The Midwest's New American Mother:

The Story of Coeducation at the Valparaiso Male and Female College

Olivia Tambrini

otambrini@gmail.com, (703) 640-4565

Valparaiso University

Class of 2025

Honor Code: I have neither given nor received nor have I tolerated unauthorized aid. *Olivia Tambrini*

In 1861, John Stephens and his second wife Clarissa moved their family from Lockport, Indiana to Valparaiso, Indiana with John's seventeen-year-old son James, fourteen-year-old daughter Lizzie, and nine-year-old daughter Belle.[1] They likely made this move for a few reasons to give their children an opportunity to attend the Valparaiso Male and Female College (VMFC).[2] The VMFC was a fine institution, educating both men and women across disciplines. The eldest daughter Lizzie, in particular, has a rich surviving historical record that showcases the values and mission of the VMFC at play. She was born on September 18, 1847 in Lockport and passed on October 12, 1937 in California. In 1866, during her senior year at the VMFC, nineteen-year old Lizzie B. Stephens was on the Classical Preparatory Collegiate path.[3] This means that she was completing a nine-year course of study of arithmetic, language arts, and exercises in Greek and Latin to pursue a career in education. Considering her long course of study, she was likely ready to finish up her degree and begin teaching soon. In the mornings, she would probably leave her family's house and head to her classes.[4] On the agenda for the first term: the Epistles and Satires of Horace, works of Alexander Hamilton, Dana's Geology, and Shaw's History of English Literature.[5] In class, she might chat with her peers, both men and women. Some of the gentlemen sat in their seats, trying to forget the horrors of their service in the Civil War. A couple of them even smoked and chewed dark, strong tobacco that stuck to the floors and stung everyone's nostrils.[6] The women, having the space to do so in an institution like this, discussed the new social movements and ideologies appearing throughout the nation, as well as catching each other

---

[1]John Stephens, "1870 United States Federal Census" (NARA microfilm publication M593, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), 135A.
[2] C.A. Brooke, "Valparaiso Male and Female College," *Weekly Republican* (Plymouth, IN), April 11, 1861.
[3] Valparaiso University, "Old School Catalog 1866-67, Annual Catalog", *Old School Catalogs (1859-1924)*, 5.
[4] Family and student housing could be rented from the institution in 1866 for $1.50 ($53.74 today) to $2.25 ($80.62 today) a week, see more details at Valparaiso Male and Female College, "Valparaiso Male and Female College!", advertisement, *Weekly Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 24, 1861.
[5] "Old School Catalog 1866-67, Annual Catalog", 17.
[6] Philological Literary Society of the Valparaiso Male & Female College, "The Monitor (Vol. 1, No. 5)" (1868). *Old School Publications*, 2.

up on matrimonial news. Lizzie would follow the lectures, probably shifting and adjusting the tight belt cinching her shirtwaist, a popular fashion trend amongst her age group. At some point in the week, she may meet with the well-attended Calliopean group, the women's literary society. Her brother co-edited *The Monitor*, the monthly men's literary society publication. Maybe, she helped him with reviewing the satires, the opinion pieces, and any other articles they published. She might have even contributed to *The Echo*, the Calliopean's publication.

In the evening, the family gathered together for supper. Father, home from the planing mill, would greet his family and his adoring wife, the mother to their outstanding children.[7] On Sundays, they go to church and rest thereafter. In spite of the ongoing recovery from civil war and the uncertainty that came with new industrial advances and economic hardships, they lived a stable life. The parents were probably put at ease by the idea that their children, all their children, were receiving a well-rounded education and entering successful careers. When Lizzie married, she was known to support her husband in his position as a reverend for his thirty-year career.[8] She bore five children, two of whom survived childhood. Lizzie was a pillar of her community and of her family, and her life exemplifies the purpose and legacy of the VMFC.

As the Valparaiso Male and Female College embraced women in their educational practices, it was uplifting the concept of New American Motherhood, stemming from the colonial belief of Republican Motherhood. This ideology believed that motherhood was a civic virtue and responsible for creating the next generation of upstanding citizens. In the mid-to-late 19th century, a new kind of Republican Motherhood, what will be coined as New American Motherhood in this paper, ushered white American women into the classroom, and collegiate institutions began to address this new need. The most innovative of these being coeducational

---

[7] John Stephens, "1870 United States Federal Census".
[8] "Former Local Teacher Dies on West Coast," *Vidette-Messenger of Porter County* (Valparaiso, Indiana), Nov. 15, 1937.

colleges. Accordingly, the Northwest Indiana Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church formed a college that invited not only men but also women to take part in a complete, thorough educational and intellectual experience. Henceforth, the Valparaiso Male and Female College (1859-1871) came into existence. Scholarship, however, fails to include the Midwestern coeducational institutions that made these radical strides in women's educational experience, focusing more on Northeastern women's colleges. This paper expands into the study of nineteenth-century women's education by uplifting the stories of Midwestern women in a coeducational institution. Moreover, this paper dissects the cultural context of women at the Valparaiso Male and Female College; and, in doing so, it explores how this new opportunity gave women a voice in the social and political machine, especially as the nation entered the Progressive Era and 20th century. The New American Mother, educated at a coeducational college, was indeed a woman rearing children for their success, her own success, and the success of future women.

