

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

English Dissertations

Department of English

5-3-2007

The Literary and Intellectual Impact of Mississippi's Industrial Institute and College, 1884-1920

Sheldon Scott Kohn

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kohn, Sheldon Scott, "The Literary and Intellectual Impact of Mississippi's Industrial Institute and College, 1884-1920." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2007.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/1059541>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

THE LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL IMPACT OF MISSISSIPPI'S INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE, 1884-1920

by

SHELDON SCOTT KOHN

Under the Direction of Dr. Thomas McHaney

ABSTRACT

After a long struggle, the State of Mississippi founded and funded the Industrial Institute and College in 1884. The school, located in Columbus, Mississippi, was the first state-supported institution of higher education for women in the United States, and it quickly became a model for similar schools in many other states.

The Industrial Institute and College was distinguished from other women's colleges in the nineteenth century by the fact that its graduates were expected to be fully prepared to support themselves. This curriculum required students to complete coursework in both liberal arts and vocational training. There was much conflict and controversy between factions that wanted the school to focus exclusively on either vocational training or liberal studies.

Pauline Van de Graaf Orr served as Mistress of English from 1884-1913. Under her leadership, the Department of English set a high standard for its students. While there was considerable attrition among the students, many of whom were as young as fifteen and most of whom had no adequate secondary preparation, the Industrial Institute and College also graduated students, such as Blanche Colton Williams and Rosa Peebles, who went on to distinguished academic careers. Frances Ormond Jones Gaither was the best

fiction writer the school graduated. After finding some success as a writer of children's books in the 1930s, Gaither wrote a trilogy of novels about the Old South in the 1940s. *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (1941) follows the establishment and development of the Hurricane Plantation in Alabama. *The Red Cock Crows* (1944) addresses the then-unexplored topic of a slave revolt in antebellum Mississippi. In *Double Muscadine* (1949), a best-seller, Gaither explores the causes and consequences of miscegenation.

INDEX WORDS: Industrial Institute and College, Mississippi State College for Women, Mississippi University for Women, Southern women, Higher education for women, Mississippi education, Annie Peyton, Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, Blanche Colton Williams, Rosa Peebles, Frances Ormond Jones Gaither

THE LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL IMPACT OF MISSISSIPPI'S INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE, 1884-1920

by

SHELDON SCOTT KOHN

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007

Copyright by
Sheldon Scott Kohn
2007

THE LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL IMPACT OF MISSISSIPPI'S INDUSTRIAL
INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE, 1884-1920

by

SHELDON SCOTT KOHN

Major Professor:	Thomas McHaney
Committee:	Pearl McHaney
	Beth Burmester

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2007

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Irina, my wife, and Nicholas, my son, for their understanding without limit and help without end. The dissertation quickly became a family focus, and we all worked hard to complete this project. I simply could never have done this without you two.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express gratitude to Dr. Thomas McHaney, Dr. Pearl McHaney, and Dr. Beth Burmester, my professors, who were willing to let me pursue this study and whose dedication to its completion was in equal parts inspiring and devoted. I could not imagine nicer people to work with. Dr. Bridget Pieschel at the Southern Women's Institute of The Mississippi University for Women was almost an equal partner in this project from my first ideas about exploring the history of the Department of English at Mississippi University for Women to providing me with every assistance imaginable during the time I spent on campus conducting research in the archives. Her knowledge of the history of the W is encyclopedic, and she supported and encouraged me without fail throughout the entire process. Dr. Martha Swain graciously provided guidance and offered the benefit of her wisdom on the careers of Pauline Van de Graaf Orr and her students. One of the most pleasant afternoons I spent was interviewing Mrs. Mary Ellen Weatherby Pope, now more than one hundred years young, about her undergraduate days (when Eudora Welty was also a student).

Finally, my students inspired me through this process. As I researched and wrote about students and teachers of more than one hundred years ago, I realized how important the connection in the classroom always has been for both teacher and student. They brought out the best in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 A TRUE FAIR CHANCE FOR THE GIRLS: OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	5
3 “MEN AND WOMEN OF MISSISSIPPI, YOU HAVE A JEWEL!”: THE FOUNDING AND OPERATION OF MISSISSIPPI’S INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE	51
4 MISTRESS OF ENGLISH: PAULINE VAN DE GRAAF ORR’S CAREER AT THE INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE AND COLLEGE, 1885-1913	163
5 CONCLUDING REMARKS	251
POSTSCRIPT	
A FORGOTTEN MISSISSIPPI WRITER: FRANCES ORMOND JONES GAITHER’S NOVELS OF THE 1940S	256
WORKS CITED	306

Introduction

As a Confucian journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, this long study began with a single sentence. While a student in Dr. Pearl McHaney's Spring 2005 Eudora Welty seminar, I read the following sentence in *One Writer's Beginnings*: "Mr. Lawrence Painter, the only man teacher in the college, spent his life conducting the MSCW girls in their sophomore year through English survey, from 'Summer is y-comen in' to 'I have a rendezvous with Death'" (80). This sentence immediately captivated my imagination with the question of what it must have been like to be the only male professor at a Mississippi women's college in the 1920s. Though I did not know it then, I had begun the scholarly journey that resulted in this study. In fact, Mr. Painter was not the only male professor on campus (Kohn 13), and Welty's claim must be seen as proof of her contention that memory "is subject to confluence" (*OWB* 104).

My research on Mr. Painter led to my first trip to the campus of Mississippi University for Women, as the Industrial Institute and College (II&C) is now known, for research on Welty's time as a student there. Before my first trip, I was somewhat familiar with the school; my grandmother worked in the Infirmary as a nurse for several years, and my mother is a proud alumna. The more I looked at the college, the more I realized that the confluence of its history and the personalities of its presidents, faculty, and students forms one of the most compelling tales I know. After completing work on my seminar paper, which became my first publication on Welty, I began researching the story of the college's founding and the people who made it what it is—what it was—and what it was

to become. Dr. Thomas McHaney and Dr. Pearl McHaney were both quick to embrace the idea of such a study and graciously supported my idea from the beginning.

In Chapter One, I offer an overview of the controversies surrounding the establishment of higher education for women in the nineteenth century. To appreciate the significance of the founding and early operation of the II&C, one must first understand that no historical event happens in a vacuum. The struggle to found the II&C expresses and reflects the controversies and challenges of that time. Although there had been some experimentation with higher education for women before the Civil War, notably at Oberlin and Antioch in Ohio, the first true women's college was Vassar, which opened in 1865. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was much debate about whether women were capable of withstanding the physical and intellectual challenges of higher education. Once those questions were settled in the affirmative, new questions arose about whether higher education interfered with women's abilities to perform tasks that had been assigned to the traditional feminine sphere. There was ongoing debate as to whether education enhanced or detracted from a woman's attractiveness and ability to make a good marriage. The nature and purpose of the curriculum in women's colleges remained a source of controversy well into the early twentieth century, when newer controversies erupted over the question of whether women should enter the workforce following graduation. Much existing scholarship on women's higher education in the nineteenth century focuses on the elite Eastern colleges. For the most part, students who pursued higher education at these schools were the daughters of privilege, and Americans were interested in following their progress and challenges.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the struggle to found Mississippi's Industrial Institute and College, using contemporary documents as much as possible, and on its operation. While the Eastern schools debated the purpose and function of higher education for women, especially the question of whether women's higher education should be academic or vocational, Mississippi established a school to provide women both a liberal arts education and industrial training. By 1884, when the Mississippi legislature founded and funded the II&C, it was clear to the enfranchised men that women needed to be educated to function in the emerging new world. Based on their experience in Reconstruction following the Civil War, Mississippians realized, perhaps quicker than people in more privileged parts of the country, the necessity of preparing women to be self-supporting. The II&C operated until 1920, when the legislature changed its name to the Mississippi State College for Women, in recognition of its academic purpose.

One of the most interesting personalities at the II&C was Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, and Chapter Three offers an exploration of her thirty-year career as the Mistress of English. As much as anyone, Orr set the tenor and tone for the II&C's academic level and aspirations. Well-educated herself, Orr offered her students both challenges and dedication unheard of in Mississippi. Students came to the II&C as young as fifteen and often woefully unprepared for college-level work; as a result, attrition rates in Orr's classes were astounding by our contemporary standards. At the same time, Orr's best students went on to enjoy highly successful academic and artistic careers. Students completing the collegiate course at the II&C were well-prepared for the rigors of graduate school at the finest schools in America. When Orr left the II&C in 1913, for reasons that remain somewhat unclear, there were howls of protest and ringing tributes

from her former students. Shortly before her death in 1954, the school gave Orr a fitting tribute when it named a building in her honor.

A particularly interesting experience I had during my research was reading the trilogy of Old South novels that Frances Ormond Jones Gaither published in the 1940s. I offer an analysis of this work as an Appendix to this study. Gaither, one of Orr's students, is unquestionably the finest fiction writer the II&C graduated. Gaither wrote these novels as if she were an eyewitness describing events she herself observed. Unfortunately, Gaither has been almost completely forgotten, and even dedicated students of Southern literature may never have heard of her.

This study has been a labor of love for me, and I have learned much by exploring the fascinating story behind the founding and operation of the II&C. Much work remains to be done, but I hope that this study offers a beginning point of reference for anyone who, like me, finds the story of the II&C compelling and wants to know more.

A True Fair Chance for the Girls: Overview of Higher Education for Women in the Nineteenth Century

The true meaning of education is the kindling and strengthening of the love of knowledge, of beauty, of goodness, till they become governing motives of action. This alone is education, to be begun in the first twenty years of life, to be carried on through time, and as I trust through eternity; and this is the education which should be given, or at any rate aimed at, in the case of every human being.

—Maria Grey, 1871

(qtd. in Eschbach 211)

For the scholar interested in the creation of women's colleges, their early operations, and the lives and prospects of their graduates, much scholarship is available. However, most scholars of women's education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have tended to focus on issues of coeducation and the prestigious Eastern women's colleges, often called the "Seven Sisters": Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Smith, Wellesley, Radcliffe, Mount Holyoke, and Barnard. As one reads the myriad detailed examinations of issues and controversies surrounding higher education for women in the nineteenth century, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of all young women, the numbers of women students in higher education were low. In *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, Lynn Gordon points out that 11,000 women were enrolled in higher education in 1870; this represented 0.7% of women aged 18 to 21 and 21% of all college students (2). By 1910, 140,000 women

were enrolled in higher education courses; this represented 3.8% of women aged 18 to 21 and 39.6% of all college students (Gordon 2). Of the total number of women enrolled in higher education in 1880, 15,700 were enrolled in women's colleges; by 1910, this number had increased to 34,100 (Gordon 7). Even then, comparatively few women were college students, though, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, women formed a significant portion of all students. Also, the increase in women students enrolled in higher education from 1870 to 1900 "was more rapid than that for males" (Solomon 58).

Assumptions about the proper roles and spheres of influence for the sexes, and hence the education that would be proper for each, have a long history in the West. Responding to Plato's egalitarian argument that "the courage and justice of a man and a woman are . . . the same," Aristotle posits two distinct spheres for the sexes: "the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying" (Stock 21). Questions about education for women arose in the early days of the American Republic. In "The Development of Higher Education for Women in the Antebellum South," Shirley Ann Hickson writes, "Some men felt guilty when confronted with the accusation that they were depriving the female sex of their inalienable rights, and some women had no intention of allowing the discussion about rights to be limited to political rights for their husbands" (3).

In *Better Than Rubies: A History of Women's Higher Education* (1978), Phyllis Stock surveys higher education for women from the renaissance to the latter parts of the twentieth century. Stock argues that in all times and places, until very recently, women's education has been defined universally in terms of the social and familial roles a female

is expected to fulfill: “Only in rare cases has the intellectual development of girls been considered a benefit in itself, or a means of fulfillment of the individual personality” (12). Historically, women were denied access to higher education, even to secondary education, “from the presumption that women were the intellectually inferior sex,” and this assumption arose from “a general presumption of female inferiority, which is manifested in the laws and customs of all civilized societies” (Stock 19). For a long time after the founding of the first women’s colleges, there was no clear consensus on the elements and emphasis of a proper college education for women: “Women and their educators were uncertain about what defined a full liberal education as well as what should be the ultimate goals of a liberally educated woman” (Solomon 78).

Questions related to the education of women, much less those related to higher education for women, were not prominent in seventeenth and early eighteenth century American national discourse. Before questions of higher education for women in America could be addressed, the country first had to make decisions about elementary and secondary education for girls. Scattered, individual voices early in the nineteenth century began calling for equal education of males and females early in the Republic. Although single-sex schools that girls could attend existed in the early nineteenth century, “[f]rom an academic point of view, their standards varied; usually deportment was practiced more than intellect was used” (Lindgren 50). In 1818, Hannah Mather Crocker, a Vermont educator, wrote that “the powers of the mind are equal in the sexes . . . and if they received the same education, their improvement would be fully equal” (qtd. in Stock 184). After several legislative rebuffs, Crocker established the first truly academic school for girls in the United States: “In 1821 the Troy Female Seminary

opened with a curriculum including mathematics and sciences, as well as domestic science” (Stock 184). Stock places the end of what she terms the “pioneer phase of American women’s education” as occurring when Mary Lyon “collected enough money to found the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837” (185). In this school, female students “faced a three-year program that constituted a true secondary education” (Stock 185). Mount Holyoke was considered the leading institution for the education of women in America until it was surpassed by women’s colleges such as Vassar, Wellesley, and Smith in the 1870s and 1880s (Gordon 30). The transcendentalists were generally sympathetic to women’s calls for education. In “Heroism,” first published in 1841, Emerson writes that the modern young woman has

a new and unattempted problem to solve, perchance that of the happiest nature that ever bloomed. Let the maiden, with erect soul, walk serenely on her way, accept the hint of each new experience, search in turn all the objects that solicit her eye, that she may learn the power and charm of her new-born being, which is the kindling of a new dawn in the recesses of space. The fair girl, who repels interference by a decided and proud choice of influences, so careless of pleasing, so willful and lofty, inspires every beholder with somewhat of her own nobleness. (379)

The famous Declaration of Sentiments issued in 1848 “included . . . female admission to men’s colleges and professional schools” as one way that society “could improve women’s lives and make a better world” (Solomon 41). In 1852, Catherine Beecher, who “raised money for the Hartford Female Seminary in the 1820s” (Stock 184), organized the “American Women’s Education Association to establish women’s schools” (Stock

185). The early women students in female seminaries “[b]etween the 1790s and the 1850s . . . became the vanguard of a new American type: the educated woman” (Solomon 27).

American questions of education, for males and females alike, are not generally resolved through national consensus, but through individual legislative processes in each of the states. In the nineteenth century, American education was completely “relegated to the individual states, each of which followed its own course” (Stock 171). This fact will prove to be crucial in the movement to establish the Industrial Institute and College (II&C) in Columbus, Mississippi, for the economic and social changes in Mississippi following the Civil War and Reconstruction led enfranchised white men to conclude, even if reluctantly, that their daughters might find it necessary, even if regrettable, to support themselves at some time in their lives. For both sexes, however, American education in the nineteenth century developed piecemeal, “through the efforts of local government and private institutions” (Stock 171). *Education* itself was “a fuzzy concept which Americans defined individually according to their experiences and opinions well into the nineteenth century” (Lindgren 47). However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of Americans “from diverse backgrounds believed in some kind of education as the means to a better life for themselves or their children” (Solomon 44).

While the country saw its first women pursuing higher education in the middle to late nineteenth century, both in women’s colleges and coeducational institutions, there was no national agreement about what constituted a proper education for women: “What kind of education, especially of a comparatively advanced kind, was deemed suitable for girls was a matter of opinion rather than one of general consensus” (Lindgren 49).

Individual women keenly expressed the anguish they experienced after being denied access to education. In 1862, the Southern diarist Sarah Morgan Dawson wrote the following in her diary: “And when I looked in my own heart and saw my shocking ignorance and pitiful inferiority, I actually cried Why was I denied that education?” (qtd. in Eschbach ix).

Although Vassar first opened its doors to women students in 1865, it was not until the 1870s that the United States began to offer widespread, legitimate options for women to pursue higher education. For the first time, women were accepted as full students in recognized institutions of higher education. Questions then arose as to the proper nature of their studies and of what activities and aspirations were appropriate for them following graduation. The reasons for providing higher education for women remained long undefined, even by advocates of women’s higher education. To allay the fears of those who predicted dire social consequences from providing women with higher education, advocates often couched their arguments in traditional terms: the goal was preparing women “to become more effective wives, mothers, and teachers, enabling them to better fulfill the nineteenth-century ideal of true womanhood” (Eschbach xii-xiii). One popular argument in favor of women’s higher education was the critical nature of “their future task: the upbringing of sons” (Lindgren 48). Even advocates gave little credence to the idea that educated women would be equipped to “reach their potential as full individuals, regardless of their sex” (Eschbach xiii). Barbara Miller Solomon in *In the Company of Educated Women*, argues that definitions of women’s proper role provided an unchanging standard in the constantly changing young country: “Although social change was a constant in the American republic, women were expected to be the stable, unchanging

element in a changing world” (xvii). The initial entrance of women into higher education was met with great suspicion, sometimes with outright hostility, because education “gave women an identity outside the family” (Solomon xviii).

Although women were first admitted to college during the nineteenth century, “it was generally held that academic studies must not impinge on their feminine attractions, nor militate against women’s traditional position in society” (Lindgren 11). The Victorian ideal of “separate spheres” for men and women held a deep and pervasive grip on American society: “The public, political, and economic world belonged to men, whereas women’s sphere was limited to household and children” (Gordon 13). Even though this view brought women’s domestic toil a certain dignity because it “glorified the responsibilities of home and sentimentalized motherhood,” women had “no political voice, limited economic options, and few legal rights, even concerning their sacred duty of mothering” (Gordon 13). As is usually the case, the reality was not quite as neat as the ideal, and Gordon concludes that “[i]n practice . . . the lives of Victorian men and women resembled overlapping circles more than separate realms” (14). Underlying much controversy about the higher education of women was a belief that men and women operated best in separate spheres because they had “inherently distinct natures” (Gordon 13). Both advocates for and opponents of higher education for women included gender distinctions in their arguments: “[c]onservatives claimed that higher education would destroy women’s desire to remain within the home, while liberals asserted that colleges would produce better wives and mothers” (Gordon 16).

It is a fair generalization that the “early females who contended for places in collegiate institutions wanted that education passionately” (Solomon 63). The first

“generation of women college students, educated between 1860 and 1890, . . . [was] a serious and dedicated band of pioneers, eager to prove themselves intellectually, and with little time or inclination for frivolity” (Gordon 30). Jane Addams describes the college woman’s agenda as follows:

She wishes not to be a man, nor like a man, but she claims the same right to independent thought and action. On the other hand, we still retain the old ideal of womanhood—the Saxon lady whose mission it was to give bread unto her household. So we have planned to be “Breadgivers” throughout our lives, believing that in labor alone is happiness, and that the only true and honorable life is one filled with good works and honest toil. (qtd. in Gordon 28)

In her 2005 monograph *Higher Education for Girls in North American College Fiction 1886-1912*, Gunilla Lindgren attributes much of the concern about women entering college to a general “apprehension that educated women would intrude on what was considered to be male areas” (13). At this time, the “college girl” was still enough of a rarity that there was great curiosity as to what she was like and how she should behave to attain success at college: “women’s colleges were a more or less closed area for those who did not work and study there” (Lindgren 16). Fiction portrayed these students as vital and ordinary young women, as Judy, the protagonist of Jean Webster’s *Daddy Long-Legs* says,

College is a very satisfying sort of life; the books and study and regular classes keep you alive mentally, and then when your mind gets tired, you have the gymnasium and outdoor athletics, and always plenty of congenial

friends who are thinking about the same things you are. We spend a whole evening in nothing but talk—talk—talk—and go to bed with a very uplifted feeling as though we had settled permanently some pressing world problems. And filling in every crevice, there is always such a lot of nonsense—just silly jokes about the little things that come up—but very satisfying. (157)

Such a picture of the life of college women reassured a society struggling with “whether education would be suitable for a woman or desex/unsex her, thereby blurring the distinct differences in deportment and attitude between men and women” (Lindgren 29). In her review of articles published during the Progressive Era, Lindgren finds many expressing “the familiar apprehension that intellectual education would alter a woman, her appearance and manner, from a charming creature into an unattractive copy of a man” (Lindgren 34). By the end of the first decade of the twentieth-century, this attitude had gradually changed to a general view that “college . . . [does] not mar the student: she is not an independent intellectual but an attractively innocent female” (Lindgren 35). Since the American ideal of the late nineteenth century was the “womanly woman” (Lindgren 32), the dilemma for educators was how to meet this goal when the nature of higher education is to help students develop some level of independence, in thought as well as action, making informed decisions on their own. Since the nineteenth century view of womanhood stressed dependence as its core, the question for educators and students alike became, “How could she do this [i.e., develop independent judgment] as a female and meet the requirements of the True Woman?” (Solomon 30).

The early women's colleges willingly took on much control over their students' lives. The general view of the time was that female students "must be guided and trained so as not to invite criticism" (Lindgren 39). In practice, this meant control over students' free time, ongoing training in social skills, and, quite often, limitations on their intellectual development. Intellectual brilliance was often seen as a tremendous disadvantage for a young woman who expected or hoped to be married:

brilliance was not to be expected of women, because the idea was that women had inferior cerebral capacities. If a girl succeeded intellectually, she was consequently thought to be a 'grind,' at risk of ruining her health and losing her femininity. If she failed, she was usually dismissed as a 'butterfly' In women's colleges, silence was compulsory during study hours, and lights had to be out at ten in the evening. Studying at night or early in the morning was forbidden. (Lindgren 56)

The first American college to offer admission to women was Oberlin in Ohio, which "opened as a coeducational college in 1833; the first bachelor degrees to women were given in 1842" (Stock 190). Initially, women students were restricted to a special Ladies Course that "required one year of study to be compared with three years for men's college education, and . . . [that] carried no degree" (Lindgren 51). However, women students "were permitted after 1841 to elect the men's course if they so wished" (Gordon 17). Women's participation in campus life, however, remained constricted and supervised: women "were not allowed to deliver graduation orations, or any other public speeches, and were expected to perform domestic work, while white male students did heavier chores" (Gordon 17). Such restrictions upon women students were not at all

exceptional. Even in female seminaries, “young women were not allowed to read their parts at this public event [i.e., graduation]; rather, their speeches were read by adult substitutes or were delivered personally at a private session” (Solomon 28).

Even though Oberlin remained coeducational, “the faculty remained divided on whether to permit women to speak in public” (Solomon 29). Adults of this period had been raised in an era when “religious precepts held that women should be silent in church and in mixed company” (Solomon 28). Women were so uncomfortable speaking in the presence of men that “an experiment with a coeducational course in rhetoric ended when the women requested a return to separate classes” (Solomon 28).

Oberlin’s justification for having women students was couched in terms of their benefit to male students: “Oberlin’s first president, evangelist Charles Finney, and future administrators and faculty felt that coeducation provided a healthy social atmosphere, as well as practice for future ministers in dealing with women who would one day be their congregants or spouses” (Gordon 17). Social interactions between men and women students “took place in an atmosphere of evangelical piety and propriety” (Gordon 17). Such restrictions did not rest well with some of Oberlin’s pioneering women students, and “future women’s rights advocates Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown opposed their college’s policies” (Gordon 18). In 1841, Elizabeth Prall wrote an essay railing against the fact that “in liberty-loving America [woman] is not allowed to speak in her own tongue, among the populace, to defend her own rights” (qtd. in Solomon 29). In fact, Lucy Stone “refused to write a commencement speech or participate in the public exercises since she would not be allowed to read it” (Solomon 29). It was not until 1857 that “an Oberlin woman . . . [was] permitted to read her part at the public

commencement” (Solomon 29). One nevertheless should keep in mind that, in spite of the limitations placed on students, the education offered women at Oberlin far exceeded any other available at the time. As student Mary Ann Adams wrote,

We are taught not only to fully appreciate the worth of an author but to think for ourselves upon the various subjects brought before us, and we do feel that this knowledge after which we are searching is of more value than the diamond which sparkles in the sands of India and the pearl in its ocean bed. . . . [T]he works we investigate are such as are calculated to furnish discipline of mind and a supply of rich thought. (qtd. in Solomon 30)

The experimental nature of Oberlin’s approach is revealed by the fact that “three reformed prostitutes were brought to Oberlin for education and rehabilitation” (Solomon 40). Although Lindgren reports that the first women students at Oberlin “often suffered adversity and insecurity because of their gender” (27), it is equally plausible to argue, as Gordon does, that women’s rebellion against the social restrictions on Oberlin’s campus reflects the “self-confidence [women had] about their place at Oberlin” (18).

Another Ohio institution, Antioch College, founded in 1853, also admitted women from the beginning (Stock 190). Horace Mann, the founder of Antioch, made no distinctions in men’s and women’s education: “Mann required women and men to take the same classes and to recite together” (Eschbach 102). Over time, however, Mann became increasingly uncomfortable over a “fear of misconduct and impropriety that was potentially present in a mixed group such as Antioch’s” (Eschbach 102). Although Antioch continued to make no sex distinctions in its course of study, Mann increasingly

felt that women “were to be educated to perform the duties of their sphere, in the home and the classroom” (Eschbach 102). Although they took the same courses, men and women students at Antioch were “separated . . . completely except in the classroom” (Gordon 17). When some women students who came to Antioch in search of equal educational opportunities “expressed their discontent,” Mann and members of the administration reacted “with shock” and began to fear that his “Great Experiment with coeducation . . . [was] a failure” (Eschbach 103).

Although the pioneering women students at Oberlin and Antioch proved equal to the intellectual challenges of higher education, considerable controversy always accompanied the movement of women into higher education. Much opposition to women in higher education came from inside universities themselves. In 1873 Harvard’s Edward Clarke published *Sex in Education or a Fair Chance for Girls*, an especially influential book. His argument “put the stamp of scientific truth on the ancient suspicion that the female brain and body could not survive book learning” (Solomon 56). Clarke “argued that higher education would destroy the ability of American women to bear children, by overtaxing them at a critical stage in their adolescent development” (Stock 191). Clarke argued that a woman’s body is

a closed energy field upon which both a woman’s brain and her reproductive system drew. If a woman then chose to use that energy for studies, her ovaries would wither away, and barrenness would ensue. . . . Girls’ intellectual endeavors were therefore dangerous for the future of the nation. Because of woman’s important mission in life, she should only be

allowed to study for four hours a day and during three weeks out of four, as she needed to rest fully during her monthly period. (Lindgren 44)

Clarke's extremely popular book was reprinted "seventeen times" (Lindgren 45). Clarke views with horror the prospect of higher education producing women with "monstrous brains and puny bodies; abnormally active cerebration and abnormally weak digestion; flowing thought and constipated bowels" (qtd. in Eschbach 84). The leading voices in opposition to Clarke were those of educated women themselves:

The *Woman's Journal*, the leading women's rights publication, printed highly critical reviews of Clarke's book by distinguished doctors and nonmedical authorities. Three volumes of essays, edited by suffragists Julia Ward Howe, Eliza B. Duffey, and Anna C. Brackett, proclaimed Clarke's ignorance about women's health and education. (Gordon 19)

Even so, the influence of Clarke's book and theories far exceeded the science of his arguments. Clarke was influential in establishing the long-standing perception that academic women "always have to prove that they risk neither loss of femininity nor their ability to produce new citizens if they choose to be educated" (Lingren 46). Clarke's ideas may also be the reason that from the beginning almost all women's colleges "included hygiene and physical education in their curricula" (Gordon 27). After Clarke's book, women's educators became resolutely determined "to make the college woman a healthy specimen, conspicuous for her vigor in mind and body" (Solomon 57). Women's athletics originally developed to fulfill "educators' commitment to make college women stronger and healthier and thus disprove the warnings of opponents of higher education for women" (Solomon 103).

Regardless of the imagined potential consequences to their health, women were interested in attending college. Those opposed to higher education for women were “waging a losing battle in the 1870s for no discouragements stopped the rising tide of female students in the next half century” (Solomon 62). Arguments similar to Clarke’s resurfaced during the Progressive Era when women began to move into paid employment. Women, so this new version of the old argument went, were “neither physically nor mentally strong enough to combine the demands of a profession with those pertaining to the responsibility for a home” (Lindgren 65).

There was much back-and-forth debate over the question of whether higher education was good for women; many claims and counterclaims offered a pseudo-scientific veneer to afford even the most outrageous claims a patina of intellectual respectability. As Eschbach correctly points out, the real question underlying these debates was “whether an educated woman was good for society” (87). American educator William Tyler expressed the concerns of many when he argued that a woman risks her purity should she pursue higher education:

Woman’s person must be protected, her virgin purity preserved, and her womanly delicacy cultivated and cherished with the most sedulous care.

Hence there should be less of publicity, more of retirement and seclusion in her education than in that of the other sex. (qtd. in Eschbach 89)

Likewise, Lindgren reports that “seemingly scientific biological reasons supported the contention that women had better abstain from higher education” (42). In the 1880s, *Popular Science* ran a series of articles by Dr. William Hammond “who argued that as female brains are as a rule smaller than men’s, it must follow that a

woman's intellectual capacities are inferior, forcing her to study more intensely when attempting to meet the same demands as men" (Lindgren 43). Herbert Spencer used a popularized Darwinian approach to argue that differentiation between the sexes had its base in evolution: "the inclination towards the personal had developed because woman was biologically prepared for, and had therefore performed, . . . 'concrete and proximate' duties over the centuries" (Lindgren 44). Others used Darwinian principles to argue that evolution had "relegated women to a permanently inferior condition, physically and mentally" (Solomon 56). By the Progressive Era, such questions largely seem to have faded from view (Lindgren 45). In 1906, Daisy Lee Worthington, a Vassar graduate, wrote pointedly on the disingenuous nature of arguments against women's education based on health: "Woman's health is endangered by a college education! The race is in peril! Man to the rescue! But he raised no great outcry against the millions of women who are working in factories under the most unsanitary conditions" (qtd. in Lindgren 45).

To counter opposition, proponents of women's higher education in the nineteenth century "sought always to project conventional virtues and appropriate attitudes and behavior" as the base of their arguments (Eschbach 90). Arguments in favor of higher education for women tended to propose that "learning would make women better wives and mothers, thereby strengthening rather than weakening the family unit, as well as society" (Eschbach 90). As the number of female college graduates grew, potential husbands of marriageable girls began to conclude "that a bright, educated female would make the best of wives, for she could use her learning and intelligence as a partner and homemaker" (Solomon 37).

In individual families, parents often had a tremendous influence upon their daughter's decision to enter college. Those families that opposed higher education for their daughters worried that "[n]ot only would their [daughters'] minds be turned to ideals other than that of matrimony during this critical stage of their lives, but intellectual accomplishments would render them unattractive" (Eschbach 87). Annie Nathan Meyer, future founder of Barnard College, recalled her father telling her, "You will never be married. Men hate intelligent wives" (qtd. in Eschbach 87). Even should their educated daughters succeed in forming a successful marriage, parents often felt that "the time and money spent on their education would be wasted" (Eschbach 88). Alternatively, some families supported their daughters' desire to enter college. In a survey of Vassar alumnae from 1865-1890, "[f]athers were mentioned five times more frequently than mothers as sources of inspiration for college attendance" (Gordon 20). When the family "respected their daughters' academic achievements and saw that these girls might not marry for whatever personal reasons," they often encouraged their daughters to continue their education and "gave them strong encouragement to explore alternatives" (Solomon 117). Quite often, "the aspiring young woman had to take the initiative with the family in negotiating her educational future: her parents were unlikely to pressure her to continue her schooling" (Solomon 63).

There were numerous financial impediments facing women who wanted a higher education. Private women's colleges were usually financially out of reach for women from the working-classes: "With financial aid very limited, few women from less comfortable homes could afford the tuition, living expenses, and foregone income to attend a private college" (Gordon 29). The families of students in private women's

colleges tended to be financially successful: while “the average income for a U. S. family of four . . . [was] \$830 in 1890 [\$18,378 in current terms (McCusker)], the average annual income of the families of . . . [women] college graduates was \$2,042 [\$45,215 in current terms (McCusker)]” (Solomon 65). Women college students tended to come from “a range of families within the broad and expanding middle class” (Solomon 64). Fathers of the first generation of women college students tended to see “college education for both sexes as the path to a fuller life, intellectually, socially, and economically” (Solomon 65). Many of them did not consider it a family disadvantage to have “ambitious daughters” (Solomon 65). A mother might be more likely to support her daughter’s desire for higher education if she had experienced “a difficult life or thwarted ambitions” (Solomon 68).

In practice, for poor Americans in the nineteenth century, “college was out of the question and beyond expectation” (Solomon 63). However, the families of women college students were not exclusively well off: more than a third of women college graduates “were from families whose annual incomes were below \$1,200” (Solomon 65). Farm families faced great challenges in educating their daughters, but many were convinced that college offered their daughters “a way out of the constrictions, isolation, and poverty of rural life” (Solomon 68).

For women and men alike, the “idea of financial aid for all who qualify did not exist” (Solomon 71). Remarkably, “some mill workers saved money to attend Oberlin or Mount Holyoke” (Solomon 31). As the social stigma associated with working one’s way through college dissipated, “private women’s institutions like Wellesley and Smith publicized the fact that women could earn their way through their schools” (Solomon 71).

Despite the obstacles, women students from diverse social classes made their way to college by the early 1900s. By that time, things were a bit easier for them, but a “young women had to have ability and personal drive, as well as a little luck, to acquire a college education” (Solomon 75). It required “\$350 (tuition, room, and board) . . . to send a girl to Wellesley” (Solomon 65). In 1905, tuition at Smith was \$100; in 1908, Mount Holyoke charged \$350 for tuition and board. (Solomon 65). Parents were more willing to sacrifice to send girls to school when they “identified with their daughters’ quest for intellectual as well as economic independence” (Solomon 66). Many parents of women students believed in education almost as in a “religion, a means toward the improvement of self and society” (Solomon 66).

William Campbell Preston Breckinridge of Kentucky was an exceptional father of an intellectually gifted daughter. Although “initially dubious” of his daughter’s decision “to attend Wellesley in 1884,” eventually he fully supported her decision to remain for the entire program and earn a degree (Gordon 20). In a letter to her while she was an undergraduate, he expressed the feeling that many men in the South were beginning to adopt towards the future prospects of life for their daughters: “you ought to look squarely in the face that if I die, you will have to make your own living: & if I live you may have to do so anyhow . . . God preserve you . . . from the aimless . . . life of the young girls you would associate with here” (qtd. in Gordon 21). Even the South was changing, and it was necessary for its people to change with the times, including preparing their daughters to work, if necessary.

In general, “[f]ounders and proponents of single-sex colleges viewed them as the most desirable way to educate women” (Gordon 190). The first endowed women’s

college in the United States was Vassar College, founded in 1860 (Stock 191). Matthew Vassar, the college's founder, was "childless, self-educated, and self-made" (Eschbach 61). Vassar's original vision was to create a school "to make women better teachers" (Solomon 48). Vassar was the first women's college that was adequately funded: "Vassar's munificence allowed his college to open with material advantages, as well as an extensive, . . . highly paid faculty" (Eschbach 61). The Civil War intervened between the college's founding in 1861 and its opening on September 20, 1865, when "close to three hundred young women from across the United States made their way up the long avenue leading from the gate house to the main building of Vassar Female College in Poughkeepsie, New York" (Eschbach xi). This was truly a momentous day, for "[e]arlier generations had seldom granted their daughters the time, the money, or the privilege of pursuing the higher levels of classics, mathematics, and science now accorded this group" (Eschbach xi). The young women forming this first class at a women's college in America was closely watched for signs of success and failure by "both those who ardently approved of the path they had set out upon and those who vehemently disapproved" (Eschbach xi-xii).

Dr. John Howard, the first President of Vassar College, feared that his students might develop a reputation for being "strong-minded" (Lindgren 33). Accordingly, in May 1865, just before the college opened, the first *Prospectus of the Vassar Female College* "stated that activities such as debates and oratory would not be allowed, since they were not 'feminine accomplishments.' Woman's mission was not 'to govern or contend'" (Lindgren 33). Even Matthew Vassar, founder of the college, "harbored

anxieties about his enterprise” (Lindgren 40). In 1861, he stated the aim of this college in his first address to the Board of Trustees:

It occurred to me that woman, having received from her creator the same intellectual constitution as man, has the same right to intellectual culture and development.

I considered that the mothers of a country mold the character of its citizens, determine its institutions, and shape its destiny.

Next to the influence of the mother, is that of the female teacher, who is employed to train young children at a period when impressions are most vivid and lasting.

It also seemed to me, that if woman were properly educated some new avenues to useful and honorable employment might be opened to her.
(qtd. in Lindgren 57)

The influential Sarah Joseph Hale, editor of the widely read *Godey's Lady's Book*, wrote to Matthew Vassar when she learned of his plans to found a college for women: “We want true women trained to the full arc of their powers of mind, heart, and soul, and taught to devote all their duties as women; then the world will be better as well as wiser” (qtd. in Eschbach xiii). By 1864, Vassar extended his view of women’s possibilities by including women on the faculty; he felt that graduates “should be granted opportunities to use their knowledge, powers, and skills” (Lindgren 57). Women were often seen as well-placed by temperament and instinct to provide the ideal force for refining and improving society through their influence in family life. They were not so much expected to succeed intellectually as to influence expression of culture (Lindgren 57-58). Studies in the liberal

arts were thus held to be appropriate for women students because “non-vocational study . . . did not overtly encourage non-feminine professional aspirations” (Lindgren 54). Men studied liberal arts as preparation for professional schools; women were to pursue the same curriculum “as learning for its own sake, detached from professional motives” (Solomon 83).

Over time, the purpose of a Vassar education moved toward emphasizing intellectual pursuits. In a letter written in 1875, President Raymond stated the Vassar mission in classically liberal terms:

The only thing we ask of our pupils is that there should be thought, honest and earnest; and the aim of our training is, not to inculcate a particular creed or system of belief, but to furnish the youthful mind with the well-established and undisputed results of past inquiry, to inform it clearly in respect to the great questions in philosophy and science which now divide the thinking world, and so to develop and discipline its faculties that it shall be able in due time to form its own opinions and to understand and explain the grounds on which those opinions rest. (qtd. in Lindgren 60)

Even so, questions of the purpose and form of higher education were never straightforward when applied to women students. As late as 1873, Dr. Howard wondered if there were “not danger of impairing the delicacy and grace, so essential to our ideals of womanhood, and of disqualifying her physical system for the high and sacred offices which God has assigned her in the domestic and social economy?” (qtd. in Lindgren 44). In a 1873 Vassar faculty report, Professor James Orton justified maintaining the Latin requirement in the students’ freshmen year on the bases of both intellect and culture: “It

is the experience of centuries that classical study is the most perfect training in the study of language; and no young lady can afford to lose that priceless culture. It is, moreover, a means of mental refinement and the inspiration of original thought” (qtd. in Lindgren 61).

Vassar students’ lives and time were carefully regulated. Women faculty members assumed responsibilities for supervising students: “[t]hey had to correct the girls’ speech and conduct everywhere at college” (Lindgren 41). Such close observation and supervision of women students met with approval in the larger American community, helping to allay fears many held of women becoming intellectuals: “the promise of surveillance . . . [outweighed] the uneasiness felt in some quarters over the new enterprise—women in higher education” (Lindgren 55). Hannah Lyman, Vassar College’s first Lady Principal, “scrutiniz[ed] everything, from the students’ morals, manners, and dress down to their visitors and shopping lists” (Lindgren 41). The college specifically charged Lyman to “judge the propriety of her students’ social calls and guard against ‘coarse or insipid frivolities of rustic and fashionable talk’” (qtd. in Eschbach 91). A special platform was “placed in her quarters so that the proper length of students’ skirts could be assured before they left the dormitory” (Eschbach 92).

Wellesley College, which held its first classes in 1875, “was the first college to have . . . a faculty composed entirely of women” (Stock 191). Wellesley held a different view of women’s higher education, one not based on its trying to offer the same education as a men’s college. Henry Durant, Wellesley’s founder, “made it clear in the beginning that his institution would offer its students a thorough education but not the same as men’s” (Eschbach 64). Due to the lack of adequately prepared applicants, Wellesley initially was forced to offer preparatory work. In 1875, the college had “only

30 out of a student body of 314 who were prepared to follow the college course” (Eschbach 65). With a general improvement in secondary preparation for college, Wellesley was able to close the preparatory department “within ten years” (Gordon 29).

Both Durant and his wife “believed higher education would strengthen women’s minds and bodies, prevent sentimentality and idleness, and prepare them to make the world a better, more Christian place” (Gordon 29). Life at Wellesley was ordered “in the seminary mold,” and “the first students found themselves in a closely and carefully regulated environment” (Gordon 29). Durant himself framed Wellesley’s mission in evangelical terms: “The Higher Education of Women is one of the great world battle cries for freedom: for right against might. It is the cry of the oppressed slave. It is the assertion of absolute equality. The war is sacred, because it is the war of Christ” (qtd. in Solomon 48). The students and faculty responded by defying “the Durants and first president Ada L. Howard, creating . . . a true college community with few vestiges of the seminary” (Gordon 29). In 1881, Wellesley hired its first woman president, “Alice Freeman [later Palmer], a young University of Michigan graduate with a secular, intellectually ambitious plan for Wellesley’s development” (Gordon 29). Under Freeman’s leadership, Wellesley admitted “a small number of black students . . . and supported their rights as members of the college community” (Gordon 46). Palmer’s own education had required struggle on her family’s part. Her father “had left farming in New York State and was studying medicine” (Solomon 69). When Palmer first requested to attend college, her parents “initially resisted, until . . . [she] convinced them that she would repay her debts to them and see her brothers and sisters through college” (Solomon 69).

Palmer addresses issues surrounding the value of higher education for women in her famous “Why Go To College?” presentation. Palmer begins by arguing that women need more from life than financial security alone. Even mothers of marriageable daughters understand that “they take grave risks when they trust everything to accumulated wealth and the chance of a happy marriage” (Palmer). Young women as well were becoming aware of the place for college in their lives: “they need the stimulus, the discipline, the knowledge, the interests of the college in addition to the school, if they are to prepare themselves for the most serviceable lives” (Palmer). Palmer calls college “life insurance for a girl,” adding that “every girl, no matter what her present circumstances, [should receive] a special training in some one thing by which she can render society service, not amateur but of an expert sort, and service too for which it will be willing to pay a price” (Palmer). Even girls with advanced professional accomplishments retain their attractiveness, and they are not “found less attractive because of their special accomplishments” (Palmer). The college experience itself may bring about unexpected changes, to the point that the graduate does not resemble her former self:

I have seen girls change so much in college that I have wondered if their friends at home would know them,—the voice, the carriage, the unconscious manner, all telling a story of new tastes and habits and loves and interests, that had wrought out in truth a new creature. (Palmer)

Of course, this was precisely what some parents worried about: by turning their daughter over to a college they would end up with a bluestocking on their hands, a strange,

unattractive creature who could never again take pleasure and satisfaction in the simple duties and occupations considered appropriate for daughters and wives.

Palmer acknowledges that many young people seek above all to have “a good time” more than anything else (Palmer). The college experience teaches them the true meaning of this phrase, but only over time: “It takes some time to discover that work is the best sort of play, and some people never discover it at all” (Palmer). Palmer also directly addresses critics such as Dr. Clarke who argue that intellectual work is injurious to a girl’s health: “I have often noticed among college girls an air of humiliation and shame when obliged to confess a lack of physical vigor, as if they were convicted of managing life with bad judgment, or of some moral delinquency” (Palmer). Using her own science to match arguments from critics of higher education for women, Palmer adds that “already statistical investigation in this country and in England shows that the standard of health is higher among the women who hold college degrees than among any other equal number of the same age and class” (Palmer). Higher education for women becomes its own reward when “[h]er beautiful home and her rosy and happy children prove the measure of her hard-won success” (Palmer).

College also offers a true experience of democracy in its range of students from diverse circumstances: “It is only when the rich and poor sit down together that either can understand how the Lord is the Maker of them all” (Palmer). Even when a college woman follows the traditional and expected path of becoming a wife and mother, her education will be of use to her: “Imagination and knowledge should be the hourly companions of her who would make a fine art of each detail in kitchen and nursery” (Palmer). Society has progressed to the point that all problems can be solved by

intelligent application of knowledge, and women can contribute greatly to this enterprise: “There is now scientific knowledge enough, there is money enough, to prevent the vast majority of the evils which afflict our social organism, if mere knowledge or wealth could avail; but the greater difficulty is to make intelligence, character, good taste, unselfishness prevail” (Palmer).

Finally, the college experience gives men and women alike what Palmer, quoting William E. Russell, Governor of Massachusetts, calls an understanding of the “everlasting difference between making a living and making a life” (Palmer). In the end, “[t]he foes of life, especially of women’s lives, are caprice, wearisome incapacity, and petty judgments” (Palmer). No college alone, even one with the best intentions and faculty, can impart all a woman needs to know to make life “a glory instead of a grind” (Palmer). However, if a woman has chosen high ideals and purpose for her life, “where else can she find so many hands reaching out to help, so many encouraging voices in the air, so many favoring influences filling the days and nights?” (Palmer).

After being chartered in 1871, Smith College, located in Northampton, Massachusetts, opened in 1875 (Eschbach 62). Sophia Smith, whose will gave money to establish the college, “saw the opening of higher education to women as a panacea that would redress the wrongs done to women, equalize their wages, increase their influence for reform in society” (Stock 191). She wrote of her vision for the college as follows:

It is my opinion that by the higher and more thoroughly Christian education of women, what are called their “wrongs” will be redressed, their wages will be adjusted, their weight of influence in reforming the evils of society will be greatly increased as teachers, as writers, as

mothers, as members of society, their power for good will be incalculably enlarged. (qtd. in Solomon 48)

Smith directed that her money be spent establishing a college “with the design to furnish for my own sex means and facilities for education equal to those which are afforded now in our colleges to young men” (qtd. in Eschbach 62).

Higher education for women in the 1870s was becoming more acceptable, and “no great fanfare accompanied the opening of Smith College” (Eschbach 62). As with other women’s colleges in the nineteenth century, lack of adequate secondary preparation limited the number of qualified applicants. However, Smith initially refused “to open a preparatory department” (Eschbach 63). In its first year, only “twelve students” were able to function at the expected level, and in its second year of operation it admitted “only sixteen women” (Eschbach 63). Reluctantly, the college modified its original vision so that, in its third year, it admitted “thirty-nine students, most of whom were ‘special students’ given the option of a nonclassical course of study” (Eschbach 63-64). As with students at other women’s colleges, Smith students were sternly warned “to desist from any impropriety” (Eschbach 92). Even during “free time,” students’ time and activities were highly structured and restricted. For example, “Sunday strolls . . . were allowed only if they led to church” (Eschbach 92).

Even with the experience of students at women’s colleges available to bolster arguments for women’s abilities to succeed in higher education, general respect for female students was long in coming: “[o]ne reason for the slow acceptance of female academic prowess may have been the doubts that even well-educated people entertained about women’s capacities for arduous intellectual work” (Lindgren 55). Further, the

process of defining the nature and purpose of the curriculum at women's colleges was often contentious. With some exceptions, "women's colleges . . . complied with traditional views as well: the direction of the chosen curriculum was in keeping with prevalent attitudes" (Lindgren 55). The dilemma almost all women's colleges in the nineteenth century faced was how best to combine ambitious intellectual goals for their students with conservative social goals for their graduates (Gordon 26).

While the cost of a college education may have presented obstacles for both male and female students, "girls also lacked the preparatory education which was more easily accessible to boys" (Lindgren 46). In 1870, Vassar's Dr. Howard "deplored the predominance of feminine accomplishments in the education offered at [secondary schools for girls]" (Lindgren 50). As a result, the preparatory department became and remained essential for the purpose and function of almost all women's colleges in the nineteenth century. The lack of secondary preparation directly affected completion rates for degree programs; at many women's colleges, "[i]n certain years only one or two diplomas were granted, while many young women entered and left with no degree in hand" (Eschbach 63). Not until the 1880s would "those women's colleges that aspired to equal men's colleges be able to rid themselves of preparatory programs" (Eschbach 64). General inadequacy in secondary preparation gradually decreased with the expansion and development of public high schools in America. By 1890, "[a]s boys tended to drop out of [public high] school because they preferred early and profitable employment, an option open to few of their female contemporaries, girls outnumbered them on graduation" (Lindgren 52).

Bryn Mawr “was founded in 1880 and offered graduate degrees in 1885” (Stock 191). This college made a noticeable exception to the academic compromises of most women’s colleges in the nineteenth century. By 1900, Bryn Mawr had awarded “forty-four master’s degrees and eighteen doctorates” (Stock 193). Joseph Taylor, “an Orthodox Quaker doctor and businessman,” left his fortune to establish the school (Solomon 49). Taylor wanted to prepare “teachers of a high order . . . [to] train infant minds and give direction to character and make the home the center of interest and attraction” (qtd. in Solomon 49). Under the direction of its woman president M. Carey Thomas, Bryn Mawr became a singular institution where “the intellectual development of women . . . reached new heights of excellence” (Eschbach 111-112). Carey held an extremely unusual view of women’s higher education in the nineteenth century. She is reported to have said, “Our failures only marry” (qtd. in Solomon 84).

Bryn Mawr held notoriously high entrance requirements; students had to pass “entrance examinations that exceeded in difficulty those given at any American men’s college” (Eschbach 112). The college also was a leader in establishing democracy on campus: “As early as 1891, Bryn Mawr students were granted power both to make and to implement rules” (Lindgren 69). The course of study at Bryn Mawr included four elements: “a core of required courses, a choice of sequences comprising a major area of study, a limited choice of electives for a distribution requirement, and finally a few completely free electives” (Solomon 80).

President Carey Thomas “demanded unsurpassed scholarship, refusing even to institute a Phi Beta Kappa chapter since every student was expected to be deserving of such distinction” (Eschbach 112). As long as she could remember, Thomas strongly

desired to enter college and become educated. As a child, she prayed to God “that if it were true that because I was a girl I could not successfully master Greek and go to college and understand things, to kill me at once” (qtd. in Eschbach 112). When it was time for her to go to college, she met with firm opposition from her father who, she said, found her desire for higher education “as shocking a choice as a life of prostitution” (qtd. in Eschbach 112). This was in spite of the fact that he was a “Johns Hopkins trustee who was committed to higher education for men” (Solomon 67). Her determination eventually overcame all opposition, and she “entered Cornell University in 1876” after considering and rejecting Vassar College as merely “an advanced seminary” (Eschbach 113). She found life as a woman undergraduate at Cornell difficult and wrote home that “[t]here is much that is very hard for a lady in a mixed university and I would not subject any girl to it unless she were determined to have it” (qtd. in Solomon 102). After graduating from Cornell, Thomas was denied admission to any graduate school in America and became the “first woman to earn a doctorate at Zurich” (Eschbach 113). Even with such academic accomplishment, her family’s friends considered her “‘a disgrace’ to the Thomas clan for following such a course” (Eschbach 113).

Thomas led Bryn Mawr students by example, “first [as] dean and later president”: “Articulate and uncompromising, Thomas, through quiet talks with students, weekly chapel presentations, and her stately presence on campus, succeeded in molding her students into an ideal” (Eschbach 113). She dedicated her life and work to proving conclusively that “women, when given the opportunity, were capable of excelling academically and professionally” (Eschbach 114). Even though Thomas helped create “a women’s college unexcelled in academic prestige,” by the end of her career, she realized

that the best path for women was full and equal participation in coeducation. She wrote, “Only by having the schools and universities coeducational can we ensure the girls of the world of receiving a thoroughly good education” (qtd. in Eschbach 114). Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, Mistress of English at Mississippi’s II&C from 1885-1913, would have found much sympathy and common ground with Thomas, as we shall see in the chapter of this study devoted to her life and work.

In 1888, “Mount Holyoke joined the ranks of quality women’s colleges” (Stock 192). Its transition from seminary to college involved a struggle that “pitted a modernizing elite of teachers and students against trustees and administrators who wished to maintain the seminary’s reputation for offering a Christian education, oriented towards enlarging, but maintaining, woman’s sphere” (Gordon 30). Quite soon after Mount Holyoke began making its transition to becoming a college, students began agitating against “required prayer meetings, domestic work, the self-reporting system for transgressions against the rules, lack of free time, and the difficulty of developing friendships in an environment where every hour of every day had its assigned purpose” (Gordon 30). Mount Holyoke’s administration reluctantly acceded to students’ demands because it was being challenged by Vassar, Wellesley, and Smith for primacy as “the nationally recognized leader in women’s higher education,” and “by 1893 the transition to college was complete” (Gordon 30).

Coeducation remained an unpopular idea among the “old universities of the East, [which] resisted the trend” of admitting women (Stock 191). State universities in the Midwest and West were generally open to the idea of coeducation, largely because of requirements arising from their land-grant status. Iowa and Wisconsin began admitting

women in the 1860s; Michigan, Maine, and Cornell in the early 1870s. (Stock 191). In 1869, when “six women had completed the requirements for a degree” from the University of Wisconsin, there was controversy as to whether they should be called “bachelors” (Eschbach 103). In the early twentieth century, University of Wisconsin President Charles Richard Van Hise promulgated his theory of “sex repulsion”: “as soon as one sex dominated [a field of study] numerically, a fear of competition drove the other out” (Solomon 60). The fear of “feminization” of certain programs of study reflected male professors’ “judgment that unless men enrolled in a course or program in substantial numbers, the subject was devalued” (Solomon 81).

Women students at the state universities often faced openly hostile reactions to their presence on campus: “many male faculty, administrators, and students viewed women’s higher education as an unwelcome threat to the social order” (Gordon 189). The problems that women students faced on early coeducational campuses leads Gordon to conclude that for women students during the Progressive Era, “women’s colleges provided a superior social and educational atmosphere” (192). Solomon argues that “coeducational schools made plain both directly and indirectly what could be denied at women’s colleges, that society attached greater importance to man’s achievements” (xix). When curriculum changes in the early twentieth century allowed students more flexibility in choosing their course of study, releasing them from the long-held requirements of a classical education, “the female student became the scapegoat for faculty frustration in a time of transition” (Solomon 60). The irony in such reactions is that women’s success in higher education, not their failures, led to new questions about the proper place to educate them. During this time, women’s colleges held onto their roles as the “one place where

women had a guaranteed welcome” (Solomon 47). Indeed, many male educators agreed that the “best solution was to have women attend their own schools” (Solomon 61). Those who held a prejudice in favor of women’s colleges claimed that “better women came out of all-female colleges” and held an “elitist preference for females educated apart from males” (Solomon 61).

Women’s academic success in fully coeducational institutions of higher education brought charges from “disgruntled, or perhaps envious males students . . . [who] charged that women interfered with male academic performance” (Solomon 58). By 1902, female enrollment at the University of Chicago “rose from 24 to 52 percent” with women receiving “a majority (56.3) percent of the Phi Beta Kappa awards” (Solomon 58). In reaction, President Harper disingenuously “announced the organization of a women’s union to promote the interests of female students” (Solomon 58). The real purpose of this initiative was to halt female progress by “segregating undergraduate classes wherever numbers warranted” (Solomon 58). In reaction, John Dewey led a faculty coalition that held such a policy to be “un-American, anti-democratic, and reactionary” (qtd. in Solomon 58). The policy of segregation was nevertheless implemented, only to be abandoned in five years when it proved to be a “costly and bureaucratic nuisance” (Solomon 59).

