The Athens of the West: Education in Nashville, 1780-1860

Timothy Augustus Sweatman
Western Kentucky University, timothy.sweatman@gmail.com

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THE ATHENS OF THE WEST: EDUCATION IN NASHVILLE, 1780-1860

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
Western Kentucky University
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Master of Arts

by
Timothy Augustus Sweatman

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THE ATHENS OF THE WEST: EDUCATION IN NASHVILLE, 1780-1860

Date Recommended: August 1, 1996

Marvin G. Lucas
Director of Thesis

Charles O. Burrey

Richard L. Brown

Director of Graduate Studies  Date

8/2/96
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Nashville, Tennessee, is known as the Athens of the South because of its reputation as a center of learning. The city's commitment to education goes back to the days of its founding as a village on the extreme Western frontier of the United States. In 1785, five years after Nashville was first settled, Davidson Academy, an advanced classical school, was established. At the same time, numerous private schools operated in the Nashville area, providing many of the region's children with a basic education.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century Nashville moved closer to becoming a major educational center. In 1806 Davidson Academy was rechartered as Cumberland College. Financial problems forced Cumberland College to suspend operation in 1816, but it reopened in 1825 and was rechartered as the University of Nashville the following year. In 1817 the Nashville Female Academy, which by 1860 was the largest and one of the most renowned schools for females in the nation, opened. Other private schools
served Nashville as well; most were simple grammar schools that taught the basics, but some advanced schools operated as well. During the 1820s and 1830s, there were some efforts to establish state supported schools for the poor, but they failed because many poor parents refused to send their children to these "pauper's schools," as the state supported schools were commonly called.

By 1850 Nashville's educational landscape was on the verge of change. Financial difficulties forced the University of Nashville to close in 1850, but in 1855 it resumed operation after merging with the Western Military Institute and flourished until the Civil War. During the 1850s, the Medical Department of the University of Nashville and Shelby Medical College opened. Both schools enjoyed great success, and by 1860 Nashville was second only to Philadelphia as a center of medical learning. Also, during the 1850s Nashville established a successful system of public schools for all the city's children. However, the Civil War would interrupt the city's progress in education.

Despite Nashville's prominence in education, no comprehensive study of the city's antebellum educational development exists. Based on several primary sources, most of which are available in the Tennessee State Library and Archives, and numerous secondary sources dealing with antebellum Nashville, this thesis represents an attempt to describe antebellum Nashville's educational development.
CHAPTER ONE
EDUCATION IN FRONTIER NASHVILLE, 1780-1816

The seeds for Nashville's development as a major center of learning were planted during the period from 1780 to 1816. From the outset, Nashville's founders made the education of their children a high priority. During the settlement's earliest days, educational efforts were frequently hindered by Indian attacks, the distance between students and schools, and a highly mobile population. However, parents, teachers, and students overcame these obstacles, and by the mid-1790s noticeable progress had been made. This progress was noted by Thomas Bailey, an Englishman who passed through Nashville in 1796 or 1797. Bailey, who later served as the first president of the Royal Astronomical Society of London, stated that the town's residents "were rapidly improving in education."\(^1\) During the early years of the nineteenth century Nashville's educational development progressed more rapidly. By 1816 Nashville had a degree-granting college and numerous private schools.

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Education in Eighteenth-Century Nashville

In the years immediately following the founding of Nashville, most children obtained their education informally. Children usually began their education by learning the fundamentals at home. The first step in a child's education, usually led by the mother, was to learn the alphabet. In the typical Cumberland home, that process began when a child was between the ages of two and three. Once children could recite the alphabet and recognize each letter, their mothers gave them basic instruction in reading. Some families had access to Dilworth or other spellers, but many mothers used the Bible or a homemade speller to teach their children to read. Regardless of the type of text used, children first learned to recognize two-letter syllables consisting of every vowel coupled with every consonant. In this way, they learned to read many two-letter words. Young children often learned the simplest arithmetic through chores that required counting and figuring, such as gathering eggs or bringing in wood. By the time most children were ready to go to school, they already possessed a basic educational foundation.

After giving their children a basic education, parents sent them to schools conducted by some of the more educated settlers in the area, often on a part-time basis. Many of

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2Harriette Simpson Arnow, "Education and the Professions in the Cumberland Region," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (hereafter *THQ*) 20 (June 1961), 120-22.
these schoolmasters were preachers who, because they tended to be better educated than the other settlers, had been persuaded to teach a few children. These first schools were usually located within the walls of the fortified stations throughout the region. Here, students first learned to read words with three and four letters; then, syllable by syllable, they learned to read longer words. Once children mastered the reading of words, they were taught to write. Afterward, the study of abbreviations, punctuation, and pronunciation commenced. Students then progressed to grammar and simple math. Few early schools offered more than a rudimentary education. Subjects such as languages, history, the classics, advanced math, and science, which eighteenth-century educational leaders considered to be essential components of a complete education, were rarely taught.

Nashville's frontier schools were conducted informally. Students were taught not by grade level, but individually,

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Anita Shafer Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860: From Frontier to City (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989), 14. Some of these teachers were probably more interested in the additional income they would receive from teaching than in providing their students with a sound education.


Most frontier families viewed the teaching of these subjects as a waste of their children's time because these subjects had no practical value. To them, a complete education was one which provided their children with the skills needed for everyday life in a frontier settlement.
based on their order of arrival at the school. Grades were not given; when students mastered a certain subject they advanced to the next. Most instructors did not provide textbooks; children brought whatever books were available at home. Tuition was relatively low, around ten shillings each quarter, enabling most families to afford at least a few terms. Even so, many schools closed after only one or two terms.

If the need for a school in an area arose, often a resident of that area opened one. James Menees began a school in a cabin on Market Street, near Fort Nashborough, sometime in 1780. Around this time, David Hood started a school, and Andrew Ewing began teaching his own children and a few of his neighbors' children. It is not known how long these schools lasted. Zachariah White, another early teacher, ran a successful school in the French Lick Station until he was killed in an Indian raid early in the spring of 1781. James Mulherrin, one of Davidson County's chief surveyors, also taught part time for several years. Joseph Sitgreaves taught one of the largest schools in the region until his death in 1792. Many of his students came from

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6Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 123.


8Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 122-23.
Nashville's most prestigious families, including the Robertsons, Donelsons, Irwins, Castlemanns, and Armstrongs.\(^9\) These men were not full-time teachers; they taught because their communities needed them to do so.

**Private Education in Early Nineteenth-Century Nashville**

Private schools in early nineteenth-century Nashville differed considerably from the pioneer schools of the late eighteenth century. Until the mid-1790s, the Indian threat prevented most parents from sending their children to school far from home, but around the turn of the century boarding schools began to appear in the area.\(^{10}\) At the same time, grammar schools, commonly referred to as English schools, began teaching the geography and history of the United States. However, these early social studies courses were designed to instill patriotism in students rather than to broaden their education.\(^{11}\) The lengths of academic terms became more uniform, although wide discrepancies continued to exist. Also, full-time teachers for whom education was a career began to replace part-time teachers who did not rely on education to make a living.

Beginning around the turn of the century, academies providing students with an advanced education became common

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 131.
in the Nashville area. Most of these academies probably patterned themselves after Davidson Academy, which had been established in 1785 and was the region's most prestigious school.\textsuperscript{12} In late 1799 or early 1800, a group of citizens, dissatisfied with the leaders of Davidson Academy, established a rival academy called the Federal Seminary. Sometime in June 1800 the new academy merged with Davidson Academy.\textsuperscript{13} Around the same time, George Martin founded Valadolid Academy, which grew so rapidly that by 1801 the closing exercises for the third quarter had to be held over two days to enable all the students to give presentations. This school accepted students at all levels from primer to college preparatory.\textsuperscript{14} Valadolid Academy's scholastic reputation increased so much that in 1805 it became the first private educational institution to be chartered by the state of Tennessee.\textsuperscript{15} Despite its overwhelming success, Valadolid Academy could not quite surpass Davidson Academy in academic reputation, although the former was probably

\textsuperscript{12}For a detailed discussion of Davidson Academy, see pages 12-23 below.

\textsuperscript{13}A. W. Putnam, \textit{History of Middle Tennessee; or, Life and Times of Gen. James Robertson} (Nashville: Printed for the Author, 1859), 645. According to Putnam, the details of the merger were never made public.

\textsuperscript{14}Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 132.

\textsuperscript{15}Bailey M. Wade, "The Development of Secondary Education in Tennessee" (Ph.D. diss., George Peabody College for Teachers, 1938), 15.
more successful financially. The academic success of both schools indicates that Nashvillians had accepted the idea of education beyond the basics.

Beginning in the early 1800s, numerous grammar schools providing more than the rudimentary instruction previously offered appeared in Nashville. Some of the more elite grammar schools assumed the role of preparing students for the academies, instructing their students in the basics of Latin and Greek, science, philosophy, and advanced math, in addition to the regular grammar school curriculum of reading, writing, grammar, and simple arithmetic. The less elite grammar schools offered a broader education as well, although most of their students would not continue their education beyond the primary level. Sometimes, instruction in anything beyond the basics cost extra. Robert Davis, who opened a school on May 13, 1816, charged four dollars per quarter to teach the basics, but for an additional two dollars each quarter a student could receive

16Valadolid Academy's enrollment was undoubtedly higher than Davidson Academy's. In 1801 it was probably at least seven or eight times greater than the older school's, considering that at the closing exercises for the third quarter Valadolid Academy had more than fifty presentations by younger students, in addition to the older students who took their examinations. At the same time, Davidson Academy may have had as many as eight or nine students (Infra, 17).

17Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 131.
instruction in the elements of algebra. These schools provided some instruction in social studies, science, and higher math but did not teach these subjects as thoroughly or emphasize them as much as the preparatory schools did.

Price and the focus of instruction were two of the main factors parents considered when choosing a school for their children. For many families, especially poorer ones, the cost of tuition was the main factor in selecting a school for their children. These families usually selected a school similar to the one opened by George Martin in April 1813, which charged four dollars per quarter. For other parents, making sure that their children learned proper manners and morals was the most important consideration in choosing a school. A school like the following appealed to these parents:

A Good English School

The subscriber . . . has employed a prime English teacher who is well recommended, and wishes to inform his friends and the public, that he will furnish genteel boarding for youth of either sex, and tuition very low. Girls may occasionally be instructed in needle-work of different kinds. Every attention will be paid to their morals, and to their instruction in genteel manner. John Williams.

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19 Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 19, in Nagy Collection.

20 Tennessee Gazette and Mero-District Advertiser, May 17, 1806. All newspapers cited are Nashville newspapers.
Boarding schools first appeared in Nashville around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Parents who desired to send their children to a boarding school had to examine carefully the accommodations offered, or else their children might end up with nothing more than an empty room. When Mr. and Mrs. Abercrombie opened their academy in 1816, they announced a willingness to take in "six or eight boarders, who must find their own beds and bedding: also every pupil to furnish a load of wood for the use of the academy, or an equivalent in money." The Abercrombies required boarders to agree to stay with them for six months. In many instances, board was considerably more expensive than tuition, limiting most boarding schools to students from upper class families.

Female Schools in Early Nineteenth-Century Nashville

One of the greatest changes in education in the early nineteenth century was the rise of schools for girls. During Nashville's pioneer days, the grammar schools had been coeducational, but the academies had been restricted to boys. However, around 1800 the notion that schools should teach girls certain useful subjects, such as needlework and other crafts, or ornamental subjects, such as music and art, gained widespread popularity. In 1804, Eleanor Clopton

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21 *Nashville Whig*, January 9, 1816.

