

A Manifest Destiny: The Common School

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Society perpetuates the culture through education. Schools today, as well as in the past, socialize the young to know, understand, and value their culture. This process was of extreme importance on the Western Reserve as the new settlers fought to perpetuate their New England culture, achieve economic growth, and fight the perceived enemies of evil and barbarism. Yankees attempted to bring to their new homes what they commonly viewed as their superior ideas of the Protestant religion. Whenever a New England population moved it brought with it the "twin sister" of religion and education, and an army of Yankee school teachers. With a strong missionary spirit the community would quickly build a church and a school staffed with these strong willed teachers. The predominately female loosely organized teaching force, could not achieve fulfillment of the dream of manifest destiny on their own, but the creation of the Common, or public, Schools in the 1830's provided a path for future success. With the help of such educational leaders as Samuel Lewis, the first state secretary of education; the text book publishers; and text book authors such as William H. McGuffey the New England ideal spread throughout the state using the Common School as the official institution for the effort. History has supported the claims of victory as remnants of the New England culture can still be found today in the public schools.