourgeois progress to both teachers and students.

Amid the many educational reforms presented by Ryerson and the Department in the late 1840s and early 1850s, public opinion took on a more positive opinion of

³⁶ AO, E2 RG 2 87-0-45, Arch J. McKinnon.

³⁷ The Act denoted these individuals as all clergymen from recognized faiths, judges and wardens of district courts, municipal officials and justices of the peace. See “School Act of 1846”, in Hodgins, *D. H. E.*, p. 64.

³⁸ Italics in original. Quoted in Curtis, *True Government*, p. 69.

teachers. Settled areas with good schools buttressed the argument Ryerson had been making all along—that poor conditions and salary, not teachers themselves, were the true enemies of sound education. Ryerson ran into some opposition to his new educational direction in mid-1848 when political opponents Francis Hincks and Robert Baldwin and what Ryerson later described as a “host of scribblers and would-be school legislators attempted to thwart his reforms by introducing a bill which effectively annulled the initiatives begun in 1846. Guided through the Legislature by Malcolm Cameron, it was passed in April. Ryerson immediately tendered his resignation, stating that when he “saw the fruits of four years’ anxious labours, in a single blast, scattered to the winds,” he was left with no other choice. Hoping for public sympathy and support, he publicly declared to his critics: “I deeply regretted that the blows which will fall comparatively light upon me, will fall with much greater weight , and more serious consequences, upon the youth of the land, and its future moral and educational interests.”³⁹ The strategy succeeded. The Act was allowed to languish and Ryerson returned to pick up where he had left off. His authority in educational matters would not be challenged for another twenty years.

Following the triumph over the Cameron Act of 1849 Ryerson moved quickly to bolster his control over education by drafting what became the Education Act of 1850. The Act gave to the Chief Superintendent the power to grant province-wide certificates to Normal School graduates and transferred certification powers from county superintendents to county boards of public instruction.⁴⁰ These boards could grant general certificates (valid throughout that county), or limit them to a particular area or school. Each teacher was also assigned one of three degrees of academic capability, following

³⁹ For more information on political context and Ryerson’s point of view, see Ryerson, *Story*, pp.423–426.

examination by one or more members of the board.

The Act of 1850 helped to alter public attitudes toward teachers in two significant ways. First, it strengthened the ties between local and departmental authority by affiliating board members' decisions with provincial standards. This in turn weakened the power of people in their communities to self-direct educational matters in their area. Second, the empowerment of Ryerson's department to grant general certification to any Normal School graduate enhanced his academic reputation and public image, at a time in his career as superintendent when he needed it most.⁴¹ He was now in a position to issue pronouncements on teaching standards and back them with the weight of official authority. It would be his vision that would inform the way in which Upper Canadians would come to understand and assess teachers and their work during this time.

Even though the Act of 1850 gave the Chief Superintendent general certification powers, however, Ryerson was reluctant to use this authority, for fear of stirring up local resistance. Following a province-wide tour in 1853, however, he felt more confident and augmented his power in the School Act of 1853. Educators with whom he met no doubt saw the benefits of provincial recognition and there seems to have been general public agreement that centrally-applied standards were to the benefit of local communities.⁴² The Act of 1853 established a general provincial standard for certification, even though the actual process of certification remained local in nature. Further changes were made five years later which allowed county boards to issue certificates, depending upon which

⁴⁰ The boards were made up of trustees from the county grammar school and the superintendents of common schools in the area. See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 22..

⁴¹ Many of Ryerson's goals for education in Upper Canada had been endangered by the Cameron Act of 1849, and it was only by threatening resignation that the legislation was allowed to lapse. Up to this point, Ryerson had been under increasing fire from critics who charged that he wielded too much influence in the absence of political accountability in such a sensitive sphere. Following this gamble, however, Ryerson's suitability to his position was never again placed in any real jeopardy.

of the three levels of the provincial standard a candidate met, while the Province granted either first- or second-class certificates to Normal School graduates, based upon the number of sessions in which they had been in attendance at the school.⁴³

By 1860, certification had more or less developed to a point where teachers and those around them began to judge their academic—and hence, professional—status by the certificate they held. “Classification was a step towards higher prestige. It recognized and labeled degrees of skill and scholarship; improving the lot of the good teacher, and discriminating against the incompetent.”⁴⁴ It also placed teachers more and more under provincial, rather than local, authority. As a result, teachers were now less vulnerable to the whims and prejudices of any local community’s expectation of them and their profession. Localities might retain their distinctiveness, but they were now subject to a centralized notion of the teacher as a professional civil servant whose job it was to enlighten them, rather than the other way around. Often, this proved to be a relatively-easy transition, provided that all parties involved were willing to acquiesce to the changes. Alex Rodgers, who started teaching in 1845 recalled that at mid-century, the trustees with whom he was affiliated were “all good men and interested in whatever was for the benefit of their School and the encouragement [*sic*] of the teacher.” Rodgers was so pleased by his circumstances in Northumberland County that he distinguished this period in his career as “thirteen of the happiest years of my life among those people.”⁴⁵

This being the general trend, it must be remembered that there were always exceptions, particularly in the rural and newly-settled regions of the province. This was

⁴² See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 23.

⁴³ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 23.

⁴⁵ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-97, Alex Rodgers.

due in part to the difficulty department officials experienced in enforcing the spirit, if not the letter, of school legislation. Much of the day-to-day operations of schools—including paying wages—remained under local control. This left teachers susceptible to manipulation, as well as tempting communities to use their authority to their own advantage. Adolphus Andrews, who taught from 1843 until 1873, remembered being caught in the middle of the Department’s “will” and his community’s “won’t” on several occasions, particularly when it came to funding arrangements. Inevitably though, “after opposition from a few who could not at first discover the beauty of (progressive school legislation), it was adopted with eagerness and school affairs proceeded with unanimity and success.”⁴⁶ Meade N. Wright recalled that when he started teaching in 1858, “[t]he local supts. For the most part were incompetent, many not understanding the simple rules of Arithmetic, being appointed by Tp. Councils.”⁴⁷

Yet, many teachers recalled fond memories of involvement in their communities, free from the bureaucratic rigidity which began to entrench itself after mid-century. J. W. Palmer, who began his teaching career in November 1844, remembered being “pretty well acquainted with the neighbourhood.” These good terms may have stemmed from, or led to, the ownership this community seems to have felt regarding its school and teacher. Although he apologized for having forgotten much about his three decades of teaching, Palmer vividly recollected the inclusion of all community members in his pedagogy. “We had spelling school one night each week at which many of the parents attended and took part in the spelling.”⁴⁸ This also suggests that parents must have respected Palmer

⁴⁶, AO, F 1207 MU 1378-92, Adolphus Andrews.

⁴⁷ AO, E2 RG2-87-0-66, Meade N. Wright.

and his scholarly abilities enough to feel comfortable subjecting themselves publicly to his scrutiny.

TRENDS IN TEACHING AND CHANGING PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Aside from the initial bureaucratic difficulties experienced by the provincial education office in changing public attitudes toward the teaching profession, other forces emerged after mid-century to challenge this endeavour. In the main, these were the feminization of the teaching profession, and the persistence of low wage rates among teachers. A closer examination shows that, in fact, the two are related. One of the unforeseen consequences of chronically-low wages for educators was the emergence of the female teacher as the norm in Ontario schools by century's end. As was noted earlier in reference to Ryerson's description of the perfect teacher, women had not even been considered as candidates. Yet, their ready acceptance into normal schools and the profession indicates that either open-minded goodwill or necessity gained them entry. For one thing, there were many other economic opportunities for males in Upper Canada during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly if they had the education necessary to gain admittance to Toronto Normal. Growing industries in the cities created many new employment options, while the low wages paid to teachers and the stifling moral climate in which they had to work offered little incentive. Women, on the other hand, did not have the same social or economic freedom. Chad Gaffield speculates that the reason for the rapid feminization of teaching in Upper Canada was because women could not depend on inheritance to sustain them in adulthood. He argues that an effective way for

⁴⁸ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-86, J. W. Palmer.

parents to provide for their daughters' futures was to have them trained as teachers. This investment might also serve as insurance for the parents in old age, since the hope was that the daughter would return to teach in her home community. Thus, teaching offered a socially-acceptable means of financial independence for women.⁴⁹

Only 13 of the 171 reminiscences consulted for this study were submitted by female superannuated teachers.⁵⁰ Their experiences varied, both in tenure and tone, but all reported generally-positive teaching careers. Susan Flynn, who began teaching at age 14 in West Gwillimbury, south of Barrie, in 1837, recalled that

the children were very simple and very very good, kind, respectful, obedient and attentive—although many were much older than I was... As to remuneration, the people signed an agreement paying me a dollar for each child for three months, with board, and without at one dollar and a quarter. But as I was handy at cutting out the children's clothes and I was a good sewer at plain and fancy needlework, I was always a welcome guest and invariably treated as one of the family.⁵¹

But other women teachers found themselves at a distinct disadvantage, in comparison with their male counterparts. Irene Ireland, who spent 13 years teaching in the Counties of Dundas, Leeds and Grenville, lamented her position as a “poor school ma’am” in describing the indifference of school officials to the parsimonious conditions under which she and other female teachers in her school were expected to teach:

It may seem strange that the teacher put up with such a state of affairs. But how soon we female teachers learned that in order to be a success in the schools, we must “take things as we find them” and that people dared (even our own sex) find more fault with us than with male teachers. We were at a disadvantage too, because with our own hands we could not make repairs thereby saving the additional expense—that terrible bugbear to some sections in the county.⁵²

⁴⁹ Chad Gaffield, “Children, Schooling and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario”, *Canadian Historical Review* 72, (1991), 157-191.

⁵⁰ Three of the records are anonymous and because of the time period, it is assumed that submissions offering only initials for given names would have been written by males.

Dorthea Flavelle recalled that when she began her career, male teachers at her school received 75 pounds yearly, while she and her female colleagues were paid 60 pounds per annum.⁵³

Male teachers even commented on the popular perception of female education itself. Archibald Andrews recalled that early in his career, “many [people] then thought girls should not know more than how to read, Grammar was no use, Geography a loss of time, Writing dangerous; they might get into trouble writing love letters etc.”⁵⁴

Margaret McPhail reported that when she began teaching in 1849, the school trustees in her area offered no help in acquiring books, maps, or blackboards; nor did they even provide her with a seat upon which to sit. “They did not think any of these things were necessary, at least they thought I could get along very well without them.” McPhail ended somewhat sarcastically, concluding “I sometimes think my powers of persuasion are not much, for I never could persuade the Trustees to make any improvement. That was my chief trouble in every school.”⁵⁵

Some indication of general teacher performance during this time is available from the Department of Education’s *Annual Reports*.⁵⁶ In these provincial summaries, local superintendents often commented on the quality of instruction available in their district. Two things must be kept in mind here. First, the information contained in the reports is an edited version of what the writer submitted for publication. Additionally, he (they were all “he” at this time) may have also omitted certain items, or exaggerated others, in

⁵¹ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-25, Susan Flynn.