By the turn of the twentieth century, the question of women’s access to higher education was more-or-less settled; a new controversy arose over what women should do after they graduated. The Northeastern women’s colleges, though rich in prestige and considered the leaders in women’s education, offered at best limited options for their graduates. As Lindgren puts the problem in the title of one of her sections, “Senior

Commencement—and then what?” (75). By the 1920s, the question about women college students became, “Why should an individual spend precious time and energy in higher education, and why should society support a venture of that kind?” (Lindgren 71).

Eschbach is certainly correct to argue that the first women college students in America desired a “taste of independence, an opportunity to use one’s time in intellect and study, and a pioneering spirit” (75). Women college graduates faced a dilemma not experienced by their male counterparts, who were expected to graduate and work:

At college she had accepted a double-edged message, to be useful and to be womanly. Only later did she wonder whether she could meet both the traditional expectations inherent in being a woman and the new obligations introduced by her collegiate experience. (Solomon 115)

Part of the challenge for these women was the fact that the old pattern of seamless transition in dependency from daughter to wife had been broken. They had experienced an independent, if closely supervised, life while in college: “[u]ndergraduate experience had strengthened the college woman’s sense of independence, allowing her to think of herself as an individual who should not be forced into any pattern unless she wanted it” (Solomon 116). While society at large might continue in its view of a woman’s proper sphere, the “enormous variety of experiences women had in college challenged their notions of the female role and capacity” (Solomon 116).

One natural answer to the question of what women graduates could do after college was found in the influx of women into the teaching force. Even when women’s education had been limited to seminaries, teaching had been an option for graduates forced by circumstance to work. Teaching was open to women because it was then

“regarded as a vocation and not yet developed as a profession” (Solomon 32). In fact, very large numbers of women college graduates worked as teachers. A 1915 study found that “83.5 percent of . . . [women college graduates who were] working, were teachers” (Solomon 127). Attracting some of the best women college graduates, “teaching . . . functioned as an intermediate or final step in the careers of [many] distinguished female achievers” (Solomon 127). Women students “who had enjoyed studying often wanted to teach; it was a way to continue to study while earning a living” (Solomon 128). Although teaching, then as now, was a “field not known for high salaries, many jobs still paid better” than other options available to women college graduates (Solomon 128). Women college graduates also considered the question of vocational stability, for teaching “offered a reliable means of earning a living” (Solomon 128). For women from less-privileged backgrounds, teaching “became a vehicle for upward social mobility. It represented an improvement over what their mothers could do for a living, a welcome alternative to working in other women’s kitchens and laundries or in mills and factories” (Solomon 128).

Being a college graduate quickly became a distinct benefit for women who wanted to teach at the better schools: “Most states did not have significant licensing laws for teachers until the early twentieth century, but university credentials quickly became a useful asset for landing a more prestigious or better-paying urban teaching position” (Gordon 19). When the number and quality of high schools greatly expanded during the late nineteenth century, women became preferred as teachers because they would work for less salary than a man, often “half the salary paid to male teachers” (Gordon 15). In the Northeast, which resisted women becoming teachers, “rarely did females receive even

half of what their male counterparts earned: usually women's salaries approximated one-third of men's" (Solomon 31). Teaching, then as now, could be a "demanding and discouraging" profession: "Recalcitrant pupils, uncooperative parents, indifferent school boards, and general isolation made the job seem hopeless" (Solomon 33). Although there was constant turnover in the teaching ranks and "many left after a short tenure" (Solomon 33), those who remained even for a year or two experienced the truth of an independent life. Teaching meant learning about independence, and as a young woman "became more independent, she gained self-respect" (Solomon 33). Even late into the Progressive Era, "teaching proved the most common choice among [women college] graduates. It was also a profession in which women were whole-heartedly wanted and sorely needed" (Lindgren 83).

As late as the early twentieth century, only single women were eligible to teach: "they were in general barred [from teaching] once they married" (Lindgren 83). The long-term educational consequences of the movement of college-educated women into teaching reverberate even today. As the teaching workforce became feminized, "apart from a reduction of wages, requirements for 'cheerfulness and a love of children' replaced the earlier ones for 'intellect, system, order, and force of character'" (Lindgren 83). Those in favor of female teachers frequently argued that "women made better teachers because they could draw upon innate maternal instincts in dealing with students" (Gordon 15). However, the shift towards a feminized teaching workforce was also marked by fear of the "woman peril": "Boys who were brought up at home or at school by women were said to acquire a coating of femininity which was destructive to the desired masculine character" (Lindgren 84).

Another possibility for women seeking employment was to enter “the field of popular writing” (Solomon 35). Opportunities for literary women grew because the “growth of literacy among women created both female authors and a readership for their works” (Solomon 35). So many women were employed in popular writing in the nineteenth century that it “followed teaching as woman’s second ‘profession’” (Solomon 36). Women writers “gained paid and unpaid employment as essayists, editors, journalists, and fiction writers” (Solomon 36). This led to women entering “the business world by negotiating contracts, and the male-dominated publishing sphere by editing magazines” (Solomon 36). Domestic fiction held “tremendous appeal for middle-class women and for authors and readers trying to live up to the demands of True Womanhood while exploring new options” (Solomon 36). College educators and teachers often wrote novels examining “the advances in and anxieties about female education” (Solomon 36).

For women college graduates who desired further education, admission to graduate school posed a new set of challenges. The first woman to earn a Ph.D. in America was Helen Magill, an alumna of Swathmore, who graduated from Boston College in 1877 (Solomon 134). By the end of the nineteenth century, “228 women and 2,372 men had received doctorates” (Solomon 134). The only woman’s college to offer a doctoral degree in the nineteenth century was Bryn Mawr, which “at the insistence of then dean M. Carey Thomas, included a Ph.D. program from the beginning in 1885” (Solomon 134). Ambitious women seeking graduate education often made their way to Europe, where they “pushed their way first into the Swiss University at Zurich and with considerably more difficulty enrolled at some German institutions where they startled skeptics with brilliant academic performances” (Solomon 134). As with undergraduate

education, money to pay for graduate studies was difficult to find. Most graduate fellowships available at the time were limited to men; “brilliant students had to spend long years earning money to pay for this costly period of study” (Solomon 136).

As the preceding overview indicates, most scholars interested in higher education for women in the nineteenth century pay little attention to the South. One exception is Eschbach, who offers a survey of Southern women’s higher education. Eschbach sees Southern women’s higher education occurring “against a background laden with the tragedy of war and reconstruction, poverty, and at times a pervasive hostility to the ideal of higher education” (136). The long tradition of gentility in the South led to the founding of female seminaries and academies which emphasized “the ideal of cultivation [that] pervaded the lives of southern women, especially those of the aristocratic classes” (Eschbach 141). The first female seminaries in the South were founded upon the idea that “women’s education would uphold, not subvert, their slaveholding patriarchal culture” (Gordon 15). There was no need for the Southern female seminaries to prepare students to face a need to be self-supporting: “the high cost of a seminary education (around \$150 a year for two to five years, with extra charges for music, drawing, and needlework) limited attendance to women who would not have to work to support themselves” (Gordon 15). Graduates of the Southern female seminaries were prepared, and expected, to return “home to marry, raise children, and assume the duties of running a plantation or urban middle-class household” (Gordon 15).

In the late antebellum period, especially in the 1840s and 1850s, education for women was often a topic of public discussion, with opinions disseminated through speeches republished as pamphlets for a wide readership. In an 1835 address in Georgia,

Daniel Chandler argued that “women had been deprived of many of their natural rights by arrogant males who had never allowed their presumptions of male superiority to be tested” (Hickson 20). He continued, “[W]oman’s primary intellectual problem was not ability but opportunity” (Hickson 20). In her survey of Southern newspapers from the late antebellum period, Hickson finds that they “increasingly dealt with intellectual equality of the sexes as an accepted fact” (22). Southern proponents of education for women generally argued “that higher education was of value to the individual woman because it enhanced her best qualities, helped her understand herself, and also enabled her to better fulfill the expectations of her role” (Hickson 26). When state legislatures proved reluctant to support institutions of higher education for women, supporters often turned to religious denominations, arguing successfully that “the moral and spiritual influence of an educated Christian mother was of paramount importance” (Hickson 57). This was often a successful strategy because denominational influence often “provided entrée into the pocketbooks of wealthy individuals who made contributions because of denominational loyalty” (Hickson 59). Church leaders also often “encouraged constituents to send both money and daughters” to school (Hickson 60). One devastating result of Southern opposition to vocational education for women was that the aftermath of the Civil War “left many white women without husbands or financial resources” (Gordon 19) and unprepared educationally to support themselves and their families. Eventually, recalcitrant southerners, “in spite of traditional indifference and hostility, recognized that increased education was essential for a revitalized economy” (Eschbach 144).

The lack of public education in the South did not, as in the North, lead to a demand for college-educated women to serve as teachers immediately following the Civil

War. There were some discriminating, intelligent Southern women who understood and spoke against the life that follows from a lack of education, but these were relatively rare. For most Southern women, “[t]he liberating light of knowledge was a dangerous instrument and would remain dim and indistinct in the distance” (Eschbach 143). Students at women’s colleges in the South clung to traditional views of their roles long after women students in other regions of the United States had begun to move beyond Victorian assumptions about women’s proper sphere of influence. Often with great reluctance, the generation following the Civil War and Reconstruction, faced with “the modernizing and urbanizing southern economy,” realized that “teaching became the road to self-support” for women, and that educated women could form the core of the Southern teaching workforce (Gordon 19). One of the first opportunities for Southern women to pursue higher education occurred in 1875 when “The Peabody Education Fund of Massachusetts financed a normal school in Nashville, Tennessee, which from the beginning included women students and faculty members” (Eschbach 145). The influence of the women graduates of this school in convincing rural southern women to attend college is incalculable; teachers “who recognized intellectual promise inspired more students to continue their education than we shall ever know” (Solomon 70). Further, even though teaching was a low-paid profession often lacking in prestige, college-educated women teachers could serve as “models of independence for women whose families either could not afford a college education or were unwilling to provide it” (Solomon 70).

Development of recognized, excellent colleges for women in the South lagged behind other regions. In an 1886-87 report (one year after classes began at the Industrial

Institute and College (II&C)), “there was not one women’s school in the South that qualified” for the label of true “arts college” (Eschbach 146). Indeed, Eschbach is one of the few scholars of women’s higher education in the nineteenth century to mention the II&C, though she does not seem to understand completely either the significance of the school’s founding as a public institution or of its unique mission. Eschbach simply reports in passing that

In Mississippi Annie C. Peyton’s agitation in the late 1870s for an institution for women resulted in the creation of the first state-supported college for women, Mississippi State College for Women [first known as the II&C]. MSCW then became a model for other state colleges for women, notably Florida State College for Women and Georgia State College for Women. (111)

There was, however, much more to the founding of the II&C than the efforts of a single woman, and its influence on other States was not as linear as Eschbach implies. Even so, it is refreshing to see the II&C mentioned in a history of women’s education in the nineteenth century, even if under its later name. Solomon likewise misnames the school when she writes, “The founding in 1884 of the exclusively white Mississippi State Normal and Industrial School initiated a pattern soon followed by Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas” (46). Making a different error regarding the Mississippi school’s original name, Solomon summarizes the struggle to found the II&C as follows:

Annie C. Peyton’s agitation in Mississippi in 1879-80 resulted in the opening in 1885 of the first state-supported separate institution for

women—Mississippi State College for Women (originally called the Collegiate Institute). This school became a model for other states of the region. (54)

It is important to realize that, even more so than in the North, women in the South would come to college without having received proper secondary preparation. According to Gordon, “the shortage of good secondary education meant that academic standards remained an issue [at Southern women’s colleges] into the twentieth century” (48). As F. H. Gaines, President of Agnes Scott College, explains in his history of that school,

It was a new and somewhat daring thing to undertake to maintain a high standard in education in the South. Such a school must encounter the criticism and opposition of other schools, must meet the surprise if not the opposition of the public, and could not expect to be at once popular with its pupils. (qtd. in Eschbach 148)

Indeed, many so-called women’s colleges, in spite of grandiose claims of being “the Wellesley of the South” or “the Vassar of the South,” at best provided “only a high school education” (Eschbach 152). In Eschbach’s view, women’s education in the nineteenth century South was a slipshod affair, low in standards and intellectual rigor, available only to the daughters of the aristocracy. Gordon argues that at the “southern women’s colleges, high tuition and residence costs limited attendance almost exclusively to those with fathers who were professionals and businessmen” (6), though this ignores the long-standing influence of the planter aristocracy. While students and faculty in the Northeast were fighting for “relaxation of seminary-type rules, southern colleges maintained and even increased such regulations” (Gordon 49). Southern families held

great sway over southern women college students: “Parents wanted their daughters to become self-supporting but also expected them to retain close family loyalties” (50).

Gordon views the history of higher education for women in the South as separate from that of other regions in the United States. As is typical of scholars of women’s higher education in the nineteenth century, she does not include the II&C among what she considers leading Southern institutions for women’s higher education:

Southern women had only limited access to their state universities, and *legitimate women’s colleges* did not develop there until the 1890s, some twenty years after the founding of most eastern single-sex institutions. Until 1905-1910, *the quality of faculty, curriculum, and student work did not match collegiate levels elsewhere in the country*. And steeped in their region’s conservative social attitudes, southern students of this period had far weaker ties to progressivism, reform, women’s rights, careers, and the world of single professional women than their northern counterparts.

(Gordon 8-9, emphasis mine)

Further, she argues that due to the closeness of families and daughters in the South, “southern college women worried about the selfishness involved in pursuing their own interests” (Gordon 165). There was often family conflict when parents “expected that their daughters’ lives would continue as before, even though they were going to college” (Gordon 175). Brandt Van Blarcom Dixon, the first president of Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans, sought on many occasions to enlist the support of parents in helping their daughters focus on their studies. In exasperation, he wrote of the Southern attitude towards women:

The Southern girl has been accustomed to the most solicitous care, and has learned to expect every attention and courtesy from her associates and others; in consequence she is inclined to be self-willed and exacting, but not self-reliant; alert and quick-witted, but not persistent and steady, eager for novelty and possessing a fine initiative, but changeable and dependent upon others for results. She lacks the discipline which comes from interest in that which requires hard work. . . . She has not been required to fend for herself, is guarded and supervised continually. (qtd. in Gordon 175)

The reader would do well to remember that even if these young women had desired to grow into independent, self-supporting adults, Southern society made such ambitions practically impossible, as it “closed many occupations to them” (Gordon 186).

Scholars seem susceptible to writing from stereotypes as they examine the early days of higher education for women in the South. In particular, the teaching and social activism of Pauline Orr, Mistress of English at the II&C from 1885-1913, and the accomplishments of her best students, counter Gordon’s stereotyped view. The II&C was a different type of women’s college from its conception, and it offered free education to girls of all classes as part of its mission from the beginning. The struggles between those, including Orr, who desired a true liberal arts college for women and others, including many parents and legislators, who desired nothing more than a vocational school, form the basis for many of the controversies I discuss in the following pages. However, the lack of adequate secondary preparation was a tremendous and long-standing problem at II&C, a source of frequent tension between Orr and a succession of the school’s male presidents, as well as between the college and the taxpayers and legislators of

Mississippi. What type of college the II&C would be, and what standards it would hold for students, remained controversial until 1920, when the school's name was changed to Mississippi State College for Women, to reflect the primacy of its academic purpose and mission.

“Men and Women of Mississippi, You Have a Jewel!”: The Founding and Operation of
Mississippi’s Industrial Institute and College

“We study for light to bless with light.”

—Motto of the Peyton Society of the II&C,

founded January 1, 1886

(*Fourth Annual* 32)

Many people find it surprising, some even find it shocking, to learn that Mississippi was *the* pioneer in establishing state-supported higher education for women in the United States. As the survey in the previous chapter indicates, even scholars dedicated to exploring the history of women’s higher education from a decidedly feminist point of view afford the 1884 founding of the Industrial Institute and College (II&C) short shrift in their discussions. Often, scholars who mention the II&C identify it with the wrong name. Yet, the founding of the II&C was a critically important event in the struggle for women’s higher education, and people involved in the long process knew this to be true at the time.

To understand why Mississippi became an educational pioneer in this area, one must first appreciate the fact that nineteenth-century education in Mississippi, even public education, was not the vacuum it is often supposed to be. From early in the nineteenth century, secondary education was available in Mississippi for both sexes. Loyce Braswell Miles’ 2003 dissertation *Forgotten Scholars: Female Secondary Education in Three Antebellum Deep South States* offers a close view of the educational opportunities available to Southern girls before the Civil War in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

One must keep in mind that education beyond the basics was not often required for a young person, especially a young man, to engage fully in society and become successful. In the early part of the nineteenth century, few professions required a college education: “Young people who received a college education did so for the prestige of the degree and not for the acquisition of occupational skills” (Miles 1). In contrast to the widely held view that the South offered no secondary education to its young people, Miles reports that by 1850 Mississippi had 782 public schools serving 18,746 students and 171 private schools serving 6,628 students (18). However, the education offered was often basic; many of these schools were “co-institutional, one-room schools with an average attendance of twenty-eight students” (Miles 31).

Mississippians in the late antebellum period enthusiastically established schools to provide their children with a Southern education free from Yankee influence. In “Education in Mississippi in 1860,” William D. McCain explains that “the two great taboos in the social life of the Old South were criticism of Southern slavery and departure from orthodox doctrines in religion” (153). The impulse to provide a “Southern education” became more pronounced in the 1840s and 1850s when Southerners feared that their children would be exposed to Abolitionist literature and ideas should they be educated in the North. As John Ezell puts it in his 1951 essay, “as the twin wedges of slavery and sectional pride pushed the people father and farther apart, adherence to customs more typically southern was demanded” (304). Education was seen as a way to ensure continuity of the traditions and customs of Southern identity.

Northerners had initially been welcomed as teachers in the South. In 1825, “the entire staff of the Academy of Natchez was from the North” (Ezell 304). At that time,

“two-thirds of the planters’ children, some quite young, left Mississippi for schools in the North and in England” (Ezell 305). There was particular concern about young Mississippians going North for legal education. Newspaper editors argued that “men who planned to live in the South should be indoctrinated with the ‘correct theories’ regarding its institutions” (Ezell 305). As the Civil War approached, Southerners increasingly found textbooks written in the North objectionable: “School texts were intended to mold young minds, but southern children could look in vain for lessons adaptable to their home life” (Ezell 306). One reviewer in the *Southern Quarterly Review* went so far as to argue that “elementary treatises published in the Northern States . . . contain sentiments not only offensive but actually poisonous to the mind” (qtd. in Ezell 306). The influential *De Bow’s Review*, from Louisiana, complained that “Geographies devoted two pages to Connecticut onions and broomcorn but only ten lines to Louisiana and sugar; histories were silent about Texas” (Ezell 311). In 1855, the Rev. C. K. Marshall of Mississippi addressed the annual meeting of the Southern Commercial Convention held in New Orleans about the Northern threat to education:

We have not the means of education at home. . . . This . . . is most ruinous to the South. What is the present position of Northern institutions? One of the Professors of Yale has already said he would shoulder his musket and march to any field to prevent the extension of slavery. What may be expected of other Northern colleges, when Yale sets such an example? Sir, I do not believe a young man can be safely educated in the North at the present time. (qtd. in Ezell 313)

Seeing an opportunity, some educators and school proprietors were quick to adapt to the changing preferences of Southern parents. In 1855, the Proprietor of the Calhoun Institute for Young Ladies advertised that the school had “an entirely new corps of teachers from the Principal on down” and that he had “determined to use all means he can now command . . . in building, refitting, and procuring such appurtenances as shall enable him to contribute his full quota, as a professional man, to the progress of the great cause of ‘SOUTHERN EDUCATION’” (qtd. in Ezell 317). Southerners gradually began to change the generally low status teachers held in the region: “the unwillingness of the southern men to become teachers . . . allowed Northerners to introduce their ‘crude Text Books’” (Ezell 319). In his commencement address to the 1859 graduates of Madison College, Senator Albert Gallatin Brown offered a simple solution to the problem of Northern influence in Southern schools: “It is easy, convenient, and natural. Let us have our own schools, academies, colleges, and universities. Let us rear and educate our own teachers, and above all, let us prepare and publish our own school books” (qtd. in Rogers 50). The emerging merchant and professional classes in the larger towns understood the need for education of the citizenry, but “the motivation for the deep southern states to provide a common education for the majority of its white citizens probably stemmed from a desire to bind all of them into a shared southern culture which was developing and being celebrated in the antebellum period” (Miles 21).

From the territorial days, Mississippians had recognized the necessity of providing for female education, of a certain type and scope. In fact, “the first school founded in Mississippi was a female academy. David Ker organized it in Natchez in 1801” (Miles 22). In 1803, “the United States Congress donated 23,040 acres for the

endowment of Jefferson College,” an institution for the education of children of both sexes (Miles 22). There was considerable early interest in secondary education for all of Mississippi’s white children: “In 1821, the state legislature created the Literary Fund to provide free schools for all white children, including orphans and indigents” (Miles 23). However, there was considerable objection to the tax aspects of the Fund, and in response to objections from Mississippi landowners “the state legislature repealed it in 1823” (Miles 24). In 1829, an education committee reported “to the legislature that state funds were unnecessary since private and locally funded schools were springing up in every county” (Miles 25). Beginning in 1830, “the governors of Mississippi . . . continued to stress the need for public education, and often made it a part of their political platform” (Miles 26).

In 1843, Albert Gallatin Brown successfully ran for governor on a platform that advocated a “well regulated system of free schools” (McCain 154). In his reelection campaign of 1845, Brown continued to stress “the school question and was overwhelmingly elected a second time on a platform favoring a free school system” (McCain 154). In 1846, the legislature passed a “Public School Act . . . that put in place a uniform system of licensing teachers, leasing school lands, and funding schools” (Miles 27). The Act provided that “the secretary of state should perform the duties of general school commissioner of the state, but was given the duty only of preserving reports from county commissioners and of publishing abstracts summarizing educational work in the state” (McCain 155). At least in part, the Public School Act “was designed to provide educational opportunities for those children whose parents could not afford to send them to the private academies already in existence . . . [M]ost communities had at least one

academy but the cost was prohibitive for many families” (Miles 28). McCain concludes that little further progress occurred in antebellum Mississippi because “the political leadership of the state was not ready for a good system of public education” (155).

In spite of opposition from the planter aristocracy, other classes had pragmatic motivations for their interest in expanding public education in Mississippi’s towns and cities. There was a general perception that a “town which had public schools also enjoyed a general contentment and a favorable reputation within the state” (Miles 29). Also, then as now, “the presence of a school increased property values and attracted potential settlers” (Miles 29). Even planters came to agree that public education allowed members of all classes to “come together to form a solid phalanx around its unique culture, which was coming under increasing attacks from abolitionists” (Miles 29). Following passage of the Public School Act in 1846, a “public high school opened in Jackson and another in Natchez. . . . Vicksburg followed in 1847” (Miles 30). In 1849, the editor of the *Tishimingo Democrat* opined that an “efficient system of common [i.e., public] schools are more healthy to a country than all of California’s gold” (qtd. in Sumner 232).

In practice, many counties “nullified the [Public School] act, which they were allowed to do simply by protesting that the law was ambiguous” (Miles 27). Even when counties did not nullify it, they varied widely in their commitment to public education. Jackson, the state capital, had an extensive network of private schools by the 1840s, and in 1845, “the citizens of Jackson established the Jackson School Association . . . charged with founding public high schools to educate those who had been left behind by the private schools” (Miles 32).

Tishomingo County, in the northeast corner of the state, offers an interesting example of antebellum Mississippi's interest in education. Its population consisted of "small subsistence farmers . . . [who] raised their own foodstuffs and bought only a few goods from the outside with the proceeds of what little cotton they produced" (Sumners 224). Yet, in such a poverty-stricken area, public school "teachers were employed by parents of the school children" (Sumners 225). The citizens established academies "under state charters . . . as early as 1839" (Sumners 225). Teachers in these academies were "trained in liberal arts colleges, and the curricula stressed classical studies" (Sumners 225). The first school for girls "was established in Eastport in 1849," two years before the school for boys (Sumners 225). By 1859, "there were ninety-four schools in Tishomingo County with a total attendance of 3,947 pupils" (Sumners 231). This county provides an example "of the attempt by deep southern states to use public education to foster political and social harmony" (Miles 34), though one must note that there was no aristocratic planter class, as in the Delta. In addition to its public school system, Tishomingo County was home to Euclid Academy, "one of the most progressive school[s] in Mississippi" (Miles 33). Parents were assured that the location of the school offered "advantages of good water, good health, and good morals, in a degree unsurpassed by any in the State or adjoining States" (qtd. in Sumners 226). They were also reassured that the students "would receive moral restraint, and they would have less temptations to vice at Euclid than at any other school" (Sumners 228).

Antebellum Mississippi had many private schools available for the education of those who could pay. There was no concerted push for public schools among the aristocracy. The upper-classes "seemed to have preferred private schools for their

children” (McCain 156). The upper-classes were also reluctant to pay taxes for public schools, which they saw as benefiting “the children of the poor and of the artisans, mechanics, and the professional and businessmen of the villages and towns” (McCain 156). The antebellum public schools did not provide adequate preparatory work, and “students who wished to attend college could prepare themselves only by attending private schools” (McCain 156). The social position of upper-class women was “to be protected and preserved at all cost” (Berry 304). Education was encouraged for women so long as it did not infringe upon their privileged and restricted place in society (Berry 304). The upper classes felt that education should ensure social stability, and “[s]tability of woman’s position meant stability of the entire southern system” (Berry 304). At the same time, there does not appear to have been any significant controversy “in Mississippi . . . over whether an institution should be for males or females; the assumption seemed to be that girls, as well as boys, should be educated” (Miles 28). It is interesting to note that McCain does not report any controversies relating to the education of females in his survey of antebellum education in Mississippi.

The issue of public versus private education continued to be controversial. In an 1845 address to the Port Gibson Female Collegiate Academy, Benjamin Drake argued that “private education encouraged aristocracy and selfishness and weakened the ties of a community by preventing the strong and abiding friendships that so often grew up among the variety of students in public schools” (Miles 78). The argument for private education was that a public school had to “educate all people regardless of their abilities, skills, or class” (Miles 79), though blacks, as slaves, were excluded from all education. Many

believed that only a private school could “provide the high level of philosophical and scientific instruction expected of a quality school” (Miles 80).

An interesting example of a private school for girls is “Sharon Female Academy [which] opened in 1837” (Rogers 40). The curriculum seems fairly standard for the time: “the preparatory class . . . [studied] orthography, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography with the use of globes” (Rogers 40). In their final year, girls would add “drawing, painting, needlework, and music” to the academic course (Rogers 41). Parents were assured that Sharon, Mississippi, was a healthy location and that “in all elements of the village is situated for female education as to have no equal in the South” (qtd. in Rogers 44). Until 1861, “the school averaged an enrollment of sixty to seventy pupils per term” (Rogers 51). After the Civil War, the school reopened and offered a degree of “Mistress of Arts” (Rogers 52). The educational goal of this program was “to have thorough scholars in the solid branches of education, while the ornamental part is not left out or ignored” (qtd. in Rogers 53). The school operated under rules that were “believed sufficiently strict for the good of the pupils, while every liberty is allowed that is not in some way incompatible with the best development of a true lady and scholar” (qtd. in Rogers 53). Students were strictly forbidden to make contact with young men: “young ladies cannot be permitted to receive attentions of gentlemen, as this has always proven wholly subversive of the very ends sought to be attained by college discipline and insubordination of this request will result in dismissal” (qtd. in Rogers 53). The value that upper-class Mississippians placed on women’s education is reflected in the fact that even in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, enrollment totaled “ninety-

four” (Rogers 53). The school survived until 1874 when it “ceased operations” (Rogers 54).

By 1860, of the approximately forty-three thousand white young people in Mississippi, more than thirty thousand attended public schools. Many of the other thirteen thousand were enrolled in private schools (Miles 37). Discussions of and controversies about education in antebellum Mississippi “usually revolved around issues of public versus private financing and local versus state control; almost never around male versus female education” (Miles 57). Based on her research, Miles concludes that “it is clear that many more schools for women existed in the Deep South than historians have assumed” (58). Yet it would be a mistake to overestimate the level and type of education that antebellum public school students in Mississippi received. By 1860, there existed “a bewildering maze of school systems which evidently purported to offer little more than an elementary education, and that only three months each year” (McCain 156).

The idea defining women’s education in nineteenth-century Mississippi became “to educate women in different classes for different reasons” (Miles 62). Antebellum academies in Mississippi promised to produce a “liberal and intelligent young lady,” to offer a “thorough and efficient system of female education based on Christian purposes, and to prepare girls for “intellectual, social, and moral enjoyment” (Miles 67-8). Whatever their class, antebellum education “prepared women for their roles within a plantation culture—accomplished and well-read wives and mothers; practical helpmates for yeoman farmers and skilled craftsmen, and at times employees” (Miles 63). Even elite women of the planter class needed to be prepared to assume duties that ranged from overseeing food preparation to presiding over stock; few of these elite women “lived the

‘idle life’ of popular fiction” (Miles 65). A mistress of a plantation required a real education because the demands of her class and position required that she be able to “think, analyze, and . . . conduct business at times, if called upon to do so” (Miles 65).

In *Lanterns on the Levee*, William Alexander Percy writes, “the lily-of-the field life of the Southern gentlewoman existed only in the imagination of Northern critics and Southern sentimentalists, one about as untrustworthy as the other” (10). These women lived lives of constant work and “had too many duties even in slavery days to be idle” (Percy 10). For these women, “charm was considered the first and most necessary course in female education . . . [because] whether [their] . . . world was delightful or vulgar depended on whether or not the women were ladies” (Percy 10). Yet, charm alone would not serve them to meet all the demands placed on them:

women on country estates so isolated as to be of necessity self-sustaining and self-governing had the direction of the feeding, clothing, education, health, and morals, not only of their own families, but of the dark feudal community they owned and were responsible for. . . . [T]hey had to know how to make cloth, bake bread, smoke meat, design quilts, pickle and preserve, nurse and concoct medicines, and supervise the cooking of all and sundry. They held Sunday school for their own and the darkies’ children and generally taught white and black alike reading, writing, arithmetic, and the Bible. (Percy 10)

As shown in the previous chapter, the emerging movement for women’s higher education in the nineteenth century, especially in the North, held the idea of separate spheres of action and influence for men and women. Southerners preferred to educate

their daughters close to home out of fear that they would be influenced by “recent changes in the concept of a woman’s sphere” (Miles 69). Antebellum Southerners would never accept ideas that, for example, encouraged women to compete openly with men at Oberlin College, or that women could be self-supporting and did not need to rely on men to support them. At the same time, Southerners on the whole were not “threatened by the educated female; rather, they seemed to have appreciated the educated environment that she created in her home” (Miles 84). On June 13, 1831, Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi, “probably was the first coeducational college in the United States to grant a degree to a woman” (McCain 160). This occurred “ten years before Oberlin College in Ohio” conferred its first degree on a woman (Miles 124).

Elizabeth Female Academy in Washington, Mississippi, “was the first chartered female institution for higher learning in Mississippi” (Miles 73). The school was chartered on February 17, 1818 (Berry 304). The physical plant was on “115 acres of land and a federal style building” donated by Mrs. Elizabeth Greenfield Roach (Berry 304). As would be the case later at the II&C, the “school established strict rules in its by-laws, including those pertaining to daily and semester schedules, dress, and examination” (Berry 305). James John Audubon served on the faculty at the school in 1823 when he “taught drawing and French for one year” (Berry 305). The school had “an ambitious curriculum including Latin, French, English, geography and astronomy, arithmetic, ancient and modern history, the constitution of the United States, moral philosophy, and the Bible” (Berry 306). The curriculum did not include “the sciences and the higher mathematics . . . [because of] men’s beliefs that the female mind could not comprehend these subjects” (Berry 306). Facing declining enrollment, Elizabeth Female Academy

“suspended operation in the 1840s because the population center in the state shifted northward to the area around the new capital at Jackson” (Berry 306).

Due to the costs of maintaining separate facilities, there was a preference for coeducational institutions in antebellum Mississippi; however, the sexes were “seldom instructed . . . together” (Miles 76). The secondary curriculum was often identical for males and females. In 1845, Adams County established the Natchez Institute, which required that “curriculum for males and females should and could be the same” (Miles 77). Although large numbers of girls enrolled in school for various periods of time, graduating classes were usually small. Over a twenty-year period, only “thirty-eight females graduated from Sharon Female College” in Madison County, Mississippi (Miles 123). Clearly, while having some education was critical to girls and their parents, “a degree simply was not that important” (Miles 123).

In 1856, Sally Eola Reneau, who was an “1854 graduate of Holly Springs Female Academy,” wrote a presentation that a “Representative Drane of Choctaw County” read to the legislature of Mississippi urging the establishment of a State Female College to provide a Southern higher education for the women of the State. (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). She stressed State and regional pride as reasons to establish the school. Graduates of the Female School, she argues, “by their noble bearing [will] reflect honor upon the State” (Reneau 3). Were college-educated teachers from Mississippi available, it would “not then be necessary to send to New England for a tutoress for a Southern institution or private family” (Reneau 3). She asked legislators to consider that a State Female College would be a source of Mississippi pride through “the influence that such an institution would have on the State among her sisters of the Union” (Reneau 4).

Reneau was careful to emphasize that there was no radical motive in her proposal to establish the State Female College: “We are not teaching young women to demand the rights of men nor to invade the phase of men. The conditions are supplied here for the higher training of the mind, of the sensibilities of her aesthetic faculties, and of the moral and religious parts of her being” (qtd. in Miles 85). According to historian Trey Berry, Reneau “did not realize the strength of the formidable establishment—educationally, politically, and socially—that she was challenging” (303). Her goal simply was “the establishment of a ‘State Female College,’ equal in every respect to that which had been provided at the University of Mississippi for men” (Neilson 4). In 1912, Dabney Lipscomb, a faculty member at the II&C, explained Reneau’s failure as follows: “political conditions were too unsettled, the future too uncertain for the State to found new institutions or expend its revenue for any other than necessary purposes. War soon came, and this, with all else that looked to the advancement of the State, was swept away by its awful blasts” (1).

In her presentation, Reneau asked “the attention of your honorable bodies to the necessity and importance of providing means for the education of the daughters of Mississippi” (1). She admitted to hesitancy in addressing such an august body but reported herself “cheered and encouraged by the belief that the most intelligent are the most liberal in their sentiments, and the wisest are ever the most ready to hear and to respect propositions and petitions which come, as mine does, without the shadow of a great name” (Reneau 1). Reneau claims no other motive than being “the humble advocate of Female Education, prompted by no other motive than a desire to enhance the happiness and character of my sex” (1). Her support for higher education for women in

no way numbered her “in the catalogue of the votaries of ‘Woman’s Rights’” (Reneau 1). In 1856, Southern women could rely on their “fathers and brothers” to protect their rights and had no need to seek new rights or equality:

The women of the South feel conscious that their rights are acknowledged and that they can best maintain them by quietly revolving in that orbit which a gracious Providence had assigned to the sex; they are satisfied with their sphere, they attract and they govern enough, but they might well seek to enhance the benignity of their influence. (Reneau 1)

An educated woman could extend a powerful influence upon civilization, while never desiring to supplant men: “Let her learn wisdom; let her enrich and adorn her mind with the gems of science and art, the fair flowers of polite literature, and the ever-green branches of knowledge. She will then exact ample tribute by her graces and secure her real rights” (Reneau 2).

There could be no doubt that women could be successfully educated in the State Female College: “it is not now an open question, whether or not woman is susceptible of high mental culture” (Reneau 2). She reminded the legislature that the 1850s was an enlightened period in which “the opinion of woman’s nothingness, and many other absurd notions that existed in the elder ages, are now known only among the things that are past and forever gone” (Reneau 2). Woman is the equal of man “in the march of the mind” (Reneau 2). Man and woman together form a whole, and “man can move in no sphere, however elevated, but woman may, and ought to be, by his side, to cheer, to advise, encourage and to assist to share alike his joys and sorrows” (Reneau 2).

Reneau acknowledges that there are numerous private female academies and seminaries, but objects that “such institutions are deemed qualified only to prepare pupils to enter higher institutions, in which the ample pages of knowledge may be more fully enrolled” (2). Reneau’s question becomes one of basic fairness: “the State of Mississippi, appreciating the importance of thorough education, has made liberal provision for her sons, while her munificence has been withheld from her daughters, who stand, alas!, as disinherited by the mother” (2). She continues,

[A]re we to conclude that the State and its present, or former representatives entertain, or have ever entertained the opinion that less means is required for the maintenance of female than male Colleges; or that a Female College would become the State less than her University?” (Reneau 3)

One of Reneau’s ideas that endured through the founding and early years of the II&C was that the State Female College would serve all Mississippians; the “indigent as well as the opulent may receive from this Institution the imperishable riches of a well cultivated mind” (Reneau 3). Further, even at this early point, Reneau argues that women should be prepared to earn a living, if necessary: “many poor daughters of our own State may be qualified for teachers—whose capacity may be judged of by the character they shall acquire and the diplomas awarded them by this Institution” (3).

Reneau then argues that she offers members of the legislature an opportunity to be visionaries: “if you now charter and liberally endow the proposed College . . . enlightened public sentiment at home and abroad will hail your action with pleasure and pride, and . . . your noble example will soon be followed throughout the South and the

West” (Reneau 3). The proposed College would have three departments: Primary; for elementary work; Academic, for preparatory work; and College, for “the whole circle of science and polite literature, as taught in the best male College in the United States” (Reneau 4). There were to be courses offered through the *Artium Magistra* degree, which would have prepared students to teach in any American college (Reneau 4).

In response to Reneau’s plea, “Gov. John J. McRae and the legislature approved the measure and designated Yalobusha County as the location for the women’s college” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). According to David Sansing in *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi*, Governor McRae sent a special message to the legislature in which “he referred to the continuing efforts of Sallie Eola Reneau, well-known advocate of a state college for women, and commended ‘the subject to the favorable consideration of the legislature’” (48). After the “governor signed the bill, . . . the college was chartered on February 20, 1856” (Sansing 48). Although “the law establishing the college empowered its board of trustees to expend whatever funds the state might appropriate[,] . . . no state funds were ever appropriated to the State Female College, and the institution never opened” (Sansing 48). After realizing that the state legislature would likely never appropriate funds for the school, Reneau “turned to the Congress of the United States” on the very eve of the Civil War (Neilson 4). She was successful in “having presented a bill to endow the college with 500,000 acres of unsold public lands in Mississippi” (Neilson 4). The Civil War intervened, however, and this plan was never implemented.

In 1858, women’s education was important enough that Governor William McWillie called a special session of the legislature “to consider a law providing financial

support for women's schools" (Miles 116). He argued that "not \$1 has ever been appropriated by the State [for female education], although we have expended hundreds of thousands of dollars for the benefit of thieves and murderers in the erection of a penitentiary" (qtd. in Miles 116).

It was difficult to find suitable teachers for antebellum girls' schools: "qualified teachers and uniform standards for instructors did not exist" (Miles 129). There was no effort to found normal schools because "teaching was not seen as a profession, but as a temporary job that would serve until men made a permanent career choice and women married" (Miles 129). Southern teachers were required to be "qualified to teach the Greek and Latin languages since this was one of the mainstays of the southern female curricula" (Miles 132). Southerners preferred women as teachers for their daughters "so that feminine societal values could be transmitted" (Miles 135). Southern women teachers were usually not "radical feminists trying to be independent," but "all white, mostly middle to upper class and usually single women trying to earn a living" (Miles 152). This helped establish a pattern in which "individuals who were committed to educating southern women had to settle for a life with little social acceptance and few material benefits" (Miles 153), a pattern that continued long after the founding of the II&C.

David L. Smiley offers a detailed portrait of a prominent antebellum teacher at a girls' school in the 1850s. William Carey Crane's career as an educator began in 1850 when the "Baptists of Hernando, Mississippi" asked him to become the Administrator of the "as-yet unborn Mississippi Female Institute" (Smiley 98). Crane's experience shows how truly difficult it was to be a teacher, especially of girls, in nineteenth-century Mississippi.

Crane was well-prepared to be a teacher, having “earned both the bachelor’s and the master’s degrees” (Smiley 98). He did not receive great support for his decision to teach in a girls’ school; a friend “considered it a blot on the Baptists that they allowed Crane to confine himself to a schoolroom” (Smiley 99). Undaunted, Crane determined to establish a college that would “embody the new features in women’s education” (Smiley 99). First, there would be a “preparatory department whose two-year course . . . conformed to the prevailing educational pattern” (Smiley 99). For the four-year college program, “Crane outlined a course containing mathematics, philosophy, history, natural sciences, and the inevitable ‘Evidences of Christianity’” (Smiley 99). Each student was expected “to select one of the ancient or modern languages in the sophomore year and continue its study for the remainder of the course” (Smiley 99). There would also be ornamental courses, such as painting and music, to provide students with skills “deemed essential for an ‘accomplished lady’ of the ante-bellum South” (Smiley 99). The school’s healthy location was an advantage during a time when “professors lost students and revenue because of the outbreak of a contagious malady” (Smiley 101).

In spite of its rigorous curriculum, or perhaps because of its rigorous curriculum, “the new college did not meet with the success which its supporters had anticipated” (Smiley 100). The small enrollment at the school required Crane to assume duties in addition to instruction and administration. Crane “taught six or more classes every day; he served as bursar and business manager as well as groundskeeper and also took charge of the boardinghouse” (Smiley 100). He also “supervised a garden which supplied fresh vegetables for the boarders” (Smiley 100). His instructional duties “began at eight A. M. and continued until four, with a two-hour respite at noon” (Smiley 100).

Crane was also charged with supervising the girls in their social contacts, especially those with “the youth of Hernando” (Smiley 100-101). Parents expected him to be extremely diligent in his supervision of their daughters. One father wrote Crane to request that he carefully supervise his daughter “since she was young and lacked discretion” (Smiley 101). This father reportedly blamed Crane when he “received a letter from the girl asking for his consent to her marriage” (Smiley 101). Another woman wrote Crane that he must carefully observe her daughter’s toenail and to take her to a physician, if necessary (Smiley 101).

Amazingly, Crane also found time to pursue his scholarly interests: “he wrote a history of the Baptists in Mississippi, a volume of literary discourses, and many articles for the secular as well as the denominational press” (Smiley 101). Since Crane did not make enough money at the school to support himself, he also served “as the pastor of the local church” (Smiley 102). After eight years, Crane concluded that his job at the female institute would remain one of “[p]oor rewards, the ceaseless struggle for money, and the constant care of the daughters of demanding parents” (Smiley 102). In 1858, he accepted the presidency of “Semple Broaddus College, Center Hill, Mississippi, a school for boys” (Smiley 102). Eventually, Crane found his way to Texas, where he became the President of Baylor University (Smiley 103). Historian David Smiley concludes that in Crane’s example, one sees that the antebellum teacher in Mississippi was “a public benefactor, and yet the public did not appreciate his work” (103-104).

Secondary education for Southern girls differed from that in the North because “many southerners insisted on similar curricula and styles of instruction for males and females” (Miles 167). Female schools in the South typically “required the study of Greek

and Latin,” though later in the nineteenth century “English and French replaced Greek and Latin” (Miles 167). Academic and social expectation for female students remained high: “southern parents and teachers . . . [tended to have] higher moral and academic expectations for females than for males” (Miles 168). Antebellum Southern parents, who never expected their daughters to work, “did not consider female education to be a threat to their way of life and so felt comfortable in making it readily accessible” (Miles 168). Southern women did not generally enter the workforce; thus, educated women presented no economic threat to men. Also, Southern education was explicitly designed to produce Southern women, who could operate skillfully in all aspects of a woman’s sphere. In school a young woman learned “what was considered proper and what was not” (Miles 184).

Although females took more or less the same courses as males, though generally not together with males, writing skills were considered an essential accomplishment for female students. Students were often expected to write home every week, and parents “often judged their daughters’ academic progress by the letters they received. Proper letter writing indicated that a young female was well educated” (Miles 185). Miles reports that a “father instructed his daughter to limit her letter writing to the immediate family because her writing skills had not yet been perfected and she might embarrass herself and the family by writing something inappropriate” (236). Female students were also often required to keep journals, and their teachers “assessed grammar, spelling, and interpretation in the journal” (Miles 186). Topics in the journals include “the young ladies . . . themselves, their friends, their teachers, school, parents, and, of course, young men. They write candidly about their feelings, both positive and negative” (Miles 233). For a

female to graduate from an academy, she usually “had to submit a composition which outside readers often graded” (Miles 187).

Faculty members were often fiercely dedicated to their female students. Teachers often remained fond of their students long after they had ceased to be pupils, as indicated in a letter from a woman teacher to one of her former students:

Missives from one so gentle and affectionate as yourself will ever meet with a most cordial welcome indeed. I will cherish them as tokens of remembrance and friendship from one in whose welfare I feel deeply interested. I think of you often Darling and the thought is mingled with sadness because I am not permitted to see the loving expression of your sweet face. As a pupil you were all that I could desire. Your lovely disposition, your diligence and perseverance when you were a member of my school, greatly endeared yourself to me and I shall never cease to remember you with the most sincere love and friendship. (qtd. in Miles 240)

School activities were popular because of “the interaction they fostered between the students and faculty” (Miles 242). When the founder of Mansfield Female College died, he stipulated in his will that he be buried on campus so that “the children can crack hickory nuts on my tombstone; and no one is ever to chase them away” (qtd. in Miles 244). In their letters home and in their journals, most Southern girls were reportedly quite positive about their schools and the education they received. On the whole, “they viewed their school and its staff with enthusiasm, [and] they complained of very few tasks which teachers assigned to them” (Miles 238). In general, “the girls seemed to like their

instructors and the subjects they learned” (Miles 238). Quite often, “student admiration for instructors bordered on hero worship” (Miles 239). Antebellum female students “laughed, cried, dreamed, and schemed much as high school girls do today” (Miles 245). Only a minority of the “girls saw school as a burden; more as a preparation for their future lives” (245).

It would be inaccurate, however, to imply that Southern parents were solely or primarily interested in their daughters’ intellectual development; documents from the time show parents largely unconcerned with their daughters’ acquisition of academic content. Schools usually offered special courses for females, including “piano, music, drawing and painting, plain and ornamental needlework, lace working, and wax and paper flower making” (Miles 189). Parents insisted that their daughters receive “the type of social upbringing as well as the academic training that they wanted” (Miles 213). What they wanted was “to improve the whole nature of the girl, not just her mind” (Miles 213). Most schools attempted to accomplish this purpose by implementing the Southern ideal: “close control on the one hand, and a routine that encouraged safe, loving intimacy between women, on the other” (Miles 214). Schools “assured parents that their daughters would be supervised at all times, even during recreational periods” (Miles 228). In the education of Southern girls, “the paramount importance continued to be protection” (Miles 229). When males and females attended the same schools, as was often the case, interaction between the sexes was forbidden: “[s]chools strictly forbade female students to speak to young men during school hours, even if they attended the same coinstitutional” (Miles 230).

In Miles' view, the assumptions and arguments scholars make about the nature and reach of female education in the antebellum South are largely faulty. On the whole, the South experienced "a growing commitment on the part of communities toward educating their women, which was much more prevalent than has been supposed and much more democratic than might have been expected in an aristocratic society" (Miles 247). The typical curriculum for girls in the South included "classical, scientific, mathematical, and philosophical studies with a strong dose of the social sciences, literature, and communication" (Miles 247). Unlike in the North, "the desirability of female education apparently was a given" (Miles 247). Although the rhetoric was exaggerated, through "the co-institutional Natchez Institute," the city of Natchez claimed "the distinction of being the first city in the United States, if not the world, to recognize the right of females to be educated as males are educated" (Miles 247-8).

Daughters of the aristocracy were educated as a matter of course. They received ornamental instruction, as well as core academics, because "they were expected to be entertaining and charming companions to their husbands and guests as well as the managers of a large household" (Miles 250). The daughters of the commercial class in late antebellum Mississippi began to receive an education including "skills that would allow them to support themselves in the workplace, if need be" (Miles 250). Although the popular view of antebellum Southern education holds that women were limited to strictly ornamental courses in preparation for a life of leisure, even before the Civil War the general tendency in Mississippi was to provide females with an education that would serve them if "the vagaries of fortune and the economy might force some . . . into the situation of working for pay to support themselves and their families" (Miles 251). A

Mississippi woman high school graduate could “become a mother, a teacher, or a missionary” (Miles 251). The Southern view was that “all three required a high school education” (Miles 251). The middle and professional classes “wanted their daughters to have the prestige of an education and . . . to have workplace skills to support themselves or assist their husbands” (Miles 255). Of course, as easy as it is to underestimate the range and depth of female education in antebellum Mississippi, it is just as easy to make the opposite mistake and overestimate it. For example, an advertisement for the Holly Springs Female Institute offered “a sound, substantial, liberal education, not masculine, but approximating as near to it as the peculiarities of the female intellect will permit” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 3).

After failing twice in the antebellum period to establish a State Female College, Sally Reneau continued to work “as an educator through the Civil War years and the Reconstruction era” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). In all, Reneau worked “for more than twenty years to gain either state or federal funding for a women’s college in Mississippi” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). In 1872, she again “received approval for a bill to establish a branch of the University of Mississippi, to be called Reneau Female University of Mississippi at Oxford” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). This proved somewhat of a pyrrhic victory. In response to her continual agitation for higher education for women, the “legislature had named Reneau principal of the female university and ex-officio vice-president of the University of Mississippi but had not made any state funds available to the new institution” (Sansing 68). All of Reneau’s victories ended in the same way: “no funds were appropriated” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). In 1873, “[t]he law establishing the Reneau Female University was repealed” to eliminate any possibility Reneau would again request funding (Sansing 68).

Rebuffed a second time by a state legislature unwilling to appropriate funds for a female college, “Reneau abandoned her effort and left Mississippi” (Sansing 68). When Reneau died in 1878, she “missed seeing the fulfillment of her lifelong dream by just a few years” (Pieschel *Loyal* 4). Her efforts on behalf of women’s education in Mississippi cannot be seen as vain. Though she did not succeed in her quest to establish a public women’s college, she “brought the claim of state supported education to women to the attention of Mississippi people, and she had won a certain amount of support” (Neilson 5).

The post-Reconstruction Era seemed a poor time to undertake new initiatives in higher education: “Mississippi was struggling to meet the meager needs of its four existing institutions of higher learning” (Sansing 68). Yet, the situation of women had changed in Mississippi, and the possibility that women would have to work for money no longer seemed remote. After Reneau’s death, two new voices took up the cause of establishing a state-supported female college: “Annie Coleman Peyton of Madison and Copiah counties, and Olivia Valentine Hastings of Claiborne County,” who advocated creating “an industrial school which would provide vocational skills for women” (Pieschel *Loyal* 5).

Annie Coleman Peyton was “the youngest child of Elias Hibben and Mary Gilchrist Coleman, pioneer settlers of Madison County” (Peyton, Mary 3). Born in 1852, she

lived through the tragic period of the War between the States and the more tragic period of Reconstruction, and from intimate knowledge based on observation of the hopelessness incident to poverty and upon her own

difficulties in acquiring an education, she was impressed with the imperative need of having the State give educational advantages to Mississippi girls. (Peyton, Mary 5)

Peyton was concerned about the future her two daughters would have with no education and wondered “why the State should show such special interest in the education of her sons and none in the higher education of her daughters” (Peyton, Mary 6). Her interest extended beyond her immediate family, which lived in relative comfort and affluence, to “those in the humblest homes so that poverty and illiteracy in Mississippi might be reduced to a minimum” (Peyton, Mary 6). Her insistence on state support for an institution of higher learning for women was influenced by her knowledge of the travails and precarious financial situation of Whitworth College in Brookhaven, Mississippi, her alma mater: “The college had just passed through the trying years of Reconstruction, and it seemed impossible for the church to meet the demands of the institution” (Peyton, Mary 7).

Peyton’s original idea was to convince the Methodist church to donate Whitworth College to the State. However, a review of the will establishing Whitworth College revealed that “the property would revert to the Whitworth heirs should it pass from under the control of the church” (Peyton, Mary 8). Although greatly disappointed, Peyton began writing articles explaining “the needs and capabilities of the women [of Mississippi] as they had never before been presented and aroused a strong sentiment in her favor all over the State” (Peyton, Mary 9). Peyton’s initial legislative success occurred in 1880 when “Senator Reuben Reynolds of Aberdeen consented to introduce a bill for the State College for Women . . . if Mrs. Peyton would draft it” (Peyton, Mary 9). The bill passed

the Senate “but failed to get to the House because of the fact that, in the absence of the able Senator who introduced the bill, the papers were lost” (Peyton, Mary 9). In 1881, she convinced the State Democratic Convention to go “on record as favoring the establishment of a state institution of higher education for women” (Neilson 5). In 1882, Peyton “again sought the passage of a bill providing higher education for women, but was unsuccessful” (Neilson 5).

As the State considered establishing a public college for women, other voices raised objections:

There was still public indifference, if not hostility, to the collegiate co-education of women; there was the fear that a State institution for women might injure the private colleges; there was also the idea that female education should be under the control of the church so that the tender female character might not be exposed to the corrupting influence of State education. (Peyton, Mary 10)

There was also considerable anxiety about the precarious financial situation of the State (Peyton, Mary 10). Peyton answered each of these objections in her writing.

To deflect Peyton’s crusade for a State-supported women’s college, there was an effort to allow the University of Mississippi to “admit to it females and confer on them degrees as at present on the sterner sex” (Peyton, Mary 12). Yet, many of those who supported higher education for women, including Peyton, did not support the idea or practice of coeducation; they wanted their daughters educated separately from men (Peyton, Mary 12). In 1883, Peyton and Hastings “agreed to work together to secure a

State Institute for Mississippi's white girls" with both industrial and collegiate studies (Peyton, Mary 14).

Peyton was an indefatigable correspondent on the benefits and necessity of higher education for women. While trying to raise money to erect a "new brick College building" for Whitworth, Peyton reported feeling to C. W. Vaiden, humiliated "to have to raise money in this way, but it seems to be the policy of our State to educate the men and negroes and leave the white females to beg an education or else go without" ("Letter to Vaiden"). Although Vaiden was a supporter of higher education for men and at-best lukewarm on higher education for women, Peyton appeals to him to make "a small donation toward erecting a College where their sisters and perhaps their future 'help-meets' may be educated" ("Letter to Vaiden"). Peyton finds the present educational imbalance between males and females "a very unjust discrimination, and indicative of a very unsound political economy" ("Letter to Vaiden"). She bases her appeal firmly on the idea that education of women better prepares them to raise sons: "the sage never entirely forgets the superstitions he learned from his nursery maid" ("Letter to Vaiden"). Thus, the necessity of women's education lies in the mother's task: "she should be refined and cultivated, enabled to train her little ones aright, answer their eager questionings, and lead them from Nature up to Nature's God" (Peyton "Letter to Vaiden"). In addition to a small donation, Peyton asked for Vaiden's assistance by using his influence "toward establishing a State Female College in South Mississippi. I should like to see such an institution grafted upon my alma mater Whitworth Female College" ("Letter to Vaiden").

