Connecticut's Public Schools

A History, 1650–2000

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CHAPTER IV

Henry Barnard and Frustrated School Reform

Introduction

THE EFFORT TO REFORM elementary schooling in Connecticut was part of a wave that swept across the nation in the 1830s, starting in New England and New York. By the early 1840s, major cities such as New York and Cincinnati boasted tax-supported free schools. The city of Boston alone levied more in school taxes than the entire state of Connecticut. Similar objectives marked state-based campaigns that were also linked by communication among leaders and publications that transcended state boundaries. Robert Church has identified three common goals: to provide a free elementary education for all white American children; to make teaching a profession by articulating a discipline of pedagogy, establishing teacher training schools, and organizing professional associations; and to develop state regulations and regulating bodies. In the Northeast and the West, the reformers succeeded to varying degrees in the first and third of these. The effort to professionalize elementary school teaching succeeded in part, but was, overall, a failure.[1]

But times were changing. A market economy, the rise of mill villages and an urban middle class, a greater diversity of occupations, and an influx of immigrants many of whom did not speak English, all gave literacy an importance beyond its centrality to moral and civic education, though the rhetorical thrust of Connecticut's reformers continued the retrospective vision of a School Funded golden age of education. Materialism and the cash economy helped support greed, or at least shifted emphasis in values away from community responsibilities and toward individual desires and concerns. The ideal of education as a public responsibility in a democratic republic began to lose its primacy; and just at a time when the right

to vote was expanding to include virtually all white male adults, though it would not be until the mid-19th century that the vocational objectives of public education would achieve parity.

Much of the impetus behind educational reform, like the contemporaneous movements in penal, insane, and dietary reforms, and temperance and other social causes, arose out of the burgeoning urbanization that accompanied industrialization. The ratio of population that lived in American cities increased from 7.2 percent in 1820 to 25.7 percent in 1870. In 1840 Connecticut's population was 15.1 percent urban; by 1890 it was 67 percent urban.[2] This urban growth was accompanied by a great influx of immigrants, many of whom were illiterate and culturally different from the Yankee Protestant majority who dominated the power structure in every American state. Reformers wanted to make the children of these new city dwellers into good citizens and malleable industrial workers. Thus, from about 1830 until about 1920 the educational concerns relating to schools in cities and those of the majority of Americans still living on farms and rural areas diverged in some respects. The free and compulsory school movements became focused on city school systems because that's where poverty was concentrated and that's where idle boys and girls congregated.[3] Out in the countryside the one-room "system" staggered on in its stagnant and impoverished way until the early years of the 20th century. Taxpayers in country districts refused to abandon tuitions until forced to by law; parents there needed their children on the farms; real estate taxes hit farmers hardest.

What went on in the classrooms also developed different strains as city schools became large and sophisticated. One thing was sure, however: moral training and fundamental Protestant Christian principles and behavior would continue to pervade classrooms everywhere. So would traditional pedagogy. What actually went on in one-room schoolhouses changed little if at all. The reform spirit was manifest to some extent in city schools where numbers made it possible to grade students by age or accomplishment and where the social environment was more varied and vibrant and could attract better teachers. But inside the classroom, pedagogy was not different from what prevailed everywhere in the 18th century. A Golden Age of the common school was in the minds of the public, not a historical reality.

The mill villages springing up all over Connecticut gave more than hints of the social problems that urban life would bring. Already a presence in the state's five cities, unemployed teenage boys, transient mill workers, seafarers, and immigrants who had come to work on the Farmington Canal in the 1820s and on the railroads in the 1830s and 1840s became a threat to civil order, private property, chastity, and

citizenship values appropriate to a self-governing people. These antisocial elements gave rise to a whole spectrum of reform movements. Drunkenness and lotteries must be suppressed; prisons and insane asylums must be made more humane; diet must be improved; women should be allowed to vote; and slaves must be freed. Out of this cauldron of social ferment arose the movement to improve the schools. Horace Mann led the battle in Massachusetts, and Henry Barnard followed very closely in his train; indeed, they were virtually parallel movements.

Henry Barnard

Henry Barnard was born in Hartford in 1811, the fourth and last child of a ship captain turned rentier, upper middle class in wealth, but not in education. Barnard attended the local district school, which he described as "miserable," and at age twelve spent a year at Monson Academy in Massachusetts, where he was "the boy who played all the time and beat us all at our lessons." After a year or two at the prestigious Hartford Grammar School, Barnard entered Yale and graduated in 1830. He was very bright and loved "books, libraries, and debate." Barnard tried his hand at teaching in a school much like the one he had attended in Hartford, but, his biographer writes, "he did not like it, and he was not particularly good at it. . . . He lasted three months." Nevertheless, the supervisors there wrote that "he has given universal satisfaction [and] is a man of superior talents and acquirements. . . . " Barnard himself thought he did not have the temperament for the work.[4]

After several months' visit through the South and in Washington, where he hung out with his state's congressional delegation, he returned to Connecticut and after some desultory study of law, was admitted to the Hartford County bar. He was an interesting speaker, and still in his twenties was often invited to give public talks. Though he denied it, his biographer infers that Barnard secretly harbored political ambitions. During a visit to London as a delegate of the Connecticut Peace Society and a tour of the continent in 1835 and 1836, Barnard fell under the influence of Heman Humphrey, the president of Amherst, and a pioneering educational reformer. Humphrey's goals for schooling "were civic and social and the means obvious—better schoolhouses, a longer school year, and, above all, more qualified teachers." "From Heman Humphrey," writes Barnard's biographer, "Henry Barnard learned the litany from which he would never deviate."[5]

Barnard's travels had been supported by his father, but now, on his return to Hartford, it was time to earn a living. He was not sure he could earn enough lawyering; he turned to politics. In 1837, he was elected to the lower house of the

Henry Barnard at age twenty-five. Copy of a painting reproduced in *Connecticut Quarterly* vol. 4 (1898).

state's General Assembly as a Whig. At twenty-six he was the youngest member of that body.[6]

Early Reform

Calls for school improvement in Connecticut had been heard during the debate over the School Fund in the 1790s, and in 1799 a Middlesex County Association for the Improvement of the Common Schools was organized, though apparently no concrete measures arose from it. A statewide Society for the Improvement of the Common School was founded in 1827. Its calls for the appointment of a state commissioner went unanswered, but it inspired the organization of local societies. Public speakers throughout the first quarter of the 19th century gave vent to educational reform, and petitions from groups, individuals, and towns arrived at the General Assembly by the scores.[7]

A whole string of governors in the 1820s and 1830s called to the attention of the General Assembly the need to improve the common schools. Indeed, Gov-

ernor John Peters in 1831 deplored, in his speech to the Assembly, "[t]he general apathy, the deficient qualifications of instructors, and the neglect of parents and guardians . . . in regulating and governing their schools . . . "; and Governor William Ellsworth in 1836 called for the establishment of an officer of the state to review "the construction and accommodation of our schoolhouses, . . . the qualification of our teachers, the modes of instruction, the books used, and the general regulation and superintendence of schools."[8]

Into the waiting arms of these reformers stepped the energetic twenty-seven year old Henry Barnard. His tireless and forceful campaigning on behalf of better schools would dominate Connecticut's educational landscape for half a century after 1838. Barnard was not acting alone or in a vacuum, of course. Most influential among Barnard's predecessors was James G. Carter of Massachusetts. During the 1820s Carter published a number of essays in which he deplored the rapid decline of that state's public schools. Public apathy, Carter said, must be overcome by state action; grass-roots administration will soon bring the total collapse of "the institution that has been the glory of New England," he wrote. Horace Mann and Heman Humphrey in Massachusetts, and in Connecticut, Thomas Gallaudet, Horace Bushnell, Emma Willard, Mary Lyon, and Catherine Beecher are only the best-known proselytizers for good public education in the 1820s; most were still active into the 1830s. Barnard was not one of them until the second year of his three-year legislative career.[9]

Barnard persuaded the General Assembly to appoint a committee to investigate the condition of the state's public schools. He was appointed secretary, and spent the summer investigating schools and teachers all over the state. The committee report pointed to the hypocrisy and cant endemic in Connecticut society, the citizens' high principles and low practices when it came to public schooling. "How happens it," the committee asked, in words written by Barnard,

> that we are willing to pay price [sic] for the skill and labor bestowed on very many things which we deem essential to our comfort and gratification, that enables those who furnish this skill and labor, or trade in its products, soon to obtain a competency, and even to amass wealth, while the teachers of our common schools, who expend their time and talent upon what we profess to regard as the dearest to us of all that we can call our own, our children and youth, can never, by that occupation alone go forward in the world, support a family, and rise to fair equality, in point of property, with those around them.