⁵² Emphasis in original. AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-33, Irene Ireland.

⁵³ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-109, Dorthea Flavelle.

⁵⁴ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-135, Archibald Andrews.

⁵⁵ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-161, Margaret McPhail.

⁵⁶ These are more commonly known today, and have already been cited as the *Ontario Educational Reports*.

deference to the moral tenor of the times, or the impression he intended to leave with officials. Second, the documents, if they are to be properly understood, need to be placed in historical perspective. It must be remembered that during this time, the provincial bureaucracy of modern education was taking shape. This would also have had an effect on teaching standards and quality, and the personal bias of each commentator.

The persistence of low salaries in many districts deprived teachers as a whole from achieving the prestige and status Ryerson had hoped for. One of the most prevalent comments officials made about teachers in the reports of the latter-nineteenth century was that they were underpaid for the work they did, especially given the conditions under which they were expected to work. This did not appear to be so bothersome in the beginning, but it became progressively irksome to superintendents as the century progressed. In the *Annual Report* of 1845-46, the issue was already drawing concern: "While there is a manifest improvement in the salaries of Teachers, it is obvious the remuneration allowed them is not sufficient to secure competent persons. It is stated in several of the local Reports, that the qualifications and efficiency of the Teachers are in exact proportion to the salaries paid them..."⁵⁷

Although teacher salaries remained low during the years following Ryerson's superintendence, the new system of teacher supervision contained within the School Act of 1846 appeared to reap some immediate moral benefits. Using the enhanced powers it granted to them, local superintendents used administrative power as well as moral suasion to change teacher behaviour and community beliefs. It therefore became progressively more difficult for both teachers and local communities to ignore education department decrees. As Ryerson noted in 1847:

In one district, where intemperance heretofore prevailed to a considerable extent, even among school teachers, the Superintendent gave notice that he would not give certificates of qualification to any, but strictly sober candidates, and at the end of six months, he would cancel the certificates of all teachers who suffered themselves at any time to become intoxicated. The result was that a majority of the hitherto intemperate teachers became strictly temperate men, the incorrigible were dismissed, and the district is blessed with perfectly sober school teachers.⁵⁷

Ryerson's optimistic tone was unmistakable. Extrapolating from this anecdote, it must have seemed obvious to him that once his ideal teacher reigned, the classrooms of the colony, children and their parents would come to embrace the tenets he espoused.

As has already been pointed out, the reality was at best an admixture of successes and failures. The nagging problem of financing an ever-growing system continued to attract less competent teachers, whose tenure in the job was usually short-lived. In "Appendix A" of the 1860 *Annual Report*, officials continued to record incidents of low pay, poor working conditions and teacher incompetence. As the Rev. J. C. Pomeroy noted in his report on the Yonge Front district, the calibre of teacher was often also a reflection of community attitudes toward education:

Education is generally backward [in the district mentioned]. There is not that amount of interest taken by the people which should characterize the citizens of a free and enlightened country. The result of this is, that we find a poor class of teachers is generally employed at low wages. The lowest salary—not the best teacher—seems the uppermost idea of most Trustees and people, and a living—not usefulness—the ruling principle of some teachers.

Pomeroy went on to recount how, when he asked a "young man...why he taught for \$6 per month", the man replied "Because it is easier than working out[side of the school environment]."⁵⁸

Still, Ryerson's efforts were not without fruit. As the decade progressed, official

⁵⁷ *OER*, (1845-1846), p. 1.

⁵⁸ *OER*, (1847), p. 9.

reports of teacher competence, professionalism and bureaucratic responsibility increased. Many teachers, perhaps taking the education system's missionary zeal to heart, or operating by example, persevered in their work. In his 1860 report, Charlottenburgh superintendent Hector McRae wrote:

In many instances, there is little shelter or comfort, the children are pressed into Them—in winter, with stiffened limbs and half-perished with cold; in summer almost smothered and suffocated for want of pure air: yet, under these disadvantages, to which pupils and teachers are daily subjected, progress is generally manifested. The credit of the progress is entirely due to the teachers, both male and female, who, though they have such just cause to complain of the dilapidated state of their school-houses and want of apparatus, do, by hard labor and fatiguing exertion, maintain the good character of their respective schools.⁶⁰

In the final analysis, it was still money more than any other factor, that determined the kind of teacher each community received. Although attractive salaries were not mentioned when superintendents lauded the work of some teachers, it was poor pay that would inevitably be cited as the main reason for the presence of an “inferior” teacher. The argument for better teacher salaries was clear-cut by the 1860s. Superintendents' comments demonstrated again and again that schools ran more efficiently, children were better-taught and parents generally had a higher regard for education when a well-paid teacher was in charge.⁶¹

However, one deficient teacher could hold back education of children in that community for a long time. In one such case, a superintendent noted that “the

⁵⁹ *OER* (1860), p. 161.

⁶⁰ *OER*, (1860), p. 157.

⁶¹ This was probably because competent teachers tended to stay in one community for longer periods, offering continuity to students and building trust with parents. James McCaul noted “I find that when efficient teachers are employed, the attendance is better, and more regular”. Another superintendent noted that some children were even “sent to a school out of their own section, that they may secure the advantage of a superior teacher, (a strong proof of the necessity of employing efficient teachers)”. Brackets in original. *OER*, (1860), p. 159.

consequences have been most injurious. Parents, disgusted with the inefficiency of the [new] teacher, have withdrawn their children and left the school nearly empty..." He went to speculate that the "bad habits" picked up by students in the interim would render it "no easy matter, even for a good teacher to restore [this] school, so injured, to immediate prosperity."⁶² Superannuated teacher W. R. Bigg summed up just such an experience by concluding that "the evil that men do lives on after them; the good is often terred [*sic*] with their bones."⁶³ Hence, although many teachers went into their profession with Ryerson's ideal in mind, there was no foolproof way to ensure that they would hold fast to his hopes for them, once they were out in the field. The process of change in attitudes, therefore, can be understood as a gradual and uneven transformation.

By the late 1860s, remuneration became the major issue for administrators. Not only was poor pay having the effect of attracting less-than-ideal candidates to teaching jobs, but fears were raised that it was also damaging the fledgling profession's future.⁶⁴ "The most serious impediment to the progress and efficiency of school instruction is the inadequate remuneration of teachers", stated the *Annual Report* in 1867.

A solid indication that public attitudes had indeed come to see teachers as positive social agents is evident in the changed focus of the Department. With passage of time, the department seemed less concerned with the moral uprightness and public respect of its teachers as a whole, and more concerned with the social environments in which they worked. Thus, blame for poor performance was shifted to the shrinking numbers of parents and local trustees, whose neglect of duty was holding back educational progress.

⁶² Rev. J. A. Murdoch, superintendent for Bathurst, Dalhousie etc. district. In *OER*, (1860), p. 161.

⁶³ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-10, W. R. Bigg.

“Among the worst enemies of efficiency and progress of Common School education are those Trustees and Parents whose whole aim is to get what they call a cheap teacher, and who seek to haggle down the teacher’s remuneration to as near starvation point as possible.”⁶⁵

In 1871, the Ontario Legislature passed another in a long series of school acts that followed that of 1846, and compulsory education for a limited period now had the force of law behind it. This may have initially enjoyed only partial success, but its passage demonstrated the increasing acceptance of public education in the province. As this faith in the value of schooling continued to flourish, teachers could look to a more secure future. With gradual support, however reluctant, from parents, school boards and the general public, teachers may have felt some of the confidence which inspired Ryerson thirty years before, as he began to formulate his vision of education and teachers’ roles within it. In the final analysis, however, Ryerson’s teacher icon was at most, another factor among the many which impacted upon instructors, both personally and professionally. It reflected a fading past, and proved unable to address present realities, nor the enormous changes in immigration which were about to sweep over and through the Canadian nation. Still, as the turn of the century unfolded, the ideal persisted, and remained as the model for western Canada, as each new province built its own school system. In this sense, it exemplified both the successes and failures of mid-nineteenth century Canadian education.

⁶⁴ In his 1866 report, Ryerson cited the example of New York state, where many instructors taught for part of the year and then worked at other jobs for the remaining time. This, he warned, “cannot advance the profession of teaching, or even make it one...” See *OER*, (1867), p. 9.

⁶⁵ *OER*, (1867), p. 9.

CHAPTER THREE
“AN HONOURABLE PROFESSION”

The 19th century is fast waning to its ominous close. Political Power is gradually slipping from the classes to the masses, without the convulsions that shook the world a hundred years ago. Events of great social significance are marching onward, and those who favor the old order of things, it would seem, must march with them or be trodden under foot.¹

The sentiment conveyed by this Upper Canadian school inspector was common among his contemporaries. Progress was seen as the natural and normal consequence of the route upon which Upper Canada had set itself a century earlier. And, no doubt, a large part of the credit for this success would have been attributed to the establishment of a free, universal and compulsory system of education in the Province. Teachers performed a key role in this transformation; further, their ability to do so was in large part because of changing public perceptions toward them.

The aim of this chapter is to show that, despite his waning influence after 1871, Ryerson and his vision of the teacher as a respected professional (albeit under the watchful eye of the Department of Education) came to epitomize the ideal as it was understood by teachers themselves and society at large. In turn, teachers resorted to Ryerson's model as a framework when recalling their own experiences. Although the public education system bore little resemblance to that which had preceded it in the early decades of the nineteenth century, its transformation was interpreted as inevitable

progress, with Ryerson at the helm, rather than a gradual usurpation of parochial autonomy in favour of standardized (read 'Ryerson') bureaucratization. Thus, this chapter draws heavily upon the recollected experiences of teachers who lived through these changes, in order to assess the extent to which these changes modified and recast public notions of teaching. The myriad changes which gradually enveloped the education system during Ryerson's tenure as Superintendent were hardened into a bureaucratic structure by the time he retired in 1876. As we have seen, his vision of the ideal teacher met with mixed success, due in large part to the broader socio-economic and cultural changes which were sweeping over the province during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although teaching was accorded more respect than it had earlier on, the issues of transience, low pay and the rapid feminization of the teaching corps presented unforeseen challenges to Ryerson's intentions for the profession. In addition, teachers themselves began to organize and think of themselves as more than simple extensions of the Department. Teachers presented an alternate view of themselves in both the public and private realms. By examining how superannuated teachers reflected back upon their careers in Upper Canada, we discover that although physical conditions tended to be rough, many teachers liked the flexibility and autonomy which this insulation from authority granted them.