There was an exchange of letters between Annie Peyton and Lela J. Cummings in 1879 as Peyton prepared to address the State Methodist Conference about allowing

Whitworth College to become the State Female College. The letters illustrate the thinking that Peyton was developing to push for the establishment of a college for women.

Cummings was the daughter of a Dr. Johnson, President of Whitworth College, who was a strong supporter of having the State take over Whitworth College (Peyton, Mary 7).

Through his daughter, Dr. Johnson offered Peyton both “sound advice and encouragement” (Peyton, Mary 8). Cummings wrote Peyton on December 1 that she had spoken to her “Pa” and that he urged Peyton “to put it [her proposal] in stronger language—in reference to the college in it mention what the State has done for the boys at Oxford . . . but what has it done for the women of the land?” (Cummings). Her father also advised Peyton not to mention other states, for “they have done little more then [sic] Mip” (Cummings). Peyton was also advised to argue that the church “is sufficiently burdened without the additional expense of Whitworth” (Cummings).

In response, Peyton wrote Cummings on December 3 that she was having a hard time writing the address:

I want to say that we do not come before them as bold, masculine, unwomanly women—not as Susan B. Anthony or Victoria C. Woodhull clamoring for universal suffrage, or for social customs that would sap the virtue of society (Free love doctrine) but as earnest, thoughtful, practical women, having an eye solely to the education of our sex, and the consequent advancement and elevation of the human race. (“Letter to Cummings”)

Peyton also wanted to stress that no church in Mississippi at the time could “command the means to build colleges and endow educational institutions” (“Letter to Cummings”).

She planned to “narrow down this idea to a proposition to [the] Conference to donate that property to the State” (Peyton “Letter to Cummings”).

In response to any argument that “Ignorance is Bliss,” especially for women, Peyton would argue to the contrary: “[e]specially for woman, ignorance is death—it is shame, it is dishonor” (“Letter to Cummings”). Peyton’s view of education for women did “not mean simply the cultivation of the intellect, but the drawing out and training of all, both moral and intellectual faculties” (“Letter to Cummings”). Woman’s education must prepare her to operate in her sphere, for when “the intellect is cultivated to the exclusion of the moral faculties she becomes unwomanly—wants to tread legislative halls, sit on juries, handle our ballot-box, and wear the judicial ermine” (Peyton “Letter to Cummings”). If the Methodist church could be persuaded to donate Whitworth College to the State, “it would be a fitting and appropriate act now for our beloved commonwealth to join with the scholarly and pious advocates of Wesleyan Christianity in freeing woman from the shackles of ignorance and dependence, thus putting her upon a higher plane of existence” (Peyton “Letter to Cummings”). Peyton recalled how a Dr. Linfield responded to her when she approached him about female education: “What are we educating them for, do we want educated cooks?” (“Letter to Cummings”). With wit and sharpness of intellect in her reply, Peyton writes that it “seems to me it ought to occur to a man of the learned doctor’s astuteness that if a woman is educated she doesn’t have to cook—that is, for a living” (“Letter to Cummings”).

Peyton, “under the pseudonym ‘A Mississippi Woman,’ waged an active campaign in the newspapers and wrote many articles supporting the school” (Hall 37). In these pleas, Peyton reminds readers that “Mississippi had provided the State University

for white boys, was annually making liberal appropriations for the support of Tougaloo University and the Holly Springs School, where Negroes of both sexes received superior instruction, but had made no provision for the education of its white girls” (Neilson 5). Noting the experience of Whitworth College, Peyton concluded “that state support would be necessary for the survival of a liberal arts college for women” (Pieschel *Loyal* 5). At the same time, she took pains to reassure Mississippians who feared the consequences of higher education for women. In this way, Peyton helped establish “public pressure” that led the legislature finally to approve the establishment of the II&C in 1884 (Sansing 68).

In an address read before the State Teachers Association in 1883, Peyton argues firmly against co-education of the sexes at the college level. Peyton begins by reminding the teachers of the creation story in Genesis; woman “was designed by her Omniscient Creator to be the companion, the helper, the equal of man. Woman, as man’s companion and helper, should be his equal, or she cannot properly fulfill the end for which she was created” (“Co-Education” 1). Woman must be educated “as woman, in order that she can also be to some extent, what man is not” (Peyton “Co-Education” 1) and that requires separate colleges for women. In Peyton’s view, there was no longer any doubt that woman “must be educated, but precisely how to educate the coming woman is still an open question” (“Co-Education” 1).

In Mississippi’s primary and secondary schools, co-education was the rule and brought noticeable benefits for both sexes: “the boys are observed to become somewhat less rude and boisterous than when taught separately, while the girls display more courage and candor than is usual under other circumstances” (Peyton “Co-Education” 2). However, at the age of sixteen to eighteen, the fact that “it is best to separate the sexes

should be apparent to all” (Peyton “Co-Education” 2). When girls of this age are segregated in educational institutions, “they are kept from the allurements of society, and no distracting influences are permitted to draw their minds from regular and systematic study” (Peyton “Co-Education” 3). After completing the course of study in a woman’s institution, the graduates are “well fitted to become companions and helpers and the equal of any man they may choose to wed” (Peyton “Co-Education” 3). Peyton wants co-education at the college level to be judged by its results; does it produce “manly men and womanly women?” (“Co-Education” 4). Co-education fails women because they have a separate sphere from men and are judged by different standards. As support for her position, Peyton quotes President Charles William Eliot of Harvard who argues that men may fail in college, “many a one stumbles and may recover himself,” but a girl simply cannot stumble: “for her, once to fall is ruin” (“Co-Education” 4).

Peyton dismisses each argument usually presented for co-education in colleges, i.e., that coeducation is natural, customary, impartial, economical, and convenient (“Co-Education” 5). She saves her strongest argument to claim that co-education does not benefit female students:

How can it benefit our daughters to send them from home and its restraining influences, at this most susceptible period of life, before the judgment has matured sufficiently to control the emotions, to be associated with youths and young men, from all parts of the country? The average young man, it must be admitted, is not irreproachable either in manners or morals. The greatest libertine may have the most polished and

courteous demeanor, and girls even in later years are scarcely able to discriminate. (Peyton “Co-Education” 5)

Peyton uses the experience of Oberlin College, which was often held to be a model of successful coeducation, to bolster her argument against coeducation. According to Peyton, the matron of Oberlin College had said “that on no account would she allow her daughter or any girls in whom she was interested to go through the College course” (“Co-Education” 6). In terms somewhat reminiscent of Clarke’s *Sex in Education*, Peyton argues that direct competition with men would not benefit women, who all have “a desire to excel, of which an essential ingredient is pride” (“Co-Education” 7). Competition with men will cause women students to drain themselves completely, resulting in “women physically and mentally wrecked, or at least, greatly impaired” (Peyton “Co-Education” 7). Medical experts at the time “did not consider that women could bear the stress that is put upon men” (Peyton “Co-Education” 8).

Peyton concludes by quoting authorities who oppose co-education. Horace Greeley is quoted as saying, “I prefer to send a daughter for schooling to Vassar, rather than to Yale or Harvard” (Peyton “Co-Education” 9). Reverend Otken, President of Lee Female College of Summit, Mississippi, said, “In my judgment, the ultimate effect (of admitting girls) would be to lower the standard of scholarship in the male colleges I would not close the doors of any (male) colleges to any lady aspirant, but should deplore [sic] any effort to encourage general attendance” (Peyton “Co-Education” 9). The Reverend Lowery, President of Blue Mountain Female College, said, “I do not favor co-education, for the reason that God made the sexes for different spheres of life, requiring a different kind of training” (Peyton “Co-Education” 10). Reverend Johnson, President of

Whitworth College (Peyton's alma mater), opposed coeducation on the grounds that it would lead to a leveling of men's and women's positions: "To lower woman, is to lower man also. That which levels lowers" (Peyton "Co-Education" 10).

On January 16, 1884, *The Clarion* of Jackson published an editorial from Peyton under the title "Why Do, Do Not, Favor a State Female College." Peyton's purpose in this editorial is to explain why the recent State Teachers' Convention had voted in favor of co-education and against a separate college for women, in spite of her plea against coeducation. Peyton explains that the vote was held after most teachers had departed and that "the majority of those favoring it were man [sic] salaried by the State" ("Why"). On the other hand, Peyton reports that the influential State Grange "recommended that the Legislature take steps to establish a State Industrial and Normal School for the white females of Mississippi" ("Why"). Peyton again dismissed the idea of coeducation with the claim that there is "no demand from the women of Mississippi for co-education" ("Why"). As she had in the speech before the State Teachers' Convention, she uses women's capacities as an argument for separate education. Women oppose coeducation because they "understand, better than any man can[,] the capacity, the necessities, all the strength, and many of the weaknesses of women" (Peyton "Why"). Coeducation is dangerous for women: "the white souled daughters of the State [must] be protected in their purity, and shielded at their most impressionable and unsuspecting age from every breath of taint and contamination" (Peyton "Why"). It is true that the State is poor, but Peyton wants to know "where is the man who would save a dollar to the detriment of his daughter?" ("Why").

On February 6, 1884, *The Clarion* published Peyton's "A Mississippi Woman in Reply to a Mississippi Man." Peyton writes in response to a suggestion that Mississippi A & M (now Mississippi State University) be dismantled and turned into a college for women. Peyton protests that the "women of Mississippi would not accept such a sacrifice. They would not dismantle one institution we have now, for Mississippi needs them all" ("Mississippi"). The problem, as Peyton sees it, is not that women's higher education needs to take away from education "for boys" or for the "colored schools," but "that the State should no longer discriminate against her white daughters, but should place them on a footing in educational privileges with the white males and colored race" ("Mississippi"). Peyton and other Mississippi women are merely appealing for "privileges that would help the white women of Mississippi to help themselves" ("Mississippi"). Peyton also feels that enemies of the women's college have become predictable by this time. There are the "trustees of the University . . . upholding co-education," and the "demagogue will be there with the cry of economy" (Peyton "Mississippi"). Finally, "as satan [sic] sometimes assumes the form of an angel of light, the minister of the gospel, who ought to be in his study, will soil the cloth of his calling in the dust of the lobbies, to persuade men that they do God service to defeat this bill" (Peyton "Mississippi").

One week later, on February 13, 1884, *The Clarion* published Peyton's "A State School for Girls." Peyton rebuts the argument that female education is best left in private hands, particularly those of the church. To the contrary, Peyton argues, state-supported education is legitimate for both sexes: "It is just as necessary, and just as constitutional to educate one sex as the other" ("State"). White girls are the only group that the state does

not make provision to educate at a “higher grade” (Peyton “State”). Essentially, white girls are being discriminated against on the basis of their color, and they deserve an education at state expense just as much as other groups:

there is a Mecedonian [sic] cry in Mississippi for educated, practical women, to be mothers to the sons and daughters of the State. Avenues are opening, too, so that women may become bread-winners, producers instead of consumers, and the State owes it to them, and to herself, to fit them for some work in life. (Peyton “State”)

Peyton also notes that women are needed for teachers, and while “women are largely engaged in teaching in our public schools, few of them have been fitted for the work by special training” (“State”). The Legislature must now decide whether there will be a State-supported college for women: “If our law-makers are just men, and wise political economists, they will hearken to the demand, and at last open the way, for the establishment of a State Industrial and Normal school for the white women of Mississippi” (Peyton “State”).

After the bill establishing the II&C had passed the Legislature, *The Clarion* printed Peyton’s “Note from ‘A Mississippi Woman.’” Peyton “rejoice[d]” at passage of the bill and reports that all supporters of the women’s college “are greatly indebted to THE CLARION for this result” (“Note”). After a series of failures, “the project has attained a measure of success, for which we are indebted to the ‘manhood of Mississippi’” (Peyton “Note”).

Although Peyton usually is identified, along with Olivia Hastings, as one of the leading forces in the drive to establish the II&C, not everyone agrees that her role was

decisive in the process. In a 1973 letter, Marcie Sanders, then Alumnae Secretary at Mississippi State College for Women, challenges the accepted role of Peyton's importance in establishing the II&C. Sanders claims that Peyton and Hastings "got absolutely nowhere" in their efforts to establish a state-supported women's college and that credit for establishing the II&C goes to "a sympathetic legislature composed entirely of men which passed the bill after a tie vote" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin"). She gives credit, instead, to Wiley W. Sanders, her grandfather, who "had experienced the loss of everything in the Panic of 1880" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin"). Following the financial crisis, he "recognized the need for vocational education for women" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin"). The Old South truly was no more, and many other legislators had also experienced financial setbacks to the point that they also "wanted their daughters trained to earn a useful living" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin"). These are good points, but Sanders seems biased when she reduces Peyton's role to the writing of "a few letters to the Jackson editors" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin"). Sanders felt that Mary Lou Peyton, who followed her mother in being a history teacher at the II&C, "spent her life glorifying her mother . . . [and that] some of her statements are completely groundless" (Sanders "Letter to Ervin").

In 1884, as Peyton and others continued agitating for a women's college, "Senator J. McCaleb Martin of Claiborne County became interested in the idea of a woman's college and drafted a bill calling for the creation of a state-supported women's college that would provide training in the arts and sciences, industrial education, and teacher training" (Hall 38). Martin was a creature of his time, as are we all, and it is difficult to find much evidence of progressive attitudes in his biography. In his eulogy of Senator

Martin, Edgar S. Wilson recalls him as a young man (he was born in 1846) enlisting in “Magruder’s Partisan Rangers composed of Claiborne County men” (Wilson 1). By the end of the war, he “rode with General Forrest and at the close of the conflict the rangers were highly praised by the general” (Wilson 1). While a law student in New Orleans, Martin “fought in the battle of the Customs House on September 14, 1874, when Republican rule was ended in the Crescent City” (Wilson 1). In 1875, Martin was a leader when “the alien was driven out and the people of Claiborne County praised Mr. Martin as an outstanding figure who had contributed largely to the restoration of home government and white supremacy” (Wilson 1). A resolution that same year from the Democratic Club of Port Gibson “found him conspicuous for the manliness of true manhood and for unselfish devotion to the cause of a suffering and oppressed people” (Wilson 2). In the 1880s, Martin became much interested in Peyton’s and Hastings’s writing and “began on his own account an investigation of education for women” (Neilson 6). It was “in the Hastings’ home that Senator Martin drafted a bill which provided state supported education for women” (Neilson 7).

In his “True History of Incorporation of the Industrial Institute and College, Located at Columbus, Mississippi,” Martin recalls how he came to draft and sponsor the bill that created the II&C. He read the articles that both Peyton and Hastings were publishing in support of women’s higher education and was especially impressed with Hastings’ idea that Mississippi women must prepare for independence through “industrial education” (Martin 277). Martin reports that at about the same time, “a copy of *Harper’s Magazine* fell into my hands, giving a full account of Cooper’s Union located in the State of New York” (Martin 277), which was successfully providing industrial education for

women. Intrigued by the possibilities such training would offer Mississippi women, he “commenced correspondence at Washington to secure information touching industrial education in the United States and on the European continent” (Martin 277).

On his way home from Jackson to Port Gibson one Saturday, he met Colonel John G. Hastings, the husband of Olivia Hastings. Martin discussed the article about Cooper’s Union and the material from Washington and “asked him if I understood correctly his wife to mean that she favored the opening of a wide field for industrial education for young women in Mississippi along with a college education” (Martin 278). In response, Colonel Hastings “suggested that I spend a day at his wife’s home on my way back to Jackson the following Monday” (Martin 278). After meeting with Mrs. Hastings, Martin “made the first draft of the bill creating the Industrial Institute and College in her parlor or sitting room near the villages of Hermanville and St. Elmo” (Martin 278). According to Martin, when Hastings read the draft, she replied,

It is far more comprehensive and complete than anything I have ever thought upon—it not only fully meets what I have in mind but I believe it will prove of incalculable value to the young women of Mississippi and [is] likely to become a model for similar institutions in other states.

(Martin 278)

Back in Jackson, the only revision Martin made was to provide directors of the College with “the machinery of the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Starkville” (Martin 278). Martin originally planned that the College be located “as nearly as possible in the center of the State,” but he removed that direction “upon motion by the senator from Attala County” (Martin 278).

After some legislative maneuvering, a “day was set for the hearing of the bill in the Senate” (Martin 279). On that day in 1884, “Mrs. Jennie Morancy, then State Librarian, filled the senate chamber with young ladies and married ladies, most of whom lived in Jackson [and] with a good, large number from other places in the State” (Martin 279). Senator Reuben O. Reynolds led the opposition to the bill, dismissing the idea of a women’s college “as an experiment” (Martin 279). One of the great historical ironies in the debate is that opposition to the bill in the House came from “Mr. Orr from Chickasaw County being a son of Judge Orr of Lowndes County” (Martin 279). His half-sister was Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, who would become the Mistress of English at the II&C and is the subject of the following chapter of this study. When Governor Lowery signed the bill, “the State gave to its daughters the institution now located at Columbus, Mississippi” (Martin 279). Over time, many of those who opposed Martin’s bill “became steadfast friends of the Industrial Institute and College” (Martin 279). Senator Reynolds, who led the opposition, later told Martin that “his [i.e., Reynolds’] forecast was not realized [and] that . . . [the II&C] had passed from the experimental stage to the stage where it had become the model for colleges of like character” (Martin 279-280). Martin closes his account by hoping that the alumnae of the II&C would undertake an effort to “visit the old Hastings home and in some way commemorate the spot, if not to preserve the building from the ruin and decay into which it is rapidly falling” (Martin 280).

In the House of Representatives, Wiley N. Nash of Oktibbeha County made a speech to convince reluctant legislators to approve Martin’s bill. Nash begins by generally supporting the effort to create “in our midst a Female Industrial School, Southern in its character, aims and tendency, where our sisters and daughters can enter

and drink at the fountains of knowledge gushing, so to speak, out of our own soil” (2).

Nash saw the time and the opportunity as truly historic: “daughters—yes, the mothers of Mississippi—come before the bar of this house tonight and ask a just verdict at your hands. They want you to do for them what you have done for the young men of Mississippi—give them an Industrial school, where they can enter and prepare themselves to battle with life’s checkered, conflicting, and ever changing scenes” (2). The women of Mississippi were waiting and watching to see how the legislature would respond to their claim for education: “Many a true mother’s heart is throbbing tonight as she awaits the final result of the vote of this House upon the pending bill” (Nash 2).

Like many others who had survived Reconstruction and financial difficulties, Nash sees that the times are changing and that what has worked in the past no longer suffices for the present, much less the future: “The past girl of the South will not suit the times that are on us. The way our girls were raised in ante bellum times will not suit the present. . . . The past Southern woman belongs to history” (Nash 2). A true education would make for Mississippi girls “a bright and prosperous future possible” (Nash 2). The present approach to education results all too often in a Mississippi girl who “emerges into womanhood in far too many instances a worshipper at the shrine of pleasure—a mere butterfly of fashion” (Nash 3).

The legislators knew that times had changed, and these men understood all too well the prospect that their daughters might need to support themselves in a post-cotton economy. Given all the changes in Mississippi, Nash argues that the House should

be eager to establish for the daughters of our State an Institute that will educate them properly and in a manner that will fit them for the present

changed state of things; enable the poor girls to gain an education, make them proficient in the various kinds of work and light labor that can be performed as well by our girls as by our boys, and thus enable them, when necessary, to gain an honest living by honest and honorable labor suited to their condition and to their sex. (Nash 3)

Nash reminds the House of the resilience and leadership of women in the dark days of Reconstruction following the Civil War. While the Mississippi men were ready to admit defeat, the women “beckoned us to a bright and luminous future” (Nash 4). Nash reports that Jefferson Davis said, “No matter how the men had gone, he had never yet seen a reconstructed Southern woman” (Nash 4). Nash then argues that “[t]he time now is, and is upon us, in which we need such an institution. The United States is far behind many other countries of the world in this respect, and Mississippi, I say with shame, is perhaps far behind most of her sister states” (Nash 4). Nash then speaks at length of the contribution the Southern woman has always made, especially during the Civil War, and quotes “The Brave at Home” by Thomas Buchanan Read to add a strong touch of sentimentality to his speech (5).

In addition to acknowledging the possibility that Mississippi girls might have to work to support themselves, Nash also draws on one of the standard arguments of mainstream nineteenth century proponents of women’s education. Women may become mothers of sons and should be fit to raise them:

we should educate our girls because they are to perform their part in working out a great, grand and glorious future for Mississippi. They are to be an important factor in our future prosperity. The women of our land are

to rear the future sons of Mississippi. They are to take the tender child and make the first and most lasting impressions on the young and plastic mind. . . . Show me the mother who has the training of a boy up to the age of ten years and I can give you a pretty correct opinion as to this boy's course in life. (Nash 6)

The men of the legislature have a duty to "look well to the education of those who are to minister around our firesides and sickbeds and make them the more able to fulfill the high and holy mission of wife, of sister, of daughter, and of mother" (Nash 6).

Nash reassures those who fear that female education would lead daughters away from their families, making them lovers of luxury unfit for work in their sphere. The College, Nash claims, will be a "Godsend, a blessing to the poor girls of the State" (6). The College will be a school where the "poor farmers of Mississippi can send their daughters; and here they can gain a good, practical education, and when they return home they will come like ministering angels and assist their old fathers and mothers and be of service in all the practical duties of life" (Nash 7). The College will not teach girls to return home "with only a desire for silks and satins" (Nash 7), quite the contrary. In fact, Nash argues, educated girls are the ones who have "no wish to pass their time strutting with the silken sons of luxury, who pass their time in foaming cups and festive songs or talking about music, moonlight, love and flowers" (7). Everyone in Mississippi is now poor; our property gone, our fortunes broken or taken from us; our fathers gray-haired, our mothers, with tottering forms and feeble steps, have had swept from under them by a hard, not to say cruel fate, that which they

had a right to expect would be a support for them in their declining years and a start for their children as they took their places. (Nash 7)

In an Addendum to the speech, written in 1897, Nash reports that he remains proud of his effort to establish the II&C. After giving the speech, he “began to work the floor of the House among the members present, to muster our strength for the final vote” (Nash 8). He evaluates his effort realistically: “Some may have done more; others may have done as much; but, as one of your representatives, I did all I could—and who could have done more?” (Nash 8).

Nash’s speech remains interesting reading, as he combines the diverse threads of argument that resulted in the II&C becoming a unique institution of higher learning. The II&C was conceived and designed explicitly to prepare women to be able to be self-supporting through work, if their circumstances would require them to do so. At the same time, Nash appeals to traditional Southern arguments in favor of higher education for women, especially the idea of preparing them to be more effective in feminine spheres of activity and influence. The reader should note how Nash carefully acknowledges both sides of the question, seeking to reassure those who worry that education would move girls away from traditional ideas and change them into luxury-loving creatures who value material wealth most of all. The fear was that higher education would turn women away from the traditional tasks and expectations. Nash proves skillful in his argument, and he is well-informed about contemporary arguments for and against higher education for women. It may well be that Nash’s speech and his floor work in the House made the difference in the establishment of the II&C; if so, he deserves to be remembered for this

alone. Though the extant copy of Nash's Addendum to his speech is incomplete due to deterioration of the original, he does mention his hope that

my connection in behalf . . . [of this] measure providing this school for the . . . [education] of the white girls of our State . . . if . . . [it could] win for me in the least degree a place . . . [of] respect, perhaps esteem, in the estimation . . . [of the] friends of female education, and especially . . . [of] those I tried so hard to aid and assist, . . . [the] same will be to me a pride, a consolation, . . . [a] proud satisfaction. (Nash 8)

Nash deserves at least that much.

The result of the debate in the Senate was a bill to create a College that would provide the women of Mississippi with three alternatives: "Arts and sciences education, industrial training, and teacher education" (Pieschel *Loyal* 5). Peyton immediately supported Martin's bill because its "provisions . . . were more liberal than hers and its aim was essentially the same" (Neilson 7). The final bill to establish the II&C passed, "although by very slim margins—by one vote in the Senate and two votes in the House" (Pieschel *Loyal* 6). The vote in the House was 45-43; in the Senate, 17-16 (Nash 8).

The official date of the establishment of the women's college is "March 12, 1884," and the school was to be called "Mississippi Industrial Institute and College for the Education of the White Girls of the State of Mississippi in the Arts and Sciences" (Pieschel *Loyal* 8). The II&C was thus established as "the first state supported college exclusively for women in the United States, and . . . the first of its type in the world" (Neilson 7). Both Peyton and Hastings became involved in the effort to "formulate a

general plan of the new college” (Neilson 12). In 1891, Peyton, now a widow, joined the faculty at the II&C and “taught at the college until her death in 1898” (Neilson 38).

The original charter of the II&C emphasized the various goals that the school was to meet:

the object of the school should be the giving of an education in the arts and sciences, in normal school systems, in kindergarten instruction, in telegraphy, in stenography, and photography; also in drawing, painting, designing, and engraving in their industrial applications; also in fancy, practical, and general needlework; also in bookkeeping, and such other practical industries as may, from time to time, be suggested to the trustees by experience or tend to promote the general object of the institution, to wit, fitting girls for the practical industries of the age. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 8)

The need for teacher training in Mississippi was critical. In the same year the II&C was established, the state superintendent of education “cited the lack of well-trained and competent teachers as the number-one problem of public education in Mississippi” (Sansing 69). Further, Mississippi was that year “the only state without a training school for its white teachers” (Sansing 69).

While Northern proponents of women’s colleges seemed to debate endlessly whether education for women should be strictly liberal arts or vocational, Mississippi chose to provide both. The II&C was designed “to provide educational opportunities of the highest and most useful sort for women from various economic levels” (Pieschel *Loyal* 8). Far from a finishing school or a strict liberal arts institution on the model of the

Northeast women's colleges, the II&C embraced diversity in its student body: "women who needed occupational training would attend school with young women who never intended—and would never be required—to support themselves" (Pieschel *Loyal* 8). The legislature was careful to ensure that the women's college would not become "just another local liberal arts college for northeast Mississippi" and did so by establishing "an enrollment quota for each county in the state" in Section 11 of the Enabling Act (Sansing 68). Wide access to the II&C was important because tuition "was free to all Mississippi girls who obtained appointments by the county superintendents of education; there was an incidental fee of \$5.00 each session" (Neilson 19), equivalent to about \$105 in current terms (McCusker). Board "which included room, meals, fuel, lights, and laundry averaged during the first two years \$9.45 a month" (Neilson 19), equivalent to about \$198 in current terms (McCusker). For girls unable to pay such sums, paid work was available sweeping, lighting gas, or doing clerical work at a pay of "from six to eight cents an hour" (Neilson 19). From the beginning, the demand for admission far outstripped the resources of the II&C. In 1890, the legislature changed the quota law so that "the number of students allowed free tuition was set at three hundred . . . , and a proviso inserted that 'all students in excess of the number apportioned to the several counties shall pay such reasonable rate of tuition as the Board of Trustees respectively may prescribe, not to be less than three nor more than five dollars per month'" (Neilson 28). Also that year, a time limit was imposed so that "in NO CASE shall free tuition be allowed for a longer term than four years" (Neilson 29). This provision worked against the ultimate academic success of many students who came to the II&C unprepared for

college work and had to spend time in the preparatory department. As a result, the number of baccalaureate graduates remained low during the II&C's early years.

The pattern for the establishment of the II&C was so successful that other states followed the model: "Georgia State College for Women (1889), North Carolina College for Women (1891), Alabama College (1893), Texas State College for Women (1901), Florida State College for Women (1905), and Oklahoma College for Women (1908)" (Pieschel *Loyal* 8). An article from the *Atlanta Constitution* from 1890 illustrates the interest other states developed in establishing women's colleges on the model of the II&C ("Traveler"). When an unnamed reporter came to Columbus to visit the II&C, he saw "one or two hundred girls all dressed in dark blue, playing croquet and tennis in the grove, watering and cutting flowers, or sitting on the galleries" ("Traveler"). The initial impression the reporter had was that this female school "is the usual high-priced boarding school, where girls are crammed with French and music and sent out, with shattered nerves, to shine in society" ("Traveler"). But the II&C was unique in being "the only women's college in the world where education of the hand and brain are considered interdependent and are carried on at the same time" ("Traveler"). In addition to "a thorough education—equal in every respect to that imparted in the best Southern colleges for young men," each student "admitted is required to learn some art which will render her self-supporting" ("Traveler"). The reporter continued that II&C was able to accomplish impressive results while maintaining an equally impressive economy in costs: "these favored daughters of Mississippi obtain all the advantages . . . at the lowest possible cost" ("Traveler"). The fact that "the entire cost [of attending the II&C] was only \$9.90 per month" meant that Mississippi had placed education for women "within the reach of

those who need it most” (“Traveler”). Even a girl without resources could be paid “for performing light work in the dining room, laundry, and garden, and those who wish to do so can earn a part, at least, of their expenses” (“Traveler”). Curiously, given that the school had only been open for five years, the reporter claims that the II&C’s “former pupils are now writing shorthand in court rooms, banks and offices all over the State; they are cutting and making dresses, setting type, keeping books, and hundreds of them are teaching in the public schools and colleges of other States” (“Traveler”). Mississippi had truly taken the lead by establishing “such an institution to help the girls who need it most. Mississippi calls to Georgia to come on” (“Traveler”).

II&C faculty members were sometimes involved in the effort to promote the idea of a women’s college on the II&C model in other states. J. T. Clark, Mistress of Latin, wrote “A Golden Gift to the Girls” for newspaper publication in 1891 when South Carolina was considering creating its state-supported women’s college six years after the II&C opened. Clark refers to the II&C as Mississippi’s “grandest and most practical institution” (Clark 1). The work at the II&C “now goes grandly on, owing its existence to the hearty cooperation, the generous pride, and the never failing affection of the whole State” (Clark 1). The buildings on campus “have all the modern conveniences, being warmed throughout by steam, lighted by city gas, and supplied with hot and cold water on each floor” (Clark 1). The II&C costs the State of Mississippi about \$50,000 per year, with salaries of about \$20,000 and the “running expenses of the institution” of about \$30,000. There is no charge for students to attend “after passing the entrance examination and paying a matriculation fee of \$5” (Clark 2).

In spite of the low costs, the II&C was a serious college with a curriculum equal “to that of any institution in the State, and the standard of scholarship is far beyond that of most female colleges” (Clark 2). According to then President Cocke, the II&C was designed to address “one of the most complex educational problems that has ever been set in this country for solution” (Clark 3). As a consequence of its dual role as both an industrial school and a college, the II&C “emphasizes the value of thorough, advanced education, and at the same time offers opportunities for speedy-preparation for self support” (Clark 3). The II&C prepares women to be self-supporting, and “[m]ore than one hundred former students of the College have reported that they are now engaged in teaching in the public schools of the State” (Clark 4). The students likewise benefit from being together in a college environment away from their homes: “It brings together, in one family, the young women from every quarter of the state and subjects them all alike to the needful discipline of a cu [sic] community living under the conditions of co-operative association” (Clark 4). For board, “[s]upplies are purchased at wholesale rates, and each boarder pays her share of the sum total of each month’s expenses” (Clark 5). In the past, year, the cost was \$9.90 per month (Clark 5). Students without the means to pay even such a nominal amount may “earn a large proportion of their boarding expenses by voluntary work” (Clark 5). The II&C embraces students who work their way through college: “[t]he work offered is honorable, and we honor those who perform it well” (Clark 5). All students wear a uniform which “greatly reduces expenses, and serves an equally good purpose in reducing the amount of time and thought usually given to dress” (Clark 6). Truly, the II&C “is a city set upon a hill; a light to the world” (Clark 6). Clark

ends by hoping that South Carolina will “emulate the example . . . with equal and even greater success” (Clark 6).

Unlike earlier efforts to establish a women’s college in Mississippi, in 1884, the II&C was funded with an “initial monetary investment of \$40,000 for the II&C’s first two years of operation” (Pieschel *Loyal* 9). Interestingly, the all-male Board of Trustees “asked several women to plan the curriculum and make the rules whereby young women would be transformed into scholars and self-supporting citizens” (Pieschel *Loyal* 9). After the bill had been passed and accepted by Governor Lowery, *The Clarion* noted that although people held “great differences . . . as to the advisability of such an institution,” all agreed that “the girls should be educated” (“State College”). The Legislature had passed the bill, and it was time for “all hands now [to] unite in making a success of the enterprise” (“State College”). The first step is “the matter of location” (“State College”). The second step is “the selection of a good faculty, which should be composed mostly of ladies who shall be thoroughly proficient in the literary and industrial studies to be pursued” (“State College”). Success in faculty recruitment requires that “salaries . . . be such as to secure the very best talent” (“State College”). The II&C will be a school that Mississippi will come to cherish, and all citizens should develop “a regard and love for its honor and good name that will guard it from any attempt [sic] at derogation or effort to injure” (“State College”). The II&C is to be “a school to which our young girls may go to improve themselves in a knowledge of the useful sciences and arts, as well as the opportunity to pursue the ordinary academic course and infrom [sic] themselves upon general topics” (“State College”). But the State also cannot afford to ignore “those who can never go to this or other higher institutions,” and citizens thus must do all “in their

power to promote the common schools” (“State College”). The editors end by declaring, “Success, say we, to the Girls’ College” (“State College”).

The Legislature did not specify where the new school should be located, and “the board of trustees immediately began to search for a suitable location for the school” (Pieschel *Loyal* 10). Section 10 of the Enabling Act instructed the Board of Trustees “immediately after their organization, [to] proceed to procure by purchase, by donation, a site for the location of the said Mississippi Industrial Institute and College for the education of white girls of the State of Mississippi” (qtd. in Neilson 203). The Board was further instructed to consider “the convenience of the people of every section of the State; also the facilities for going to and from said institution” (qtd. in Neilson 203). Student health remained always a major concern of nineteenth century education, so the Board was further instructed to locate the II&C “at a place known to be healthy, and free from annual epidemics” (qtd. in Neilson 203).

All Mississippi towns and cities could bid for the school so long as they possessed “a few desirable qualifications, including a central location and a healthy climate” (Pieschel *Loyal* 10). Climate and location had long been critical factors for school location in Mississippi; schools were “usually located in areas that were easily accessible and perceived as being dry and therefore healthy” (Miles 80). In a rural state like Mississippi, people did not live close together, so “the existence of convenient waterways, railways, and other forms of transportation was of paramount importance” (Miles 80). The perception that the location provided a healthy climate was important because “[d]iseases and fevers occurred frequently and health remained a priority for all parents” (Miles 80).

In response, several towns and cities made arguments that the II&C should be located in their areas. In response to so much interest, *The Clarion* published “The State College for Girls—A Suggestion” on April 30, 1884. There had been so much discussion about where the college would be located that the paper “feels like calling a halt on the discussion through its columns of proposed sites for the Industrial College for Girls” (“State College—Suggestion”). There was so much interest in the location because communities all over the state considered the college “a prize to secure” (“State College—Suggestion”). Instead of writing letters to the paper, the editors suggest that “communities that are in earnest in the matter of securing the College shall go to work and put their propositions in business shape, so that if real estate or cash are to enter into the inducements, the trustees will have something tangible before them” (“State College—Suggestion”).

Robert S. Hudson wrote in support of Kosciusko as the location for the State Female College in *The Clarion* on March 26, 1884. He extols the virtues of Attala County:

Attala is more than a good average county of the State, in lands, production, health, intelligence, morality, religion, churches, ministers, fine water, timbers, fruits, vegetables, meats, domestic industry, and all that we now need, should have and do, and a more kind and hospitable, provident and generous people don’t live, and while they live at home, they live plentifully, cheerfully, and happily. (Hudson)

Since the recent completion of the railroad, Kosciusko had become convenient to all areas of the State. Although the city was “moved by no greed, . . . [it] would not scorn

either the money or the honor upon a just quid proquo” (Hudson). In Kosciusko, the students could “unlock the hidden mysteries of nature, drink copisouly [sic] at the grand emporium of knowledge and science, and of the pure and delightful health-giving air and water abounding there” (Hudson).

On April 2, 1884, *The Clarion* published a letter from C. K. Marshall supporting Brandon as the location for the college. Marshall rejects Columbus because the city is “out of the way and will subject young ladies to the necessity of several changes of cars to get there” (Marshall). However, he does admit that Columbus has advantages, in spite of its poor location: “The city is elegant, society is all that could be wished, and once there one might wish to remain for life” (Marshall). However, Marshall feels that it is somewhat unfair to locate the college “on the mere borders of the great Commonwealth” (Marshall). In terms of a central and healthy location and a refined citizenry, Marshall feels that Brandon is “the town that comes nearer combining all the essentials to meet the wants of the institution than any other place” (Marshall):

The site is elevated, salubrious, picturesque, well drained and surrounded by the best agricultural improvements, furnishing at low figures, meat, milk, butter, vegetables, fruits, and whatever is needful for the tables of the school or schools, and any number of families that may move to the town from abroad, to educate their daughters. Its ladies are refined, cultured, hospitable, intelligent and good. (Marshall)

The south Mississippi town of Wesson made its case in the June 4, 1884, edition of *The Clarion*. These citizens proposed “very modestly to lay the claims of our thriving little Lowell before the Board” (“State Female College: Why”). The citizens of south

Mississippi felt slighted because “north and central Mississippi have had the lions’ share of public institutions and government pap for the last twenty years” (“State Female College: Why”). The citizens of Wesson understand that the State Female College is to be

a normal school, where the poorer classes of our young ladies can, by their own individual efforts, obtain for themselves the same educational advantages that are enjoyed by their more wealthy neighbors—strictly an industrial school for girls, where not only the best English education can be obtained, but where every department of domestic economy, including all the vocations by which labor can obtain a livelihood, are especially taught so as to make our young ladies self sustaining under all the vicissitudes of an eventful life. (“State Female College: Why”)

If the school were to emphasize industrial skills, Wesson would be the ideal choice because its women “earn by the individual efforts and supernatural industry the enormous sum of \$96,008 annually” (“State Female College: Why”). Following the idea of the greatest good for the greatest number, Wesson should be the choice because it is

the asylum for the widows and orphans of the entire State, she is the ultimatum of three fourths of the young ladies who are laboring under the double misfortune of poverty and limited education. . . . While there are so many first class schools for young ladies in our state, the rich and prosperous will not patronize the industrial school to any great extent. (“State Female College: Why”)

As for industrial training, Wesson has “[o]ne thousand girls in this town [who] are now in need of just such an institution” (“Wesson”).

Wesson also meets the requirements for accessibility and health: “It is as healthy as any point on the Illinois Central Railroad and is remote from any malarial insanitary centre [sic]” (“State Female College: Why”). There are existing buildings which could be used for dormitories, and in terms of morals “no town in the State stands higher” (“State Female College: Why”). Wesson seems to have a good argument, and one wonders if the Trustees accepted the invitation “to visit our town and let us council together” (“State Female College: Why”).

In the end, Columbus was chosen because the city and the “board of trustees of the Columbus Female Institute, a boarding school that had been in operation from 1847 to 1877, offered to donate the institute’s property worth around \$50,000 and city bonds in the amount of \$50,000” (Pieschel *Loyal* 10). II&C professor Dabney Lipscomb reports that the “buildings and grounds of this institute . . . had in 1870 been formally tended by its Board of Trustees to the University of Mississippi for use as a department of the State University for the education of women, indicating the demand very soon after the war for additional educational advantages for women” (2).

Columbus quickly became the obvious choice for the II&C’s location: “Precious time and money would not have to be wasted in building a completely new campus, and the women’s college would be established in a city that had shown itself to be strongly supportive of the principles of female education” (Pieschel *Loyal* 10). During the antebellum period, Columbus had been home to two fine schools: “Franklin Academy and the Columbus Female Institute” (Pieschel *Loyal* 11). Founded in 1847, the Columbus

Female Institute had a reputation “as a very strict school with virtually no vacation time” (Berry 309). Students were “allowed a mere four days for the December holiday” (Berry 318). The school emphasized its moral focus in its publications, claiming in 1871 that “the President, founder and owner of this institution, is consecrating all his means, and a large portion of his time, to the building up of a school for girls and young ladies, founded on Christian and scientific principles” (qtd. in Berry 316). Students were allowed to maintain accounts with merchants in town, “but only under the strict supervision of the institution’s governess” (Berry 318).

In a 1971 letter, Marcie D. Sanders, Alumnae Secretary for the Mississippi State College for Women, suggested that there were ulterior motives behind Columbus’ eagerness to obtain the II&C. Sanders reports that her “grandfather was in the legislature at the time the bill to establish II&C was approved”:

a group of men in Columbus, who had money invested in the Columbus Female Institute (which went broke) wanted the state to locate the new II&C in Columbus. These men wished to sell the debt-laden buildings to the state for the new II&C. Many legislators, my grandfather included, felt that the price of the buildings was more than the property was worth.

(Sanders “Letter to Allen”)

For whatever motives, Columbus was selected as the site for the II&C. The lands from the Columbus Female Institute proved suitable, and there were initial orders to “supervise the completion and renovation of Main Dormitory and the building of a new brick structure containing basement laboratories, administrative offices, classrooms, and a large chapel or assembly hall” (Pieschel *Loyal* 11). The spirit driving the effort to

establish the II&C is captured beautifully in an unattributed newspaper article, probably from the Columbus *Commercial Dispatch*, of April 17, 1885, describing the groundbreaking for the new chapel (“Female College”). Mr. Harrison, Chairman of the Building Committee, made some remarks to mark the occasion. By the act of placing the cornerstone, he stated, “I do declare for Mississippi’s manly sons that her daughters shall be free” (“Female College”). This was an act and an accomplishment that would live long beyond the lives of any of those present: “When tongues that speak to-day shall long be stilled in clay this edifice shall tower as a monument to woman’s emancipation and shall speak in terms of pride and in tones of pleasure of the enlightened manhood that set this great thought free” (“Female College”).

Harrison had supported the Enabling Act to found the II&C “with all the energy of my nature, the warmth of my heart, and the ability at my command” (“Female College”). He also confessed to hoping, should the bill be successful, “that Columbus might be [the] favored location for the inauguration of the new departure” (“Female College”). He then repeated what he had said in support of the Enabling Act:

Mississippi in taking the lead in this new departure for female education and advancement in the arts and sciences, had won for herself a crown more precious and lasting than money could purchase, and would make herself the admired educational queen among her Southern sister States.

Yes, the pile of brick and mortar that are soon to be reared . . . will stand a perpetual memorial to the considerate affection which Mississippi feels for the welfare of her daughters, and so being the first among the sisterhood of the Southern States sufficiently progressive to put in practical form the co-

education of the sexes—and thereby giving to her daughters the opportunity to compete with her sons for a [sic] honest independent living. (“Female College”)

The unknown journalist added that the building “when finished will be a magnificent one, and one in which the people of the State can feel a just pride” (“Female College”).

Richard W. Jones, chosen to be the first President of II&C, “had adequate academic qualifications and enjoyed the respect and support of most students, faculty members, and legislators” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). Jones “held degrees from Randolph-Macon College and the University of Virginia” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). In preparation for the opening of the II&C, Jones was authorized “to visit various schools in other sections of the country to study curriculum and plants, preparatory to making recommendation to the trustees for the organization of the new college” (Neilson 8-9). Eager to begin working, Jones arrived in “Columbus on February 19, 1885, and began actively the duties of his new office” (Neilson 11).

The II&C was Jones’ fifth academic appointment. As a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Mississippi before coming to II&C, Jones “had advocated the establishment of a women’s college and had addressed the legislature in 1884 in support of the Martin bill [to establish the II&C]” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). Although the II&C was chartered to provide industrial and vocational training, Jones planned that the education students received at the II&C would be “as thorough and extensive as that conferred by our best colleges for young men” (qtd. in Sansing 68). From the beginning, Jones allied himself with “the collegiate faculty [who] insisted that the girls in the industrial and normal departments be required to take a certain number of academic courses” (Sansing

69). Although there were objections from the vocational instructors, “literary courses were required of all students enrolled at the institute” (Sansing 69).

When the II&C officially opened on October 22, 1885, there were “341 students,” all of whom were “at least fifteen years old, in good health, and . . . of good moral character” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 12). That the students were not limited to the wealthy classes was a notable innovation in higher education for women. In contrast with the Northeastern women’s colleges, which, in the early years especially, tended to be only for the wealthy, “tuition was free, and the cost of board [was] minimal, [so] girls of every class and financial standing could afford to attend” (Pieschel *Loyal* 12). To keep any county or region of Mississippi from dominating the student body and to ensure that all young women in Mississippi could take advantage of the educational opportunities at the II&C, the Enabling Act of March 12, 1884, specified that each county be assigned

its quota of scholars, on the basis of educable white girls in the state and several counties; and the several Superintendents of Education in the counties then were to advertise it in some newspaper published in the county, and after the expiration of two weeks from such advertisements were, with the approval of the Board of Supervisors in that county, to commission such number of white girls to said institution. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 12)

For girls who could not afford the “small room and board fee of \$9.45 per month,” the school administrators “planned to allow them to earn a portion of their expenses by such work as sweeping halls or doing clerical duties in the college offices” (Pieschel *Loyal* 12). Because the II&C had “public status and the fact that tuition was free, the student

body was more heterogeneous than that found in the private schools” (Hall 17). The approach of educating young women to be self-supporting meant that the program of study at the II&C “was far different from the curriculum offered at the other [Southern women’s] colleges” (Hall 17).

The long-awaited opening day finally arrived on October 22, 1885. *The Columbus Dispatch* describes the day as follows:

The day dawned gloriously bright, not a cloud to mar the sunlight, not a zephyr but what might kiss the fragrant cheek of the most fragile flower. A perfect day, we hope emblematic of the future of this college.

The immense crowd surged into the Chapel of Main Dormitory, which became packed. Occupying the stage were the Board of Trustees, the faculty, the clergy, the city council, popular educators, noted visitors, prominent citizens, the Mozart String Band, the choir, and the Press. The sun shone through the colored window panes giving a glorious tint of bright blue, red, and other colors to the flower decorated room. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 14)

Mississippi Governor Robert Lowery told the assembled crowd, “Men and women of Mississippi, you have a jewel! Preserve it!” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 14). State Senator E. T. Sykes of Columbus, a strong supporter of locating the II&C in Columbus, made the Address of Welcome at the opening ceremonies of the new school (“Grand”). He begins by noting that this new beginning is also the end of the Columbus Female Institute where “for more than thirty years, this spot has been dedicated and held sacred to the intellectual training of the daughters of Columbus” (“Grand”). Columbus residents

know that “these charmed grounds . . . produce upon us who have known them so pleasantly an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic importance” (“Grand”). But change has arrived, and now it is time to relegate the Columbus Female Institute to history and to “look only to the bright and still brightening future of these classic grounds—a future which promises to make of them a modern Athens—the seat of Arts, Science and Literature” (“Grand”).

Sykes particularly praised the women whose efforts had led to the establishment and funding of the II&C:

To those noble women who are entitled to the proud pre-eminence and distinguishing honor of originating this grand advance in female education, and in their disinterested and untiring love for the girls of Mississippi, who sought by their unanswerable logic and personal influence to keep public attention directed to the justness and necessity for their claims until finally their hopes were realized in the passage of this Act. . . . To you, Mrs. Peyton, and to you, Mrs. Hastings, . . . who . . . have done so much to promote and further every interest of this college . . . this people, yea, the friends of women everywhere, desire to acknowledge their deep sense of gratitude, and to return thanks to the Giver of all gifts that you have been permitted to witness these exercises so dear to your hearts. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 15).

Peyton and Hastings are “Mississippi women, fit to adorn any age and station in life, and whose abiding and disinterested love for the welfare of Mississippi’s daughters, has brought you from your distant homes to honor and grace this occasion with your joyous

and sympathizing presence” (“Grand”). *The Clarion* also deserves special notice for its “defense of the girls of Mississippi, and in *Clarion* tones to demand for them their just and equal rights” (“Grand”). This day, Mississippi truly takes the lead in providing for the education and rights of women; the State “recognizes that the sphere of woman is constantly enlarging as education fits her for loftier duties, and the more practical responsibilities of life” (“Grand”). The young women entering the II&C are to be educated “for participation in life and to sustain you in their [sic] faithful and conscientious discharge, as well as to teach you to smooth the rough places or to beautify their ruggedness” (“Grand”). The II&C is a true college, and its young students must be prepared to work hard, for “[t]hose who would bear away the laurel must encounter the fatigue . . . of the arena” (“Grand”). These students were to be educated to become womanly women, not to compete with men: “cultivate assiduously every graceful, womanly accomplishment, and study particularly the science of neatness, order, and taste; these are essential items in the formation of a complete female character” (“Grand”).

Sykes recognizes that times are changing. Although women’s “holiest, sweetest duties are found in the narrow limits of the home,” it is now time to educate women for full participation in society and culture. As a graduate of the II&C, a young “woman will be qualified to engage in the remunerative employments of life, and her freedom from poverty and idleness, will be assured” (“Grand”). Sykes ends with praise for the selection of Richard Jones as the first president. The Trustees “could not have made a better selection; . . . could not have found a more cultured gentleman, a more thorough scholar, or a more lovable character” (“Grand”).

On this day of triumph, seeing all her long, hard work come to fruition, Annie Peyton made her first public speech:

I have never made a public speech in all my life, but I feel I would indeed be ungrateful not to express my thanks for the kind and honorable mention made of me here to-day. More than ever to-day am I proud to be a Mississippi woman. I love my native State. I am proud of all her resources. I am proud of her Governor and State officers. I am proud of her judiciary; of the State Grange and the State Press. I am proud of our schools and Colleges; and especially of this College. Under its present management I have no fears for its future. I have every confidence in its success and support. *I believe the interests of Mississippi's daughters are safe in the hands of Mississippi's sons.* (Peyton "Address")

When Colonel J. L. Power spoke, he lauded the state of Mississippi "for taking on the task of qualifying young women for work and thus destroying the widespread belief that Mississippi's 'only ambition was politics and cotton'" (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 15). Altogether, the speeches celebrating the opening of the school lasted for "nearly four hours" (Pieschel *Loyal* 16). By the end of the day, the first state-supported institution of higher education for women "had officially begun operation" (Pieschel *Loyal* 16).

In its coverage of the opening of the II&C, the Columbus *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* called it "one of the grandest events that ever occurred in the history of the town" ("Our"). The students had arrived earlier in the week:

Girls of all qualities, sizes and styles had poured in and the spacious halls and corridors of the Dormitory resounded with happy laughter and echoed

and re-echoed with the tones of their winsome, joyous voices. There were blonde girls, brunette girls, non-committal girls, quiet girls, boisterous girls, tall girls, short girls, thin girls, fat girls, ugly girls, pretty girls and in fact any kind, size or description of girl known to the trade. (“Our”)

Following the official opening ceremony, the Gilmer Hotel held a ball “that casts into insignificance anything of the sort that has occurred in Columbus for many years”

(“Our”). One of the interesting aspects of the physical plant was the Dynamo, which “[l]arge numbers of our visitors and home people had never seen . . . before” (“Our”).

Many other visitors were interested in seeing the “immense washing machines and drying apparatus at the College” (“Our”). The *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* continued its coverage on

October 24, 1885, reminding its readers how, as the opening day had approached, “the guardians of this Institute and College arrived, and then the girls, the girls, the girls!”

(“Institute”). All of Columbus had been of one mind, “filled with the bustle of preparation, everybody interested in the same subject, everybody wanting to see the teachers, the girls, and the College” (“Institute”). When the opening ceremonies began, “for *once* at least, we were happy” (“Institute”). The enrollment figure of more than 300 students led the paper to claim that the II&C was “the largest opening ever known in a Southern college, and unprecedented for an initial session” (“Institute”). With the opening of the II&C, “Mississippi is the queenly pioneer in the education of women, exciting the wonder and admiration of States and people far distant” (“Institute”).

The opening ceremonies began at 11:00 a.m. ended at 4:00 p.m., when the guests left “hungry . . . but not weary” (“Institute”). After the parents left, the students set about the business of settling in, and the paper reports that they “cannot help being contented in

being under the care of such warm hearts, and living in such a delightful building, surrounded by such splendid parks” (“Institute”). The Fire Department gave a display of their prowess with their equipment following the ceremonies: “Looking up Main Street we saw great jets of water leap up, up, up till lost to sight or falling in a Niagara of spray outlined upon the evening sky, whose setting sun gilded the myriads of drops, till they seemed to be falling in showers of gold upon the people below” (“Institute”). The opening of the II&C was “a perfect day—a day we will never forget, a day we have crowned as Queen of all the Past with a star whose setting shall never come in our memory of pleasant things” (“Institute”).

The Columbus *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* called the opening of the II&C “The Dawning of a New Era” (“Dawning”). The local press realized the significance of what occurred when the II&C opened: “It is the pride of the State and with its inauguration Mississippi takes the lead in the education of women” (“Dawning”). The paper predicts the success of the II&C for “untold thousands of Mississippi’s daughters; whose beneficent fruits will multiply as the years go by and whose results will inspire other States to exert themselves in that noblest of all ambitions—the elevation of their womanhood” (“Dawning”).

The former President of the Confederate States, Mississippi’s Jefferson Davis, who was unable to attend the opening due to illness, wrote, “there is no institution in the State in which I have felt . . . a greater interest” (Davis). Such an institution was well-deserved and long past due:

The daughters of Mississippi with virtuous grace have blessed our day of peace, and the self-denial and fortitude with which they have met the trials

which it has been our misfortune to suffer, has commanded my highest admiration, has been the ground of my hope for the future, and justified the confidence I feel that among them we might look for such examples as the mother of the Macabees. (Davis)

The curriculum offered these first students some choice in their studies: in “every course but music and fine arts, the student was required to pursue at least one vocational subject that would prepare her for some type of practical labor” (Pieschel *Loyal* 16). To test their preparation for higher education, “students at the college were required to pass an entrance examination which tested competency in spelling, reading, grammar, literature, mathematics, United States history, and geography” (Pieschel *Loyal* 16). As was common also in the early years of the Northeastern women’s colleges, during “the first few years of II&C’s existence, the majority of the students were in the preparatory department” (Pieschel *Loyal* 16). Mississippi lacked adequate secondary schools that prepared students for higher education, so “even bright and able girls eager to attend II&C had been unable to obtain even the most basic skills, such as penmanship and arithmetic” (Pieschel *Loyal* 16).

The original faculty consisted of eighteen members. The President was male, and all others were female. In his history of the II&C, Dabney Lipscomb stresses that the efforts of Jones’ faculty were also crucial in the early success of the institution: “To the enthusiastic co-operation of his well chosen faculty much credit is due, and linked indissolubly with the name of the College will always be the names of the devoted women who served it in the early days” (2). Under Jones, the academic focus of the II&C “was laid naturally and necessarily on the collegiate work, lack of means requiring the

postponement of the full development of the industrial features; not an unwise policy perhaps, even if means had been available for both” (Lipscomb 2). At least three members of the original faculty of eighteen were graduates of the Columbus Female Institute (Neilson 16). Some women “felt that it should have been an all-woman staff” (Neilson 16), with a woman president. One interesting contrast with the Northeastern women’s colleges is that fully one-third of the original female faculty members were married women, something often explicitly forbidden in the North.