Republican Motherhood characterized the ideal 18th century American woman. Once women were allowed to enter college classrooms, the concept evolved into the idea of New American Motherhood. The term "Republican Motherhood" was popularized by historian Linda Kerber's 1976 article "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment - An American Perspective".[9] In this article, Kerber defines Republican Motherhood under the notion that this was women's political role in the birth of the United States.[10] It is comparable to the "Spartan Mother," as Kerber describes, who raised their sons dedicated to the good of the *polis*.[11] Good character begins in a domestic upbringing of civic virtue, with an emphasis on duty to one's

[9] Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment--An American Perspective", *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187–205.
[10] Kerber 187
[11] 187

national identity. Upstanding women make upstanding mothers, and these mothers raise upstanding children. Likewise, Republican Mothers had a civic duty to the republic to raise worthy citizens.[12]A change occurred, however, in the mid-to-late 19th century when white American women, with the financial means to do so, entered the world of higher education. But, how exactly did this change the role of the Republican Motherhood? What impacts did women's emergence into higher education have on the American educational system? Coeducation, in particular, was a radical new structure that impacted this shift. Historians have contextualized the shift from Republican Motherhood to New American Motherhood differently over the past century. But, the study lacks two essential components: first, it has lacked the term to describe this change and, second, it has often failed to include the stories of Midwestern coeducational schools making major strides in this crucial part of American women's history.

Since the early 20th century, scholars have explored the context for the emergence of women into higher education, both its origins and its influence on American women. Discourse centers around, specifically, the religious, cultural, social, and economic implications of this historic moment. This conversation, in all its variety, however, finds itself focused on the Northeastern context of women in higher education and fails to define this significant shift from Republican Motherhood to New American Motherhood, as this paper coins it. Even though many early women's seminaries and colleges were established in New England, the first coeducational experiment occurred in the Midwest; and, furthermore, a majority of the first coed institutions founded themselves on Midwest soil. The waves of conversation around 19th century women's higher education in the United States demonstrates that this conversation lacks an inclusion of the coeducational schools established in the Midwest, which were arguably a more radical and impactful display of women's emergence into higher education. Moreover, this

[12] 198

inclusion brings New American Motherhood to the surface as a definition of this important culture shift.

The earliest modern study on the history of women's education can be traced to the appropriately titled 1929 book *A history of women's education in the United States* by Thomas Woody.[13] In his publication, Woody measures the evolution of American women's education by considering the social and political context that shaped each wave—emphasizing the colonial, Puritan roots of such history i.e. Republican Motherhood as it would later be defined. Woody was a progressive scholar for his time, and much of his writing holds up today. However, he fails to acknowledge the full scope of racial and ethnic nuances intertwined in these historic moments, as Maxine Schwartz Seller recounts in her 1989 book review.[14] Seller's review also suggests that Woody's classic literature fails to provide a chronological account of women's education. Instead, he employs a topical account. This categorizes the book as invaluable for scholars investigating the latter account in the study of women's education over time. In addition to this, again, his writing argues for the colonial roots of Republican Motherhood and thus discusses women's colleges in New England. The coeducational institutions of the Midwest are briefly mentioned, but nothing is particularly hard-hitting about this discussion. It seems as though, in Woody's book, coeducation is nearly a tiny part of the larger picture—which is realistically certainly not the case. Yet, in its nearly 800 pages of survey, Woody's book remained the most

---

[13] Thomas Woody, *A history of women's education in the United States* (The Science Press, 1929).
[14] For more on second wave feminism scholarship on women's collegiate education and Republican Motherhood, see Jill K. Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1974): 1–12; Sarah Elbert, "The Changing Education of American Women," *Current History* 70, no. 416 (1976): 220–34; Carol K. Coburn, "The Case Against Coeducation: An Historical Perspective," *Feminist Teacher* 3, no. 3 (1988): 19–22; Maxine Schwartz Seller, Review of A History of Women's Education in the United States: Thomas Woody's Classic. Sixty Years Later, by Thomas Woody, *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1989): 95–107; Linda Eisenmann, "Reconsidering a Classic: Assessing the History of Women's Higher Education a Dozen Years After Barbara Solomon," *Harvard Educational Review* 67, no. 4 (1997): 689-717; and, Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (1997): 171–91.

highly acclaimed literature in the field until the 1970s and 1980s; in this literature, second wave feminist historians investigated the underlying patriarchal context and impact of women's higher education in American women's social role.

Second wave feminism sparked new thought into the historical study of women's education, uncovering the impact of said education on women's social standing. Second wave feminism is characterized by the sociopolitical movement of the 1970s and 1980s, when women across the United States organized for the reform of sexual politics. Linda Kerber's scholarship would fit under this movement. Sarah Elbert was also a feminist historian writing at this time. In her 1976 article "The Changing Education of American Women", she studies the impact of women's education on the societal role of women. The article widely views this change through the shifting sexual division of labor in industrial America and the new kind of domesticity that emerged. More women were becoming the breadwinners in the absence of their late husbands., Elbert's socioeconomic analysis presents fascinating ideas in this area of study, but her work primarily focuses on the students at women's colleges in New England throughout the 18th and 19th century. But, in her writing, the Midwest is entirely absent and these 19th century women are still confined to the concept of Republican Motherhood. However, Jill Conway, another prominent second-wave feminist scholar, actually includes the prospect of coeducation in her 1974 paper "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States". She accomplished this by referencing the establishment and impact of Oberlin College, the oldest coeducational liberal arts college in the United States, located in Oberlin, Ohio. So, there is evidence that the Midwestern context and coeducation were discussed at this time, but the scholarship is still lacking. Even today, in a modern context, the majority of literature about the

history of 19th-century women's higher education utilizes subjects on the East Coast and confines them to 18th century ideals of womanhood and motherhood.