¹ M. J. Kelly, Inspector for County of Brant, *Ontario Department of Education Report (hereafter, OER)*, 1893, p. 132.

THE LAST YEARS OF THE RYERSON REGIME

Most historians regard the School Act of 1871 as a landmark in the evolution of the educational bureaucracy in Ontario.² It made state schooling compulsory for all children, although initially this might be for as little as four months each year. Still, it was hailed by many observers as the triumphant culmination of the steady progress made in state education, from its humble and confused beginnings in Upper Canada at the end of the previous century. Under this legislation, ‘free’ public schools, funded by each municipality would now be mandatory.³

The Act had two immediate effects. First, it formally ended the parochial attachments teachers had with their respective communities, by institutionalizing standards, set by the Department of Education.⁴ Second, it set in motion a series of events which, paradoxically, would result in an increased demand for teachers, while inhibiting better wages and social recognition.

Little had changed in teachers’ legal status during the 1860s. Local trustees paid him or her, many of whom had no pedagogic experience and therefore lacked the ability to competently scrutinize individual educational practices. Although this situation kept departmental intrusions at bay, it often led to disputes over what exactly was to be expected of a teacher, both in and outside of the classroom. The School Act of 1871 replaced the process of trustee-teacher dispute resolution through arbitration with one which allowed either party to appeal directly to the Division Court for settlement. As the

² See for example, Prentice, *The School Promoters*, pp. 16-20. See also Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 367.

³ By the Act, common schools were renamed public schools, to reflect the fact that they were being financed by public funds and presumably now operated according to publicly-defined goals. See Prentice, *School Promoters*, pp. 16-17.

⁴ As we discovered in Chapter Two, this proved more ceremonial than real. See p. 55. See also pp.89-91.

following example shows, this ended the tendency of individual trustees or boards to arbitrarily change teaching duties, whenever this suited their purposes.

In 1879, the Toronto School Board informed its teachers that during an upcoming visit of the governor general, they were to muster their students and march them in a civic procession to welcome the visiting dignitaries. Teacher defiance provoked threats of dismissal from the Board. Teachers brought the matter before the Court, which ruled that “the board’s legal right over a teacher was confined to the school and the playground, within school hours.”⁵ Thus, while the ruling did not free the teacher entirely from local control, the law did severely restrict the ability of local authorities to dictate the terms of employment. This change in legal status has been characterized by some observers as one of the crucial elements necessary for teaching to be considered a legitimate profession.⁶ Moreover, it also reveals that teachers were taking advantage of the bureaucratic tools at their disposal to assert their beliefs, which in this case at least, were very different from those of their employer.

While Ryerson’s previous school legislation had generally been passed with little meaningful opposition, resistance began to stiffen as the decade of the 1860s drew to a close. Ryerson’s long-time rival George Brown, whose on-and-off antagonism throughout Ryerson’s tenure had resulted in several minor skirmishes in the press and elsewhere, renewed his attack upon Ryerson over his proposed school bill of 1869 for what now appears to have been purely partisan reasons.⁷ Nevertheless, the confrontation became a magnet for other opponents. Criticism of the Department of Education began

⁵ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 78.

⁶ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 77.

to mount in political circles as well. Whereas at one time the Superintendent's position on educational issues was accepted as Government policy, new political alliances and the push for more democratic reforms in the Legislature produced an unwillingness to acquiesce on the part of the governing party, which could no longer justify deferring to an un-elected official on such an important issue.⁸

Another major shift, given new life after Confederation, also did not bode well for the Chief Superintendent. Both the newly-created Province of Ontario, along with the federal Parliament, had Conservative governments in power, and as the country slumped into recession during the late 1860s (not to mention the scandals and intrigues of a party in the federal sphere), many laid blame for federal problems at the feet of the provincial government. This in part is what led to the ousting of Ontario's first premier, Sandfield Macdonald, in the election of 1871, and the subsequent 34-year reign of Reformers in the provincial legislature. Led initially by Edward Blake, a prominent Upper Canadian lawyer who had little sympathy for the cronyism exemplified by Egerton Ryerson, the party began to assert its own ideas regarding education. While in opposition, Blake had formed a loose alliance with George Brown, already noted for his antagonisms toward Ryerson. Inside the Legislature and in the pages of Brown's *Globe* newspaper, the pair served as the magnet and mouthpiece for mounting challenges to Ryerson's supremacy in educational matters.⁹

⁷ The Act of 1869 contained little in the way of controversy regarding education, and the main reason for its eventual abandonment by the Conservative Government of the day was largely due to the increasing influence of Reform elements within the Legislature. See Sissons, *Life and Letters*, II, pp. 76-77.

⁸ The position of Chief Superintendent of Schools was created in the School Act of 1841, with this individual reporting to the Provincial Secretary. As we have seen, however, this line of accountability soon lost its credibility under Ryerson.

⁹ "For most of his career, Ryerson had faced little articulate opposition to his policies, and most of what there was lacked the intellectual force to match the vigour of his rhetoric, or the breadth of his reading and experience. In public at least, Ryerson had had it mostly his own way for nearly twenty years. After 1865,

Ironically, Ryerson himself had unwittingly contributed to this state of affairs. Up until the 1860s, his recurring battle with local boards and communities over the need for elevated and uniform elementary educational standards were almost always decided in his favour. One of the consequences, however, was that when he began to articulate his vision for higher education in the province, local interest re-emerged to challenge his views. This time, however, the public was better-informed and could not be so easily dismissed.¹⁰ During the fall and spring of 1868 and 1869, the Sandfield Macdonald government witnessed an increasing stream of petitions from constituents and criticism in the press, regarding Ryerson's proposed educational reforms. Although Ryerson's defence was true to form, the inaction of the Education Office in enforcing policy at this time suggests that the attacks had caught him off-balance. The following autumn, when he submitted draft bills for the common and grammar schools of the province, "the legislation was "kicked and cuffed and hacked so unmercifully", that the Premier, on Ryerson's suggestion, withdrew both bills."¹¹ In a prickly *Globe* editorial which followed the Superintendent's retreat, there were clear indications that a new political climate was in ascendance: "And if Mr. Cameron (the provincial secretary and sponsor of the bill) or his master think to put their mark upon their country by their educational enactments, they will need to aim at something higher and better than being merely Dr.

however, this ceased to be the case." In R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education: The Rise of the High School in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1990), p. 191.

¹⁰ Among other things, Gidney and Millar cite the following: "The imposition of a strict entrance examination (for grammar school admissions) and the mass failures that accompanied it, the pressures Ryerson and (school inspector) Young brought to bear on teachers and trustees to improve accommodation or to adhere to the prescribed program, the discounting of girls to half the per-pupil grant and other irritants besides had together created deep-seated and wide discontent over grammar school policy by the spring of 1868." *Inventing Secondary Education*, pp. 191-192.

¹¹ Sissons, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 576.

Ryerson's recording clerks."¹² The provincial election of 1871 brought the Reformers to power and, even though Blake resigned scarcely a year later, his replacement, Oliver Mowat, proved no more amenable to giving Ryerson *carte blanche* than had been Blake himself.¹³

While these attacks upon Ryerson mitigated his ability to place an unfettered personal stamp upon the educational system of Ontario, they did little to change the generally-positive attitude of the public toward education. The fact that so many people now sought—and were given—an active voice in educational matters not only bespeaks the fact that Ryerson had awakened an interest in education among the residents of Ontario, but also that the fundamental model which he had proposed had been adopted by most communities. Fights no longer revolved around whether or not there would be a school, but how well that school was doing compared with others in that region and around the province. There was a general recognition of the benefits accruing from a solid educational foundation, even though views as to curricular content varied widely, particularly between rural and urban areas.¹⁴

In general, Ontario teachers in the 1870s were employed within a bureaucracy which had crystallized in structure, and was now concentrating on bureaucratic efficiency and the professionalization of its employees. This included improved teaching conditions, a steady ratcheting-up of teaching qualifications and attempts at fostering teacher associations. Schooling, as it had been understood as late as the 1840s, bore little resemblance to what teachers could hope for thirty years later. Teachers no longer

¹² Sissons, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 577.

¹³ Mowat, unlike either of his political allies Blake or Brown, was not an ideologue when it came to deciding policy. This may explain in part why he was able to remain in power for more than a quarter-

boarded around, performing domestic as well as pedagogic duties, and being paid directly by student fees.¹⁵ They had become firmly ensconced as public servants. Boards by law were expected to develop and practise Department-approved policies and procedures for the operations of schools within their jurisdictions, creating the appearance of local autonomy while ensuring an overall provincial minimum standard.

However, two main attributes which lay outside of Ryerson's vision continued to characterize the teaching profession in Upper Canada. These were, firstly, the increasing feminization of the teaching corps, and secondly, the chronic transience of its members. As we have seen, women were among the first students at the Toronto Normal School in 1847 and, in spite of initial reservations about their suitability to the task¹⁶, their representation increased steadily in the following decades.¹⁷ This fact no doubt must have troubled Ryerson as he reached the end of his career. Yet, there were moments when he appears to have accepted matters as they were, perhaps even making it seem as if he had intended it that way. One teacher recalled that while at the Normal School in Toronto, he had heard Ryerson say that it was the Superintendent's hope that one day all teachers would be women.¹⁸ If this individual's memory was correct, the incident illustrates a stark contradiction to Ryerson's often-reiterated views on this matter. However, if one considers that the Normal School audience to whom he was talking

century. See Randall White, *Ontario, 1610-1985: A Political and Economic History*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), pp. 139-143.

¹⁴ See Gidney and Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education*, pp. 190-193.

¹⁵ As we will see later, this was not considered to be such a negative thing. See pp. 83-85.

¹⁶ "In 1841, the question of women teachers was first raised. Assistant Superintendent Murray doubted whether their appointment was legal. He dismissed the problem with the remark: "Besides, if they are to receive and of the public money, they must be examined by the Township School Commissioners." This, apparently, was considered beyond their abilities. See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 47.

¹⁷ See Marta Danylewycz et.al., "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching: A Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study", in *Social History*, 16:31, (1983), 81-109; Madeleine Crumet/Hobart and William Smith Colleges, "Pedagogy for Patriarchy: The Feminization of Teaching", in *Interchange*, 12:2, (1981), 165-184.

comprised many women, and adds to this the fact that their numbers in the system had been rising steadily since the late 1840s, the remark may be seen as little more than a polite acknowledgement on the spur of the moment, coming from a man whose values remained firmly entrenched in the patriarchal social order.