The tensions involved in meeting the competing industrial and academic demands of the new school quickly became apparent, and in the “first six years the II&C had to survive four administrative changes, two of them tinged by accusations of incompetency and fraud” (Pieschel *Loyal* 21):

The highly qualified and dedicated first president, Richard Watson Jones, resigned at the end of three years. The second president, Charles Hartwell Cocke, resigned before the end of his second year. His hasty departure from office necessitated the appointment of an acting president, Mary J. S. Calloway, who served four months but refused to become president on a permanent basis. When former president Jones declined an invitation to return to II&C, the third permanent president, Arthur H. Beals, took office in June 1890 but departed at the end of his first year. (Pieschel *Loyal* 21)

Prospects for the II&C looked generally promising during its first year. The Board of Trustees prepared and presented its first report to the legislature in January 1886 (Thornton). Money was tight in Mississippi, then as now, and the II&C did not receive a generous amount for its establishment: \$40,000 from the State and another \$24,000 from

three bonds issued by Columbus (Thornton 1). In current terms, this would be approximately \$1,323,000 (McCusker). The annual total for all salaries was \$22,480 (Thornton 3), worth almost \$465,000 today (McCusker). President Jones earned \$2,500 annually (Thornton 2), worth \$51,700 today (McCusker). Most professors earned \$1,200 annually (Thornton 2), worth about \$25,000 today (McCusker).

In its first report, the Board was clearly proud of what had been accomplished at the II&C. They reported “feeling that we have great cause to be gratified at the very flattering auspices under which it began its career last October” (Thornton 4). In his portion of the Report, Jones describes the dormitory as “a massive, strong, safe brick structure, three stories and a mansard high, 175 feet front and running back 170 feet” (Thornton 5). In the dormitory, there are “219 pupils lodging, besides matron, housekeeper, and teachers” (Thornton 5). Jones describes the buildings on the II&C’s campus as having “all the modern conveniences” (Thornton 5). In particular, the use of steam heat represents a technological advance that brings the buildings “even in the coldest weather to a comfortable and healthy temperature” (Thornton 5). The school admitted only Mississippi girls, though it received many applications from “Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Alabama” (Thornton 7).

Jones notes that the course of study at the II&C represents “a marked advance upon the usual course of study in girl’s [sic] colleges, especially in the elements of a solid education, in the mathematical and scientific studies” (Thornton 8). There is no longer any reason for a citizen of Mississippi to “send his daughters out of the State in order to obtain the most thorough and accomplished education” (Thornton 8). In particular, the two-year Normal Department will serve “the public school interests of the State by

sending out well educated teachers thoroughly informed and practiced in the best methods of teaching and governing schools” (Thornton 8).

The Mississippi press agreed that the opening of the college represented a moment when Mississippi had truly taken the lead in education. In an editorial, the *Jackson Ledger*, recalling “the stormy scenes in the House of Representatives when the bill for the establishment of this institution came up for final passage or rejection in 1884,” admitted “we were anxious to see the workings of a college created by a majority of three votes in the Legislature” (“State Female College”). The II&C “was established under the most unfavorable circumstances” (“State Female College”). The appropriation was small, and “its enemies were almost as numerous as its friends” (“State Female College”). In spite of all opposition, the II&C had survived and was now flourishing: “Mississippi has, today, the most elegantly equipped and thoroughly handsome institution of its kind in the country; no State in the Union can boast of such a tastily arranged and convenient female college or institution” (“State Female College”). The editors argue that the II&C needs more support and that “Mississippi should show her daughters that she will sustain and equip them for life” (“State Female College”).

The first problem Jones faced was overcrowding: the enrollment at II&C was far “more than the dormitory could accommodate” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). In his first Report of the President, Jones notes that “the dormitory has been full from the date of the opening and we have been obliged to decline to receive at least one hundred girls who desired to board in the dormitory” (Thornton 6). Many students came from reduced financial circumstances, and work “in order to pay the whole or a large part of their expenses is a necessity” (Thornton 12). Jones takes care to speak to all the students “decidedly in favor

of the dignity of labor and the meritorious conduct of those who prefer to work and become educated and self-supporting, rather than to remain idle and dependent” (Thornton 12). He reports that the students on the whole behave admirably: “daughters of the rich, those of moderate means, and of the poor, are here together in one harmonious body; their earnestness impresses every visitor; as a rule they are not only cheerful but bright and happy” (Thornton 12). Jones discourages both shopping and visitors to reinforce to students that “this is not a fashionable school for visiting, but an earnest school for work and study” (Thornton 14).

As noted, many students came to the II&C without adequate secondary preparation, and “more than half the students each year had to be placed in the preparatory division” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). In his 1885-1887 report to the Board of Trustees, Jones writes,

A few students have been sent to us each year without the preparation required. It has been the policy of the college to do the best possible thing for those sent us; but it is clearly not the province of the Institution to teach students the primary studies. A student who does not know the multiplication table and is ignorant of simple division ought to be in a primary school and not in the Preparatory Department of the College. (qtd. in Neilson 13)

From the start, there was considerable dissension on campus over what the primary focus of the II&C should be, with a rivalry developing between “the advocates of vocational training and the advocates of the liberal arts curriculum” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). Students were often unhappy about “uniforms, strict rules, and what they considered to be

unrealistically high academic standards” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). For the fortunate few students enrolled in the collegiate department, “a classical curriculum had been prepared” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22). Aspiring teachers enrolled in “the normal department . . . [with] a two-year curriculum” (Pieschel *Loyal* 22-23). In this program, students “were expected to master . . . [the] subjects and learn how to teach them effectively” (Pieschel *Loyal* 23). Not until 1897 did the first students receive “Mistress of Pedagogy” degrees, and this was not a bachelor’s degree (Neilson 37). In addition to academic studies, “each student was required to pursue a vocational subject (an industrial)” (Neilson 14). For industrial training, students could “study garment construction, art needlework, typewriting, bookkeeping, repoussé, printing, freehand drawing, designing, phonography, and telegraphy” (Pieschel *Loyal* 23). No industrial student “was permitted to take bookkeeping or phonography unless she could pass a satisfactory examination in the Arithmetic and English of the first section of the Business Course, or its equivalent” (Neilson 15).

Students lived under a structured schedule that ran from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (“Rules”). Any rule violation resulted in demerits, and demerits could lead to disciplinary action up to expulsion. Students were to rise promptly at 6:00 a.m. and make their rooms orderly. Any disorder in the student’s room could lead to as many as 10 demerits (“Rules”). When the bell rang for breakfast, the students were “promptly [to] form in line” and, after the tap of a second bell, “descend quietly and orderly to the dining-room” (“Rules”). After morning classes, students would eat lunch at 1:10 p.m.; supper was served at 6:00 p.m. (“Rules”). Study hours were from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., with the students free to visit whomever they wished from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. Lights out was at 10:00 p.m.

("Rules"). Any student who left the dormitory by the front door could receive up to 5 demerits. For taking a visitor to her room without the Matron's permission, a student would receive up to 25 demerits ("Rules"). Leaving the College without permission could lead to 50 demerits ("Rules"). In all, there were thirty-two specific infractions, as well as flexibility for the faculty to assign demerits as required. Students were expected to be self-monitoring, and each Saturday each student was to "hand to the teacher of her floor a written statement of the observance, or non-observance, of the Dormitory Rules and Regulations ("Rules"). On Sundays, "All students . . . [were] required to attend the church of their choice at least once . . . and to attend the Sunday School" (Pieschel *Loyal* 24).

Even though there were many more students interested in attending the II&C than the school could possibly accommodate, not everyone was happy to see women receiving higher education. The Mississippi power structure of the time, which Sansing describes as "not unlike a totalitarian state," felt threatened by demands for higher education and wondered whether "it could control the consequences of mass education" (75). President W. B. Highgate of the all-black State Normal School was fired in 1886 after being accused of "encouraging his black students, by his own example, to be uppity and ambitious" (Sansing 75). Likewise, the higher education of women made those who had begun to hold onto "dreams of an Old South that never was" uncomfortable when they considered the possible consequences (Sansing 75). Jones found it necessary "to reassure the board of trustees in 1887 that he was not teaching his female students 'to demand the rights of men nor to invade the sphere of men' but instead was teaching each woman 'the beautiful Christian graces that constitute her charm of social life, and the queen of the

home’” (Sansing 76). One wonders if Jones sincerely meant this, or if he was saying what was necessary to mollify those in power.

In her 1904 history of the II&C, Rose Peebles, an II&C graduate who would later become the Head of the English Department at Vassar, describes the problems that accompanied the opening and establishment of the school. The two aims of the II&C, to provide both college-level work and industrial training, caused some problems: “How was . . . [the II&C] to train young women in these two directions, which while they helped each other to a certain extent, were at the same time somewhat opposed?” (Peebles “Industrial” 1). The II&C was truly visionary, for no “other school had undertaken just this work” (Peebles “Industrial 1). Yet, there was no singleness of thinking or purpose in the minds of the people of Mississippi as to what the purpose of this new school should be:

Some thought it was to be a place where the poor white girls of the State should be taught to sew, wash, scrub, cook, to use their hands mainly in household work, and should be given only so much mental training as was necessary to fit them for such work—and not much was deemed essential. Others thought the school should teach, besides these purely domestic arts, such breadwinning occupations as bookkeeping, stenography, millinery, etc.; and these extended their requirements in the amount of mental discipline that would be adequate for girls who were, by the use of these arts, to earn their livelihoods. Another and smaller class foresaw in a way what might really come of the venture and trusted that the future would show the wisdom of Mississippi in trying the experiment of having, to

teach in her schools, to assist in the conduct of her business interests, and to be the mothers of her sons and daughters, really educated women—women with the culture that can be obtained by such genuine college education as the women in the North and East receive, with the practical aid that comes from knowing some industrial art well, and with the aesthetic and spiritual broadening of outline that comes from the study of music and art. (Peebles “Industrial” 1)

While the II&C did have much in common with other women’s colleges, like the necessity of admitting students who were unprepared for higher education, the dual purposes of the II&C led to some unique tensions among members of the faculty. Long after Jones left, presidents navigated a narrow straight, restraining both “those who considered the college work the most important from desiring that it be only a college, and those who were in heartiest accord with its industrial work from demanding that it be made merely an industrial institution” (Peebles “Industrial” 2).

By the end of his third year, Jones “decided to return to his professorship at the University of Mississippi” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). He left on good terms, but he could not be induced to again serve as president, despite the fact that “he soon would be invited—twice—to return” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). After he left, it “proved difficult to replace him” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). Peebles feels that the success of Jones’ presidency “is shown by the fact that the scope of the work then laid down had not been altered in any large measure” by 1904 (Peebles “Industrial” 2). She also argues that “those early years stand out brilliantly, since it was then that so many things which have made the work here worthwhile were put in operation” (Peebles “Industrial” 3).

In a memorial for Miriam Greene Paslay, member of the first graduating class and long-time Mistress of Latin, Peebles writes a touching description of what it was like to be a student during these early days. Originally from Adams County, Peebles was an AB graduate in 1891; she “received a Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr and eventually became English department head at Vassar” (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). From her perspective in 1932, Peebles writes eloquently of the promise—and the perils—facing the young women who were determined to be among the first AB graduates of the II&C:

In 1887—now a long time ago—girls who went to the Mississippi State College for Women, then in its third year, received a number of confused impressions. The place was beautiful and dignified. Students were eager. There was an inescapable sense of experiment. Something new was being attempted in this remote state. A great sense of responsibility had been laid on these young women students. They did not realize just what, but they were keen to meet it. They heard politicians frequently in Chapel proclaim that here was a woman’s college, Mississippi was in the lead, a great achievement.

In two well known classrooms an antidote to this large oratory was at hand. The truth was that the South had few colleges. None for women. They were not to be deceived. If this was to be one, its students must work not as young women in so-called colleges were accustomed to work, but as students in European colleges worked, as women in the Eastern part of our own country were working. It would be no easy task. Every force was against such an accomplishment. Students of those early years will recall

even the well remembered tones of these voices, so quiet, restrained,
pregnant with a new force. (Peebles “Remembrance”)

Following Jones’ departure, Charles Hartwell Cocke became “the second president of II&C” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). In his unpublished essay on Pauline Orr’s career at the II&C, Stephen Pieschel reports that Cocke was a “mediocre and unqualified local resident” (Pieschel “Orrs” 9). Cocke had been “a trustee of the Columbus Female Institute in 1884 and was one of the three trustees who signed the document transferring the property of the Columbus Female Institute to the State of Mississippi for the use of the newly authorized state college for women” (Neilson 23). Cocke had been a student at the University of Virginia “from September 1869 to February 1874” (Neilson 23). Although financial difficulties forced him to return to Mississippi in 1874, if he “had been able to complete the session in 1874, . . . he would have met the requirements for both an engineering degree and an AM” (Neilson 23). His “stormy” administration was referred to in the papers as a “Cocke fight” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). Problems immediately arose for Cocke because there was “a very strong faction, including both men and women, who wanted the college to have women on the board of trustees and a woman as president” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25).

Cocke’s administration was marked by “friction, dissension, and general unrest, involving students, faculty, townspeople, and to some extent, people in the state at large” (Neilson 23). He faced an “embittered” faculty when in September 1888, the board of trustees ruled “that the presidency would be open to men only” (Pieschel *Loyal* 25). In November 1888, further disruption flared when Cocke “attempted to remove a faculty member without due cause or prior notification in order to appoint a friend to a position

on the faculty” (Pieschel *Loyal* 26). Cocke attempted to exercise power over the faculty and the II&C in multiple directions:

first, he tried to assume autonomous control of the hiring and firing of faculty, specifically with regard to the Latin teacher; second, he tried to dominate curriculum decisions; third, he refused to support the temperance activists among the faculty; fourth, he tried to enlist the support of students, the local population, the board of trustees, and the legislature and the governor, when he failed to receive the support of the faculty.

(Pieschel “Orrs” 9-10)

The *Fourth Annual Catalogue*, published in 1889, offers a view of the state and goals of the II&C under Cocke. In addition to Cocke, there were 20 faculty members, five of whom held a Master’s degree (*Fourth Annual* 4-5). Attrition among students in the College Course is reflected in the fact that the Fourth College Class, who would form the first baccalaureate class to graduate from the II&C, had only ten members at the beginning of the year, while the Second College Class, i.e., Juniors, had 30 members. Industrial Arts courses were given to provide “thorough practical training in Arts by which woman’s opportunities for usefulness may be multiplied” (*Fourth Annual* 20).

Tuition remained free to students appointed by their County Superintendent of Education; students were responsible for some expenses, though board was “furnished to pupils at actual cost” and the II&C sold books “at publisher’s prices” (*Fourth Annual* 25). Students received good nutrition in the dining hall: “food is abundant, of sufficient variety, well cooked and nicely served” (*Fourth Annual* 25). The II&C strove to keep costs as low as possible; as noted, students paid less than ten dollars a month for “room,

fuel, light, washing, water etc.” (*Fourth Annual* 25), and Music and Fine Arts required tuition ranging from 50 cents per month for solfege to \$5.00 per month for oil painting. Each student was required to “deposit for board at the beginning of the session at least \$30.00 and must always keep the amount of one month’s board to her credit” (*Fourth Annual* 25). If a student could not meet this requirement, she would “be required to withdraw” (*Fourth Annual* 25). Each student was required to provide “one pair of sheets, one pair of pillow cases, one pair of blankets, one bed-spread, six towels, six napkins, two clothes-bags, a teaspoon, table spoon, knife and fork; the spoons and fork must be either silver or silver-plated” (*Fourth Annual* 26).

Students dressed in uniforms at all times while on campus. The full dress uniform for spring and fall

[s]hall be navy blue sateen made and trimmed according to model, with smoked pearl buttons, size of silver half dime; hat shall be the prescribed navy blue straw sailor, trimmed with a band of navy blue satin ribbon, with loops in front; tan colored gloves; white linen cuffs, and no ribbons or veils except navy shall be worn. (*Fourth Annual* 26)

There were similar requirements for the winter dress uniform. The only exception to the uniform requirement was for students in mourning who were “required to have dresses made according to the model; black hat, uniform style” (*Fourth Annual* 26). There was a bit more flexibility for everyday dress:

a navy blue dress of any material not necessarily made according to the model, but trimmed with same material and smoked pearl buttons; navy blue wrap, either cloak, shawl or flannel scarf, navy blue ribbons and

veils, navy blue sun bonnet trimmed with the same material, or prescribed uniform hat; white collars and cuffs, and tan colored gloves. (*Fourth Annual 26*)

Students were to dress in uniform “from time of entering; no exceptions shall be made” (*Fourth Annual 26*).

All students were required to work to contribute to the maintenance of the campus, but there was both required and voluntary work (*Fourth Annual 26-27*).

Residents in the dormitory rooms were required “to do all the work necessary to keep them in nice order” (*Fourth Annual 26*). Work in the dining room was “required of the pupils” (*Fourth Annual 27*). Students could choose to do voluntary work for which they were paid “at the rate of six to eight cents per hour” (*Fourth Annual 27*). Cocke was careful to stress that the II&C had “no disposition . . . by word or action, to disparage those who work to aid in paying their expenses” (*Fourth Annual 27*). In fact, he notes that some “girls have paid their whole expenses by work” (*Fourth Annual 27*). However, the II&C discouraged this as a widespread practice, for when a student “works so much daily as to be wearied, she loses ground in her studies” (*Fourth Annual 27*). The II&C existed to educate students, and Cocke urged them “to regard their studies and their industrial arts as of paramount importance” (*Fourth Annual 27*).

Students were strongly discouraged from absences from campus for any length of time because “[t]he absence of a few days is a serious loss” (*Fourth Annual 28*). Students who are often or frequently absent from campus “fall behind their classes; and, as a consequence, they nearly always become discontented and suffer irreparable loss” (*Fourth Annual 28*). While on campus, students were “not permitted to receive visits

from young gentlemen” (*Fourth Annual* 28). Parents were reminded that the purpose of having their daughters at the II&C was to educate them: “while their daughters are in College their attention and efforts should be concentrated on their studies and industries, and this cannot be done if they indulge in making and receiving visits” (*Fourth Annual* 28). Students were not to “write for articles of dress which are expensive and unnecessary. Such articles cannot be worn” (*Fourth Annual* 29). The only holiday in the school year was “one day only . . . given at Christmas” (*Fourth Annual* 31). Parents were urged “not to take their daughters home Christmas, unless they live very near” (*Fourth Annual* 32). In spite of the attacks on Cocke’s academic prowess, he raised the requirement for receiving an industrial certificate to “completion of academic work equivalent to freshman” (Neilson 27).

At the discretion of County Superintendents of Education, admission remained open to any student “at least 15 years of age, in good health, and . . . [able to] furnish [a] certificate of good moral character” (*Fourth Annual* 38). Each county was allocated a certain number of spots for students at the II&C based on its percentage of educable white girls. Although many County Superintendents did a good job, “[i]f all would do so it would relieve us of much embarrassment which has ensued upon the failure of some to report as requested and as required by law” (*Fourth Annual* 38). An ongoing concern during the early years of the II&C was that “students have been sent to us each year without the preparation required” (*Fourth Annual* 38). Cocke hoped that “these suggestions will call the attention of those, who have seemed indifferent to the ‘conditions,’ to the duty of carefully complying with them” (*Fourth Annual* 38). Cocke described his administration as “parental; the object is to strengthen the higher motives

and develop character” (*Fourth Annual* 29). His approach arose from “the earnest desire and aim of the President and Faculty to induce students to act from a high sense of honor and propriety, and to learn to govern themselves, to do right from the love of right” (*Fourth Annual* 29).

In his 1889 report to the legislature, Cocke noted difficulties because industrial students were required to take academic courses. Problems arose when “a student’s knowledge of Arithmetic and English is inadequate to the demands of business, [but] she is required to associate these branches of study with her Industrial Art” (Cocke 1). In September 1888, the Board passed a resolution to the effect that “if in the opinion of the Faculty . . . any pupil has failed to make such progress as to justify the belief that she will not avail herself of the full benefit of education as here offered, . . . then upon the recommendation of the Faculty, it shall be the duty of the President to declare her place vacant and to notify the Superintendent of Education of the proper County” (Cocke 1). While this did not mean that all students who fell below a passing grade would be removed from the II&C, the resolution reinforced the idea that “diligence and good conduct and health, moral and physical, sufficient to meet the conditions of life obtaining in this cooperative community are essential” (Cocke 1). A student who did not meet these requirements could “average 85 or 90 percent in her grades and yet be denied continuance” (Cocke 1). The most pressing need Cocke saw was for additional dormitory space to allow more students to attend the college (2). In addition, the equipment for teaching and learning was inadequate; there was “no library, no museum, no infirmary building, no gymnasium, only a meager supply of models in the Industrial Art

Department” (Cocke 2). However, Cocke praised the faculty highly for their “zeal, efficiency and faithfulness” (Cocke 2-3).

In 1890, “a group of students petitioned the governor to remove President Cocke from office [because] of financial mismanagement, lack of academic qualifications, failure to support all departments of the school, and disregard for the local temperance movement” (Pieschel *Loyal* 26). The students wrote that Cocke was “not an educator, never at any time having taught more than five or six months” (qtd. in Neilson 25). They attacked his academic record as “very poor, shown by the fact that although he spent five years in that University, he received neither a BA nor an MA; the usual time for earning a BA being three years and an MA four years” (qtd. in Neilson 25). They also found his personal qualities lacking: “His convictions are weak, his opinions vacillating. He cannot command admiration and respect of his pupils nor inspire them to higher levels of scholarship” (qtd. in Neilson 25). These students argued that Cocke was not the person to lead the school to a high level: “The girls of Mississippi want a high standard State college, and are not willing to stand by and see their school degenerate into a mere sham” (qtd. in Neilson 25).

There were even numerous “rumors about sexual misconduct” (Pieschel *Loyal* 26). Apparently, the rumor first arose when the word “‘immoral’ had been used in connection with Cocke’s character” (Neilson 26). Subsequent investigation proved that the girl who used the word *immoral* “in connection with Mr. Cocke did not know the meaning of the word. She thought he had been ‘immoral’ in wanting to make curriculum changes” (Neilson 26-27).

In response to the controversy over Cocke, former state Senator Sykes, who had delivered an address during the II&C's opening ceremonies, wrote that Cocke's critics were spreading "unhallowed fabrications—the mere inventions of womanly vindictiveness and unholy hate aggravated by hysteria" (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 26). The *Macon Telegraph* was equally harsh in its assessment, writing that Cocke's critics were

a lot of fault-finding women and petticoat advocates who, in charity to their sex should, in the *Beacon's* opinion, be tenderly chloroformed into a better world where they can have an angel for a governess, and feed on strange fruits which will make them all over again, even to their bones and marrow Otherwise, they should be condemned to the two lowest circles of a vulgar woman's Inferno, where the punishments are small-pox and bankruptcy. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 26)

Criticism of Cocke developed into criticism of Columbus as a town of "whiskey, saloons, drunkenness, and rowdyism" (Pieschel *Loyal* 26). Although the board was generally supportive of Cocke, it "voted 8-1 to ask for his resignation to quiet the controversy and save the school" (Pieschel *Loyal* 27). Following Cocke's departure in March 1890, Miss Mary S. J. Calloway served as the interim president. Calloway had served the II&C as the lady principal, "a position comparable to that of dean of students and vice-president" (Pieschel *Loyal* 27). Her appointment led to "rejoicing among those who were advocates of a woman president for the college" (Neilson 30).

The *Columbus Dispatch* wrote positively about the II&C at the end of the 1889-1890 school year. In its article about the closing ceremonies, it reported that "the chapel was packed to its utmost to accommodate friends of the grand institution, who came from

many sections of the state” (“Closing”). The paper concluded that “the Institution had lost none of its prestige” (“Closing”). Further, even with a woman now serving as president, “the change of management had not given it a death blow but on the contrary had gained a new impetus carrying it forward in its grand mission for the white girls of Mississippi” (“Closing”).

Calloway apparently “did not seek the office” of president, and “the board selected Arthur H. Beals to serve as the school’s third permanent chief administrator” (Pieschel *Loyal* 27). Beals proved another poor choice. He “claimed to have degrees from Yale University and Heidelberg University, but his credentials apparently were falsified” (Pieschel *Loyal* 27). Little biographical information about Beals survives, though Sarah Neilson confirmed that he was “unknown at Yale” (32). Neilson spoke to people who knew Beals and received “conflicting reports about him,” though everyone “agreed that he was not the right man for the presidency” (Neilson 32).

An article from the Columbus *Commercial Dispatch* reported on Beals’ address to the students as school opened in 1890 (“Opening”). Beals was described as the “systematic, energetic, and progressive president of the institution” (“Opening”). He began by urging “on students the duty of obedience and strict compliance with the rules of the school” (“Opening”). Each student “must perform her part, and . . . a failure to do so would be considered as sufficient notice of an intention to withdraw from the institution” (“Opening”). The writer found Beals a “practical, business-like man, possessed of great executive ability . . . [who] would prove equal to every emergency that may arise” (“Opening”). The author further reported that “the fact was plainly distinguishable that realizing the importance of the trust confided to him, that he had

made up his mind to manage the school in his own way, and would brook no opposition from anyone or any source” (“Opening”). As far as the *Dispatch* was concerned, Beals was the right man at the right time: “He has entered upon the work with the thought of success uppermost in his mind, and judging from his methods, [and] thorough familiarity with the minutest detail of the College, the writer has no doubt of the result”

(“Opening”). Although this was the opening of the school year, “Dr. Beals spent the whole time (summer) in his office in the College, hard at work in the interest of the institution” (“Opening”). In another newspaper article about the II&C, J. T. Clark, Mistress of Latin, writes that Beals “is a teacher and superintendent of experience though he is still young. He is progressive and practical, with a mind . . . comprehensive of great aims while attentive to the minutest detail” (6).

The existence of the II&C was threatened, and it was possible that the school would not survive further controversy. The president had relatively little authority; he was seen as a “‘chairman of the faculty,’ and his recommendations carried comparatively little weight” (Neilson 34). Much of the negative publicity had confirmed the worst suspicions of “many people in the state [who] were rather dubious about a state supported college for women” (Neilson 34). The question of Woman’s Rights was being hotly debated nationally, and “the new college, almost inevitably, had become a rallying point for the feminist group and some of the faculty members were prominent in the councils of the feminists” (Neilson 34). In spite of all the numerous problems with his administration and open dissension among the faculty, Beals apparently “wanted and expected to be reelected” (Neilson 34). The Trustees instead commended Beals for his personal qualities and claimed “that these estimable qualities may secure for him a

favorable reception wherever he may go” (qtd. in Neilson 35). Beals departed from Columbus and was not heard from again in Mississippi education, although he reportedly became the “head and total personnel of the Department of Education” at the Georgia State College for Women, which opened in 1891 (Curl 6).

Despite all the controversy with the president’s office, students were continuing to be educated in a way that Mississippi women never had before. The II&C awarded its first ten A.B. degrees in 1889: “[s]ix of these women eventually became members of the II&C faculty, some of them having played key roles in the effort to oust President Cocke” (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). Throughout the 1880s, “enrollment remained in the three hundred to four hundred range . . . , with ten A.B.’s per year being about average” (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). The preparatory department remained strong during these early years, having “more than two hundred students per year” (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). Students at the II&C remained under strict control, and “a student . . . [could] be sent home for accumulating too many demerits” (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). Maud Butler, for example, who became the mother of William Faulkner, was expelled for excessive demerits (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). Until 1910, “punishments for rule violations were handled in the form of demerits and were posted on the inside of every bedroom door—a certain number for cutting a meal or for not attending church or Sunday school, or for wearing a belt not of the width or of the material designated in the catalogue” (Hall 61). Teachers were “surrogate parents living on each floor of the dormitories, eating with the students, and taking them to church each Sunday” (Hall 62). Some rules violations resulted in immediate expulsion: a “student being caught in an automobile with a young man without permission resulted in dismissal” (Hall 79). In response to a letter from a father requesting leniency for his

daughter, President Whitfield replied, “Too many girls have been sent home for one offense of this nature for me to interfere with the rule in this case” (qtd. in Hall 79).

After constant, ongoing turmoil with its presidents in the 1880s, “the board of trustees was desperate to find a permanent president who would provide a stabilizing influence and minimize friction among the faculty” (Pieschel *Loyal* 30). They chose “Dr. Robert Frazer . . . a scholarly man, and an experienced educator with a LL.D. from the University of Virginia” (Pieschel *Loyal* 30). Frazer was a well-traveled, having served for several years as “American Consul at Palermo, Italy” (Neilson 36). Although Dr. Frazer held a vision for what the II&C should be, “he was to encounter great difficulty in putting his programs into practice because of the severe financial depression in the 1890s and because of his lack of authority in some administrative matters” (Pieschel *Loyal* 30). The legislature was not of a mind to appropriate adequate funds, and Frazer grew “to resent having to travel to Jackson to beg the legislature for funds he thought the college should receive as a matter of course” (Pieschel *Loyal* 30). His eight-year term at the II&C was “handicapped by a crippling lack of money, bickering faculty, and a steady decline in enrollment” (Pieschel *Loyal* 30). The controversy over what kind of college the II&C should be continued through Frazer’s term: “[o]ne group [of the faculty] asserted that the II&C was, or should be, a liberal arts college with very high standards—higher standards than the average Mississippi high school graduate could meet if she entered the freshman class immediately following graduation” (Pieschel *Loyal* 37). The basic question for the II&C in the 1890s became, “Should the college be operated for the benefit of the talented and privileged few, or should it be organized to meet the needs of the average girl, as was intended by the founders?” (Pieschel *Loyal* 37). No one disagreed that academic

standards should be high; the question was, “how high these standards should be, particularly for the students who were not candidates for a degree, and as to whether or not industrial work merited credit” (Neilson 41). To put it another way, “battle lines were clearly drawn between those who believed that women’s education would prepare them for a life independent of sex stereotypes and those who felt that women’s education should prepare them for the roles of wife and mother” (Hall 110). Dr. Frazer also felt that the board of trustees consistently did not show him “the consideration due his position” (Pieschel *Loyal* 38). By the end of his tenure, it seemed that he had accomplished little: “Enrollment dropped sharply in 1897-1898; the faculty continued to be divided” (Neilson 40).

With so many ongoing controversies surrounding the II&C, one easily loses sight of how much the II&C meant to the young women of Mississippi. A letter from September 14, 1891, reminds one that the II&C offered young women a chance to learn to do for themselves and to make something of their lives. In this letter, Bernice Vinson asks for assistance for Sally Lampley of Winston County:

Sir:

Miss Sallie Lampley of Winston county wishes to secure some kind of work in the college this year that will assist materially in defraying her expenses, as she is paying her own way, and has no one to depend on but herself. She is an orphan, lives with her uncle, and is very anxious to secure a good education.

She has applied to the book-sellers for the position of agent for their stationary &c, if you can assist her in obtaining this position, or

another of them, or can secure for her employment in any other capacity, I shall esteem your kindness as a personal favor, she is a good, deserving girl, and would appreciate anything you could do for her.

Resptly' &c,

Bernice Vinson

While there might have been controversy over what form the school should take, many Mississippi girls recognized that the II&C offered them a chance they could not hope to obtain anywhere else.

County Superintendents of Education continued to appoint students to the II&C based on their apportionment. To do this, they would complete a Form of Certificate of Appointment, certifying that the student

has furnished satisfactory evidence of good moral character and of good health. She has passed a satisfactory examination in the studies required. I have therefore appointed her, with the approval of the Board of Supervisors, to a Scholarship in said Institution. ("Form")

Superintendents would also report the student's grades in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography, and U. S. History, as well as her overall academic average ("Form").

In his first Biennial Report to the Trustees of the II&C (1891-1893), Frazer reports that enrollment had fallen from 319 students, with 116 in the college course, to 287, with 80 in the college course (1). Frazer attributes this decrease in enrollment

chiefly to the financial straits from which our people have been suffering for the last two years; but, in some measure, also to a more rigid

application of the terms of admission, made to relieve the College work of the incubus imposed by the presence of a number of unprepared pupils.

(Frazer 1)

The II&C also began vigorously enforcing “the law retiring students who show no disposition to improve” (1). In compensation for the reduction in numbers, Frazer claims a “manifest rise in the intellectual tone of the school and in the general character of its work” (Frazer 1). Also, good students were returning to school in a number and percentage “already in excess of the like class for the whole of any previous session” (Frazer 1-2). This led Frazer to argue that the “power for good in the state of ten girls with four years [sic] training is greater than that of a hundred with only one” (Frazer 2). The main problem, however, continued to be “the presence of too many girls unprepared for the kind of work the College must do” (Frazer 2). In spite of Frazer’s bias in favor of academics, the II&C continued its policy of requiring all students to study an industrial art (Frazer 3).

The *Eleventh Annual Catalogue* shows what had and had not changed at the II&C by 1895. Much of the content is the same as in the earlier catalogue from the 1880s; the differences highlight the changes. The faculty had fallen to sixteen, with one opening (*Eleventh* 3). The II&C had awarded fifty-nine B.A. degrees from 1889-1895 (*Eleventh* 4-5). Of these early graduates, forty-seven were employed as teachers, six were wives (two of whom had served as teachers before marriage), three were identified as simply “at home,” and three had entered other professional fields: civil service, physician, and stenographer (*Eleventh* 4-5). The total attendance at the II&C since it opened had been around 1,600: “[t]wo hundred and thirty have taken certificates of proficiency in

industrial arts, and fifty-nine the degree of B.A.—the highest academic honor borne by any woman in the Southern States” (*Eleventh* 17). To earn a B.A., a student had to maintain “a high standard of deportment, complete, and pass successful examinations upon the several studies of the Collegiate Course and one Industrial Art besides. In the Senior year, review examinations may be required on subjects finished in previous years” (*Eleventh* 36).

The County Superintendents of Education were informed that “Mississippi usually appropriates about \$25,000 a year for the support of the I.I. & C.” (*Eleventh* 38). Superintendents were urged to take seriously their responsibilities for appointing students to the II&C, for “[t]here is no place in earth where a State, or an individual, can put money with better promise of great outcome than the brain of an honest girl” (*Eleventh* 38). Only Superintendents were authorized by law to make sure that the II&C extended “the benefits of the school to the young women of every county in the State” (*Eleventh* 38). If not for altruistic motives, those who actively appointed students to the II&C could also “reasonably hope to equip their schools with good teachers—the prime necessity of good schools” (*Eleventh* 38).

The II&C was admitting out-of-state students by 1895. Although they were not eligible to stay in the dormitory, “by paying a tuition fee of \$30 a session, they may be admitted into the College with the same advantages offered Mississippi students boarding out” (*Eleventh* 42). The costs for music instruction had risen to \$2.50 per semester for solfege and to \$20.00 per semester for piano or organ (*Eleventh* 42). Students continued to be expected to do required work; voluntary work continued to be available. Pay rates

ranged from six cents and hour for sweeping to \$15.00 per month for clerical work; students could also earn money through dressmaking (*Eleventh* 44).

Students continued to wear uniforms “of dark navy blue lawn, made and trimmed according to model, *i.e.* tight waist, open in front, with invisible fastening, plain in the back with a little fulness [sic] at waist line, and a gathered fulness [sic] in front from hem to shoulder seam in the neck” (*Eleventh* 44). Gloves were now to be black (*Eleventh* 44). The regulations extended even to underwear:

To check the tendency to tight-lacing, so injurious to young girls, we earnestly ask the hearty co-operation of parents, especially of mothers, in having their daughters wear a *corset-waist* instead of a *corset*. The corset-waist may be either the Ferris, the Equipose, or the Common Sense Waist. All underwear must be made in the most simple style, with little or no trimming; otherwise, extra laundry charges will be incurred. (*Eleventh* 45)

There must have been quite a few “first cousins” coming to visit the II&C students, for the students were “not permitted to receive visits from young gentlemen—not even from first cousins” (*Eleventh* 46). Students were also asked to consider the privilege extended them in being able to study at the II&C: “coming to the school is not a matter of constraint, and . . . in entering it, . . . [the student] voluntarily assumes the obligation of honest conformity to its regulations. Those who cannot cheerfully do this are asked not to come” (*Eleventh* 48).

When Dr. Frazer resigned in February 1898, “[w]ithin the space of slightly more than thirteen years, the college had been under the administration of four presidents and an acting president” (Neilson 41). In response to this alarming trend, the legislature

decided to investigate “why the president’s chair was so hot no one could sit in it for long” (qtd. in Neilson 42). In the meantime, “Miss Calloway again agreed to serve as acting president until a new head could be found” (Pieschel *Loyal* 38).

Chaos and bad publicity followed Frazer’s resignation, and “the legislature threatened to withhold future appropriations unless the board of trustees could arrest the decline of the institution” (Sansing 69). Such an action certainly “would have guaranteed the school’s continued decline, if not its demise” (Sansing 69). When a “ten-man investigative committee arrived in Columbus, . . . [it] found the Industrial Institute and College in utter disarray” (Sansing 69). The committee first concluded that

under the present management of the college sufficient power is not vested in the president by the trustees, and we would recommend that the president be empowered and authorized to select each member of the faculty [and] that the power of suspension of final discharge . . . be conferred upon the president. (qtd. in Neilson 43)

The committee also attempted to settle the long-standing feud between the industrial and academic factions of the faculty by instructing the board of trustees that “certificates of proficiency or diplomas in any industrial study or pursuit be issued to scholars whenever they have, in the opinion of the president, attained such proficiency, regardless of proficiency in any literary or academic study” (qtd. in Neilson 43). The committee urged that “no discrimination in the matter of admission to the dormitory be made between those pupils who simply desire to pursue an industrial course, and those who desire to pursue both an industrial and academic or collegiate course” (qtd. in Neilson 43). Finally, the committee ended on a positive note by reporting that they “have had their impressions

confirmed that it is an institution which has already and is now accomplishing great good for the girls of the State of Mississippi” (qtd. In Neilson 44). Were the committee’s recommendations to be put in place, they felt that “the good that can be done by this Institution to the girls of Mississippi cannot be overestimated” (qtd. in Neilson 44). The revisions and reforms that followed the committee’s report would prove of great benefit to Andrew Kincannon, the next president of the II&C.

In 1900, Mississippi “had a population 92.3 percent rural, the highest rate of illiteracy in the nation, and the lowest per capita income” (Sansing 77). Total college enrollment that year was “2,727, with 2 percent of the 18- to 21-year age group in college” (Sansing 129). By that time, 105 women had earned an AB from the II&C in its first fifteen years, and the II&C was continuing to grow: “By 1901, the state offered free tuition to 400 girls apportioned from 75 counties based on the number of white educable girls in the county as compared with the entire number in the state. . . . Dormitory space which was limited went to the free students only” (Hall 39).

Andrew Armstrong Kincannon, the next president of the II&C, was “the first president of the II&C to have been born in Mississippi” (Pieschel *Loyal* 40). Kincannon had a good education, including an “LL.D. from the University of Arkansas,” and experience as an educator, including “three years as state superintendent of education in Mississippi, a position which automatically made him a member of the II&C Board of Trustees” (Pieschel *Loyal* 40). After the legislature threatened to cut off funds to the II&C, “the board of trustees made a special plea to Andrew Kincannon . . . to accept the presidency” (Sansing 69). Kincannon only accepted after the board “promised not to

interfere with his administration and to seek additional funding for the school” (Sansing 69).

Kincannon’s positive relationship with the trustees gave him an advantage that none of the previous permanent presidents had; also, he was “personally acquainted with most of the faculty and . . . [had] considerable insight into the affairs of the college and its special problems” (Pieschel *Loyal* 42). He also knew “from whom he might expect loyal support” (Neilson 49). Kincannon was a tireless promoter of the II&C, taking “advantage of every opportunity to attend gatherings in various parts of the state where he might bring the college to the attention of the people and reassure them of its aims and policies” (Neilson 49). This effort was necessary to build support, as there was a real possibility that the II&C “would be forced to suspend operation” (Neilson 48).

Following suggestions from Pauline V. Orr, Mistress of English, Kincannon proposed creating a separate Department of Rhetoric. In his 1901 Report to the Legislature of Mississippi, he argued that “better results would be achieved from the Department by separating the work of Rhetoric and Composition from that of Literary proper” (Kincannon “Report”). Every student at the II&C required a proper education in the grammatical and rhetorical aspects of English:

You need not be reminded that the study of English is of vital interest to every woman, regardless of her position in life. Without a knowledge of English no culture is possible to the American woman. She cannot receive recognition in polite society if she is ignorant of her mother tongue; she cannot enter the school room as a teacher if ignorant of her language, nor

can she succeed in the business world if she does not speak and write the English language correctly. (Kincannon “Report”)

Kincannon established new industrial courses that he hoped would permit graduates of these courses to “do more than exist on meager wages” (Pieschel *Loyal* 47). Because of his background as an educator, Kincannon took a great interest in the normal school and “pushed for the establishment of a model school where actual practice teaching could take place” (Pieschel *Loyal* 47). The first male faculty member arrived in 1901 when “J. M. Barrow . . . came to head the mathematics department after the retirement of Miss Calloway” (Pieschel *Loyal* 49). To keep current with educational trends in other American colleges, in 1906 the II&C introduced an elective system for its A. B. and B. S. programs:

From being rigidly prescribed nearly one-half of the work of the junior class and about two-thirds of that of the senior class became elective, preserving the distinctive A.B. and B.S., and yet affording advanced students in either of these courses and opportunity to broaden . . . the range of their culture, to specialize in certain directions, according to inclination or prospective need. (Lipscomb 3)

Under Kincannon, the II&C continued to exert great control over students’ lives while they were at school. The 1901 *Catalogue of the I. I. and C.*, stated unequivocally that students were forbidden to share the company of young men: “Pupils are not permitted to receive visits from young gentlemen—not even first cousins—nor to spend the night out of the College, nor to make visits on Sunday. It is not worthwhile to ask for any departure from this rule” (qtd. in Hall 62). Most restrictions remained in place until

the 1909-1910 school year, when student government was formed and began to argue that “many of these rules and regulations . . . [be] gradually relaxed” (Hall 63). By 1920, “Juniors during their last term and all seniors were allowed to leave the campus during the day without chaperones and without signing out” (Hall 63).

Kincannon was greatly supportive of students’ efforts to find employment and become self-supporting after graduation. He wrote the following letter for each of the thirteen members of the 1899 graduating class from the Normal Department:

To Whom It May Concern:

It pleases me to introduce Miss - - - - - of the Senior Class of the Industrial Institute and College, as a young lady of superior worth both intellectually and socially. For several years, Miss - - - - - has directed her education with the purpose of becoming a teacher and her record as a student gives abundant evidence of her attainments as a scholar. I commend her most heartily to any school in need of the services of a first class teacher, and predict that she will prove successful in any position to which she may be called.

Respectfully,

Andrew A. Kincannon

(President, Industrial Institute and College)

Student Zuba Hand, in a 1902 letter home to her mother, provides a view of what life was like for students at the II&C during Kincannon’s presidency. In examining this letter, one gains an immediate appreciation for the careful penmanship that students learned at the II&C, for the handwriting appears beautifully effortless. Hand reports that conditions in

the dormitory were not good that year: “We’ve had bugs, rats, and have itch now. I don’t know of any other way in which we could bring more disgrace to the College” (Hand 2). Later, Hand adds that they “have caught 32 rats now” (5). In response to her mother’s previous letter questioning the competence of Dr. May Jones, the woman physician who had been on staff since 1897, Hand replies that the doctor “has been here 5 years and has never lost but 4 cases out of the 500 girls each year, and we have had some terrible cases of typhoid, pneumonia, appendicitis, etc.” (3). Hand was also proud to add that Jones “graduated at the Woman’s College in Baltimore with high honors and when she passed her examinations to begin practicing out of 143, all men but her, she came out with the highest grade” (Hand 3-4). Her mother should not continue to speak against Dr. Jones, or she will “have the whole college, pres., faculty, and all, to fight if you do” (Hand 4).

Columbus continued to take great pride in the II&C. In a 1903 article from the *Commercial Dispatch*, the journalist writes that all of Mississippi “is justly proud of the State’s magnificent Industrial Institute and College, located at Columbus” (“Columbus”). The greatest need the II&C had that year was for more dormitory space: numerous “Mississippi girls . . . [are] anxious to participate in the advantage to be derived there from the courses taught, and they are unable to attend the I. I. and C. for but one reason—the lack of room” (“Columbus”). The II&C itself is “the first institution of its kind, . . . today the largest in the world” (“Columbus”). One cannot help but be impressed with “[t]he sunny-tempered teachers, the interested pupils, [and] the air of order and good discipline that pervades this college” (“Columbus”).

A significant accomplishment in student life at the II&C occurred in November 1904 when students published the first issue of *The Spectator*; it continues to be

published as the student newspaper to this day. One feels the presence of Miss Orr when the editor writes, “Women in the past have possessed genius and have given to the world additions to its great literature. May it not be supposed that there are today women of literary ability; and that there may be such in our midst?” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 188). Given the many uncertainties and controversies of the first twenty years of the II&C, the students declared their intention to publish a magazine that would “portray the work and life of the college, and to arouse the sympathetic interest of every Mississippian in the future welfare of the II&C by showing people that their past efforts towards up-building the school have not been wasted” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 188).

One of Kincannon’s innovations was the establishment of summer sessions for Mississippi teachers: “He made arrangements to hold a ‘Summer Normal’ which would bring to the campus many teachers, both male and female, desiring to improve their teaching skills” (Pieschel *Loyal* 43). While the initial sessions of the Summer Normal had been directed only towards elementary teachers, the June 11 to July 6, 1907, session was the first to “offer to teachers of ungraded county schools and of graded schools in town or country an excellent opportunity to strengthen their scholarship and acquaint themselves with the best methods of teaching the subjects with which they have to deal” (“Fourth Session”). There was a special focus on teachers “who intend to take the Examination for Teacher’s License,” and the II&C would administer the examination “at the close of this Normal” (“Fourth Session”).

The special course for Primary Teachers promised that instruction “will be ably and attractively presented” (“Fourth Session”). Those who attended would “find exceptional opportunity to qualify themselves for this difficult and highly responsible

place in our educational system” (“Fourth Session”). For Grammar and High School teachers, the Summer Normal promised that instruction in every “branch of the Common School course will be taught with reference both to mastery of the subject and to its effective presentation to the pupil: what, how and why, each receiving due attention” (“Fourth Session”). There was also to be a series of special evening presentations to the attendees: “Superintendent Whitfield, President Kincannon. The Faculty of the Normal, and other prominent educators from within and without the State, will contribute to the interesting and profitable feature of the Summer Normal program” (“Fourth Session”). The Summer Normal could accommodate as many as “five hundred or more teachers” (“Fourth Session”). This was possibly the first educational opportunity at the II&C available to both men and women: “One Dormitory will be set apart for the men; the others will be occupied by the ladies” (“Fourth Session”). Tuition, room, and board for the entire program was \$15 (“Fourth Session”). The campus of the II&C and the city of Columbus are described in glowing terms:

To those who know what the Industrial Institute and College is, the facilities it can afford, and the attractiveness of its buildings, grounds and surroundings, it is unnecessary to speak on these points; nor of the attractions which the beautiful city of Columbus offers to a gathering of teachers in the way of churches, amusements, shopping advantages, shaded streets, granolithic walks, parks, and street car conveniences, is it needful to speak to most of our well informed State teachers.

Those who know not the College or the city will, without doubt, if they attend this Summer Normal, be thoroughly convinced that no place in the State is more suitable for such a school. ("Fourth Session")

In response to changes at the II&C that Kincannon implemented, "enrollment rose promptly and rapidly; the percentage of increase during the Kincannon administration is the highest in the history of the college" (Neilson 54). By the 1906-1907 school year, 816 students were enrolled (Neilson 55). The faculty increased from 21 to 49 (Neilson 62). However, preparation of students for college-level work continued to be an issue for the II&C. In her 1904 history of the II&C, Rosa Peebles explained the academic level as follows:

While, owing to the impossibility of finding students prepared to do regular work on entrance, the course of study is not equivalent to the A.B. courses offered in our best American Colleges, it is nevertheless far superior to that obtained in the ordinary schools for girls throughout the country, and a student going from here to such colleges has nothing to relearn, since her training, though less extensive than theirs, is not less thorough. (Peebles "Industrial" 3)

The fact that II&C successfully educated its students was reflected in the fact that "every year some of its graduates go to Bryn Mawr, Columbia, the University of Chicago, or elsewhere, to pursue their college work, thus showing that our young women are ready to receive even more than can yet be given them by the State" (Peebles "Industrial" 4).

In the early 1900s, many of the students at the II&C were from the lower economic levels of Mississippi:

A report to the board of trustees in 1905 reflects the economic backgrounds of the students—parents of 40 percent were farmers; parents of 14 percent were merchants and small shopkeepers; and parents of nine percent were widowed; no occupation was given for the latter. Only six percent listed family occupation of physician, dentist, or lawyer. (Hall 48)

Students continued to be “allowed to work on campus to earn money for their board” (Hall 49). In 1904, “the state legislature provided \$3,500 for a Student Labor Fund which permitted 76 girls (one from each county and one from the state) to receive payment for cleaning, sweeping, and doing light work in the laundry, post office, library, etc.” (Hall 49).

By the end of his administration, Kincannon had “restored, to a large degree, the confidence of the people of Mississippi in ‘their’ college; it was following the threefold plan for which it had been established” (Neilson 63). Kincannon resigned in 1907, “after a successful nine-year term,” not under a storm of controversy, as had happened to previous presidents, but to assume “the chancellorship at the University of Mississippi” (Pieschel *Loyal* 53).

The final president of the II&C was Henry Lewis Whitfield, who would become Governor of Mississippi after his term at the school. Whitfield is said to have spent his life “cheerfully and enthusiastically dedicated to the task of improving the spiritual and the physical condition of his fellow Mississippians” (Pieschel *Loyal* 55). Although he planned to be a lawyer, “his love of teaching was so great that he abandoned any idea of the practice of law and devoted almost his entire life to the field of education” (Neilson 64). Whitfield followed in Kincannon’s footsteps twice in his career. First, when

Kincannon “resigned as State Superintendent of Education, Mr. Whitfield was appointed by Governor McLaurin to complete the unexpired term of Mr. Kincannon” (Neilson 64). Second, he became president of the II&C when Kincannon left to accept the chancellorship of the University of Mississippi. Whitfield was “intimately acquainted with Mississippi’s educational system” (Neilson 65). While serving as the State Superintendent of Education, “he visited not only every county in the state but practically every community and school” (Neilson 65). Shortly after becoming president of the II&C, he said, “Mississippi needs better schools, better teachers, longer school terms, better health, better babies, and better biscuits” (Neilson 65).

As president of the II&C, Whitfield acted upon his belief “that there was a place for both the classical curriculum and the strictly utilitarian courses in a state college; that they were not incompatible; and that they should be blended” (Neilson 65). Controversies erupted as he “frequently disagreed openly and vigorously with the more conservative and conventional educators” (Neilson 66), and he became a controversial president. While “[h]is friends loved him devotedly; his enemies were bitter against him and ridiculed his ideas” (Neilson 66). Yet, as Whitfield wrote in the catalogue, the II&C was developing a high sense of its purpose as an institution of higher learning:

to improve the intellect by the best methods which philosophy and experience suggest, to afford means for broad and thorough culture, and to preserve and improve every characteristic of refined womanhood. This high mission demands high standards. Every incentive to diligence and thoroughness is afforded and corresponding earnestness is expected of every pupil. The object is to secure to our young women accurate and

adequate preparation for life. Let all who seek admission bear in mind that high achievement involves high endeavor. (qtd. in Lipscomb 4)

Many students held Whitfield in great esteem. Sarah Cotrell, Class of 1909, remembered being concerned about his use of the English language: “Mr. Whitfield was always just himself. Because we loved him so, we prayed he would not make a grammatical error, would look his best, would not spit tobacco juice” (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 192). When he felt it was necessary to do so, Whitfield would censure a faculty member to quell outrage from the larger community, as he did in a 1910 letter to Minor White Latham:

I regret to have to write you that there is being generated against you a volume of public sentiment. I had two men to come to see me yesterday in regard to the matter. It seems to be generally disseminated [sic] throughout the state that you teach or say before your classes, that the Bible is good literature, teaches the finest code of morals, but that it has no divine origin, and in that respect has no more validity than myths and fables. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 192)

Whitfield explains the purpose of the II&C and his expectations in a 1914 pamphlet called “Going Off to College?” that was distributed to prospective students:

The Industrial Institute and College belongs to the people of the State; it is sustained by them and should serve them. The College invites those high school graduates who have pride and ambition, and who are willing to do real work and have the patience to make the proper preparation, to come and enjoy the advantages which it offers. (4)

With regard to the Collegiate program, Whitfield notes that recently “a number of our graduates have taken in one year the master’s degree in several of the great American universities” (“Going” 2). Whitfield urged students to ensure that they held a seriousness of purpose before applying for admission; he discouraged applications from “those who wish to prepare themselves for frivolous society; only such women are wanted as will use these advantages for a fuller and better life for themselves, their fellow men and their God” (“Going” 4). Moral and religious training is at the forefront of the educational experience Whitfield stresses, praising “the splendid religious sentiment that pervades . . . [the] student body” (“Going” 3).

Although he was able and dedicated to the II&C and its students, Whitfield also made controversial decisions, such as the one believed to have resulted in the resignation of Pauline V. Orr, a member of the original faculty and the subject of the following chapter of this study. By 1914, those opposed to Whitfield’s decisions “had become numerous and increasingly hostile” (Pieschel *Loyal* 66). What would turn into a major crisis began when “an anonymous pamphlet, printed out of state and mailed to Mississippi legislators, attacked Whitfield in a manner crude enough to violate U.S. postal laws concerning obscenity” (Pieschel *Loyal* 66). The pamphlet attacked Whitfield directly, accused him “of lewdness and immorality, attacked his administration of the college, and also made derogatory statements concerning certain members of the faculty” (Neilson 74). The pamphlet was signed “S. T. Payer,” and although an investigation was conducted “the author or authors were never publicly identified” (Pieschel *Loyal* 66); even though the pamphlet’s author was identified by postal inspectors, “the guilty party

had used other persons as dupes, and it would not be possible to make public the perpetrator without injuring the other people who had been involved” (Neilson 75).

A letter Whitfield wrote to Mr. J. W. Street, father of two girls at the II&C, expresses the tone of his reaction to the controversy with the “S. T. Payer” incident:

I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your letter expressing your confidence in me and the dear grils [sic] under my care.

The splendid manner in which the students and the patrons of the institution have supported me is more than gratifying; not a student has withdrawn from school.

I am merely writing to express my deep appreciation; of course, the girls will give you the particulars.

I wish to especially thank you for your offer of financial help, which at the present time I have no need for; but I sincerely appreciate your thought in this matter.