Today, historians study women's higher education through the lens of socioeconomics and cultural change.[15] Socioeconomic studies of this topic emphasize that the post-war United States saw a loss of fathers and sons, the breadwinners of the familial structure. Especially in the new market system established in the Second Industrial Revolution, money-making and education were crucial for American citizens.[16] Some widows found stability in Civil War pensions, but as scholar Laura Salisbury articulates, "the process of applying for pensions was costly and time consuming" for these women.[17] Many of them, additionally, did not seek remarrying. Thus, women were obtaining enough funds to live stably as widows rather than finding another man to provide income. This paper emphasizes, however, the idea that the marriage market was bleak. Rather than uplifting this new economic prosperity of women, Salisbury seems to showcase how the statute of marriage changed in a negative light. While this is just an interpretation, it can also be interpreted that a new economic climb was beneficial rather than a burden to the prospect of marriage. This is especially beneficial for the new American Mother, who was already gaining a great deal of autonomy by entering colleges. The power of the matriarch to transform her world amidst the change of a post-war nation is truly notable. Therefore, the marriage market may have been bleak, but at least women were allowed

---

[15] For more contemporary scholarship on women's collegiate education and Republican Motherhood, see Sarah Robbins,"'The Future Good and Great of Our Land': Republican Mothers, Female Authors, and Domesticated Literacy in Antebellum New England," *The New England Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2002): 562–91; Catherine Villanueva Gardner, "Heaven-Appointed Educators of Mind: Catharine Beecher and the Moral Power of Women," *Hypatia* 19, no. 2 (2004): 1–16; Linda M. Perkins, Review of Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840 by Margaret A. Nash, *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2007): 254–56; Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Laura Salisbury, "Women's Income and Marriage Markets in the United States: Evidence from the Civil War Pension." *The Journal of Economic History* 77, no. 1 (2017): 1–38.

[16] Jewel Smith, "Introduction," in *Transforming Women's Education: Liberal Arts and Music in Female Seminaries* (University of Illinois Press, 2019), 7.

[17] Salisbury, "Women's Income and Marriage Markets in the United States", 7

some deal of independence. There are stronger examples of scholarship about this post-war cultural evolution, but again, it focuses on a New England context rather than a Midwestern one. As the VMFC's story illustrates, new cultural strides were not just occurring along the Atlantic coast.

Another modern example detailing American women's educational experience is scholar Jewel Smith's 2019 book *Transforming Women's Education: Liberal Arts and Music in Female Seminaries*. Smith provides here a contemporary, profound, and intriguing look into women's higher education at liberal arts colleges and women's colleges in the 19th century.[18] Smith's book surveys a cultural and social scope into this topic, emphasizing that well-rounded curricula and intellectual extracurricular activities empowered women to find their voice in male-dominated American social life. However, once again, she focuses on single-sex schools in New England. Certainly, these are important histories to tell, but these well-rounded curricula and intellectual extracurricular activities for women were happening in coed institutions in the Midwest as well. These experiences were just as valuable and even more radical than the ones occurring in single-sex, Northeastern colleges. As scholars have surveyed the religious, cultural, social, and economic foundation of the rise in women's higher education initiatives, they have showcased the uplifting of American women's intellectual voice. While these interpretations are valid, a portion of the story is missing. Discussing Midwestern coeducational institutions and coining New American Motherhood can fill that gap of insight and scholarship.

The implications of 19th century women's education can be traced through a complex web of historical events and ideas, but the interpretations' common thread is the prospect of New American Motherhood. By entering colleges and receiving official degrees, women across the country were making revolutionary strides in their social leverage and given a platform to shine

[18] Jewel Smith, "Introduction," in *Transforming Women's Education*, 7.

in broader intellectual conversations. Unfortunately, however, the stories of the landmark coeducational school of the Midwest have been glazed over. These women deserve to have their voices heard and stories told. By looking through the archives, collections, and histories of the institutions that made the radical choice to educate men and women across disciplines, these narratives can be uncovered. Looking into these Midwestern women's stories is a step into a more well-rounded study. Just as the women of New England became stronger civic forces through college education, so did the women in the innovative Midwestern schools of the 19th century.

American expansion and notions of New American Motherhood made possible the creation of coeducational institutions in the Midwest. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 chartered the Midwest and called for the pursuit of virtue through education. The Ordinance was a geopolitical force as it gave prospective institutions funds and land to build schools. Article 3 of the Ordinance declares, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged".[19] Thus, the Ordinance charged these new states to establish noble institutions, and several Christian denominations took the charge: the Catholic church with, most notably, Notre Dame and the Methodist church with schools like the VMFC. Of course, the Ordinance was built on a flawed, colonizer ideology, but education for women can be a perceived benefit of this Ordinance. After all, the VMFC was established through this legislation and invited both women and men to take part in this patriotic and intellectual opportunity. Coeduction was a radical step into the future of American society, and thousands have reaped the benefits of this movement over the centuries.

---

[19] See "An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North-West of the River Ohio," the Northwest Ordinance was adopted on July 13, 1787, by the Confederation Congress, the one-house legislature operating under the Articles of Confederation" https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/northwest-ordinance.

The Valparaiso Male and Female College probes the question of what exactly is in a name. Meaning, "Male *and* Female College" was not only a direct invitation to women but it was also an invitation to the prospect of coeducation. The VMFC was not an experiment of coeducation, but rather it was a mission. The United States sought the pursuit of independence, civic virtue, and economic reform after the horrors of war. War divides families, communities, and social spheres, and reconstructing these areas was crucial for the good of the nation. By uplifting a new demographic of citizens, women, great strides could be made. Here enters New American Motherhood. While scholarship and archival records leave many gaps in the history of the institution, the records that do remain attest to a commitment to providing a well-rounded and thorough educational and intellectual opportunity for men *and* women.

