

A History of
Education in
South Spencer
County

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Introduction

During the 1990-91 school year, Superintendent Gerald L. York asked me to write a report about the historical background of education in South Spencer county, as a part of an overall assessment of the quality of our programs and the serviceability of our buildings and facilities.

As the report evolved from a written record of the past, it seemed only natural that it includes some thoughts about where we may wish to go in the future.

Public education in this nation finds itself at a critical juncture. The quality of learning has become a top priority issue among leaders of business and industry. State governments across the nation are calling for a restructuring of the way we educate kids. President Bush and the governors of all fifty states recently formulated six national goals for public education. They are as follow.

By the year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.
3. American students will leave grades, 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history and geography; and every school in America will insure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.
5. Every American adult will be literate and will possess the skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in American will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Whether we are able to accomplish these loft goals is uncertain. What is certain, however, is the absolute necessity to try.

Although the South Spencer County School Corporation has a fine record in the percentage of students who graduate from high school, the other five goals have been considerably more elusive. Moving towards them will require a cooperative effort on the part of school personnel, parents, business and industry people, professionals, senior citizens, and students themselves.

We must dedicate ourselves to maximizing our strengths - the human resources available in our community, the vast resources of technology, the knowledge we have discovered about how children learn - and apply them in our schools and in our classrooms.

This will necessitate changes in our thinking, changes in our attitudes, and changes in the ways of doing things. Our willingness, as a team, to make these alterations will determine the future of education in South Spencer, and, as a consequence, influence the growth and development of this community for many years to come.

The past is our heritage. The present is our sacred trust. The future is our gift to our children and our grandchildren. Herein lies that gift that truly matters.

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The facts of this document stand on their own merit. The errors and editorials are mine and mine alone.

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH SPENCER COUNTY

A LOOK AT YESTERDAY

An Untamed Wilderness

Imagine if you will, a virgin land replete with wild life and small game; a land where wolves and foxes are plentiful, where white-tailed deer are abundant and where wild bears prowl in the deep woods of the river bottoms. (Goodspeed, Bros. & Co., p. 260)

Imagine green forests, thickly clad with poplar, beech, hickory, oak and sycamore trees. Imagine rolling hills (the remnants of an ancient glacier) and the meandering Ohio River, originating in the forked waterways of Pittsburgh and gently rolling towards the mighty Mississippi.

Imagine a land where scattered bands of Shawnee and Wyandotte Indians occasionally roam. Enter Spencer County, Indiana, in the early 1800's. (p. 250)

Named after Captain Spier Spencer, commander of an Indiana company of mounted riflemen who fought in the Battle of Tippecanoe (Nov. 7, 1811), the land lying on the north bank of the Ohio River was an untamed wilderness at the beginning of the 19th century. (Shull, p. 171 & 172) Abraham Lincoln described it as "...a wild region with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods." (Roll, p. 373)

With the arrival of the early settlers, primarily from the eastern states and the older settlements of Kentucky, crude log homes began to make their appearance in the forests of South Spencer. A few of these pioneers- especially those who could read - understood the importance of creating an environment in which their youngsters, and those of their neighbors would have the opportunity to learn through this printed word.

Home School Movement

The first organized attempt at providing a formal learning environment for the pioneer children in South Spencer County was the development of the home schools. According to Myrtle Woolfolk, "The Educational facilities from 1805 to 1820 were very poor. The families living closest were able, for a few weeks, to get a teacher by boarding him around." For brief spans of time, children were assembled and taught in a designated home. It's interesting to note that the only real qualification for teaching in this early period was "...to be able to make a quill pen and handle a beech limb adroitly." (The Rockport Journal, Feb. 11, 1955)

Abraham Lincoln, whose formal schooling in North Spencer County amounted to less than a full year of the entire period of his residence in Southern Indiana (1816-1830), later wrote, "No qualification was ever required of teacher beyond 'readin', 'writin', and 'cipherin' to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard." (Roll, p. 376)

One Room Schools

With the passage of time and as the number of children increased in the county, it became the consensus that education could best be delivered in buildings specifically designed as schools. The 1820s and '30's saw the creation of one-room schools, usually located in abandoned log buildings and churches. They sprang up all over South Spencer-Luce, Ohio and Hammond townships claimed several at this time. In 1825, J.B. Greathouse's tannery was the site of the largest classroom in Rockport. The upper story of the courthouse likewise served as a classroom in 1833. These schools and others like them were supported by subscriptions. Patrons were charged \$1.00 to \$2.00 per month. (Goodspeed Bros. & Co., p. 399)

First Teachers

Early historical records identify the following individuals as being among the first school teachers in the

South Spencer area: Hammond Township - Thomas Miller, Owen R. Davis, Josiah Crawford, John Howard, John Schrode, and Mr. Burns;

Luce Township: Susan Tucker, Sylvester Jessup, Holtsclaw and Rodney Pitt, Benjamin and David Luce, William Bowland, Eldridge Hopkins and Joseph Arnold; Ohio township - George Moffet, Mr. Price, Dr. Stevens, James Robb, Dr. Moore, William G. Thomas and Asel Dorsey. Dorsey, incidentally, is noted for having taught the young Abe Lincoln. (p. 399-414)

Women teachers were scarce. Few could qualify because of age and marital status. Married women were not eligible to teach during the infancy period of formal education in South Spencer.

Early Curriculum

Reading, spelling, writing, and ciphering (arithmetic) made up the curriculum of these early subscription schools.

According to David Morgan, an early teacher from Spencer County who had written for the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, people had different notions of what was important reading. Thus, students brought in a variety of reading materials, such as the Bible, a horse doctor book, copies of the Indiana Legislature and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The role of parents in book selection was obviously critical during this period. (Morgan)

Education Statewide

During the late 1820's and '30's there were several major reform movements receiving lots of attention in the American nation, especially in the New England states. Public funding of education, temperance, slavery, religion, and women's rights were a few of the popular issues of the day.

Although Indiana was receiving a steady stream of colonists from the East, educational reform did not come to this heartland til somewhat later.

It was estimated in 1834, that among children from age five to fifteen, only 1 of 8 could read. "Indiana ranked lowest of all free states in popular intelligence and the

means of popular education. Only a little over one-sixth of the children of school age actually attended the common school." (Roll, 495)

Teaching Methodology

A popular teaching methodology at that time was to have students read and cipher aloud, simultaneously. Whoever got to school first began a recitation of their reading assignment and those that followed began theirs as soon as they arrived. These oral renditions continued until everyone was finished. This was the birth of the "blab-schools."

A major emphasis in education all during the 1800's was on memorization, drill and discipline. The lecture method was the most prevalent teaching technique.

Common Disciplinary Measures

Corporal punishment was surely in vogue during this early epoch. Other popular forms of punishment, according to Morgan, were (1) standing up in class; (2) standing in the corner; (3) standing on one foot; and (4) staying in at recess and after school.

Morgan describes the dunce block and cap as one of the "most foolish things introduced into the schools by the early teacher." He gives the following account: "It consisted of a wooden block about one foot high and conical shaped cap about two feet long with the word, 'dunce' around the brow. It generally had a feather protruding from the apex of the cone. The culprit stood on the block, the cap adorned his head and there he stood to be laughed at by the rest of the school." Morgan left no doubt about his absolute distaste for this type of chastisement.
(Morgan)

Water and Heat

The older boys were usually responsible for cutting wood, keeping the fire going and carrying water into the school house.