Henry Barnard at age forty-three in 1854. Borrowed from *Connecticut Teacher* 34(October 1966).

Just for starters, though the old 1650 law that required parents and masters to see that their children and servants learned to read was still on the books, "there is no attempt to enforce the law, and any attempt to do so, would, I fear, be regarded as an unauthorized invasion of individual and parental rights," Barnard wrote in 1839.[10]

Reform Legislation

The legislation that followed this report created a Board of Commissioners of the Common Schools with a full-time secretary. The Board included the governor and the Commissioner of the School Fund and eight others, one of whom was the still young Barnard. After Thomas Gallaudet rejected the secretaryship, Barnard was pressed to take it, which he did. The job paid three dollars a day, but Barnard, who had just been offered a lucrative law partnership which he rejected, preferred to work without pay for fear that otherwise his service on the commission would appear self-serving. He served two six-month terms pro bono and then accepted the stipend on a per diem basis until the position was abolished in 1842.[11]

The Board was required to investigate and report annually on the condition of the common schools. It was authorized to withhold state money from those districts which did not submit visitors' reports. It would take time and energy for Barnard and the commission to make these regulations stick; but the young crusader had the energy and would make the time. "Mr. Barnard," the commissioners reported, "was instructed to visit, as far as practicable, all parts of the state, to inspect the schools and school houses, and ascertain their actual condition . . . and to confer with school officers and teachers, and the experienced friends of education, as to any modification which they should think it advisable and practicable . . . ." Barnard's *First Annual Report*, dated May 1839, sixty pages of small type, described the common schools under a series of headings that included "School Visiters [sic] and Overseers," "Character and Degree of Instruction," "School Houses," etc. It was a catalog of the pedagogical crimes of commission and omission that I have described above (in Chapter II).[12]

Barnard called first for a "more decided, active, generous public sentiment" to overcome the "wide spread and paralyzing apathy" pervading the public mind. The system must be "animated with a more vigorous principle of life." The school law should be amended to permit districts to employ more than one teacher so that schools could be divided into grades, with women to assist men as teachers of the youngest pupils. The number of committeemen should be cut to one for each district; at the society level there would be two visitors who should be paid. Schools should be supported by a tax on everybody's property and the School Fund should be distributed according to actual attendees, rather than the enumeration—that is the number of school-age children in the district—an enumeration that was frequently falsified, anyway. Teachers' wages must be elevated considerably and a teacher training institute should be established. A year later, Barnard added the need to standardize textbooks, fix up the school buildings, motivate and compel regular attendance, do away with rate bills, and provide more and better apparatus like globes and blackboards. These objectives would remain the focus of Barnard's talents, intellect, time and energy for the rest of his life.[13]

In his investigations all across the state, Barnard found the schools in desperate straits. He reported eloquently and persuasively to the Assembly: "The common school," he said, should

> no longer be regarded as common because it is cheap, inferior, and patronized only by the poor, and those who are indifferent to the education of their children, but common as the light and the air, because its blessings are open to

> all and enjoyed by all . . . that day will assuredly come, and it will bring along a train of rich blessings which will be felt in the field and the workshop, and convert many a hope into a circle of unfading smiles. For one, I mean to enjoy the satisfaction of the labor, let who will enter the harvest.[14]

The committee report and Barnard's eloquence persuaded the state's legislators to enact a series of reform measures in 1839, enhanced in 1840 and 1841. The 1841 act, which repealed and replaced virtually all prior 19th-century school legislation, was passed, Barnard claimed, "with an unanimity which we trust is a pledge of the friendly and united feeling in which its various provisions will be carried out in their local administration."[15] In view of the state's failure to enforce much of its own legislation, especially that relating to education, Barnard surely knew that his "trust" was more a desperate hope than a confident prediction.

"An Act Concerning Public Schools" is long and detailed, including as it did, all the provisions of the reforms of the previous three years. It incorporated and empowered the school societies and authorized the election of various officers. School societies' authority to establish districts and regulate their conduct was continued, along with the mandate to submit an enumeration of all residents over four and under sixteen years old. The societies were permitted to levy school taxes and were held responsible for state school funds transmitted to them. Boards of "visitors" were to "prescribe rules and regulations for the management, studies, books, classification and discipline of the schools in the society." "Classification" in this list refers to grouping students by accomplishment, so that a teacher could instruct small "classes" within her one-room school, rather than one student at a time.[16]

The heart of the reforms lay in the sections dealing with the role of the visitors, one or two of whom could be appointed a committee to carry out the stipulated duties. These duties included four visits a year to each district school, sometimes as many as ten roundtrip miles on foot or horse—an arduous and time-consuming chore in those societies with many districts, in some places over twenty. (Recall that there were several *societies* in most towns.) The visitors were required to examine prospective teachers and hire only those certified as competent by them or their small committees: "To teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and grammar, thoroughly, and the rudiments of geography and history," and "whose moral character, literary attainments, and ability to teach" were satisfactory. School societies could "annul" certificates of those teachers found wanting in any of these respects at any time. It was illegal for anyone to seek employment as a teacher who did not possess

a certificate.[17] These provisions empowering and mandating the society visitors were the essential core of Barnard's reforms; and it was these, as we shall see, that were most likely to fall by the wayside.

Districts—the little subdivisions of the societies—ultimately, by statute or tradition supported by the courts, were invested with general corporate powers. They could sue and be sued, tax and spend, and make contracts; and indeed in those respects "are placed on the same footing as towns." This was a lot of authority to extend to meetings of a handful of voters lead by a single committeeman appointed by the society committee. And, according to a chronicler in the 1870s, the courts abetted the expansion of district activity to "every neighborhood where at least twelve children could be gathered for elementary instruction."[18] A district, under the law, must include at least forty school-age children, another provision often breached. (In 1850, 38 percent of the districts had fewer than forty school-age children, including twenty-five with fewer than ten).[19] Annual district meetings were mandated. District committees were ordered to provide "suitable school rooms" and adequate "fuel properly prepared." The district committees were also required—not merely permitted—to "suspend during pleasure [i.e., as long as they want], or expel from school . . . all pupils found guilty on full hearing of incorrigibly bad conduct." Teachers were required to keep a register of attendance.[20]

Several long sections of the act continued the system of allocating the income from the School Fund, and stipulating just how the enumeration, on which distribution was based, was to be taken. An attempt was made to put some teeth into provisions aimed at false enumerations, fraudulent certification of teachers, and misappropriation of school funds. This was essential, Barnard said, because "there was not even a formal compliance with the law" on visitation and teacher certification, "in fact there had been an utter disregard" of the provisions of these laws. Barnard found at least one uncertified teacher in each of the thirty societies he surveyed in 1838.[21]

An important section declared, "No child shall be excluded from any common school in the district to which the child belongs, on account of the inability of the parent, guardian, or employer . . . to pay his or her tax . . . for any school purpose whatever." The selectmen were to carry out this provision and it, unlike much of the rest of the act, was fulfilled robustly even when the non-taxpaying parents outnumbered the taxpaying parents. Local school taxes were supposed to be levied on all the taxpayers in the district, not just parents of school children. This, too, was a provision often breached because the old rate bills were specifically authorized, and districts were much more likely to opt for this mode of covering expenses than

the widely unpopular taxes.[22] Regardless of the intent and spirit of the law, and of the ideology of civic responsibility that called on everyone to support the education of every child, many Connecticut taxpayers were damned if they were going to pay for the schooling of someone else's children, but as far as I can determine, no child was ever denied access to school because her parents could not pay taxes or tuition.