22 Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 134.
opened Nashville's first school exclusively for young ladies. The following advertisement placed by Mrs. Clopton suggests that her school focused more on ornamental learning than academics:

[Students will be] taught to read and write, to mark and embroider, and all other useful needle work, as far as their capabilities will allow, they will also be teach'd wax work, the tables in arithmetic, and the English gramer, if they chuse.23

Apparently Mrs. Clopton's school was successful, for other schools for girls followed. On May 25, 1807, Joshua Green opened a school for young ladies in a "Large White House near Mr. Eastin's printing office." He taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and music.24 Joseph Caldwell opened a Female Academy similar to Green's school on August 24, 1807.25 Another early school was Mrs. Tarpley's Female Academy, which provided a basic grammar school education along with training in needlework and art. Mrs. Tarpley's school charged seventy-five dollars for tuition and board, limiting enrollment to daughters of the wealthy. In 1810, Mr. and Mrs. Green opened a school to teach young girls to "read the best authors with pleasure and profit; to think with method, to speak with propriety,

23Tennessee Gazette and Mero-District Advertiser, February 22, 1804.


25Ibid., August 20, 1807.
and to compose with ease and accuracy."\textsuperscript{26} In 1815 Mrs. Christian Irby began a school for girls.\textsuperscript{27} It is likely that other schools for young ladies operated in Nashville during this period, although records from the period are incomplete.\textsuperscript{28}

Although the desire to teach young ladies arts and crafts spearheaded the development of girls' schools in the early nineteenth century, not all institutions of learning for females offered instruction in these areas. In 1812 Mrs. Barbour started a school where young ladies would receive instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, the use of globes, grammar, natural history, moral philosophy, material philosophy, principles of chemistry, civil history, and principles of taste and criticism. Tuition was forty dollars a year, and board was eighty. French was offered for an extra three dollars per quarter, and instruction in music would cost an additional eighteen dollars each quarter. Mrs. Barbour informed the public, "Needle work, embroidery, music [as a component of the basic curriculum]
and painting will form no part of my plan of instruction." \textsuperscript{29} On December 1, 1815, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold started an academy for young ladies. They taught the pronunciation of the English language, reading, penmanship, grammar, arithmetic, belles-lettres, and geography with the use of globes. The Arnolds charged quarterly tuition of eight, ten, or twelve dollars, depending on the level of the student, and board cost twenty-five dollars per quarter. \textsuperscript{30} The curricula of these schools, lacking the components considered to be the foundation of a proper female education, were probably too radical for the schools to be widely popular. \textsuperscript{31} Nevertheless, these schools showed that females were capable of advanced learning, and they prepared the way for future schools which would provide girls with an education that in some instances was as advanced as that most boys received.

Davidson Academy

Nashville's most prominent pioneer families were determined to strengthen their position in the region by making gentlemen of their sons, thereby creating a distinction between them and Nashville's other young men. However, none of the earliest schools in Nashville provided a classical education, which was a necessary part of a

\textsuperscript{29}Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 136.

\textsuperscript{30}Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 406.

\textsuperscript{31}Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 136.
gentleman's training.\textsuperscript{32} To meet this need, in 1785 a group of Nashville's leading citizens founded Davidson Academy. James Robertson led the effort to establish Davidson Academy. As Davidson County's representative in the North Carolina General Assembly, Robertson convinced the legislature to grant a charter for the founding of an academy "available to the youth of the community."\textsuperscript{33} On December 29, 1785, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill entitled "An Act for the Promotion of Learning in the County of Davidson." This act chartered Davidson Academy and created a Board of Trustees to supervise the academy's operation and manage its property. The academy was authorized to grant certificates to students who completed its curriculum. The act granted the Board of Trustees 240 acres of public land adjoining Nashville's southern boundary for the support of Davidson Academy. The act also stipulated that "no lands, tenements, or hereditaments, which may be vested in the Trustees of the Academy of Davidson for the sole use and behoof of the academy, shall be subject to any tax for the space of

\textsuperscript{32}Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 14-15.

\textsuperscript{33}Alfred Leland Crabb, Nashville: Personality of a City (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), 171. While the school would technically be open to all young men, its tuition rate and nonutilitarian course of education would mostly limit the enrollment to boys from upper-class families.
ninety-nine years."³⁴

After guiding the act through the legislature, Robertson returned to Nashville, and he and the other trustees met for the first time on August 19, 1786, to make plans for the opening of Davidson Academy. At this meeting, the trustees chose Dr. Thomas Craighead to be president of the school and appointed Ephraim McLean and William Polk to supervise the surveying of the 240 acres granted by the North Carolina legislature and to make a "just and lawful" division between this tract and the town.³⁵ On September 25, the trustees set tuition at £4 per year in hard money and selected Craighead's Spring Hill Meetinghouse in Haysborough, about six miles north of Nashville, as the site of the school.³⁶ Within the next two weeks the trustees increased tuition to £5 per year.³⁷ Approximately two

³⁴University of Nashville Board of Trustees, Davidson Academy, 1785 to 1806; Cumberland College, 1806 to 1826; The University of Nashville, 1826: Laws of North Carolina and Tennessee Relating Thereto (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce, 1892), 23.

³⁵Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 639-40.

³⁶Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 7, in Nagy Collection; McRaven, Athens of the South, 24.

³⁷Putnam's History of Middle Tennessee contains portions of the original minutes of the Board of Trustees, which have since become lost, but the dates for some of the entries are not clear. Putnam seems to say that tuition was increased to £5 at the same meeting at which it had been set at £4 (see Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 640), while other early histories state that the increase was made soon thereafter, implying that it was done at a subsequent meeting. See W. Woodford Clayton, History of Davidson County, Tennessee, with Illustrations and Biographical
months after the August 19 meeting, the school opened.

The education students received at Davidson Academy differed considerably from the instruction provided in the area's other schools, which was limited to the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, skills which had practical applications on the frontier. Students at Davidson Academy received a broader, more complete, less utilitarian education designed to appeal to a more aristocratic clientele. While no plan of study or curriculum for the school exists today, a list of the books used by Craighead indicates that the curriculum was highly advanced for a frontier area. Latin, Greek, and higher mathematics were the foundation of the course of study. Other subjects, such as history, geography, and science, were likely taught as well, if not during the school's earliest years, certainly by the first years of the nineteenth century.

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Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1880), 254, and Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 377. It can be assumed that the increase was approved before October 5, 1786, because Putnam places his record of the increase before a resolution which was adopted on that date.

38 Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 15.

39 John M. Bass, "Rev. Thomas Craighead," American Historical Magazine 7 (January 1902), 92. I was unable to find this list.

40 Crabb, Personality of a City, 172; Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 14-15.

41 It seems unlikely that an effort to style Davidson Academy as a college, which the Tennessee General Assembly attempted in 1803, would have been made if the school did
As the Nashville area became more heavily settled during the 1790s, Davidson Academy's educational mission changed to meet the town's growing needs. Emphasis on providing an education simply to create a class of gentlemen diminished. By the late 1790s Davidson Academy's primary purpose had become the preparation of young men either for college or for a professional career. 42 The academy's patrons accepted the change, realizing that a college education would further solidify their sons' position among Nashville's social elite. Many of the students who received their education at Davidson Academy during this period acquired positions of civic, commercial, and social leadership in the city during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Davidson Academy's success was largely due to the abilities and hard work of its president and sole teacher, Thomas Craighead. Craighead was a graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and his intellectual prowess impressed his students and the community at large. 43 For twenty years, he allowed the school to meet in his small church building. While little is known about Craighead as a teacher, the success of

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42 Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 131.
43 Crabb, Personality of a City, 171-72.
Davidson Academy indicates that he was capable. Teaching several hours a day, six days a week, he generated in his students an interest in their lessons. Under Craighead's leadership, Davidson Academy built a strong academic reputation throughout Tennessee.

Davidson Academy's classical curriculum, along with its relatively expensive tuition, kept the number of students low, no more than a dozen most of the time. One visitor to Nashville in 1802 remarked that the town had a college, but that it had only seven or eight students and a single teacher. It seems unlikely that the school's enrollment would have been significantly larger before then, especially when one considers that both the school's reputation and the area's population had increased substantially since the mid-1780s. Because the number of students was small, Craighead could spend more time with each student, enabling them to learn their lessons more thoroughly. The low number of students also made it easier for Craighead to maintain discipline in the classroom. However, the small number of pupils also meant that the school's income remained low, limiting its potential.


"Crabb, Personality of a City, 172.

"Arnow, "Education and the Professions," 132. The visitor, Andre F. Michaux, undoubtedly was referring to Davidson Academy, since it was the only institution in Nashville at the time which even resembled a college."
The trustees supplemented the school's income in various ways. Soon after Davidson Academy opened, the board appointed Ephraim McLean and Robert Hays as agents to rent out the lands belonging to the academy. They rented the "cleared, arable lands" to Lardner Clarke for four years, beginning December 1, 1787, at an annual rate of ten shillings per acre, half to be paid in cash and half in corn. The academy also raised revenue by operating a ferry. The ferry was financially successful, returning profits ranging from $100 to $650 each year, but operating it was a troublesome venture which required a considerable portion of the trustees' time and energy. Consequently, they voted on November 8, 1791, to sell the ferry, but a buyer could not be found. Over the next two decades, the trustees leased the ferry to one person after another. In 1813, the trustees finally sold the ferry, along with some land, for $7,005.25. These fundraising efforts were moderately profitable, but they did not provide Davidson Academy with enough capital to establish a solid financial footing for the future.

Davidson Academy's poor financial condition impeded the school's growth and development, preventing the school from immediately complying with a 1796 act of the Tennessee

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47 Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 377.

General Assembly moving the academy from the Spring Hill Meetinghouse to the "hill immediately above Nashville, and near to the road leading to Buckhannan's Mill; . . . as soon as the funds will permit."49 In 1802, the school's unstable financial state contributed to a dispute among the trustees over whether to move the academy to Nashville, as the legislature had directed, or to Montpelier, in Sumner County. To settle the dispute, subscription drives were held in the two communities, with the one raising more money becoming the academy's new home. Nashville's citizens contributed a greater sum, and the trustees initiated plans to move Davidson Academy from Haysborough to Nashville.50

On July 15, 1802, the Board of Trustees appointed Andrew Jackson and James Robertson to oversee the construction of a new academy building on the site specified by the legislature. Three years later, the Board awarded the contract to erect the new edifice to Charles Cabaniss for $10,890, specifying that the building was to be forty-five feet long and forty feet wide.51 In 1803, the trustees ceded a stretch of land 104 feet wide to the city; this

49University of Nashville Board of Trustees, Laws of North Carolina and Tennessee, 24. This site was located on the 240 acre tract granted to the trustees by North Carolina. Incidentally, this act was passed on April 15, 1796, nearly two months before Tennessee became a state.

50Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 10, in Nagy Collection.

51Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 646-48; Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 9, in Nagy Collection.
strip of land became Broad Street. That same year, the Board sold for twenty thousand dollars all but seven acres of the land granted to Davidson Academy by North Carolina. The remaining seven acres would become the campus of the school when its relocation was completed.\textsuperscript{52}

Many people viewed the planned relocation of Davidson Academy to a larger campus as the first step toward establishing a college in West Tennessee. The Tennessee General Assembly shared this view and on October 25, 1803, passed an act converting Davidson Academy into Davidson College. However, the Board of Trustees believed that the legislature had acted too hastily. After "mature deliberation" and obtaining the opinion of "counsel learned in the law," the trustees voted unanimously on January 19, 1804, to reject the change on the grounds that the move would adversely affect the school and was illegal.\textsuperscript{53} The trustees appointed Thomas Craighead and Daniel Smith to

\textsuperscript{52}Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of the University of Nashville (Nashville: A. Nelson \& Co., Printers, 1850), 22.