Students and teachers quenched their thirsts by dipping a gourd into a cedar bucket filled with water. If they dipped more than they could drink, they were instructed to pour the remnants back into the bucket, thus practicing early conservation since it was not uncommon to have to carry the water some distance. (Morgan)

Typical Schoolhouse

Morgan described the typical schoolhouse of this early period as being a log building, approximately 22 feet by 18 feet, with a clapboard roof and a dirt floor. A fireplace was built in one end and a door made of clapboards hanging on wooden hinges was erected on one wall near the middle. A window was formed by taking out a log of one wall. This opening admitted not only light, but sometimes animals as well. Later, small openings were cut from the log and greased paper was pasted over the opening for protection. While allowing light to enter, this new engineering kept out many unwanted creatures.

Students sat on split logs which were smoothed off. Hickory pins served as leg supports. The girls sat on one side of the room and the boys on the other. Desks were placed against the walls, which pupils faced while doing their homework. Since the teacher's desk was normally in the center of the room, students turned to face the center when reciting or participating in other oral work. Polk berry juice served as homemade ink for the pupils. (Morgan)

Favorite Schoolyard Games and Activities

Just as youngsters today, children of the 19th century had their favorite playground games. Among these were town ball (a forerunner of baseball), tip cat, hand ball, bull pen shinney, andy-over, jumping contests, wrestling and knuckle fist fights. Other activities included "...hare and hounds, wet and dry stones, prisoner's base, hide and seek...and fox and geese." (Warren, p. 75)

Early Funding

Education was given a boost in South Spencer as better funding methods were developed. An early state law made possible a construction fund for a county seminary. Fines

issued by Justices of the Peace and Circuit Courts were the source for this fund. Fines of \$1.00 and \$5.00 for fighting were handed out with such frequency that the early 1800's became known in Spencer County as the "Fist and Skull Age". (Goodspeed, Bros. & Co., 400)

Free School Movement

The county seminary was completed in 1835 and for several years was the leading school in Rockport. Although it was designed to provide education for children throughout the county, travel difficulties were such that for the most part, only the youngsters in Rockport attended the institution. Thus, the boys and girls in the outlying regions continued to attend the small log cabin schools closer to their homes.

In 1853, following the passage of the first "free school law", the seminary was sold. Many opposed the free school system in its infancy, predicting its failure.

Meredith Nicholson, in The Hoosiers wrote that "...prejudice existed in the minds of many against free schools as undemocratic." (p. 78) During this time an Indiana Legislator declared, "When I die I want my epitaph written, 'Here lies an enemy to free schools'" (p. 79)

The theory of public funding of education in Indiana evoked some difficult questions. "Should the industrious be taxed to support the indolent? Should the people be made benevolent by law? (p. 83-84)

There were objections that public funding hinted at priestcraft—"...the real object was the union of Church and State." (p. 84) The loudest protests, according to Nicholson were heard from the people who would have been helped the most, "...the wretchedly poor and ignorant." (p. 84)

While the southern half of Indiana voted against allowing public funding, the state as a whole voted affirmatively. Subsequent legislation allowed each county the freedom to adopt or reject free schools as their inhabitants saw fit.

Advocates of the free system held frequent public meetings to educate the masses on the advantages of such an

initiative. The first free schools opened in South Spencer in 1859.

With the advance of the free school movement, education, for the first time, became accessible to the masses—rich and poor, alike. Mrs. Emma Yeager in her "History of Schools in Luce Township" describes the changes brought about by this new legislation. "New frame buildings were erected. Uniformity of textbooks enabled teachers to arrange pupils into classes, decrease noise, and use improved methods of instruction." In addition, prospective teachers had to pass examinations in order to qualify to teach. Education in Southern Indiana was definitely on the upswing. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Neighborhood Schools and their Curriculum

It's interesting to note that in 1865, there were 12 school districts and 12 schools operating in Hammond Township. Luce Township could likewise boast of 13 school buildings in 12 districts. Seventeen one-room schools could be found in Ohio Township prior to the turn of the century.

The course of study in Hammond Township, as outlined by Lola Ayer, was "Orthography (Spelling), Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, English, Grammar, Physiology, and United States History." (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Building character and teaching patriotism were major objectives of the free school movement. In this way, early educational proponents believed that Americans would develop common goals, values and a sense of national unity. The McGuffey Readers, which were apparently in wide use near the turn of the century in the South Spencer Schools, influenced the moral ideas of more than one generation of Americans.

Teacher Salaries

Teacher's salaries hit an all-time high during the latter 1800's--\$2.02 per day for males and \$1.23 for females. Since there was no state aid at that time, the money sometimes ran out prior to the end of the school

term. Thus, it was not uncommon for teachers to donate a portion of their time in order to finish out the year which had been increased to six months. Prior to this, it was the norm of teachers to be paid \$10.00 a month and board for three months of school during the winter. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Transportation

Transportation during this time in our history was very basic. Boys and girls often walked several miles to and from school in all kinds of weather. It is reported that they sometimes had to "coon a rail fence" in order to cross a creek. Later, as consolidation began to take place, students were frequently transported by horse or mule drawn covered wagons to the larger township schools. These wagons, whose capacities were normally 12-15 students, continued in use until the early 1930s when they were replaced by the original motorized school buses. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

The Black Schools Movement

Roy Bauman, in an article published in the Rockport Democrat in 1955, wrote that with the end of the Civil War, blacks were no longer slaves, however no schools had been built for them and they were not permitted to attend schools for the whites.

Aunt Leafy Mackey was credited with first teaching blacks in her home in Rockport. She then donated the land and helped build a school house near the Negro Methodist Church. By 1874, it became part of the town's public school system.

Two teenage boys, William H. Merithew and Filmore Snyder, started a black school in Merithew's home (on present day Walnut Street). They had five pupils.

In the later 1870's, a remodeled house north of the Smithfield Baptist church was provided by the town of Rockport for Negro students. According to then Superintendent A.H. Kennedy, "The house occupied by the colored school situated in the western part of the city is well warmed and seated." (The Rockport Journal Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

During the early 1880's, white students who had been attending school in a frame building on North 5th Street (site of present high rise apartment), were transferred to the seminary building in Rockport. The building on North 5th was then made ready for the upper elementary black students, with the primary students remaining in the school building on the west part of the town.

In 1839, the 5th Street building was remodeled and primary students were moved to it. Miss Rhoda Samuels was hired as third grade teacher at this time. Later this school became known as "Sumner School" and continued to provide a high standard of education until it closed in 1955, following racial integration in the South Spencer County schools.

Bauman reports that there were five black schools in Ohio Township at the turn of the century. These were: "Africa, at Africa; Shawler, at McGill location; Lake Mill, at Lake Mill; No. 12, between Sand Ridge and Hatfield; and Hartwell School. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

A two story frame school building was erected in Richland in 1865. Ten years later, a brick building was constructed and the older frame building became a negro school and church. By 1911, most of the blacks had moved away from Richland and the school was discontinued.