The statue of 1841 continued the Board of Commissioners that had been created two years earlier, eight "persons" annually appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. The board was to continue its investigations, collecting data and reporting to the General Assembly. The position of full-time secretary was carried over, with expenses and up to three dollars a day allowed. Barnard, of course, stayed in the job.[23]

The reform legislation beginning in 1838, culminating in the statute of 1841 summarized above, had a highly varied affect on school districts across the state. The public concern that lay behind this legislation was in no small measure the result of Barnard's work. As secretary to the Board of Commissioners, Barnard visited hundreds of schools; gave a couple hundred public lectures; polled dozens of visitors; communicated in writing with scores more; and launched the *Connecticut Common School Journal.*

Partisan political currents threatened Barnard's job in 1840, but he remained optimistic. "Parents," he wrote in 1841,

> are found more frequently in the schoolroom to cooperate with the teacher and encourage their children; their attendance at society and school meetings is more numerous; larger appropriations are made for all school purposes; many new schoolhouses have been built and old ones repaired after approved models, and more has been done in this respect within two years than for the twenty years before; school visitors are more strict in their examination of teachers, and regular and vigilant in visiting the schools required by law; a uniform set of books in all the schools of a society has been in some instances prescribed, and in others recommended, by the proper committee; a graduation of schools has been secured in eighty districts by employing two teachers where only one was employed before, and in several instances by establishing a central or union school for the older children of several districts; good teachers are employed for a longer period in the same school, and at higher wages; the average length of the schools is increased; . . . men of education and wealth are withdrawing their children from private schools. . . . [24]

Barnard's scenario was rosy indeed and not widely shared—especially by middle and upper class families. Nor was the General Assembly's parsimony in matters educational curbed. Parents were pouring money into private schools. Public apathy, especially before the 1830s, was characteristic of citizens who resisted any government activity that they did not personally promote. "If years of legislative activity," writes a 20th-century scholar, "apparently accomplished naught but a strengthening of tradition and custom, that result was hardly an accident." In particular, Connecticut citizens hated taxes imposed by a distant General Assembly, money that busy farmers and mill owners wanted for their own purposes.[25] Even legislated reforms remained a vision, not a material fact. Indeed, Barnard's description of the state of things was more vision than fact.

Politics

The 1830s was an era of political party formation in many states, and Connecticut was no exception. Indeed, partisanship reached one of its periodic extremes in the state, and, complained a committee of the General Assembly in 1845 "in this State, unlike New York and Massachusetts (and indeed all other States, so far as your committee, can learn) the cause of Common School education is connected with party politics—a thing fatal to any improvement in schools, especially where the great parties are so evenly balanced as in this State." Despite these remarks, the centralization of school policy and administration was, in fact, a point of partisan dispute in many other states, especially where—as in new states—constitutions were being written or revised.[26] But in Connecticut, reform of the public schools took a buffeting from the strong political crosswinds greater than anywhere else in the Union. Barnard's job was the first victim of the storm.

The old Federal Party had become impotent after its rabid opposition to the War of 1812 and the abortive Hartford Convention that came in its wake.[27] But the aristocratic spirit that animated the graying Federalists remained in many of them. In the face of a rising popular party organized as Jacksonian Democrats, the remnant Federalists joined with their ancient enemies, the Tolerationists, and in combination metamorphosed into Whigs. They included the commercial and industrial capitalists, who tended to be progressive in economic matters such as using the power of government to further business and industrial development. They favored protective tariffs, general incorporation and bankruptcy laws, and commercial treaties with foreign nations. They were also reformers found in disproportionate numbers among those calling for temperance, penal reform, suppression of

lotteries, humane care for imbeciles and the insane, and other causes tending to the reform of individuals. In Connecticut their sharpest focus was on public education. Henry Barnard was an enthusiastic and outspoken Whig. In the Assembly he joined like-minded moralists and elitists in the new party's first legislative majority.

Opposing the Whigs were the Jacksonian Democrats, reformers, too, but of a different persuasion. Jacksonians worked for political change that would come through institutional forms rather than individual character development. They first elected a governor in Connecticut in 1833 and except for one year, Governor Edwards and his Democratic followers in the General Assembly controlled the government until 1838 when the Whigs garnered the governorship and a comfortable legislative majority.

The public education changes that were incorporated into the statutes of 1839 to 1841 were Whig measures and were seen as partisan political measures by their opponents. The populist Democrats did not like the centralization of educational administration represented by the commission, especially its busybody secretary; and they opposed any limitation of the control of district committees. "An attempt on the part of the present school visitors, to follow the law [that gave society visitors authority over district affairs] as it now exists," reported one society committee member, "well nigh produced a little tornado." Refusals to certify well-connected local candidates "were regarded as acts of unjustifiable assumptions of power." But sometimes they were nothing more than small-town partisan squabbles. "Personal jealousies or local prejudices may in too many places counteract and oppose the labors of the most sincere and disinterested individuals; and if the great interests of common education are in imminent danger in the United States, one principal source of danger is in the blind and rancorous spirit of party."[28]

Locals thought the state commission was unnecessary, intrusive, and expensive. In 1842 when the Democrats again achieved a gubernatorial victory and a majority of the Assembly, they immediately repealed the act of the previous year in a blatantly partisan move. "The major motive behind this action" wrote a student of the affair a hundred years later, "was partisan rivalry, the Democrats being anxious to get rid of Barnard because he was a strong Whig." He had, after all, called his opponents "ignorant demagogues" and "a set of blockheads." Barnard had not alone politicized the issue, but he had enthusiastically and vociferously joined the fray. In an obvious slap at the Democrats, visitors in Killingly blamed "*party spirit*. Our schools, our school fund, and the dearest interests of our children, are dragged into the political shambles and sacrificed upon her deadly shrine. A professed love of the 'dear people', and a real love for the people's votes, and the people's money, have

hitherto thwarted the efforts and paralyzed the exertions of the only true friends and patrons of permanent and rational liberty." The repeal bill passed both houses by majorities of better than two to one.[29]

"I am entirely persuaded," declared the distinguished jurist Samuel Church, "that legislation can do but little for our schools, so long as party spirit and political rancor are cherished so generally among our citizens. This curse finds its way everywhere and spoils everything. And I shall never believe that our legislators are sincere in their professions of regard for the schools, unless they do something to assuage the bitterness of party spirit."[30]

Barnard put on as good a face as he could in his third report to the commission. He feigned satisfaction with the developments of his three years as secretary: "The measures of the Board have accomplished all that was anticipated by those who were active in the passage of the act creating it in 1838. More enlightened, liberal and vigorous views are beginning to govern the action of parents, committees and districts," he wrote. Barnard's perspective was badly skewed, but not entirely off the mark. There were pockets of positive result. The New London visitor claimed that schoolhouse architecture and construction had improved markedly and "embrace . . . the recent improvements . . . " advocated by the *Common School Journal*. In Middletown, after Barnard's efforts of 1838 through 1841, the number of students in the public schools "more than doubled," and "nearly all the private schools have been given up," with great savings in collective spending. "Side by side," the society's reporter wrote, "in the same school room, and in the same classes may be seen the children of the richest and the poorest." But, he had to admit, it was a unique situation among urban places: It is "a sight which cannot be seen in any other public school in any city of Connecticut."[31]

The New London correspondent told Barnard, "[y]our lecture here, though but few attended, had more effect than we anticipated." Funds were raised, sites bought, schools built or improved, and additional teachers hired. Another wrote from Killingly, "I think I can safely say, that at no former period within my recollection, has the interest in common schools been so general or so intense." One man, who had been examining teachers in Rocky Hill for forty-nine years, said teachers had improved in scholarship, probably because they knew they would be examined rigorously.[32] (He did not explain why he had not been so rigorous for the previous four decades, however).