His past attempts at recruiting men to teaching had borne little fruit and pointed to a future in which the idealized Victorian family itself might be endangered. Thus as late as 1871, Ryerson exhorted his audiences to recognize and accept their God-given social rank, no matter the inequity. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands... Children, obey your parents... Servants, be subject to your Masters...” For their part, husbands, fathers and masters “were to love their wives and treat the children and servants with justice.”¹⁹ In and of itself, this statement did not preclude women from teaching, but Ryerson surely must have recognized the problem it posed for teaching’s attainment of professional status.

Keeping in mind popular perceptions of ‘appropriate’ gender relations, it is surprising that, out of all of the superannuated teachers who wrote to Hodgins, only one complained of what he claimed were the detrimental effects of women entering into the teaching profession. In describing his experiences as a teacher, John McNamara complained that a “great many Lady Teachers got leave to teach on “Permits” – teaching often for 10 or 12 Dollars a Month, keeping out many Teachers of ability and experience, the lowest salaries militating against them.”²⁰ Unlike their male counterparts, however, women did not have the same occupational freedom of choice to opt out of teaching for more promising opportunities. Still, the less-than-favourable sentiments of John

¹⁸ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-21, Peter Deachman.

¹⁹ Egerton Ryerson, quoted in Prentice, *School Promoters*, p. 108.

McNamara were the singular exception in this regard. As was noted in Chapter Two, all of the other teachers—male and female alike—lauded the work of women teachers during the formative years of education, pointing to the sometimes extraordinary conditions under which they taught.

The other critical issue which Ryerson had not foreseen in his ideal corps of teachers was that of chronic transience. Yet once again, he and his successors had, through legislation, caused this to occur. One of the most prominent changes taking place in late-nineteenth century education was in the area of certification. Ryerson believed that this was by far the most effective tool for weeding-out incompetents, leaving only the truly-committed and well-educated teachers to turn his teaching ideals into reality. The School Act of 1871 embodied many such innovations and foreshadowed the trends which were to be the basis for future legislation in this area. Firstly, County Boards of Examiners—those responsible for administering education policy locally—were up to this point, lay bodies comprised of the county grammar school trustees and superintendents, many of whom possessed no qualification in pedagogy. Henceforth, each board was to be composed of no more than five members, each of whom must have a certain level of educational expertise, as dictated by the Council of Public Instruction.²¹ The Act also adjusted certification levels for teachers, giving the Council of Public Instruction the power to issue province-wide first-class certificates, while the county boards were permitted to issue second-class provincial certificates, although the provincial body subsequently subsumed this power in the 1877 act. Third-class

²⁰ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-48, John McNamara.

²¹ Each board have among its members at least one county superintendent, the remaining members being made up of either a grammar school headmaster, a British university graduate with at least three years'

certificates remained under local jurisdiction, and were valid for three years. All examination papers for the purposes of certification were now to come from the Department, the first two levels being marked there as well.²²

The changes had both short- and long-term effects. Upon the Act's passage, the school system by virtue of its teachers' present qualifications, was populated with instructors holding temporary third-class certificates. Soon after, the number of candidates for first-class certification dropped off precipitously because, as many candidates complained, the examination was too arduous.²³ What became apparent later on was that, rather than commit to the considerable effort of elevating their certification, teachers quite often would work until their permit expired and then either apply for an extension, or abandon the profession. The result was a constant turnover of under-qualified teachers, whose supply was kept up by the many model schools, set up as alternatives to normal school training at the close of Ryerson's career.²⁴ High turnover and an oversupply of teachers also prolonged and exacerbated the longstanding problem of low salaries in many areas, since recent graduates were willing to work for less money.

In combination, these trends altered the trajectory of Ryerson's plans somewhat, since they militated against the expeditious development of a widely-recognized and well-respected profession. But they did not halt it altogether. Even though teachers themselves were struggling internally with these issues, they were in fact part of a larger social trend known as progressivism, which would legitimize state intrusions into

school experience, or a teacher holding a first-class certificate. See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, pp. 51-52.

²² "To be eligible for a First Class certificate, a candidate had to have five years' successful teaching experience: the requirement for a Second Class certificate was three years' successful experience. Attendance at the Normal School was considered the equivalent of the teaching experience required for either class of certificate." See Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 52.

²³ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, pp. 52-53.

virtually all aspects of public life and in the process, lend authority and respect to what would come to be called the public service.²⁵ Oddly, this occurred in spite of failed attempts by educational officials to achieve these specific aims. The reason for this seems to have been a desire on the part of teachers to distance themselves from the Education Department.

During and after Ryerson's tenure, the Department of Education attempted to bolster professionalism among teachers by encouraging and organizing the creation of teacher associations and officially-sanctioned meetings, to discuss current (Department-approved) educational issues. Several formal and informal organizations formed during the latter-nineteenth century, but the inherent weakness of their membership and the fact that few teachers appeared to find any use for them—particularly those with official sponsorship—kept them from evolving into recognized professional associations. Indeed, where some degree of autonomy from the Department was present, controversy inevitably arose over issues affecting one or both parties. One prominent example occurred in the dying days of the Ryerson administration. As previously mentioned, the early 1870s marked a time when the Chief Superintendent was under fire from critics who were now in a position to seriously challenge his department's policies. During 1874 and early 1875, rumours began to circulate that the provincial government was planning to eliminate the existing senior education administration, in favour of a conventional ministry structure. As the months went by, speculation intensified over possible candidates for the position. Fearing that his life-long efforts in education would be jeopardized, Ryerson became increasingly strident in his interactions with those who

²⁴ Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, pp. 56-57.

²⁵ See Prentice, *School Promoters*, p. 108

disagreed with him. One potential candidate said to be under consideration for education minister was Goldwyn Smith, then president of the Teachers' Association. The Association was an autonomous organization which had formed a few years before, and which had quickly developed into a public forum for contentious educational issues. At the organization's annual meeting in August of 1875, first Smith, and then Ryerson, spoke about the future direction of education in the Province, with Ryerson bluntly criticizing many of the points Smith had made just prior to his speech.²⁶ The action was disruptive enough that following the incident, the assembly completely forgot to move and pass a routine motion thanking the outgoing president.²⁷ There can be little doubt that at this period in his career, Ryerson's influence was on the wane, and soon after he announced his retirement. But despite the many changes now underway, he had left an indelible mark upon the education system in general and teachers in particular. He had standardized the environmental and moral benchmarks by which schools and teachers in the province would henceforth be measured, and even though many teachers recognized that these ideals were unattainable in reality, they nevertheless used them when comparing experiences.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL VALUES

During the later years of the nineteenth century, the issue of morality in the classroom became increasingly important for educational officials.²⁸ While this had always been inherent in the school system, it became a particular concern for the

²⁶ Sissons characterized Ryerson's tone as "forthright or even abrupt" at times. See *Life and Letters*, II, pp. 633-634.

²⁷ As it turned out, Smith used a speech he gave the next day to trade shots with Ryerson once more. See Sissons, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 634.

Department by virtue of the School Act of 1871, when compulsory education was written into law. Because we have already explored Ryerson's religious views, there is no need to reiterate them here. However, at this point it is useful to discuss the context in which these beliefs existed. For, although Ryerson argued against denominational schools during his tenure, one must be careful not to confuse this with the notion that Upper Canadian classrooms should therefore be free of religion. Throughout his career, Ryerson had supported 'Christian' education. The connotations will be explored below, but at its heart, Christian, as Ryerson understood it, was synonymous with stability. The numerous social and economic changes which were reshaping the Canadian landscape threatened this order, and the danger of social anarchy which Ryerson had feared in the years leading up to the Rebellions might indeed reappear if this spiritual anchor were neglected.

The concept of morality, as Ryerson and his ilk thought of it, was a universal ideal of which all were capable, if not culpable. But the word itself connoted social and cultural values which were inextricably woven into the social fabric of Upper Canada. In order to properly understand the implications of this upon education, a brief description is offered here regarding the nature and constitution of the Anglo-Protestant culture at this temporal juncture. It is difficult to describe cultural values without stereotyping; however, some essential characteristics can be teased out, as guidelines to develop a sense of the kind of atmosphere which existed in Upper Canada during much of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

²⁸ This concern led to an official survey on this question in 1896. See Robert Lanning, "Assessing Morality: The Ontario Provincial Survey of 1896", *Journal of Educational Thought*, 26:1, 1992, 5-21.

Anglo-Protestantism was firmly rooted in British Victorianism, itself a socially amorphous concept.²⁹ Among the ideals both ideologies shared were patriarchy and patriotism to Queen and Country. Adherents tended to be politically conservative, devoutly religious, value self-reliance and expect deference to authority. Repression of one's emotions (seen as self-control) also played a key role in the culture. An overarching presumption held that simple adherence to these principles would ultimately lead to the formation of a utopian society. Anathema to these Anglo-Protestant ideals was any form of immorality, characterized by such biblical crimes as licentiousness, drunkenness, pride and idleness. It also harboured deep suspicions of the Catholic Church.³⁰

The foregoing "do's and don't's" by no means represents the definitive list of characteristics. And there are countless cases where seeming pillars of the community fell far short of the higher standard.³¹ But hypocrisy aside, the righteous fervour embodying Anglo-Protestantism in Upper Canada must be appreciated before the education system it was instrumental in shaping can be fully understood. Anglo-Protestantism imbued a kind of self-righteous intolerance for those who did not share its vision.³² This might be manifested either as condescending benevolence, or outright bigotry.

²⁹ As one writer has noted: "The Queen's name became an adjective about the middle of the nineteenth century; it has conveyed many meanings to subsequent generations, and has set every historian his own job of definition." See R. K. Webb, *Modern England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, (Toronto: Dodd, Mead, 1968), p. 448.

³⁰ This often verged on fanaticism. For example, see Douglas Dart's study of the separate school debate in the popular press in "George William Ross: Minister of Education in Ontario: 1883-1899", M. A. thesis, (University of Toronto, 1971). For later manifestations, see Philip Currie, "Toronto Orangeism and the Irish Question, 1911-16", in *Ontario History*, 87 (1995), 397-409.

³¹ For an exploration of this contradiction, see P. B. Waite, "Sir Oliver Mowat's Canada: Reflections on an Un-Victorian Society", in *Oliver Mowat's Ontario: Papers Presented to the Oliver Mowat Colloquium*, ed., David Swainson, (Kingston and Montreal: Queen's-McGill Press, 1971), pp. 174-188.