In 1904, a Negro school was located at Kensington, where Luce Elementary now stands. Shortly thereafter it was moved to Eureka, where it functioned until a sharp decline in enrollment forced the remaining pupils to be transported to Rockport. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

The Foundations of St. Bernard

In the February 11, 1955, issue of The Rockport Democrat, Marie Conen and Gladys Martin outlined the history of the St. Bernard parish.

According to their account, Father Joseph Kundeck of Jasper came to Rockport in 1849 and started with the four Catholic families he found there. Since the Catholics were so few in number, they had no permanent pastor until 1874.

Benedictine priests served the mission during these years. Traveling from St. Meinrad, Troy and Cannelton, they made infrequent trips to Rockport to celebrate the Mass and serve Holy Communion. Mass was offered for a time in the home of John and Margaret Kerstiens, located on N. 6th St. near the present church site.

The cornerstone for the first church was laid on June 6, 1850. It was named St. Bernard, in honor of a leading merchant of the community, Bernard Herman Walters, who provided much of the funds for the church.

In 1874, Rev. John William Book moved to Rockport and took charge of the small congregation. A new, larger brick church was constructed and dedicated in June of 1876. The old church was turned into a school with the Benedictine Nuns assigned the task of providing Catholic children with a religious education.

Father Book was instrumental in building up the parish and in 1882, with approximately sixty families in the congregation; a rectory (priest's home) was built.

Conen and Martin report that the "Benedictine sisters conducted an academy on what is commonly known as 'Bosler Hill,' a short distance from the church and the present school. Later the school was moved to the east end of the original church.

Sometime during this period, a small house was erected for the nuns. Over the years, it has been added to and remodeled. The present building, having been renovated and brick veneered, serves as the parish rectory.

Following a fire which destroyed the church on New Years morning, 1917, a new church was built on the old site and completed in September of 1918.

During the late 1940's, a new school and gymnasium was built, opening in September of 1949. Additional classrooms were built in the 1950's, with the latest building phase completed in 1961. Recent remodeling, including a science and home economics lab, took place in the latter 1980's.

Presently, St. Bernard School has an enrollment of 127 in K-8 (1990-1991). (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Higher Education in South Spencer County

South Spencer County's first and only institution of higher learning was organized by men of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1863. Young men were prepared for higher classes in universities and young women were provided a full college curriculum. The building, originally known as the Rockport Academy and later changed to the Rockport Collegiate Institute, was three stories high and cost \$20,000 to build.

Located at the present site of Rockport Elementary School, this outstanding institution was the marvel of its time. 135 students were enrolled during the 1864-65 school year. In 1866, a total of 197 students registered for classes.

According to Bauman, "...a new piano was purchased for \$425, and a set of Philosophical apparatus for \$500 and the Institute and grounds was valued at \$31,000."

A local dignitary, General James Veatch, was quoted at the time as saying, "Our society here bids fair ere long to become a most powerful means of disseminating truth and eradicating error. Nor would the figure be overstrained were we to imagine that we already see the pale, crippled and haggard ranks of ignorance and error recoiling before the well directed aims of the invincible phalanx of free discussion and patient investigation." (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

The History of Warrick, Spencer, and Perry Counties, Ind., reports that the college hosted the first Teacher's Institute of Spencer County in 1865. "Men from abroad-educators of eminence lectured to the institute on the leading educational topics." For many years afterwards, these institutes (In-service training) were held annually. (p. 414)

However, this educational wonder was short-lived. Because of declining enrollment, the college was closed in 1873 and for many years thereafter, served as a secondary school, with elementary students housed in a portion of the building from time to time. (p. 407)

Demise of the One-Room Schools

As populations shifted, with some areas growing and other declining, many school buildings were abandoned while others were newly built or renovated. The compulsory education law of 1897 and the inclusion of secondary schools in the state educational system gave further impetus to the advancement of learning and the decline of the one-room schools. For instance, Luce township could still count 13 elementary schools in 1904. By 1925, however, this number was reduced to three—Richland, Hatfield, and Eureka. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

The Secondary School Movement

During the early part of the 20th century, Luce, Ohio and Hammond townships all could boast of excellent high school facilities.

Luce Township

Emma Waters, in her historical article on "Richland City", for the 1968 Rockport-Spencer County Sesquicentennial, writes that the first high school in Richland was established in 1906. Earlier records indicate that some high school work was offered in a few of the district schools prior to 1900. Those who intended to go into teaching, for example, were able to take ninth grade "preparatory courses" which qualified them for a license. Around 1901 to 1902, a two year high school curriculum was provided, which included courses in Algebra, Latin, Ancient History and English.

For a time, classes were held in the grade school building; later the high school was moved to the old Baptist Church on the north edge of town. "From 1911 to 1914, it was housed over Ferguson's store."

The curriculum during this time, as recorded by Ms. Yeager, was academic "...first year: algebra, rhetoric, Latin I, physical geography; 2nd year: advanced algebra, American Literature, Latin II, physics; 3rd year: plane geometry, Caesar, general history, and English; 4th year:

advanced physics, geometry, Latin III, and English. A credit in music and drawing was also obtainable."

A new brick high school was completed in 1914 (present site of the vacated Robert Harris Jr. High). For a time it was called Richland High School, but later the name was changed to Luce Township High School. Construction cost was \$10,600 for the three story building. In addition to the regular classrooms, the structure included a superintendent's office, a manual training shop, a domestic science kitchen, physics and agriculture laboratories and an auditorium (45 ft. by 45 ft.). L.T.H.S. was the first high school in the southern part of the state to offer vocational classes (in 1919). (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Referring to the elementary and high school complex, a Rockport Journal article, in October of 1914, reported that "Richland City has perhaps the largest and best equipped school buildings now of any town its size in the state." In 1935, four classrooms were added above the gym and an agricultural room and a shop area were built north of the gym.

Records indicate that L.T.H.S. offered four broad courses of study in 1955: (1) college preparatory; (2) vocational; (3) home economics; and (4) commercial.

Following consolidation in 1965, high school students in Richland transferred to Rockport and 7th, 8th and 9th graders attended the newly created Robert Harris Jr. High.

Ohio Township

Rockport High School was established following the closing of the Rockport Collegiate Institute. According to Elmina Ruth Armstrong Cook, who wrote of the early schools in Spencer County for the Spencer County Historical Society, Kate Snyder was the first graduate in 1879. "Through the energy and efficiency of Prof. A.H. Kennedy, the Rockport High School on Nov. 10, 1882, received a commission from the state board of education, which permits the high school graduates to enter the freshmen class of the state university without another examination." Rockport High, by Mrs. Cook's account, was one of only twenty two secondary schools in Indiana to have received such a commission.

Rockport offered a three year high school program until 1894 when a fourth year course of study was added. Mr. Bauman reported that a gym and additional classrooms were built onto the west side of the high school in 1924-25. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

The 1924 Beech Leaves, published by the Rockport High School class of '24 indicates that in addition to a rigorous academic curriculum which included Latin, French, Physics, Economics, History, Geography, Geometry, English, and Public Speaking, a broad range of extra-curricular activities were offered. These included girls and boys glee clubs, orchestra, and girls and boys basketball. Incidentally, the girls team won 7, lost 3 and played to one tie. For the season, they outscored their opponents 294-165. The boys were 9-7 and were eliminated in the second round of the Tell City sectional.