All these upbeat appraisals are reported in Barnard's *Journal*, and are therefore suspect. Nevertheless, there is no question that Barnard's efforts brought about improved conditions in many districts. Society committeemen began to take their

duties more seriously; school buildings were repaired, and many new ones of better design were built; societies where neglect was traditional began to enforce the statutes regarding the number of days per term; and fewer incompetent teachers were continued in their jobs. But improvement was spotty. Many societies continued to turn a blind eye to their districts' failings. Predictably, visitors' reports reflected the partisanship of the era. Democrats belittled the effort and its results; Whigs praised and perhaps exaggerated them. Thus one society reflecting the Democratic view concluded its report: "It would seem too, that a system like this, [of the era before 1838] begun in wisdom, and from time, for almost a century, enlarged and improved by the assembled intelligence and experience of the State, had attained to such a degree of perfection, that it would savor much of a spirit of *wanton* innovation for anyone now to propose alterations or amendments thereto." Only blind partisanship could link the word perfection to Connecticut's common schools of the 1830s and 1840s. The appointment of a state superintendent, said Bloomfield's visitors "should, of course, be kept clear of the contamination of political partyism. . . . " And still, after Barnard's hundreds of lectures all across the state, in a typical report, visitors complained that "parental vigilance is oftener manifested for the frustration of plans of improvement, than for their furtherance." Other visitors' reports echoed the same theme. "There is little of the spirit of improvement among us," was the report from Bozrah; "a great lack of interest" in Clinton; "a great want of interest" in Coventry; etc.[33]

In 1840 Barnard had to admit, "Owing to the trouble and expense of assessing and collecting a tax solely for school purposes, it has, with other causes led to the abandonment of property taxation in the school society, and hence to the desertion of the school meeting, and the wide-spread apathy which prevails on the whole subject." Schools were not only pitifully underfunded but unpatronized as well. Few parents ever visited the schools or showed up at district and society meetings. No one seemed to take seriously the qualifications for legitimate certification, and parents didn't care. "All public spirit and pride seemed to have fled." The neglect of the property tax was more than a financial loss; a general tax on all property owners was a substantive representation of the idea that public education was essential to a viable republican system and thus the fiscal responsibility of everyone. Its abandonment robbed the principle of substance.[34]

But friends of education had not given up. In 1844 the Whigs were back in control of the state government and they reestablished the commission and its working secretary—almost the only significant legislative accomplishment of the session. When the Democrats were returned to power in 1845, they allowed some of the

provisions of the 1841 statute to stand and created the position of superintendent of schools, to be held exofficio by the commissioner of the School Fund. Barnard, who in his years away from Connecticut had served as commissioner of education in Rhode Island, returned to his native state in 1849 as principal of the state's first normal school.[35]

Reform Fails

Though Barnard's efforts made a difference in some societies, most remained in a state of willful decay. The system—so promising on paper—was undergoing an era of demolition by neglect. "The secluded living condition," writes a 20th-century scholar, "and pressing cares of daily farm life fostered mental stagnation. . . . " The conservatism of agricultural societies generally was at the root of Connecticut's famed steady habits. In association with a profound egalitarian spirit and a blinding localism—"self-government reduced to an absurdity"—the common school system as it was practiced in Connecticut bred its own destruction as an educational program.[36]

At the grass roots, Connecticut parents and taxpayers were willing to spend only enough money to allow them to claim to support education. Except for those who paid private school tuitions, the claim was nothing more than cant and hypocrisy. The schools as educational institutions failed miserably. Unattractive and uncomfortable schoolhouses built to accommodate thirty or forty children were packed during the winter term with twice that number and more, ranging from three to twenty years old; often staffed by teenagers of no experience and schooled only in the memorize or suffer the hickory-stick pedagogy that they themselves had known. The pedagogical inefficiencies were mind-blowing. After two or three years of four-month winter terms and for the abcdarians an additional two or three-months in the summer, a persevering student had learned to read haltingly; had probably not learned to write at all; and knew no arithmetic. It took three or four years for a typical student to learn what we in the 21st century would expect children to know after first grade. These conditions drove most children—especially the boys—out of the schools as soon as they were useful on the farm or could earn a few pennies in a factory. Despite all the romanticism surrounding the old one-room schoolhouse, recollections almost universally manifested distaste, even hatred, of the years spent in these dismal holding pens. The establishment of the School Fund was the basis of Connecticut's reknown for its support of public education. There is no evidence that the pedagogy practiced in

her schoolrooms was any different from methods found in any other northeastern state.

Grass-roots parsimony and apathy undercut efforts to reform Connecticut's public school system. The pedagogy practiced inside the classroom hardly differed—if it differed at all—from what it was in pre-School Fund era. Residents in "the school districts . . . were possessed by a spirit of independence, which often turned into blind obstinancy," and Barnard's reform legislation hardly helped. Noncompliance was more the rule than the exception. Visitors did not do what they were supposed to; many—perhaps the majority—of teachers were fraudulently certified or not certified at all. A report from Danbury in 1844 is representative: "Every office connected with school is irksome and avoided; and that of district committee is thrown upon those who are either not judges of a teacher's qualifications, or have not time to look up one who may be competent; and the first offers, if cheap, are too readily accepted. And the argument [of the district committee] to the [society] examining committee is, if he suits us, he ought to suit you . . . Besides, they say, our children are getting as good education as we had ourselves." In the districts—where the scope and quality of what actually went on in classrooms was determined—conditions continued to deteriorate. Nobody much bothered to attend district meetings, and often the meetings were perfunctory.[37]

Despite its failures in many districts, the Connecticut system of public schooling looked good on paper. The first state to establish a perpetual school fund, its school society statutes set out a system of district schools and teacher certification that was admired and emulated throughout the North. It is an irony that reformers in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other states as far away as Kentucky cited the Connecticut system just as the implementation of its statutes reach its nadir. By 1838 non-compliance with the teacher certification rules and term-length requirements was an accepted practice in more societies than not. Very few societies were in full compliance with the statutes, and in many even the pretense of fulfilling them was absent. Indeed, "certificates were returned to the Comptroller's office that the schools had been kept in all respects according to law . . . when in fact there had been an utter disregard of its provisions. . . . "[38]

Thus when Barnard and his fellow reformers launched their campaign in Connecticut, their compeers in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other states were years ahead of them. Indeed, said one disappointed Connecticut citizen when Barnard's position was abolished, Connecticut "steps backward in the cause of education whilst her sister states and the Nations of the whole earth are going forward." Of course, these more westerly states soon learned that, like Connecticut

and other New England states, creating an effective school system on the ground did not automatically follow the creation of one on paper.[39]

Eight years after Barnard and his colleagues began their campaign for better schools in Connecticut, the members of the General Assembly saw little positive result. Once again they appointed a committee to find out why. The committee sent questionnaires to all 214 societies; only 59 bothered to reply. "The cause of this neglect to comply with the wishes of the General Assembly," the committee reported, "in a reasonable effort to promote the cause of education, can only be ascribed to indifference to the subject, and an unwillingness to do anything more than the law imperatively requires without compensation . . . a majority of the people manifest a decided opposition to improvements or innovations, especially if any extra expenditure would be occasioned," and friends of reform are "ready to give up in despair."[40]

The district system allowed town voters to slough off administration to the local society committee, and the society to pass responsibility on to the district committee which often thrust administration into the hands of a single person. Under this one-man rule "[h]is sway is absolute," complained a deputy in the General Assembly in 1890, "no town meeting can get at him; he puts his own ignorant daughter in as a school teacher; . . . he is a supreme dictator."[41] Here are the minutes of a committee meeting held in North Haven:

North Haven, October 5th, 1868

The following persons were elected on the Board of School Visitors at the annual Town Meeting for the term of three years from date:

R. B. Linsley
Julian W. P. Tuttle
George W. Smith

Immediately after the adjournment of the Annual Town Meeting the Board of Visitors met in the small room in Academy Building and organized. Present, Goodsell, Linsley, Tuttle, Smith, Goodyear, Dickerman, and Austin.