³² This attitude developed deep roots in the Canadian psyche. For example, see Howard Palmer and Harold Troper, "Canadian Ethnic Studies: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Implications", *Interchange*, 4 (1973), 15-23.

Anglo-Protestant ideals permeated virtually all aspects of organized government activity in Upper Canada, from its inception, through to and past Confederation. The evolution of the education system was no exception to this statement. The colony was born of the British Parliament's Constitutional Act of 1791. From its humble beginnings, the region's destiny was to act as a bulwark of British imperialism. Its first governor, John Graves Simcoe, strove to create in Upper Canada a second England, "with England's political and social systems, her law, her Church and her education."³³ This cultural homogeneity was buttressed by the arrival of people—like Ryerson's family—who had emigrated from the United States following the American Revolution. And, despite the early presence of other ethnic groups, the continued influx of United Empire Loyalists further-entrenched the Anglo-Protestant culture.³⁴ The result was "a WASP elite in Upper Canada, thoroughly dedicated to the preservation of a class society and thoroughly colonial in its reverence for the British monarchy, law and custom."³⁵

In contradiction to this ordered social hierarchy, the economy of Upper Canada was undergoing a major transformation during the nineteenth century. The growth of first commerce, and then industry, was encroaching upon a region which hitherto had relied on rural agriculture and self-sufficient towns to define its way of life. This had social, as well as economic implications. Cities were growing rapidly, and the people who came to work in them encountered a reality very different from that of the dominant classes. Many of the new arrivals were Irish emigrants, who began flooding British North America during the years of the potato famine. As well, highland Scots, displaced

³³ Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty, quoted in Audrey Walker, "History of Education in Ontario, 1791-1841", M. A. thesis, (University of Toronto, 1977), p. 56.

³⁴ As was discussed earlier, Ryerson himself was born into a Loyalist family in 1803.

by agrarian reforms, also came to begin anew, as did German-speaking peoples and blacks escaping Southern slavery.

Many Upper Canadians, particularly the well-established elite, perceived these newcomers as a threat to the social status quo. Although the majority of Irish coming to British North America was Protestants from the north, some Roman Catholics also settled in the colony. Local anti-Catholic sentiment, questionable Irish loyalty and the fact that most of these people arrived unskilled and impoverished, simply reinforced Upper Canadian unease at the prospect of accommodating these individuals. Blacks settling in the region had to contend with the additional prejudice that they were a visible minority, and American at that. Thus, they were routinely suspected of holding egalitarian and republican views.³⁶

The arrival of this diverse group challenged the cultural homogeneity and economic hegemony of the ruling WASP elite. As industrialism fostered the growth of cities, so developed the inherent problems associated with urban growth. Slums grew and many immigrant families, already at an economic disadvantage, fell victim to the unpredictable turns of the industrial marketplace. Impoverished and unemployed individuals—particularly children and youth—became regular sights on city streets. To the Anglo-Protestant upper classes, this constituted fertile ground for political and social unrest. State schooling was perceived as one solution to this problem.³⁷

Other factors affected Upper Canada during Ryerson's day. As outlined in Chapter Two, fear of American incursions, both militarily and culturally, remained high

³⁵ Kas Mazurek, "Interpreting Ethnocultural History - With a Commentary on the Social Context of Early Public Schooling", *Essays on Canadian Education*, (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), p. 33.

³⁶ As noted by one author, "[t]his suspicion of republicanism was held of most American immigrants." See Mazurek, "Interpreting Educational History...", p. 33.

well past mid-century.³⁸ This sentiment seemed well-founded at the time. Concern over American influence in Canadian affairs remained ubiquitous as the nineteenth century progressed, and education seemed a logical place to inculcate firm imperial-national patriotism as a solid defence against its tainted allure.³⁹ Anti-American advocates argued for the elimination of all possible cultural contamination coming from the United States. They soon discovered there were many to be found in the education of their children.⁴⁰ Ironically, it was often people of Loyalist heritage who had imported American influence into their schools. Lack of funds and qualified British instructors meant that teachers hired by a community were usually American by birth, or education. Resources were a problem, too. “No Canadian textbooks were published until the 1830’s and American texts were at least as commonly used as were British texts.”⁴¹

The School Act of 1846 gave the Department of Education the power to determine what texts should be used, and after examining what was available, Ryerson determined that a series known collectively as the *Irish National Readers* be adopted. After all, politically Ireland was in a position very similar to that of Canada, and much of the information deemed essential was present. Although there was some initial disagreement over this decision, the sets did become standard in most schoolhouses in the

³⁷ This is a central premise of Alison Prentice’s *The School Promoters*.

³⁸ Ryerson himself led a group of Upper Canadian Methodists away from the American Church, into a union with British Wesleyan Methodists. This demonstrates the fluidity of religious attachment along political as well as spiritual lines. Many black American Methodists who moved to Toronto in the early twentieth century also switched their allegiance to the British denomination, citing the former’s history of supporting slavery as the reason for their decision. See Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s to 1950s*, (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991).

³⁹ For more information on imperialism and nationalism in Canadian affairs, see Carl Berger, ed., *Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought*, (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969).

⁴⁰ For more information on this topic, see James Love, “Anti-American Ideology and Education Reform in 19th Century Upper Canada”, *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History*, J. Donald Wilson, ed., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1984), pp. 170-180.

colony, where local attitudes and money permitted. The reason for this may have been that the *Readers* became the standard content for teacher examinations; thus, to use the text in class prepared one for the exam and vice-versa.⁴² Moreover, teachers were presented with a clear-cut model of relations between ‘civilized’ people that they could transfer to students and parents in their day-to-day duties. The books gave them objective ammunition to counter attitudes and behaviour that did not constitute proper decorum. But as always, this was often more a bureaucratic illusion than it was a classroom reality.

This is evident in the perception of the teachers who looked back upon their experiences in the early years of public education in Upper Canada. There were official rules, but when circumstances warranted, teachers used whatever they themselves possessed, or the texts their students brought to the school. Patrick D. O’Meara, who taught in several schools during his 35-year career from 1848-1873, recalled that “[t]here was a big improvement [in education] in [a] Short Time because the Irish National School Books were used then. I could classify the children committed to my care...”⁴³

On another pedagogical level, the Department of Education sold in-class resources through its depository, set up at mid-century as a central warehouse for various forms of educational apparatus.⁴⁴ In books and manuals, officials showed by anecdote and example how teachers should impart information and general social values in their

⁴¹ Don Dawson, “Concepts of Frontier, Hinterland and Metropolis and the Development of Education in New France, Ontario and Alberta”, *Education in Canada: An Interpretation*, J. Stewart Hardy, ed., (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1979), p. 36.

⁴² After 1850, “County Boards of Public Instruction used the Irish readers as the basis for teachers’ examinations.” Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 270.

⁴³ Spelling inaccuracy in original. AO, F 1207 MU 1378–153, Patrick D. O’Meara. Many other teachers mentioned in passing that they used the *Irish National Readers*.

⁴⁴ This included books, as well as world globes, blackboards and prizes for in-school competitions, as well as materials on teacher training and professional development.

classrooms. Individual schools were also sent information on when to substitute moral suasion for physical violence. One such teacher manual described the ‘appropriate’ use of corporal punishment thus:

The true way and the safe way... is to rely mainly on moral means for the government of the school—to use the rod without much threatening, if driven to it by force of circumstances, and as soon as authority is established, to allow it again to slumber with the tacit understanding that it can be awakened from its repose if found necessary. The knowledge in the school that there *is* an arm of power, may prevent the necessity of any appeal to it.⁴⁵

Although publicly the Department of Education intimated during the 1860s that corporal punishment was no longer used in its institutions, several scholars have demonstrated that, in fact, this was not the case.⁴⁶ The retired teachers who wrote of incidents in the classroom in which they had to choose between moral or physical force professed a preference for moral suasion. When deemed necessary, however, most did not hesitate to utilize physical force when the former tactic failed to achieve their aims. James Kelly, whose career spanned some forty years, from 1837 to 1877 recalled an incident in some detail during his first teaching post in the township of Gainsborough. In it, he seemed to suggest that both parents and trustees fully expected a teacher to maintain firm control of their charges, regardless of method.

Decspline [read “discipline”] In those times as practiced by what the people called a good teacher was really severe. I heard after I took this school that the big boys hurld (*sic*) a former teacher through the window when he attempted to bring them under subjecture to his ruls (*sic*). I was warned by the Trustees who intended to put me on my guard that I might possibly have difficulty with some of the young buck-thorns two especially

⁴⁵ From the teaching manual of the master of the Albany Normal School, quoted in Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, p. 316.

⁴⁶ See for example, Prentice, *School Promoters*, p. 35, Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, pp. 310-365. For concrete examples of how school promoters thought this subject might be translated into curriculum, Gidney and Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education*, pp. 234-243.

being named. ... The one I convinced of my superior agility in an encounter which he sought by giving him a good ducking in a snow drift... the other young fellow was not so easily managed... He brought some rotten apples in his pocket [to school one day], and as he was so backward, he had to take his seat on the low bench, opposite to him were the little girls on the other side of the stove. He scooped the rot of the apples out with his thumb and shot it in the girls faces. I noticed the girls in commotion and looking up... I caught him in the very act... I told him he would have to behave or he would have to take up with a thrashing, [but] he paid no attention to the warning. There was at that time a large beech rod lying somewhere behind me. I grabbed it and was upon him before he could rise from the seat... I gave him a complete thrashing... I had no further trouble in this school.⁴⁷

Other teachers were not as fortunate. A Mr. Jones, who taught for a while in the district of Renfrew, was reported to have complained of “several cases of insubordination” at a school board meeting in February 1859. After showing board members “several dangerous missiles which had been thrown about the school”, he tendered his resignation.⁴⁸

The choice between moral suasion and corporal punishment was not always so cut and dried. Teachers also had to endure the anonymous pranks and shenanigans of students. Henry Dugdale, a teacher in the Kingston area who taught from 1850 to 1876, recalled just such an incident, teaching on Wolfe Island in January 1865:

The Winter was very stormy and cold; much snow had fallen which obliged the door shut and the windows up with a good fire in the stove. Suddenly there was a suffocating atmosphere in the room which caused a general coughing and sneezing amongst the pupils till it became intolerable when there was a rush for the outside, some of the younger ones burying their faces in the snow for relief. As soon as order could be obtained and inquiry made as to the cause I found that some of the rude boys had put cayene (*sic*) pepper on the hot stove which was the cause of the uproar. Could never find out who did it for several years afterwards.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ AO, F 1207 MU1378-103, James Kelly.