A 1917 Beech Leaves edition makes reference to the participation of Rockport student athletes in high school track and soccer.

Many kinds of contests were popular at this time, such as the annual oratorical contest, vocal solo contest and the reading contest sponsored by the Literary Club.

In 1956, the school trustees erected a new high school on South Fifth Street, which is currently the residence of South Spencer Middle School. Construction costs were approximately \$750,000. The present South Spencer High School was completed in 1975 for the grand sum of \$7,407,204. (from Financial Records of the South Spencer School Corp.)

The modern facility, housing 520 students in grades 9-12, is located on an eighty acre site in REO. Pupils from Ohio, Luce and South Hammond townships are eligible to attend tuition-free. ("Background Information on South Spencer School Corporation," compiled by Financial School Consultant Service, Bloomington, In., 1973)

Hammond Township

The original secondary school in Grandview was opened in 1905, with the first class graduating in 1909. The new two story brick building was actually an addition to the

three story brick building which had been erected as an elementary school in 1867. A gymnasium and Home Economics building was added in 1929.

In July of 1943, a fire completely destroyed both the older building and the new addition housing the athletic and home economics facilities.

At this time, school officials were anticipating a fall enrollment of 125 high school students, with approximately the same number expected for the grade school.

In response to this unexpected tragedy, high school students from Huff Township were transported to Troy. North Hammond pupils went to Chrisney, while those in Grandview and South Hammond transferred to Rockport. (The Rockport Journal, July 16, 1943)

Elementary Schools in South Spencer during the 20th Century

Ohio Township

As has been earlier recorded, there were 17 one-room schoolhouses in the township prior to the turn of the century.

Elementary students in Rockport were attending seminary school during the latter 19th century. In 1900, the Washington Building was built to relieve overcrowding.

In 1920, many of the older schools had been abandoned and it was evident that the Ohio Township school system needed to be improved and updated.

In 1922-23, Silverdale and South Central schools were built. This construction phase totally eliminated the one-room schools in Ohio Township. (Bauman)

With the construction of Rockport Ohio Township Elementary School in 1962, Silverdale and South Central schools, along with the seminary school, opened the doors for the final time. The modern era of public education was ushered in, but not without much debate and fanfare as

proponents and critics of the new organization plan thrashed it out in public meetings and in the county newspapers. (articles from The Rockport Democrat, December, 1960 - March, 1961)

A south wing, consisting of four classrooms was added onto Rockport Elementary in 1971, and four more classrooms were added onto the north wing in 1986.

Enrollment during the 1990-91 school year stood at 425.

South Hammond Township

The three story brick building in Grandview, which had been constructed in 1867, was serving a majority of those elementary students living in the South Hammond school district in 1900.

With the addition of the high school building in 1904-05, the elementary and secondary students were housed on one campus site.

Following the destruction of the building in the fire of '43, grade school students attended classes in a W.P.A. Barracks, which had been purchased from Tell City. In 1949, a new elementary school was built for students in grades 1-8.

Consolidation in 1966 transferred 7th and 8th graders to Rockport. The grade school building was finally closed in 1973, with all students enrolling in Rockport Elementary School. (Ray Woolfolk, "Grandview", Rockport-Spencer Co. Sesquicentennial publication, 1968)

Luce Township

By 1925, three grade schools were serving the students of Luce Township: Hatfield, constructed in 1910; Eureka, built in 1920; and Richland, opened in 1925. Richland was the largest, having five rooms, while Hatfield and Eureka had four. (from Corporation records, 1959)

With the construction of Alcoa in the '50's the population increased approximately 10% between 1950 and 1960.

In 1961, the present site for Luce Elementary School was purchased and the new school was constructed and opened in 1962. This replaced the schools at Richland, Hatfield, and Eureka. Its first year's anticipated enrollment was between 350 and 425. 240 students were enrolled in 1990-91. A faculty lounge and a storage area were added on in 1986.

School Building Construction

The history of education in the South Spencer County School Corporation is a history of gradual progress, of a continual search to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances.

As in all other enterprises, improvements in education have not always come easily. Many times, emotionally charged issues have divided intelligent people. Differences of opinion have been aired and debated, both privately and publicly. Facts were often clouded by rumors. The public good was sometimes overshadowed by personalities and politics.

Rockport-Ohio Township Elementary School

Building new schools and closing old ones has invariably stirred spirited reactions in South Spencer County. The proposed building of Rockport Elementary School during the initial part of the 1960's was a typical example of how well meaning people can harbor opposing viewpoints.

An edition of The Rockport Democrat, dated January 20, 1961, declared, "A public hearing on a petition objecting to the execution of a lease agreement entered into between Lincoln Land School Building Corporation and the Rockport-Ohio Township Schools, Inc. will be held on Monday, January 23rd."

The article went on to say, "A citizens committee, objecting to the construction of a new school at this time, circulated a petition which was the object of the above hearing." (The Rockport Democrat, Jan. 20, 1961)

Approximately 150 persons attended the hearing on the 23rd and listened to reasons for the new building as presented by Attorney Paul Mason and Superintendent, John Hill. Also answering questions pertinent to the hearing were the engineer and architect, local Fire Chief, Louis Skelton and Attorney Ralph Zoercher.

The proposed elementary school was to be built at the estimated cost of 420,000. (The Rockport Democrat, Jan. 27, 1961)

As a result of the objections from the "Citizens' Committee", the Rockport-Ohio Township School Board voted to delay action on the new grade school building. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 3, 1961)

Later in the month, a school board meeting, attended by more than 50 people, prompted Superintendent Hill to recommend further meetings with school patrons to air out all the pros and cons of the project. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 17, 1961)

The Rockport-Ohio Township School Board voted in favor of beginning construction of the new elementary building, according to the March 3rd edition of The Rockport Democrat 1961. Three members voted for it; two abstained.

The article goes on to say, "The 'Citizens' Committee' vowed to invoke all necessary action and legal procedures to make sure that the voters of Ohio Township will have an opportunity to express their opinion in an election duly allowed by the laws of the state of Indiana."

The March 10th edition of The Rockport Democrat recorded the following development. "A petition for mandate was filed in the Circuit Court here Monday afternoon against the Rockport-Ohio Township Schools, Inc." The petition, filed by individuals opposed to the construction of a new elementary building, "... would require an election on the quest of dissolving said consolidated School Corporation." Supposedly, the corporation was to have given notice of an election and to hold an election for the purpose of "taking the vote of the legal voters residing in Ohio Township, upon the question whether the consolidated schools of said city and township shall be dissolved."

The petition went on to claim that the Board refused to "publish said notice of election and that they be mandated to do so and to hold said election as required by law."

The Board turned the petition over to their attorneys, Paul Mason and Ralph Zoercher.