In response to the S. T. Payer affair, Whitfield published a small pamphlet called “Progress and Present Standards of the Industrial Institute and College” (Neilson 75). While Whitfield wanted to show the progress of the II&C under his administration, he also did not belittle the efforts of the previous presidents:

Those familiar with the Industrial Institute and College know that it was not born full grown; that it had a small beginning; and that what it is today it has become because of the accretions, year by year, through the service of those who loved it and have unselfishly labored for it. The period immediately preceding the one under discussion will always be known as

the era of the great expansion of the college, both as regards its patronage and the equipment necessary to accommodate this largely increased attendance. (qtd. in Neilson 76)

Whitfield also directly addressed the issue of the academic standards of the II&C, which had long been a source of controversy:

The present Industrial Institute and College would have been impossible ten years ago because of both the lower standards of the public schools and a less appreciative public sentiment for higher education. . . . The Industrial Institute and College is a part of the public school system . . . The standard of work in the high schools has always been a limitation on the standards of the college; to have set the work of the college out of the reach of the high schools would have made it impotent for service to the state and brought destruction to itself. Again, it must be remembered that the Industrial Institute and College is a public institution, supported by the taxes of the people; that it has no right to exist unless it serves the whole state. To have made it an aristocratic college where only a selected few could have enjoyed the advantages of its courses, would have defeated the purpose of its creation. (qtd. in Neilson 76)

Student discipline remained tight under Whitfield. Student Mary Clayton Barwick, Class of 1913, recalled the level of supervision students were subject to during Whitfield's tenure:

We had to be chaperoned whenever we left the school grounds. And rules were very strict concerning playing cards. Rook cards were O.K., but

bridge cards were absolutely taboo. And I recall many games of bridge played on a quilt on the front campus using thirteen rook cards but played by bridge rules. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 180)

Perhaps as a consequence of the strict control exercised over students' lives, the student-faculty relationships were closer than at other Southern women's colleges:

Each year the school established a Student-Teacher Friendship Plan whereby ten to twelve students would adopt a teacher as their friend and counselor. Each student would take an oath “. . . to be an obedient daughter to her throughout the session.” Students and teachers playing tennis, taking walks, and visiting with one another was a common sight at the I. I. and C. (Hall 73-74)

Students at the II&C through 1920 were almost all “from within the state” and “many were quite poor” (Hall 47). In 1914, almost thirty years after the first students arrived, the II&C finally abolished its preparatory department, as incoming freshmen were better prepared for college-level work (Neilson 77). In 1918, “the last Normal Diplomas were awarded; it was felt that the time had come when graduation from a four-year college should be the goal of all prospective teachers” (Neilson 81).

Faculty salaries were long a problem for Whitfield. In 1912, he wrote the legislature that “I desire to emphasize one thing, and that is the need of better salaries for our teachers. I find it harder each year to get competent teachers for the salaries we offer” (qtd. in Neilson 83). The problem continued throughout his tenure. In 1919, he wrote, “I regret to have to announce that an unusually large number of the faculty have resigned

because of the inadequate compensation received for their services. . . . Fully one-third of the places in the college have been made vacant” (qtd. in Neilson 83).

In the end, Mississippi politics would force Whitfield from the presidency, even as the II&C became Mississippi State College for Women. Lee Russell ran for governor in 1919 and asked for Whitfield’s support. Whitfield “not only declined to support Russell but actively campaigned for his opponent” (Sansing 85). In retaliation, when he was elected, Russell “fired Whitfield in 1920” (Sansing 85). In 1920, the legislature also considered a bill to consolidate “the University of Mississippi, the Agricultural College, and the Industrial Institute into one institution named the University of Mississippi and located in Jackson” (Sansing 85). Under the plan, the II&C would remain “in Columbus as a junior college for women” (Sansing 85). The plan failed; then, as now, each college in Mississippi had its champions, and none would see their school closed.

Despite the record of accomplishment at the II&C through 1920, Hall reports that “the college never received the recognition which it felt it rightfully deserved” (40). Even the name of the college became somewhat controversial, with many students feeling that “‘Industrial Institute’ sounded ‘too much like a reform school’” (Hall 41). While the legislature was debating whether to consolidate the State’s separate institutions of higher education into a greater University of Mississippi, “Whitfield invited the legislature to visit the Industrial Institute and College. After their visit the lawmakers voted to keep the school autonomous and independent and changed its name to Mississippi State College for Women” (Sansing 86).

In 1920, the II&C was no more. The school had grown far beyond the vision that had led to its founding, and no one any longer questioned the wisdom or the place of a

state-supported institution of higher education for women. There were no further serious efforts, until late in the twentieth-century, to close the school or merge it with other institutions. Questions of the school's purpose and function had been answered, and "The W," as the school has been known ever since, had its academic mission cemented in its new name.

Mistress of English: Pauline Van de Graaf Orr's Career at the Industrial Institute and
College, 1885-1913

"I have desired, above everything else, the mental
enfranchisement of the girls of Mississippi. I have tried
to help them to realize and express themselves.

—Pauline Orr, 1913 ("State College for Women")

Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, Mistress of English at the II&C from 1885-1913, "was one of the leaders of that small minority that transformed the schooling of females into the education of women and citizens" (Lindsey *Life* 1). Her impact on the students and the II&C was long-lasting and profound. As Stephen Pieschel notes, Orr was one "of the most important educators in the South before 1920" (Pieschel "Orrs" 1). The Orr family, originally from South Carolina, "was one of the most distinguished clans in the South" ("Pioneer"). Orr's uncle "was a governor of . . . [South Carolina] and later served as a minister to Russia" ("Pioneer"). Jehu Orr, Pauline's father, who would become a Republican judge after the Civil War, "moved to Mississippi in a covered wagon in the 1840's and established the family home not far from Columbus" ("Pioneer"). He "lived to be ninety-six and had the same modern views about the ability of women to learn and to work as did his daughter, Pauline, and [sic] unusual attitude for men in those days when women were mere females" (Taylor, J. 1).

According to Sarah Neilson, "Miss Pauline V. Orr was the daughter of a well-known Columbus attorney; she was unusually well read and had enjoyed many

advantages; she held no degree” (16). Orr was born in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, in 1861 to Cornelia Van de Graaf and Jehu Orr (Wilkerson-Freeman 72). Given her aristocratic family background, Orr “should have been a stereotypical Southern Belle” (Pieschel “Orrs” 1). However, both of her parents had been educated in the North, with her father holding a master’s from Princeton (Wilkerson-Freeman 72). During the Civil War, Orr’s mother “bore two children, . . . cared for three stepchildren, and managed the plantation and family business interests” (Wilkerson-Freeman 73). Sarah Wilkerson-Freeman argues that it was the experience of struggle and deprivation following the War that made Orr “determined to be economically independent and resourceful” (Wilkerson-Freeman 73).

In her unpublished biography of Orr, Myra Mason Lindsey writes, “Her parents must have been alarmed by her determination to read and to study when she should have been resting or playing with the other children of her age on the plantation” (*Life* 1). Orr demonstrated a passionate love of literature from early in her childhood: “She went through Dickens, Scott, Macaulay, Hume, Gibbon, Green, Guizot, Plutarch, and Shakespeare when the average child of her age was dressing dolls” (Lindsey *Life* 2).

Although the “Columbus Female Institute [which would become the site of the II&C] was within a mile of her home,” Orr would not consider becoming a pupil there. Janie Taylor, one of her students, reports that, without her parents’ knowledge, Orr read “lessons to a senior girl student who was half blind and had learned much Latin, Algebra, Geometry, and English” (1). The other school in Columbus was “a strict preparatory school for boys who were going to college, a Greek and Latin school headed by a Mr. Edmonds, graduate of the University of Virginia” (Taylor, J. 1). In a highly unusual

process for a girl of her place and time, she approached Edmonds directly to request admission to the boys' school: "After demonstrating her skills to the school's headmaster, and her surprised parents, Pauline was allowed to enroll even though she was female and ten years younger than most of the students" (Wilkerson-Freeman 73). She graduated from this school "with high honors" (Taylor, J. 1).

At the age of sixteen, Orr "insisted on attending Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn Heights, New York, a girls' boarding school with a rigorous and innovative curriculum," where she was "the only Packer student from the Deep South" (Wilkerson-Freeman 75). Packer was a unique school because, first, "women's intellectual abilities were held in high regard," and, second, some "female faculty members advocated expanding women's 'sphere'" (Wilkerson-Freeman 75); it was long considered the finest girls' school in the country. She undertook the study of German at Packer, a course that would prove useful in her intellectual development in the future. Orr mastered the difficult curriculum and "graduated in two years, not the usual four" (Taylor, J. 2). One develops an idea of the impression Orr made while a student at the Packer Institute from a letter D. G. Euton, chemist and scholar, wrote on her behalf when she was being considered for a faculty position at the new II&C:

While a pupil at the Packer Institute some few years since she was an earnest faithful student, winning by her ladylike deportment, her pleasing and graceful manners, the entire confidence and esteem of her companions as well as teachers. She was very conscientious and thorough in all her work and would never leave a subject until it was thoroughly mastered. Her power of conversation and ability to communicate clearly to others

her own thoughts and knowledge, eminently commend her as a teacher of history, literature and criticism, as well as the various branches of natural science and metaphysics; and I am sure she will not disappoint the reasonable expectations of her employers in any position whose duties and responsibilities she may be willing to assume.

After graduating from the Packer Institute, Orr “visited home and then sailed for Germany to do private study in Hartsburg for six months. She learned to speak and write the German language well enough to enter the University of Hanover” (Taylor, J. 2). By the time she entered her twenties, Orr “had set her sights on becoming a New York City journalist” (Wilkerson-Freeman 75). However, she returned to Columbus, Mississippi, in 1880 and “apparently had no academic goal—or opportunity—other than to enjoy language and literature at her parents’ home on Orr’s Hill” (Pieschel “Orrs” 2).

One of the ironies in the struggle to establish the II&C is the fact that one of the state legislators “who opposed the women’s college was W. G. Orr,” Pauline’s half-brother (Pieschel *Loyal* 5-6). Orr was in Jackson for the debate on establishing a state-supported woman’s college, not to support the bill, but to watch “the political debut of her half-brother, William Gates Orr, newly elected representative from Chickasaw County” (Pieschel “Orrs” 2). At that time, Orr is said to have expressed “only mild curiosity about the women’s college bill” (Pieschel “Orrs” 2).

Once the bill establishing the II&C passed the legislature in 1884, Orr’s father was instrumental in getting the II&C located in Columbus. Part of his motivation, as pointed out in the previous chapter, may have been that the Columbus Female Institute had some significant financial issues. However, he may well have been thinking that the

school could provide “an opportunity for his still unengaged daughter to make use of her academic ability” (Pieschel “Orrs” 3). After R. W. Jones had been selected as first president of the II&C, he ate dinner with the Orrs. When “he met Pauline Orr, [he] was immediately impressed with her erudition, and selected her for the first faculty” (Pieschel “Orrs” 3). Janie Taylor reports Jones as being “very much concerned over finding the right person for Mistress of English Literature and Elocution but that his search was ended” (2-3). Jones is said to have asked Judge Orr, “Why didn’t you tell me your daughter was so beautifully educated?” (Taylor, J. 3). At the age of twenty-two, Orr was “brilliant, beautiful, earnest, well-trained and ambitious for the women of her native state” (Taylor, J. 3). Susan K. Cook, Professor of English at the Packer Institute, wrote a letter of recommendation on Orr’s behalf:

In character and personal influence she commanded the entire confidence of teachers and classmates. Miss Gordon, then often in charge of the study-hours for boarding pupils, tells me that Miss Orr’s industry and diligence were rare—and her command of English in conversation or class exercises, admirable.

Stephen D. Lee, President of the nearby Mississippi A&M College in Starkville, also supported Orr for the position of Mistress of English: “I know of no lady who has been more gracefully educated for the position she seeks. I believe her fully competent and earnestly recommend her to your favorable notice.” Orr seemed perfect for the job, and she was hired. In its article reporting on the opening of the II&C, the Columbus *Tri-Weekly Index* offered special praise for Orr: “Miss Pauline Orr, Mistress of English Literature and Elocution, is well known by us all. She is a brilliant brunette whose whole

bearing is lady like, cultured and graceful. To hear her recite is a privilege whose pleasure one never forgets” (“Institute”).

In her career, of almost thirty years, Orr proved to be of incalculable value to the II&C. She “took as her mission the goal of proving to the world that Mississippi’s women scholars could be the finest in any setting” (Pieschel *Loyal* 19). In addition to providing excellence as a teacher, Miss Orr was a significant figure “in the growth and progress of II&C” (Pieschel *Loyal* 20). In 1904, Rosa Peebles, her former student, wrote that Orr is one of “those early teachers to whom the College and Mississippi owe a debt not to be slightly estimated” (“Industrial” 3). Miss Orr

by her rare force of mind and character, and her irresistible enthusiasm in the cause of uplifting Mississippi girls, was enabled to touch the hearts and enlarge the outlook of the students through her lectures on literature which were also made lectures on life. (Peebles “Industrial” 3)

One wonders exactly what convinced Orr that this was the position for her. Before accepting the position at the II&C, Orr had turned down teaching positions at “Vassar, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, Syracuse, and Northwestern” (Wilkerson-Freeman 76). During her long career, she always “struggled to keep the standards high when others were content to let them fall” (“Pioneer”). One of her former students said, “She was as tough an instructor as you can imagine” (“Pioneer”). Myra Mason Lindsey, who was also one of her students, describes her presence in the classroom as follows:

She was an expositor with few equals. The searching clarity of her intellect illumined for her students the dry, tangled problems of scholarship. She made Middle English, with its linguistic difficulties, as

contemporary as the latest novel and as beguiling. A work like The Booke of Curteseye preserved in the Sloan manuscript, which she translated from the crude, obscure language of some unknown contemporary of Chaucer brought into her classroom the social customs and daily manners of 1460. The disquisition she wrote upon it is a masterpiece of both scholarship and exquisite prose. As she discussed it with her classes, it was no longer dry and remote, but throbbing with up-to-the-minute life, sly humor and sympathy for those long-gone Englishmen, who, though deep in the Wars of the Roses, could lay down exact rules for personal greetings, table etiquette, travel with its dangers and difficulties, and even sleeping. Lectures on subjects like this sent her English majors flying to the library for more material on the period, made them look forward to Chaucer as to entertainment. (*Life* 4)

When Orr came to the newly established II&C, she entered a world of experiment by design. In spite of being so young, Orr's "tastefully buttoned-up appearance, dark hair, and intense dark eyes made her an impressive figure" (Wilkerson-Freeman 76). With all the rhetoric floating around the campus, indeed the State, of how Mississippi was leading the nation educationally with the establishment of the II&C, it was Orr, along with Mary Calloway, who reminded students that education in the South lagged far behind the rest of the country. Orr had no doubt that "women could perform difficult academic work, and she used her elite training to challenge her students' intellectual faculties and improve their self-expression" (Wilkerson-Freeman 77). However, from the beginning, Orr's career exhibited tension as she struggled "to maintain high academic standards, and

to adapt to the political realities of an educational system supported and controlled by the enfranchised men of Mississippi” (Pieschel “Orrs” 1).

In the summer of 1885, before classes began at the II&C, Orr studied in Monteagle, Tennessee, with Dr. William Baskerville, a grammarian from Vanderbilt University, who stressed “the necessity of emphasizing grammar in her collegiate curriculum” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4). Baskerville was the co-author of the influential *Baskerville and Sewell’s Grammar* (Taylor, J. 3). During this summer, Baskerville repeatedly told Orr, “Make them study grammar, Miss Orr. Keep them at it” (Taylor, J. 3). Baskerville later wrote,

Miss Orr . . . studied with me at Monteagle and I can assure you of her ability and indefatigable industry. She has that earnestness, that enthusiasm and persistence which are necessary to the true teacher and furthermore she has a right conception of the study of English.

The original English curriculum at the II&C reflected Baskerville’s emphasis on students developing an understanding of grammar before proceeding to composition:

freshmen were to use Abbot’s How to Parse; sophomores would use Hill’s Science of Rhetoric and Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Primer; juniors would use Morris’ Historical Grammar . . . Not until their senior year would Miss Orr’s students be allowed to concentrate on composition skills—after they had spent three years developing an understanding of grammar. (Pieschel “Orrs” 4)

Every student who “went through Miss Orr’s classes came out . . . knowing the anatomy of his [sic] mother tongue” (Taylor, J. 3). Her lessons were often “hair-raising

remembrances” that her students retained in their memories long after they left the II&C (Taylor, J. 3). Orr gave of her time freely “to help all and any students who wanted help in and out of classes[,] but she was especially eager to help those who helped themselves” (Taylor, J. 3). To those who had no interest in learning, she “often explained that the State was spending tax money to see that worthy, ambitious young women received an education, that space was needed for many who could not enter” (Taylor, J. 3). Student attrition in her classes remained high throughout her entire career.

More than simply stressing the need for her students to read widely, Orr set aside Monday evenings for “meetings with her English students and teachers in old Study Hall . . . to inoculate ‘her girls’ with the contagion of poetry and literature in general” (Taylor, J. 4). This was a new experience for most of the young women at the II&C. They had not ever before heard someone speak “informally of the importance of the study of our language . . . [who also] read the best of prose and poetry . . . with a new and lasting meaning” (Taylor, J. 4). Equally impressive to these young students was that Orr was the first person they ever had met who spoke “of the great movements and changes affecting literature . . . [that] revealed the very character of different peoples” (Taylor, J. 4). Students, not knowing the facts of Orr’s education, often “thought that she was born knowing everything” (Taylor, J. 4). Orr must have made an indelible impression on those first students: to the “poor and uneducated, Miss Orr’s culture and grace must have seemed awesome and perhaps out of place at an industrial school” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4).

Orr’s vision was to “devote herself to running a high-level liberal arts curriculum—creating a Vanderbilt or a Vassar for Mississippi women” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4). Such an academic vision “demanded high standards” for the II&C, but most of the

students who came to school, many as young as fifteen, were unprepared for college-level work. It was not too long before “[s]tudents and parents complained that the academic standards were unrealistic” (Wilkerson-Freeman 77). Any students who were not committed to learning must have been “frightened by Miss Orr’s academic seriousness” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4).

These were the true pioneer days at the II&C, and Orr’s effort “is as rugged as any story of pick-and-shovel pioneers” (Taylor, J. 3). Orr dedicated herself completely to the new school’s success: “[s]he worked night and day, lending and giving her books for study” (Taylor, J. 3). The first students were often especially eager to learn, but they “did not know what learning was all about[,] and it was the task of Pauline Orr to organize, examine, classify, and inspire” (Taylor, J. 3). Orr took an interest in each student as soon as she arrived on campus and “personally gave all the examinations to every student who enrolled” (Taylor, J. 3). As Mistress of English, Orr was “responsible for the language skills of every II&C student” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4-5).

Even industrial students at the II&C “were expected to display a certain level of proficiency in English,” and those who could not do so were classified as preparatory students (Pieschel “Orrs” 4). Under Orr’s leadership, the II&C maintained a strong preparatory department that did not close “until the year after her resignation from the faculty” (Pieschel “Orrs” 5). In the group of “250 to 350 students who comprised the first II&C class . . . 30 were judged capable of first year college work in . . . grammar” (Pieschel “Orrs” 7). In fact, “some students in the 1880s were arriving at the II&C with almost no academic background” (Pieschel “Orrs” 7). One can imagine the demanding workload Orr assumed when one realizes that she taught English “to every student

enrolled in the school” (Pieschel “Orrs” 7). Concurrent with the opening of the college, “[p]roblems with academic standards arose immediately” (Pieschel “Orrs” 4). Orr felt that the requirement that the II&C offer industrial arts and a normal school, as well as liberal arts, “stood in the way of her goals as a teacher” (Wilkerson-Freeman 77). A minority of the students, and of the people in the state, were interested in the A. B. degree: “[a]lthough without an A.B. herself, Miss Orr found herself . . . developing and defending the A.B. curriculum” (Pieschel “Orrs” 5).

Orr was always a central figure in the academic controversies that marked the early years of the II&C. Years later, she recalled the difficulties she had in establishing high standards: “It wasn’t easy. . . There were those who said girls didn’t belong in college. And there were those who thought we should go easy on the girls” (“Pioneer”). Although Orr seemed never to have criticized her colleagues publicly, some faculty members may have been as unprepared to teach college courses as the students were to succeed in them. In a 1979 interview, Lena Ellington, Class of 1906, remembers that “we had one or two outstanding teachers that were qualified, but we had some who were just natives of Columbus that were put there to teach” (Ellington 10). One of the history teachers was “a native of Columbus, and she was a good, fine person; but she didn’t have a historical background, she didn’t have a historical education” (Ellington 10). The excellent teachers included “Miss Orr [who] was well educated, Miss Peebles—Rosa J., I believe—in the literature department was well educated. And Miss Paslay had Latin, and she was very good” (Ellington 10). Peebles and Paslay were both devoted former students of Orr.

Orr maintained cordial relations with Jones, the first president of the II&C. He “particularly admired Orr’s ‘vigorous intellect’ and her desire to offer advanced courses as students became capable of performing more difficult work” (Wilkerson-Freeman 77-78). Jones shared Orr’s view that the liberal arts should be the prime focus at the II&C. Although Orr seems to have “worked well with Jones during his three years as president, . . . she rankled under the leadership of later presidents, who put more value on vocational knowledge than on the liberal arts” (Pieschel “Orrs” 6). Years later, Orr wrote to Nannie Herndon Rice of Starkville that Jones was “the only highly competent one [president] in a long stretch of years After he left, the best the college could do was to keep in sight—in lessening degree—the standards he set up” (qtd. in Pieschel “Orrs” 12).

Orr’s “Report of the Department of English,” presented to President Jones, reports that in “October 1887, 255 students enrolled for English” (Orr “Report of Department”). Not a single student was “fully prepared for the Freshman Class; but about thirty diligent students . . . accomplished the Freshman course, with the exception of a small portion of the parallel reading” (Orr “Report of Department”). Of the remaining 225 students “only about thirty succeeded in passing the final examination entitling them to admission in the Freshman class” (Orr “Report of Department”). Although Orr admits that the results seem “discouraging,” she is quick to point out that many students “came to us altogether without knowledge of the elementary principles governing the structure of the English language” (Orr “Report of Department”). The students, except for 14 who failed a test on “Grammar exclusive of Analysis,” did well enough to earn “a second grade certificate to teach in the public schools,” and the thirty students who passed the Freshman course “could have taken a first grade certificate” (Orr “Report of Department”). The main

drawback was that the typical student came to the II&C unprepared for college-level work, and Orr reports, “I cannot say that I see any improvement in the preparation of the new students” (Orr “Report of Department”).

In the College course, the Freshmen were “studying Kellogg’s Rhetoric, and [sic] elementary and practical text-book. They are studying also the works of several of the most prominent authors of the present century, Macaulay, Scott, Dickens, Bryant, Tennyson, etc.” (Orr “Report of Department”). In the second semester, Freshmen would study “an advanced Rhetoric by Bain, and the careful reading of the leading 17th and 18th century authors” (Orr “Report of Department”). The course of reading included

“Julius Caesar,” “Pilgrim’s Progress,” both of Dryden’s Odes for the Feast of St. Cecelia, as well as “MacFlecknoe,” Milton’s “L’ Allegro” and “Il Penseroso,” most of Addison’s “De Coverly papers,” “The Vision of Mirzah,” the essay on “Superstition,” “Cheerfulness,” etc., Swift’s “Voyage to Lilliput,” Goldsmith’s “Deserted Village,” and several of his essays, Pope’s “Essay on Criticism,” Burns’ “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” and Burke’s great speech on American Taxation. (Orr “Report of Department”)

The Juniors that year were “making a critical study of English literature” that included “Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and a few of the more difficult modern authors—Carlyle, Wordsworth, etc.” (Orr “Report of Department”). Before any class began the study of a particular author, Orr would generally offer “a lecture giving the scope, purpose, and workmanship of his leading compositions, the influence of his time

upon him, and, in turn, his influence upon his contemporaries and posterity” (Orr “Report of Department”).

Orr trained her students in a particular approach to literature: “the student first reads the whole to get its general outline and drift” (Orr “Report of Department”). The student then “studies it carefully, passage by passage, noting the construction, the style, the figures employed, the individual words” (Orr “Report of Department”). Finally, the student was “then expected, if required, to substantially reproduce the work in writing” (Orr “Report of Department”). Orr claims success for this method by the number of students who “are developing a taste for Literature that cannot fail to have a telling effect upon their future pursuits and character” (Orr “Report of Department”). Finally, Orr concludes that one “imperative need of the English Dpt. at present, is a Library containing standard works and books of reference” (Orr “Report of Department”).

In 1888, Orr argued to the Legislature that “[o]ne purpose of the II&C . . . was to counter ‘the prevailing superficiality in the so-called education of girls’ by developing and maintaining high standards under the guidance of fairly compensated specialists and scholars” (Wilkerson-Freeman 78). She asked the Legislature if they intended to say to II&C students,

Study conscientiously, laboriously, consecutively for years, . . . but remember that by the accident of sex you are debarred from ever receiving the just recompense Your work, because you are a woman, is to be branded with the mark of inferiority, and sold for what would be little more than half its market price, if offered by a man. (qtd. in Wilkerson-Freeman 78)

President Richard Jones' appreciation for Orr's early contribution to the II&C is reflected by his saying, "Her work has been of historic value to Mississippi. Miss Orr's name should be written in the stars" ("Pioneer"). In 1888, he wrote of her,

Miss Pauline V. Orr has been the Mistress of English, having charge of that Department since the opening of this institution October 22, 1885. She is a lady of the most admirable literary taste as a writer, of the most just and delicate appreciation of literary excellences in an author, of extensive and accurate information, of broad and thorough training both in general scholarship and in English as a specialty. The Course of instruction which she laid out here in the English language and its literature is in my judgment one of the best in the country. She is enthusiastic in her work as a teacher and inspires her pupils with ambition to excel and with love of the subjects. One needs to read her course of instruction and to see her in the class room in order to be able to appreciate her vigorous intellect, her superior methods, her devotion to her professions. I commend her strongly.

When Charles H. Cocke became president of the II&C in 1888, he "immediately reduced the liberal arts requirements for all programs" (Wilkerson-Freeman 78). There were some political machinations in the Board of Trustees that led them that same year to declare "that the President be and he is hereby empowered . . . to determine the course of study to be prescribed and followed in the II&C in all its departments" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 9). One finds Orr's views at the time on what the proper role and function of the Department of English should be in the *Fourth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and*

Students of the Industrial Institute and College for the Education of White Girls of Mississippi. Orr writes that a “brief review of the more difficult principles of English Grammar begins the work of the First College Class in this Department” (*Fourth* 19). Students are warned that the “study of Grammar is a review, and will by no means suffice for the student unacquainted with the laws governing the structure and the logical analysis of the English sentence” (*Fourth* 19). Students are also informed that they will be required to sit an examination in English when they arrive at the II&C: “As a preparation for this examination, we would suggest the use of one of the following books; Abbott’s *How to Parse*, Reed and Kellogg’s *Higher Lessons in English*, Whitney’s *Essentials of English Grammar*, Swinton’s *Grammar*” (*Fourth* 19). Reading for the first year of the College course “embraces . . . the study of Bryant, Scott, Macaulay, and Thackery” (*Fourth* 19). In the second year, students focus on “the study of Anglo-Saxon, and advanced Rhetoric” (*Fourth* 19); reading in the second year includes “the works of Dryden and the great writers of the Queen Anne period, and closes with the study of Burns, Goldsmith, and Milton” (*Fourth* 19). In the Junior year, students pursue the “philosophical study of the history and development of English literature, the study of Chaucer’s poetry, and of the Elizabethan authors” (*Fourth* 19). Seniors attend “lectures on the English language [and produce] written criticism of certain authors whose works form a part of the English Course, and the study of Shakespeare, Burke, Carlyle and Tennyson” (*Fourth* 19). Orr gives “[l]ectures discussing the various authors and epochs under consideration . . . regularly throughout the course” (*Fourth* 19). Orr describes the benefits accruing to students from this work:

It is the aim of this Department, aside from the mental discipline that it offers, to secure to the young women of Mississippi, in the first place, a knowledge of their own language so that they may speak, write, and teach it properly; and in the second place, to inspire them with a loving appreciation of those great representative books, from Chaucer to Tennyson, that form the grandest achievement of the English speaking world. (*Fourth* 19-20)

During the controversy about Charles Cocke continuing as President of the II&C, Miss Orr was identified as one of the faculty members who did not sign a statement supporting him (Neilson 25). By 1890, the last year of Cocke's administration, "Mary S. J. Calloway and Pauline V. Orr had emerged as the main creators and permanent guardians of II&C's high academic standards" (Pieschel *Loyal* 28). Even so, when Cocke resigned in March 1890, the Columbus *Index* expressed its displeasure with the idea that the female students and faculty could run the school. If that would happen, "then we say that the college will be a failure, and instead of proving a blessing to our girls, it will turn out to be a hot bed for nursing resistance to law and order and legally constituted authority, and its doors should be forever closed" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 11). A Birmingham paper reported that faculty who supported Cocke had been shunned by others, to the point that "when one of . . . [Cocke's supporters] fainted and fell to the floor, not a single teacher went to her relief. These are hard things to say about women, but there is abundant proof of their truth" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 11). Threats to close the II&C were quite serious, but Orr continued to work for high standards.

In an 1891 speech to the Mississippi Teachers' Association, Orr argues that the primary purpose of the II&C is “‘intellectual,’ to give young women the ‘power of thought’ and ‘command of [their] resources’” (qtd. in Wilkerson-Freeman 79). The training in industrial arts had value for all students in that “individual circumstances and surroundings . . . *can be confidently predicted in the case of no girl whatever*” (qtd. in Wilkerson-Freeman 79).

During the early 1890s, Orr began what would become a lifelong Boston marriage, with Miriam Greene Paslay. While a student in the first graduating class at the II&C, Paslay made an immediate impression upon both faculty and students from the moment she arrived. Rosa Peebles, Class of 1891, remembered the faculty continually impressing upon the students the need for them to work hard if the II&C were to succeed:

At that time a new student, Miriam Greene Paslay, arrived who made at once a striking impression because of her great physical beauty, her reticence, almost aloofness, her grace and what we felt to be an intellectual sophistication. She at once went to work as if she had come from some genuine university. She knew how to study. She immediately became an influence. There was the ideal student that the two or three great teachers had hopefully sought to find in this welter of ignorant, more-or-less traditionless Mississippi girls. The girls themselves sensed the quality.

(Peebles “Remembrance”)

Paslay's parents died during her time as a student at the II&C; being an orphan made her work “all the harder to earn one of the first bachelor of arts degrees, and after some graduate training, [she] was hired to teach in the Classics Department in 1891”

(Wilkerson-Freeman 80). The example of Paslay may have helped Orr develop “her arguments for a type of higher education that offered women security and independence” (Wilkerson-Freeman 80).

Rosa Peebles describes Orr as the one teacher at the II&C who “made the college, the spiritual, intellectual college—all that has ever really counted” (“Miss” 73). Early students all found her “a different kind of woman and teacher from any with whom we had come in contact” (Peebles “Miss” 73). Although students knew that she was “a Mississippi woman, her different and thorough training in the North and in Germany made her seem cosmopolitan in our provincial midst” (Peebles “Miss” 73). As long as students did their work to the best of their ability, Orr “was all sympathy and encouragement” (Peebles “Miss” 73). However, on any day when students showed no preparation, Orr quickly reminded them “quietly” that

the college was new, an experiment in fact, the legislature was giving the women of the state a chance to show whether they wanted college training or not; that her assignment had been no greater than girls in the North accepted willingly and prepared creditably, but if it was too much for Mississippi girls she had nothing to say. (Peebles “Miss” 73)

Orr was a memorable reader of poetry, and Peebles reports long afterward that when she “came across passages of poetry that she read to us then, they stand out from the page, fuller of meaning because of her power” (Peebles “Miss” 74). Peebles explains the impact of Orr’s teaching as “spiritual. It emphasizes character, care for the things of the mind, the integrity of thinking. It is seeing large” (Peebles “Miss” 74).

Although Orr entered her 30s as an unmarried woman completely dedicated to teaching, she was capable of exciting passion in men. The following letter is dated March 3rd, 1893, 10:20 o'clock:

Most respectfully I beg your forgiveness for forcing another note upon you. It is anything but pleasant for me to do so now and I shall certainly not do so again except by your positive permission.

Your refusal to answer my note this afternoon increased the embarrassment of the trying position in which I find myself. Surely your resentment is not so great that you cannot see me. It is simple justice to me that you should see me. I cannot rest under your last note. I am not theatrical, but I am desperate. I write from a heart surcharged with its own bitterness—bitterness of which you are not the sole cause. For God's sake do not spurn me utterly. I do not deserve it. I must see you! I will not take no for an answer. Surely you will not force me to the unmanly course of skulking around corners for an opportunity to see you. I appeal to you—man to woman—to save me this. I beg you to appoint me some time and place where I may see you—when I may say what I cannot write. I appeal to your womanliness, to your tenderness, to your humanity. This is abject, but I care not if it is—I am wild. You do not know me, or you would not treat me so. It is far from being best for either of us. It maddens me and I care for nothing save for you and your undoubted right to be free from everything that might compromise and embarrass you. Trust me for this. I would throw my life before anything that would harm you and you know

it. Again I beg you to appoint a meeting for us two—I ask it—as a dying man makes his last request. I will stake my life upon the declaration that your will shall be respected.

Good night! God forgive me and help us both—for—I love you!

(qtd. in Pieschel “Orrs” 14-15)

This letter is signed only “Your cousin” (Pieschel “Orrs” 15). This is a remarkable document, as Orr seems to have been guarded and discrete about revealing her private life. We do not know her feelings, but we do know that someone loved, or at least thought he loved, her passionately and with devotion.

During her life, Orr was often subject to “‘dark’ periods” that incapacitated her. In 1893, following one of those periods, Orr and Paslay “secured permission to take unpaid sabbaticals and sailed for Europe” (Wilkerson-Freeman 80). It is also possible that “the urgency of . . . [the] emotional plea [included above] may have had something to do with” Orr’s decision to travel abroad (Pieschel “Orrs” 15). Orr hired Rosa Peebles, who would earn a Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr and eventually become the head of the English Department at Vassar, “to take charge of her classes” (Wilkerson-Freeman 80). This was the first of numerous trips to Europe between 1893 and 1905, where Orr and Paslay “became habitués of biergartens and cafés, attended the theater on a weekly basis, and increasingly disassociated themselves from traditional images of the southern belle” (Wilkerson-Freeman 80). Orr studied for “two years at the University of Munich, where Bavarians marveled at her ease and fluency of their language, with her beautiful North German intonation which she had learned at Hartsburg” (Taylor, J. 2).

In Europe, while studying the German language and culture, Orr began writing poetry, highly influenced by the “spirit of romanticism that still flourished at the end of the 19th century” (Pieschel “Orrs” 15). Many of Orr’s poems “eventually found their way into II&C publications” (Pieschel “Orrs” 15). For example, Orr wrote “Palm Sunday” in 1894 while in Harzburg:

Palm Sunday and the doorways here,
 And cottage windows far and near,
 Are garlanded in wreathes of green,
 With roses twined their sorays between,
 And o’er their brows the mountains throw,
 A veil of fleecy, lacelike snow,
 While the fields a mantle of green display
 And I think as I look on it all here today
 Of hills and fields that are far away
 Of home and friends across the sea
 So often here in thought with me! (qtd. in Pieschel “Orrs” 15-16)

Orr clearly was a better student of literature than poet. Her poetry often seems conventional and sentimental, lacking originality and vigor. Nothing in this poem, or in most of her poetry, compels the reader or catches the reader’s imagination. It is as if she cannot rise above conventions of Victorian sentimentality as she becomes, at best a poetaster. Yet, Orr was undoubtedly a sensitive and intelligent reader and expostulator of contemporary poetry. It does not seem possible that the same person could write such wooden poetry and also write the following analysis of Browning:

On one condition, man's every-day activities and perplexities, his weaknesses, his humors even, may be themes of the poet; and this condition is that these things shall not be presented according to the methods of the laboratory in wholly realistic dissection but in the illuminating and reconciling glow of that light that never was on sea or land. And it is this light that makes us feel in Browning's poetry, as we must feel in the contemplation of every true work of art, however tragic, terrible even its subject, not the helpless and depressing sense of human weakness and misery but the permanence of the moral order, the grandeur of the conception of life that places the emphasis upon abiding truth rather than upon material issue or events. The varied and contradictory facts of human life so conceived and handled may become the material for a noble and sincere type of art which must often express itself with nervousness and ruggedness and even consonantal harshness in order to echo the clash and clang and strife of life as well as body forth its abiding beauty.

("Lecture" 1)

The paradox in Orr's work is that her prose reaches a poetic level of expression that often eludes her poetry. How is one to reconcile her ability to write about Browning with such sensitivity and insight and also to write, apparently sincerely, "And I think as I look on it all here today/Of hills and fields that are far away/Of home and friends across the sea/So often here in thought with me!"?

Some of Orr's poetry is more successful than "Palm Sunday." As was true of many intellectuals in the 1880s and 1890s, Orr was influenced by the work of Thomas

Carlyle and subsequently wrote her poem “Sartor Resartus,” in 1894. Stephen Pieschel finds that its “rhythmic tetrameter lines . . . [offer] a vivid testimony of the impact Carlyle’s transcendentalism had on Miss Orr” (“Orrs” 15-16):

Of all the books of the changing ages,
 I scarce know one upon whose pages
 Is stamped more boldly the passionate plea
 For the spirit’s supreme reality.
 This work is a needed protestation
 To the modern man of every station
 ‘Gainst a world of matter without any soul,
 ‘Gainst material mortals with dust for their goal.
 In the world, as in man, the essence is soul,
 Not to be, not in part, but the causative whole;
 The basic condition that underlies
 The varied phenomena greeting our eyes,
 Is spirit, or if you prefer, call it thought;
 The rest is a frail superstructure wrought
 To body forth and symbolize
 The eternal truths it typifies.
 But man so engaged has become with Truth’s wrappings,
 Earth’s vanishing, garish, and counterfeit trappings,
 The rush and the hurry, the din and the chatter,
 So caught and ensnared in mere forms of matter,

That he misses the drift of the soul's still monitions,
 And mistakes, through the senses, life's primal conditions.
 Like a mathematician failing to see
 In such signs, or symbols, as A and B
 Mere tangible forms in subject alliance
 With the ruling, intangible laws of science,
 Simply mechanical sign-posts, or stations,
 Pointing the way to thought relations.
 Of the symbols of life an interpretation
 Is proposed by every age and nation;
 Indeed each individual heart,
 In solving this problem must bear a part;
 And whether we face the issue or not,
 For the flesh or the soul we are casting our lot.
 If, through the blind medley of sensuous things,
 We catch the gleam of spirit wings,
 And see in hill and flower and sod,
 Incarnate, the thoughts of the infinite God,
 Like Sartor's hero, we've passed away
 From the Everlasting Nay to Yea.
 (qtd, in Pieschel "Orrs" 16-17)

The poem's title alludes to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* ("Sartor"). The book is "based on the speculations of an imaginary

Professor Teufelsdröckh and . . . [leads] to the conclusion that all symbols, forms, and human institutions are properly clothes, and as such temporary” (“Sartor”). The notable chapters are those on “‘The Everlasting No,’ . . . ‘The Everlasting Yea,’ which depict a spiritual crisis such as Carlyle himself had experienced during his early Edinburgh days” (“Sartor”). Given the paucity of records detailing her personal life, it seems impossible to know whether a personal spiritual crisis might have motivated Orr to respond so powerfully to Carlyle. It could have been her struggles with teaching, her struggle with her “Cousin,” or even a struggle over her developing relationship with Paslay. However, it is clear that Carlyle influenced Orr’s “view of life, [and that] she also used her verse to impart his ideas to her students, thus adding to her reputation as a teacher who communicated literature to her students and made a lasting impression on them” (Pieschel “Orrs” 17). “Sartor Resartus” flows as a poem, and it seems sincere in its affirmation of the “Everlasting . . . Yea,” which must have been of concern to Orr. She feels the importance of looking beyond that which passes to that which is eternal. Tennyson would approve of her stand “‘Gainst a world of matter without any soul, / ‘Gainst material mortals with dust for their goal.” This is a poem of the spiritual as superior in every way to the material, of the soul as more precious than the body. Orr seems quite enamored of Carlyle, and one can only wonder how she interprets the “Yea.”

When Blanche Colton Williams, who would become a noted literary critic and scholar, arrived as a freshman at the II&C in 1894, Orr “recognized her brilliance immediately” (Pieschel “Blanche” 116). Williams was in the decided minority of II&C students because she “did not have to begin her college work as a ‘preparatory student’” (Pieschel “Blanche” 116). Though Williams would become supremely self-confident in

her professional career, as a student she was “shy and serious, focused on her studies” (Pieschel “Blanche” 116). Williams’ “marks were nearly perfect in mathematics, English, history, and Latin” (Pieschel “Blanche” 117). Evelyn Hammett wrote a posthumous sketch of Williams in which she reported that, in a letter, Orr wrote,

I had Blanche Williams in my English classes from 1895 to 1898. I knew she was a genius. Besides her studentship, she was a very beautiful girl, a leader on the campus. No one who enters the hallowed halls of M.S.C.W. will ever rival her. I know this and the college knows this. What a woman she has turned out to be . . . as a teacher, as a writer, as a friend. (3)

Alice Sutton Moore spent some time escorting Williams on a tour of the MUW campus on one of her visits. As they left the dormitory, Williams said, “I loved this College more than anyone who walked these halls” (Moore). On these visits, Williams “walked around smoking cigarettes in a long holder[;] neither Dean Kiern nor anyone else had the courage to tell her that smoking was not allowed on campus” (Moore).

Since the II&C required all students to complete an industrial course, Williams chose an early form of shorthand, which “must have proved useful in notetaking all her life” (Pieschel “Blanche” 117). Williams, who would write a biography of George Eliot in the 1930s, discovered her subject while a student at the II&C:

In the college dining-room four hundred of us waited after dinner . . . for the first tap of the bell at which we rose to form a line and march out.

While we waited, we read Thackery, Bulwer-Lytton, Scott and Dickens. I came to George Eliot. By chance I discovered *The Mill on the Floss*. After closing the book on the final plangent iambic lines, I said, “She knows,

she knows about country life, country boys and girls, how brothers and sisters feel about each other.” Not hitherto had I found anything like that saga for simplicity, humor, pathos, tragedy. (Pieschel “Blanche” 119)

Since the library at the II&C was so lacking in volumes at the time, Williams “must have relied heavily on Miss Orr for extra reading material” (Pieschel “Blanche” 120). Years later, Williams explained what it was like to have been one of Orr’s students:

we ached over Anglo-Saxon verbs and we bled over Chaucer’s spelling, and we wondered what it was all about, and whether the woman of the sparkling eyes, after all, followed ecstatically a light that was but mirage. And why was it necessary to learn Macaulay’s paragraphing, to master his essay structure? Why should life all labor be with Kellogg and Genung? Why should Lonsbury’s History of Language be absorbed by us who would perhaps teach grammar students only? But we began to understand when we sipped the cream of Shakespeare and Tennyson and Browning, and by the close of Senior year we increased in understanding: we knew this woman had made us aware that technique must ever precede expression By and by we understood more fully yet. She had given us a key wherewith to open one door of the House of Life,—once within, all other doors turned on magic hinges. (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 9-10)

Williams continues, “I am thankful to her for many things, but most of all for the courage to *think*, never to be afraid of truth” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 10).

Williams found Orr’s influence pervasive throughout every year she taught at the II&C: “she knew no student whom she did not thrill to keener vitality, for whom she did

not blaze paths of freedom, . . . whom she did not endow with something of her own earnestness in attacking the undone past” (“Pauline” 19). The reasons Orr became such a success as a teacher of English are difficult for Williams to specify:

If she gained anything in her girlhood study in Packer Institute which she “passed on,” then the wonder is that she succeeded in adapting and molding it to the needs of Mississippi girls; if she created altogether by her own genius, the wonder is that she had the courage to foster her individual theories in a soil but poorly prepared. (“Pauline” 20)

Orr, living in Columbus far from the intellectual centers of the East, was basically on her own as she designed the curriculum for the II&C and as she taught: “She planned boldly, independently, for the college and her girls when she set about building that Department of English” (Williams “Pauline” 21). Williams ignores the students who did not manage to meet Orr’s exacting standards when she claims that every student benefited from contact with Orr, each in her own way:

never a girl teacher in the smallest country school who has studied with her that does not pass forward the torch of enlightenment and evolution of truth; never a grade teacher or high school teacher in Mississippi who, as her disciple, has not conveyed the principles of her teaching, which, may be hazarded, dominate the State. And surely never a post-graduate student who has not recognized the soundness of her teaching, its breadth and power. (“Pauline” 21)

Orr educated students by adding “properly selected material to the content the students already possessed” (Williams “Pauline” 21). In this way, she “cultivated their

appreciation and helped them to form standards of taste” while she drilled her students vigorously “from Anglo-Saxon to Tennyson” (Williams “Pauline” 21). Orr “made her students know and feel the incisiveness of a poignant essay, the lyric swing of the late Victorians, the majesty of Greek drama and the humanity of Shakespeare’s plays, the epic sweep of *Paradise Lost*” (Williams “Pauline” 21).

Orr met individually with her students in conferences “before personal meeting [sic] were heralded by other colleges as among the essentials” (Williams “Pauline” 21). As a grammarian, she saw punctuation as meaning, drilling her students on the difference between “He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again” and “He was a man: take him for all in all. I shall not look upon his like again” (Williams “Pauline” 22). The inspiration Orr implanted in her students at the II&C arose from her use of “the imagination of the scientist which leaps to a glowing truth, then with drudgery works out the way to it[;] . . . she projected a vision of the future and taught her disciples to know that step by step must the goal be attained” (Williams “Pauline” 22).

Williams long revered the education she received under Orr’s direction. In 1931, while she was in England on one of her many research trips, she wrote the following in a letter to Orr:

When I reflect on my college years, I marvel all the more as I grow older at the wisdom you had, even so young, in outlining that English course for the women of Mississippi. I suppose comparatively few of us appreciate your making Old English a part of the curriculum, for comparatively few built upon that foundation. But the literature of later years—all who knew that course must forever value. . . . Do you wonder I wish to record my

thanks once more to you who set me on a way in which I find so much joy?

In 1935, when Williams published her *Old English Handbook*, *The Spectator* reported, “Of her interest in the study of Old English, Dr. Williams says that she got her taste for it in her green salad days at I. I. and C.” (“Alumna”). Williams’ textbook was “adopted for use by Harvard and Ratliff [sic], Columbia and Barnard” (“Alumna”). In a letter to the MSCW librarian shortly before this text was published, Williams wrote, “I should like a copy of this book to give to you, for I learned all my foundation of Old English right there at M.S.C.W.” (Williams “Letter to the Librarian”).

During the 1890s, Orr wrote “His Name Was Writ in Water,” the title taken from the epitaph on John Keats’ tomb, which Williams included in the Preface of *Forever Young*, her biography of Keats published in 1943:

High-gifted and ill-starred, frail genius of fancy fraught,
 He should have roamed life’s fairest, sunniest fields, and wrought
 Our age a gladsome song. His lot was to dwell
 In darkened ways, where sorrow’s blighting hoar frosts fell.
 The seeing eye was his, the quick responsive thrill
 To beauty in the field or cloud-crowned slope of hill,
 In forest trees, or gleaming stream through shadowy vale,
 In hero’s deed, inspiring song, or artless tale.
 These were reflected in his verse, the pictured line,
 The roseate, lipid warbling phrase, rich-imaged, fine
 And velvet soft, yet glowing, palpitating, stirred

With inward fire, it throbs like burnished breast of bird,
 That through some wood a flood of liquid trilling flings,
 Till the trembling air with melting, rapturous music rings.
 He longed to grasp the fairy scroll of lofty Fame;
 Too soon with icy breath death called his fated name.
 With bitterness he cried: 'In water was it writ
 The rolling world in all her course hears naught of it.'
 In water writ: "'Twas well, for all the sea-washed lands have heard
 Keats' name, and loved the matchless music of his word.'"

While she was a graduate student at Columbia in 1906, Williams maintained a close relationship with Orr and others from the II&C: "Miss Orr and Miss Paslay . . . were taking graduate courses at Columbia, as were two other II&C graduates, Emma Laney (1905) and Nannie Rice (1906)" (Pieschel "Blanche" 121). After Orr and Paslay moved to New York in 1920, Williams "began to spend many stimulating hours at the brownstone Miss Orr bought on West 74th Street" (Pieschel "Blanche" 122). When Williams died, Orr wrote to Nannie Herndon Rice that "so few are left of the old inner circle and as they drop out one by one the world grows poorer for me" (Orr "Letter" 1945). Williams' death had affected her powerfully:

That Blanche Williams is not there is a sorrowful thought for me. She looked so vital & beautiful the last time I saw her when she brought me a copy of Forever Young. . . . I hope they are all together, carrying on some high aim in the next sphere. I think there may be many of them. (Orr "Letter" 1945)

Mary Craig Kimbrough, who would marry the novelist Upton Sinclair, was another student of Orr during the 1890s. In *Southern Belle*, her autobiography, Sinclair writes briefly of her education and the II&C. Her parents were both of the upper-classes, so Sinclair had private teachers who came to her home for primary and secondary instruction: “piano teacher, voice teacher, elocution teacher, and one who taught me the skirt dance” (Sinclair 16). At the age of thirteen, her parents “decided that I was to matriculate at the Mississippi State College for Women” (Sinclair 16). Although she was technically not old enough to matriculate, her father “traveled with me to the town of Columbus and in the president’s private office the situation was explained” (Sinclair 17). President Frazer examined her himself: “By good luck I was able to answer all his questions correctly, and he told Papa I had passed” (Sinclair 17).

Like many of the II&C’s young students parting from their families for the first time, on the day she was to leave for college she was “in a very unhappy state of mind, for I had never been away from home before, except for visits to relatives and friends” (Sinclair 17). Kimbrough attended the II&C for three years, and she “made a record which caused a woman teacher to come rushing to my room in excitement” (Sinclair 17). Out of all the girls who had ever been enrolled in the II&C, Kimbrough “was the first girl ever enrolled who had got a grade of 100 in the course called English!” (Sinclair 17). Few students who had Orr as a teacher ever knew such a feeling.

Although the II&C was provincial and excluded Blacks by design, it was free of other prejudices. After she left the II&C, Kimbrough became a student at the Gardner School for Young Ladies in New York City. The Mistress of the school apologized for there being a Jewish girl among the students. However, as Kimbrough’s “roommate at

the Mississippi State College for Women had been Jewish I saw no reason for the apology” (Sinclair 19).

After traveling and studying in Europe, Orr “introduced an advanced comparative literature course on Old and Middle English works and gave dramatic readings of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and Robert Browning’s poetry” (Wilkerson-Freeman 81). Wilkerson-Freeman argues that Orr had intense conflicts with President Frazer about academic standards: “Frazer and others accused the faction of the faculty led by Orr and Paslay of placing the institution on ‘too high a plane,’ holding the students to ‘too high’ a standard, favoring the more dedicated students, and making it overly difficult for some students to graduate” (81). Frazer often complained that he was powerless over the female faculty: “only the trustees, many of whom were related to faculty members, had the authority to force the women to alter their methods” (Wilkerson-Freeman 81). As a remedy, Frazer suggested that “the practice of hiring only women to serve on the faculty be abolished” (Wilkerson-Freeman 82). However, one wonders if Wilkerson-Freeman has the complete picture, at least of how Frazer viewed Orr. In 1898, Frazer wrote the following evaluation of his seven-year association with Orr:

With native endowments of exceptionally high order, and the scholarly spirit in eminent measure, Miss Orr has spent much time in wisely directed study along the lines which lead to thorough equipment for her work. The breadth of her attainments and the fine finish of her culture she makes always subservient to the interest of her classes. As a teacher, she is earnest and stimulating, having especially marked gifts for arousing the activity and enthusiasm of her pupils. (“Evaluation”)

Clearly, even if the relationship between these two was conflicted, Frazer recognized Orr's value to the II&C.

In 1896, Orr presented a lecture on "The Education of the Modern Woman" to a group of II&C alumnae. According to Stephen Pieschel, in this speech, Orr demonstrates "not only her love of literature and her commitment to education, but also her dedication to helping women form a philosophy and an attitude which would enable them to achieve their full potential as intelligent beings" (Pieschel "Orrs" 18). Orr begins by explaining that as the new century was approaching, there was a new type of teaching, far from the rote memorization and drills of the earlier decades of the nineteenth century: "To the model teacher of to-day, the scepter is not the rod; nor is the text-book the be all and end-all of education, but the hand-maid, as the school room is the vestibule, to the world and to life" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 18). The greatest change in education, however, was "the extent to which women have been admitted to a share in the educational advantages and the independent thinking of our time" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 18). It was, after all, not long ago that women feared to reach outside the sphere that had been allotted to them: "Charlotte Bronte, as late as 1847, asked pardon, virtually, for the authorship of *Jane Eyre*" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 19).

The State of Mississippi "reared the solid walls of the Industrial Institute and College in testimony of her belief that education, with all the possibilities it implies, is the heritage of the daughters of a free and enlightened State" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 20-21). Education does not produce manly women; quite the contrary, a "truly cultured girl will retain the love of the home, the old gentleness, the domestic virtues, and the Christian womanhood, but along with these will come the fullness of intellectual life"

(qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 21). Orr argues that intellectual training is "necessary to the highest usefulness of a woman in any sphere, the home, the school-room, or the business office" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 21). Intellectual training does not provide women with "information solely, or even principally, but habits of independent, accurate thought, power to judge wisely; to use and apply knowledge" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 22). Orr sees what usually passes for education of women as lacking intellectual substance, merely "preparing for a few years of young lady life" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 22). The rush to prepare girls for entrance into society as young ladies results in an education that quickly and vaguely "passes before the student's mental vision, leaving her either consciously baffled and confused, or what is worse, flippant and self-satisfied and deceived as to her own attainments" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 22). Such a false education belies the purpose and function of intellectual development: "to so train and develop the intellectual faculties that they shall become strong, pliable and capable of adjustment to the varied duties and emergencies of life" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 24).

But education does not consist of intellectual training alone: "Heart culture is of infinitely greater importance, and should receive a larger share of the teacher's attention" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 24). Given the special demands that society makes on women, their education must stretch beyond the limits of both the purely practical and the purely intellectual: "That education is best that produces the highest type of woman, not the most subtle disputant or analytic reasoner, nor yet the most accurate stenographer, designer, or book-keeper" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 24). The college must also stretch its definition and goal of education to serve women students fully:

School and college life should contribute not only positive knowledge and practical skill to the girl, but a larger sympathy and seriousness, a more settled response of spirit and of bearing, a securer personal equipose [sic], and greater discretion, tenderness, and unselfishness, for true womanliness is made up of these; at the same time it may be easy, affable, approachable, gay; on the surface it may be changeable, but in principal and aspiration as fixed as heaven, as changeless as truth. (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 24)

Orr is prepared to fight against those who argue that women need not be educated, that education leads to the destruction of a woman's femininity and allure, "as though she were more lovable and loving, finer, loftier, and more disinterested, because of her ignorance and the pettiness and narrowness that go with ignorance" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 25). Just as "refined gold is malleable as well as lustrous[,] . . . the perfect woman combines strength with responsiveness and sweetness" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 25). The chief tool in the education of women is, simply, "the introduction of good books into the school" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 25), and this requires careful planning and thought. When a girl has "learned to read intelligently and to love Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Ruskin, Carlyle and Macaulay [she] has been introduced into the society of the wise and good" (qtd. in Pieschel "Orrs" 26).