In the fall of 1859, the Valparaiso Male and Female College opened its doors. John L. Smith was a notable Methodist pastor and elder who oversaw the growth of the Methodist-Episcopal church throughout Indiana.[20] In his 1892 book *Indiana Methodism,* he outlines the church's efforts to establish colleges in Northwest Indiana. He writes that the Northwest Indiana Conference of the Methodist-Episcopal Church worked tirelessly to plan "a great university in Indiana"[21] Amongst these efforts, the Valparaiso Male and Female College came into existence alongside what is known today as DePauw University. The Valparaiso College, as it was called in Smith's book, sought to educate men and women, just as the order of nature demanded. The Conference felt it was their divine duty to allow men and women to learn in a coeducational environment.[22] It was according to the natural order of things to bring men and women together for the pursuit of learning. The press raved of the school's success and

[20] Nettie Dowdell Williams, *Valparaiso Male and Female College, Northern Indiana Normal School, Valparaiso College, University of Valparaiso: Their Histories and Influence*, 1, 20th century, booklet, Porter County Museum.
[21] John L. Smith, "Indianapolis District" in *Indiana Methodism* (Valparaiso Ind.:J. L. Smith), 232
[22] Smith, "Chapter XXII", 262

virtue. An 1861 column from *The Plymouth Democrat* notably commends the "flourishing" institution and its beautiful campus, and others followed suit.[23] Through and through, the institution was making strides in the mission of coeducation and in uplifting women's intellectual and educational capabilities. The school purchased land, constructed a temporary hall, and on September 21, 1859, 75 students attended the first day of courses within its 3 departments, taught by 6 faculty members.[24] From then on, enrollment rose to 157 students, with 327 following the next year.[25] The Valparaiso Male and Female College, once an idea, now had put its name on the map, serving its community and beyond with well-rounded education for men and women, as depicted in its curriculum, staff, and student experience.

The VMFC catalogs for each school year outlined its mission to provide a practical study of education for men and women alike. These curriculum catalogs are lengthy, dense, and complex to the modern eye. Upon exploring them, it is easy to get in the weeds and grow confused about how these programs worked without a guidance counselor from the 1860s to help readers out. Also, the 1861-1864 catalogs are missing from the archival record, and studying the curriculum cannot accommodate for every year of the VMFC's existence. Alas, what can be drawn from the catalogs is an illustration of the college's commitment to well-rounded coeducational practices and glimpses of New American Motherhood at play. Each catalog listed its student body by name, men and women both. The institution contained three departments that expanded to have different paths over time: the Normal/Primary, Preparatory, and the Collegiate Departments. The Normal Department, or Primary Department as it was briefly known, educated its students in the theory and practice of teaching.[26] This encompassed a short, two-year degree

[23] "Local and Miscellaneous" *The Plymouth Democrat* (Plymouth, Indiana), July 18, 1861.
[24] Williams, *Their Histories and Influence,* 3.
[25] Williams, *Their Histories and Influence,* 2
[26] It should be noted that it seems that the school also had a Primary Department that supposedly educated primary school students. This was likely used as a form of practicum for education students or as a placeholder for the future

program and taught students first and second grade pedagogy. The Preparatory Department began as a four-year program but later provided a two-or-three year program when the English and Classical paths were included. Traditionally, preparatory departments were programs that could directly prepare students for a collegiate program.[27] The Collegiate Department was a four-year program that included exercises in Greek and Latin, as well as essay and oratory seminars in the junior and senior year. Supplementary mini-departments also appeared over time. An Academic Department was even added in 1867 to accommodate students who perhaps did not have enough preparation for the Collegiate level in their "common schooling".[28] It also opened up the opportunity to dip into the Normal Department or to take the business courses newly offered at the time. Why this addition of the Academic Department? Besides helping students that might be behind the Collegiate level, it was also an adapted degree program that took less time, which may seem necessary if pursuing a complete Collegiate degree takes nine years in total.

In its entirety, a full VMFC education was a commitment. If the students chose to study in every department (study in the Collegiate Department), the program took students nine years to complete. A nine-year course of study seems overly ambitious, but this was not uncommon. It is noted by the late scholar Iran Cassim Mohsenin that the age structure for college at the time was significantly lower than what the 21st century mindset would expect. Using data from the neighboring DePauw University's 1850-1859 graduating classes, students graduating from collegiate departments have ages falling between 23.8 and 22.1 years.[29] This was likely the case for the VMFC as well, making students in nine-year programs as young as thirteen upon their

---

elementary schools in Porter County once they had building to learn in, but not much literature details this feature, so it is difficult to draw conclusions about

[27] Iran Cassim Mohsenin, "Note on Age Structure of College Students" *History of Education Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1983): 495.

[28] "Old School Catalog 1867-68, Annual Catalog", 13.

[29] Mohsenin 495

entrance into college.[30] Still, it is reasonable to assume that non-traditional students—people with jobs and mothers—might want the option to pursue a shorter course of study. The Academic Department, and other departments, grew out of the necessity to accommodate these individuals.

As the Academic Department was introduced in 1867, the Collegiate Department's English branch oversaw a change as well. It distinctly noted in its 1867 description that the branch was specially adapted for "young ladies who desire a liberal education without devoting as much time to Latin, Greek, and higher mathematics".[31] Now, this is not a critique of women's intellectual capabilities. This was likely changed for students looking to finish their studies quickly to pursue a career or for women seeking short seasonal study to improve their skills for the teaching job they already hold.[32] The Academic Department was no different in function. It can also be interpreted that these shortened studies could encourage the prospect of New American Motherhood. Young women need to study, but they also need to marry and bear children to share this new knowledge with. As women saw fit to be educated and be a new American Mother, programs adapted with her. Accommodations were made for students and their parents, but certainly newly-wed students and their children could live in these accommodations as well. Better yet, the quality of these courses of study remained the same: thorough, well-rounded, and flexible. At the VMFC, women were not solely subject to domestic-focused learning or ornamental programs like music and men were not subject to more "practical" subjects for the working world. Nothing barred its students from study across