Upon legal review, Mason and Zoercher found that the chapter under which the vote on dissolution was filed had been repealed on an earlier date by the Indiana Assembly. Thus, the petition was dropped. (The Rockport Democrat, Mar. 17, 1961)

In December of 1961, the Citizens' Committee published their opposition to the new construction. Their major reasons for opposing the plan were the following:

1. Children would not receive a better education, because larger classes are less teachable. (that was obviously assuming that the new Rockport Elementary School would be significantly larger than the classes had been at Silverdale, South Central, and Seminary)
2. Only a few students would be able to participate in extra-curricular activities, or even class discussions.
3. Children in South Central and Silverdale would have to be transported further.
4. The worst feature was the plan to house 7th and 8th graders with high school - students. (Many individuals, including some educators, opposed this plan because of the social implications) (The Rockport Democrat, Dec. 16, 1960)

The Luce Township Building Project

In contrast to the controversy spawned by the Rockport Elementary School project, the construction of Luce Township Elementary School during the same general time period was a relatively smooth process, once the decision was made to build. The events leading up to this decision, however, were not uneventful.

According to Ethel Nixon, the Hatfield School P.T.A., in 1957, invited patrons from the existing elementary schools in Luce Township—Richland, Hatfield, and Eureka—to a series of group meetings for the purpose of discussing consolidation and plans for new buildings. Antiquated and overcrowded, the old buildings were no longer able to accommodate a first class educational program.

A preliminary decision was made by the superintendent to house all the Eureka and Hatfield first through fourth graders at Hatfield. Students in grades 5-8 were to attend school in the Eureka building. Richland School was to remain unchanged. The new organization was to be implemented during the 1960-61 school year.

Many people in the Luce Township community opposed the plan, however. By circulating a petition and obtaining a restraining order, they delayed the opening of school for two weeks and forced the administration and trustees to look at other options. Soon thereafter, plans, were drawn up to construct a new building in the center of Luce Township to house students from all three elementary schools.

The new Luce Township Elementary School was completed in 1962 and pupils in grades 1-6 were placed in their new surroundings. All seventh and eighth graders transferred into the Richland Elementary School building. (Nixon)

Reorganization (First Try)

A state-wide movement to reorganize school districts began in Indiana in 1959. This led to some of the bitterest infighting ever witnessed in the southern portion of Spencer County.

The reorganization effort was a movement to upgrade the delivery of education through a consolidation of facilities, finances, and resources, both human and material.

According to Chapter 202 of the Acts of Indiana 1959, the objectives of reorganization were as follows:

1. To provide more efficient use of the public funds.
2. To provide a more equalized education opportunity for all pupils.
3. To achieve greater equity in school tax rates among the various now existing school corporations.

The Spencer County Reorganization Committee was formed in 1960 to develop a reorganization plan for the entire county. The committee was composed of Chairman, John C. Hill, Supt. of Rockport-Ohio Township Schools; Secretary, Eloise Ferguson, Luce Township; Treasurer, Orville Martin, Ohio Township. Remaining members included Theodore Woolsey, Spencer County Supt. of Schools; Shirley Schumacher, Trustee Grass Township; Eugene Stein, School Board Member, Clay Huff; Ford Scott, Carter township; Anthony Peters, Harrison Township; and Chris Tremper, Hammond Township. Advisory committees, representing the numerous schools in the county, were made up of P.T.A. members.

According to the document, A Comprehensive Plan for Reorganization of Spencer County Schools, April, 1961, there were eight school corporations in Spencer County. "They are Carter, Grass, Hammond, Harrison, Jackson, and Luce Township School corporations, the Clay-Huff Consolidated School Corporation and Rockport-Ohio Township Schools, Inc."

The document goes on to report that nineteen school buildings were in use during the 1959-60 school year. Thirteen of them housed students in grades 1-8. "Two buildings housed students 9-12, two buildings housed students in grades 1-12, and two buildings housed students in grades 1-6."

Assessed valuation for Spencer County for the 1959-60 school year was \$21,038,960. With 3,376 students in resident A.D.A., the average assessed valuation per pupil was \$6,232.

Following a lengthy review of the educational programs, the building structures, sources of funds, school government, assets and liabilities, attendance figures and

projections, insured valuation of school property, and bonded indebtedness of the various school corporations in Spencer County, the Reorganization Committee proposed a two unit system in 1961.

The northern portion was to be named Lincoln Land School Corporation. It was to encompass the areas of Dale, Mariah Hill, St. Meinrad, Fulda, Gentryville, and Clay-Huff. The southern sector, to be called The Pocket School Corporation, would have included Midway, Chrisney, Newtonville, Grandview, Richland, Hatfield, Eureka, Silverdale, Rockport, and South Central.

The area of the proposed Lincoln Land School Corporation was 184 square miles, while The Pocket School Corporation was 197 square miles.

According to the 1959-60 records, the tax rates for the school corporations in the county were as follows:

Luce Township	\$2.27
Ohio Township	\$2.99
Hammond Township	\$2.83
Harrison Township	\$2.18
Carter Township	\$2.63
Jackson Township	\$2.50
Grass Township	\$2.01
Clay-Huff Township	\$2.20

The ultimate purpose of the Reorganization Committee was to assure that certain minimal standards be met throughout the county. These were as follows:

1. As far as possible all elementary pupils should be in classes of students of the same grade. Combination classes should be eliminated.
2. The pupil-teacher ratio should approximate the state formula—32 pupils A.D.A. in grades 1-8 and 28 pupils in grades 9-12. This will affect a far more effective use of the public's funds than presently exists in the county.
3. Practical art experiences should be provided all pupils at the 7th and 8th grade levels. Experiences in home economics, industrial arts and agriculture should be provided.

4. Music and art programs should be provided all pupils in grades 1-12.
5. The proposed high schools should be comprehensive in their course offerings. A complete academic program should be offered—4 years of math, science and English; at least 2 years of modern foreign language and Latin; 3 years of social studies, physical education and health; also complete vocational programs in home economics, agriculture, industrial arts and business education.
6. Guidance and counseling programs should be established for all pupils. Licensed personnel should be employed.
7. Adequate library programs should be a part of each school with licensed personnel employed.
8. All teachers should hold at least a B.S. degree and be licensed in their teaching area.
9. The proposed school corporations should establish classes for the mentally and physically retarded.

It was further proposed that the governance of these two school corporations be vested in a board of school trustees who would be duly elected by the voters in the townships they represent.

In order to prevent flagrant abuses of power by newly elected school trustees, the reorganization plan called for the following standards of conduct for individual board members: "...that he will honestly and faithfully discharge the duties of his office, that he will not, while serving as a member of such board become interested directly or indirectly in any contract with, or claim against the Pocket School Corporation, and that he will not be influenced during his term of office, by any consideration of politics or religion or any thing except that of merit and fitness in the appointment of officers and the engagement of employees."

Although a summary of facts—unequal educational opportunities for children, inequality in pupil teacher ratios, small numbers of pupils in each school, and sub-

standard buildings throughout the county—called for major changes, the two unit plan was rejected by the voters in a special election in 1962. (A Comprehensive Plan for Reorganization of Spencer County Schools, 1961)

Reorganization (Second Try)

According to a 1964 edition of The Rockport Democrat, a public hearing was held in VFW hall in Chrisney on February 14, 1964. The meeting was called by the State Commission on School Reorganization for the "...purpose of reviewing a one-unit system for county schools."