\textsuperscript{53}Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 647. It is likely, but not certain, that Andrew Jackson and John McNairy, both of whom were judges and members of the Board of Trustees, provided the legal opinion to the board. No record of the details of this meeting exists, so the reasons for the board's opposition are unknown. It is possible that the board felt that Davidson Academy was not yet ready for such an exalted status, given its size and financial condition. It also seems likely that the trustees did not believe that Tennessee could alter a charter granted by North Carolina and that the legal advice they obtained supported this position.
present the board's opinion to the legislature and to petition that body to repeal the act. The General Assembly complied on March 4, 1804.54

Two years later, a complex land agreement between Tennessee, North Carolina, and the United States government revived the movement to transform Davidson Academy into a college. After Tennessee became a state in 1796, Congress claimed the right to dispose of vacant lands within the state. At the same time, North Carolina continued to issue warrants and titles to land in Tennessee, even though North Carolina had ceded the territory which became Tennessee to the United States government in 1790. In 1806, the three parties agreed to a compromise on the land issue. Tennessee ceded all claims to the vacant lands west of the Tennessee River and a portion of land in the southern part of the state to the federal government. In return, Congress granted control of all other vacant lands in the state to Tennessee. These lands were to be used to satisfy North Carolina's claims to land in Tennessee. The agreement also required Tennessee to set aside 100,000 acres of land for the support of academies to be established in each county. Another 100,000 acres was to be reserved for the support of two colleges, one in East Tennessee and one in West Tennessee. The land designated for the support of the

54Ibid.; Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 11-12, in Nagy Collection.
colleges and academies was to be sold for two dollars an acre, but squatters who already resided on these lands could purchase the tract they occupied for one dollar per acre. The proceeds from the sale of these lands were to go directly to the academies and colleges.55

The trustees of Davidson Academy recognized that the amount of money guaranteed to each college by the land agreement would provide financial security for their school if it became one of the two colleges. Concerns about the legality of such a change quickly disappeared, and on July 19, 1806, the Board petitioned the legislature to reorganize Davidson Academy as the official college of West Tennessee.56 On September 11 of that year, the Tennessee General Assembly passed "An Act to Establish a College in West Tennessee." By the terms of this act, a college was to be "established on the square reserved for the Davidson Academy . . . which shall be known and distinguished by the name of Cumberland College."57 The proceeds from the sale

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56Putnam, History Of Middle Tennessee, 648; Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 381. At least six, and possibly seven, of the eleven trustees who had opposed the change in 1804 had resigned, including Jackson and McNairy, who had probably raised the question of the legality of the change in 1804. Also, the financial benefits of the reorganization may have changed the minds of the four or five trustees who had opposed the earlier change.

57University of Nashville Board of Trustees, Laws of North Carolina and Tennessee, 26.
of one-half of the land reserved for the two colleges, "together with all the property, real and personal, of what kind soever, of Davidson Academy," were to be reserved "for the sole use, benefit, and support of said Cumberland College forever." On December 2, 1806, the trustees of Davidson Academy completed the papers which transferred the academy's property to the Board of Trustees of Cumberland College. On December 2, 1806, the trustees of Davidson Academy completed the papers which transferred the academy's property to the Board of Trustees of Cumberland College.

Cumberland College

At the time of its establishment in 1806, Cumberland College was far from ready to open. The new college building remained unfinished, faculty positions needed to be filled, and supplies had to be purchased. On July 21, 1807, the trustees selected Craighead as president of Cumberland College. On November 30, 1807, the board voted to open the college on September 1, 1808, to appoint two professors for the college, and to establish a grammar school in connection with the college. Soon afterward, books and other supplies were purchased at a cost of one thousand dollars. The board appointed Dr. William Hume professor of languages and George Martin as tutor of the grammar

58 Ibid., 28.
59 Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 648.
60 Ibid., 649.
61 Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 382-83.
62 Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 649.
school. In 1808 the new building was completed. It was 70 feet long by 47½ feet wide, three stories high, and cost $12,240. In the fall of 1809, three years after its chartering, Cumberland College opened.

Almost immediately after its opening, the college found itself in search of a new president. Craighead submitted his resignation as president of Cumberland College sometime in 1809, probably early in the fall. However, he agreed to continue in that office until a replacement was appointed. On October 19, the Board of Trustees, with Craighead absent, met with Dr. James Priestley concerning the position. Priestley indicated his willingness to accept the job, and on October 24 the trustees unanimously chose him to succeed Craighead as president of Cumberland College.

Priestley provided vigorous leadership for the infant college. Under his administration Cumberland College was "in fact a superior classical school." The new president enjoyed a reputation as a firm disciplinarian and an


64 Laws of the University of Nashville, in Tennessee (Nashville: B. R. M'Kennie, Whig and Steam Press, 1840), 30. The original plans, which had been approved in 1805, had been modified after the chartering of Cumberland College to make the building larger.

65 Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 650. Craighead continued to serve on the Board of Trustees until 1813.

66 Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 54.
excellent scholar. His reputation as one of the country's greatest classical scholars attracted students from a wide area to Cumberland College. In addition to his administrative duties, Priestley taught courses in mathematics, moral philosophy, rhetoric, logic, and natural philosophy. He was an excellent teacher, but he had little concern for students who were not completely serious about their studies or who did not perform well in the classical curriculum.

Priestley demanded that his students exercise careful discipline in their studies and their behavior. On January 8, 1813, the Board of Trustees, acting upon the recommendation of Priestley, expelled two students "for non-compliance with rules prescribing course of study." One of the students, Cave Johnson, later a Congressman and United States Postmaster General, had merely been careless with his Latin pronunciation. Johnson's expulsion led to a strike by the student body. The students marched downtown carrying a large banner which declared, "We will not cave in

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68 Ibid., 432.
69 Crabb, Personality of a City, 175.
70 Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 650.
71 Crabb, Personality of a City, 173.
until Cave is taken in." 72 Priestley stood firm, and the students, probably under threat of expulsion themselves, soon capitulated. On another occasion, a group of students engaged in "rioting a bit" were met by the president, wearing his full academic regalia, "his face rigid with monastic grimness, his eyes blazing with medieval fire." After a moment, the students hurried to their rooms and their Latin books. 73

The stern discipline enforced by Priestley fit well within the framework created by the strict rules imposed by the Board of Trustees at the college's beginning. These rules governed practically every aspect of a student's life:

It will be improper to suffer the students to attend assemblages, balls, theatrical exhibitions, parties of pleasure and amusement, and more to frequent gaming-tables, taverns, and places of dissipation. They should seldom indulge themselves in going to town, except on necessary business, which should be dispatched hastily, that they may return to College without delay. 74

To discourage students further from venturing into the town, the rules mandated that they wear black academic gowns "when they walk into the town!" 75

Little is known about student life at Cumberland College during Priestley's tenure as president. The

72 Thweatt, "James Priestley," 433.
73 Crabb, Personality of a City, 173.
74 Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 649-50.
75 Ibid., 650.
students had little free time; they were required to spend most of the day either in class or studying in their rooms. When they did have free time, the college's rules restricted the ways they could spend it. Priestley lived in the college building with the students, making it difficult for students to skirt the rules successfully.76

The thorough regulation of student life and the ascetic environment at Cumberland College were conducive to study. Students thoroughly learned the lessons they received from their professors because they spent most of their time studying them. Of the nineteen students who graduated from 1813, the year the first degrees were granted, until 1816, when the college suspended operation, five went on to serve in Congress.77 Priestley and Hume instructed their students in all the branches which constituted a classical education. The curriculum was basically the standard four-year course of study taught at most colleges of that period. Priestley's leadership and the success of Cumberland College's graduates helped the school build a strong academic reputation.

Despite Cumberland's sound academic reputation and the support the college received from some of Nashville's most

76Crabb, Personality of a City, 174.

prominent citizens, its financial condition steadily worsened. The approximately seven thousand dollars realized from the sale of the ferry and some college lands in 1813 did little to improve the situation. The main source of the problem was the state's failure to collect the money owed by the occupants of the lands reserved for the support of the college by the terms of the 1806 land agreement. When the trustees of Davidson Academy made their plans to establish Cumberland College, they had depended on the income from the sale of these lands to provide a solid financial foundation for the new institution. When this income did not appear, the college's fiscal condition weakened.

The trustees of Cumberland College were determined to collect the money from the lands to which the institution was entitled. On May 22, 1813, the Board of Trustees appointed a committee composed of four lawyers, all members of that body, to determine "what ought to be done to recover the property of the College." It is likely that the trustees were referring to the land proceeds when they formed this committee; on September 3, when the trustees added Robert Whyte to the committee, they instructed it to decide what actions should be taken to procure the funds belonging to the college. What the committee recommended is unknown; the records of Cumberland College from this

78Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, 651.

79Ibid.
period were lost.

Around the same time, Priestley launched a spirited drive to persuade the General Assembly to collect the money owed by the residents of the reserved lands and distribute the proceeds to Cumberland College. Priestley's effort encountered strong opposition, and a vicious war was waged in the state's newspapers. Priestley pointed out the benefits higher education would offer the entire population of Tennessee, while his opponents decried the notion of forcing poor settlers who struggled to make a living from the land to pay for the support of a college for the sons of wealthy aristocrats. In the end, Priestley's efforts failed, and the legislature granted the occupants of the reserved lands a deferment on their payments. Discouraged by the lack of support for the college from the state government and the people of Tennessee, in 1816 Priestley resigned as president of Cumberland College. 80

Priestley's resignation, combined with the institution's wretched financial condition, rendered Cumberland College unable to continue. On October 12, 1816, the Board of Trustees voted to suspend operation of the college until November 1, 1817, by which time the trustees hoped to find a way to make the institution fiscally stable. The trustees granted Hume permission to operate a grammar school in the college building while the college was

suspended. The experience of Cumberland College convinced the trustees that more than academic excellence was required for a college to succeed.

**Nashville's Educational Progress to 1816**

By 1816 Nashville had made considerable progress in education. Immediately after the city was settled in 1780, its citizens began to open schools to educate their children. Five years after Nashville's founding, its leaders opened the first institution of advanced learning in the region, Davidson Academy. For twenty years Davidson Academy provided the sons of the city's elite with a classical education. At the same time, numerous private schools met the educational needs of most of the city's children. A few of these private schools followed Davidson Academy's example and offered a classical education. Beginning in the early 1800s, schools designed exclusively for females opened to provide girls with the artistic and practical skills young ladies were expected to have. The opportunity for a basic education was available to all but the poorest children in Nashville by 1816.

Nashville's first institution of higher learning was established in 1806 when the Tennessee General Assembly

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Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 18, in Nagy Collection.
rechartered Davidson Academy as Cumberland College.\textsuperscript{82} The college opened for classes in 1809. Although very small, Cumberland College built a strong academic reputation; a high percentage of its graduates attained positions of leadership and prestige. Despite its academic success, the school was constantly beset by financial problems, which forced it to suspend operation in 1816. However, Cumberland College would eventually regain its glory and lay the foundation for Nashville's later prestige as a collegiate center.