Gen. E. D S. Goodyear appointed chairman and A. F. Austin, clerk.

Voted—That we have but one Acting Visitor.

Voted—That A. F. Austin be Acting Visitor for the ensuing year.

Voted—That we accept and approve the bill now presented by A. F. Austin for services as Acting Visitor for the past year.

Voted—That all duties required of the board of Visitors devolve upon the Acting School Visitor, and that he be authorized and he is authorized to examine all teachers, grant certificates, visit schools, make returns, and do all further business pertaining to said Board.

Voted—That the time spent in schools be left at the option of the Acting School Visitor.

Voted—To adjourn without date.

A. F. Austin
Clerk[42]

This was a plum: there were eight districts in North Haven at the time, and A. F. Austin controlled the appointment of teachers for all of them. He continued in that position for five years.

Helen Walker, writing authoritatively in 1925, summarized the situation. "Seldom has the state taken the lead and enacted legislation which radically modified educational conditions in the majority of towns. The one memorable attempt, during Dr. Henry Barnard's first administration as head of the school system, to adopt a state-wide policy somewhat at variance with local inclination, and to enact much needed remedial legislation met with such disastrous defeat that educational improvement was retarded for many years."[43]

The Failure of Centralization

We have seen how common school administration was assigned to the newly invented school societies in 1798. These societies received funds from the state and distributed them to the districts. There was virtually no state supervision. When after 1839 the districts were given the money directly, nominal supervision by the society visitors led to the widespread decline—and worse—of the common schools. The failure to improve the district schools as described above moved the General Assembly in 1856 to designate the town as the state's agent to administer the public school fund. Actual management of the schools remained in the districts.[44]

Under the school legislation of 1838 and 1841, the State Board had no command authority, nor, indeed, authority to do anything but gather and publicize data relating to the public schools. We have described Barnard's efforts to bring attention to the schools' miserable condition and to enliven and activate the public's

educational concern. Democratic domination of the legislature in the early 1840s tolled doom for the energetic and aggressive Henry Barnard who did not turn thirty until 1841. When Democrats in the General Assembly eliminated his position and repealed the Whigs' centralizing legislation of the previous years, "[e]ducators in other states were aghast at the calamity which had befallen the noteworthy achievements of one of their ablest leaders. . . . They concluded," wrote Helen Walker, "that in the future Connecticut could serve no useful purpose educationally except as a warning."[45]

There was no state school administrator worthy of the name for twenty years after the educational Waterloo of 1841. The Assembly merely designated, in 1845, the commissioner of the School Fund to be also the superintendent of the common schools under the direction of a legislative committee—a political body. When the state's first normal school was established in 1849, Barnard—wafted back to Connecticut on the shifting political winds—was appointed its principal. At the same time—undoubtedly as a money-saving measure—the General Assembly made him superintendent of the common schools, a juncture of positions that was maintained for two decades.[46]

At any event, no state officer had any supervisory authority over the district committees, which by the late 1840s had been given virtually complete control over their schools. The state supreme court, in 1890, confirmed that "[f]rom the earliest period in the history of Connecticut the duty of providing for the education of children was regarded as a duty resting upon the state . . . ," and that for a long time before and after the adoption of the constitution in 1818, "the town as such had nothing to do with the election of school committees or other officers having charge of educational matters within the town limits." Management of the schools, the court pointed out, was "in large measure a neighborhood affair." So deeply did district autonomy become ingrained in Connecticut's public school "system" that as late as 1925, after decades of town responsibility and consolidation, Helen Walker could write, "The district control . . . became so fixed that the state has never since been able to abolish it entirely, in spite of repeated attempts."[47]

Connecticut towns have never had any degree of constitutional or legal autonomy.[48] They are administrative units created (initially, in 1636) for the convenience of the state. When the General Assembly shifted responsibility for educating Connecticut's children back to the towns in 1856, a great policy divide had been crossed. As we have seen, actual changes in the district system were nominal. But the policy shift brought about an 180 degree turn in orientation. Two further reforms were called for: the establishment of institutionalized state supervision; and consolidation of and ultimate anihilation of the little old one-school district.[49]

Reestablishment of the Board

In 1865 the General Assembly reestablished the Board of Education and its executive secretary, called the superintendent of schools. The secretary was appointed by the Board. This body could prescribe printed enumeration and attendance forms and require every town to submit a written report of its compliance relative to certification of teachers, adherence to term minimums, and use of the state funds.[50] Though the Board and the secretary tried hard to enforce these regulations, compliance was spotty. One bitter Democrat supported this laissez-faire local administration, claiming in 1867, "[t]he schools were worse than they used to be [before state supervision], and he was in favor of abolishing the office of secretary of the board, and letting the schools run themselves, as they formerly did when they were better than they are now."[51] The State Board of Education complained as late as 1909 that it "often finds itself confronted by unwillingness to accept advice, resentment of counsel, determined opposition to anything like control."[52] For the rest of the 19th century, not gained legislatively until 1909, the goal of the reformers was the abolition of the districts and consolidation of the schools under town administration, a story I tell in Chapter X below.

Graded Schools

Despite the unenlightened state of public opinion and the dominating force of the anti-taxers, some fundamental improvement in Connecticut's public schools unfolded with the 19th century. The most significant of these was the rise of the graded school—a phenomenon of an urbanizing society. Graded schools were confined, of course, to population centers large enough to send to school children numerous enough to break down into grades. The rise of mill villages in the 1820s and 1830s meant that even small towns might have such population centers. Winchester, for example, was a typical agricultural town with a population spread fairly evenly throughout the town bounds and centered on the Congregational Church. With the development of mill sites at the junction of the Mad and Still rivers running along the eastern edge of town, the farmers' sons and daughters flocked to the village of Winsted, and doubled its population in four years after 1850. Some of Winchester's district schools in the countryside were closed down, others consolidated, and a new larger one was built in Winsted with several additions over the years. The new school with perhaps two hundred students and four rooms—later more—allowed for graded classes. (In 1892 the youngest pupils were set off

in a separate kindergarten building). While grading was accomplished in Winsted village in the 1850s, out in the Winchester countrywide it was another two decades before a pair of consolidated schools were graded—and then only after fifteen years of local resistance.[53]

Some movement toward grading had begun in the 18th century when teachers broke up their schools into "classes" based on subject-matter skills. It would be usual to find six-, nine-, and twelve-year-olds reading in one group, while a similar mix of ages were learning arithmetic in another. School peers were not necessarily age peers; age grouping would not have made much sense to early 19th-century teachers. We should recall that school attendance varied greatly individual to individual, and an equality of academic competence was not expected. "It would be difficult," Henry Barnard wrote in 1865, "to conceive of a more diverting farce than an ordinary session of a large public school, whose chaotic and discordant elements have not been reduced to system by a proper [achievement-level] classification."[54]

An early step toward grading students is exemplified in Portersville district in New London. There, when school kids numbered 100 in 1839, instead of establishing a new one-room district—the customary procedure—the voters approved a plan to build one large school, divide it into two rooms, hire two teachers, and separate the children by accomplishment and age. Many districts in the antebellum decades followed that design. Occasionally, after the 1840s, they would add classes of "the higher branches," foreshadowers of the future high schools.[55]

The major cities, of course, had sufficient students to allow for grading, but they didn't do it until after the reformers made it an issue in the 1830s and 1840s. As noted above, by 1840 eighty districts had introduced some degree of grading, at least to the extent of setting out two grades in 1–8 schools.[56] As in Hartford, children were put in grades based on their reading and writing competency just as they had been "classed" formerly—and still were out in the country. Thus many classrooms in graded schools included children of widely ranged ages.