After listening to the proposal by the second Reorganization Committee, the State Commission unanimously approved the new plan and recommended it be placed before the voters in the May Primary.

The article went on to say that if voters were unable to agree upon a reorganization plan, the state legislature would enact one. One way for the state to have expedited the matter would have been to deny aid to the smaller schools.

In the special election to decide whether or not the county would accept a one-unit system, the plan was defeated 3232 to 1795. Thus, the county went back to square one. (The Rockport Democrat, February 14, 1964)

Reorganization (Third Try)

Third time was charm! After five years of failing to accomplish the task of reorganization, a consolidation plan was finally accepted in December of 1964—in North Spencer, through a special election, and South Spencer, by a petition. (The Rockport Democrat, December 18, 1964)

The new plan, which went into effect on January 1, 1965, was described as follows:

"One unit named the North Spencer County School Corporation comprising the townships of Carter, Harrison, Jackson, Clay, Huff, Grass and the portion of Hammond township lying north of a road extending from the Hammond township boundary on the west to the Hammond township on the east, said road being located on or near the second section line north from the south boundary line of Township

6S, Range 5W, sometimes commonly known as the Clint Jefferies Road." (The Rockport Democrat, October 30, 1964)

The other unit was called the South Spencer County School Corporation and it comprised the southern portion of Hammond Township, along with Luce and Ohio Townships.

It was determined that an elected school board in South Spencer consist of five members: two from Luce Township, two from Ohio Township, and one from Hammond township. (The Rockport Democrat, October 30, 1964)

In January, Fred Ayer was elected Superintendent of the South Spencer School Corporation by a temporarily appointed school board of Morris Woehler, Paul Boyd, Elizabeth Cron, Ralph Saddler, and William Machin. Paul Dunker was elected Assistant Superintendent soon thereafter. This final organization continues to the present day.

Southern Indiana Hoosiers: How Others See Us

The citizens of South Spencer County, Indiana, are descendents of a rugged, individualistic band of pioneers, who built their homes and eventually a community on a heavily wooded tract of land bordering the Ohio River.

In 1916, Meredith Nicholson, author of The Hoosiers wrote the relationship between the early Indian settlers and their forest environment. "Before they reached the Indiana wilderness...the stalwart pioneers had swung their axes in Pennsylvania or Kentucky, and had felt the influence of the great, gloomy woodlands in their lives; but in Indiana this influence was greatly intensified. They experienced an isolation that is not possible to-day in any part of the country, and the loss of nearly every civilizing agency that men value." (Nicholson, p. 36 & 37)

Describing the endless array of natural obstacles and diseases facing the pioneers, Nicholson concluded, "...the wilderness...drove them in upon themselves, strengthening their independence in material things by shutting them off from older communities."

The terrible isolation, however, encouraged a meditative mind-set often manifesting itself in spiritual longings and religious themes. "If books were found in a pioneer home, they could be expected to include first the Bible, and then very likely "The Pilgrim's Progress." (Warren, p. 49)

In general, the Indiana pioneer "...was likely to be of the younger age group and not well to do but on the make...He possessed self-reliance, fortitude, and courage. He was an individualist, but hospitable and cooperative. Above all, he had a spirit of violate self-confidence, 'bodaciousness' ..." (Thornbrough and Riker, p. 260)

Their social life, according to author, Bess Ehrmann, was "...centered around 'log rollings' and 'husky bees', camp meetings, religious gatherings, 'shooting matches', and visits to the general stores at the cross-roads. There they came together and exchanged information and discussed the subjects that were of interest to them in their backwoods life." (Ehrmann, p. 65)

In describing the Southern Indiana Hoosier in the 1930's, Ehrmann wrote, "It seemed to me that there was something of eye-eye straightforwardness and fine frankness and kindness and courtesy that you meet almost unflinching in these people...that you don't find so commonly elsewhere." (p. 77)

James Madison, in his book, Indiana Through Tradition and Change, 1920-1945, described the inhabitants of Southern Indiana of this time period as extremely skeptical of new ideas and particularly resistant to changes in education.

"Settled first largely by people from Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Kentucky, southern Indiana remained in the twentieth century more rural, more isolated, and more attached to the traditions and ways of life of the mid-nineteenth century than northern Indiana." (Madison, p. 23)

Since schools and churches have been the anchors of Southern Indiana society since the early 1800's, there was much debate during the 1920's and 30's regarding the direction of education. Those who argued for change wanted more direction and greater funding from the state. At this

time, state revenue accounted for only 10% of the total funding of education. Federal support was practically non-existent. In addition, reformers were seeking a more centralized and standardized system of education. (p. 263)

In 1922, a governor's commission evaluated public education in Indiana. Their major finding was that Indiana's small rural schools were, "bastions of backwardness that were resisting the needs of a modern society." (p. 266)

According to Madison, Republicans and urban Hoosiers, in general, supported change in the schools. Democrats and rural Hoosiers, especially in Southern Indiana, tended to oppose reform, arguing for continued local financing and for traditional methodology. (p. 265)

As a result of these studies, the state legislature increased the amount of aid sent to poorer districts, so that by 1940, nearly half of the school corporations were receiving state relief funds. (p. 269)

Racial Discrimination and Segregation

Madison claims that another obstacle to educational improvement in southern Indiana, as well as the state as a whole, was the existence of discrimination and segregation.

Indiana's public schools, according to Madison, reflected society's broader reactions to the black-white issue. "In some schools, particularly in such northern Indiana cities as Fort Wayne, South Bend, and East Chicago, black and white students sat side by side in integrated classrooms. In the southern part of the state, public schools are generally segregated and remained so until after passage of a state law in 1949 prohibiting segregation." (p. 278 & 279) It is interesting to note, that Rockport-Ohio Township did not actually integrate their schools until 1955, when Sumner School closed and the black students of the community began attending the public schools.

A LOOK AT TODAY AND TOMORROW

Just as the spirit of reform, prompted by free public schools, uniformity of textbooks, the inclusion of

blackboards, globes and outline maps in the classrooms, equal number of days taught, the initiation of county examinations for new teacher candidates, new teaching methods, and the construction of new frame buildings, gave new life to the schools in Spencer County in the 1850's, so has this same spirit of renewal once again visited the arena of education in South Spencer County in the 1990's.

In fact, a nation-wide renaissance in public education is now in progress. Advances in knowledge in all areas of human endeavor have brought about a public clamor for improving the way we educate our children.

Technology in the World

Youngsters who have grown up in a world where the sights and sounds of revolutions, wars, peace conferences, space walks, and laser surgery in all parts of the globe can be instantly transmitted into their living rooms are no longer motivated by many of the teaching methods which served us well in the past.

Fiber Optics

Mankind stands in awe as the secrets of the atom, the gene and the cosmos are being unraveled in front of our very eyes. We marvel as the communication technologies shrink the barriers between peoples and continents. In Megatrends 2000, John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene write, "On December 14, 1988, the first fiber-optic telephone cables across the Atlantic went into service. This new cable can carry 40,000 calls simultaneously, tripling the volume of the three existing copper cables plus satellites, which together can carry a total of 20,000 calls." (p. 23)

Continuing in this vein, "A fiber-optic cable across the Pacific went into service in April, 1989, linking the United States and Japan. North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia are being strung with fiber-optic cable. By 1992 more than 16 million miles of fiber-optic cable will be in place." (p. 23) According to the authors, fiber-optic cable carries 8000 conversations, while traditional copper wire can carry only 48. Likewise, fiber-optics provide much faster and clearer communications than copper wire.