\textsuperscript{82}Here the term "institution of higher learning" refers to one which granted bachelor's degrees, not one which merely offered an advanced education.
CHAPTER TWO
PRIVATE EDUCATION IN NASHVILLE, 1817-1860

During the period from 1817 to 1860, Nashville's private schools built on the educational foundation which had been established during the city's frontier days. Many private schools offered more advanced instruction than their predecessors, while others continued to provide a basic curriculum. The number of specialized schools increased during this period, as numerous classical schools and institutions for girls provided alternatives to the regular grammar schools. In the 1830s, schools for blacks first appeared in Nashville, and for nearly a quarter of a century they struggled against prejudice to remain open. During the 1850s, the creation of the Nashville public school system appeared to threaten the existence of many private schools, but the public schools were unable to accommodate all the schoolchildren in Nashville. Thus, in 1860 Nashville's private schools still played an important role in the city's educational life.

Grammar Schools

Most of the private schools in Nashville during this period were small grammar schools; literally hundreds of
them served the city during this era.¹ Most of them existed for only a brief time and were unknown to almost everyone except their patrons, but a few established a long term presence in the city and gained a degree of fame. Grammar schools during this period were similar to those which had existed during Nashville's late frontier period (roughly from the late 1790s until the mid-1810s).²

Grammar schools were usually less expensive than other private schools, but they were still too expensive for poor families. For students whose parents could not afford even the least expensive schools, Ann Grundy and a group of ladies established Nashville's first Sunday school on July 2, 1820; others soon followed. The earliest Sunday schools taught reading and writing free of charge, incorporating religious instruction into the lessons. Initially, every church in the city opposed the Sunday schools because they offered secular instruction (reading and writing) on the Sabbath; however, the Sunday schools continued. When an attempt to develop a system of public education for the poor was begun in the late 1820s, the Sunday schools gradually gave up the teaching of reading and writing and focused

¹For a listing of several private grammar schools of this period see Wooldridge, *History of Nashville*, 406-10, and Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 22-29, in Nagy Collection.

²Supra, 7-8.
completely on providing religious and moral instruction. 3

One particular type of grammar school popular in early nineteenth-century America, the Lancasterian school, was introduced to Nashville by A. Rogers in May 1818. In the Lancasterian system, teachers trained older students, called monitors, to assist them in teaching the younger students. This system allowed teachers to instruct more students at the same time. Because classes were large, teachers could charge less per student without diminishing their income. Occasionally, because they did not have as much direct responsibility for teaching younger students, Lancasterian teachers had time to give older students instruction in advanced subjects not commonly taught in grammar schools. Rogers, for instance, taught in addition to the basics geography, Euclid’s elements, theoretical surveying, belles-lettres, and the general principles of logic and moral philosophy. 4

Nashville’s Lancasterian school was successful from the beginning. It had about sixty students when it opened in May 1818, and by the end of the year it had more students than any other school in Nashville. 5 In October 1819, the Board of Aldermen, which was considering the question of

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3McRaven, Athens of the South, 36-37.


5Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 22, in Nagy Collection; Nashville Whig and Tennessee Advertiser, January 2, 1819.
incorporating the school, sent John Johnson and Alexander Porter to visit the school and to draw up a report based on their observations. Their report praised Rogers and the Lancasterian system, resulting in the Board's incorporation of the school. Within a few years, Rogers left the school, but it continued to prosper for at least a decade under his successors, Mr. Clanton, William Young, and Mr. Holton. Gradually, the Lancasterian system lost its popularity, and Nashville's Lancasterian school appears to have closed by the early 1830s.

Another specific type of grammar school that operated in Nashville during this period was the infant school, also known as the dame school or the juvenile school. These schools were designed for children younger than ten; some students were as young as four or five. The most famous infant school of the period was Mrs. Pamilla Kirk's Dame School, which served the city during the 1840s and 1850s. According to a former student, the children were "taught in the one room, class by class, or trained as a unit in the first stages of mental, moral, domestic, artistic,

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6Nashville Whig, October 27, 1819; Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 23a-b, in Nagy Collection.

7Nashville Whig, February 21, 1825; Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 408; Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 25, in Nagy Collection.

8In 1834, Alfred Hume opened his classical school in the same building which had been occupied by the Lancasterian school in 1828, the last year for which I could find mention of the Lancasterian school.
patriotic, and religious development."9 One unusual feature of Mrs. Kirk's school was that there were no desks in the classroom. Each child brought his or her own chair to school. Another former student described how Mrs. Kirk meted out discipline:

A child in need of discipline was forced to stand before the class for a period of time. For a second offense, the child had to stand with his hand behind him. A third offense resulted in the student having to stand before the class on one foot. "If a child being punished forgot and put his foot down he got a tap from Mrs. Kirk's little rod, but I never saw a child undergo severe corporal punishment," recalled Mr. Callendar.10

A Mrs. Thom opened a juvenile school on January 24, 1848, but little else is known about this school except that it was not as prominent as Mrs. Kirk's school.11

One grammar school of the period merits mention, not because of its impact on Nashville, but because of who taught it. William Ferrell, one of the leading American meteorologists of the nineteenth century, operated a grammar school in Nashville from 1854 until 1858. During these years, he published a seminal work in the field of meteorology, "Essay on the Winds and Currents of the Ocean," the first work to describe the effect of the earth's rotation on atmospheric and oceanic movement. Soon after

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9 Octavia Zollicoffer Bond, "Mrs. Kirk's Dame School," in Tennessee Authors and Writings on Tennessee, TSLA.

10 Ibid.

11 Nagy, "Early Private Schools," 29, in Nagy Collection.
publishing this work, Ferrell gave up teaching his school to pursue further meteorological research.\textsuperscript{12}

Despite some fears to the contrary, the creation of the Nashville public school system in the early 1850s did not negatively affect private grammar schools in Nashville during that decade. Because the public schools could not accommodate all the city's children who wished to attend school, the need for private schools remained great, and new ones opened periodically. None of these schools established a long term presence in the city, closing within a decade because of the Civil War.

\textbf{Classical Education}

Because Nashville's grammar schools neither offered a traditional classical education nor adequately prepared students for college, numerous schools designed to do both opened in Nashville between 1817 and 1860. Commonly referred to as classical schools, academies, or preparatory schools, they tended to be considerably more expensive than the grammar schools and were almost exclusively patronized by the wealthy.\textsuperscript{13} Since colleges remained closed to women until the middle of this period, most of these schools were for men only.

\textsuperscript{12}Roscoe Nunn, "William Ferrell," \textit{Tennessee Historical Magazine}, first series, 3 (September 1917), 194-95.

\textsuperscript{13}There were exceptions to this. Some schools which called themselves academies were simply regular grammar schools, while sometimes a classical school was called a grammar school.
The earliest classical school of this period was Cumberland College's preparatory school, which remained open from 1816 until 1823 or 1824 while the college itself was closed. Dr. William Hume, who had been a professor in the college, taught the preparatory school from 1816 until he became principal of the Nashville Female Academy in 1819.\(^4\) On November 22, 1819, M. Stevens took Hume's place. He limited enrollment in the school to thirty students and charged tuition of twenty dollars for a five-month session of instruction in the "Latin and Greek Languages, and the Sciences . . . until such a time as the College shall go into operation."\(^5\) It is not known how long Stevens taught at the school, but in late 1822 or early 1823 John Coltart was the teacher of the preparatory school.\(^6\) When Cumberland College resumed operation in 1824, the preparatory school became a department of the college.

After resigning as president of Cumberland College in 1816, Dr. James Priestley started a private academy at his home, Montebello. The academy at Montebello admitted both males and females, although the two sexes were segregated. Priestley taught the young men, and his wife taught the young ladies.\(^7\) The girls probably did not receive as

\(^5\) Nashville Gazette, November 13, 1819.
\(^6\) Nashville Whig, February 5, 1823.
\(^7\) Thweatt, "James Priestley," 437.
thorough an education as the boys, although their education was better than that available to most females. Priestley instructed the young men with the same dedication and intensity that he had displayed at Cumberland College. The school at Montebello was a boarding school, which allowed the Priestleys to make sure their students constantly maintained studious habits. Opportunities for students to engage in social activities appear to have been limited. One student wrote, "I am very much pleased with Dr. Priestly, but it is a very loansome place and the fare extremely bad." It is not known how long Priestley taught at Montebello, but the school definitely closed by February 1821, when Priestley died.

Around 1821 Dr. De St. Leger opened an academy which also taught both sexes separately. Instead of hiring one teacher for the girls while he taught the boys, De St. Leger taught both sexes himself. Girls attended his classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and boys attended on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Tuition was ten dollars per quarter. The curriculum included the basics, history, belles-lettres, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, bookkeeping, commercial correspondence, and French. It is not known when this school closed.

18Daniel S. Donelson to Andrew Jackson Donelson, March 12, 1819, in the Dyas Collection, John Coffee Papers, TSLA.

19Nagy, "Early Private Schools, 24, in Nagy Collection; Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 408.
One of the most famous classical schools in Nashville during this period was the one taught by Alfred Hume. Hume opened his school on September 24, 1834. He charged $12.50 per session to teach the basics, and for an additional $15 he taught grammar, geography, history, bookkeeping, algebra, and geometry. Not long afterward, Hume added Latin and Greek to the advanced curriculum. Hume's reputation as an educator was so great that when the city of Nashville prepared in the early 1850s to establish a public school system the Board of Aldermen selected him to observe various public school systems throughout the nation and create a model for Nashville based on his observations. Hume's school ended with his death in 1853.

Another highly respected classical school of the period was Josiah W. Horr's English Classical Seminary, which began offering instruction March 28, 1836. Tuition for a twenty-one week session varied according to the course of study pursued. For the basics plus geography, tuition was fifteen dollars. Tuition for courses in rhetoric, composition, declamation, bookkeeping, ancient and modern history, and the classical languages was twenty dollars per session. For twenty-five dollars per session students received instruction in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, surveying, conic sections, topography, navigation, astronomy, natural

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20 Nashville Republican and State Gazette, September 20, 1834.
philosophy, and moral and intellectual philosophy. Horr announced his intention to make his school a permanent institution, but it is not known how successful he was in doing so.  

The Nashville Female Academy

In early 1816 a group of twenty-five prominent Nashvillians founded a school for young ladies, which they named the Nashville Female Academy. They bought three acres of land in the southern part of town from David McGavock for fifteen hundred dollars and later purchased another two acres of adjoining land. Construction of a school building began almost immediately. In the meantime, the academy's founders searched across the nation for the best teachers available. United States Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, who knew Felix Grundy, one of the academy's proprietors, recommended Dr. Daniel Berry of Salem, Massachusetts, for a faculty position. The academy's owners interviewed Berry and his wife and on July 2, 1817, selected Berry as principal and hired Mrs. Berry to assist him. Later that month, the school building was ready for use. On August 4, 1817, the Nashville Female Academy opened with

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21 National Banner and Nashville Whig, March 25, 1836.

22 Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 399; Crabb, Personality of a City, 194.

approximately sixty-five students. 24

On October 3, 1817, the Tennessee General Assembly incorporated the Nashville Female Academy as a stock company. The original twenty-five founders received stock in the school, and anyone else who subscribed $150 before November 10 would also become stockholders. According to the articles of incorporation, the academy's stockholders were to choose annually seven trustees to oversee the day-to-day operation of the school. 25 The Nashville Female Academy was the first school in Tennessee to be controlled by a stock company. 26

The trustees intended for the academy to offer young ladies a complete academic and ornamental education. They divided the school year into two annual sessions of five and a half months, with a half a month's vacation between sessions. They also organized the curriculum into four branches. The first branch consisted of the rudiments of spelling and reading. Reading, writing, and English grammar made up the second branch. The third included arithmetic, geography (with use of globes), and composition. History, philosophy, and ornamental learning constituted the fourth branch. The cost of tuition, to be paid in advance,

24Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 400.