---

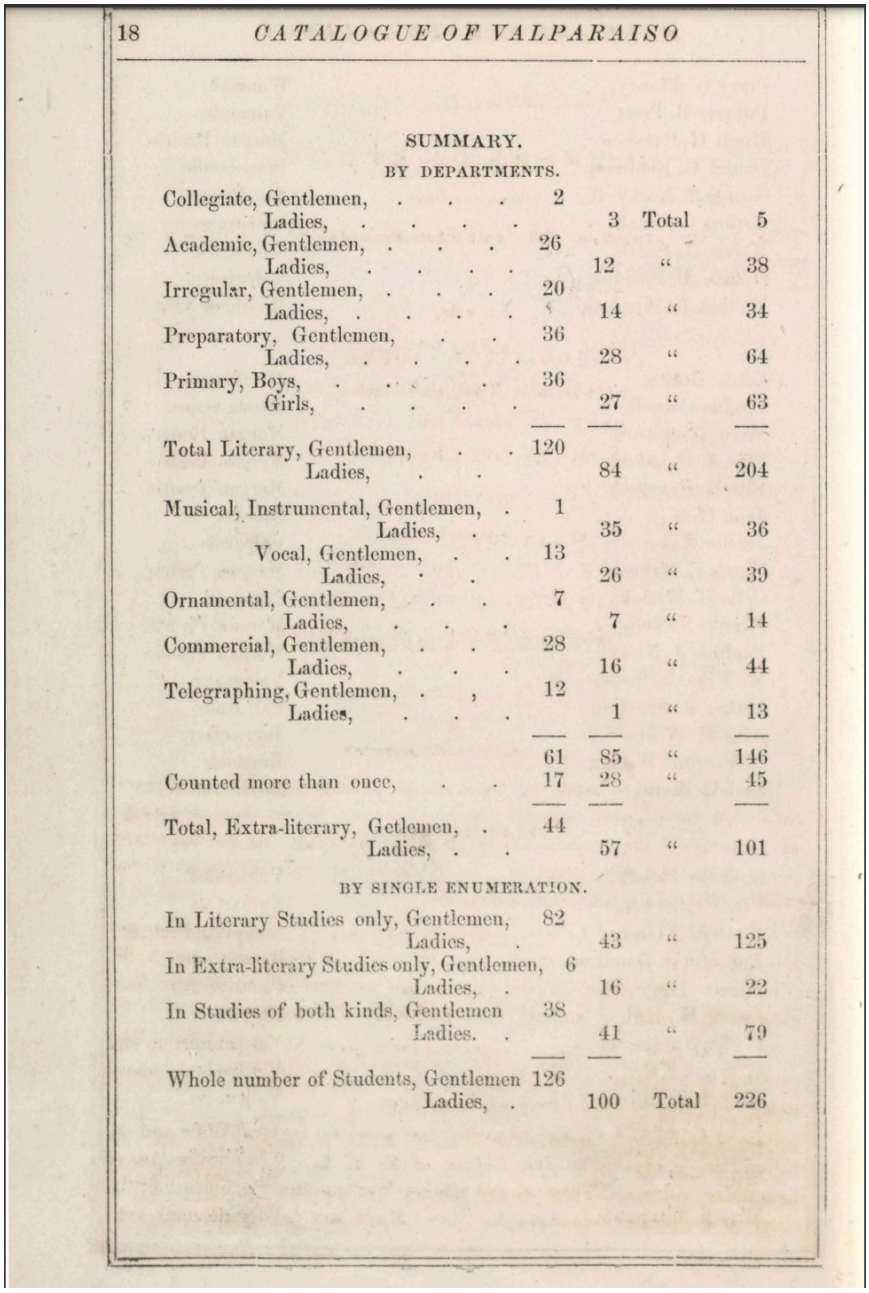
[30] Mohsenin's other data proves this was common practice for the last two millennia, anyway. However, as the 20th century rolled around, administrators found that the pressure of college might be too drastic for these young people, and the concept of a "high school education", modeled after the German idea of Gymnasium, rose to fruition.Gymnasium is the most advanced secondary school of the three types in Germany: Hauptschule, Realschule, and Gymnasium. Gymnasium is more preparatory-focused. Hauptschule provides student with below average grades a quality education at a slower pace than Gymnasium. Realschule is a vocational education that sets students up with an apprenticeship. The modern American high school was inspired by Gymnasium, as Mohsenin explains.

[31] "Old School Catalog 1867-68, Annual Catalog", 13.

[32] "Old School Catalog 1865-66, Annual Catalog", 20.

disciplines. In the beginning, there was only one liberal arts program with three paths, but as the VFMC grew, the school added supplementary "extraliterary" programs in music, ornamental programs, and business.

The VMFC did indeed grow and shift its curriculum, but it still held fast to its interdisciplinary, all-encompassing mission. The numbers speak to this; the array of students in each program is fascinating to examine. The 1868-69 catalog summarizes the students in each department and program (see Figure 1). Two features stand out: one, the relative balance of men and women distributed across the departments and, two, the minimum number of men and women across the departments. The average number of students in each department is 25 students total, with an average of 19 men and 16 women in each. The minimum number of both men and women is 1, one man in the Musical Instrumental program and one woman in the Telegraphing program. In spite of this, it is clear the literary and extraliterary departments are relatively balanced with a few exceptions. The outliers demonstrate that, even if numbers of men or women are low, students could still participate across disciplines. For the sake of New American Motherhood, this showcases some of the new agency and power women had. The Faculty of the VMFC was even exemplary of including women in coeducation classrooms, with both men and women teaching.



18 CATALOGUE OF VALPARAISO

SUMMARY.

BY DEPARTMENTS.