High Tech communication systems and computers of all kinds are the driving force for the information age, just as manufacturing was the catalyst of the industrial revolution. (p. 23)

A Call for Technology in the Classroom

For more the fifty years, Peter Drucker, a brilliant economist and philosopher, has shed light on the changes that have continuously confronted our society. In The New Realities, he comments on the present and future role of education in an information, hi-tech age. "Within the next decade education will change more than it has changed since the modern school was created by the printed book over three hundred years ago." (p. 232)

Drucker further observes, "Since school learning and school diplomas increasingly control access to jobs, livelihoods, and careers in the knowledge society, all members of society need to be literate. And not only in 'reading, writing, and arithmetic.' Literacy now includes elementary computer skills. It requires considerable knowledge of a complex world in which boundaries of town, nation, and country no longer define one's horizons...For today's small child, the television set and the video cassette recorder surely provide as much information as does the school-in fact probably more. But only through the school-through organized, systematic, purposeful learning-can this information be converted into knowledge and become the individual's possession and tool." (p. 233)

Life-long Learning

Drucker believes that learning must be a life-long endeavor. "The knowledge society also requires that all its members learn how to learn. It is of the very nature of knowledge that it changes fast... Engineers ten years out of school are already 'obsolescent' if they have not refreshed their knowledge again and again. And so are the physician, lawyer, teacher, geologist, manager, and computer programming." (p. 233)

Everyone Learns Differently

Another major shift in our way of thinking about education, Drucker explains, is the result of our attempts at trying to understand how learners learn. "We know first that different people learn differently. Indeed, learning is as personal as fingerprints; no two are exactly alike. Each has a different speed, a different rhythm, a different attention span." Drucker goes on to suggest that if an individual is forced to learn in a way that is foreign or uncomfortable, he will grow frustrated and resist. Because of this reality, Drucker sees the role of the teacher changing. "It will predictably become the responsibility of tomorrow's teacher to identify the way learners learn..." and to lead them into an appropriate learning environment. (p. 247 & 248)

Technology can Reconstruct Learning

Creating a learning technology, rather than a teaching technology, Drucker believes, is the proper role of modern education. He envisions technology doing for our present age what the printing press did for the medieval period. "Just as the printed book became the new "high tech" of education in the fifteenth century, so computers, television, and video cassettes are becoming the high tech of education in the twentieth century...From the beginning the printed book forced the schools...to change drastically how they were teaching. Before then, the only way to learn was either by laboriously copying manuscript, or by listening to lectures and recitations. Suddenly, people could learn by reading." (p. 249)

Computers are User Friendly

Drucker claims that computers are much easier to use than books. "It has unlimited patience. No matter how many mistakes the user makes, the computer will be ready for another try. It is at the command of the learner the way no teacher in a classroom can be. Teachers in a busy classroom rarely have time for any one child. The computer by contrast is always there, whether, the child is fast, slow, or average; whether it finds this subject difficult and that one easy; whether it wants to learn new things or to go back over something learned earlier. And, unlike the printed book, the computer admits of infinite variation. It is playful." (p. 249)

Technology is Multi-Sensory

Because children come to school with a variety of learning styles, schools, if they are to flourish, will have to utilize a myriad of learning tools and teaching methods. Technology with its multi-sensory approach to learning can be an indispensable tool for the teacher who truly wishes to reach all of her students, not just the academically advanced ones who will learn regardless of how the learning environment is shaped.

Current Practices and Future Trends

Such practices as cooperative learning, group decision making, application of skills and concepts learned, peer tutoring, thematic teaching and role-playing have for many years been used successfully by master teachers. The integral role played by books, periodicals, journals, and newspapers needs to be enhanced. More reading materials are needed in our school libraries, not fewer. Since writing and speaking clearly are absolutely essential in the information society, teachers must find ways to increase opportunities for students to more fully develop these skills.

Peering into the horizon, we see great emphasis being placed upon early childhood education. Since readiness for school is important in academic success, more and more services must be extended to youngsters who have had the ill fortune to have been born in poverty.

The mainstreaming of handicapped youngsters, year round schooling, performance testing (including tests that measure real knowledge) and the nation-wide usage of distance learning are some vital issues which will call upon the resourcefulness and creativity of educators and the public alike.

Parental Involvement

We must encourage a more systematic and meaningful role for parents. Research tells us that quality parental involvement in a child's educational life translates into classroom success.

Specifically, schools can provide parenting classes, workshops on "How to help your child with math, reading, and other course work", opportunities for volunteer work in the school setting, and an invitation to assist educators in setting goals, developing learning strategies and evaluating programs.

Since parents are a child's first and most important teacher and mentor, schools must be seen by them as a viable and accessible resource, where they can draw support and encouragement in their daily efforts to raise healthy, happy and well educated children.

Community Involvement

Community involvement has the power to infuse the classroom with fresh ideas and resources for motivating kids to learn. Many individuals—grandparents, senior citizens, members of service organizations, professionals, hobbyists and homemakers—are just waiting to be asked to join us as we search for better ways to educate our kids. Likewise, our public schools must offer adult education classes for both pleasure and personal improvement, including technology (computer) training.

Business and industry spokesmen are continually voicing their reliance on the quality of learning in the schoolhouses of this nation. Their call for ending the traditional classroom scenario where... "students still sit in rows of desks, passively absorbing lectures and memorizing facts—education appropriate to a factory economy that values efficiency in rote tasks above creativity" cannot forever be ignored. (Agenda, Fall 1991, "The Real World Catalyst", by Therese Mageau)

It is time we in education made greater use of the wealth of resources in the working world. Businesses adopting schools; schools adopting businesses; career shadowing; apprenticeship programs; businessmen sharing their experiences with students; students volunteering for community service; the list of positive interactions between business and education is endless. The community is a veritable storehouse of learning and service opportunities.

Site-Based Management

The notion of site based management, a change in the locus of control from the chief administrative office to the individual schools, needs to be examined as an option in South Spencer County. It has already become a reality in many parts of the country. In Kentucky, it is being mandated state-wide by 1996. Building administrators, teachers, parents, and local community members are now making many of the traditional decisions (i.e. budgetary, instructional and personnel) which once originated exclusively from central administrative offices. This in line with the philosophy that those who are responsible for carrying out decisions, should be involved in making them.

Knowledge Explosion

The knowledge explosion in the later half of the twentieth century has turned our world topsy-turvy. One of the best kept secrets of this state of affairs is that the new technology has empowered the individual. No longer can a dictator in the modern world survive, when global television and audio and videocassettes, are accessible to almost everyone. To control people's minds, the dictator must control information. This, he can no longer do.