25Ibid., 400-401.

depended on which branch of study the student pursued.\textsuperscript{27}

The academy enjoyed immediate success under the leadership of the Berrys. The initial enrollment of 65 in the first session of the 1817-1818 school year was followed by a total enrollment of 180 in the second session. To assist the Berrys, the trustees hired a Mr. Leroy, along with his wife and her sister, to teach music, and a Miss Gardette and a Miss Payson to serve as "auxiliary tutoresses."\textsuperscript{28} In a letter written June 6, 1818, to the Berrys' former pastor in Salem, Mrs. Berry described the condition of the school:

\begin{quote}
The Academy is quite pleasantly situated about a half a mile from the centre of the town in a pleasant grove on the side of a hill quite a retir'd place . . . The school is quite pleasant and we think making handsome improvement; it is on a much more extensive plan than we had any idea when we left you; the present number of schollars is 180 as many as can be accommodated conveniently in the end of the building, which is complete; they have commenc'd on the other wing, and are in hopes to have it finished by another season. We have had one public examination, shall have our second about the middle of July.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

The second examination was attended by a large number of citizens, indicating that public interest in the school was growing. During the 1818-1819 school year, enrollment increased to 186 in the fall session and 218 in the spring

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27]J. E. Windrow, "Collins D. Elliott and the Nashville Female Academy," Tennessee Historical Magazine, second series, 3 (January 1935), 81.
\item[28]Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 401.
\item[29]Newcomer, "Two New England Teachers," 76.
\end{footnotes}
session, and additional faculty members were hired.\textsuperscript{30}

The high point of the Berrys' tenure at the Nashville Female Academy was a visit by President James Monroe in June 1819. After touring the campus, Monroe addressed the students and faculty. He stated that he could not "express in terms too strong the satisfaction . . . [which] a view of the seminary" gave him. He concluded, "The female presents capacities for improvements, and has equal claims to it, with the other sex."\textsuperscript{31}

At the end of the spring session in 1819, the Berrys resigned from the Nashville Female Academy and moved to Alabama. The trustees selected Dr. William Hume, teacher of the preparatory school at Cumberland College and a highly respected scholar, to succeed Berry as principal. Hume created an atmosphere of strict discipline and honor during his tenure as principal. He forbade students to attend public dancing parties or balls during the school term.\textsuperscript{32} Hume also expected the young ladies to live up to high standards of honesty and morality. In return, students were treated with respect and honor. This atmosphere of honor became one of the academy's most famous characteristics.

Despite Hume's reputation as an outstanding scholar,

\textsuperscript{30}Wooldridge, \textit{History of Nashville}, 401-402.

\textsuperscript{31}Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, \textit{History of Tennessee}, 1:434.

\textsuperscript{32}Goodstein, \textit{Nashville, 1780-1860}, 63.
the school's strong academic prestige, and its growing commitment to creating an environment characterized by honor, the academy's enrollment declined by more than half during his first three years as principal and then leveled off throughout the remainder of the 1820s. The major cause for the decrease in enrollment during this period was the widespread belief that the academy was an aristocratic institution. By all accounts, the Nashville Female Academy was "the rich man's school." Most of the students in the school's early years came from families of planters in the countryside surrounding Nashville, although some were daughters of the town's most prosperous merchants. Because the academy was so expensive, the charge that it "inculcated aristocratic habits of luxury" was frequently made. To refute these charges, in 1825 the trustees publicly declared

33Not until 1839 did enrollment again reach the level of 1819, the Berrys' final year with the academy. See "Nashville Female Academy," Statistics, in Collins D. Elliott Papers, TSLA.

34During the Age of Jackson, anything characterized as aristocratic was frowned upon by a majority of the people. With the rise of common-man democracy during the 1820s, members of the upper class who sought elective office often portrayed themselves as average people instead of aristocrats, especially in Western states such as Tennessee. Thus, many wealthy people who otherwise would have sent their daughters to the Nashville Female Academy did not do so because they did not want to alienate the electorate. This same anti-aristocratic fervor would hinder efforts toward higher education in Tennessee until after the Civil War.

35Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.

36Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 63.
that the girls were dressed in clothing produced locally; only the "necessary woolens" were brought in from outside the area.\textsuperscript{37} The trustees' efforts were largely in vain; throughout Hume's tenure as principal enrollment remained relatively low, although in 1830 it began to increase significantly.\textsuperscript{38}

In 1833, not long after the academy's enrollment began its steady rise, Hume died suddenly of cholera. The trustees chose Dr. R. A. Lapsley to succeed Hume. Lapsley continued the work of his predecessor in strengthening the academy's reputation as a place characterized by honor and academic excellence. He resigned at the end of 1837 to open a mercantile business and was succeeded by Dr. W. A. Scott. Scott remained at the Nashville Female Academy for only one year, leaving at the end of 1838 to accept a pastorship in New Orleans. Lapsley, whose business efforts had failed, returned to the academy in 1839 as joint principal with Dr. Collins D. Elliott.\textsuperscript{39}

The Nashville Female Academy reached its peak under the leadership of Elliott, who served as joint principal with

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38}"Nashville Female Academy," Statistics, in Elliott Papers. Perhaps the trustees' refutations of the charges of inculcating aristocratic tendencies in the students were finally accepted by most of the city's residents.

\textsuperscript{39}Clayton, History of Davidson County, 269; Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 404.
Lapsley until 1844 and sole principal from 1844 until 1866. Elliott was a strong proponent of providing women with the opportunity to pursue an advanced education, and under his guidance the academy offered coursework as rigorous and thorough as that offered by all but the most elite institutions for young men. Enrollment in the academy increased from 173 in 1838, the year before Elliott's arrival, to 513 in 1860, which made it the largest girls' school in the United States and possibly in the world. Much of the increase in enrollment was due to the academy's broadening base of patronage during the Elliott era. By the 1850s, students from aristocratic families throughout the South attended the Nashville Female Academy. In addition to increasing enrollment significantly, this widespread base of support from some of the South's wealthiest families allowed the academy to be more than self-sustaining; it was "self-enriching," returning a profit of more than twenty-five thousand dollars per year by 1860.

The academy's prosperity allowed it to expand and

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41"Nashville Female Academy," Statistics, in Elliott Papers; Crabb, Personality of a City, 195; Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.


43Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 41; Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.
modernize its facilities frequently without increasing tuition. The year 1857 was the only year tuition was raised during the Elliott era; that year the academy underwent extraordinarily extensive remodeling and expansion. Elliott spent forty thousand dollars for new bathrooms, furniture, and general remodeling.44 In addition to that, a new chapel was built, the number of dormitory rooms was increased, and new classroom equipment, including a chemical apparatus, was purchased. The next year, a total of sixty thousand dollars was spent on improvements.45 By 1860 the academy's buildings, most of which were two stories high, fronted on Church Street for 180 feet and extended back 280 feet, enclosing a yard of approximately five acres. The buildings were constructed so that all the rooms received sunlight. To protect students from the elements, the buildings were connected by covered walkways.46 By 1860, all buildings were heated by steam and lighted by gas. The dormitories had hot and cold running water, and the kitchen and laundry equipment was the best available.47

Under Elliott, the Nashville Female Academy reached a new level of academic excellence. He selected the best

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44Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, History of Tennessee, 1:434.
45Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 42.
46Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 404-405.
47Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 42.
teachers available from throughout the nation, and sometimes from abroad, for the academy; judged by the standards of the day they were well above the average. The curriculum was organized into three levels -- the Preparatory, Academic, and Collegiate Departments. The entire course of study after the Preparatory Department required eight years to complete. In the two advanced departments, there were two daily class sessions, from nine in the morning until noon and from two until four in the afternoon. During school hours, students were prohibited from pursuing any activity other than their schoolwork.

Girls younger than ten were placed in the Preparatory Department. For one or two years, depending on the individual student's educational progress, they learned the basics. The only textbooks used, apart from the Bible, were McGuffey's *Speller* and *First Reader* and Mitchel's *Primary Geography*. The Preparatory Department had a separate room filled with maps and charts for teaching geography. The younger children in the Preparatory Department, some as young as five, were taught separately from the older children; their lessons were not as advanced, and they spent more time in recreation. Elliott publicized the special

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48 Windrow, "Collins D. Elliott," 88; Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 45.

49 Windrow, "Collins D. Elliott," 89.

50 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 42.
treatment given to younger students:

We confine them under strict discipline [in the classroom] but a short time each day, the remainder of the time being devoted to play and such amusements as are deemed suitable; though they are all the while, in school or at play, carefully supervised by their teacher.51

After mastering the basics in the Preparatory Department, students entered the Academic Department. The four years of this department were designated, in ascending order, second junior, first junior, second senior, and first senior. Subjects taught in the Academic Department included spelling, reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, grammar, penmanship, vocal music, composition, botany, American history, and mythology.52 Most of these subjects were taught in each of the four years of the course. Biblical instruction, integrated into the lessons given in the regular subjects, was part of the regular course of study.

Upon completing the course of study in the Academic Department, students began work in the Collegiate Department. Unlike the Preparatory and Academic Departments, in which one teacher taught all subjects to one class, teachers in the Collegiate Department taught one or more subjects in which they were especially knowledgeable.53

51 Nashville Female Academy, Circular, August 1859, in Cooper Family Papers, TSLA.

52 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 42; Nashville Female Academy, Circular, August 1859, in Cooper Family Papers.

53 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 42-43.
The course of study in the Collegiate Department required four years to complete. The prescribed curriculum was highly advanced and thorough, as shown in table 1.

In addition to the regular academic coursework, students could take classes in the Ornamental Department in vocal and instrumental music, fancy needlework, drawing, and painting. This department also included modern and classical languages, which were not part of the required course of study. The Ornamental Department was the most popular, and its classes were open to "any ladies (not school girls) from the city" in addition to the academy's students. Those who attended classes only in the Ornamental Department were known as "parlor boarders." The faculty of the Ornamental Department were especially able. Elliott boasted, "In painting, drawing and music we have endeavored to secure for our patrons the very best talent." A large number of teachers of the arts were European, chosen by Elliott because he found few Americans as proficient in the arts.

Under Elliott's guidance, the Nashville Female Academy's reputation as a place characterized by honor

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54 Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, History of Tennessee, 1:434; Nashville Female Academy, Circular, August 1859, in Cooper Family Papers.

55 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 43.