Collegiate, Gentlemen,	2			
Ladies,		3	Total	5
Academic, Gentlemen,	26			
Ladies,		12	"	38
Irregular, Gentlemen,	20			
Ladies,		14	"	34
Preparatory, Gentlemen,	36			
Ladies,		28	"	64
Primary, Boys,	36			
Girls,		27	"	63
Total Literary, Gentlemen,	120			
Ladies,		84	"	204
Musical, Instrumental, Gentlemen,	1			
Ladies,		35	"	36
Vocal, Gentlemen,	13			
Ladies,		26	"	39
Ornamental, Gentlemen,	7			
Ladies,		7	"	14
Commercial, Gentlemen,	28			
Ladies,		16	"	44
Telegraphing, Gentlemen,	12			
Ladies,		1	"	13
	61	85	"	146
Counted more than once,	17	28	"	45
Total, Extra-literary, Getlemen,	44			
Ladies,		57	"	101

BY SINGLE ENUMERATION.

In Literary Studies only, Gentlemen,	82			
Ladies,		43	"	125
In Extra-literary Studies only, Gentlemen,	6			
Ladies,		16	"	22
In Studies of both kinds, Gentlemen	38			
Ladies.		41	"	79
Whole number of Students, Gentlemen	126			
Ladies,		100	Total	226

Figure 1: Summary[33]

[33] "Old School Catalog 1868-69, Annual Catalog", 18.

Throughout time, women and men both made up the faculty in the VMFC. Something to point out is that, in early catalogs, men are regarded as professors and women as teachers. This might imply a certain dynamic. Some of the men held the title of reverend, which might warrant the title of professor, but later on this changed. This language seems more vague in catalogs after 1865, and some reverends are regarded as teachers. So, possibly this had to do with whether they were full-time or part-time faculty instead of a ranking system. Still, it is not clear enough to know. Nevertheless, men and women were educators in the VMFC. This is yet another example of New American Motherhood. Certainly these women might have been mothers, but they were strong women figures in academia in their own right. The leverage of women into college goes beyond who was sitting in the desks. Looking at the story of Rhoda Bates, educator in Mathematics, illustrates this.

Rhoda Bates was a graduate of the VMFC in 1864, earning a Master of Arts (A.M. as it is defined at the VMFC). As it is noted, she taught mathematics to VMFC students.[34] Archival records also show that she married the superintendent of Porter County school and helped establish new schools. Born March 4, 1845 in Porter County, Indiana and passing away at the age of 40 on December 11, 1885, she is noted in the 1870 census as a teacher and in the 1880 census as a housekeeper.[35] 1880 is nine years after the VMFC closure, and she was likely suffering from poor neurological health.[36] But, her husband was able to carry on their legacy after her passing. The local newspaper, the Vidette-Messenger, notes the two met at “the Methodist college” or the VMFC. She encouraged him to become the superintendent of Porter

[34] "Old School Catalog 1868-69, Annual Catalog", 5.
[35] Rhoda Bates, “1870 United States Federal Census” (NARA microfilm publication M593, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).
[36]There is reason to believe this, as her granddaughter passed away from Huntington's chorea, a rare, inherited brain and nervous system disorder that begins exhibiting symptoms in a person’s 30s and 40s. If the person exhibits symptoms in their 20s, their death comes quickly thereafter. Her granddaughter, named Rhoda Rannells after her grandmother, passed away at the age of 28 in 1929. Mabel, Bates’ daughter, died at the age of 82 from an unknown cause of death, but likely passed the gene to Rannells and did not suffer herself.

County schools, in spite of his youth. This launched his career that spanned decades, a career with a rich local history and legacy. Her very place at the VMFC impacted the education of the school and of her community. Sadly, with declining health, her story was cut short and lived on with the success of her husband. As mentioned, she taught mathematics, a STEM subject. She too was a pillar of her community and exemplified the mission and legacy of the VMFC. The students were students of esteem, and life at school on campus and extracurricular activities further spotlighted the high esteem the students, men and women, were held at.

The students were held to a high standard and often rigorous studies, according to how the catalogs illustrate the government of students. But, how serious was this government? It is interesting to compare the expectations of students in the catalogs to the words put out by the student body in their publications. It is described that monitoring and governing of students is constructed under a "parental" responsibility and that is designed to be "preventative" and "corrective".[37] It can be inferred that this means parents have the final word on a student's conduct. Next, it expounds upon the school's action in response. The catalog describes the punishment in response as not "wanting to correct the evil." Perhaps, this means the punishment will not equate to the crime, unless the parents declare otherwise. However, it is again hard to draw a complete conclusion from this confusing wording. Nonetheless, students were encouraged to exercise self-respect, and improper order would be swiftly dealt with. It is curious to think whether these words were written for the peace of parents' minds or if they were strictly held rules. The students' literary society activities and publications, on the other hand, may give a glimpse into student conduct. While the catalogs claim men and women will be separated from one another, it is recorded that students had lots of interaction with one another. So, maybe monitoring was mild, since students knew how to conduct themselves well. After all, their

[37] "Old School Catalog 1867-68, Annual Catalog", 21.

commitment to community and intellect are evidence. The students' extracurricular activities showcase student prowess and intellectual prosperity better than mere numbers and course descriptions in the catalogs. Students had an outlet through these resources to engage in social, political, and intellectual discussion. Additionally, much like the salons and clubs that allowed open conversation for women, these resources gave leverage to women's voices. In doing so, hard conversations could be had and, from there, these groups could find movements and initiatives for change.