Through the 1890s, students continued to come to the II&C unprepared for college-level work, and attrition rates remained high. In Orr's 1897 report to President Frazer, she reports that of all 313 students taking courses in English in 1895-1896, 174 were passed; of 108 students in collegiate courses, 71 passed, with seven receiving the

A.B. degree. (Orr “Report to Frazer”). The results for 1896-1897 were similar: of all 344 students, 209 were passed; of 140 students in the collegiate courses, 88 passed, with nine earning the A. B. degree (Orr “Report to Frazer”). These results reflect the demanding English curriculum that Orr had designed. College freshmen and middle normal students were required to study “Anglo-Saxon—grammatical forms and translations from the Chronicle; Homilies, Aelfric’s Lives, etc.” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). Sophomore collegiate and Senior Normal students studied “Historical Grammar, with which the study of Chaucer is associated, as illustrating the language of the Middle English Period” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). Orr held training in rhetoric and literature as of equal importance with grammar:

In conducting this phase of the work, our aim is not simply to acquaint the students in a general way with the History and Masterpieces of English Literature, but to develop in them a trained and sensitive appreciation of literary merit, a genuine enjoyment of what is worthy in books, and a capacity to intelligently interpret an author’s meaning and to enter, measurably at least, into the plan, mechanism and motive of his work. (Orr “Report to Frazer”)

The “least advanced classes” studied Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” Bryant’s “Thanatopsis,” Longfellow’s “Evangeline,” Hawthorne’s “Wonder Book” and “Tanglewood Tales,” and Lowell’s “Vision of Sir Launfal” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). In working with these selections, students “apply the principles of Grammar and Analysis and the simpler principles of Rhetoric” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). The Freshmen continue

the study of Rhetoric, and with this is associated the careful reading of some Nineteenth Century compositions more difficult than those undertaken in the preparatory classes—such as Macaulay’s Critical Essays on “Pilgrim’s Progress,” “Warren Hastings,” “Robert Clive,” Tennyson’s “Two Voices” and “The Dream of Fair Women.” (Orr “Report to Frazer”)

Sophomores combine the study of Rhetoric with “class discussions of some of the shorter masterpieces of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries; Milton’s ‘L’ Allegro’ and ‘Il Penseroso,’ Pope’s ‘Essay on Criticism’ and ‘Rape of the Lock;’ [sic] somewhat extended selections from Swift and Addison . . . [and] one of Shakespeare’s plays” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). The Junior class “having almost completed the prescribed language course, is occupied chiefly with literary work. Taine (History of Eng. Lit., abridged); Spenser and Milton are the authors usually studied” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). Seniors “read critically, discuss in class, and are examined upon Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam,’ and Burke’s speeches on Anglo-American affairs—Taxation and Conciliation. They are also expected to essay some original work in constructive or analytic composition” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). Seniors also study Carlyle and Browning (Orr “Report to Frazer”).

In addition to studies in literature, the English Department offered a Composition course, with “[e]xercises involving the fundamental principles of expression . . . to secure for the students gradual increase in precision of thought and technical knowledge” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). The addition of an extra teacher in the English Department “is now yielding especially gratifying results, which abundantly justify the forethought of the Trustees in furnishing additional teaching force to meet this phase of English training” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). This curriculum placed heavy demands on teachers; in addition

to “the grading of the entrance and annual examination papers,” each teacher in the Department of English was responsible for the “weighing and grading of at least four thousand pages of manuscript during the session” (Orr “Report to Frazer”). Orr’s own instructional responsibilities included teaching in the classroom fourteen to seventeen hours per week (Orr “Report to Frazer”).

One develops a sense of the high expectations Orr held for her students, and perhaps also why so few completed the A. B. program, by reviewing copies of her examinations. Orr expects the Juniors of 1898 to write six essays, based on their study of Taine’s *English Literature*:

- I. Define the term literature: What during the past century has revolutionized the study of history?
- II. State the more conspicuous results to the language and literature of England, produced by the Norman conquest.
- III. Give briefly the causes that led to the English novel. Name its most noted representatives.
- IV. Classify and give the leading works of
 1. Ben Johnson
 2. Sheridan
 3. Samuel Johnson
 4. Burke
 5. Burton
 6. Lily
 7. Pepys

8. Skelton
 9. Cower [sic]
 10. Jeremy Taylor
 11. Marlowe
 12. Greene
 13. Ascham
 14. Farguhar [sic]
 15. Congrene [sic]
- V. Were the movements described by Taine as Christian and Pagan Renaissance coeval or did one follow the other? (Precisely)
- VI. Milton
1. What two influences do we see in Milton's work?
 2. What books did he write in defense of poetry?
 3. How did his conception of life differ from that of Shakespeare?
- (Orr "Junior English Examination")

Seniors had a similarly challenging examination. The Class of 1899 sat for the following examination on Browning:

- I. In regard to the dramatic element compare as closely as you can the work of Browning with (1) that of Shakespeare, (2) that of Tennyson.
- II. As to artistic beauty and technical finish, how does the poetry of Browning compare with that of Tennyson? As to strength and intensity, how?

- III. Show that the respective treatments of the Lagurus incident in “In Memoriam” and in “The Epistle” are notable characteristics of each work.
- IV. a) By specific reference to “The Epistle,” “Saul,” “Death in the Desert,” and “Rabbi Ben Ezra,” explain Browning’s theory as to the spiritual necessity for the presence in the world of failure, sin, and doubt.
 b) Show that the creed of Browning is in this respect harmonious with that of Tennyson.

(Orr “Senior English Examination”)

These are difficult examinations by any measure, perhaps reflective more of graduate than of undergraduate work in contemporary academics. One easily understands why the graduating classes in the early years of the II&C were so small, why there was such attrition among students. At the same time, it is also easy to see why so many of the relatively small number of graduates made distinguished academic careers. Orr’s students were well-prepared to do graduate work.

Wilkerson-Freeman argues that Orr’s teaching situation improved when Andrew Kincannon became president in 1898, for he “respected Orr and Paslay and approved of their ambitions” (Wilkerson-Freeman 83). In her 1901 report to Kincannon, Orr reported that the English Department had served “four hundred and eighty-two (482) students, and the teaching force and material equipment of the Department are alike insufficient to secure results commensurate with the growing usefulness of the institution.” The teachers of English did not have enough rooms to conduct all their classes, and Orr requests “four

rooms connected or easily assessable to each other . . . not only [as] a convenience to the teachers, but also a means toward increasing the efficiency of their work” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). In what had become a constant refrain in Orr’s reports, she adds that “the previous training of the students in our Department is relatively poor” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). The students need personalized “contact and suggestion by the aid of which they would insensibly assimilate much that will not come to them simply through the intellectual apprehension of grammatical principles and literary compositions” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”).

The first purpose of the Department of English is to offer its students “possession of the working principles of English grammar, thus correcting and developing their expression” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). Further, the teachers are said to be “striving to build up in them that discriminating appreciation of good books which can be secured to them only by the systematic teaching of literature” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). Such a goal should apply to all students at the II&C: “we undertake to teach even the least advanced of our students how to read and interpret a piece of simple but solid and genuine literature” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). Literary training is critical for the success of the II&C:

Aside from its value as mental discipline, nothing probably within the range of a school curriculum is comparable to a well planned and well executed course of reading for dignifying and beautifying the everyday lives of our girls, increasing their general intelligence, widening their sympathies and grounding their characters. (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”)

Orr is visionary in her insistence that to accomplish such an education, teachers must have time to give each student individual attention; there must be “[t]ime and opportunity . . . for individual conferences between teacher and pupil, especially with reference to the written exercises, which, in the earlier stages of English study, should be of almost daily occurrence” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). For the five hundred students the II&C anticipated enrolling during the next academic year, Orr requests “at least four teachers, all specially trained for the scientific performance of truly educational work in English” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). Orr was generally complimentary of the students at the II&C, who “are studying well” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”). The recent creation of the Department of Rhetoric and Composition, under Miss Rosa Peebles, has “greatly strengthened the course of study” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1901”).

Although Orr, along with Paslay, was on leave in 1903-1905 to study at the University of Zurich and travel in Italy, the catalogue for that year shows the progress that Orr had made in establishing a solid Department of English at the II&C. In Orr’s absence, Rosa Peebles served as interim chair. Much of the content and course description in this catalogue is similar to those of previous years. In the Normal course, Juniors continue to study Anglo-Saxon with “Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Primer” as the text (“Twentieth” 18). They now have an elective course in “The History of the English Language,” consisting of “Lounsbury’s English Language; Skeat’s Etymological Dictionary; lectures on questions of usage in English Speech” (“Twentieth” 18).

Orr has also designed seven elective courses for students in the A. B. course. The course on Chaucer included “readings from the Canterbury Tales. Lectures on Chaucer’s life and works. Skeat’s edition of The Prologue, The Knight’s Tale, The Nonne Preestes

Tale” (“Twentieth” 19). For Browning, there was to be “[r]apid reading of a large portion of Browning’s poetical works together with minute study of the more important poems. Browning’s attitude towards life and towards his art are discussed” (“Twentieth” 19). There are also courses in Shakespeare’s Historical Dramas and Tragedies (“Twentieth” 19). The courses in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century literature focus on “rapid reading of much of the literature of the period, and close study of some of the masterpieces” (“Twentieth” 20). There is also a new course on American Literature, surveying the “historical development of English literature in America from its beginnings to the present day” (“Twentieth” 20). The composition course has also grown in rigor and expectations:

During several weeks of the session short daily themes are required, and, during the third term, longer weekly themes, and the critical study of the structure of one of Macaulay’s essays. The students’ notes on required private reading are also submitted for correction. Students revise, or rewrite, corrected themes after conferring with the instructor. (“Twentieth” 20-21)

Composition and Rhetoric offers three elective courses. In the Advanced Course in Writing, “[a]ccording to the desire of the class, the course will be descriptive, narrative, argumentative, or expository writing, the last having special reference to methods of research and arrangement of material” (“Twentieth” 21). There were also elective courses in the Structure of the Novel and the Drama and Studies in Verse forms (“Twentieth” 21).

During the two years she was absent from the II&C, Orr “studied at the University of Zurich and travelled extensively. One trip took her to Florence and the

grave of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, also the home where the Brownings lived (Taylor, J. 2). She had long been a devotee of Browning and once said of him, “He is not obscure, but intimate and clear as if he were explaining” (Taylor, J. 2). Thomas Neukom of the State Archives in Zurich, Switzerland, confirms that Orr and Paslay were students at the University of Zurich in the Winter Semester 1903-1904 and the Spring Semester of 1904. During the Winter Semester, Orr and Paslay enrolled in three classes together: Excursive Readings of an Anglo-Saxon Text, History of English Literature from Chaucer to the Time of Queen Elizabeth, and Middle English Grammar and Readings. Paslay also took Introduction to Romanian while Orr took a course in The Romantics (Neukom). In the Spring Semester, they took the same courses: History of German Literature in the Eighteenth Century, History of English Literature from the Era of Queen Elizabeth to the English Revolution, Practices in Middle English Texts, Independent Study of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and Historical Grammar of the English Language (Neukom).

Orr’s diary from 1903-1905 makes for fascinating reading. There is much in the diary about artists popular in Zurich at the time. Orr’s careful tracking of her accounts belies the image of her as living off her family money and unconcerned about the salary she earned at the II&C. She writes often of the lectures and theaters she attended and includes myriad details of her daily life. Orr suffered from debilitating headaches and often found it necessary to remain in her apartment while Paslay attended lectures. On September 12, 1904, after a draining bout with headaches, Orr writes that she spent a “Blessed day in bed getting soul and body rested up and sweetened up” (Dairy). Although she was weak, she accompanied Paslay and some gentlemen to the countryside:

I am too weak from yesterday to walk so we sit around and bask in the blessed sunshine . . . Talk to Milly [Paslay] & his handsome blonde nobleman of a friend. In aft M and the It. [i.e., Italian] take a walk, but I must sit, wh. Allows [sic] one at least to look out far up the hazy valley, on the right Murreu, looking like a castle high up on a cliff in the “Idylls of the King.” (Dairy)

Such passages seem to humanize Orr, to remove her from the pedestal of being only interested in teaching and learning. Neither Orr nor Paslay was inured to the attractions of a “handsome blonde nobleman,” though there appears to be little in the dairy to suggest that either one indulged in active romance. Orr reports that the winter that year was harsh, wet, and long. Nevertheless, the two kept up a complete schedule of classes and culture, so long as Orr was not incapacitated. Money was a concern for both of them, as reflected in the relief evident in Orr’s entry for April 3, 1905:

Much to record with gratitude. First, a letter from Papa telling me that he has won his Johnson vs. Bank case, a righteous judgment, for which I had prayed for poor Papa but it seems too good to be true! Then our back salaries were enclosed in the letter that was cause for gratitude and more.

One who reads the diaries develops a new understanding of the human side of Orr, as opposed to seeing her only in her professional role. Since she kept her personal life private, the diary offers insight into her unavailable elsewhere.

Although Orr was in Europe during the 1904-1905 academic year, that year’s *Meh Lady* included “April Days in Mississippi,” a poem Orr had written in Germany a decade earlier:

*Green, sunlit hills before me rise,
 And Spring's astir in earth and skies.
 The field lark pipes in lane and lea,
 Bob White blithely calls to me
 From the tangled thicket of briar and sedge
 That grows about the ploughed field's edge.*

*The world looks young, and smiles as though
 She knew no mournful long ago,
 No troubled time recalled, not aught
 Of sunless seasons, tempest fraught,
 Nor ever made before to-day
 This joyous pledge of a coming May.*

*And we'll accept the promise, too,
 Believe that all that's fair is true,
 In shining hours recur no more
 To dead hopes born in Springs before,
 Forebode no fear, recall no tear,
 And share sweet April's smile this year!*

As is true of Orr's other poetry, "April Days in Mississippi" remains much less interesting and effective than her scholarship. Yet, the poem speaks of the longing of the exile, even a temporary one like Orr, for home.

One of the mysteries of Orr's life is why she returned to Columbus and the II&C repeatedly. Had she wished to do so, she certainly could have obtained a position at another college. It is true that her ties to her home were strong, and she would not leave Mississippi permanently until after the death of her mother. Orr clearly hopes for a renewal in Mississippi, and she sees the possibility in what is new: "The world looks young, and smiles as though/She knew no mournful long ago" ("April"). This must be the hope that she holds in her heart and soul, that force which directs her to return and try again. Like an April morning, there is hope for a "coming May," which would be the time when Mississippi finally overcomes its reluctance to educate its children and makes good on the promise of their heritage. Although every Spring of hope for Mississippi has led but to another Winter of disappointment, Orr engages in a bit of willful self-deception in order to develop another bout of optimism: "To dead hopes born in Springs before,/Forebode no fear, recall no tear,/And share sweet April's smile this year!" ("April"). Even as she rests in Germany, surrounded by culture and cafés, she longs to return to Mississippi—and to try again. She will be neither defeated nor deterred.

Orr's student Nannie Herndon Rice, who graduated from the II&C in 1905, became a lifelong friend. In a letter of April 1914, Orr wrote that Rice had "a very genuine gift to cultivate and bring to fruition" as a writer ("Letter" 1914):

This paper of yours has really exquisite literary quality,—poetry, emotion, delicacy and imagination are in it: and I want you to become a writer, and you can, Hundreds of women are making their way in America with their pens, whose gifts are inferior to yours. And they are getting something out of their lives,—friendships, travel, the sense of being in the world stream,

and then, too, pushing forward this woman movement by commanding respect for what they think and say. (Orr “Letter” 1914)

Orr’s prescription for becoming a writer is “to write something every day that goes by. Write, write, write, whether you feel like it or not” (Orr “Letter” 1914). Although one must also attend to other things, while beginning a writing career, Rice should “let this daily writing come first” (Orr “Letter” 1914).

In another letter from February 1928, Orr implores Rice to remain always true to her creativity: “Dont [sic] let your creative powers die! I am a poor one to preach, consumed as I have let myself become with practical and personal cares during recent years, but I dont [sic] want routine work to hold you in its grip until your fuller vigor of body and mind is spent—as it did me” (Orr “Letter” 1928). Orr also reports, “There is so much that I could do and see better now than ever in my life before, but I haven’t the physical strength to do much more than meet the mere demands of living and keeping one’s business straight from day to day” (Orr “Letter” 1928). In another letter from August 1930, Orr assures Rice that she has “heard about the college hurricane in Mississippi,” by which she means the loss of accreditation following Bilbo’s actions to purge his political opponents from Mississippi’s colleges (Orr “Letter” 1930). Experienced educators were leaving Mississippi in droves. Orr writes, “I do hate to see the state lose its best spirits, but the educational path there is one of martyrdom for all except mediocrities and intriguers” (Orr “Letter” 1930).

Following the death of Miriam Paslay, Orr wrote Rice to express gratitude for her condolences. Orr writes that she was “deeply touched . . . by its beauty and insight” (Orr “Letter” 1932). In her relationship with Paslay through the years, Orr “was indeed

blessed. I knew it. Every day of all the years added something to my realization of it and my gratitude for it. If this could, as you say, only make the separation less hard.

Immensely harder!” (Orr “Letter” 1932). Orr finds her life without Paslay intensely lacking: “[S]uddenly everything died in me, all but the capacity to suffer and the consciousness that I must try to gather strength and coherence to meet the joyless obligations this change has brought” (Orr “Letter” 1932).

Although many II&C students were passionately devoted to Orr, not all held her in high esteem. In a 1979 interview, Lena Ellington, Class of 1906, recalls her days as a student of Orr’s. Ellington remembers Orr spending a year in Germany where “she had studied old English, middle English, and made a special study of Chaucer. So instead of giving her famous Shakespearean course, she gave this course in Chaucer” (1). Ellington reports knowing Orr, first, when she was a student, later as a fellow teacher at the II&C, and finally as a retiree living on Long Island (1). When asked to describe Orr, Ellington replied,

She was about medium height (5 feet 4 ½ or 5 inches). And she had a rather heavy suit of grayish hair, had a fairly round face, and dressed in shirtwaists and skirts, dark shirtwaists and coatsuits most of the time. As I remember, her eyes were brown, piercing eyes and a very vivacious type of manner, quick walk. (2)

Students often found Orr both strict and demanding:

I think she was so regarded—as very exacting. I remember there was one girl in our class that failed in that Chaucer course, and we never did think

she ought to have failed—it was quite a sad affair. But she was regarded as one of the strictest of the teachers—most exacting. (Ellington 2)

In addition to teaching, Orr made numerous presentations to academic and non-academic audiences in Mississippi. In December 1906, Kincannon wrote to Alfred Hume, Chancellor of the University of Mississippi, to inform him that Orr would be visiting Oxford that weekend:

This letter is not intended to tell you who Miss Orr is, but to express the hope that you as Chancellor of the University as well as individually will meet with Miss Orr. . . . You would do the students of the University of kindness if you should invite Miss Orr to deliver a lecture from the University platform.

Orr was invited to present a lecture on Robert Browning to the all-male English faculty. The *Oxford Eagle* reports, “When the history for the educational movement for women in Mississippi shall have been written, among its great women will be the name of Pauline V. Orr” (“Reception”). Orr’s lecture was noted as exceptional:

Seldom is it one’s privilege to hear so complete and profound a discussion of a literary subject; rarer still is it that the discussion itself is embodied in a literary form of perfection and charm. Viewed through the medium of Miss Orr’s clear intellect, sympathetic understanding and poetic insight, Browning ceased to be the obscure poet of the superficial reader and became the great and luminous star of the first magnitude among the moderns. Every phase of the poet’s splendid genius was made to shine in

its own proper light and in the added light of the gifted lecturer's presentation of the subject. ("Reception")

In response to Hume's letter praising Orr's lecture, Kincannon wrote, "In my opinion, Miss Orr is easily the most gifted woman engaged in educational work in the South, and is easily the equal of any of the great women of America" (qtd. in Wilkerson-Freeman 83).

In her May 1907 report to President Kincannon, Orr reported on two departments: English Language and Literature and Rhetoric and Composition. In the 1906-1907 academic year, the English Language and Literature Department had served 852 students ("Report to Kincannon 1907" 1). The vast majority of the students were enrolled in First and Second Industrial, with 23 studying Sixteenth Century Literature, 9 studying Nineteenth Century Literature and 3 Teaching Fellows enrolled in Middle English (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 1). The Department of Rhetoric and Composition served 436 students (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 1). The teaching staff for both departments consisted of eight teachers, including Orr (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 2-3). Orr taught the advanced students: Sophomore Literature, Junior English, Senior English, both electives, and the Teaching Fellows (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 3). Orr reports being "satisfied that the measure of good accruing to them [i.e., the students] has been beyond calculation" (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 4). However, both departments continued to be hampered from being as effective as possible by "a general and not greatly diminishing unpreparedness for College work" (Orr "Report to Kincannon 1907" 4). Orr was proud of the teachers on her staff, reporting that they "have

discharged their duties so intelligently, faithfully, and zealously that I feel that too much cannot be said in their praise” (Orr “Report to Kincannon 1907” 4).

Orr’s most successful student of English from the first decade of the twentieth century was Frances Ormond Jones Gaither, who was known as Frankie O. Jones while at the II&C. Frances Gaither is the finest writer of fiction the II&C graduated, and the Postscript of this study is an essay on three of her mature novels. In 1934, Gaither offered the following description of her college career at the II&C:

Entered January, 1907, by examination, classed Sophomore for the rest of the year. Did some cramming and took some outside exams during spring in one or two Freshman subjects—called, in those halcyon days, “back work,”—and got myself classed Junior in time to put on in September a cap and gown (second hand, bought from Mary McClure, I think, who graduated the spring before) with the rest of the class of 1909. However, I still worried [to the] bitter end, had to study Latin in the summer by myself to take an exam the next year to graduate. And the last examination I took the week before graduating was Junior Physics, which paper Li Mae Bacot marked “59 and 1-2, or 60.” Since the half meant I did or didn’t graduate I chose 60 and she scratched out the 59-1-2. (“Mrs”)

In the *Meh Lady*, the school yearbook, for 1909, Gaither figures prominently among the students. The yearbook was dedicated to Orr “for her broad scholarship and her lofty intellect, for her genuine human interest, and for her beautiful life, consecrated to the girls of Mississippi” (*Meh Lady*). Each senior has a page dedicated to her that contains a picture, a quotation, and a description. Gaither’s quotation is, “Learning is but

an adjunct to ourself. And where we are our learning likewise is” (*Meh Lady*). Gaither was praised as a senior for “literary attempts which are far more than endeavors” (*Meh Lady*). She is further described as having

nimble wit, a classic profile, a brilliant mind, a power of arguing for her own decided opinions, high admiration for all that is noble and right, good and noble, not a passive, futile approbation, but a productive and living desire which her energy and strong will make felt. (*Meh Lady*)

The editor also notes that the “way she is regarded by the faculty makes you green with envy, but no one can blame them after once hearing her recite in any subject” (*Meh Lady*). Gaither served as Devotional Chairman for the YWCA and President of the Campus Improvement League. She played in the Senior Dramatics presentation of “The Minuet” and was a member of the Senior Art Class.

Gaither was writing by the time she was a senior. The *Meh Lady* contains an original poem, a translation of Horace, and a short story from her pen. The poem is titled “Across the Darkness”:

Last night, my love, although a thousand miles of darkness rolled between,
I seemed to see you standing near the radiant threshold of my dream.
And as you passed without the rainbow portals of that place,
The shifting light of love shone through the gates and glorified your face.
Aquiver with my eager joy, I drew the glowing gates apart.
I flung them wide and kissed you, love, and clasped you to my beating
heart.

In dreamland's brightening dawn we moved through the greenly-winding
memory lane.

Where flitted sprites of faded long-past joys, all sparkling, free from pain.

With clasped hands we wandered slowly on into that great beyond—

A gorgeous field aglow with crimson poppies, nodding in the sun.

All day you lay outstretched before me in the rippling poppy sea;

I stroked your hair, and with poppies whispered, "Sleep and dream of me."

The while you dreamed your dreams aloud, I picked the slumberous
poppies there,

And tenderly I wove them with your dreams in garlands for our hair.

Then as the sun sank o'er the field, I crowned you, love, and you crowned
me

With drowsy poppies and with misty visions that can never be.

At eventide we traced again the shadowy paths of memory lane—

The joys were gone, the gathering dusk was peopled with the ghosts of
pain.

You gave me a burning good-bye kiss at the fading threshold of my
dream,

And then. my love, a thousand miles of night and darkness rolled between.

(Meh Lady)

The poem seems Victorian in its sensibility and technique, though one also feels the influence of the Anglo-Saxon in its alliteration and long lines. Obviously, Gaither uses the dream vision as a metaphor and opportunity to discuss topics in literature that

young ladies of the day were not expected to offer up for public consumption as confession of experience. There is, thus, much talk of kissing and much stroking of hair. This is a love poem, expressing the desire this senior holds for passion in her life, and the poem offers a hint of the writer that would emerge. The idea that love reaches across the dark abyss, joining lovers in imagination if not in fact, surely is more Victorian than modern in idea and conception. This tendency to remain conventional may be more a reflection of Orr's teaching and influence than of Gaither's sensibility. At the time, Orr seems to have preferred the poetry of the Victorians, Browning in particular, over the emerging experimental forms of literature. One feels the young woman's longing in this poem, though it does not degenerate completely into sentimentality. Its subtext offers love now as a thing of darkness, available only in the imagination and not at all available in the reality of Columbus or the II&C. A lover, even one physically close by, might as well be thousands of miles away, for the II&C structured its students with a regimen that controlled most aspects of their lives. Gaither evinces a passionate nature, full of the longing for love, yet she is enough of a realist, even so young, to know that longing is as close to love as she will get before she leaves the II&C.

Gaither shows more promise in "In Anticipation of Sue," her short story published in the *Meh Lady* for 1909. This charming story contains a good bit of tension and manifests a surprising eye for detail; as soon as the reader becomes sure what will happen, Gaither turns the story on its side, much as O. Henry might. At the beginning of the story it is a cold and wet morning in some unnamed town. The day begins when the alarm clock wakes up Pryor with its "B-r-r-r-r" ("In"). It is only "five o'clock, and the room looked awfully cold," as indeed it is ("In"). Pryor jumps up to fill his fireplace with

“straggling bits of wet kindling, and struck match after match in his endeavor to light them” (“In”). Even though Pryor finally gets a middling fire going, it is so frigid in his room that “his hands were so cold he had to struggle to fasten his collar” (“In”). The reader is not yet sure who Pryor is or why one should care, but Gaither immediately implants the idea that this is a special morning and that Pryor must rush to get ready.

When Pryor hears a locomotive shriek in the distance, he “struggled desperately into his over-coat, seized his hat, umbrella, and suit-case and dashed from the room” (“In”). Through the stormy morning, hampered by muddy crossings, treacherous walks, and icy rain, Pryor manages to reach the train just as the conductor calls his final “All Aboard!” (“In”). Pryor must be some sort of drummer, though Gaither does not tell us so, for as he climbs on the train, he knocks open the “crazy clasp” on his suitcase, “spilling out [sample] collars and handkerchiefs without number” (“In”). The quest overrides all for Pryor today, and he can but “cast one rueful glance at the stretch of mud widening between him and his lost linen” (“In”). He collapses into a seat for a calming smoke, only to discover that he has left his matches “on the hearth in the wet kindling” (“In”). Pryor is on a quest for a maiden, and she has sent him a letter stating that a certain unidentified lady will be waiting at a train station “on Sunday night from seven to eleven” (“In”).

Pryor leaves at dawn to spend the day waiting for “Sue who wrote thus indefinitely and unsatisfactorily about her all-important plans” (“In”). Gaither falls a bit short in her imagination when she claims that Pryor thinks of Sue as “the most willful, scatter-brained little firefly you ever saw, with a world of bright hair, and an infectious good humor” (“In”). Pryor enjoys a nice breakfast in which “Sue’s eyes looked up roguishly at him from the toast on his plate. Sue’s hair got in his eyes when he drank his

coffee” (“In”). When the train finally arrives at the Junction, his destination, Pryor forgets his umbrella. Pryor has planned to take a room for the day, only to learn that the hotel, which is never full on Sunday, is “All full!” (“In”). He thinks, instead, to pass time reading a newspaper only to be told, “We get no paper here on Sunday” (“In”). Alone with only his thoughts—no umbrella, no room, no paper—Pryor can but repeat to himself, “come seven, come heaven” (“In”). He watches the rain fall “with tireless monotony on the leaden world outside the dirty windows” (“In”). Phrasing and imagery such as this reflects Gaither’s emerging skill and talent. The precision and appropriateness of the imagery captures the feeling of a day spent only in waiting. The day drags on, for “[h]owever lazy one may be, one hates doing nothing when one is twenty” (“In”). As the hours drag interminably, Pryor can only amuse himself by thinking of words that rhyme with neither “seven” or “heaven,” for “[w]hen one is twenty, one thinks profanity a proof of manly indignation” (“In”).

The longed-for train finally arrives after an eternity of waiting, and Pryor thoughtlessly pushes people out of his way in his desperation to find Sue, for “[w]hen one is twenty, one thinks no one else’s business as important as one’s own.” (“In”). Sue finally arrives and appears equally surprised and pleased to see Pryor. She then introduces him to a “Mr. Mannering,” with whom she has been traveling (“In”). Inside the depot, Sue declares she is looking forward to “a delicious time in here all warm and dry” (“In”).

As one would expect, Pryor is not at all enamored of the idea of spending some time with Sue and Mannering: “He was angry with Sue, angry with Mannering, but angriest of all with himself for acting like a chump” (“In”). In fact, “Pryor longed to

choke him”: “[w]hen one is twenty, one hates above all things superior age” (“In”).

Gaither succeeds in having the reader believe that this is a story of frustration with Pryor as its focus. He has waited all day in uncomfortable conditions, away from home, and bored—only to be subjected to Sue’s wiles. Perhaps Pryor will wise up and leave her be.

However, there remains one final trick. The twist to come seems obvious enough in retrospect, but Gaither surprises the reader in his or her first trip through the story. The *deus ex machina* arrives in the form of a train, which Mannering must run to catch in time. Only when Mannering leaves does Sue confess that she “thought his train would never come” (“In”). Pryor finds himself “astounded at the miraculous departure” (“In”). He needs no more encouragement than for Sue to invite him to “have the coziest, sweetest Sunday evening in the world, here all by ourselves” (“In”). Pryor responds instinctively and enthusiastically, for “[w]hen one is twenty, one wastes little time in preliminaries” (“In”).

This early story hints at an emerging talent from a young lady who is not afraid to be a bit risqué. The author succeeds in pulling in the reader and leaving him or her smiling with satisfaction by the end of the story. One imagines how pleased Orr must have been to read this story. While Gaither’s undergraduate poetry seems entirely too conventional, the story plays upon the conventional and engages the reader.

It is ever a long path from having potential to being recognized as an accomplished artist. After Gaither graduated from the II&C, she spent some time recruiting promising students. Lottie Street, Class of 1914, remembers “one June morning in 1910 . . . [when] a lovely lady came to our door. It was Frankie O. Jones . . . of Corinth, Mississippi. She said, ‘Mrs. Street, Mr. Jobe, the County Superintendent, had

written me to come to see you, as your daughter Lottie wants to go to II&C. I am a graduate this June of II&C” (“Remembrances”).

Gaither’s next serious work appears to be *The Pageant of Columbus*, written for the commencement of the II&C’s Class of 1915. While at the II&C researching the Pageant, Gaither wrote to Orr about how the campus felt without her presence:

Dear Miss Orr:

We are always going to miss you in the same way every day you stay away from us. I stole a peep into your classroom yesterday, and I realized then that I am almost glad your pictures will not be left. I cannot stand to see the room just as it used to be but with the great presence gone from it. I am not going to tell you how I feel about things. You know. But I can’t keep from saying that the college life is lonely and purposeless without you. You see, to put it mildly, I have not been reconciled to your absence.

Love to you from

Frankie

The inspiration for *The Pageant of Columbus* came from members of the Class of 1915, who wanted to produce “a historical pageant of Columbus” (4), the city not the man. One becomes immediately aware of the allegorical nature of the work in the Prelude by noting that the characters have names such as Folly, Worldliness, Indulgence, and Joy (5). In the Prelude, one learns that the II&C offers much to those who care to learn, and little to the foolish. In an allegorical Valley of Youth, Folly wanders with Worldliness, her mother, and Indulgence, her father (5). Although Folly is tempted to remain within the Valley of Youth and spend every day learning, she must leave with her parents to attend a ball

given by “young Mr. Wealth” (9). As she leaves, the figure I. I. and C., a woman of learning and dignity, says that Folly did right to leave: “She would not have been happy here. Our simple pleasures would soon have become stale for her, and then she might have made even you discontented” (9). If this one young girl does not desire to learn, “there are hundreds of girls who wish to learn beautiful things” (9). As the new girls gather round, the I. I. and C. promises to “tell you the story of Columbus, fairest city of flowers, how she first came into being and then grew and grew to lovely womanhood” (11).

Part One Scene One deals with “Ancient Days” (12). This scene explores the founding of the Chickasaw nation long in the past. The Indian tribes did not always co-exist peacefully, for Oktibbeha, the name of the county next to Lowndes, and the name of a “stream that marks the boundary between . . . [the] nations, is the Indian word for ‘Bloody Waters’” (14-15). In Part One Scene Two, Columbus the man meets with Isabella and Ferdinand. Columbus promises riches to the sovereigns and declares, “I go to discover the dark places of the earth that they may be lighted” (19). Isabella fears that Columbus will fail, but a courtier reassures her that “[i]t is not in failure that disgrace lies, but in striving not. It is not the unachieved which dims our glory, but the unattempted” (20). At the end of the scene, Isabella thinks that in the future, perhaps, someone will remember her and she sees a time “when fair cities spring up in the wilderness, a grateful posterity shall name some of them for him—Columbus” (21). In Part One Scene Three the explorer de Soto meets the native Indians. It is not until Part One Scene Four that the white settlers arrive, and the Indian counsel meets to determine how to respond to the whites who are coming into the land. Tecumseh is a fierce warrior who favors war: “But

a little more, and the red man, like the negro, will be their slave. The proudest Choctaw warrior will be made to dig and to bend under cruel burdens” (30). Tecumseh urges quick and violent opposition: “My prophet says that the Great Spirit has promised that not one of his children shall be slain, but that he will make our victorious tomahawks glow with the blood of the white man” (30). Pushmataha, the other Indian leader, speaks against Tecumseh in favor of peace: “You have heard him, how he said the white men took the lands of the Shawnees, but you have not heard him tell that the Great Father in Washington paid a fair price for these lands” (30). After Tecumseh slaughters white settlers, Pushmataha grieves for them: “They were our friends. They played ball with us. They shared their food with us. Where are they now?” (31). More settlers arrive to begin creating the town of “Possum Ridge” (32). This does seem altogether a poor name, so the settlers choose a new name, thereby actualizing Isabella’s prophecy for how future generations would honor the explorer she sponsored: “What do you say to naming it for the man that discovered America—Christopher Columbus?” (32). The white settlers eventually grow and multiply, pushing the Indians out and offering them a treaty to exchange their lands for those of the plains. Realizing that there is no choice, that the Indians’ time has now passed, Pushmataha reluctantly agrees: “In the morning of life, great Chahta led our forefathers toward the rising sun. Many centuries have passed since then. And now we must turn toward the setting sun and retrace that weary way” (35). In this way, the city of Columbus is established and named.

Part Two Scene One takes place at the beginning of the Civil War. All citizens of Columbus draw together for a speech by Jefferson Davis. Davis begins by warning his listeners that the election of Abraham Lincoln “will mean but one thing, a declaration of

national hostility toward the South and her institutions” (41). All should be prepared to do as the State of Mississippi does:

If Mississippi in her sovereign capacity decides to submit to the dictation of a base and arrogant foe, then I will sit me down as one upon whose brow the brand of infamy and degradation has been stamped. But if Mississippi decides to resist then, if needs be, I will gather around me her brave and resolute sons; and, planting her flag upon the crest of battle and making a few small hillocks upon her border, wait the reception of the vandal horde. (41)

The soldiers march off to war, carrying flags the ladies of Columbus made. Everyone expects a quick victory and that “the war will be over in two months” (42).

Part Two Scene Two occurs early in 1865. The occasion is a grand wedding in a time “when most Southern girls are having to get married in homespun” (46). The groom is the illustrious General Stephen D. Lee, who would become president of Mississippi A & M in neighboring Starkville. Crystal Clear, who is watching the scene, wonders if it is “wrong to wish the Confederacy had not failed” (49). Part Two Scene Three occurs in April 1866. The war is over, and the time is sad: “Columbus has lost her youth, her joyous buoyant youth” (51).

Part Three Scene One occurs in 1876, a decade after the war ended. Gaither displays a level of racism and stereotype not found in her later work as she describes the crucial Presidential election. For one who would come to write with fairness to all and with a keen understanding of the complexity of the Old South, this seems a particularly unpropitious beginning. The scene describes an encounter between two Blacks and a

carpetbagging Yankee. The Blacks speak of how good times are for them: “De niggers ‘lects de officers, passes de laws, an’ spends de money. De white folks cayn’t do nothin’ but pay de taxes” (52). The carpetbagger encourages the Blacks to vote Republican: “If the Republicans win, you gentlemen will soon be owners of plantations with white men picking cotton for you” (53). The white citizens have different ideas. As one says, “We cannot sit quiet while this misrule devours our patrimony, or while our women behind closed blinds tremble at the sound of black hordes tramping past to music of fife and drum” (54). The white citizens defeat the carpetbagger’s plan to extend dominion over Columbus by stuffing the ballot box until the Democratic candidate is overwhelmingly elected, thus ending Republican rule—once and for all.

Part Three Scene Two ends the play with a visit to the II&C when it was new. Two II&C students enter the stage. One reports that commencement is approaching, and the other adds that “from eight in the morning until six in the afternoon I alternately chewed my pen-staff and scribbled thoughts on English Literature” (56), reminding the audience that Orr has only recently left. Other II&C students march in, as well as the faculty, for this first commencement. Dr. Jones rises to speak:

The year’s work is ended, and our first commencement reached. In other days, we will achieve greater things in the eyes of the world, but I think there will never come a time when these walls look down upon more earnest effort and nobler ambition than they now see in these first students. (57)

Annie C. Peyton, who made such a crucial effort to establishing the II&C, looks ahead to see that the school will produce important women: “women of business . . . those who

reign in the hearts of friends . . . those who care for the sick . . . artists . . . musicians . . . teachers . . . and those who need the wisdom of all, mothers” (58).

In the Postlude, the Young Columbus promises to be worthy of all that has come before: “I vow to my fair flowers that I will be worthy of my past” (59). Mississippi ends by praising II&C: “Daughter of my heart, I. I. and C., you are the molder of the future. We go as we came, leaving you in the quiet of your leafy cloisters to shape the vision of tomorrow” (60). The final scene occurs between a girl and I. I. and C. The girl does not want to leave, but the I.I. and C. wisely reminds her that she “cannot dwell forever in the Valley of Youth. Go, my children, your Alma Mater bids you go” (60).

With the exception of the unworthy racism, *The Pageant of Columbus* shows Gaither’s continued development as a writer in the years after she left the II&C. The imaginative history Gaither writes here prefigures the serious work she would produce in the 1940s. Even the scene with the Blacks and the carpet-baggers fits its time and place, though not ours, illustrating how Southerners felt they had no choice but to take drastic action to save their land from Republican rule. Gaither’s point, in conception if not in execution, does not differ substantially from Faulkner’s “Skirmish at Sartoris,” in which Drusilla Hawk and John Sartoris forget to get married in their urgency to prevent a Republican electoral victory in Jefferson. Gaither’s reliance upon crude stereotypes of Blacks calls attention to the scene in an unfortunate way. However, Gaither completely overcomes such clumsiness with age and experience, and her trilogy of the Old South does not offer or rely upon any such crude stereotyping.

Gaither’s sense of history, her ability to make the reader feel that the author describes long-ago events first-hand, remains a strength of her writing through the years,

and she builds upon the base successfully. The reader notes her attention to detail and the care with which she has conducted her research. As is true of Gaither's later work, she could be accused of being more interested in historicism here than in art, but the charge ignores the fact that she writes fiction, not history, though as accurately and detailed as she possibly can. Research always remains her base, but her technique and result is artistic. In preparing *The Pageant of Columbus*, Gaither reports having "to hurry through the fascinating by-paths of scrap-books and spoken reminiscences as well as the broad highways of history" (4). After listing many of the people she spoke with and works she consulted, Gaither reveals what would become her philosophy of historical fiction: "the typical is to be desired rather than the actual, and truth in a large sense rather than photographic accuracy of detail" (4). Such a statement could apply in equal measure to any of her novels of the Old South.

In the 1920s, Gaither's fiction appeared in magazines such as *Ainslee's*, *McCalls*, and *North American Review* (Simms 73-74). For the centennial of Columbus, Gaither offered "When I Think of Columbus," a lyric poem:

When I think of Columbus, I think of the bridge

As it looks with the sun going down,

Grounded in mists, fabricked of shade,

A bridge to the sun from the town.

Across the river sunk in night,

It spans the shadow and touches the light.

But once was a time when there was no bridge—

Ah, then, I wonder who

Saw the sun set red and saw the mist
Fold in the river with blue.
When I think of Columbus, I think of homes
Shouldering steadfast trees,
Comely and high, with old brick walls,
White of pillar and frieze,
With wide and friendly steps that go
From the green-edged walks to the portico.
Then I wonder that here were untrodden wilds
When Gideon Lincecum came,
Who saw the Tombigbee full of fish
And the forests full of game.
When I think of Columbus, its flowers glow:
The japonicas' red array
The jonquils low about their feet,
But golden, as vivid as they.
Once in a year are the violets bright,
And once the Jessamine scatters star-light.
At every gate, whatever's in bloom,
Japonica, jonquil or rose,
I think of ladies in ruffled skirts
Alighting from the old landaus.
Thinking so of Columbus, my very thought

Is perfumed with garden scent,
 A magic aroma of earth and of blooms,
 One fragrance of many blent—
 But never quite merged, that Frascati one
 Smells mellow, as luscious as fruit in the sun.
 I wonder who touched this wistaria loop,
 What parasol set it a-swing
 Like a censor to bring delight to me
 When I think of Columbus in Spring.

Gaither's feeling seems sincere throughout the lyric, even if the poem does not seem accomplished. One, indeed, feels the powerful impression Columbus continued to make on Gaither years after she graduated from the II&C. One sees the river, the gracious, stately homes, and their fortunate occupants. The smell of Spring flowers reaches one in memory if one cannot be there in person. Of course, Orr also wrote "April Days in Mississippi," which may have influenced Gaither as she writes also of her memory of Columbus. Gaither seems a more confident writer now, if not a great poet, in control of her language, knowing when to rhyme and when to let free verse flow. Of course, one could easily point out all the things Gaither chooses not to see in her view of Columbus, but the poet's purpose is simply to praise, and not at all to criticize or challenge assumptions. Gaither seems content to praise, comfortably writing in a bucolic mode. She accepts without question, and the citizens of Columbus must have appreciated such a sympathetic portrait of their town.

By 1934 , Gaither was well-known enough that Blanche Colton Williams referred to her as “our fiction writer” in a speech celebrating fifty years of the Mississippi State College for Women (“Heritage” 8). *The Spectator* noted Gaither’s visit to the MSCW campus in March 1934 (“Correspondence”). Her presence on campus “removed her from the realm of sheer legend and made her a person to us. Her charming, natural manner almost makes one forget that she is a celebrity. M.S.C.W. is proud of her, and honored by her presence” (“Correspondence”). When Gaither returned to campus to research the upcoming masque for the fiftieth anniversary of the college, the *Commercial Dispatch* called her “one of M.S.C.W.’s most distinguished alumnae” (“Mrs.”). In the article, Gaither is referred to as a “well-known authoress” and a “poet of distinction” (“Mrs.”). Since graduating in 1909, Gaither “has kept in close touch with the college, and it is with much pleasure that M.S.C.W. anticipates her coming” (“Mrs.”).

In 1935, Gaither wrote a masque for Mississippi State College for Women to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. This production was titled *The Clock and the Fountain*, but I have not been able to find an extant copy. As Pieschel writes,

The culmination of the Golden Anniversary celebration occurred in 1935 during graduation weekend. At this time the pageant *The Clock and the Fountain* was performed. The author of the pageant, Frances Jones Gaither, had been developing steadily as a writer since her graduation in 1909. (*Loyal* 102)

Gaither was chosen to write this masque because she “had the writing skill and the long-standing connection with MSCW to make her the logical choice to compose an anniversary pageant” (Pieschel *Loyal* 102). Blanche Colton Williams saw the production,

directed by Emma Ody Pohl, and was impressed. She begins a letter to Pohl by asking, “May I make bold to congratulate you on the successful production of the masque written by Frances Jones Gaither?” (“Letter to Pohl” 1). She adds, “The performance last night was as near perfection as you yourself could wish” (“Letter to Pohl” 2). Williams concludes by claiming that “the great artist expresses herself through her work, objectively—not putting herself forward. You are a very great artist” (“Letter to Pohl” 4).

After Gaither graduated in 1909, Orr remained at the II&C for only four more years, though the impact and influence of her teaching continued to resonate for decades. Orr’s career at the II&C ended during the presidency of Henry Whitfield, who arrived after Kincannon resigned in 1907 to assume the chancellorship at the University of Mississippi. The arrival of President Whitfield brought new tension into Orr’s life, as he held “intentions to expand the domestic science program and cut the Latin and literature requirements” (Wilkerson-Freeman 83). Students are said to have complained to both Paslay and Orr of Whitfield’s “negative attitude toward the Latin curriculum” (Wilkerson-Freeman 83). In her first report to Whitfield, it is clear that Orr realizes that things have changed with the departure of Kincannon. Orr reports that the Department of English Language and Literature has served 591 students in the school year just completed (Orr “Sessional” 2). She reports overall satisfaction with the teachers but is less complimentary of the students’ accomplishments: “teachers have devoted themselves with unflagging zeal to the interests of their classes, and the great majority of the students have applied themselves well, considering how new to most of them rational and consecutive mental processes are” (Orr “Sessional” 2-3). The collegiate students, i.e., those whom Orr taught, “did work that would have been regarded acceptable in any

College any where” (Orr “Sessional” 3). With the Freshman Class, the situation was different: “we have what might seem statistically a less satisfactory record unless we weigh duly the conditions confronting those of us whose office here it is to conduct an English course leading to a B. A. or B. S. degree” (Orr “Sessional” 3). Orr calls Whitfield’s attention specifically to “the heterogeneous material composing the so-called Freshman Class in this institution,—material which no educational system in the world could shape, within a year, to true collegiate ends” (Orr “Sessional” 3). The English course at the II&C, “like every other College English course of recognized rank in America, is largely conditioned upon, and requires a measurably accurate and adequate acquaintance with syntax and grammatical analysis” (Orr “Sessional” 3). More than twenty years after the II&C was founded, Orr found that entering students continued to lack adequate preparation for college-level work. In addition to adequate preparation, success in college, Orr continues, also requires a seriousness of purpose: “there must of course be intelligent purpose and industry on the part of the Freshman student . . . ; it follows that the absence either of preparation or of earnest purpose inevitably leads to failure” (Orr “Sessional” 4).

Of the twenty-seven Industrial students who enrolled in English the first term, eighteen failed, of the 22 in the second term, fifteen failed (Orr “Sessional” 4). Orr remains singularly unimpressed with the Industrial students: “These girls lack the persistence and purpose necessary for serious work. They cannot, by any proper principal of classification, be regarded as collegiate material” (Orr “Sessional” 4). In the academic track, 50 percent of students passed to the second academic track; of those, 60 percent passed to the Junior course (Orr “Sessional” 6). Orr reports being satisfied with this

number, “when we consider the fact that our 1st and 2nd Academic classes have enrolled within them all sorts of public school material from the fourth and fifth grades on. It is obvious that this material should not be here at all” (Orr “Sessional” 6).

Orr offers the new president this information so that he “may have at his disposal these specific facts bearing so closely upon the standards of the school, and coming within the sphere of my personal experience and observation” (Orr “Sessional” 6). Orr then hastens to add that “throughout my connection with this school I shall labor as earnestly to carry out his plans and purposes as though they were my own” (Orr “Sessional” 6). Orr would like to see a differentiation of the courses and academic requirements for the industrial, music, and collegiate programs. The college requirements should “be applied only to those who, having a general collegiate education in view, are working toward a degree or a normal diploma” (Orr “Sessional” 6). She ends by requesting “that the President will not find it necessary to cut down our teaching force, and that he will inform me definitely upon this subject as early as possible, in order that I may plan the work for next year, assigning their classes to the several teachers in advance and directing them as to advisable study and preparation during the summer” (Orr “Sessional” 6).

In her “Report of the Department of Rhetoric and Composition” from the same year, Rosa Peebles echoes Orr’s points. Given their long and close relationship, it is not surprising that these two would present a united front to the new president. Peebles begins by praising the dedication and effort of both the faculty and students: “I think the work done by the teachers exceptionally faithfully and ably performed, and that by the pupils the most earnest and efficient done by them since my connection with this

Department six years ago” (Peebles “Report”). Peebles finds the same problem as Orr in the students’ lack of preparation: “Inasmuch as approximately all applicants are admitted into the lower classes . . . , many of them belonging properly in the fourth, fifth, or sixth grades of the public schools, we cannot be surprised that not more than about 60% of those registered in these classes have been promoted” (Peebles “Report”). Again following Orr, Peebles reports that “we are convinced that the ends for which the school was established,—namely an honest, thorough, and practical education for Mississippi women,—not only can not be accomplished, but will surely be defeated if a great bulk of unprepared material be passed up into the higher classes” (Peebles “Report”).

Perhaps it was inevitable that two people with perspectives on education as different as Orr and Whitfield would have serious disagreements. In a 1979 interview, Lena Ellington, who was both a student of Orr’s and later a colleague of hers at the II&C, shared her perspective on the divisive conflict. Ellington calls the disagreement between Orr and Whitfield “a very sad affair” (2). The campus was divided into “an Orr faction and a Whitfield faction,” forcing Ellington “to sort of go between the two” (3). Ellington reports that Orr never mentioned the conflict to her, but that “Mr. Whitfield talked to me about it” (3). The gossip floating around campus at the time indicated that the conflict arose because Orr thought Whitfield “was going to go in for practical and more mechanical subjects and was going to neglect the classics—language and literature and so forth” (Ellington 3). Orr displayed little sympathy for the students who came to the II&C unprepared for college work, and Whitfield hired Ellington explicitly to look after “girls who were failing courses, who were not fully prepared for college work, And [sic] they were unhappy, and they were weeping, and they were crying around” (Ellington 3).

Although Orr had strong reasons to demand that the II&C hold to the highest academic standards, many other people on the faculty and in the State agreed with Whitfield that “Mississippi girls did not need so much Chaucer and Shakespeare as they did need science and physiology and agriculture” (Ellington 3).

After almost thirty years, Orr abruptly terminated her relationship with the II&C through her resignation in May 1913. Wilkerson-Freeman argues that Orr resigned “to protest Whitfield’s dilution of the curriculum as well as to devote herself to Woman Suffrage (Wilkerson-Freeman 84). However, the reasons for her resignation remain obscure and are not as evident or obvious as Wilkerson-Freeman argues. Orr was on a leave of absence during the 1910-1911 and 1911-1912 academic years, when she went to Columbia University to earn an M.A. (“Miss”). She returned only for one more year, with her last day at the II&C being June 2, 1913 (“Miss”). Perhaps other reasons contributed to her decision to leave, such as the appealing possibilities of life in New York or her desire to work full-time for Woman Suffrage. Also, one should keep in mind that she retired after teaching at the II&C nearly thirty years, a long academic career by any measure.

Orr’s resignation brought attention and tribute from the press. The *Commercial Appeal* of Memphis wrote in its headline that the II&C “Loses a Valuable Instructor.” The value of Orr’s work at the II&C was reflected in the fact that

Her pupils have made very exceptional records in such institutions as the University of Chicago, Bryn Mawr, Smith and Columbia, and it is noteworthy that these young women accord Miss Orr unlimited credit for their achievement, and that such English scholars as Baskervill [sic] of

Vanderbilt, Corson of Cornell and Thorndike of Columbia have testified to the soundness of her collegiate method, and the striking preparedness of her students for graduate work in English. ("State College for Women")

Dr. R. W. Jones, the II&C's first president, commented that Orr's work had "distinct historic value" ("State College for Women"). To her students, Orr gave "an incalculable impulse to wide human interests, to a just conception of scholarship, and to that independent mental life which is the best result of education" ("State College for Women"). The newspaper did not speculate on the reasons for her resignation: "While the cause of Miss Orr's resignation is not openly stated, it is understood that it is prompted for personal reasons" ("State College for Women").

The S. T. Payer (probably an abbreviation for State Tax Payer) controversy erupted soon after Orr left the II&C. Senator Sykes, who had long supported the II&C, essentially accused Orr and Paslay, writing that the pamphlet was produced by a

few dissatisfied ex-members of the faculty and a few misled alumnae, who, inspired with renewed hope arising out of the prevailing craze of 'Woman Suffrage,' to secure a Board of female trustees of the II&C in expectancy by them of the logical sequence of a "*Woman President*" of the Industrial Institute and College. God spare the College such a calamity. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 66)

Whitfield certainly seems to have believed that Orr and Paslay were responsible. He supposedly gave instructions to the postal investigator researching the controversy to "focus on Orr and her associates" (Wilkerson-Freeman 85). Whitfield further wrote a testimonial to his executive abilities and asked the faculty to sign it: four, including

Paslay, refused and “learned that they would not be rehired to teach in the fall” (Wilkerson-Freeman 85). The alumnae loyal to Orr came to believe that Whitfield “wanted to purge the II&C of all faculty who ‘bore the stamp of Miss Orr’” (Wilkerson-Freeman 85). After a long struggle, including publication of a letter Paslay signed “stating that the rift had arisen from a misunderstanding on her part,” Paslay was reinstated as a teacher at the II&C for the 1915-1916 academic year (Wilkerson-Freeman 86).

According to Ellington, the word on campus on the time was that Orr had composed the S. T. Payer letter and got a student to type it (4). Such an action does not seem to match the understanding one develops of Orr, who “was quite a heroine to some people in her day” (Ellington 4). By the time the scandal had passed, many people were left wondering if Orr really resorted to such measures:

[W]e who had Miss Orr in a class never could understand and feel that she had written such a letter. I just never could figure it out. Why she would and how she would and whether—why she would feel that Mr. Whitfield was injuring the reputation of the college to the extent that she would resort to such a thing as that. (Ellington 4)

For his part, “Whitfield defended his decision [to drop Latin and modern language from the requirements for a B.S. in home economics] as being progressive and practical, but some of his faculty members rejected his arguments” (Pieschel *Loyal* 65-66). In a 1917 letter from Whitfield to Emma Hooper, he wrote that he was not “an enemy to Latin”:

You were here during the time of issue (1912), and, as you doubtless remember, everybody was required to take Latin blindly, without any

regard for how the subject was to fit into their life. My contest was to put Latin on a par with other subjects, and have it taken by those into whose scheme of education it would fit. (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 192)

When considering the implications of Whitfield's activities and his supposed motivations in his conflict with Orr, one should keep in mind that he remained hugely popular with alumnae and students of the II&C. Many argue that it was the former students from the II&C and MSCW who pushed him over the top when he successfully ran for governor of Mississippi in 1922. Standards and curriculum at the II&C had been disputed by various factions at the II&C long before Whitfield arrived. Orr always held firm in her desire for high academic standards and requirements, while a succession of presidents, after Jones, perhaps with the exception only of Kincannon, attempted to emphasize the industrial arts and make it easier for students to graduate.