56 Nashville Patriot, August 6, 1859.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Term</th>
<th>Second Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freshman</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsing with Grammar</td>
<td>Composition Reading</td>
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<td>History Written Arithmetic Mental Arithmetic</td>
<td>Grammar Penmanship Spelling and Defining</td>
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<td>Vocal Music</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sophomore</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsing with Grammar Mental Arithmetic Composition Reading Vocal Music</td>
<td>Penmanship Spelling and Defining Algebra Chronology Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Junior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsing with Grammar Mental Arithmetic Composition Reading Vocal Music Penmanship</td>
<td>Spelling and Defining Geometry Natural Philosophy Astronomy Mythology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Senior</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Arithmetic Mental Arithmetic Composition Reading Vocal Music Penmanship Chemistry</td>
<td>Spelling and Defining Intellectual Philosophy Meteorology Algebra Geometry Grammar Physics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

became more firmly established. Both faculty and students were expected to live up to the highest standards of integrity at all times. Teachers were not permitted to accept from a student any gift which cost money. Mail was delivered directly to students unopened, and students could send mail to whomever they pleased without school officials censoring it. Before entering a girl's room, a teacher had to knock and be asked to enter. To charge a student with any type of dishonorable act in the presence of another student was strictly forbidden to all teachers. Teachers were also prohibited from using "personal violence of any kind" to discipline students.\(^{58}\)

To maintain an atmosphere of honor among the students, Elliott carefully regulated their actions. Believing that a lady's education ended "as soon as she began to see company," Elliott did not approve of his pupils having dates.\(^{59}\) Novels were prohibited because of their morally detrimental effect on the students.\(^{60}\) Rules such as the following were intended to ensure that at all times students acted as proper young ladies:

No young Lady leaves our lot unattended by a Teacher, expends one dime without our approbation; is permitted to have an account in the city; receives any company but relatives, and not those during school hours nor on

\(^{58}\)Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.

\(^{59}\)Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, History of Tennessee, 1:434.

\(^{60}\)Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 46.
the Sabbath, when it can be avoided; will be permitted to receive eatables, even from her parents; receives or sends messages of any kind, through the day scholars; is allowed any pocket money; is permitted to associate with any other school girls, who attend promiscuous dancing schools, parties, pic nics, fishing parties, &c. We cannot educate, either in our Boarding or Day Schools, pupils who are allowed by their parents to be "halfway young ladies."  

The older girls undoubtedly resented some of the rules, but apparently few made any serious attempt to circumvent them. It was reputed that "no runaway matches, no entangling love affairs, no stain-spot of scandal, no evil of any kind, ever befell any of its [the academy's] pupils."  

Considerable effort was made to maintain strict discipline at the academy. Mary Catherine Killebrew, a student at the academy during the 1850s, wrote the following about Elliott's style of discipline:

[Elliott's] greatest strength was in his discipline and all of his teachers worked in harmony. . . . Occasionally a pupil would have to be punished, but it was done in such a way as to show that her good was thought of. Even the little ones some almost babies were drilled perfectly.  

To ensure that the rules were enforced at all times, Elliott assigned female teachers to supervise the students after

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61 Nashville Female Academy, Bulletin, February 1859, in Cooper Family Papers.

62 Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.

63 Mary Catherine Killebrew, "Reflections of a Lifetime," (1902), 24, in Joseph Buckner Killebrew Papers, TSLA.
This job was often a monotonous one, as can be seen from a letter written by Martha O'Bryan, a student at the academy during the 1850s, in which she mentioned that her sister Fannie, a teacher at the academy, was serving her "week in the Hall." During this week, Fannie had to "sit there every night and see that the girls study and stand at the dining room door and see that the girls walk in orderly."\(^{65}\)

Despite the thorough regulation of their actions, the students enjoyed numerous amusements. On Saturday nights they gathered with the faculty for fun and frivolity. At these parties the students and teachers customarily provided the entertainment, giving concerts, tableaux, or charades. During warm weather, picnics on the academy grounds were common. Students frequently took chaperoned walks in the town.\(^{66}\) Talking with friends was also a popular amusement.

One particular form of recreation, dancing, which originally was instituted at the academy as a means of exercise, caused a great deal of controversy. In the early 1840s, Elliott incorporated dancing into the exercise classes. In 1844, at the request of several parents, he

\(^{64}\)It can safely be assumed that male teachers were not given this assignment because it required teachers to stay with the girls at night. These assignments were made on a rotating basis for a period of one week.

\(^{65}\)Martha O'Bryan to Joseph Branch O'Bryan, March 16, 1851, in Joseph Branch O'Bryan Papers, TSLA.

started a dancing school for students in the boardinghouse he owned.\textsuperscript{67} The dancing school immediately came under attack. Once it became evident that a large number of Christian leaders opposed the dancing school, Elliott, who was also a minister in the Methodist church, decided that a church council should quietly settle the issue. However, John B. McFerrin, editor of the Methodist newspaper, the \textit{Nashville Christian Advocate}, believed that ministers should be publicly called to account when they erred, and on November 15, 1844, he published the following editorial:

\begin{quote}
We understand that the Principals of the Nashville Female Academy have recently suffered a dancing department to be established in connection with the institution. This we regret exceedingly. . . . we hereby pledge ourselves to throw the weight of our influence . . . against any institution with which any of our people are connected where such an injurious practice is tolerated. We humbly hope and most earnestly entreat the members of our Church to patronize no school, public or private, where the children are taught this sinful amusement.\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

In response to McFerrin’s attack, Elliott submitted a letter to the \textit{Nashville Christian Advocate}; that letter was published the following week (McFerrin was out of town at the time). In the letter, Elliott stated that the dancing school was not officially associated with the academy, but with the boardinghouse which he and Lapsley owned. He

\textsuperscript{67}From the beginning of the academy until 1843, the boardinghouse was owned by the academy and administered by a steward. In 1843, Lapsley and Elliott bought the boardinghouse and supervised its operation.

\textsuperscript{68}Windrow, "Collins D. Elliott," 83.
pointed out that it was the parents who had asked him to establish the dancing school; he did so to keep the students from going out into the city to take dancing classes.  

For several years the dancing controversy was fought bitterly. Lapsley, who had opposed the dancing school from the beginning, gave up his share of the boarding house and resigned as co-principal of the Nashville Female Academy. McFerrin continued his scathing attacks on Elliott and the academy. Elliott defended himself on the basis that the Bible, the laws of the church, and the writings of John Wesley supported his contention that dancing was not sinful if done as a form of exercise. The controversy reached a climax in 1858 after one of the Saturday night parties at the academy. At this party, the academy's black servants arranged the entertainment, which included a Virginia breakdown. Upon learning of this, McFerrin was outraged and called upon the Methodist Church to punish Elliott. Elliott withdrew from the Methodist Church, which responded by divesting him of his orders as a minister.

Despite the dancing controversy, the Nashville Female Academy was recognized as an institution based on Christian principles. Biblical instruction was a key component of classroom education at all levels. All students,

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69 Ibid., 83-84.

accompanied by a teacher, were required to attend the church to which their parents belonged. Chapel exercises were held daily in the morning and evening. Dr. John Todd Edgar and Dr. R. B. C. Howell, two of Nashville's most prominent religious leaders, observed that overall the academy's students were deeply pious and religious. In 1857, Elliott declared, "There have been in the last five years more conversions in the academy than in . . . any church in the city, if not all put together."  

By 1860 the Nashville Female Academy ranked among the most prestigious and successful schools in the South and was highly regarded as a center of learning. The academy's facilities were among the most modern in the nation. The campus was one of the safest and most healthful in the nation, a fact which the academy publicized frequently:

Rooms . . . all heated with steam and lighted with gas. Thus no danger of fire, either to the buildings or the clothes of Pupils. . . . But two deaths of Pupils here in more than 40 years . . . We have spent years at a time, without a case of sickness, serious enough to watch with through a night.  

Perhaps the success of the Nashville Female Academy can best be seen in the undying devotion to and love of "the old

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71Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 43-44.
72Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268.
73Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 44.
74Nashville Female Academy, Bulletin, February 1859, in Cooper Family Papers.
academy" expressed by many former students. One former student, not long after her graduation from the academy, declared:

I love these halls, desks, globes, maps, and school books, and that old Bible from which I have heard our beloved superintendents read so oft the morning and evening lessons; and I love that familiar old bell that has called us so faithfully to our studies; its tones are as the voice of an old acquaintance.  

Another former student, the wife of a Methodist minister, said years after the academy closed, "We there were taught and required to practice self-denial all the time, and yet hilarity, joyousness, and gladness were around us at all times." Through the influence it had on the lives of its students, the impact of the Nashville Female Academy was felt in Nashville was felt for decades after it closed in 1866.

Female Education in Nashville, 1817-1860

The success of female schools in Nashville during the first years of the nineteenth century encouraged the establishment of numerous schools for girls in the period from 1817 to 1860. The prosperity of the Nashville Female Academy also inspired the opening of other girls' schools. While ornamental learning continued to be an important part of the curriculum of most of these schools, increasing numbers of girls' schools focused on providing their

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75 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 46-47.

76 Clayton, History of Davidson County, 268-69.
students with a solid academic education.

One of the most famous schools for young ladies during the early part of this period was Mrs. Scott's Seminary for Young Ladies. Mrs. Scott opened her school on Cedar Street in 1824, and it remained open for seven years. Mrs. Scott offered a broad curriculum at her school. Instruction was provided in orthography, reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, composition, geography, astronomy, chronology, mythology, natural and moral philosophy, rhetoric, chemistry, and needlework, both useful and ornamental. Day students paid tuition of either fifteen, twelve, or ten dollars per session, depending on what level of study they pursued. For boarding students, tuition and board totalled fifty dollars per session. Assisting Mrs. Scott were T. V. Peticolas, who taught drawing, and Mrs. S. DeForges, who taught French.

Another prominent female school of the time was the Spring Street Female Institute, opened by Dr. Philip S. Fall in 1828. The institute was an immediate success and soon employed a faculty of five males and one female. The course of study was divided into four classes. Tuition was fifteen dollars per session for the lower two classes and twenty-five dollars for the upper two classes, with an extra charge for instruction in music, drawing, and French. Board was

77Crabb, *Personality of a City*, 199.

fifty-five dollars per session. In January 1830, the price of board and tuition was reduced.\textsuperscript{79} The following advertisement for the Spring Street Female Institute provides a glimpse of life at the school:

Young ladies are thoroughly instructed in the various plain and ornamental branches of Polite Literature . . . The government of the Seminary, is strict and uniform, but mild and parental. And, that the minds of its inmates may be exclusively devoted to the objects contemplated in its establishment, all participation in the amusements of the place [Nashville], is strictly prohibited.\textsuperscript{80}

Despite its early success, for unknown reasons the school closed sometime in 1830.\textsuperscript{81}

On February 18, 1852, the Tennessee General Assembly incorporated the Nashville Ladies College, which patterned itself after the Nashville Female Academy. The school chose Dr. R. A. Lapsley, former principal of the Nashville Female Academy, as its first president. Lapsley intended for the Nashville Ladies College to provide young women with the "power to guide the unfolding intellect in the path of honor and true greatness."\textsuperscript{82} He administered the school efficiently until he retired in 1855. Mrs. M. A. Knox

\textsuperscript{79}Crabb, \textit{Personality of a City}, 199; Wooldridge, \textit{History of Nashville}, 408.

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{National Banner and Nashville Whig}, January 6, 1829.

\textsuperscript{81}Crabb, \textit{Personality of a City}, 199.

\textsuperscript{82}Davenport, \textit{Cultural Life in Nashville}, 47.
succeeded him and ran the school until it closed in 1862.  

The Nashville Ladies College provided young ladies who sought an advanced education a less expensive alternative to the Nashville Female Academy. Tuition for one five-month session at the Nashville Ladies College was fifteen dollars for the Primary Department and twenty-five dollars for the Higher Departments. The cost of taking courses in the arts and foreign languages varied, depending on what the individual teacher charged. The level of instruction at the Nashville Ladies College was comparable to that at the Nashville Female Academy. Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, one of the state's most renowned educators, was professor of experimental philosophy, chemistry, mineralogy, geology, natural history, and botany. Although it never acquired as great a reputation as the Nashville Female Academy, the Nashville Ladies College was recognized as an excellent school.