The literary societies and the student publications gave students the opportunity to express themselves freely with like-minded young people in a coeducational setting and in settings segregated by gender. The literary societies found its roots in The Philomatheon, a flourishing group composed of men and women students.[38] Later, these evolved into The Philological for men and The Calliopean for women. While it may seem like separating the literary societies would not be constructive for gender politics, it likely empowered women to speak their minds and work together in a safer space. Mary Kelley, in her book *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*, illustrates that these groups encouraged the elevation of mind and eloquence in "civil society."[39] She states:

> In these settings, as in literary societies at female academies and seminaries, women addressed the larger meanings of the knowledge they were pursuing, practiced the art of persuasive self-presentation, and instructed themselves in the values and vocabularies of civil society.[40]

Without men, women had the opportunity to practice the rites and rituals of an upstanding citizen of civil society. Better yet, women worked alongside each other to brave this new social role. Having safe spaces such as these are empowering, and it is reasonable to believe these women

[38] "Old School Catalog 1859-60, Annual Catalog", 15.
[39] Mary Kelley describes civil society as, "to include any and all publics except those dedicated to the organized politics constituted in political parties and elections to local, state, and national office" in *Learning to Stand and Speak,* "Introduction", 5
[40] Kelley,"Introduction", 14

developed a strong sense of sisterhood together. The new American Mother was now a pillar of her family and of her fellow women, who could work together to advance their societal role. *The Monitor*, the Philological's monthly publication, even reports on potentially *the Calliopean's* own publication. An 1868 article discusses the women's society's exhibition of their writings and of *The Echo*, "a society paper".[41] Not only were women engaging in discussion, they were publishing their thoughts and writings. They were also presenting their works and talents to a public audience. Sadly, no record of *the Echo* lives in the Valparaiso University Archives and Special Collections. The only record surviving of this publication is in the words of *The Monitor*. Nevertheless, *the Monitor* captures a glimpse into student life at the VMFC and showcases the cultural shifts occurring as a result of women entering the college classroom.

The two surviving issues of *The Monitor* offer a profound display of the student body's thoughts, questions, and conversations about the world around them. They published prose, satires, opinion pieces, local business advertisements, and reports of student activities and campus happenings. The women are mentioned several times in a seemingly supportive light. A notable article is the 1868 *The Monitor*'s report of "The Calliopean Exhibition". The author here reviews a presentation given by the Calliopean women of their literary writing and of musical performances. To begin, the author complimented the fine entertainment the women provided. Then, the author described the women's appearances, noticing they all wore lace and gauze instead of one woman who wore calico.[42] This is an odd thing to point out, the women's dressing, because why would the men care about how the women are dressed? Is this a critique of their physical presentation? In some ways, yes. It can be assumed this comment is added to introduce their critique of the women's elocution. But, this critique is not one of the women's capabilities,

[41] "The Monitor (Vol. 1, No. 5)" (1868), 5.
[42] "The Monitor (Vol. 1, No. 5)" (1868), 5.

but of the conventional ways in which women are taught in comparison to men. In a profound statement, he writes, “We protest against that conventionalism which thus mars the finest performances by forbidding declamation to ladies.” The author fought back against convention, calling on the freedom of expression of women. Perhaps, he wanted them to be confident and articulate in their arguments, just as the men are encouraged. The “conventionalism” was maybe the lack of preparation of women for exercise in “civil society” as explained by Kelley earlier. Even though the women could practice the rites and rituals of civil society, they might not have had the confidence to act so eloquently; they might have still felt pressured to remain quiet in their declamation from expectations before a time of New American Motherhood. In accordance with this interpretation, it is unsurprising that the author adds that the women’s opening greeting was “feelingly pronounced” but lacking in confidence. When some women read essays, the author congratulated their writing but critiqued their elocution. Even Lizzie Stephens’ little sister Belle presented an essay, but it was also met with the same constructive criticism. Did the men truly uphold this push against conventionalism? Were they being facetious? How did the groups view each other? It is unclear in this article. Still, it is fair to argue that they interacted a lot with one another and seemed relatively supportive of each other. The 1869 publication even proposed a union of the “Callios” and the “Philoes”, wherein they proposed the societies to publish a collaborative periodical that combined the resources and abilities of both.[43] The author quoted, “In union there is strength.” This quote pinpointed the power of coeducation. The union of men and women in higher education was revolutionary and it is a story that should be told. So, perhaps the students were often civil with each other and supported their peers, regardless of gender. In the end, they coexisted with one another, seemingly happily with each others’ presence. Plus, the student catalogs are detailed with many local advertisements. Campus was

[43] "The Monitor (Vol. 1, No. 6)" (1869), 2.

relatively close to the bustling downtown area where these businesses operated, so students likely went together on several outings to restaurants, parks, and shops. Aside from this, the publications demonstrate the supportive community of students and the leverage of women in private and public circles. New American Motherhood sought the elevation of women's educational and intellectual capabilities. This effort was not lost in the interactions amongst students of the Valparaiso Male and Female College and the day-to-day happenings of the school, even as the school abruptly closed after twelve years of existence.

In 1871, because of funding restraints, the Valparaiso Male and Female College had to close its doors. The 1869-70 catalog showcases that what the school had advanced in department and curriculum, they had not gained in increased enrollment.[44] As seen previously, the school operated with several new departments in the last three years of its existence. But, numbers stabilized between 200-300 students enrolled each year. This was not sustainable for funding or, therefore, for expansion. So, the school shut down. The buildings stood vacant, as it was the board's final wish to designate the campus for educational purposes only. All that lived in the deserted buildings was the memory of flourishing students, both men and women, pursuing education for the good of the nation. As the school had intended, it prepared hundreds of women for economic and social advancement. These women would eventually become mothers and people in the working world and community. But, the VMFC had equipped them with a quality, thorough, and well-rounded education. Lizzie, Rhoda, and others—their work is etched into the saga of history, as their names remain listed in the school catalogs and in their periodical articles. A coeducational mission had succeeded, and these women had the diplomas to affirm this. Though the school only had a twelve-year run, its history will henceforth not go unnoticed. The development of its successor, the Northern Indiana Normal School, is a testament to its strength

[44] Williams, *Their Histories and Influence,* 4.

and legacy. In 1873, Henry Baker Brown—whose name lives on as one part of Valparaiso University's modern-day school colors—caught wind of this deserted campus and revived the school under its new name. From then on, it was regarded as the "Poor Man's Harvard" and has continually touched the lives of thousands of alumni since then. What began as an exercise of coeducation and New American Motherhood has echoed into a lasting, venerable institutional history—the memory is preserved in Valparaiso University today.