Wilkerson-Freeman clearly admires Orr for her high standards, equating them with early feminism. However, using Wilkerson-Freeman's method of applying contemporary standards and criteria for evaluating historical questions, one could also argue that Orr was an elitist. Clearly, she preferred working with the best and brightest students, feeling that giving these few a full education would do more for the State and the prospects for all women than partially or inadequately educating larger numbers of the less-capable. Granted, by keeping her classes small and only working with the best students, Orr did produce some remarkable results, yet one wonders how many students of talent and potential did not emerge from the Preparatory Department quickly enough for Miss Orr to take them seriously. Any question of Orr's elitism remains hard to answer from this distance. In an undated reflection on her teaching, Orr writes,

Education becomes more and more commercialized, and I can understand why that is true, but I cannot regret that my primary object as a teacher was not economic deliverance or professional opportunity—worth fighting for as those were, but to widen the outlook and increase the joy and freedom of women’s lives. Dealing gladly with ideas has always seemed to me the best evidence that traffic with books was worth while; and I still feel sure that students who have got that release out of their schooling have the best results of education, however impressive it may be to have the emoluments and honors to which real education entitles them.

(“Reflection”)

Clearly, a succession of presidents at the II&C saw the purpose and function of the school differently from Orr. The school’s charter clearly did not allow the II&C to offer only college-level classes, but imposed a three-tiered mission that included industrial training and a normal school for teachers, as well as a college. Rather than argue, as Wilkerson-Freeman does, that Whitfield abused Orr, it is also possible to make the case, as Neilson wants to do, that Orr never accepted that the II&C was not to be only a liberal arts college and that its mission in support of the education of Mississippi’s white girls could not be strictly intellectual. There are clear political implications of both approaches to education, and by 1913, if not long before, it must have been clear that proponents of neither side would budge from their entrenched positions. As Stephen Pieschel writes in his 1985 essay on Orr, one “cannot say with certainty why Miss Orr quit teaching in 1913 and why she left Mississippi in 1920” (ii).

Following Orr's resignation and departure from the II&C, *The Spectator*, then a monthly literary magazine, dedicated the March 1914 issue to her legacy at the school. With Orr's resignation, "the institution and the state lose the service and the presence of one of the rarest women and teachers of her generation" ("Memorabilia" 7). Her students who went on to further education at some of the finest schools in America

and who have thus become acquainted with the educational processes of the advanced institutions of other sections and states, do herewith express our grateful appreciation of the general attitude and approach to learning that Miss Orr made possible to us, and of her entire educational procedure, which we have found to be in harmony with the very soundest that this country affords. ("Memorabilia" 7-8)

Having seen the best opportunities available at other schools, these alumnae "have come to place an even higher value than in our college days upon Miss Orr's scholarship and personality, upon the intellectual stimulus of her instruction, upon her noble and gracious humanity" ("Memorabilia" 8). As a teacher, Orr had "power to illumine the commonplace; to endow with life and interest the driest and thorniest details; to connect the demand for unflagging work with a supply of unfailing joy" ("Memorabilia" 8). This issue of *The Spectator* included twenty-five tributes from alumnae who had studied with Orr.

Blanche Colton Williams wrote of her sadness following the recognition that Orr has resigned: "She has taught so many of us to find our work and to perform it as best we might, that we bow to her wisdom in retiring when her own labor is safely accomplished"

(qtd. in “Memorabilia” 9). The circumstances Orr faced when the II&C was first established were truly unique:

A woman who believed in the women of her state, who towered above most women of her day, but whose love prompted her to stretch out her hands to those below rather than to dwell in a place of art removed from the valleys—such a woman was Head of the Department. Her knowledge, which was to increase and become more profound, was reared on an intellect superbly of the highest. Her clear-seeing eye, her vision which divined the future, added to that practical good sense which has dominated her acts, keeping them always in harmony with her ideals,—her wisdom caused her to put an embryonic college abreast of those of the east [sic].

(qtd. in “Memorabilia” 9)

Eula Deaton, President of the Alumnae Association, writes that Orr’s “resignation is a calamity the extent of which we cannot estimate” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 10). The accomplishments of the II&C owe much to Orr, who

came to our college when its standards had still to be formed; and out of the fullness of her enthusiasm, her culture, her vision, she gave it an ideal; through days and nights of toil, against overwhelming odds, she wrought, as a workman at his forge, to fashion for us the weapons of truth and aspiration to war against sham and low and unworthy aims. (qtd. in

“Memorabilia” 10)

Rosa Peebles declares that, without Orr, even the establishment of the II&C “would have been useless” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 11). Further, Peebles finds that “all the things that

make the college worth while when we measure it with other colleges for women in other more favored parts of the country, are directly or indirectly traceable to Miss Orr” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 11). Emma May Laney writes, “I owe her most of all that is worth while in me now or that I shall ever have” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 11). Rena Crawford writes, “I shall never cease to be thankful that I went to the college at a time when it was possible for me to be in Miss Orr’s class throughout my entire course. . . . I attribute the power I have to love the beautiful and the true largely to my English course at the I. I. and C.” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 12). Margaret Scott writes, “I have not found any of the professors here at Columbia holding the place in my mind that Miss Orr has. None of them has the power of inspiring one for a love of literature as she has” (qtd. in “Memorabilia” 14).

After leaving the II&C, Orr dedicated herself to the cause of Woman Suffrage in Mississippi. At a hearing of the Mississippi legislature to consider a resolution in favor of suffrage for Mississippi women on January 21, 1914, Orr “stated that in a modern, industrial society women needed the vote” (Taylor, A. 19). In the fall of 1914, Orr gave a speech in favor of Woman Suffrage at the Mississippi State Fair in Jackson (Taylor, A. 21). In April 1915, at the annual convention of the Mississippi Woman Suffrage Association in Jackson, Orr spoke on “Mississippi Women and the Ballot” (Taylor, A. 22). At the same meeting, Orr was elected president of this group. In April 1916, at the annual convention in Meridian, Orr was again elected president (Taylor, A. 22). As president, Orr “delivered suffrage lectures in many of the larger towns of the state. She organized several new clubs. There were now eighteen suffrage societies in Mississippi” (Taylor, A. 22-23). In 1916, at the Mississippi Federation of Women’s Clubs convention

in Greenwood, Orr “introduced a resolution to endorse woman suffrage. In spite of much sentiment in its favor, the delegates decided to postpone action” (Taylor, A. 23). It appears that Orr did no further work for the group after this point. According to Wilkerson-Freeman, following the death of Orr’s mother in 1917, she and Paslay were free to leave Mississippi and move to New York, where they “set up permanent housekeeping in a large brownstone at 252 West 74th Street” (Wilkerson-Freeman 89). In New York, Orr and Paslay’s home “became a way station for former II&C students and colleagues who wanted to pursue advanced degrees, establish professions, and try out their literary talents in the big city” (Wilkerson-Freeman 90). For the rest of her life, Orr maintained an active correspondence with many of her former students.

Not until 1954, shortly before her death, did MSCW give Orr the recognition she deserved by naming a building after her:

For many years, former students and teaching associates of Miss Pauline V. Orr had discussed the possibility of naming a building after the first head of the English Department. Miss Orr, in her nineties, lived with her nephew in Long Island, New York, but had never forgotten the women’s college, and for many years had provided the means for one deserving student per year to attend MSCW. In 1954, the old chapel on front campus was dedicated as the Orr Chapel in honor of one who had worked all her life for the purpose of women’s education. (Pieschel *Loyal* 133)

The final chapter of Orr’s long relationship with the II&C was one of triumph, long after her adversaries and friends alike had passed into the stream of history. In recognition of the occasion, Myra Mason Lindsey, Class of 1912, wrote an address which another

alumna read aloud. Orr at the time was “93, frail and blind, that is, physically” (Lindsey “Address” 1). She asked that Lindsey, “Tell them . . . that my heart is where it has been all these years, with my college and its students” (Lindsey “Address” 1). Lindsey herself remembered what it was like to be a student of Orr’s at the II&C:

Some modern physicists say that no sound ever made is lost. I, too, feel that Miss Orr’s beautiful voice will never be lost to those who were fortunate enough to be her students in English Room One in this building. Those rich cadences and overtones have made Chaucer and Browning live more intimately for us because of her interpretation. (“Address” 1)

Even at 93, Orr retained “her same old unquenchable thirst to know everything, not only the what but why” (Lindsey “Address” 2). After resigning from the II&C, Orr “bought the big old brownstone house on West 74th Street, Manhattan that she refers to affectionately as 252” (Lindsey “Address” 2). She shared the house with “Miriam Greene Paslay, beautiful and brilliant and full of laughter that caught and filled all of us who were associated with her” (Lindsey “Address” 2). Orr’s house “was a gathering place for Mississippians and Southerners in general and for many New Yorkers, friends old and new” (Lindsey “Address” 3). On Sunday afternoons, “editors, writers, musicians and many clergymen” came to visit Orr in her “brown velvet dress and diamonds” (Lindsey “Address” 3). Orr developed a good sense of business and managed to make a good living on the market: “she attacked the problem of the market as she had once attacked old Gothic and Anglo-Saxon” (Lindsey “Address” 3). Even at her advanced age, Orr maintained contact with “her former students, many of whom traveled great distances to see her” (“Pioneer”).

Although she was now blind, Orr “kept up with all the modern poets, some of the arty ones and can explain W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas who are Greek to most people” (Lindsey “Address” 6). Lindsey reports that not “long ago she had me reading in Latin some of the poetry of St. Thomas Aquinas” (“Address” 6). In parting, Orr wanted to say that she

thinks that Dr. Hogarth must be the answer to her prayers for the good of the college, and wants to tell the board of Trustees that she feels deeply the honor they have bestowed upon her in dedicating our beautiful old chapel to her as a living symbol of her service to the women of our college and of our state. She says she hopes she deserves it. (“Address” 7-8)

Lindsey’s answer was that “[t]hose of us who know her and who have been blessed by her teaching know that she does” (“Address” 8).

Janie Rice Taylor gave the next speech and officially dedicated the building. She begins by stating that Orr “is one of Mississippi’s great women” (1). Even old and blind, Orr reported that “the books she has learned by heart have been among her greatest comforts” (Taylor, J. 4). She remains interested in all aspects of life, longing “for news of the latest books, of politics, the theatre, and life in all its aspects” (Taylor, J. 4). She continues to love MSCW, as she had the II&C: “Her greatest and most active interest in all her life has been and is now, the ‘College,’ which she loves as her child” (Taylor, J. 4). Now properly in her dotage, “waiting out the years,” Orr always remembers “the golden time when she helped to educate thousands of young Mississippians whom she remembers and loves” (Taylor, J. 5). Orr was proud to know that the building would have her name, as this is the “old chapel where the sound of her voice reached so many young

minds and where its sound may still be a part of these very walls” (Taylor, J. 5). Taylor concludes by dedicating the Orr Building “[w]ith gratitude in our hearts, with reverence for her blessed memory, with appreciation for her high standards of scholarship and achievement” (5).

The ceremony dedicating the Orr Building ended with a letter from Orr herself, who was too frail to travel to Columbus for the event. These are apparently her last official words to the college she loved and served so long:

I love this dear Chapel. I loved it when it, like the college, was brand new and I was very young. Today I love it even more because it has been strengthened and enlarged for the service to future generations of Mississippi women, and I think I may be forgiven for loving it in a very special way because it now bears my own name.

I spent my whole life working within these walls. Here it was my privilege to instruct thousands of the brightest and the best girls of our state. These women, I say without prejudice and with high pride, have no superiors in all the world. And few equals. I cherish them all as friends who have proved their loyalty. Their kindness has warmed me throughout the long, long years. And their influence will bear fruit after I am gone. The students who have come to the College since my time here and those who are present now are dear to me too. I hope that they will not object if I include them among “my girls.” And I ask that our brilliant new president, Dr. Hogarth, and his faculty keep me with them as an ever-continuing colleague.

I used to urge my students to conserve and reverence the best the past has given us. But I believed then and I know now that this past is alive for us only as we use its wisdom and its strength in constant, even painful, search for farther truth.

And so I rejoice that progress continues at our Mississippi State College for Women. I visualize the old chapel as it was when the girls in blue gathered every morning to worship in its auditorium. I wish fervently that I could see the re-modelled building, devoted to the arts of speech, drama, journalism—language and literature in general. I welcome the changes that have afforded us a radio station, editorial rooms, a theater. These are all beams of light to all Mississippi. Any change that makes the good we know a basis for something better is true education, the kind of progress that God intends us to make and sometimes forces us to accept. I am touched to the depths that this old chapel is dedicated to fostering such enlightenment among our students. And I am inexpressibly grateful that this building now bears my name and will keep that name alive when I have been called away. (“Message”)

Pauline V. Orr died in 1955 at the age of ninety-four (Wilkerson-Freeman 91). Perhaps the best tribute to the value of Orr’s work and the impact of her teaching is the way her students remembered her, often more than fifty years after they were her students, as did Emma May Laney, Class of 1906:

The zest which she evoked extended beyond the classroom. Well do I remember, even after almost fifty years, one hot afternoon in April when a

class of twenty-five followed her in a long blue line (we went outside the gates in those days only with a chaperone) on a dusty walk of five miles to see wild hawthorne in bloom—all because we had heard her read Browning's 'Oh, to be in England now that April's there.'" (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 176)

Janie Rice Taylor, Class of 1911, writes, "Into the life-blood of this great college has gone the enrichment of the teaching, the planning, the consecration to high purpose, the peerless leadership, and the high accomplishments of this great woman" (qtd. in Pieschel *Loyal* 176). Myra Mason Lindsey perhaps captures best the essence of Orr's life and career at the II&C when she writes, "As a child, she was never juvenile; if she should live one hundred years, she could never be old" (*Life* 4).

Concluding Remarks

The II&C was founded in a time of challenge under a cloud of resignation, almost with a hint of despair. The enfranchised white men of Mississippi had survived the double disasters of Civil War and Reconstruction, only to be threatened by financial panic in the early 1880s. The emerging society seemed to offer little solace and no real promise of stability. The ideal of the Southern woman as incapable of existing independently and needing masculine protection throughout her entire life, though it long appealed to the imagination, became little more than another casualty of the nineteenth century. The Old South truly was gone. Even if reluctantly, these battered men found enough strength in themselves to found and fund the first state-supported college for women in the United States.

Mississippians had neither the leisure for nor the interest in engaging in debates about the nature, purpose, and scope of higher education for women. Mississippi's young women needed to be educated and prepared to be self-supporting, and that was the mission the legislature assigned to the Industrial Institute and College (II&C), founded in 1884. The II&C was experimental by design, and, during its early years of operation, there were times when the school might not have survived one more shock. Given the general lack of educational opportunities in Mississippi, especially for women at the secondary level, having a true women's college must have seemed impossible in the face of such difficult times. Mississippi seemed a poor soil for such an innovative approach to education.

Not everyone agreed that academic standards at the II&C should be high and that the curriculum should be rigorous. During the II&C's early years, many students and parents, even occasionally legislators, protested that the expectations and standards were beyond the reach of Mississippi girls. Some presidents were ready to accede to demands and lower standards. However, the presence and example of Pauline Van de Graaf Orr, Mistress of English, always provided a counterexample to such arguments; she knew that the women of Mississippi could meet even the most demanding requirements of any academic program. Although it is true that attrition rates in the courses Orr taught and supervised were high throughout her tenure, the success she had with her best students reminds one that great results often follow high expectations and a clear example. Since many of Orr's students were in the Normal program, her influence extended to the secondary systems of Mississippi and other states that hired II&C graduates. In higher education, Orr's students made contributions to many American colleges, with some rising to high levels. Frances Gaither had an important career as a writer of fiction. Orr's influence was felt long after she departed, and the school finally named a building in her honor shortly before her death in 1954.

Eastern women's colleges continuously debated the proper form and purpose of higher education for women, but it was Mississippi, which was not in a position to join the debate, that established a college intended to give women the skills and education they needed to be self-supporting. As the first women anywhere able to attend a state-supported college, the young women of Mississippi responded enthusiastically, proving both the value they saw in higher education and their ability to make the most of any opportunities. Once Mississippi led the way, other states were quick to follow with their

own state-supported colleges for women. By educating a previously marginalized population, Mississippi's II&C stands as an example of what is possible in higher education when those who are said not to be worthy, women in this case, are finally given their chance.

After the legislature changed the II&C's name to the Mississippi State College for Women (MSCW) in 1920, the school's purpose and function was permanently established as a college, and there has never been serious reconsideration of that decision. Integration was late in arriving to MSCW in 1966, but there was no disruption when the first African-American students enrolled (Pieschel *Loyal* 135). The school was granted university status in 1974, and today its name remains the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) (Pieschel *Loyal* 126), though it now admits men as well as women. As it was the first state-supported school for women, MUW was also the last. Following a case that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court and was decided on a 5-4 vote, MUW was forced to admit male students to all programs in 1982, while retaining its name and mission to provide "educational opportunities and encouragement for women" (Pieschel *Loyal* 153). MUW continues today as a small school noted for excellence and personalized education, for both women and men.

Much research remains to be undertaken on both the intellectual and literary impacts of the II&C, as well as of both MSCW and MUW. The archives at MUW are currently undergoing a major and complete organization, recovering documents that have not been seen before. Many interesting stories about students and faculty at the II&C remain to be discovered. Access to additional primary sources will certainly make our

understanding of the literary and intellectual impact of the II&C richer and more complete.

In addition to Eudora Welty, who attended the school from Fall 1925 to Spring 1927, and Frances Gaither, other writers from the school deserve attention. Myra Mason Lindsey, who wrote a draft of a biography of Pauline Orr, was an accomplished short story writer, as well as fiction editor at *Good Housekeeping*. Faulkner may have contacted her early in his career when he was trying to sell short stories. There has been some recent critical attention paid to Blanche Colton Williams, but no one has produced a monograph on her voluminous critical and literary writings. In addition to publishing well-received biographies of John Keats and George Eliot, Williams was the founding editor for the O. Henry Awards and wrote the introduction to the first eleven volumes in the series. Marcia Winn was a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*. Shelby Foote credited Lillian McLaughlin, who worked on *The Spectator* with Eudora Welty, as inspiring him to write. Ruth McCoy Harris, who also worked in *The Spectator* with Welty, wrote an award-winning short story in 1947 and was said to have drafted a novel. In the 1950s, Louise Eskrigge Crump wrote two entertaining mysteries set in the Delta. Alice Walworth Graham, in a thirty-year literary career lasting through the 1970s, wrote two series of popular novels, one set in antebellum Natchez, Mississippi, and one in medieval England.

This study represents a beginning of the research that needs to be done to develop a complete understanding of the II&C's intellectual and literary impact. In the end, the school remains an anomaly for me, a successful experiment in higher education where one should not have occurred. Circumstances demanded that the II&C be founded and

funded, but the teachers and students made its lasting literary and intellectual contributions. Mississippi, before any other state, began to educate her daughters as well as her sons.

A Forgotten Mississippi Writer: Frances Ormond Jones Gaither's Novels of the 1940s

“the typical is to be desired rather than the actual, and truth in a large sense rather than photographic accuracy of detail”

—Preface to *The Pageant of Columbus*, 1915

One of the most pleasant experiences I had while researching this study was my first reading of the three novels Frances Ormond Jones Gaither published in the 1940s: *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, *The Red Cock Crows*, and *Double Muscadine*. I had never heard of Gaither before; so far as I know, I never came across a reference to her in any article or book discussing Southern literature. In a 1986 article written for the *Clarion Ledger*, Frank Smith wonders why Gaither has been so quickly forgotten: “[a] number of highly talented Mississippi writers attended the school now known as MUW, . . . but Frances Gaither probably ranks next to Eudora Welty as the best novelist among them” (“Mississippi”).

A close reading of Gaither's three novels of the Old South provides a rich experience for any student of Southern literature. Each novel offers a subtle and shaded examination of the social relationships and culture of the plantation system. Gaither's Old South is complex and contradictory, marked by multiple human ambiguities; her Old South refuses to be categorized in modernist terms. These are tales of rugged people who live in tough times, complex, rich tales of “slaves and slaveholders who lived in antebellum plantations—the first detailed, serious treatment of the subject in American fiction” (Smith “Mississippi”).

Gaither was born Frances Ormond Jones on May 21, 1889, in Somerville, Tennessee, daughter of Annie Matilda Smith and Paul Tudor Jones (Thrasher 1). Significantly for her mature fiction, especially *The Red Cock Crows*, Gaither's ancestors included both a Yankee-come-South and a slaveholder (Thrasher 1). Even as a small child, Gaither "told her friends that she was going to grow up to write stories" (Smith "Mississippi"). In high school, Gaither was attracted to Rice Gaither "because he too wanted to be a writer They did not marry until Frances had finished at the II&C in 1909" (Smith "Mississippi"). Gaither permanently moved to New York in 1929 when her husband began working as an editor for the *New York Times*.

As Ronald L. Davis points out, for modernist Southern writers, "the fact of Southern history that they're stuck with is slavery" (186). Gaither "confronts not just the immorality of slavery, but the mystery that surrounds the whole subject" (Davis, R. 186). Davis goes so far as to claim that "[u]ltimately it is the lack of understanding between white and Blacks, and the tragic consequences of this ignorance, that is the real subject of her three major novels" (186). Davis assesses Gaither as less an artist than an historicist: "Her main concern was the historian's concern: to understand and interpret the meaning of the past" (186). Gaither contradicts the popularized image of the Old South prevalent in modernism:

understanding the institution of slavery in the antebellum South meant, first of all, debunking numerous myths, in particular the myth that plantation life in Mississippi and Alabama was all a matter of juleps, white columns, coquettes in frilly dresses and contented darkies singing in the cotton fields. (Davis, R. 186)

In Gaither's Old South, people individually may be kind and noble, but the "real villain is the system of slavery, the code that the white community blindly accepts and that perverts the best qualities of its members" (Davis, R. 187). Slavery "was a lie and, as such, it could do nothing but alienate and isolate the whites, not only from Blacks but from themselves" (Davis, R. 187).

In a 1949 interview concurrent with the release of *Double Muscadine*, Harvey Breit asks Gaither if she writes historical fiction: "'Perhaps,' she says, 'my understanding of the term is wrong. But I do not think I write what I call historical novels. I don't base characters on actual personages. What I try to do in dealing with the past is to create an illusion of the present.'" Gaither reports working "terribly hard to get my characters to think and feel and speak as if they were living now, in this moment" (Breit). She begins writing novels with extensive research "to absorb the period so completely that I am able to give out what I believe are its realities" (Breit). While writing, Gaither spends "half her working time . . . in research, half in actual writing" (Breit). Gaither would not agree that she is more of an historian than a novelist. She undertakes research to identify the narrative emerging from the mass of fact and document, claim and counterclaim. Although Gaither's fiction is undeniably polemical, it is not history.

However, as Michael Kreyling notes in *Inventing Southern Literature*, Southern literature is history: "It is not so much southern literature that changes in collision with history but history that is subtly changed in collision with southern literature" (ix). With reference to the South, one must make a distinction between *past* and *history*: "'The past,' [J. W.] Cash argued, is not the same as 'history,' and those who elevate the former (as image) neglect the latter" (Kreyling 35). The past in Southern literature creates and

destroys identities simultaneously: “As Faulkner wrote in *Intruder in the Dust*, it is always a few minutes before two o’clock on July 3, 1863, and Pickett is always about to give the fateful order to charge: southern identity is always about to be achieved and obliterated in the same fateful instant” (Kreyling 168).

Lynn Veach Sadler, in one of the few scholarly essays addressing these three novels, argues that Gaither is “always concerned with freedom of the most universal reach” (115). While this is not a unique concern for a writer, Gaither gives “it graphic poignancy in the example of women, often according special attention to their plight within the more overt frame of slavery” (115). Slavery is everywhere present in all three novels, but Sadler sees that “a strong peripheral and undergirding theme is the destructiveness—for all—of the mythologizing of Southern Womanhood” (Sadler 118), which is accurate. Confusion inevitably follows when a slaveholding woman’s reflections on her “relationships with the slaves begin to make her reflect on men’s relations to women” (Sadler 120). The Southern myth only endures so long as everyone agrees that “life is so good . . . that no one, not even a slave, could want to change it” (Sadler 120). Sadler acknowledges that men in Gaither’s novels, also, withhold their true selves from wives and mistresses, whether white or slave, due to their own “enslavement to the Southern codes of Honor and Womanhood” (Sadler 122). Though offering interesting ideas, Sadler imposes a feminist reading upon Gaither’s work. Always and everywhere, conflicts and misunderstandings arise between men and women, but Gaither does not make this struggle the focus of any novel: the base for civil society in the Old South was slavery. Gaither uses her considerable talents as researcher and novelist to dramatize the

slave system, often in stark terms, without undue sentiment, and she intends that slavery be the center of these three novels.

In 1941, Gaither published *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, the first novel in her trilogy. Frank Smith, who would develop a deep appreciation for Gaither's work, initially found *Follow the Drinking Gourd* incomplete: "Mrs. Gaither has made the story of Hurricane Plantation on the Alabama River one that moves easily with unflagging interest, but the novel lacks any depth of penetration" ("Historic"). Margaret Wallace in the *New York Times Book Review* expresses surprise at finding "a panoramic novel in brief, the kind of chronicle of an era which might have sprawled over a thousand pages but actually takes less than three hundred." In the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Frank Daniel praises Gaither's "authenticity" and notes that she "presents the economical wastefulness of slavery, and its inimical effect on all concerned."

Gaither's plantation life bears little resemblance to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*; neither does it emphasize, as in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, those who would wrestle what they desire from the land by force of will alone. Instead, Gaither examines the formation and long-term floundering of Hurricane Plantation in Alabama, an operation that never does too well or too poorly.

Gaither's characterization in this novel focuses more on the archetypal than the individual. Her characters here are types: the Good Master, the Earnest Young Man, the Slave Driver, and the Confused Slave. Gaither offers a polemical answer to the false romance of the plantation system presented in popular modernist Southern fiction. Less her verisimilitude disorient unsuspecting readers, Gaither informs the reader in the

Preface that “the characters in this story are fictional except Peg-leg Joe, a real person associated in Southern legend with the Drinking Gourd song.”

Plantations begin in loneliness and squalor, with no hint of emerging splendor. The solitary John Austen, founder and Master of Hurricane Plantation, arrives ahead of the slaves. With only a fire for company in a ramshackle cabin, Austen spends his first night looking at the list of “the people” (5), the slaves he has chosen to accompany him to his new plantation:

He had wanted to include no family unit in which the number of children far outbalanced the adult strength. To sever no ties of kinship was an impossibility, because all superannuated people, for their own good, must be left at home. But certainly no parents of young children should be separated from them. (6)

As the slaves arrive and begin to clear the land, the reader suspects that Gaither offers little beyond Southern apologetics and Old South myth-making. Gaither’s picture of the benevolent master and contented slaves tempts the reader to put the novel aside:

The people were in good spirits, and worked well. Their voices sounded happy, mingled with click of axe and thud of maul, as John Austen rode from group to group to see how they were getting on. They were always glad to have him near, urging him to get down and see how for’ard they were with their work, begging to be noticed and praised, courting conversation on the most trivial points. (17)

Austen feels that slaveholding should be reserved for aristocrats with refinement of spirit that equips them to understand the people. When an overseer mentions that he is thinking

about buying a slave and asks for advice, Austen tries “to keep out of his voice the distaste he felt at the idea of [the overseer] . . . becoming a slave-owner” (22). Austen’s chivalric *noblisse oblige* defines his responsibility for the people. Only an aristocrat like Austen could seriously claim that his slaves are “like members of my family” (23). Thus, Austen establishes Hurricane Plantation with benevolent intentions under aristocratic ethics.

At the very beginning of Part Two, the reader learns that “John Austen was dead” (69), though no one informs the slaves. Never profitable, Hurricane Plantation has gone through “uncounted overseers” (73). The tamed land is fully cotton country now. In describing the South’s nature and landscape, Gaither’s prose often approaches lyricism:

Close in to the road on both sides the cotton grew as high as the seat of the sulky. The tops of the frost-darkened plants, interlocking, spread in a vast plain, acre beyond acre, monotonous as a sea, with billows crested in white. The deadened trees thrust upward, stark and pointed, like ship masts crowding a harbor. Cotton, cotton, cotton in every field. (79)

Without knowing of Austen’s death, the slaves continue to rely on their Master’s concern for them to guarantee good treatment: “Mas John he don’t ‘low us be whup’ ‘bout cotton. Runnin’ ‘way, yas’r, come git yo’ bastin’. An’ messin’ ‘roun wid another man’s wife, wham, wham, wham. But cotton! No, siree” (98-99).

In a world of plantations, where every overseer must claim to think exclusively of the owner’s interests, all could never be as it seems. Mr. Nail, the current overseer, needs his bonus money to marry Lura, his fourteen-year-old sweetheart, whose family lives hidden in the back of Austen’s land. Through Nail, Gaither reaches deep into the horror

of slavery, into the injustice and fear, the psychic and physical pain of being subject to the whims of such a man. When a slave woman faces a whipping for coming up short in her picking, Nail plans to whip her publicly as an example. In defense of his mother, her child can only scream, “I don’t want Mist’ Nail whup my mammy” (105).

Nature foils the plans of all men, rich and poor, slave and free, when Hurricane Plantation experiences a real hurricane. With great feeling and impressive control over her language, Gaither offers the feeling of being caught in a hurricane through her powerful rhythms and alliteration of wind-like consonants: “For there was now a great roar, not on earth, but in the heavens, like big iron-wheeled wagons hauling cotton bales on a wooden bridge, a mighty bridge without beginning or end” (109). The sunrise reveals a scene of utter destruction:

The loose cotton . . . had been blown clean away and the baled, drenched with rain water. In the fields all the open cotton—all Mr. Nail’s estimated forty bales—was whipped off and beaten into the dirt. Many plants had been broken off at the roots by falling timber and all had been split and torn. . . . The storehouse on the bluff had been unroofed and the fifty-six bales of cotton stored there, rain soaked like those at the gin. (115).

Since Nail is a member of the lower classes, any dream he could have, even something as worthy as marriage, remains always precarious, subject to the whims of both men and nature. The loss of “his” cotton, secretly planted on Austen’s land to form the economic base for his future life with Lura, is more than he can overcome. Listless and unconcerned, Nail makes no effort to recover any of Austen’s crop: “The rain-wet bales, which might yet have fetched a fair price if promptly opened and dried, were left to

mildew and rot” (121). Before the hurricane, Nail had neglected to plant extra food in his enthusiasm to produce a cash crop, and now there is hunger: “These were the leanest times Hurricane had ever known” (122).

With the death of John Austen, responsibility for Hurricane Plantation falls upon his son, Robbie, who has developed abolitionist sympathies at college. When a neighbor congratulates him on his winning, easy ways with the hands, Robbie expresses the anti-slavery convictions he honed through his college debates:

“Too easy,” he said bitterly. “That’s the whole trouble. We treat them like children in spite of ourselves.”

“Well,” said the squire, “they are children, aren’t they?”

“No!” cried the boy. “They are not. At least most of them are not. They are grown men and women. We cheat them when we pretend to them they cannot grow up.” (148)

Gaither emphasizes two hard facts through Robbie: masters themselves are never free, and the perfect expression of capitalism is bondage in all its forms. Hurricane Plantation has paper held against its people and other property. The creditors would take it as a sign of good faith if Robbie would live at Hurricane: “Absentee ownership . . . hardly ever pays even in good times—and it’s hell on the Negroes, as your father used to say” (159). Robbie’s last college debate addressed “Whether slavery was justifiable morally and economically” (161), and he came to Hurricane Plantation “[t]o free my people, . . . ship them all to Liberia, sell Hurricane to pay for their passage” (156). He saw himself as Liberator, but, in truth, he is as bound to the land in service to his masters as the people are to him. Robbie could walk away, as he dreams, only at the cost of having the people

split up and sold. No Austen would pay such a price. Class conflict among the whites explodes in Robbie's first meeting with Nail. When Robbie delicately suggests that Lura's family should leave, "[i]t was the first time in Robert Austen's life that he had been looked at with hate. And he was unprepared for it. It was the hatred of a class for a class" (164). Nail, insulted, leaves immediately, and Robbie must manage Hurricane Plantation on his own.

Through Robbie, Gaither approaches her theme for the first half of this novel: the capitalist system, expressed in bondage, makes slaves of us all, though some hold to an illusion of freedom. Even the Master cannot live free when there are creditors to satisfy. Under Robbie, the economic situation at Hurricane Plantation continues to be precarious, and one day a man arrives to take away two slaves "and their three youngest children" (190). However, the greatest threat to survival is the arrival of cholera (192). Robbie faithfully nurses the people, including the sick child Poldo: "When Poldo got well, Mas Robbie had been dead and buried for many days" (193).

Robbie, the last, best hope of the Austens, and the privileged class they symbolize, gave his life in service to the people, perhaps foolishly, perhaps nobly. The Austens' compact with the people loses force as Robbie takes his enlightened ideas to the grave. Hurricane Plantation does not change for several years after Robbie's death: "the place had continued to be run, nominally at least, for Mas John's wife and daughter" (197-198). Eventually, however, many of the people are lost "by sale and foreclosure" (197), and Hurricane Plantation "changed owners almost as fast as it had overseers" (198).

As Part Three begins, the years have taken their toll on Hurricane Plantation: “[w]orn out land is worn out land” (203). Littleberry, the overseer, sets reasonable tasks and otherwise lets the hands do as they please: “he saw no reason why a smart, brisk hand who could finish up a day’s work by three o’clock shouldn’t take off at three and work his own patch, or cut wood or gather moss to sell or go fishing or attend to his traps or do whatever else he had a mind to” (205).

Littleberry introduces Peg-leg Joe, who is based upon an historical figure, to Hurricane Plantation as an itinerant carpenter who has come looking for work. Poldo, now grown and serving as Hurricane Plantation’s de facto manager, sizes him up, unsure what to make of him:

this carpenter . . . was as fair and rosy-cheeked as a white baby child—although he was far from young. Scores of fine wrinkles crinkled up his babylike skin at the corners of his eyes whenever he laughed. The eyes themselves were blue, not faded out like Mr. Littleberry’s, but deep and dark, like the sky in picking time. His hair and his short small beard were fine and flosslike. (216)

Gaither highlights the biblical qualities this carpenter possesses. Christlike, he works honestly and patiently while waiting for just the right moment to share his own version of the Good News. Moseslike, he offers deliverance to those in bondage. When Peg-leg Joe meets Poldo one evening, he offers to tell him about his true work, adding “[b]ut you must keep the secret carefully—from Mr. Littleberry, for instance. Otherwise, it might cost me my life” (219). Ignoring Poldo’s fear of knowing such dangerous information, Peg-leg Joe points to the Big Dipper in the sky: “You know the Drinking Gourd, don’t

you, Poldo?" (219). Peg-leg Joe continues, "My real work is teaching people how to follow that star and go free" (220). He tells Poldo of Canada, "where black people are as free as white" (220). He tells him of the Underground Railroad: "[I]f a man is brave enough to risk the journey to the Ohio River, beyond it he will find friends to hide him and smuggle him through to Canada" (221). Joe instructs Poldo in detail how to get to the Ohio River, "saying which rivers and creeks were to be crossed and at what place on each the crossing was safest, naming those streams which should be followed without crossing, describing landmarks and swamps for hiding out" (221). Poldo's first reaction is fear for Peg-leg Joe: "I hear 'em say white folks hangs men fo' talkin' runaway talk to niggers" (222). Hurricane is his home, he continues, Littleberry is good to him, Littleberry trusts him, Littleberry needs him: he has no reason to run. Joe accepts what Poldo says because a "man must want freedom deeply if he is to risk his life for it" (222). After asking Poldo to keep their talk a secret, he walks away: "In a few weeks I'll be gone and you can forget you ever saw me" (225).

The next year, a free black man who works on a steamboat buys Poldo's wife from the bank, and she willingly leaves with him. That same night, alone and devastated, Poldo "began to murmur under his breath in foolish and querulous pleading, like a child resisting authority: Hurricane my home. Hurricane where I's born at. What'd I leave Hurricane for?" (261). Freedom increasingly pulls the reluctant Poldo forward. As he prepares to leave, he mumbles that "[m]an be a fool run off from Hurricane this night. Sheriff and his dogs liable be here soon in the mornin'. Man sho' be out o' his mind make them ol' hounds a fresh warm trail to follow" (262). Pain pushes Poldo forward until, for the first time in his life, he exists completely on his own. Terrified and lonely,

Poldo begins to run, imagining returning to Hurricane and begging for forgiveness. In his confusion, he comes upon a raft and waits for the dark to cover him as he glides down the river, following the Drinking Gourd: “‘Free.’ He spoke it aloud, but questioningly, unsure of its flavor. Then he put another, homelier word beside it. ‘Free nigger. Uh, uh, uh’” (268).

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a much better novel than Smith’s review would lead one to believe. As always, Gaither treats all her characters fairly, though they seem more representative of types than individuals. Early in the novel, the somewhat flat African-American characters seem to offer only images of content, happy darkies living on their plantation, fiercely loyal to their master. Poldo does flee the plantation, but the proximate cause of his flight is his wife’s betrayal rather than a developing consciousness and understanding of *freedom*: he flees his pain before he runs towards freedom. Poldo’s long dealings with white people have made him savvy enough to make his journey to freedom alone, but he is sure to be lonely. Gaither does not describe his new homecoming, though the reader feels sure he has one. Poldo simply disappears down the river and, thus, from the history of the South.

Gaither published *The Red Cock Crows* in 1944. While *Follow the Drinking Gourd* explores issues related to absentee-owned Deep South plantations, especially the capricious nature of conditions the slaves face, *The Red Cock Crows* addresses slave insurrection, the fear that gripped almost all whites in the Old South. In the Preface, Gaither writes that although the story is fiction, its “main events . . . do bear at least a family resemblance to happenings in the summer of 1835 at the now vanished town of Livingston, Mississippi.” The slaves in *The Red Cock Crows* want freedom and think

they know how to get it, though ignorance prevents them from planning through to consequence. The established and privileged white society proves itself willing to accept any extreme behavior in defense of its false ideology. Gaither is no less fair to these characters than to those in *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, but fairness does not necessarily imply sympathy.

The Red Cock Crows gathered mostly favorable reviews. Writing in the *Library Journal*, L. M. Kinlock calls it "A skillful job, very slow at first, but with mounting tension through the Negro trials." P. V. Stern in the *New York Times Book Review* writes,

Mrs. Gaither knows her material; she gives a truthful picture of plantation life, and she shows how insurrection, spreading like fire in a coal seam, could undermine a normal and not untypical Southern slaveholding community and consume it in a raging inferno of hatred and bloodshed.

N. E. Monroe in *Catholic World* writes that this novel "in its sustained imagination and truth to human nature would be hard to equal in modern fiction."

As the novel begins, Adam Fiske, a Yankee graduate of Bowdoin College, has come South to establish a school for the planters' children. Once established in a local tavern, Fiske reveals that he holds a letter of introduction to the planter Ward Dalton of Shandy Plantation, which increases everyone's interest: "When a man wanted to say a 'heap' of anything, he just said: 'as many as Dalton's got niggers'" (6). The strangest person Fiske has ever met is the slave Mid, who will come to a tortured, though perhaps just, end in the hysteria that follows revelation of the slave plot.

I, a Forks nigger, I is. I don't b'long to these here Mullenses. I reckon you wonder how come I b'longs to one white man and works out for another?

Well, you see, Mr. Fist, it like this: My young master he got more niggers now than he know what to do with, seem like. An' he say, Mid, he say, how you like to work down to the Bluff for Mr. Joe Mullens? Hit a heap easier work than choppin' cotton an' no tellin' what you make in tips. (8)

Fiske's first glance of Fannie, whom he will love, occurs when he sees a young girl wearing "a charming bonnet, lined with watered silk in peach color which shed a rosy light upon her face when she turned momentarily in the direction of the stranger" (8). As Fiske, in the company of Fannie and her friend, approaches Shandy Plantation for the first time, Gaither offers another lyric description of the fecund Southern landscape:

There were masses of purple and gold and crimson wild flowers cramming the corners of the zigzag rail fences and tumbling along the open roads; deep green groves with their shining-leaved magnolias and bright bay trees; cornfields smothered and sagging under their jungles of pea-vine; acres of sweet potatoes, acres of goobers; and always, in vista after vista, each as wide as some broad inlet of the ocean, the dark green cotton, which, like the ocean again, was white-crested as far as he could see. (11-12)

Even such a prosperous operation falls short of the romanticized plantations of the popular imagination. The master's house was "a plain, weatherboarded pile, somewhat in need of paint, sprawled across the top of a broad low knoll, and giving the appearance . . . of having been put together piecemeal" (13).

The slave Scofield, who will lead the slave rebellion, commands respect on Shandy Plantation. Scofield's quest begins when he receives a sign from God one day

while leading the hands out to work: “[H]e heard a Voice saying: My kingdom is not of this world. And then he knew that something more was expected of him” (97). Scofield spends much time reflecting on the sign, going “off alone into the woods and study[ing] over in his mind what the Spirit had said and pray[ing] to know what was meant” (97). Years earlier, he became a preacher by standing “up while the singing and testifying was going on and wait[ing] for the Spirit” (97). Crowds of slaves now come from all over to hear him preach, but, he thinks, “just being the most powerful preacher at the Forks wasn’t what the Spirit meant, either, seem like” (98).

On the night his mother dies, Scofield receives a more urgent vision: “The Spirit stood beside him and said: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth—I came not to send peace but a sword” (98). An army needs weapons, and there is no way for Scofield to equip an army, though a white friend could buy supplies. Scofield asks the Spirit, “Ef’n I jes’ could have *one* sign, anything a-tall, jes’ any li’l sumpn nuther to go by, please S’r. So I c’n know which white man I got to ast” (99).

Shortly thereafter, while Scofield returns to Shandy Plantation after a trip to town, he sees “[l]uminous paths . . . [beginning] to open through the glowing heavens, centering where the sun had gone down, like the spokes of a shining wheel” (45). Scofield believes this is the same experience described in the Old Testament when “Ezekiel saw that wheel of time” (45). God promises liberation for Scofield’s people through this heavenly sign: “Up the hill of heaven out of the shining west poured a host beyond all counting, some afoot, some on horses and mules, thousands and thousands, with guns and spears and flags, men who shouted and sang as they came” (45). The host follows its new Moses: “black men and brown and yellow, all following one brown man who rode far out in front

and turned in his saddle and waved his bright sword above his head to encourage them onward” (45-46). As the man turns to face the multitude, Scofield saw that it “was his own face” (46). Part One ends with Scofield, dazed and unsure of what he has seen, returning to his cabin to read what the Bible says about Moses (47).

Throughout *The Red Cock Crows*, Gaither repeatedly stresses how slavery as an institution continues to exist only under great duress, under threats both internal and external. Following Kreyling, one hesitates to see Faulkner everywhere in Southern literature; however, Gaither seems to be writing under the influence of *Go Down, Moses*, particularly Section Four of “The Bear.” The setting for *The Red Cock Crows* is the 1830s, the same time some of the ledgers were written that Isaac McCaslin reads in his futile attempt to define his family’s past. As Richard Godden and Noel Polk point out, “slavery in the 1830s and 1840s was an embattled institution, held in place by compulsory pass systems, by complex patterns of surveillance, and by ‘the obligatory involvement of all white members of the community in the implementation of the laws’” (344-345). In Gaither’s novel, although there appears to be a general lackadaisical approach to the pass system, no one, like Faulkner’s Uncle Buddy and Uncle Buck McCaslin, experiments with “liberatory performances . . . sustained, subversive and founded on traced economic losses” (Godden 344). Gaither’s slaveholders are dedicated to their peculiar institution.

Gaither’s focuses Part Two of the novel on how Fiske, a Yankee outsider, adapts to life on Shandy Plantation. Gaither writes with authority of the education system the upper classes in antebellum Mississippi preferred, largely a focus on tutorials for individual students, or sometimes small groups, with an emphasis on recitation. Fiske

finds success beyond his expectations on Shandy Plantation: “a thriving school, a salary of five hundred a year guaranteed by Ward Dalton and three of his well-to-do neighbors” (51). Gaither never describes any of Fiske’s lessons, and this seems a curious oversight in a writer so interested in historical detail. She focuses, rather, on contrasts between North and South, illustrating her analysis through the developing relationship between Fiske and Fannie. For her part, Fannie “was content to sit bent over her embroidery frame a whole hour at a time if Adam would read aloud to her” (53). Yet, for all his happiness, Fiske cannot overcome his impression of slavery, as he writes in his journal:

I am continually aware that around my small, snug island washes forever the ocean of slavery, infinite and mysterious. All life here is shaped by its mighty influence. But the whole subject, by some unwritten local law, is forbidden to me. It is not only that I must not discuss it—I may not even have an opinion about it. (53)

In spite of such dissatisfaction with slavery, Fiske admits to no desire to interfere: “His content was far too deep for that and, besides, he had a distaste for the role of censorious reformer” (54). Through the reverie Fiske indulges in while writing, Gaither indirectly addresses what it is like to be a writer working on a novel during a time of war:

What if he . . . should be doing something very important after all? What if he were speaking for the dumb and down-trodden what they themselves had no words for or would not dare to utter if they had? The pen *is* mightier than edged steel. And freedom is a cause worth any man’s passionate service. (119)

Fiske has a hard time understanding Fannie, and Southerners in general: “I have never experienced such kindness in all my life. I did not know people could be so kind to a total stranger” (68). When Fannie accuses Fiske of hating life at Shandy Plantation, all he can ask is, “Does a man hate heaven?” (69). Fannie intentionally misunderstands his sentiments to convince herself that “he *did* love the South, then, like everybody else who really knew it!” (69).

Troop Clay, who is actively courting Fannie with her father’s approval, invites Fiske for a dinner at his house and a ride. Edna Lee, Troop’s sister, suffered from “youthful misfortune” (72) and is forever known as a fallen woman. Fiske expects that her eyes would show “grief or shame,” but she “regarded him hardly differently from the way Fannie and . . . the rest of them did” (72). Yet, Edna Lee lives isolated from the world of women, like Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, with “every woman at the Forks so ashamed of her that any one of them would turn red as a beet if her name was mentioned in their presence” (73). After dinner, while Troop and Fiske ride away to meet some other young men, Troop admits his true feelings about women: “They’re so damned sensitive. Not but what I pity the poor things. I’d rather be the low-downest Negro buck, slave to some hard-driving farmer across the bottom than the richest woman at the Forks” (75). Fiske is surprised to hear such an declaration from a man who appears “so proud of the South because it exalted women” (75).

As Part Three begins, the disgraced Edna Lee tries to drift off to sleep—unsuccessfully—and overhears Mid talking to a female slave:

be mighty fine, eat all the white meat you want. Umph. White flour biscuits dreenin’ butter and turkey breasts as big as my hand. Umph. Seem

like I ain't never had me nothin' but wings and backs down at that old tavern, jes' Mullens leavin's and lef-overs. Be mighty nice have me a fine ridin' horse for once, finest in the Forks, an' a new leather saddle, make a scrunchin' sound ever' which way you turn. Ride all over the Forks. Ride up past Arden and Shandy or all the way down to the Bluff, in the big-road, out by the short-cut, ride f'm one end this county to the other, watchin' white folks choppin' cotton. (125-126)

Later that evening, Edna Lee repeats the conversation to Troop and her sister who conclude immediately that Mid's speech reveals an impending slave insurrection, the greatest fear of whites in the Antebellum South.

Although a few cool heads caution against overreaction, the white men form an ad-hoc Committee of Safety to investigate whether there is a slave rebellion in the offing. When men representing the Committee of Safety insist on taking a Shandy slave to town, Fannie begs Fiske to go along, ignoring the possible consequences involving him in Southern concerns. Fiske wisely hesitates: "I'm just a Yankee, after all. . . . You've all advised me, time and again, not to meddle in these things" (150). However, Fiske cannot refuse Fannie anything for long, and he goes to town.

Before the Committee of Safety, Troop interrogates Mid skillfully, carefully manipulating the slave to the point where he can tell only the truth, and lies no longer serve him. If there were a plot, Troop claims, Mid would naturally play along to learn as much as possible and then tell his master all. Mid should tell all now, Troop continues, for the white men in the room "have promised me, Mid, that they will not punish you in any way if you tell the truth" (154). Everyone, especially Mid, knows this is a lie. Mid

wisely refuses to admit to hearing any talk about killing a white baby: “I ain’t let nobody on earth talk to me like that ‘bout no l’il white child, Mas Troop . . . swear to God” (158).

The Committee of Safety gets nothing from Mid.

As the Committee of Safety continues its investigation, Gaither counterpoises frenetic human action with the natural peace and contentment of a typical Southern night:

Evening comes, down South, even in the hottest weather, with a magic of its own. Often a breeze springs up after sundown, but whether it does or not, dewiness steals upon the air, a cooling, moist breath in which are distilled all manner of heavenly garden scents—tuberose, star jasmine, sweet olive. The moonflowers open saucer-wide, honey-sweet, on the vines that curtain the porches. (167)

The South’s natural beauty leads to its characteristic gentle living, but the peace of this night is but a prelude to murder.

In the middle of the night, Mid wakes to the mob of whites, most of them poor and without slaves, chanting his name outside the jail: “Mid! Mid! Mid!” (173). Fiske, attempting to enter the jail after being awakened, finds himself confronted with the threat of violence from these uncouth, uncultured men: “he did not miss the threat in the tones of voice and in the hostile faces pressing closer and closer at the foot of the steps” (177). The Sheriff, also detained, criticizes the idea of a hanging without a proper gallows: “the best noose in the world ain’t gonna give you a proper hanging without you got good and sufficient drop” (180). He further objects to killing without allowing for spiritual comfort: “I’m a Christian and I believe ever’ man, black or white, ought to have the chance to cleanse his soul before he go to meet his Maker” (180). Reluctantly, the Sheriff

helps the mob develop a serviceable gallows out of a sense of compassion for the victim: “He was a man of mercy, and if a life was to be taken he believed in taking it easy-like” (181).

Brought out with his hands tied behind his back, “Mid was beyond speech, almost beyond walking. His head rolled about on his shoulders. His knees wobbled and bent. He lurched now to this side, now to that” (183). In spite of their clumsiness and lack of experience, the mob succeeds in lynching Mid:

As the wagon moved under him, Mid fell to his knees, beating the air with his bound wrists, The barrel rocked and, insecurely fastened after all, tore loose with a sound of ripping planks and toppled, Mid’s feet kicking out wildly for it and even his arms, fettered and helpless, clutching at it as he fell, the rope, somehow, not taut yet. (183)

The planter class views such mob action with disdain. As one aristocrat tells Fiske the following morning, “Our people’s lives won’t be worth a picayune in the hands of men without such property themselves and no respect for that of other men—a rabble without ruth or scruple” (190).

One of the odd features of the self-appointed Committee of Safety lies in its obsessive desire to create a complete record of its proceedings. Although Fiske wants to run back to Shandy, leaving behind all questions of slave guilt or innocence, he is chosen for secretary and finds himself “seated at a table on the platform, methodically recording on paper whatever went on about him” (192). Following deliberate, patient questioning of slaves from all over Scott County, the white men on the Committee of Safety expose an organized plan for slave insurrection: “A leader the intended rebellion certainly had, an

elusive, mysterious Spartacus There were equally misty captains . . . ; recruiting agents; roving message-bearers” (205).

Two days before the planned rebellion, Scofield has plenty to think about; his secret role as leader of the insurrection remains hidden, for now. Scofield refuses to accept that his divinely inspired plan could be defeated before it begins. However, Scofield’s plan had no real hope for success from its conception. With an element of surprise, perhaps the slaves could have succeeded in initial, bloody attempts to overthrow white rule at Scott’s Bluff; however, neither Scofield nor anyone else involved in the planning understands that there must be some plan for what to do after the insurrection. The slaves seems to think only in the vaguest of terms of leisure, big houses, and white folks working in the fields. Though they know not what they would do after the insurrection, the slaves all know they want to live free—even if they must spill white blood to do so.

As rumors of roving bands of slave insurrectionists flow through the Bluffs and the countryside, white men suspected of sympathy with the slaves are arrested. In its dealing with the white suspects, the Committee of Safety succumbs to an inherent fear of the Other, manifesting paranoia in the face of any unfamiliar perspective that could, in any measure, contradict or challenge, however slightly, its ideology. A sympathetic aristocrat warns Fiske not to speak too forcefully on behalf of any accused white men, even though they likely are innocent: “You might land yourself in an awful mess if you tried to cross them in this. After all, you are a Yankee” (229).

The Committee of Safety sends two men to Shandy to ask if Scofield “could be spared to offer prayers for a Negro sentenced to hang at sundown” (232). When Scofield

sees the two men approaching him in the field, he turns and flees “in the opposite direction, running as hard as he could” (233). Even on the run, Scofield continues to refuse to call off the plan for the next day, issuing orders that the slaves should proceed as planned in the morning. Alone, abandoned by all, caught outside in a thunderstorm with plenty of lightning, Scofield experiences one final vision: “at a dangling rope’s end, a man [was] hanging. The man was dead. His body swayed, limp in the wind. His brown face was sagging, too, emptied of life. Scofield, in that one revealing flash, saw the face distinctly. It was his own” (246). Upon waking in the morning, Scofield realizes that it “was Saturday, July Fourth at last, and nothing changed after all. White folks like always in the big house, niggers in the field” (247).

The next day, the Committee of Safety arrests Fiske on suspicion of having corrupted Scofield. While waiting to be called before the Committee of Safety, Fiske prepares letter to be sent to Maine so that he would not “be remembered in that far-off household as one who had died like a common criminal” (258). His last letter is to Fannie, and Fiske can hardly write his last words to her: “It occurred to him now belatedly that perhaps he had been unfair to her. Could she help it that she did not love him?” (258). After decreeing three more executions for Saturday afternoon, including a white man complicit in the plot, the Committee of Safety calls a recess until Monday, reprieving Fiske while the final events play themselves out (259).

When brought before the Committee of Safety on Monday morning, in spite of the possibility of being hanged, Fiske “had strangely little interest in what was about to take place” (278). Justice in the Bluffs is an illusion; indeed, justice under slavery is impossible. Although Fiske “had broken no law or any statutes . . . the unwritten law of

this land was beyond man-made code or statute” (278). He feels removed from himself, as if watching “a young man whose face he hardly knew, who, wandering by an alien river, had somehow missed his footing and was drowning now in the ice-cold current, with no one near to feel regret or pity” (279). After much incendiary questioning, the Committee of Safety arrives at its true point of interest when Troop Clay asks Fiske for his view of slavery. Fiske admits that he is in favor of “*Legal* emancipation” and that insurrection would be “a damnable calamity—destructive—no good, only evil for black and white alike” (283). Troop Clay relishes making his accusation of the perfidious and incendiary nature of Fiske’s influence over Scofield: “[Y]ou impregnated the mind of this simple plantation darky with the fatal virus of revolt, Mr. Fiske, you of course knew that you were unleashing peril on every white woman in this community” (286). Fiske recognizes Troop’s lack of understanding for what it is and shouts back, “Only a fool could make such an accusation” (286). The tension between these two breaks when the sheriff reports that Scofield has finally been captured and taken to jail (287).