In one Hartford school building in which three district schools had been consolidated, "the pupils have first entered the lower classes, and have advanced by gradation to the higher." But the practice was not systemized and fraught with "numerous exceptions" because "many enter the school for a few months only. Such are admitted to any of the classes, according to their age, present condition, and capacity for making progress."[57] As crude as it was, coming as it did in 1813, this very early move toward gradation was not typical and, to the best of my knowledge, not replicated elsewhere for years—if not decades.

New Haven in 1851 had about 4,000 children enrolled in school, about half of them in private elementary and secondary schools. This 4,000 constituted 78 percent of the school-age children in the city. Only about half of them were in school on any given day. In 1852 New Haven standardized its curriculum, graded its ten public elementary schools, and built a new 500-student school designed for graded organization, signaling thus, its preference for grades. The improvement and perception of improvement was immediate. The relative proportion of children in private schools fell dramatically. When semicompulsory attendance was initiated in 1872, previously unschooled kids flooded the public common schools.[58]

By 1875, ninety-five of Connecticut's 166 towns had at least one graded school. Sixteen had one school divided into two "departments," hardly to be called graded. Indeed, caution is called for in assessing claims of "graded" schools. In many cases "grading" was inappropriately used to describe schools in which a single room of perhaps fifty students was divided into "classes" of students working at the same level of proficiency. Thus the North Haven visitors referred to exactly that arrangement as a "graded school." There were two rooms with six "grades" among the fifty students in the primary room and "several" grades in the higher room.[59]

Derby presents, perhaps, a more typical example. In that burgeoning industrial city, there were schools of three, five, and ten departments, and three schools with four departments. The division into ten departments there probably tells us that there were children under five and over sixteen in that school. By the 1870s, New Haven had twenty-three schools graded into three, twelve, fourteen, and even twenty-two "departments," though a division into so many supposedly achievement-based "grades" might have more to do with the diversity of textbooks than anything else.[60]

In 1875, there were 222 districts in the state with fewer than twenty school-age children, and another 325 with fewer than thirty. It did not make fiscal sense to hire more than one teacher in these districts; they remained ungraded, but presumably teachers broke them up into classes for reading, arithmetic, and other recitations. Teachers in schools in places like Naugatuck's Middle District with thirty-five winter students ranging in age from four to fifteen would get no relief. Grading schools could be very expensive—doubling the cost of salaries by dividing into only two departments, and few districts were willing to do that with fewer than forty students. They would want about two hundred students within walking distance of school before they were willing to staff six age- and proficiency-based grades. As of 1884 only 188 of 1634 district schools were graded.[61]

Despite its obvious advantages, there were "reformers" who attacked grading. The *Common School Journal* published an eleven-part series promoting Lancaster's monitorial system. (See below.) It was a frontal attack on Horace Mann's campaign to grade the schools of Boston. One teacher and several monitors chosen from among the oldest and best scholars, one advocate claimed, could teach 150 students more efficiently than could five graded teachers—and with a huge saving of money. Indeed, the main thrust of this polemicist's argument is the fiscal one. His assumption was, of course, that teaching amounted to nothing more than listening to memorized lessons.[62] Even Charles Hine, Connecticut's turn-of-the-century commissioner of education, concluded after a very detailed study of the New London County schools in the 1880s, "No evidence . . . raises a good graded school above a good ungraded school in point of real efficiency." He admitted, however, that grading made possible more rapid progress through the elementary curriculum for most students. And, indeed, many teachers in graded schools tended to "teach above grade," especially when grading was new and not well articulated. Perhaps dealing with more advanced material was more interesting for the teachers and more challenging for the students.[63]

There may have been some financial advantage to be squeezed out of graded schools, however. In Bridgeport where the city schools were graded, it was the practice to start new teachers in the first grade, pay them less, and improve their salaries only as they were "promoted" up the grades as openings arose. Also, where graded schools existed, three-, four- and five-year-olds were not included. There is a great falling off of attendance of those youngsters after the 1840s. In Massachusetts almost all five-year-olds were in school in 1860, but only about one-third by 1880; Ohio saw a similar trend. It can be assumed that Connecticut was no different in this respect. Grading, then, depended on school populations, and a local tax base large enough to support several teachers in buildings with many classrooms.[64]

In association with standardized curriculums, many urban districts began to prescribe textbooks, though parents still paid for them well into the 1870s and beyond—indeed into the 1920s in some towns. New York State had been supplying textbooks free to the schools since the 1840s.[65] The combination of graded schools with system-wide textbook adoption provided a basis for measuring individual student progress and placing students in achievement-based classes, grouped to fill one room and taught by one teacher. In urban centers, it was also possible to construct the classes to consist of age peers. Over time, the system brought about a fair coincidence of age and achievement so that promotion from grade to grade kept kids of the same age together. It also provided both criteria and a mechanism

for assessing individual achievement and guiding judgments about promotion and retention.[66] Ultimately, in the 20th century, many systems made age rather than achievement the principal criterion for promotion so that movement from grade to grade became virtually automatic. At the opening of the 21st century, in reaction to this "social promotion," many systems instituted standardized testing to guide promotion and retention decisions. Graded schools, however, had become the norm all across the nation, and only in the most remote rural areas was grading impossible.

Kindergartens

From time to time I have noted the tendency of colonial and 19th-century mothers to view local schools as child-care centers for their very young children. The "'warehousing' function of public schools has long been acknowledged in the historiography of U.S. education . . . ," writes Stephen Lassonde. And indeed it found expression in Connecticut. Recalling his earliest school days at about 1800, Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst College, wrote, "We had no school-house then in our district, and we met as much for play as any thing. . . . I was very young, as were most of the children. What I learned then, if anything, I have forgotten." A teacher, in 1839, offered a common complaint when he charged that many of the little children were "sent to his school to be kept out of the way."[67]

The kindergarten movement migrated from Germany and found expression in Boston in 1818, when a separate building was set aside for three- and four-year-olds. The first regular kindergarten in the United States was established also in Boston by Elizabeth Peabody in 1860. It was private, but in 1873 St. Louis provided a publicly supported kindergarten, a practice soon emulated in Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities. By 1912 there were 312,000 kids in kindergartens across the nation, and by 1920 about 10 percent of five-year-olds were in them. Sometime around 1870 a school for training kindergarten teachers was established in New York City, and one of its graduates set up a kindergarten in New Milford in 1873. At first most kindergarten teachers were trained at private institutions, but public teachers colleges soon took over. Private training programs diminished from 137 in 1906 to 31 in 1920. Kindergarten teachers in Connecticut were required to have a special certificate beginning about 1924.[68]