The Valparaiso Male and Female College has a history that has not been deeply investigated until now. This is a true shame, as it stands as one of the first coeducational institutions in the United States. Under the movement of New American Motherhood, women had an even more advanced role in the political and social machine. The skills they gained at schools that were pursuing this new type of ideology gave way for a new generation of educated, virtuous, and intellectual women. It is not as if they never had the capability to succeed in a higher education context. Instead, up until this time, they did not have the means to do so. The conversations already happening in the parlors of women across America were elevated through their college careers. Clear strides were made at the VMFC in the rights of women and in the evolution of education. Now, it is not until the mid-20th century that the VMFC's successor admitted people of color. This is a story that has yet to be told, just as the women's story must be. The integration of all-inclusive spaces strengthens society rather than ruins it. Without the bravery of the VMFC and other coeducational institutions, this paper may not even be possible, in content or in the authorship. New American Motherhood perfectly encompasses the time between concepts of Republican Motherhood and the Progressive Era, where even more social change—like women's suffrage and labor movements—took place. The entrance of women into higher education is crucial to education as it stands today, especially in regards to the

popularization of coeducation. Lizzie Stephens, Rhoda Bates, and their incredible fellow alumnae are important, even if they are not studying in New England.

Works Cited

"An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States North-West of the River Ohio," the Northwest Ordinance was adopted on July 13, 1787, by the Confederation Congress, the one-house legislature operating under the Articles of Confederation" https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/northwest-ordinance.

"A Crusty One" *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), Sep. 8, 1843.

Baepler, Richard. *Flame of Faith, Lamp of Learning: A History of Valparaiso University*. Concordia Publishing House, 2001.

Bates, Rhoda. "1870 United States Federal Census" (NARA microfilm publication M593, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

Brooke, C.A. "Valparaiso Male and Female College" *Weekly Republican* (Plymouth, IN), April 11, 1861.

Coburn, Carol K. "The Case Against Coeducation: An Historical Perspective." *Feminist Teacher* 3, no. 3 (1988): 19–22.

Conway, Jill K. "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States." *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1974): 1–12.

Eisenmann, Linda. "Reconsidering a Classic: Assessing the History of Women's Higher Education a Dozen Years After Barbara Solomon." *Harvard Educational Review* 67, no. 4 (1997): 689-717.

Elbert, Sarah. "The Changing Education of American Women." *Current History* 70, no. 416 (1976): 220–34.

"Elizabeth Bradshaw Stephens" Geni.com, last updated May 13, 2018, https://www.geni.com/people/Elizabeth-Stephens/6000000000195958229.

"Female Education and the Duties of the Female Sex" *Vermont Intelligencer* (Bellows Falls, Vermont), April 28, 1817;

"Former Local Teacher Dies on West Coast," *Vidette-Messenger of Porter County* (Valparaiso, Indiana), Nov 15, 1937.

Kelley, Mary. *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Kerber, Linda. "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment--An American Perspective." *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187–205.

"Local and Miscellaneous" *The Plymouth Democrat* (Plymouth, Indiana), July 18, 1861.

Mohsenin, Iran Cassim. "Note on Age Structure of College Students." *History of Education Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1983): 491–98.

Nash, Margaret A. "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia." *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (1997): 171–91.

"Page 4," *The Weekly Republican* (Plymouth, Indiana), Oct 24, 1861.

"Pay Honor to Pioneer Head City School," *Vidette-Messenger of Porter County* (Valparaiso, Indiana), Jan. 25, 1929.

Perkins, Linda M. Review of *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840 by Margaret A. Nash*. *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2007): 254–56.

Perry, Elisabeth Israels. "Men Are from the Gilded Age, Women Are from the Progressive Era." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (2002): 25–48.

"Public Lecture" *The Charleston Mercury* (Charleston, South Carolina), April 27, 1826

Robbins, Sarah. "'The Future Good and Great of Our Land': Republican Mothers, Female

Authors, and Domesticated Literacy in Antebellum New England." *The New England Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2002): 562–91.

Salisbury, Laura. "Women's Income and Marriage Markets in the United States: Evidence from the Civil War Pension." *The Journal of Economic History* 77, no. 1 (2017): 1–38.

Seller, Maxine Schwartz. Review of *A History of Women's Education in the United States: Thomas Woody's Classic. Sixty Years Later, by Thomas Woody*. *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1989): 95–107.

Smith, Jewel A. *Transforming Women's Education: Liberal Arts and Music in Female Seminaries.* University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Smith, John L. *Indiana Methodism* (Valparaiso Ind.:J. L. Smith).

Stephens, John. "1870 United States Federal Census" (NARA microfilm publication M593, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), 135A.

Valparaiso Male and Female College, "Valparaiso Male and Female College!", advertisement, *Weekly Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 24, 1861.

Valparaiso University, *Old School Catalogs* (1859-1924), 71-77 https://scholar.valpo.edu/oldschoolcatalogs/.

Williams, Nettie Dowdell. *Valparaiso Male and Female College, Northern Indiana Normal School, Valparaiso College, University of Valparaiso: Their Histories and Influence*. 20th century, booklet, Porter County Museum.

Philological Literary Society of the Valparaiso Male & Female College, *Old School Publications*. 30-31, https://scholar.valpo.edu/oldschoolpubs.