The electronic heartland, according to Naisbitt and Aburdene, is enveloping not only the United States but all of the developing countries around the globe. (Naisbitt & Aburdene p. 304)

The good news for education is that now we are truly approaching a time when we can all assume the role of life-long learner, no matter what our circumstances. We have the technology to allow every individual, no matter if he lives in Toronto, Canada, Denver, Colorado, or Hatfield, Indiana, to gain access to a specific body of knowledge needed at a particular time. As a people, we are no longer dependent on our location for the acquisition of information. Through the wonders of computers and T.V.'s, equal access is available to all. Southern Indiana does not have to take a backseat to anyone. The children of South Spencer will be able to get as good an education as youngsters in the most advanced classrooms in California or Massachusetts.

Changing Role of the Teacher

To be an educator in these exciting times is both frightening and exhilarating. The change from a teaching environment to a learning environment will require new perspectives and major attitude adjustments on the part of teachers and administrators. In an information/high tech society, teachers must become facilitators of learning, coaches, guides, mentors, group leaders, and a leader among learners. They must likewise be willing to learn about and begin using some of the most powerful educational tools ever developed by man, computers, TV's and multi-media technology.

Let it be reiterated here that the individual classroom teacher will continue to be the major player in public education. As the popular western writer, Louis L'Amour, expressed, "Education depends on the quality of the teacher, not the site or beauty of the buildings--nor, I might add, does it depend on the winning record of the football team..." (L'Amour, p. 4) L'Amour further wrote, "If I were asked what education should give, I would say it should offer breadth of view, ease of understanding, tolerance for others, and a background from which the mind can explore in any direction." (p. 3) For possibly the first time in history, the classroom application of modern communications and technology makes this vision a reality.

Changing Role of the Administrator

Administrators must relinquish their traditional roles as order givers, and spend more time in cooperative and collaborative efforts with teachers, parents and community groups in continually seeking for ways to improve the schools. They must begin seeing themselves as catalysts for improvement, as facilitators for change, as community leaders responsible for raising public awareness regarding the needs and deficiencies, as well as the strengths, of our educational enterprise.

Prospects for Change

These changes will not happen overnight. Proposals for new programs and improved facilities and equipment will be vigorously challenged by many individuals. The high

cost of improving education cannot be ignored or denied. What is actually best for children is open to debate. There will certainly be valid concerns and honest differences of opinion on the part of patrons as well as educators themselves.

These differences need to be analyzed, critiqued, discussed and debated in a spirit of open-mindedness. Oftentimes doubts and concerns are laid to rest as facts replace rumors and misunderstandings.

Spencer Countians seem to respond best to change when they are involved in the decision-making. Educational issues which have social or economic implications for the entire school corporation need to be approached in a spirit of teamwork. Parents, educators, students, and community members must frequently pool their resources to determine the best courses of action. Notwithstanding all of its inconveniences and inefficiencies, democracy is still the best form of governance ever devised.

Although reluctant to veer from tradition, most Spencer Countians are capable of demonstrating a vast amount of generosity and helpfulness when they can be shown that the change will truly benefit the youth of our community. Considerable effort must be made to communicate specifically how the youth will be served and in what ways they will benefit. The youth, themselves may be their own best spokesmen. Their experiences and unique insights ought to be sought out whenever educational changes are contemplated.

Four Questions to Ask

The four major questions that Southern Spencer County Hoosiers must ask themselves as they ponder new educational programs and proposals:

- (1) **Is change needed?** Are conditions such that problems and obstacles prohibit optimal learning or growth and development activities? Are there better ways to learn and teach? Are there resources available that have the power to enhance learning?
- (2) **Will change help our kids?** Will it improve achievement, study habits, attitudes, motivation,

self-confidence, personal health and opportunities for growth and development? Will it make learning more meaningful?

- (3) **Can we do it?** Are we willing to make the extra effort to learn a new role? to try a new approach? to make a new plan? to take a leap of faith?
- (4) **Can we afford it?** How will it impact the general community, financially, both now and in the future? Is it worth it? Can we afford not to make the change(s)?

If we can honestly answer yes to the four questions above, our course is clear. It is time to act.

If the answer is no to any of the four, then we must re-analyze our goals, revise our proposals and ask these questions again...and again...and again til we are certain our children are receiving the best education we can possibly provide for them.

Our Legacy

Life is an act of becoming, evolving, always trying to improve, to be more tomorrow than we are today. Experience tells us we never arrive at the golden gate, but our journey must never end. Our quest must never cease. Everyday and always, we must continue to march forward.

The greatest legacy we can leave the younger generation is the opportunity and motivation for lifelong learning, service and achievement. Let it not be said of our generation that we gave them anything less.

LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH SPENCER CO.

- 1) Home school Movement-early 1800's
- 2) One room schools (subscription schools)-mid-1800's
- 3) Free school movement; public funding; standardized textbooks- mid to latter 1800's
- 4) Closing of one-room schools; movement toward larger consolidated schools-latter 1800's
- 5) Black school movement-latter 1800's
- 6) Catholic school movement (St. Bernard)- latter 1800's
- 7) Higher education (Rockport Collegiate Institute); organized by men of Methodist Episcopal Church-1863
- 8) Secondary school movement; included in public school funding-early 1900's
- 9) Vocational education; given impetus by Smith-Hughes Act of 1917- early 1900's
- 10) Pre-school movement (private kindergarten)- early 1950's
- 11) Racial Integration-mid-1950's
- 12) Reorganization-1965
- 13) Introduction of technology in the schools-1980's

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APPENDIX

Kindergarten

The first public kindergarten in the United States was established in St. Louis in 1873. Social skills and creative play were the objectives for these preschoolers. (World Book)

The South Spencer Board of Education voted to incorporate Kindergarten into the school system for the 1966-67 term. Major funding came from federal aid, with state support covering most of the remaining portion.

However, pre-schooling began several years earlier in South Spencer County. Kindergarten, Inc., a privately run institution, was in operation during the early 1950's. Classes met in the lower auditorium of Trinity Lutheran Church. (The Rockport Journal, April 15, 1966)

Vocational Education

Vocational education in the U.S. was given birth by the Morrill Act of 1862, which gave federal land to certain colleges and universities to teach agriculture and mechanical arts. Later, in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act financed job training in high school. This piece of federal legislation gave great impetus to the teaching of Agriculture, Home Economics, the Trades and Industries in our secondary schools. (World Book)

Early Records indicate that Manual Training and Home Economics departments were part of the Rockport High School program as early as 1910.

Luce Township High School initiated vocational course work in 1919, following the Smith-Hughes Act. Mr. A. A. Smith was the first vocational instructor. L.T.H.S., in fact, was the only school in the southern part of the state to be teaching vocational classes at this time. (The Rockport Democrat, Feb. 11, 1955)

Hot Lunch Program

During the latter 1930's, Spencer County began taking advantage of a newly created government program. For the first time surplus commodities were furnished to the schools by the government, thus making hot lunches available to all students in both the public and parochial schools of South Spencer County.

An enterprising trustee from Midway, F. M. Yearby, saw the opportunity to supplement the hot lunches with vegetables grown from a vegetable garden. Thus, with the manpower supplied by the Works Progress Administration, a garden project was begun at Midway. Soon, all of the schools in Luce and Ohio township were eating fresh and canned Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, onions, lima beans and cabbage from the gardens at Midway and later, Hatfield. (The Rockport Journal, Apr. 8, 1938)