When Scofield faces the Committee of Safety for the first time, the white men seem genuinely interested in learning what caused him to foment rebellion among the slaves:

It doesn’t make sense to me somehow, Scofield. How on earth could a boy with so many advantages, so trusted by his master, foster a bloody rebellion? Had some white man done you an unforgivable wrong that we don’t know about? Had an overseer, maybe, stolen from you a woman that you prized? Tell me, boy. I want to help you if I can. (289)

The answer lies in slavery itself, but the Committee of Safety gropes about as though blind. Though Gaither may be criticized for not completely understanding the slave mind, she understands the slaveholding mind quite well—and she does not flinch when bringing its shortcomings clearly into view. What the slaveholders see clearly, however, is the lack of imagination on Scofield's part, his failure to understand that, had the rebellion been successful, there must then be an after: “[W]hat was you aimin’ to do? . . . Was you gonna be king of the country, Scofield, run the whole shebang to suit yourself?” (291). The members of the Committee of Safety pry and pry, offering enticements for testimony, but Scofield understands that his fate is sealed: “This his last day, all right, but ain’t a man alive, white or black, can make him say what he don’t aim to say” (291). With honesty, Scofield reports, “The Spirit guide me” (291). The members of the Committee of Safety refuse to treat such a claim seriously, and “[s]miles traveled around the table” (291). When asked if the death of his captains showed him the fault of his way, Scofield replies, “The Lord Jesus was crucify” (292). Undaunted even in the face of blasphemy, the Committee of Safety presses Scofield to identify Fiske as the plot’s instigator. Scofield realizes he has a last chance to do one good thing before he dies: “He’d be proud to do Mr. Fist one last favor” (293). Scofield insists he never talked to Fiske about anything but the proper names of plants: “That all him and me ever talk about” (293).

Fiske learns that evening “that he was not to die: . . . not to lose, in one long shuddering fall, sunlight and air forever” (295). He is told to “leave the county, never to return” and “warned against any attempt to infiltrate his ideas here by other means—the mails specifically” (295). As Fiske approaches Shandy for the last time, he remembers

writing of it as Paradise: “he was leaving that Eden amply provided with a pair of pretty angels to slam shut the gates behind him and display the flaming sword” (296). The novel’s climax occurs in the confrontation between Fiske and Fanny at Shandy. When Fannie, equally relieved and concerned, demands to know why he has “come home,” he answers “her cruelly, as cruelly as he could” (297):

It is all done, really, to safeguard the purity of Southern womanhood, which, it goes without saying, is the purest on earth. It is really for your protection, Fannie, that I am banished. Just like a page out of Sir Walter. I may not write you a letter. They told me they would take it out of the Scott’s Bluff Post Office and burn it. If I should come back, they’d hang me. They wouldn’t really do it? Oh, yes, they would. Why not? They are above the law. Or rather they make their own law. And if they but build the wall high enough they can keep their women pure and their darkies innocent and childlike. It’s simple, isn’t it, Fannie, once you understand it? Just simple old-fashioned Southern hospitality after all. (297-298)

Adam leaves Shandy Plantation, Fannie, and the South—never to return.

As Scofield is marched from the jail to the Committee of Safety, a throng of people waits: “The square and the streets as far as he could see were packed with people, thicker than he had ever seen them” (300). They do not threaten or taunt him, but draw “back almost respectfully, it seemed, and nobody jeered or called out as he passed” (300). The Committee of Safety, of course, finds Scofield guilty and reads their verdict to him:

It is not given to us to know what untoward circumstance or what villainous person planted in your receptive mind the first seeds of your

wicked design. Nor can we understand how you, a man privileged above his fellows, occupying the highest position open to one of your color and condition, could nourish the dreadful ambition once implanted.

. . . .

You die dishonored, degraded, condemned by all men, white and black, and by Him above who warned us against false prophets with their great signs and wonders. (302-303)

Scofield remains silent, but remembers John 14:2: “In my Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you” (303).

With the death of Scofield, “[i]t was over, suddenly and completely over—like a thunder-storm that leaves the air purged and each leaf and blade standing clear with the sharp-edged brightness of new pennies” (304). Now that Fiske has left, Fannie “was like a lost soul. There was nobody she could talk to, really, and she needed to talk to dispel the fears that beset her” (305), especially her fears for the future. She continually returns in her mind to Fiske’s last words to her: “Adam’s farewell mocked her as harshly as in the moment when he spoke it. It was like a flawed mirror held before her, from which she could not take her eyes—its very distortion bound her. Is that what we’re like, she would whisper fearfully, is it?” (305).

Troop comes to speak to Fannie of their future, but Fannie notices “*I*, he said, just *I*. Not once did he say *we*” (308). Troop changes tactics to indulge her whims, to which she declares (quoting Fiske), “It’s as though you wanted to keep me shut up inside a high wall” (309). When Troop leaves, she packs her valise before sitting down to write her family a farewell note. She approaches Montgomery, her grandfather’s loyal manservant,

to ask him to take her valise downstairs and finds herself unable to explain what she wants to do: “How explain that it was to find out what she wanted that she must go away?” (310). The irony of her situation expands when Montgomery funds her journey by giving her his purse “plump with gold collected luckily yesterday on a note long overdue” (310). As she prepares to leave, Captain Webb, from the Committee of Safety, arrives to report that Adam is safe and to give her the letter Fiske “had written weeks ago when he believed himself facing death” (312). When Fannie opens the letter, she reads, “What ever happens to me . . . remember always that I loved you to the end as I did from the beginning” (312).

Although Fannie realizes this farewell was written before Fiske’s final visit to Shandy, “[i]t could not annul that bitter one he had hurled at her head afterward” (312). She leaves Shandy with longing and regret that will follow her forever: “Never had it appeared so fair to her” (313). Fannie understands that she faces a future of exile in a land that is not hers:

She had met plenty of Southerners who had to live up North. She knew how the last one of them was marked by the exile’s curse, how they all had nostalgia in their blood to hand along from generation to generation. How much more must she, a real exile—for she never could come back if she married Adam Fiske—hunger and thirst for the homeland? (313)

The reader wonders how much these last lines of the novel reflect Gaither’s experience. She lived for many years in the North, yet she wrote only of the South. Though Fannie, too, leaves the South, she is the South.

The Red Cock Crows is certainly a more accomplished novel than *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, and in vision and execution Gaither has become an accomplished writer of fiction. Though she understands the rarified expectations of life assigned the Southern woman in antebellum culture, her own eye ranges freely through the population and landscape, often becoming defining. Character development in *The Red Cock Crows* remains rich throughout the novel, and it is a mistake to see this novel as primarily an exploration of proto-feminism, as Sadler does. It is true that Fannie finds her own voice and leaves Shandy to search for her destiny in the far reaches of the cold North. However, Southern womanhood is not as weak and incapable, not even as pure, as the myth of the Old South would have us believe. Fannie, left alone to manage Shandy Plantation in a time of crisis, had shown great initiative in nursing sick children and managing business affairs. Although Fannie makes an untypical choice in the end, she does so for love. Gaither does not want the reader to see Fannie as atypical, but rather as a Southern woman who, like so many other Southern women, found strength when none was apparent.

In 1949, Gaither published *Double Muscadine*, her most commercially successful novel, to considerable attention. By this time, Gaither had been researching slavery for a decade. As she put it, "I have been in slavery for ten years" (Breit). In the *Commercial Appeal* for March 3, 1949, Paul Flowers writes,

If Francis [sic] Gaither set out to construct tragedy in the classic tradition, wherein circumstances beyond control of the principals plus weaknesses of some characters brought disaster upon the heads of innocent associates, she surely accomplished her purpose in 'Double Muscadine.'

In the same edition of the *Commercial Appeal*, Rhea Talley devotes her “Southerner in New York” column to the new book. The Book of the Month Club’s selection of *Double Muscadine* “guarantees \$30,000 to . . . [the] author and the same sum to the publisher” (Talley “Frances”). In the *Clarion Ledger*, Bill Skelton writes, “Mississippians, always eager to recognize a native son (or daughter) who has achieved success in the writing field, can give themselves great pleasure in pointing out Mrs. Gaither. They will also doubtless give themselves pleasure in reading her bracing story.” In the *New York Times Book Review*, Southerner Herschel Brickell praises *Double Muscadine* as the latest of Gaither’s “three distinguished pieces of fiction.” Gaither handles “her chosen theme with impressive skill and her trilogy now stands alone for its honesty, its reality and the maturity with which the most delicate phases of the master-and-slave relationship have been explored” (Brickell). *Double Muscadine*, in Brickell’s view, “is a novel of unmistakable distinction, which should give satisfaction to people weary of the fads of current fiction, its experiments, its abnormal characters and its hopelessness.” In the *New York Herald Tribune*, Worth Tuttle Hedden writes that, by making her courtroom antagonists of different classes, Gaither “provides an arena for depicting the strain between the two classes of whites in Southern ante-bellum economy.” Marcia Carroll explains why the Book of the Month Club chose this novel as its selection for March 1949:

We chose this book because—The ideal of every novelist is to hold the reader with an Ancient Mariner’s glittering eye; but rarely is this sorcery achieved so well as by Mrs. Gaither in this novel. We all commented upon the genuine pleasure the book gave us, unusual for five people who read as

many novels as we do. But DOUBLE MUSCADINE is uncommonly good in other respects, too, and notably for its character delineation.

Although *Double Muscadine* was Gaither's most popular novel, in some ways it falls short of *The Red Cock Crows*. The earlier novel emits a power in its characterization that *Double Muscadine* does not have, an emotional honesty that is not the point of the later work. *Double Muscadine* explores the many ramifications and implications of the retrial of Aimée, a slave woman accused of murder. Unlike *The Red Cock Crows*, which generally eschews moralizing, *Double Muscadine* holds guilt, in all its implications, as the center of the novel.

In her Preface, Gaither notes that the "trial is modeled in considerable part on an actual case in the records of the Supreme Court of Mississippi in the 1850s." In Part One of the novel, Gaither brings the reader up to the present moment of action. Syke Berry, the inexperienced defense lawyer, wakes up to face this most important day in his life. The reader who knows Gaither's previous two novels of the Old South immediately detects a note of sympathy for the lower classes absent from her previous work, though she never explains how Syke rose from humble beginnings to become a lawyer. Syke exemplifies the professional outside the planters' caste system, an emerging force in the late Antebellum South. However, *Double Muscadine* remains a novel of slavery, like the other two, and Gaither does not want the reader to develop sympathy for indulgences of Southern aristocrats. On his way to court, Syke looks at Waverly, the plantation where the murder occurred, and he imagines its master getting ready to come to court. With more than a tinge of resentment and with eager anticipation of the courtroom battle to

come, Syke thinks, “Good morning, your lordship, I reckon you don’t exactly relish the idea of being hauled down from up there and rolled about in the mud, now do you?” (5).

The courtroom serves as the community center of Athens, Mississippi, in Chewalla County. Placards and notices on its outside walls tell the story of communal life for the past five years:

A notice of a balloon ascension of several springs ago flanked the advertisement of a travelling magician’s show of last summer. There were posters of circuses in successive Octobers; handbills of theatricals, a dozen-odd at widely separated dates, some by itinerant professionals, others by local talent; spelling matches and graduation exercises; a political rally with barbecue in the yard outside; a religious revival which in an earlier day would have sheltered under a tent in the circus lot or earlier still in some brush arbor out in the country. (12-13)

Such precision in detail and description marks the prose in all of Gaither’s major novels, but here she shifts her emphasis from the aristocracy to communal life. Those who look for amusement in Athens, Mississippi, have money to pay for travelling shows and circuses. Characters of the lower- or rising middle-classes in her earlier work tend to be crude in manner and often deliberately obstruct the plans and ambitions of the upper-classes. Here, all partake in the life and work of the community, if not sharing equally in its rewards.

Kirk McLean, Master of Waverly Plantation, arrives in town with two women. First, there is his new young wife Martha, a “Georgia girl, a mere slip of a thing, seventeen, whom he had met and married off at the springs last summer” (16-17). She

poured the poisoned tea that killed her step-son, so “everybody pitied her” (17). There is also Sis Hat, “his first wife’s sister” (17). Everyone says that she “blamed herself . . . kept talking about God’s punishing her” (17). Gaither hints that her tale conceals multiple layers when she adds that people wonder if Sis Hat feels guilty for having “lost her temper with the cook that morning and insisted on having her whipped? Or did her regrets go back to older, darker secrets?” (17).

Waverly is one of the oldest plantations in Chewalla County, with land “only fair to middling, nothing like so rich, that is to say, as the Delta country west, but not so poor either as the hill counties northward” (18-19). Although McLean is popular around town, most people also know about his habit of miscegenation: “Everybody has his faults, of course, and Kirk McLean had, or was supposed to have, one which his friends did not so much approve as condone, saying, at least as long as he remained unmarried: Well, who does it hurt? Whose business is it but his?” (21). Martha remembers how her uncle, a United States Senator, invited her to join his wife and daughters at Healing Springs, Georgia, and Martha “simply could not believe in her luck” (27). Martha and McLean meet in secret until they are discovered “kissing above bridal Veil Falls” (29), causing her jealous relatives to hold her under lock and key as a virtual prisoner. Martha escapes only by allowing McLean to “steal her away one midnight from her hateful prison” (30), and married life disappoints her greatly. She has exchanged one form of bondage for another; all is not well in the marriage, and Martha remains continually miserable.

The court of Chewalla County’s first order of business is “The State of Mississippi versus Aimée, a slave” (35). Aimée, the accused slave, is “a quadroon, rather slender, wearing the same gaudy flounced silk dress and gold hoop earrings she had worn

throughout the first trial” (35). Nobody in Athens knows what to expect from Judge Rusk, who is new to the bench. While overseeing the process of jury selection, Judge Rusk looks at Syke sympathetically:

he found considerable amusement in imagining the rough-haired tawny boy with his backwoods speech pitted against the gray and mannered old aristocrat. He himself expected to get on very well with the boy, because, somehow, he liked him—a sandhiller, they’d have called him back in the judge’s native state. Here he was hillbilly, peckerwood or red-neck probably. Well, he was a fiery one, anyway, no dirt-eating there. Ten to one he had a good mother. (45)

As is typical of Gaither’s plantations, the Master’s house at Waverly falls short of the mansion of romance and imagination: “just a double log cabin . . . , two hulking rooms with a dogtrot linking them, a backwoods house without a single thing to set it apart from a hundred others glimpsed from stage and steamboat” (56). Sis Hat accepts Martha immediately, welcoming her sincerely and warmly: “Welcome to Waverly. This is the happiest day of my life, I do declare. This is the day I been praying for” (57). As wife and Mistress, Martha is expected to fulfill a specific role at Waverly, though she is too young to know what to do. After some hesitation, Sis Hat decides to be direct and forceful:

Maybe you’d feel more at home like if I was to tell you what’s expected of you right from the start: Well, you’re to set in the wife’s place and pour out at mealtimes. But I’ll keep the keys and do the giving out and order what we’re to eat. Looking after the people’s rations I’ll go on with, too. Hunt [Martha’s step-son], I reckon, will keep on asking me what he can

and can't do, for the present anyway. If he change, it won't be fast. And we won't crowd him. You'll maybe want to do your own mending and Br'Kirk's. And I reckon I won't miss it much. (89)

Martha eventually settles into a pattern of sorts at Waverly: "She was happy as the day was long, hunting muscadines for Sis Hat to make into wine, picking her little flowers and fixing them in mugs and bottles, humming to herself" (95). Her spirits change when the town ladies come to Waverly for a social, and each deposits a bit of cloth in a bag for Martha to use in making a quilt (95). After they leave, Martha finds a piece of paper in the bag on which there is one question: "Who is the father of Lethe's children?" (96). Martha confides her fears to no one, but the question confirms her intuition that McLean has sexual relationships with slaves and drives her into deep depression.

As a last resort, while McLean is away in New Orleans, Sis Hat decides to give Martha "a dose of plain and undiluted truth" (104). McLean, Sis Hat tells Martha, has his faults, like anyone, and "one mighty bad one in particular" (104). Martha rebels against such knowledge, "even putting her hands over her ears to shut out the unbearable truth" (105). Sis Hat continues like a "nurse, who must do her painful duty of dressing a wound" (105). Sis Hat concludes that "being a woman is hard when you come right down to it. You ain't the first to find that out. And maybe if you pray, the good Lord will ease your burden or give you strength to bear it" (105). With the cook unable to work after a stroke, Sis Hat writes McLean, asking him "to look around down there in New Or-*leens* for somebody to do Aunt Dosia's work" (106). He chooses Aimée, the defendant in the trial.

In Part Three, Gaither devotes much attention to Martha, how she reacts to the trial—and her suspicions about McLean’s habits. Tom Peters, the experienced District Attorney knows how to play the jury well: “[T]he crime itself he referred to with awestruck solemnity in a lowered voice that moved his audience deeply. Not a woman in the courtroom but had to reach for her handkerchief” (113). Dr. Gregory, the first witness for the prosecution explains that last November 10 a slave summoned him to Waverly where the three white adults in the house seemed in no immediate danger, but Hunt, the child, was mortally ill: “He suffered collapse some time after the lamps were lighted, went into a coma and never came out poor fellow. I could do no more. Along toward midnight—eleven-ten to be exact—he—he died” (117). Overcome with emotion even now, Gregory must pause, and the reader and jury alike realize “the enormity of the crime, which had cost an innocent child his life” (117). Aimée, who attempted to flee Waverly that evening, was found dressed in “field hand’s clothes” (119).

After the long court day, Martha arrives back at Waverly with Banning, McLean’s pastor friend who came from New Orleans to offer the family his support. Banning believes that all people are ultimately good and noble, incapable of willfully choosing to do wrong. Ignoring all evidence to the contrary, Banning, at best, must dissemble to maintain this illusion. When Martha asks if he believes the stories about McLean and Lethe, his slave mistress, Banning replies, “Certainly not. Do you think I’d be here if I did?” (135). Martha admits that she is “going through with that trial partly because I want to find out. I have to” (136). She most of all wants to know why McLean bought Aimée: “I nearly go out of my mind trying to figure it out: why, why, why?” (136). Martha remains utterly alone, a stranger at Waverly. McLean finds his way to where Martha and

Banning are talking, and there is an uncomfortable moment as he notes “Martha’s tear-blotched face” (137). McLean, imagining that the trial places great strain on her, offers to let her stay home every day after she testifies, but Martha refuses: “No, Mr. McLean. I’m not going to stay home at all. My place is there with you to the end” (137). In a burst of dramatic irony, McLean proudly declares to Banning, “[C]an you understand how it strengthens a man in the face of his enemies to have his wife wholeheartedly at his back?” (138).

Peters calls Banning to testify on the third day of the trial (151). Banning knows quite well that there is no innocence in McLean and that his true testimony would wound Martha; as is his habit, he dissembles. Banning recounts accompanying McLean to see the wench for sale, in spite of his distaste for slavery (152). McLean buys Aimée immediately for a good price and quickly discovers, if he did not already suspect, that she had been “old Arnaud’s mistress” (153). Syke asks Banning if McLean had been “wanting a likely young wench” (155), strategically placing the jury’s focus on the Master rather than the defendant.

When Sis Hat testifies, the reader expects her to make McLean seem innocent of any wrongdoing. When Aimée arrived, Sis Hat was not able to pronounce her “Frenchified name that sounded more like May than anything else” (163). After a trying week in which Aimée proves that she cannot cook, indeed has no domestic skills, Sis Hat objects to what she considers the slave’s uppity manner, demanding that McLean “[w]hip the wench” (172). Martha imagines the whipping as erotic sadomasochism: “He would make May unbutton her dress and bare her shoulders. He would lash her naked yellow flesh” (172-173). Syke cross-examines Sis Hat ruthlessly, asking if Aimée said,

that she had pleased one white man from the time she was sixteen years old to the day he died, and that she reckoned, from what she learned of her new master during one night in New Or-*Leens*, that white men was mighty near all alike in one particular, wherever they happened to live? (181)

Judge Rusk excuses Sis Hat from answering and admonishes Syke “to refrain from questions offensive to a white lady’s finer feelings” (181).

On the stand, Martha seems young, alone, childlike. She proves unable to testify even under the benign guidance of Peters: “Beyond a nod for Yes or No, she could only twist in her chair and touch her wadded-up handkerchief to her lips” (184). Peters gets “nothing out of her at all” (184). Syke knows he must tread carefully on cross-examination, for everyone in the courtroom pities Martha, as if she were “the beloved daughter of each one of them, that in her suffering each experienced a father’s helpless heartache” (184). Instead of cross-examination, Syke simply “stood and said the defense had no questions to put” (184). Everyone reacts with approval, and the “breath of relief that ran through the courtroom was like a mighty single sigh” (184). Martha gratefully leaves the courtroom, followed by McLean, Banning, and Sis Hat.

McLean knows that he will have a hard time getting past Syke unscathed. While waiting to testify on the fourth day of the trial, McLean demonstrates a “coolness which such men can usually summon in the face of actual danger” (206). Peters plans to end his case with McLean, and he expects this witness to remain firm in the face of whatever onslaught Syke may offer: “Women—and Negroes, too, of course—are skittish and unstable, prey to their own emotions of fear or anger. With one of them on the stand, a lawyer has forever to be on guard for the unpredictable” (209). Under Peters’ gentle

questioning, McLean tells the story of his son's death. By focusing on all the legal wrangling in the trial, the reader has forgotten that McLean's son died from poison: an innocent child perished because of this horrible crime. As McLean prepares to withstand Syke's cross-examination, Martha looks at him and a "plea, almost a cry of longing, fluttered from her heart. Tell the truth. Oh, please tell the truth. Whatever it costs you, whatever it costs us both, tell the truth" (211). McLean feels persecuted and irritated by Syke's persistence, eventually admitting that he took Aimée to his "own personal lodgings" in New Orleans (216). Syke gently leads McLean in telling his story—until he pounces: "Did you or did you not have sexual intercourse with the prisoner that night of Saturday, October 26, in that attic room?" (219). This is the question everyone has prepared for and expected, and everyone eagerly anticipates the answer. When the Prosecution objects to the question, Judge Rusk rules that "if the High Court found this court in error for excluding the answer to this particular question in November, I can do nothing but allow it now" (219). McLean replies, "I remember it quite well. My answer is NO" (221). Martha knows this is untrue: "So he had lied after all. There was no hope for him then. None for her" (221). Judge Rusk also believes that McLean is lying, but he was "none the less glad of it" (221), thinking that his manliness will comfort Martha. However, as McLean leaves the witness stand, Judge Rusk glances at Martha and sees her face "close-shuttered and still, as lifeless as a carved mask" (222).

McLean's testimony marks the end of the State's case. On his way out of the courthouse, Syke passes the wagon waiting to take the slaves back to Waverly. McLean, buggy whip in hand, confronts Syke: "Under protection of the court up yonder, you made a slur on my good name. I demand retraction and apology" (224). When Syke refuses to

offer either, the “whip lashed Syke’s temple and the flesh along his cheekbone in one searing blow” (224). Syke wrests the whip from McLean and “went at that handsome face with his bare fists” (224). The fight continues until passersby drag the two apart.

Alone in his room during the recess, Judge Rusk lacks appetite because “[t]his case was more distasteful to him than any that he could recall. He would be glad when it was over and he was traveling homeward” (227). Martha disturbs his reflection by coming to ask for advice about getting a divorce (228). Rusk argues against divorce, for practical reasons:

I’m not saying what is fair, my dear. I’m only saying what *is*. There’s not a place in our society where the divorced woman can rest the sole of her foot. And if ever she should find a man brave enough to marry her, she would only go through the hell of seeing him come to regret it. If they should have children, she could only expect their lifelong reproach. Maybe some day in some other society it won’t be like that. But here and now it *is*. Believe me. (228-229)

Judge Rusk has a daughter near Martha’s age, and he claims that “he’d rather see his daughter in her coffin than see her divorced” (229), though he knows this is not true. After Martha leaves, Judge Rusk asks himself why there is no “avenue by which a trapped creature may seek escape” (230). Martha feels more lost than ever. She had thought divorce to be “well, not happiness, certainly, but freedom at least, escape from Waverly and Athens and the everlasting curious faces spying on her pain” (230).

In the opening statement for the defense, Syke concedes “the State’s contention that, at the time and place named, a poisoning had indeed occurred, by which one white

person had died and the lives of three others been threatened” (244). However, Aimée, also called May, behaved strangely at Waverly not because she is guilty, but because she is “a sensitive, perhaps even hysterical, person abruptly snatched from the only home she had ever known and plunged into a strange and hostile environment” (244). Aimée, is a victim, too.

Duffy, the former overseer at Waverly, is the second person to testify for the defense, giving Gaither a chance to explore the psyche of lower-class antebellum whites. Before Duffy can be sworn in, Peters asks that the judge “declare this witness incompetent. He is mentally deficient” (249). In chambers, Peters claims that “the man is stark crazy. He suffers a perpetual delusion relating to witches, conjuring and the like” (250). Before making a ruling Judge Rusk invites Duffy into chambers: “[W]itnesses which I have examined state you put considerable reliance in—well, black magic, or hoodoo and conjure as commonly called” (252). Duffy answers, “[T]here’s a heap happen round me ever’ day I live that’s a mystery to me” (252). After a pause to spit, he explains his views in detail:

Take like that wire they got strung all the way from New Or-*leens* to Washington. I can see how they make lightning run on it, but how they can get it to talk I ain’t anyways able to figure out. A miracle of science the paper calls it. I don’t know. Same with conjure. I don’t know why some needles and pins and a mite of dried snake’s head pounded up and wrop all together in a scrap of red flannel got such almighty power in ‘em. I just know they have. I seen it work too many times. That answer your question, judge? (253)

Duffy's testimony presents him with his long-anticipated moment as the center of attention, and he "wished to make the most of it" (255). With difficulty, Syke focuses him on the events at Waverly the past November. Duffy suspected that the poisoning "had been done with Jimson weed" and adds that "this wasn't the first time poisoning been tried at Waverly to my certain knowledge" (257). Although Duffy's testimony drags on longer than Syke had planned, he is happy that several points have been made: "Mr. Duffy's offer to testify at May's first trial, Lethe's malice toward May, her, Lethe's, long-continued possession of the poison and her presence in the kitchen the midnight before the crime" (258). Syke waits before playing what he considers his trump card: "Mr. Duffy, a little while ago you referred to a previous occasion at Waverly when poisoning was attempted by the use of Jimson weed . . ." (259)

On the morning after McLean arrived home with Martha, Duffy had come to the kitchen to get a cup of coffee "when Aunt Dosia come at him from the shedroom, yelling screeching" (260). Lethe joined Aunt Dosia in trying to get the pot from him. When he dropped it, "out with the coffee and a good teacupful of wet grounds, came a little bag, or a rag tied up like a bag" (261). When he poked it with his toe, "damned if it wasn't Jimson weed they'd boiled up for that Georgia girl" (261). As Martha listens, she remembers every detail from that morning: "So they meant to kill her—just her that time, Martha herself, Martha alone. And they'd have done it, too, but for Mr. Duffy. Only he, this humble, ignorant overseer, had stood between her and death" (261). McLean had never brought the information about the previous poisoning to the prosecution's attention, and Martha understands the myriad implications of Duffy's story clearly: "it was Lethe her husband had chosen to shield, not her, his wife" (263). McLean "was not, and never

had really been, her protector” (263). Martha’s love for McLean was “something she had made up to believe in because she wanted to believe in it. She had loved an image, not a man” (263).

The defense next calls Lethe as “a hostile witness and so entitled to neither protection of the prosecution nor mercy from the defense” (267). Lethe had seen Aimée arrive in Athens and heard “the jokes the bystanders made about her . . . heard them saying they didn’t believe she’d been bought for a cook” (269). The defense presses Lethe to admit jealousy of Aimée equal to that for Martha—passion enough for murder: “Isn’t it true that the bottle, still in your own possession, in your apron pocket or in your stocking where you had carried it for months, you took out now and emptied into the teapot right then alone in the dark” (271). Lethe denies it utterly: “No sir! No. No. That’s not true. I swear to God May done it. May the one” (271). With that, the defense rests.

While McLean remains in Athens to get drunk, Martha returns to Waverly with Banning. Martha repeats her conversation about divorce with Judge Rusk. With considerable sympathy for Martha, Banning explains that “while a woman who breaks her marriage does invite bitter experience, she might understandably prefer that to living a lie” (277). Further, Banning believes that the judge misspoke, for “no man would want his daughter dead rather than undergoing hardship” (277). Martha turns to seduction to manipulate the one man who listens to her, suggesting that she “might go to New Orleans” after leaving McLean (277). Banning explains that Martha’s plan is folly because “[t]he world is merciless, especially towards a woman who has left her husband, as the judge tried to tell you. Disinterested friendship with a man would—well, surely you can see what people would think, Miss Martha” (278). Martha becomes even more

aggressively seductive: “‘Suppose,’ she whispered, ‘it wasn’t a false position. Suppose we made it true’” (278). Banning knows that Martha is in error, not in love: “At my age, I know my place” (279). Having failed to seduce Banning, Martha “felt the chill of utter loneliness” (280).

As the novel approaches its end, more than one verdict awaits the characters involved in this trial, including Martha’s judgment of herself. Gaither often uses weather to symbolize her characters’ inner states, as she does here for Lethe: “A hard storm came on in the night—thunder and lightning and a driving rain” (285). Lethe, under the influence of a sedative, “did not wake until she was thoroughly drenched” (285), as she has failed to wake to the reality of her situation until it has drenched her. While Lethe fixes a fire and some coffee for her white family, she ponders if her life has any meaning: “She was raised as near white as any colored girl could be” (286). Although she “turned out bad” (286), she never felt bad with McLean, who is the father of two of her children (286). Pregnant again, she does “not know whose baby it was inside her” (287). She thinks it “could be Mr. Orrin’s or it could be Mr. Paul’s, Mrs. Simmons’ brother from Alabama, that was here to see his sister back in February” (287). She cannot rule out other possibilities, though she is almost sure the father was “not that stranger white gentleman was through here, selling chill cure . . . or that other gentleman steam-doctor” (287). In her testimony, she had been “scared . . . into lying again. She knew better than that” (287). Lethe would not have harmed Martha, no matter how jealous she felt towards McLean’s new wife (288). In fact, Aimée did not get the bottle of poison from Lethe, as the slaves had testified. Lethe set it herself among the dishes “to set a trap for a low-down nigger to tempt her to kill herself” (289). As the sun rises, Lethe simply “walked away

down the street” and goes to drown herself (290). Though introducing Faulkner is always risky, one wonders if Gaither here is not answering a question from Section Four of “The Bear”: “*Who in hell ever heard of a niger drowning him self*” (267). When Martha arrives in Athens on Friday, the courtroom buzzes with news of “Lethe’s disappearance and pursuit” (292). Martha remains unconcerned about anyone else’s fate: “What became of Lethe or May could not matter when she still did not know what was to become of *her*” (292).

The prosecution recalls McLean to rebut Duffy’s testimony. When Syke arises for cross-examination, McLean’s demeanor “changed as before” (293). After some questions about why he did not report the incident with the Jimson weed, Syke aims directly at his target, “Were you for some years prior to last summer in the habit of having sexual relations with Lethe and are her two youngest children yours?” (293). The reader is not quite sure why McLean drops any further pretense, but he answers, simply, “Yes” (294). Martha can sink no further: “She had drained the last bitter dregs of revelation and public exposure. She was incapable of taking in anything further” (294).

After his summation, Syke heads toward the tavern to buy the drinks he promised Duffy (295). In the tavern, he “gulped down the one drink the circumstances demanded, . . . shook hands with Duffy, put down money to cover several more rounds for his guests and made his way toward the door” (298). Much to Syke’s surprise, McLean sits alone at another table, “holding up a glass and beckoning with it” (298). McLean compliments Syke on his summation before asking, “I suppose you know it may cost Lethe her life?” (298). McLean claims that Syke has turned the people of Athens against Lethe: “Perhaps it’s more likely they’ll just shoot her down resisting capture. And maybe the poor thing

would be better off if they did” (298). Lethe is utterly lost, and McLean knows that his selfishness, not Syke’s examination, has cost them both their love.

For the first time, Syke is confronted with the real-life consequences of the web a lawyer may spin: “An icy chill stole over Syke. . . . Lethe’s flight *proved* her guilt. Of course it did. Then why did warmth drain out of him like his lifeblood leaking away? If he did not stagger, it seemed to him that he did” (298). McLean understands Syke’s role as a defense lawyer, but he does not understand Syke’s motivation:

What I can’t get is your almighty assurance this time—as though you were riding some goddamned holy crusade. You say it’s not from personal ill will towards me. Certainly you can have none against Lethe. Then what is back of it? Money? That bonus you’re to have for full acquittal? (300)

As Syke leaves, he glances once more at the solitary McLean, wondering if it were “true, as he hinted, that nobody would drink with him? Had his friends turned against him sure enough? Popular as he was, it didn’t seem possible somehow. And yet . . .” (300).

Syke’s encounter with McLean sobers him, teaches him the power of the law as both a tool of justice and an instrument of destruction: “[W]ay I feel now, I wish’t I’d stayed between plow-handles where I belong. Yes, sir, ever since I left Mr. McLean today looking like he’d lost his last friend, I been down in the mouth” (326). The jury’s verdict of “Not guilty” causes no strong reaction among the townspeople: “There was no evidence of deep feeling one way or the other. Maybe it had turned out about as they had expected” (327). After the case is won, after he receives his bonus, after Aimée leaves on her way back to New Orleans, “Syke felt lonely” (328).

More bad news awaits McLean, this time about Martha. Rumors abound that Martha and Banning are lovers. McLean finds proof in the fact that the fan she asked Banning to go back with her to get from the courtroom was “left lying for her husband to find and retrieve” (311). He imagines Martha and Banning “hugging and kissing and calling each other love names like sweetheart and darling” (312). As he considers the possibility of infidelity rationally, he knows it “was an obvious lie, cast in spurious words. It rang as dull and hollow as a lead coin. A sane man would do well not to be taken in by it” (312). But honor, especially when it does not exist, forms a central core of the Old South’s code of conduct. McLean’s spurious honor forms “a promise, a bond, a sacred oath” (313). His shattered life requires “sacrifice. Men have always resorted to death in one form or another for redemption” (315). Before McLean leaves for Waverly to confront Banning, a slave places a note from the sheriff in his hands:

Lethe’s trail come to an end on the bluff a couple miles this side Bates’ Bend. I sent 2 fellows in a rowboat off from there and they come on her body drove hard against a old sawyer a little way off the nigh bank. I’m bringing it in soon as I git me a wagon and team. (316)

Lethe’s death is not sacrifice enough, for she is but a woman and a slave.

Later that evening, as an exhausted Dr. Gregory arrives at Waverly for dinner, he hears “the blast of the horn, after fading as from sheer exhaustion . . . [begin] again more urgently than ever” (322). He arrives at the house to find “Miss Hat . . . lying on the floor” (323). As Dr. Gregory attends the dying woman, Martha comes “running toward him, [and he] heard her panting, gasping breath long before he came near her” (323). At the old swimming hole, “the two . . . lay there, one fallen along the sloping, white-

shingled bank, the other half lying, half leaning against a prone tree trunk and able to recognize the doctor and speak. Go away, Doctor. Let me die. I want to die” (323-324).

As McLean lies in his sickbed, he imagines how Lethe drowned, “her mouth had jerked open at last calling to him: Mas Kirk, Mas Kirk” (330). He knows that Aimée “killed my son The innocent perish and the guilty live on” (330). What McLean cannot completely remember is what happened at the creek, although he believes, accurately, that he deliberately killed Banning after calling him a “[h]ouse-breaker, traitor, snake in the grass” (331). Martha, the only witness, lies to him, saying that he meant to kill himself and that Banning died trying to take the pistol away (331). With McLean finally asleep and the slaves finally calmed, Martha attends “to the small, far voices from her own depths, a whispering chorus that had been going on within her all these hours” (332). Martha’s heart and soul join together to put her on trial. The first charge is that the “death of Miss Hat, though apparently attributable to natural causes, was desired by this woman” (332). Guilty. The second charge is that, in her flirtation with Banning, “[s]he wanted to hurt her husband. She is, therefore, as guilty of her husband’s death as if it had occurred” (333). Guilty. The final charge is that Banning “freely gave her friendship but it was not enough. She wanted more. She must be loved at all cost, if not by her husband, then by this blameless gentleman, this family friend” (333). Guilty. With Sis Hat dead, Martha is now Mistress of Waverly, the “inadequate, blameworthy girl who was also this woman, would somehow do each of these things [necessary to run the plantation]—she must because there was nobody else to do it” (333). Martha found her place at the cost of three lives.

The final two novels of Gaither's Old South trilogy both end with an epiphany of the female protagonist. In *The Red Cock Crows*, Fanny follows her heart North where Fiske has gone, leaving the South forever. In *Double Muscadine*, Martha rises to meet the demands of Waverly plantation, including, especially, being prepared to tell the same lie as many times as necessary so McLean will never have to face the truth. Leaving the South and staying in the South are equally valid options. Fannie leaves to find herself, while Martha stays to define herself through her role.

Each of Gaither's novels written in the 1940s is powerful and unforgettable. These are novels of liberation, set in a society of bondage. Readers and scholars of Southern literature are poorer for having ignored and forgotten them. Gaither's writing is powerful and detailed, accurate and evocative. Her attention to detail, always based in copious research, forms a convincing base for her narratives. In the dialect of the characters' place and time, or in the wrangling of antagonists, Gaither always fascinates and stimulates in equal measure. She is one of Mississippi's finest stylists. Frank Smith is correct to note that Gaither "has been, too soon, almost forgotten" ("Mississippi"). To read Gaither's slave novels of the 1940s is to experience the full range and power of one of Southern literature's finest novelists.

Works Cited

- “Alumna Sends New Book to MSCW Library.” *The Spectator* 24 September 1935: 1. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Baskerville, William. Letter to Sam Small, D.D. 8 November 1890. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Berry, Trey. “A History of Women’s Higher Education in Mississippi, 1819-1882.” *Journal of Mississippi History* 52 (1991): 303-319.
- Breit, Harvey. “Frances Gaither Speaks.” *New York Times Book Review* 3 April 1949. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Brickell, Herschel. “Caste and Class in the Old South.” Rev. of *Double Muscadine* by Frances Gaither. *New York Times Book Review* 6 March 1949:5. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Carroll, Marcia. “Book of the Month Club News.” March 1949. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Clark, J. T. “A Golden Gift to the Girls.” *Union Recorder* 20 January 1891. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Clarke, Edward Hammond. *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*. Boston, MA: James R. Osgood and Company, 1874.
- “The Closing Scene of the Industrial Institute and College: The Chapel Packed and Jammed as Never Before.” *Columbus Dispatch*. 1890. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Cocke, C. H. "From President C. H. Cocke's Report, 1889." Vertical file. University Archives.

Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

"Columbus Has the Greatest Institution of Its Kind in America." *Columbus Commercial*

Dispatch 22 April 1903. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Cook, Susan K. Letter of Recommendation on Behalf of Pauline Orr. 1 June 1885. Box 1.

Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

"Correspondence." *The Spectator* 20 March 1934. Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant

Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Cummings, Lela J. Letter to Annie Peyton. 1 December 1879. Vertical file. University Archives.

Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Curl, Lottie Moring. "The History of the Georgia State College for Women." Thesis. George

Peabody College for Teachers, 1931.

Daniel, Frank. Rev. of *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Frances Gaither. *Saturday Review of*

Literature. 15 March 1940: 21. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Davis, Jefferson. Letter to Charles T. Harrison. 22 October 1885. Vertical file. University

Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Davis, Ronald L. "Gaither, Frances Ormond Jones." In *Lives of Mississippi Authors*. Ed. James

B. Lloyd. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1981: 186-187.

“The Dawning of a New Era.” *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* 23 October 1885. Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Eleventh Annual Catalogue of Officers and Students of the Industrial Institute and College of Mississippi. 1895. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Ellington, Lena. Interview. 18 September 1979. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “Heroism.” 1841. In Joel Porte, ed. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays & Lectures*. New York: The Library of America, 1983. 369-381.

Eschbach, Elizabeth Seymour. *The Higher Education of Women in England and America 1865-1920*. New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1993.

Euton, D. G. Letter to the Trustees at the State Industrial School of Mississippi. 1 June 1885. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Ezell, John S. “A Southern Education for Southrons.” *The Journal of Southern History* 27 (1951): 303-327.

Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) New York: Modern Library, 1964.

---. *Go Down, Moses*. (1942) New York: Modern Library, 1955.

---. “Skirmish at Sartoris.” In *The Unvanquished*. (1939) New York: Vintage, 1966: 215-242.

“The Female College—Breaking Ground for the Chapel.” 17 April 1885. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

- Flowers, Paul. "'Double Muscadine' Weighs One Life, Happiness of Many." Rev. of *Double Muscadine* by Frances Gaither. *Commercial Appeal* 3 March 1949. Subject file, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- "Form of Certificate of Admission." Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Fourth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Industrial Institute and College, for the Education of White Girls of Mississippi*. 1889. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- "Fourth Session of the Summer Normal of the Industrial Institute and College." 1907. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- "Frances J. Gaither, Distinguished Alumnae, is Dear to our Hearts." *The Spectator* 3 October 1944: 2. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Frazer, Robert. Biennial Report to the Trustees of the Industrial Institute & College, 1891-1893. December 1893. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Evaluation of Pauline V. Orr. 7 January 1898. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Gaither, Frances. "Across the Darkness." In *Meh Lady*. 1909. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . *Double Muscadine*. New York: MacMillan, 1949.
- . "In Anticipation of Sue." In *Meh Lady*. 1909. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

- . Letter to Pauline V. Orr. 1915. Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- . *The Pageant of Columbus within a Masque of II&C: The Book of Words*. 1915. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "When I Think of Columbus." 1921. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- "Gaither Presents Picture of Pre-Civil War South." *The Spectator* 3 October 1944: 1, 3. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Godden, Richard, and Noel Polk. "Reading the Ledgers." *Mississippi Quarterly* 55:3 (2002): 301-359.
- Gordon, Lynn. *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*. Hew Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- "A Grand Event! Opening Ceremonies of the State Industrial Institute and College." *The Weekly Index* 30 October 1885. Vertical file. Special Collections. J. C. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Hall, Deborah A. "'Coming of Age' in the Progressive Era: The Role of Southern Women's Higher Education Between 1900 and 1917." Diss. University of Kentucky, 1991.
- Hammett, Evelyn. "A Sketch of Blanche Colton Williams." Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Hand, Zuba. Letter to her mother. 19 March 1902. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Hedden, Worth Tuttle. "In Ante-Bellum Mississippi." Rev. of *Double Muscadine* by Frances Gaither. *New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review* 6 March 1949: 2.

- Hickson, Shirley Ann. "The Development of Higher Education for Women in the Antebellum South." Diss. University of South Carolina, 1985.
- Hudson, Robert S. "The State Female College—Where Shall It Be Located?" *The Clarion* 26 March 1884: 1. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- "The Institute and College." *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* 24 October 1885. Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Jones, R. W. Letter on Behalf of Pauline Orr. 26 June 1888. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Kincannon, Andrew A. Letter in support of the Normal graduates of the Class of 1899. 17 March 1899. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Letter to Alfred Hume. 6 December 1906. Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- . Report to the Legislature of Mississippi. 1901 Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Kinlock, L. M. Rev. of *When the Red Cock Crows* by Frances Gaither. *Library Journal* 69 (1 May 1944): 404.
- Kohn, Sheldon S. "Mr. Painter: Welty's Memory and the Archives." *Eudora Welty Newsletter* 29:2 (2005): 12-21.
- Kreyling, Michael. *Inventing Southern Literature*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.

Lee, Stephen D. Letter of Recommendation for Pauline Orr. n.d. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Lindgren, Gunilla. *Higher Education for Girls in North American College Fiction 1886-1912*.

Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 2005.

Lipscomb, Dabney. "Mississippi Industrial Institute and College." 1912. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Lindsey, Myra Mason. "Address for the Dedication of the Orr Chapel." 30 October 1954.

Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. *Life of Pauline V. Orr*. Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Marshall, C. K. "The State College for Girls: Dr. C. K. Marshall Favors Brandon." *The Clarion* 2 April 1884: 3.

Martin, J. M. "True History of Incorporation of the Industrial Institute and College, Located at Columbus, Mississippi." *Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series* 4 (1921): 277-280.

Meh Lady. 1909. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

McCain, William D. "Education in Mississippi in 1860." *Journal of Mississippi History* 22 (1960): 153-166.

McCusker, John J. "How Much is That Worth Today?" 2006. *Economic History Services*. 28 July 2006. <<http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd>>.

- “Memorabilia.” *The Spectator* 8.6 (March 1914): 7-17. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Miles, Loyce Braswell. “Forgotten Scholars: Female Secondary Education in Three Antebellum Deep South States.” Diss. Mississippi State University, 2003.
- “Miss Pauline V. Orr.” Summary document of her career at the II&C from the Office of the Registrar. 10 May 1954. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. New York: Macmillan, 1936.
- Monroe, N. E. Rev. of *The Red Cock Crows* by Frances Gaither. *Catholic World* 159 (August 1944): 476.
- Moore, Alice Sutton. “Echoes of Blanche Colton Williams.” n.d. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- “Mrs. Frankie Jones Gaither to Visit M.S.C.W. in March.” *Commercial Dispatch* 27 February 1934. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Nash, Wiley N. “Speech in support of Senate Bill No. 311, delivered at the Capitol before the House of Representatives on March 5th, 1884.” Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, MS.
- Neilson, Sarah D. *The History of the Mississippi State College for Women*. Unpublished mss. 1954. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Neukom, Thomas. Email to the author. 25 September 2006. Translated by Dorothy Kemptner.

“The Opening of the I. I. and C.” *Columbus Commercial Dispatch*. 1890. Vertical File.

University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Orr, Pauline V. “April Days in Mississippi.” In *Meh Lady*, 1904: 59.

---. *Diary: 1903-1905*. Box 3. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

---. “His Name Was Writ in Water.” Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

---. “Junior English Examination.” 14 June 1898. Vertical File. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. “Lecture Notes on Robert Browning.” n.d. Box 4. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Nannie Herndon Rice. 20 April 1914. Rice Family Papers. Mitchell Memorial Library. Mississippi State University. Starkville, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Nannie Herndon Rice. 17 February 1928. Rice Family Papers. Mitchell Memorial Library. Mississippi State University. Starkville, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Nannie Herndon Rice. 10 August 1930. Rice Family Papers. Mitchell Memorial Library. Mississippi State University. Starkville, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Nannie Herndon Rice. 8 August 1932. Rice Family Papers. Mitchell Memorial Library. Mississippi State University. Starkville, Mississippi.

---. “Message from Miss Orr.” Read at Orr Building dedication. 30 October 1954. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

- . "Reflection on Teaching." n.d. Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- . "Report of the Department of English." n.d. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Report to President Frazer." 1897. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Report to President Kincannon." 2 December 1901. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Report to President Kincannon." May 1907. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Senior English Examination." 18 February 1899. Vertical File. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Sessional Report of the Department of English Language and Literature for the School Year 1907-1908." May 1908. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- "Our Pride, the Opening of the State Female College Yesterday." *Tri-Weekly Dispatch* 23 October 1885. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Palmer, Alice Freeman. "Why Go To College?" 2006. *Project Gutenberg*. 27 May 2006.
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext00/2clg10.txt>>.
- Peebles, Rosa. "The Industrial Institute and College." 1904. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

- . "Miss Orr and the Teaching of English." *The Spectator* 8.6 (March 1914): 72-74. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Remembrance of Miriam Greene Paslay." 1932. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Report of the Department of Rhetoric and Composition to President Whitfield." 27 May 1908. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Percy, William Alexander. *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son*. (1941) Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.
- Peyton, Annie. "Address of Mrs. Annie C. Peyton." *The Clarion* 28 October, 1885. Vertical file. Special Collections. J. C. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "Co-Education of the Sexes in Colleges and Universities. An Essay, by Mrs. Annie C. Peyton, of Hazlehurst; read before the State Teachers Association, by Miss Matilda J. Jones." 2 January 1884. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Letter to Lela J. Cummings. 3 December 1879. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Letter to Dr. C. W. Vaiden. n.d. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . "A Mississippi Woman in Reply to a Mississippi Man." *The Clarion* 6 February 1884: 4. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. "Note from 'A Mississippi Woman.'" *The Clarion* 12 March 1884: 3. Vertical file.

University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. "A State School for Girls." *The Clarion* 13 February 1884: 2. Vertical file. University

Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. "Why Do, Do Not, Favor a State Female College. *The Clarion* 16 January 1884. Vertical file.

University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Peyton, Mary Lou. "'A Mississippi Woman' Annie Coleman Peyton, 1852-1898." n.d. Vertical

file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Pieschel, Bridget Smith. "Blanche Colton Williams: Mentor of Southern Women's Literature."

In *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives*. Eds. Martha H. Swain, Elizabeth

Anne Payne, and Marjorie Julian Spruill. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003.

72-93.

--- and Stephen Robert Pieschel. *Loyal Daughters: One Hundred Years at Mississippi University*

for Women. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1984.

Pieschel, Stephen. "The Orrs of Orr's Hill." Unpublished essay, 1985. Special Collections. Fant

Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

"Pioneer Opened Door in Women's Education." *Alumnae News Bulletin, Mississippi University*

for Women. Spring 1979: 47. Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library.

Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Read, Thomas Buchanan. "The Brave at Home." In *The Little Book of American Poetry, 1787-*

1900. Ed. Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915. 96.

- “Reception and Lecture: Women’s Clubs of Oxford and University Faculty Compliment Miss Orr.” *Oxford Eagle*. December 1906. Box 16. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.
- Reneau, Sallie Eola. “Address to the Legislature of the State of Mississippi, January 1856.” Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Rogers, Tommy Wayne. “The Schools of Higher Learning at Sharon, Mississippi.” *Journal of Mississippi History* 28 (1956): 40-55.
- “Rules and Regulations for Boarding Pupils, Mississippi Industrial Institute and College.” October 1886. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Sadler, Lynn Veach. “Women and Freedom in Selected Novels of Mary Johnston and Frances Gaither.” *Jack London Newsletter* 16 (1983): 115-124.
- Sanders, Marcie D. Letter to Mrs. Edgar Allen III. 20 October 1971. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Letter to R. C. Ervin. 4 September 1973. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Sansing, David G. *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1990.
- “*Sartor Resartus*.” *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Ed. Margaret Drabble. 6th edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000: 896.
- Simms, L. Moody, Jr. “Frances Gaither: A Sketch.” *Notes on Mississippi Writers* 3 (1970): 73-78.

Sinclair, Mary Craig. *Southern Belle*. Phoenix, AZ: Sinclair Press, 1962.

Skelton, Bill. "Mrs. Gaither Rings Gong With Story of Old South." Rev. of *Double Muscadine* by Frances Gaither. *Clarion Ledger* 6 March 1949. Subject file, Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Solomon, Barbara Miller. *In the Company of Educated Women*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.

Smiley, David L. "William Carey Crane, Professor of Old Mississippi." *Journal of Mississippi History* 12 (1950): 98-104.

Smith, Frank. "Historic Novel Considers New Phase of Old South." Rev. of *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Frances Gaither. *Commercial Appeal* 17 March 1940. Vertical file. Special Collections. J. C. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. "Mississippi author Frances Gaither: Too soon forgotten." *Clarion Ledger* 16 March, 1986: F3. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

"The State College for Girls." *The Clarion* 26 March 1884: 2. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

"The State College for Girls—A Suggestion." *The Clarion* 30 April, 1884: 2. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

"State College for Women Loses a Valuable Instructor." *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis) 18 May 1913. Vertical file. Special Collections. J. C. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

"The State Female College." *Jackson Ledger*. n.d. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

“The State Female College: Why It Should be Located at Wesson.” 4 June 1884: 2. Vertical file.

University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Stern P. V. Rev. of *The Red Cock Crows* by Frances Gaither. *New York Times Book Review* 21

May 1944: 6.

Stock, Phyllis. *Better than Rubies: A History of Women's Education*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978.

Street, Lottie. Remembrances. n.d. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Sumners, Mary F. “Education in Ante-Bellum Tishomingo County.” *Journal of Mississippi History* 20 (1958): 224-234.

Talley, Rhea. “Expatriate Mississippian Writes Historical Novels of the South.” *Commercial Appeal* 16 March, 1947. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

---. “Frances Jones Gaither Wins Dual Honors With New Book.” *Commercial Appeal* 16 March 1949. Subject file. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Taylor, A. Elizabeth. “The Woman Suffrage Movement in Mississippi, 1890-1920.” *Journal of Mississippi History* 30 (1968): 1- 34.

Taylor, Janie Rice. Speech. Dedication of the Pauline V. Orr Speech Building. 30 October 1954. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Thornton, J. J., et al. “Report of the Board of Trustees to the Legislature of Mississippi, January 1886.” Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

- Thrasher, Jennie Wood. "Frances Gaither." In Beulah M. D'Olive Price. *Some Corinthians of Today and Yesterday*. 1950. Vertical file. J. C. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- "A Traveler Entering Columbus, Mississippi." *Atlanta Constitution*. 1890. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Twentieth Annual Catalogue of the Industrial Institute and College of Mississippi*. 1905. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Vinson, Bernice. Letter to William Neilson. 14 September 1891. Vertical file. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Wallace, Margaret. Rev. of *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Frances Gaither. *New York Times Book Review* 17 March 1940: 7.
- Webster, Jean. *Daddy Long-Legs*. (1912) Rpt. Mahwah, NJ: Watermill Press, 1988.
- Welty, Eudora. *One Writer's Beginnings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Whitfield, Henry. "Going Off to College?" 1914. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- . Letter to Mr. J.W. Street. 13 January 1914. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.
- Wilkerson-Freeman, Sarah. "Pauline Van de Graaf Orr: Feminist Education in Mississippi." In *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives*. Eds. Martha H. Swain, Elizabeth Anne Payne, and Marjorie Julian Spruill. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003. 72-93.

Williams, Blanche Colton. "Heritage: An Address delivered by Dr. Blanche Colton Williams at the Mississippi State College for Women, June 4, 1934." Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. Letter to the Librarian at MSCW. 28 November 1931. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Pauline V. Orr. 8 July 1931. Box 1. Lindsey-Orr Papers. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

---. Letter to Emma Ody Pohl. 2 June 1935. Vertical File. Special Collections. Fant Memorial Library. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

---. "Pauline V. Orr, Teacher." *The Spectator* 8.6 (March 1914): 19-22. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.

Wilson, Edgar S. "Hon. John McCaleb Martin, A Great Mississippian." 7 September 1924. Vertical file. University Archives. Mississippi University for Women. Columbus, Mississippi.