⁴⁸ The first page of this letter is missing, therefore there is no way to determine its origin; however, other comments within it suggest that it was written by an official of Smith's Falls, probably in response to Hodgins' circular. AO, F 1207 MU 1378-152.

⁴⁹ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-119, Henry Dugdale.

This type of situation was not the norm in all classrooms, of course. Some teachers managed to conduct their classes with fairly liberal degrees of democracy. James Elliot, a school teacher who began his career in 1843, found that allowing students a say in how they were to be governed was an effective alternative to corporal punishment.

I would on the first day of school say it was necessary to have some rules for the good government of the School and wished them to help me make them and would ask them if I was to allow any fighting and everything I could think of. I hoped none of them would do any of those bad things but it was customary in making laws to attach a penalty and with judgment I could get it reasonable. The whole was taken down in writing with preamble and witnesses. I tried it 20 years and it often restrains a teacher as well as pupils.⁵⁰

This practice did not preclude Elliot's use of physical force, however, as he himself observed: "There were a few [pupils] that seemed bent to make mischief but a few doses of the extract of beech made them all right."⁵¹ No doubt, Elliot was referring to beech wood rods which many teachers resorted to as a means of force. Moral and corporal preference aside, what is notable here is the pedagogic latitude possessed by teachers, as the consequence of a nascent educational system which ultimately could not force its will in this area—and for that matter, many others. Time and again, one witnesses the contradiction between what was considered 'proper' by authorities, and what actually occurred in classrooms at mid-century.

Thus, it should come as little surprise that in many respects, the policies of the Ryerson administration and the reality of teaching—particularly in a rural community—were often very different. For one thing, the relatively-comfortable, insulated bureaucrat

⁵⁰ AO, F 1207 MU 1378–93, James Elliot.

⁵¹ AO, F 1207 MU 1378–93, James Elliot.

in Toronto had little idea of what life was like in a pioneer community. And, although the latter conditions tended to dissipate with time, they did persist well into the 1880s in more remote areas of the province. This was particularly true of teaching conditions. One of these was the practice of “boarding around”, in which the teacher in a community would live for a short period with families of the children he or she taught, depending upon each household’s willingness and material means. The practice, though quite common in the early part of the nineteenth century, was viewed by school reformers and many teachers as both personally demeaning for the instructor, as well as an impediment to the professionalization of educators. But while this seems to have been the official line of the Department and its supporters, little evidences of this resentment exists in the reminiscences of teachers. Indeed, many teachers wrote of it as being one of the more interesting aspects of the job itself. Susan Flynn, who began teaching in West Gwillimbury township at age 14, recalled her first assignment.

The people signed an agreement, paying me a dollar for each child for three months with board, and without at one dollar and a quarter. But as I was handy at cutting out the children’s clothes and I was a good sewer at plain and fancy needlework, I was always a welcome guest and invariably treated as one of the family. On Thursdays a boy or girl often would come up to me and say, “Please teacher, will you come to our house?”⁵²

James Elliot’s experience was similar in tone: “I used to board around with the pupils and found it very agreeable. I did not have to board more than 4 or 5 places in a Section and there used to be a little rivalry as to whom could do the best for the teacher.” S. Vanderwater also focused upon the positive aspects of lodging with students and their

⁵² AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-25, Susan Flynn.

families: “In many respects I like[d] the plan and I got acquainted with every person in the place. Got the best to live on and the best bed in the house.”⁵³

These brief excerpts are not cited here in order to prove that boarding around was a preferred lifestyle for the majority of teachers.⁵⁴ However, they do support the contention that its universal condemnation by authorities may well have been for reasons other than the comfort of the teacher. It may in fact have been because of the lack of bureaucratic scrutiny inherent in this arrangement. When one considers the increasingly-segregated nature of the schoolhouse itself, this postulation takes on more significance.

Increasingly during the nineteenth century, schools became places where central authority manifested its presence at the community level. At the same time, public participation in and around the school was progressively frowned upon. External influences had to be kept from education, to optimally benefit scholars.⁵⁵ This in turn led to the acquisition of buildings and property by the Department. “School buildings and grounds that were owned outright by boards of trustees could be controlled. Rented rooms in buildings used for other purposes, and even in the private residences of schoolmasters—commonplace locations for schools up to the middle of the century—began to be thought unsuitable.”⁵⁶ Similarly, while it is no doubt true that the early conditions under which teachers were expected to practise their trade were by and large painfully inadequate, the fact that many persevered in this environment suggests that

⁵³ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-131, S. Vanderwater .

⁵⁴ Still, it is remarkable that out of the 15 people who do mention boarding around, only one lamented its inconvenience.

⁵⁵ In one instance, “the annoying conduct of strangers” at the Model School in Toronto in 1859 led the Department to fence in what had hitherto been used as a public park. See Prentice, *School Promoters*, pp. 154-155.

⁵⁶ Prentice, *School Promoters*, p. 155. She goes on to argue that fears of moral contamination disposed the Education Office to discourage and even prohibit use of school buildings for anything other than their intended purpose.

some teachers were willing to put up with these hardships because of the compensation they received in other areas of their work.

Judging from what teachers remembered of their greater autonomy in the classroom, and the intimacy many felt with their communities, one gets the sense that in spite of the professional support they sought, many teachers yearned for some of the more traditional practices. Further, the observation points to a larger paradox, namely, that while teachers desired the social and remunerative benefits which professional bureaucracy bestowed upon them, they did so at the cost of personal flexibility and the intimate ties they had with students and parents. Their reminiscences suggest that despite many of the modern technical and pedagogic innovations coming their way, teachers viewed their experiences not simply as the necessary first step in public education in Upper Canada, but also as being representative of the era in which they taught—one both appropriate and suited to the given circumstances. In this regard, they created for themselves a hybrid teaching iconography, borrowing heavily from the altruism and professionalism of Ryerson and combining these attributes with the practical reality of pioneering front-line civil servants who navigated between bureaucratic dictum and parochial self-interest, who saw the wisdom and folly of both interests, and found the middle ground necessary to accomplish their goal—to educate the people of the province.⁵⁷

Much of this sentiment is evident in teacher descriptions of themselves, their students and communities, and the particular circumstances in which they worked. The

⁵⁷ In fact, a myriad of influences became well-established after mid-century, “[I]ncreased wealth, larger population and keener competition demanded better training for the tasks of life and the struggle for success. This affected the content and method of teaching. At the same time, the rival claims of other

recollection of Charles Clark, who taught from 1846 to 1866 paints a common picture of what these conditions were:

The great majority of the school houses [at mid-century] were log houses with a frame school-house here and there without any maps or blackboards... The desks in almost every school were attached to the wall almost all round the school – room with long forms for seats before the desks; the scholars sat on those forms facing the desks with their backs to the teacher.

Clark goes on to describe how he and his students chinked the gaps between the school's log walls with moss in the fall, to keep out the draft.⁵⁸ Oliver Olmstead, as he wrote of his experience in mid-nineteenth century schools, pondered the dangers to students' health from studying in such conditions:

The school... was in a bad condition. House small frame with sometimes one hundred pupils. No maps, no apparatus... House badly seated, writing desks on two sides. Pulpit in one end, stove in the middle....seats without backs, little children could no (*sic*) touch the floor. It is a wonder that they did not leave school with crooked spine[s].⁵⁹

Although the general physical layout as described by teachers was similar, many instructors described innovative ways in which they and their students made practical improvements to the circumstances. George Peters recalled how the precarious nature of the seating arrangements in his school made it necessary for him to improvise a solution:

The desks... were all of one height and were about right for the average scholar of 12 or 14 yrs. but were too low for larger pupils and as much too high for small ones... and as there were no ink wells and the ink bottles because of the shaky condition of the desks very frequently tipped over, a channel to catch the ink and drain it back into the bottle was the common thing in front of each pupil.⁶⁰

professions and of business occupations (*sic*) seriously affected the personnel of the teaching staff." Althouse, *The Ontario Teacher*, p. 50.

⁵⁸ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-106, Charles Clark.

⁵⁹ AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-53, Oliver Olmstead.

⁶⁰ AO, E2 RG 2 87-0-56, George Peters.

Adam Robinson remembered altering the height of the benches in his school house to accommodate the smaller students.⁶¹ These teachers, when confronted with the realities of the front line in education had little problem in devising practical solutions to the realities of their individual classrooms. Thus, in a sense, pragmatism engendered autonomy and initiative, two characteristics entirely absent from Ryerson's teaching model.

PATRIOTISM

As we noted earlier, Ryerson considered teachers as critical instruments of informal political and cultural indoctrination. By example and with the help of department-directed curriculum, they would, Ryerson hoped, tame and train the masses of Upper Canadians—particularly new immigrants—to respect and adhere to the tenets of the country's emerging imperial-national Anglo-Protestant society. To this end, Ryerson and his department dictated which books should be used, and what courses of study were suitable to this context. There is no evidence in the reminiscences which blatantly contradicts this goal, however, when the subject of patriotism (as it is to be understood in its Anglo-Protestant context) is broached, teachers tend to treat it as an issue to either be negotiated, to keep peace in the classroom, or as a subject for critical discussion. It is not, as Ryerson would have liked, an unquestioned precept. Part of the reason for Ryerson's rationale may have to do with the fact that early on, education was recognized as an effective tool in the arsenal of state-sanctioned propaganda, and there are many examples

⁶¹ Robinson only wrote five short paragraphs to Hodgins, but vividly recalled this incident: "I do remember the commencing in one school. The forms (benches) appeared to be all the same size. I got a saw and cut a part of the feet of one or more of the forms so that one of the least child could sit on it and its feet on the floor. AO, E2 RG 2 87-0-80, Adam Robinson.

of its use in this capacity during and after Ryerson's time.⁶² The state was thus justified to utilize the evolving ubiquity of public education to further contemporary political aims. This, in turn, not only informed public discourse on the topic, but helped to fan the flames of religious and moral disagreements as well.