By the 1880s what began as a place for upper middle class families to keep their youngest children in an environment more nurturing than the typical common school with its rigid bench sitting, was transformed, under the guidance of urban

female social workers, into a place for the acculturation of immigrant children. The settlement house version of kindergarten dominated until the 1910s when the public schools incorporated kindergartens and treated them as a downward extension of elementary school. In these classrooms little children were expected to learn numbers and letters, learn how to follow directions, learn to carry on harmonious relations with their classmates, and understand their position in a world wider than their family.[69]

The movement took off in Connecticut. In 1886 the General Assembly authorized towns and districts to add kindergartens to their public school systems. Other states and municipalities were, at this time, resisting the expenditure of taxpayers' money on kindergartens; some even prohibited such a use of taxes. By 1888 all the large towns in Connecticut had eliminated children under six from their elementary schools, and country districts were beginning to do so where possible. On the other hand, the State Board required all the model schools associated with the normal schools to include kindergartens. Kindergartens, commissioner Hine said in 1893, "were part of the model and practice system." In 1890 there were in Connecticut five public and thirteen private kindergartens serving 871 little children; by 1900 twenty-two towns had public kindergartens serving 6,999 children; in 1914, 153 kindergartens served 11,000 little kids. In 1918 there were 222 public kindergartens in forty towns enrolling 16,158 children. In 1950, eighty-eight towns supported public kindergartens for 25,353 children four- to seven-years-old.[70]

In 1967 the General Assembly required all towns to include kindergartens in their public school systems. At that time all but three towns had them, enrolling 51,224 children—who incidentally, did not fall under the legal definition of "school age children" according to the attorney general, even though a new enumeration law included all children, three to seventeen. Just at that moment negative demographics hit Connecticut's five-year-olds. Kindergarten enrollment fell from 56,415 in 1968 to 36,599 in 1977, a drop of nearly 20,000; leaving, I suppose, about a thousand unemployed kindergarten teachers.[71]

Postscript: The Lancastrian Experiment, Another Failed "Reform"

Symbolic of the failure of school reform in the 1830s and 1840s is an experiment with a "monitorial" organization of the classroom after a military model. This was the Lancastrian system whose "compelling feature," writes one modern scholar, "was that it was cheap."[72]

The unwillingness of Connecticut citizens to pay wages high enough to attract competent people to teach their children brought about a great shortage of good teachers. District committees responded by hiring more women—at half the price of men; by cheating on the number of days school was open; by crowding school buildings; and mostly by hiring incompetent men to "keep school" in the winter. When the English reformer, Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838), developed a system for mass education, it was the answer to the prayer of many educationally—and fiscally—concerned citizens of the burgeoning cities of the nation. Lancaster visited the United States and found in some places raging approbation; in others, ardent rejection. Boston was one of the latter; New York state, one of the former.

Lancaster's system—also called the monitorial system—was tried in New Haven where it succeeded for about thirty years beginning in 1821; and in Hartford, where it was abandoned after three or four years. The system was designed to enable the "teaching" of large numbers of students at very low costs, on the same principle that teaching assistants are employed to substitute for professors in large lecture courses at American universities today. The master teacher, seated on a raised platform, gave instructions to a group of "monitors" chosen from among the older, better students. The monitors then gave the instructions to the students who then recited, sometimes individually and sometimes as a group. In this way, a single teacher, with a phalanx of fifteen-year-olds could conduct recitations of as many as a thousand pupils all in the same room, all at the same time. The method was strictly memorization and repetition.[73]

Lancaster's model was the military, and a very strict discipline was enforced. It was, really, robotic. "No matter that the system . . . appeared to violate every norm of democratic and republican life," writes Carl Kaestle, "[i]t was cheap, efficient, apparently effective."[74] It was effective if the aim of schooling was limited to scratching out letters, words, and sums on slates and memorizing textbooks, but it was mindless. We have to remember that when an old-timer recalled that as a child he "went through Morse's Geography," what he was saying was that he memorized parts of the book each day and recited them to his teacher. But when New Haven graded all its elementary schools in 1851–1853, the city, writes its historian, "had indicated its choice of method of education: the grade school superceded the Lancastrian as the model for the future."[75]

But Lancaster's system and method succeeded in one New Haven school. John Lovell was able to instruct 425 students in the basement of New Haven's Methodist Church on the Green. The school was a component of the city's First District and apparently worked well enough to last at least to 1850. Indeed, one authoritative

modern scholar refers to it as New Haven's "most reputable common school" of the 1850s. In Hartford, the First District schools were consolidated into one Lancastrian school in order to institute this money-saving system, but it was abandoned after three or four years.[76]

One historian calls the Lancastrian system a "fad of the moment"; Barnard gave it a highly qualified endorsement. It would work when the young monitors were themselves well instructed and enthusiastically committed. But it wouldn't work if the master teacher changed every term—which was the case in most Connecticut schools. Over all, with the single exception of Lovell's school in New Haven, Lancaster—fortunately—had very little lasting impact on Connecticut schools.[77]

46. Barnard, *First Annual Report* (1839), 49, 63; CCSJ III:109 (March 1841); Ibid., III:109 (March 1841).
47. CCSJ III:185, 109 (June 1841) describing Wolcottville and Torrington. For no schools, see, e.g., Waterbury described in CCSJ II:238 (May 1840). In 2005 the Department of Education criteria for state financial support for school building called for 120 square feet per child in elementary schools of 350 to 750 pupils, 176 square feet in junior highs, and 190 in high schools, but only 9-foot ceilings as compared with Barnard's 12.

Chapter IV

1. See generally, Walter, *American Writings*, Part II; Bushnell in CCSJ IV:11 (December 1841); Church and Sedlak, *Education*, 55–56.
2. Ibid., 75; Fuller, *Introduction*, 54.
3. See generally, Cremin, *National Experience*, Chs. 4, 5 and Kaestle, *Pillars*, Ch. 2.
4. MacMullen, *Barnard*, 12, 17, 20, 21.
5. Ibid., 30, 33, 35.
6. Ibid., 42.
7. Ibid., 52–53; Morse, *Neglected Period*, 147, 146.
8. MacMullen, *Barnard*, 53; Barnard, *First Annual Report*, 163, 165.
9. Kaestile, *Pillars*, pf. 105; Cremin, *National Experience*, 154.
10. MacMullen, *Barnard*, 56; CCSJ I:1 (April 1838) quoted in MacMullen, *Barnard*, 59–60; Barnard, *First Annual Report*, 12.
11. MacMullen, *Barnard*, 61.
12. Barnard, *First Annual Report*, 3.
13. Ibid., 52–55; CCSJ II:36 (October 1839). Records falsified, ibid., II:201.
14. Quoted in MacMullen, *Barnard*, 60.
15. CCSJ III:217 (May 1841). The full text of the act is printed in ibid.
16. Ibid., 218.
17. Ibid., 218, 219.
18. *Statutes* of 1835. Title 87, Ch. 1, sects. 3, 4, 5. 461; *South School District v. Blakslee*, 13 Conn. 227 at 233 (1839) and *McLoud v. Selby*, 10 Conn. 390 at 395 (1835); CSLA "Colleges and Schools" 2nd series I:27b (May 1805); *Sheldon v. Centre School District*, 25 Conn. 224 (1856); AJE XXV:399 (1874–75). The powers of committeemen were limited to strictly school affairs and could not be exercised if any single district voter objected. *Schofield v. Eighth School District*, 27 Conn. 498 (1858); *Berlin v. New Britain School Society*, 9 Conn. 176 at 180 (1832).
19. In 1852, 626 districts out of 1642 enumerated fewer than forty pupils. Secretary's "Report" 1852 Appendix, 49–50.