Education of Blacks in Antebellum Nashville

As in the rest of the South, and much of the nation, in the years before the Civil War, Nashville offered few educational opportunities for its black residents. Many

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83Advertisement for Young Ladies' Seminary, Nashville Tennessee, in Robert Houston McEwen Papers, TSLA; Crabb, Personality of a City, 200.

84Advertisement for Young Ladies' Seminary, in McEwen Papers.

85Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 47.
whites, fearing that education might lead blacks to claim equality with whites, strongly opposed giving blacks even the slightest hint of an education. However, a few whites believed that blacks should have some opportunity to obtain a basic education. With or without white support, however, a small number of Nashville's black residents were determined to educate themselves and other members of their race. For almost a quarter of a century, they enjoyed some success.

Alphonso M. Sumner, a black barber, opened the first school for Nashville's black children in March 1833, with twenty students present. According to Daniel Wadkins, who served as Sumner's assistant and taught the school when Sumner had to attend to his barber shop, there was an "understanding that none but free children should attend." However, a few slaveholders permitted their slaves to attend the school. Six weeks after the school began, illness among the students forced Sumner to close it for two weeks. Before that time ended, Sumner was accused of sending letters to two fugitive slaves living in Detroit. As a result, he was "nearly whipped to death, and compelled to leave the State never to return." This incident intensified white opposition against schools for blacks.

For nearly five years the notion of establishing a

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school for Nashville's blacks lay dormant. Late in 1837, the municipal government raised the issue. On December 27, Mayor Henry Hollingsworth submitted a resolution allowing Nashville's free black residents to organize a school within the city limits. The Board of Aldermen voted to table the resolution, and at the next meeting of the Board, January 10, 1838, it was withdrawn from consideration.⁷ Although it did not pass, the proposal signalled that opposition to education for blacks had subsided somewhat.

After the failure of the resolution, Nashville's "most energetic free colored citizens got up a petition" asking permission to establish a school for free black children to be taught by a white man.⁸ A number of the city's leading white citizens endorsed the petition, and in January 1838 a school opened. John Yandle of Wilson County was selected to teach the school. Yandle taught his students to read and write, and he gave them some instruction in arithmetic and geography. However, according to Daniel Wadkins, "he could not teach them grammar."⁹ The number of students who attended this school averaged around thirty. Despite receiving support from some of Nashville's leading white citizens, Yandle was "threatened with violence more than

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⁷Minutes of the Nashville Board of Aldermen, December 27, 1837, and January 10, 1838, in Nagy Collection.

⁸Hubbard, History of Colored Schools, 5.

⁹Ibid.
once" for teaching blacks, but he did not back down. Two years after opening the school, however, Yandle found "business that paid better" and left the school.90

The success of Yandle's school encouraged the founding of other schools for blacks in the 1840s. In 1841, Sarah Porter opened a school in her home on Broad Street. Twenty-five students attended her school that first year. The next year, assisted by Daniel Wadkins, she taught a considerably larger number of students. In 1843, to accommodate the additional students, they moved this school to the house of John P. Sledge. In 1845 Mrs. Porter moved her school to another location, where it remained until she closed it in 1856.91 In 1843, Wadkins opened a school on Water Street near the jail. During this school's first year, the average attendance was thirty-five, and while the school was established for free black children, a number of slave children attended. Wadkins moved his school the next year and began to offer evening instruction. In the evening school, "very many of the young people acquired the rudiments of an English education."92 Between 1850 and 1855, Wadkins moved his school four times. Mrs. A. L. Tate, Rufus Conrad, and Mrs. S. Thomas also taught black children in the late 1840s, but only Mrs. Tate's school lasted more

90Ibid.
91Ibid., 6.
92Ibid., 5.
than a year.  

These schools were more successful than even their supporters had probably expected. By 1850, the literacy rate for Nashville's adult free black population may have approached 60 percent, which was high for an antebellum Southern city. That same year, one newspaper editor declared that the black schools were in "flourishing condition." The success of these schools did not go unnoticed by white opponents. In 1855 or 1856, a group of whites visited Wadkins at home one night and told him "not to teach that negro school another day." Wadkins replied that his school "was not against the law," but the whites answered that "the neighborhood objected, and if it is opened you [Wadkins] must look out for the consequences." Wadkins closed his school for a while, then reopened it in a new location the next year. After seven months, the captain of the police ordered Wadkins to close the school; Wadkins did so, this time permanently. Fears of a black insurrection led the city government to outlaw "schools for

93Ibid., 6.
94Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 152.
95Ibid.
96Hubbard, History of Colored Schools, 5-6. Wadkins' account, recorded in Hubbard, implies that the date was 1855, but Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 152, gives the date as 1856.
97Hubbard, History of Colored Schools, 6.
free blacks or slaves whether taught by whites or blacks," and any white person found to be teaching blacks would be fined fifty dollars. Despite the risk, in 1859 Rufus Conrad returned to Nashville to teach black children. The local authorities found about his school a few months later and closed it down. Conrad's school was the last to attempt to offer educational opportunities to Nashville's black residents before the Civil War.

**Antebellum Private Schools and Nashville's Educational Heritage**

Nashville's antebellum private schools played a key role in the city's development as the Athens of the South. The city's grammar schools educated most of its children in the days before public education, providing a barrier against rampant illiteracy and ignorance, which would have retarded the city's growth. Without the academies and classical schools, it is doubtful that Cumberland College and the University of Nashville, the foundations of the city's fame as an educational center, would have been able to find enough qualified students to maintain their high academic standards. The city's most famous private school, the Nashville Female Academy, also contributed to its reputation as a center of learning. Other private schools for females helped Nashville to have an unusually well

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99Ibid.
educated and well informed female population. Also, the attempts that were made to educate the city's black residents, although limited in effectiveness by white opposition, developed a small pool of educated blacks who would play a major role in developing a college for blacks after the Civil War, further strengthening Nashville's claim as the Athens of the South. Without its myriad of private schools, Nashville could not have earned its title as the Athens of the South.
CHAPTER THREE

HIGHER EDUCATION IN NASHVILLE, 1817-1860

Nashville's numerous private schools helped to make the city Tennessee's leading educational center, but it was through higher education that Nashville became one of the South's major centers of learning. Antebellum Nashville's most prestigious institution of higher learning, the University of Nashville (formerly Cumberland College), attracted students from throughout the South. Few Southern colleges matched its reputation for academic excellence. Although hampered by inadequate funds, the University of Nashville laid a foundation on which the city built its reputation as the Athens of the South.

The Revival of Cumberland College

At the time the Board of Trustees suspended operation of Cumberland College in October 1816, it planned to reopen the institution on November 1, 1817. However, by the time that date arrived the school's financial condition had not improved enough to allow it to resume operation. For more than three years the plans to revive the college lay dormant.

Although it appears that the college's financial
situation had not improved appreciably, early in 1821 the Board of Trustees announced that the school would reopen on the first Monday in December. James Priestley agreed to resume his duties as president of the college. The Board set tuition at fifteen dollars per five-month session, with the sessions ending on the first Monday in May and November. However, students would have to find lodging in private homes until the college could build a refectory.¹ Priestley's sudden death on February 6, 1821, temporarily brought the plan to reopen Cumberland College to a halt.²

After more than a year of inactivity following Priestley's death, the trustees again resolved to open the college. Throughout late 1822 and early 1823 they appealed to the citizens of Tennessee to provide the financial support necessary to establish Cumberland College as a first rate institution. As an example of their commitment, the trustees each contributed a substantial amount of money to the college. Thousands of people responded to the subscription drive, providing the college with enough money to bring its facilities up to date.³ The old college

¹Nashville Clarion, February 28, 1821. Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 385, gives the year as 1820. However, the evidence indicates that the year was 1821.

²Thweatt, "James Priestley," 438. Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 385, states that the institution "continued to flourish for a short time" after the death of Priestley. However, Wooldridge is referring to the preparatory school, not the college itself.

³Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 386.
building was enlarged, and a new refectory was built to provide dormitory space for students.⁴

One of the trustees' most pressing concerns was finding a president for the college. They sought for the position a man who was not only an excellent scholar but who also had the energy and enthusiasm to carry out numerous fundraising efforts and keep the college before the public eye. Their first choice was Dr. Horace Holley, president of Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky.⁵ They also expressed an interest in Dr. Philip Lindsley, acting president of the College of New Jersey. In 1823, both men rejected the job. However, in January 1824, Lindsley wrote to the trustees, "I begin to think . . . that Providence has destined me for the West."⁶ Encouraged by this modest display of interest, on April 26, 1824, the Board of Trustees selected Lindsley as president of Cumberland College and set the date of its reopening for November 3 of that year.⁷ Although the College of New Jersey had recently offered him its presidency, Lindsley accepted the position at Cumberland.

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⁴Kelton, "University of Nashville," 57; Laws of the University of Nashville (1840), 30-31.

⁵Crabb, Personality of a City, 175-76.


⁷Crabb, Personality of a City, 176; Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 386-87.
Why did Philip Lindsley accept the presidency of a fledgling college which had been closed for eight years when he could have presided over one of the nation's oldest and most established colleges? To begin with, he felt shackled by the Board of Trustees of the College of New Jersey, which he felt had an indifferent attitude toward the college's educational needs. He saw a "greater prospect of success" at Cumberland College because distinguished men who were truly concerned with the educational needs of the college made up its Board of Trustees. He also saw in Cumberland College a challenge to his ambitions and ingenuity.

Commenting on the educational needs of the Southwest, Lindsley said, "Throughout the immense valley of the Lower Mississippi, there exists not a single college. . . . The time has arrived when they must have the means of education at their own doors, or be deprived of its benefits altogether."  

The new president began his duties as soon as he learned of his selection. In July, although still serving as acting president of the College of New Jersey, Lindsley issued an appeal to the citizens of Tennessee for funds to

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8Haunton, "Education and Democracy," 133-35. After two years at Cumberland College Lindsley would say that it was far ahead of the College of New Jersey in its quality of instruction and the way it was governed.

9Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 4.

10Haunton, "Education and Democracy," 132.
relieve Cumberland's still great financial burden. He immediately encountered problems that would plague his fundraising efforts throughout his career in Nashville. Because Cumberland College was "to be a christian, but not a sectarian institution," it could not rely on one particular denomination for support, as many other colleges could. He also learned that a large number of Tennesseans, including several members of the General Assembly, opposed higher education, believing that it served the educational desires of the privileged class at the expense of the education of the working class and the poor. For over a quarter of a century he would labor strenuously, largely in vain, to disprove this idea.

Because of illness in his family, Lindsley did not arrive in Nashville until Christmas Eve, delaying the opening of the college by about two months. He brought with him approximately fifteen hundred books to add to the college's library, which contained only about a hundred. Soon after the beginning of 1825 (probably on the first Monday in January), Cumberland College reopened after being closed for just over eight years. Enrollment on the first day of classes was twenty-eight, and seven more students

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11 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 5.
12 Nashville Whig, February 21, 1825.
13 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 103-104.
Student Life at Cumberland College

Student life at Cumberland College under Lindsley was as thoroughly regulated as it had been under Priestley. In 1825 the college published its rules and required all students to read them and sign a paper in which they "solemnly promised to obey" them. Students who disobeyed any rule were subject to "mild and equitable" punishment which aimed at the "reformation of the offender." Seven levels of punishment were established: (1) private admonition by any college official, (2) admonition before the entire faculty, (3) formal admonition before the offender's class, (4) public admonition before the entire student body, (5) suspension for a limited, definite period, (6) suspension for an indefinite period, and (7) formal and public expulsion. Only the Board of Trustees could expel a student.