The single most important contribution to the teaching of patriotism in Upper Canadian schools was in the area of text books.⁶³ They also helped to lay the groundwork for gradation and uniform testing criteria for teachers who wanted to improve their certification. In short, they augmented the shift from local to central authority and provided guidelines for teaching groups, rather than individuals.⁶⁴

Most of the commentary by retired teachers surrounding the issue of patriotism indicate that teachers considered the consequences of department policy as it came down to them. Some welcomed the introduction of tools such as standardized textbooks, but for different reasons. John Phillips wrote:

One of our greatest troubles was the variety of school books in almost every section. The first settlers brought along "books from home" which had been used by them and their fathers before them there... And each parent stood up for his own, declaring it to be the best... It was a great relief when the Irish national readers were introduced and all others forbidden.⁶⁵

The prevalence of American texts in the earlier part of the century was also noted by many teachers, with varying degrees of concern.⁶⁶ Most simply noted their presence and

⁶² As Prentice notes, Ryerson feared the "lack of public spirit, the collective energy and enterprise", so fundamental to the Protestant work ethic. She later goes on to say that he laid the blame for such public ills as materialism, crime and ignorance on the absence in Upper Canada of "the elusive spirit of patriotism, in his view, the fountain of all collective energy and enterprise." The argument would prove to be an enduring one in Canadian education. See *School Promoters*, pp. 47, 52.

⁶³ This explains, in part at least, why Ryerson argued so ardently for their standardization and adoption after 1846.

⁶⁴ As Curtis notes, "The purposes of instruction in the educational state were much more 'societal' than individualistic..." See *Building the Educational State*, p. 269.

⁶⁵ F 1207 MU 1378-171, John Phillips.

went on to laud the adoption of the Irish, then Canadian reading series which appeared after mid-century.⁶⁷ Of all the letters consulted, only two make extremely-nationalistic statements, and this begs the question: *why?* Perhaps patriotism was so much a part of the Anglo-Protestant culture at the time, there was no need to state the obvious. Or, the answer may lie in waning fear about American debasement. Another possibility, which comes across in the reminiscences themselves, is that many teachers had taught during a period of considerable American influence, in the form of U. S. immigrants, teachers and text books. This does not suggest that their sympathies lay outside those of the Canadian nation, rather, it points to a more balanced view of the situation. This ability to see beyond official rhetoric could extend to other areas as well. We see this type of treatment in the descriptions of religious difference and diversity in the classroom.

James Elliot recalled that as a young teacher in the County of Peel in 1852, he had been confronted with sectarian division and discord:

At the time I took the school there was a bitter feeling between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. The teachers had to let out the parties at different times to prevent fighting on the road... The Bible and Testament were still used as reading books more or less and kept up a rather ill feeling so I spoke to the trustees asking whether they had any objection to having the R. Catholic Bible in the school. They left it to me. I therefore told the R. Catholic children that they might fetch their Bible and Testament if they wished... So soon as the RC began reading from their Testament the others were surprised to find the two versions so much alike and sometimes within a year they would read in the same class.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Some distinguish certain texts specifically as American in origin, but the majority simply list them among the many books used. See for example, files AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-66, 93, and AO, F 1207 MU 1378-124, 125 and 130.

⁶⁷ See for example, files AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-11, 86, and AO, F 1207MU 1378-103

⁶⁸ , AO, E2 RG 2-87-0-93, James Elliot.

Other teachers considered their opinion important enough to openly question official policy. John Phillips bluntly criticized Ryerson's stance on the use of the Bible in the classroom, forcefully noting the consequences it wrought:

The great life-mistake of the late Dr. Ryerson was in opposing the Legislature in prohibiting the reading of the Bible in the public schools. He insisted on its being permissive and got his way. But that did not satisfy all the protestant clergy even, many of whom wanted bible reading enforced in all the schools. The legislature plainly foresaw that, since the two great bodies of Christians into which this country is divided had each a bible of its own—and that as each looked upon the other's bible as erroneous in some essential particulars—it was better to exclude both from the public schools—not out of any disrespect for either, but for peace sake. And had the protestants of old Canada West listened to their representatives in parliament instead of to their clergy, the R. Catholics would soon have fallen into line, and we would have but one system of school in this province.⁶⁹

These two teachers clearly recognized themselves as something other than mere appendages of the educational state, blindly following Department directives and policy. They recognized the potentially-explosive nature of religion in schools and suggested or implemented suitable alternatives to deal with it. James Elliot attempted to modify public policy, no doubt in response to the particular conditions in which he found himself. John Phillips felt that he was knowledgeable and competent enough to question educational policy, albeit as a retiree.

In conclusion, if we consider that the vast majority of events contained within the reminiscences focus upon local rather than bureaucratic topics, then we begin to appreciate how teachers of this era saw themselves, both collectively and as individuals. Their self-image was not wholly-divorced from what Ryerson had hoped it would be, yet neither was it merely a sycophantic approximation of the ideal preached by the Chief Superintendent. Likewise, public opinion had undergone a further change in its attitude

toward teachers. No longer did the debate focus so much around whether teachers were inherently good or bad, but rather, how they in particular, and public education in general, were both to be employed, to further the ideological aims of progress and imperial-nationalism.⁷⁰ The art of teaching had indeed been transformed by the events of the nineteenth century, from a miserable employment to an honourable profession, with *and* in spite of the intentions and perseverance of Egerton Ryerson.

⁶⁹ AO, F 1207 MU 1378-171, John Phillips.

⁷⁰ As Prentice notes, by century's end, Upper Canadian "ideologists stressed education, manliness and gentlemanliness", and the notion of "public servant" came to be associated with this ideal. See *School Promoters*, p. 108.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting upon the evolution of education in Upper Canada during his life, retired teacher Robert Deachman wrote:

And as I advance in years, I see a greater necessity of attending to the education of the youth of our land as no other individual holds such a responsible position as our teachers, and I verily believe that the educators of our children are, to a certain extent, moulded [*sic*] by those engaged in this noble work.¹

Deachman, like many of his colleagues, understood the value of teaching and the rewards it promised for students. By openly lauding the profession, he also testified to the general improvement in status which teaching underwent during the nineteenth century. At long last, the public had come to respect teachers and the work they did. Implicit here as well is an understanding of the connection between good education and socio-economic well-being. Teachers formed a vital link between the generations, ensuring that the younger generation was properly equipped to assume the awesome social responsibility currently being borne by their parents. They, after all, were tomorrow's citizens..

The popular perception of teacher changed dramatically during the nineteenth century. During the first four decades, teachers were associated with unsavoury attributes, ranging from hapless incompetence to outright skullduggery. Colonial political status and rugged pioneer conditions eclipsed the need for an educated population. The upper-classes regarded teachers with a mixture of condescension and

¹ AO E2 RG2-87-0-22, Robert Deachman.

scorn, as servants who provided an educational foundation for the future elite of Upper Canada. To the lower classes, teachers were a tertiary concern, to be considered only after the necessities of survival and safety were well in hand.

Teachers, for the most part, reinforced these stereotypes. Teaching brought little economic and social rewards, and people plying the trade tended to be transient and lack the necessary academic skill required to impart even the most rudimentary literacy and numeracy. They remained unorganized and unmonitored until the early 1840s, when responsible government came to the colony and the elements of modern educational state formation began to take shape. Egerton Ryerson gave substance and direction to these tentative political inclinations into education. Ryerson's reputation as a Methodist preacher and an articulate public speaker, combined with some fortuitous political manoeuvring, put him in a position to launch his vision of education. Part of this scheme necessitated ameliorating public perceptions towards teachers, while transforming the profession into an effective bureaucratic arm of a centralized educational authority under his tutelage. Under the watchful supervision of the Department of Education, teachers were supposed to emulate and enforce Ryerson's academic and administrative philosophies, both of which were inexorably tied to and informed by the pervasive Anglo-Protestant cultural ideology of the period and place.

As Upper Canada grew, however, social, economic and cultural conditions altered the trajectory of Ryerson's educational vision. Although he was able to improve the image of teachers as a group, he proved unable to keep the emerging profession exclusively-male, and firmly under the control of his department. Teachers discovered that, individually and collectively, their vision did not necessarily parallel that of

Ryerson, or any other bureaucrat. In the process, they developed a sense of professional self-awareness that would permit them greater opportunities to determine what their role should be in provincial education. The public respect they garnered was sometimes because—but just as often in spite of—what Ryerson had envisaged a half-century earlier. The twentieth century saw them continue their struggle for recognition as a profession, however, like it or not, it was Ryerson who laid the foundation for what they were able to achieve, long after he departed the scene.

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Appendix A

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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RG 2-87-0-2	Anonymous	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-3	Allan, James	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-4	Anderson, James	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-5	Anderson, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-6	Armstrong, Jas. W.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-7	Bates, Mary J.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-8	Beatty, W.H.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-9	Best, Alex	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-10	Bigg, W.R.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-11	Bowes, Ellen	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-12	Bradley, William	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-13	Bremner, J.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-14	Burkholder, Benjamin	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-15	Cameron, Peter	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-16	Cavanagh, Jas.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-17	Clarke, J.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-18	Chaplin, Thomas	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-19	Cook, James	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-20	Costello, Cath.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-21	Croll, David	[ca. 1896]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-22	Deachman, Peter	[ca. 1896]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-23	Derby, Saml.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-24	Dimsdale, A.H.	[ca. 1896]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-25	Flynn, Susan	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-26	Foran, Jas. M.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-27	France, Thomas	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-28	Haldane, John	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-29	Henry, Parsons D.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-30	Hollis, A.	1896	MS 914
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RG 2-87-0-32	Hovenden, Sarah	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-33	Ireland, Irene	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-34	Jamison, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-35	Kyle, Joseph	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-36	Lee, A.H.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-37	McAlpine, Maria <i>nee</i> Murray	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-38	McBride, Geo. D.	1896	MS 914

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RG 2-87-0-39	McBrien, Australia B.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-40	McColl, Arch.	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-41	McCalty, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-42	McGeehan, Ellen	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-43	McGoey, Thos. Q.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-44	McGrath, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-44.1	McKerrall, Theophilus	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-45	McKinnon, Arch. J.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-46	McLaren, Alexander	1865	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-47	McMahon, Mary A.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-48	McNamara, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-49	McNeillie, J.R.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-50	Macartney, Chas.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-51	Marshall, James	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-52	Moug, Stewart	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-53	Olmstead, Oliver	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-54	Payne, Geo. L.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-55	Perry, Samuel T.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-56	Peters, Geo.	[ca. 1896]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-57	Philips, Robert	[ca. 1896]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-58	Pierce, Richard R.	1876	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-59	Regan, Emma R.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-60	Robinson, James	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-61	Russell, Robt.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-62	Scott, William H.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-63	Sinclair, John	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-64	Stephen, Alex	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-65	Varcoe, Jonathan	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-66	Wright, Meade N.	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-67	Young, James	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-68	Aldborough	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-69	Amprior	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-70	Aurora	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-71	Aylmer	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-72	Belleville	1862	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-73	Bracebridge	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-74	Brampton	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-75	Brockville	1894	MS 914