20. Barnard's "Report" and the text of the act of 1841 are included in CCSJ III:219, 220, 229 (May 1841).
21. Barnard, "Third Annual Report" in CCSJ III:pf. 242, 235 (May 1841) CCSJ I:73 (1838).
22. CCSJ III:220, 229.
23. Ibid., 221.
24. Ibid., 229.
25. Morse, *Neglected Period*, 120.
26. Kaestle, *Pillars*, 155. Connecticut General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 16; Tyack, *Law and Shaping*, 15, 18, 61.
27. This and the following paragraph are based on Morse, *Neglected Period*, Chs. 2, 3, 7 supplemented by Thomas, "Politics," Stamps, "Political Parties," and Cavenaugh, "Party Competition," pf. 105.
28. Connecticut General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 44; CCSJ I:104 (February 1839).
29. Morse, *Neglected Period*, 154; MacMullen, *Barnard*, 97; Killingly visitors in General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 45–46.
30. Church quoted in CCSJ III:96 (June 1841).
31. CCSJ III:193 (June 1841), IV:19 (December 1841).
32. Ibid., III:56 (December 1840); Ibid., III:76 (January 1841); Ibid., II:146 (February 1840).
33. General Assembly Committee Report of 1845. 7, 28, 27, 31, 35.
34. Danbury visitors in Ibid. 36; CCSJ. II:201 (1840).
35. Morse, *Neglected Period*, 321.
36. Ibid., 159, 145.
37. Ibid., 159. General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 4, 44; CCSJ I:73 (1839); General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 35–36.
38. Kaestle, *Pillars*, 189. As early as 1825, one perspicacious observer, coupled Connecticut with New York as a pair of bad examples. Ibid., Barnard, *Third Annual Report*, 229.
39. See generally Kaestle, *Pillars*, Chs. 6 and 8, "steps backward. . . . " quoted in Ibid., 218.
40. General Assembly Committee Report of 1845, 4, 5, 12.
41. "Report" of the Secretary 1890, 164.
42. Allen, *North Haven*, 50. North Haven had only one school society, so society and town meetings were coincident.
43. Walker, "State Support," Abstract. n.p.
44. Ibid., 44.
45. Ibid., 34.
46. Ibid., 35. Combining school superintendencies with other state offices was a common money-savings practice in many states. By the 1890s, the median size of state departments of education was two people. Tyack, *Shaping*, 61–62.

47. *State ex rel. Walsh v. Hine*, 59 Conn. 50 (1890). *State ex rel. Huntington v. Huntington School Committee*, 82 Conn. 563 at 566 (1909) quoting *Gilman v. Bassett*, 33 Conn. 298 at 304 (1866); Walker, "State Support," 38.
48. *Webster v. Harwinton*, 32 Conn. 131 (1864). See also Collier, "New England Specter."
49. See Chapter X below.
50. Walker, "State Support," 43. Appointment of the secretary by the State Board followed the practice of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In twenty-one states this was an elective office; in ten, a gubernatorial appointment. AJE XXIX:xliv–xlv (1879).
51. Bennett quoted in *Connecticut Courant*, July 24, 1867, 6. Associated legislation authorized the BOE to prescribe textbooks, a practice that has never been taken up. Walker, "State Support," 43. An effort to commission and prescribe a text on hygiene and physiology in the 1890s came to naught. See Hine correspondence in William Graham Sumner Papers at the Archives and Manuscripts Room at Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.
52. BOE *Report*, 1909, 9.
53. DeMars, *Winsted*, 32, 346–48; Boyd, *Annals*, 404.
54. AJE XV:317 (1865).
55. CCSJ II:67 (November 1839); as in Winchester. Boyd, *Annals*, 403; as in Danielson CSJ 3rd series, I:203 (1871).
56. CCSJ III:229. Eighty districts is, actually, not so many since there were over 1600 districts in the state. Probably these eighty were in cities. Competence-grading was much more common in schools across the country than age-grading. The practice of "leaving back" students who could not meet academic standards meant that up to 30 percent and more of a class might be two or three years older than their classmates. (See below Ch. VII)
57. Alcot, *First Hartford*, 8. Consolidation had been brought about in order to establish a Lancastrean school that failed. The case for graded schools is made in "Report of the [New Haven] Board of School Visitors," *Proceedings* of the Board of Education. New Haven: Thomas J. Stafford, 1856.
58. Lassonde, "Learning." 36–37, 38; See also Lassonde, *Learning*, 36–37; Osterweis, *New Haven*, 227. Osterweis is referring to the Noah Webster School at George and York streets.
59. AJE XXXI:694–95 (1881); Allen, *North Haven*, 57.
60. AJE XXXI:698 (1881); Lassonde, *Learning*, 36–37; Lassonde, "Learning," 38. Hartford had sixteen districts, but only ten schools in the 1870s and claimed 131 "departments" collectively. AJE XXXI:650 (1881).
61. Ibid., 698; Ward, *Naugatuck*, 20–21; BOE, *Report* 1884, 48.
62. CSJ XIII–XIV (1859).
63. "Report" of the secretary 1890 in CSD 1884–90, 228; "Reports of Teachers" in BOE, *Report* 1887, 266.
64. Bridgeport BOE, "Fourth Annual Report" 1880, 32–48; Soltow, *Rise of Literacy*, 118–19.

65. CSJ 3rd series. I:237–40 (July 1871); DeMars, *Winsted*, 354; CCSJ. I:50 (1838).
66. Stephen Lassonde describes the transition to graded schools in New Haven in its full social context in his book, *Learning to Forget*, pf. 32. He provides further insight into the developmental implications for adolescents in his dissertation of the same title, pf. 42.
67. Ibid., 47; Humphrey quoted in Barnard, *First Century*, 368–69; CCSJ I:11 (1839).
68. AJE XXVI:294–95; Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 174, 175; New Milford Historical Committee, 92–93; Church and Sedlak, *Education*, 331n; Walker, "State Support," 55.
69. Church and Sedlak, *Education*, 223, 330–32.
70. Walker, "State Support," 55; Church and Sedlak, *Education*, 322–23. Hine in letter to William Graham Sumner in WGS correspondence, file 306. August 21, 1893; "Report" of secretary 1888, 28; "Report of the secretary" 1897, 61; DOE, "The Status of Education in Connecticut: A Review," bound in CSD 1955–56. 11; "Report" of secretary 1916–19, 105; DOE, "Status of Education," 11; Clark, *History*, 217.
71. *Connecticut Education*, June 1968, 2; Ibid. September 1968, 2; *The Board of Education*, V:1 February 15, 1946; DOE, "Digest of Educational Statistics," December, 1977, Division of Administrative Services mimeographed pamphlet bound in CSD (CSL) 1976–77, vol. II. n. p.
72. Rosenstengle, *School Finance*, 32.
73. Butler, *Education*, 328, 330, 337, 338. In New York City the adoption of Lancaster's system in 1822 drove the per pupil costs down to $1.22.
74. Kaestle, *Evolution*, 20; Butler, *Education*, 338; Alcott, *First Hartford*, 7. Alcott says the Lancastrian School was established in 1810. Butler says in one place that it was first mentioned in newspapers in 1815, and in another that it was established in 1824. *Education*, 328, 338.
75. Lassonde, "Learning," 41; Osterweis, *New Haven*, 227.
76. Mead, *Development*, 47–48; CCSJ II:209 (June 1840).
77. Lovell was still alive at the age of ninety-six in 1890. A school in New Haven was named after him. "Report" of New Haven BOE 1890. 7.

Chapter V

1. Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 76, 90.
2. Bushnell quoted in Edwards, *Singular Genius*, 62.
3. AJE I:368 (1855).
4. "Report" of the secretary 1852. Appendix, "Statistics of Common Schools," 49–50.
5. Ibid., 49–51, 52–57.
6. Walker, *State Support*, 39; Report from Farmington in General Assembly Committee on Education, "Report" (1845), 40–41. In 1870 Connecticut's districts averaged eight months and three days—about 165 days—more than any other state but Maryland. AJE 3rd series.