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RG 2-87-0-76	Chatham	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-77	Cornwall	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-78	Elgin County	[ca. 1890]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-79	Forest	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-80	Gananoque	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-81	Gore Bay	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-82	Grimsby	1894	MS 914
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RG 2-87-0-84	Iroquois	1895	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-85	Kingston	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-86	Listowel	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-87	London	1886-1891	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-88	Markham	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-89	Milton	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-90	Morrisburg	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-91	Newburgh	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-92	Niagara	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-93	Norfolk	1896	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-94	Parry Sound	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-95	Perth	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-96	Peterborough	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-97	Port Hope	1894	MS 914
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RG 2-87-0-99	Sault Ste. Marie	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-100	Simcoe County	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-101	Smith's Falls	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-102	Stamford (Niagara Falls)	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-103	Thornbury, Grey County	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-104	Thorold	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-105	Toronto	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-106	Walkerton	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-107	Walkerville	[ca. 1894]	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-108	Wardsville	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-109	Welland	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-110	Weston County	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-111	Windsor	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-112	Woodstock	1894	MS 914
RG 2-87-0-113	Lorretto Convents and Academies	[ca. 1894]	MS 914

ASSORTED ARCHIVAL READINGS – TEACHING IN THE 1800'S

Article 40. Arch McColl		
Article 41. John McCalty	1855	
Article 42. Ellen McGeehan	1861-1889	
Article 43. Thomas Q. McGoey	1865-1891	
Article 44. John McGrath	1859-1876	
Article 45. Arch J. McKinnon	1858-1879	
Article 46. Latin Valedictory	1865 – not translated	
Article 47. Mary A. McMahan	1866-1882	
Article 48. John McNamara	1857-1874	
Article 49. J.R. McNeillie	1854-1888	
Article 50. Chas. Mearhrey	1856-1878	
Article 51. James Marshall	1858	
Article 52. Stewart Moag	1858-1882	
Article 53. Oliver Olmstead	1838-1851	
Article 54. George L. Payne		
Article 55. Samuel T. Perry	1860-1872	
Article 56. George Peters	1860-1867	
Article 57. Robert Phillips	1842-1866	
Article 58. Richard R. Pierce	1874-1876	
Article 59. Emma R. Regan	1855-1882	
Article 60. James Robinson	1843-1862	
Article 61. Robert Russell	1858-1876	
Article 62. William H. Scott	1857-1887	
Article 63. John Sinclair	1845-1876	
Article 64. Alex Stephen	1856-1876	
Article 65. Jonathan Vascoe	1857-1882	
Article 66. Meade N. Wright	1858	
Article 67. James Young	1856-1866	
Article 68. Aldborough History	1819-1875	
Article 69. George Craig	1856-1894	
Article 70. J.M. Wills	1825-1888	Aurora School Board
Article 71. Thomas Hammond	1818-1883	Aylmer School Board
Article 72. Belleville Seminary	1854	
Article 73. James Boyer	1858-1894	Bracebridge School Board
Article 74. Henry Robert	1834-1853	Brampton School Board
Article 75. Brockville Grammar	1807	
Article 76. T. Harris	1855-1884	Chatham Collegiate Institute
Article 77. C.J. Wattral	1803-1878	Cornwall School Board
Article 78. Aldborough History	1796-1894	

ASSORTED ARCHIVAL READINGS – TEACHING IN THE 1800'S

Article 79	W. Kerr	1839
Article 80	Adam Robinson	
Article 81	Bernard Daly	1842
Article 82	James Robinson	
Article 83	N. Valentine	1839
Article 84	D. Young Hoyt	1843 – 1879
Article 85	<u>H. L. Whitcourt</u>	
Article 86	J.W. Palmer	1844 – 1873
Article 87	Wm. Gorman	1842 – 1858
Article 88	Michael Gallagher	1842 – 1871
Article 89	C. Routy	1841 – 1872
Article 90	<u>John Monaghan</u>	1841 – 1872
Article 91	John Wilson	
Article 92	Adolphus Andrews	1843 – 1873
Article 93	James Elliott	1843 – 1863+
Article 94	Patience S. Courtney	1843
Article 95	<u>S.S. No. 5 Trafalgar</u>	1844
Article 96	Patrick Sullivan	1845
Article 97	Alex Rodgers	1845 - 1872
Article 98	Untitled	
Article 99	Edmund B. Harrison	1844
Article 100	<u>William Warlurton</u>	1836 – 1846+
Article 101	James C. Clark	1846 - 1872
Article 102	James DeCantillon	1847 - 1875
Article 103	James Kelly	1847 - 1877
Article 104	Fred E. Seymour	1830
Article 105	<u>Pringle Shaw</u>	1845
Article 106	Charles Clark	1848 - 1866
Article 107	Elizabeth Glenday	1847 - 1878
Article 108	William Poole	1848 - 1876
Article 109	Dorthea Flavelle	1847 - 1875
Article 110	<u>D. Sullivan</u>	1847 - 1869
Article 111	T. Chislett	1869 - 1878
Article 112	Sebastian Gfroerer	1869 - 1892
Article 113	Dundas School	1843 – 1869
Article 114	Untitled	
Article 115	<u>Benjamin Shirreff</u>	1852 - 1884
Article 116	William Plunkett	1850 - 1880
Article 117	Charles Shortt	1850 - 1876
Article 118	Paris Board of Ed.	1850 - 1894
Article 119	Henry Dugdale	1850 – 1876
Article 120	<u>John Mackay</u>	1850 - 1878
Article 121	J.E. Johnson	1850 – 1880
Article 122	Untitled	1850 - 1876

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Article 124	David D, Keenan	1851 - 1884
<u>Article 125</u>	<u>Richard Coe</u>	<u>1851 - 1866</u>
Article 126	Robert Hamilton	1851 – 1875
Article 127	E. Hopkins	1851 - 1876
Article 128	Hugh Lucas	1851 - 1882
Article 129	A. G. Rothwell	
<u>Article 130</u>	<u>Alexander Stewart</u>	<u>1851 - 1876</u>
Article 131	S. Vanderwater	1852
Article 132	Thomas Armstrong	1852 - 1877
Article 133	R.A. Johnson	1852
Article 134	Caledonia School	1852 – 1874
<u>Article 135</u>	<u>Archibald Andrews</u>	
Article 136	A.C. Osborne	1852 - 1882
Article 137	William Heavener	1853
Article 138	Susan Goodbody	1852 - 1890
Article 139	D. McAlpine	1853 - 1883
<u>Article 140</u>	<u>John Quinn</u>	<u>1851 - 1872</u>
Article 141	J.G. Ward	
Article 142	John McCarter	1853 – 1866+
Article 143	Alexander Forbes	1853 - 1878
Article 144	J.K. McBain	1853 - 1873
<u>Article 145</u>	<u>Village of Tweed</u>	<u>1853 - 1896</u>
Article 146	J.W. Weighill	1865 - 1885
Article 147	Port Hope Schools	1853 - 1896
Article 148	Cornwall Schools	1816 - 1896
Article 149	Cynthia E. Busch	
<u>Article 150</u>	<u>Nicholas Jarvis</u>	<u>1852 – 1872</u>
Article 151	Nonexistent -Oops! ☺	
Article 152	Smith's Falls Schools	1847 - 1893
Article 153	Patrick D. O'Meara	1848 - 1873
Article 154	Dundas Schools	1848 - 1894
<u>Article 155</u>	<u>Alexander McPhee</u>	<u>1848</u>
Article 156	James Mackay	1848
Article 157	William Poole	1848 – 1857+
Article 158	Robert Dickson	
Article 159	Samuel Megaw	1848 - 1881
<u>Article 160</u>	<u>James Greer</u>	<u>1849</u>
Article 161	Margaret McPhail	1849 – 1865+
Article 162	James Forrest	1849
Article 163	P. Jordan	1849 - 1884
Article 164	J.D. O'Sullivan	
<u>Article 165</u>	<u>H.C. Clarke</u>	<u>1849 - 1873</u>
Article 166	Edward Rose	1849 - 1877
Article 167	Napanee Collegiate	1850 - 1894

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Article 168	Joseph Drummond	1850 – 1854+
Article 169	R.O. Campbell	1850
<u>Article 170</u>	<u>Vienna Public School</u>	<u>1850 - 1894</u>
Article 171	John Phillips	1849 - 1858

Appendix B



TORONTO, 17th March, 1896.

CIRCULAR TO SUPERANNUATED SCHOOL TEACHERS
IN ONTARIO.

DEAR SIRS,

In preparing, for the Department of Education, (under the direction of the Honourable the Minister,) the DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN UPPER CANADA, from 1791 to 1876, it appears to me that the History would be much more complete if the old Teachers of the Province would contribute the result of their experience in the Schools, during their early period of service in them.

I will, therefore, thank you to send me a brief sketch of the Schools in which you may have taught,—the condition of the Buildings, the kind of Fittings in the School Rooms, Apparatus, Maps, Books used, and any other details which might be of interest in this Work, on which I am now engaged.

I may add, that, in addition to any specific information which you may be able to give me about the Schools in which you may have taught, I should be glad to get copies of old Newspapers, old Pamphlets, old Parliamentary proceedings; (Bills, Reports, etc.); Old School Records; College Calendars; Examination Papers, and any other documents which might throw light on the educational history of Upper Canada from the earliest times.

Very truly yours,

J. GEORGE HODGINS,

LIBRARIAN AND HISTORIOGRAPHER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

P.S. Address: 92 Pembroke St., Toronto.

Appendix C: From Alison Prentice, "“Friendly Atoms in Chemistry”: Women and Men at Normal School in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Toronto”, *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J. M. S. Careless* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1990), p. 294.

**Table 2: Toronto Normal School, 1850–54 and 1855:
Reasons for Leaving Early
(before the end of the session)**

Reason	Women			Men		
	Rank	n	%	Rank	n	%
A: Known						
Illness/"alleged" illness/death of student or family member	1	19	44	1	36	36
"Incompetence"	2	14	33	3	14	14
"Dissatisfied"/"Wanted at home"/"Own convenience"	3	5	12	4	12	12
Discipline-related problem(s)	4	3	7	2	16	16
"To take a school"	5.5	1	2	5	11	11
"Want of funds"	5.5	1	2	7	3	3
"Too young"	-	0	0	6	7	7
Total Known		43	100		99	100
B: Not Given or Unclear		30			42	
Total		73			141	

Source: Archives of Ontario, RG 2-H-1, vol. 10, Toronto Normal School Registers, sessions 1850-54; RG 2-C-6-C, Incoming General Correspondence, "List of students who left during the session", 18 Apr. 1855.

n number of students leaving early

% n as percentage of total for whom a reason is known