The rules covered nearly every aspect of student life. Students were expected to be "plain and economical" in their dress and to appear "neat and cleanly" at all times. They had to attend morning and evening prayers in the college

14Crabb, Personality of a City, 176.

15Laws of Cumberland College, in Nashville, Tennessee: Enacted by the Board of Trustees (Nashville: Printed at the Office of the Whig, 1825), 8.

16Ibid., 9.

17Ibid., 4.
chapel daily and the church designated by their parents on Sundays. Other than to attend church, students could not leave the campus on Sundays. Students who were convicted of any criminal offense were expelled, and those found guilty of any "gross immoralities or impieties" were punished according to the "heinousness of the offence." They were strictly prohibited from keeping liquor or weapons in their rooms and could not go to a tavern without permission from a faculty member. Students were expected to avoid the company of "persons of notoriously bad character." During study hours, students had to maintain "perfect silence." While the college was in session, students could not attend "any unlawful or expensive amusement" nor go more than two miles from campus without permission.  

Students had to live in the dormitory unless they lived with their parents or other relatives, a family designated by their parents or guardians and approved by the trustees, or a faculty member. All students who lived in the dormitory were required to dine with the steward in the refectory. When the summons for each meal was given, the students were to go "peaceably" to the door of the dining hall and wait for a professor or tutor. Upon entering the dining hall, students went to their assigned places and stood "in perfect silence" until the presiding officer asked the blessing. After the meal the presiding officer rose,

Ibid., 14-19.
followed by all the students, and gave thanks for the meal. The students then left the dining hall "without noise or disorder." No student could leave the table before the meal was dismissed without permission from one of the officers who was present.\(^{19}\)

Lindsley and the trustees, dedicated to maintaining a scholarly environment, enforced the rules strictly and sometimes harshly. Nevertheless, violations appear to have occurred frequently. Most of the infractions were minor and punished lightly. However, students occasionally committed severe offenses, such as cheating, breaking curfew, sexual immorality, and possessing a weapon on campus. Students guilty of such activities were punished harshly, usually by expulsion. In an attempt to prevent students from breaking the rules, professors took turns patrolling the campus and the city at night to make sure no students were out.\(^{20}\)

**Academics at Cumberland College**

Under Lindsley's guidance, Cumberland College endeavored to provide the highest quality of education possible. To enhance the college's academic environment, he sought the most talented students and professors available. Like his predecessor, Philip Lindsley believed that a

\(^{19}\)Ibid., 13.

\(^{20}\)Crabb, *Personality of a City*, 179, states that expulsions of students occurred frequently. Although he is describing the University of Nashville, it is likely that Lindsley and the trustees were just as strict when the institution was Cumberland College.
classical education was the best kind. Throughout his career he stressed that education should be sought as a great good in itself, not as a tool for some utilitarian purpose. 21

Cumberland College employed strict requirements for admission to ensure that only students who were intelligent, devoted to their studies, and of the highest integrity entered the college. The college expected prospective students to have a strong background in classical learning:

Candidates for admission into the Freshman class, are expected to be accurately acquainted with the Grammar, including prosody, of the Greek and Latin tongues, with Mair's Introduction . . . Caesar's Commentaries, Virgil, Cicero's Orations, Greek Testament and Dalzel's Collectanea Graeca Minora, or with other Greek and Latin authors, equivalent to these; and also with English Grammar, Arithmetic, and Geography. 22

Applicants who had attended another college or university were required to produce a letter from the president or a faculty member of their previous institution certifying that the applicant had "left it without censure." Before being admitted, students had to "furnish satisfactory testimonials of . . . good moral character." Applicants who had participated in a duel, either as a principal or a second, were denied admission. 23

Students who met the rigorous admissions standards

22 Laws of Cumberland College (1825), 7.
23 Ibid.
found a challenging curriculum awaiting them. The entire curriculum was prescribed, with all the following courses required for graduation: Algebra, Elements of Geometry, Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, Descriptive Geometry, Conic Sections, Analytical Geometry, Differential and Integral Calculus, Mensuration, Surveying, Navigation, Mechanics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Experimental Philosophy, Natural History, Roman and Grecian Antiquities, Rhetoric and Belles-lettres, History and Chronology, Greek and Latin Classics, Moral Philosophy, Logic, Political Economy, Philosophy of Mind, Principles of Natural and Political Law, Composition, Oratory, Criticism, Natural Theology, Evidences of the Christian Religion, and the Holy Scriptures.  

Students who wished to learn French, Spanish, or Italian could do so by attending courses taught by the professor of modern languages. Because these optional courses might interfere with their regular coursework, students were required to obtain the consent of their parents or guardians as well as that of the faculty to enroll in them.

The college administration expected students to take their studies seriously:

Every student shall diligently apply himself to such studies as shall be proscribed by his teacher, and shall be careful not to be absent from any recitation of his class . . .

When a student is absent from recitation, without

24Ibid., 10; Kelton, "University of Nashville," 192.

25Laws of Cumberland College (1825), 11.
the permission of his instructor, he shall be called to an account for it . . . if a student be frequently absent, he shall be reported to the faculty, and be subjected to such punishment as they may judge necessary.26

To encourage students to develop proper study habits, the college established study hours, during which time students were required to remain in their rooms "unless called . . . to recite, or by some urgent necessity, of which he shall always be ready to give an account to any officer of the College who may observe his absence." Study hours took up most of the day outside of mealtimes; they were from sunrise until breakfast, nine until noon, two until five in the afternoon, and during the winter from eight until bedtime.27

To make sure students properly observed study hours, college officials reserved the right to enter students' rooms at any time.28

The college did not limit the educational experience of the students to study hours and class recitations. With Lindsley's permission, on May 6, 1825, a group of students formed two literary societies, the Carroll Literary Society and the DeWitt Clinton Literary Society.29 The literary societies met regularly to read current literature, present orations, and engage in debates. Occasionally the two

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26Ibid., 10.
27Ibid.
28Ibid., 5.
societies held a joint debate; winning a debate against the rival society was a source of great pride. Another way the college broadened the students' educational experience was to have students give orations before the student body and faculty each evening (except for Sundays and holidays) after prayer time. Lindsley arranged the schedule so that every student would deliver at least one oration during the term. To make sure that students spoke on topics that were intellectually stimulating, the president approved all orations in advance.30

One of the key components of Lindsley's commitment to academic excellence at Cumberland College was the selection of professors who were excellent scholars and teachers. Lindsley himself taught a full course load, which consisted of at least five classes which met six days a week.31 George McGehee, who taught mathematics and natural philosophy, and Nathaniel Cross, who taught ancient languages and literature, were the other professors.32 The president and trustees chose young men, usually ones who had just earned their bachelor's degrees, to serve as tutors. Tutors assisted professors in all their duties and had the

30Laws of Cumberland College (1825), 12.
31Crabb, Personality of a City, 178.
32Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 392; Crabb, Personality of a City, 178.
primary responsibility for monitoring student behavior.\textsuperscript{33} Some tutors eventually obtained regular faculty positions.

\textbf{Cumberland College Becomes the University of Nashville}

Philip Lindsley's goal was to build Cumberland College into a university that would rank with Europe's best. In 1825 that goal seemed unreachable. Nevertheless, with the motto, "Let us aim at perfection," he devoted his full efforts to achieving his lofty goal.\textsuperscript{34} According to Lindsley's plan, the university would consist of six colleges with twenty-five instructors and would accommodate six hundred students. Each college would manage its own internal affairs, and a \textit{Senatus Academicus} would administer the university as a whole. He estimated that his plan would cost $200,000 to implement. The Board of Trustees supported Lindsley's plan and in 1825 purchased a 120 acre farm to be the site of the university.\textsuperscript{35}

Lindsley realized that his plan would succeed only if a large number of Tennesseans, particularly Nashvillians, supported it. He began a vigorous public relations campaign intended to explain to the people of Tennessee how higher

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Laws of Cumberland College} (1825), 6-7. To help them do the latter more effectively, they were required to live and dine with the students.

\textsuperscript{34}Davenport, \textit{Cultural Life in Nashville}, 10.

education would benefit the entire state. To people who argued that education beyond the primary level was useless and aristocratic he addressed the following:

Far be it from me to utter a syllable in opposition to primary schools. They are indispensable . . . But the best mode of encouraging and multiplying these is carefully to foster the higher seminaries -- because the latter must or ought to furnish teachers to the former. . . . Wherever colleges abound, there is no difficulty in providing teachers for all the academies and schools in their vicinity.36

To the citizens of Nashville, particularly the city's merchants, Lindsley emphasized that a flourishing college would greatly add to the city's prosperity:

[The citizens of Nashville] will chiefly reap the immediate benefit of the pecuniary expenditure which must necessarily follow the establishment of a flourishing literary institution in their village. Every student who comes from abroad will contribute to the wealth and prosperity of this people. New Haven derives a revenue of between two and three hundred thousand dollars annually from her students. . . . it would be greatly to your interest to advance the whole sum necessary to insure complete success to your college.37

Lindsley's efforts succeeded moderately. A considerable number of citizens joined the trustees in contributing money to the college; some gave substantial amounts. The Nashville Whig praised the "incessant exertion" of Philip Lindsley and those who by supporting Cumberland College helped "Tennessee assume her proper

36Halsey, Works of Philip Lindsley, 1:79.
37Ibid., 1:88.
intellectual rank among her sister states." However, Lindsley warned the college's supporters that much more work needed to be done before Cumberland College could "attain to a rank equal to her sister institutions." The total contributed fell far short of that needed to make Lindsley's dream a reality, but enough had been given to begin the process.

On October 5, 1826, the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to request the General Assembly to change the name of Cumberland College to the University of Tennessee. The committee soon submitted the request, which caused a great deal of controversy in the legislature, especially in the Senate. On November 11 the trustees amended the request, changing the proposed new name from the University of Tennessee to the University of Nashville; the trustees may have received word that the proposal would not pass without the revision. After bitter debate, the General Assembly approved the change on November 27, 1826 -- Cumberland College had become the University of Nashville.

The creation of the University of Nashville was the first step in Lindsley's plan to build a great university in

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38*Nashville Whig*, June 25, 1825.


40Kelton, "University of Nashville," 45-54, discusses in detail the debate over the change.

Nashville. However, he realized that the university's financial condition would not permit him to advance his plan without substantial help from the state or the private sector. In an address at the first commencement of the University of Nashville on October 4, 1827, Lindsley reaffirmed his commitment to establishing an incomparable university and called on the people of Tennessee to provide him with the necessary means to do so:

Now I venture to assert, that, our infant university might be made, in five years, superior to any and to all the colleges in our country -- if the people will but decree it. . . . Buildings, books, apparatus, teachers, constitute the principal expensive ingredients of a university: and money can command them all . . . Upon the virgin soil of Tennessee, then, may be reared a seminary, which shall eclipse . . . all other institutions -- if her sons will but prove true to themselves and faithful to future generations. . . . Here let us erect a university, so decidedly and confessedly superior in every department, that a rival or competitor need not be feared. . . . PERFECTION should be our motto and our aim, however much we may ultimately fail of attaining it.42

Despite the university's shortness of money it quickly established a solid reputation in the area. The National Banner and Nashville Whig, referring to the University of Nashville, declared, "The cause of learning has advanced amongst us . . . with a steady, if not accelerated pace."43

Academics at the University of Nashville

Under Philip Lindsley's leadership, the University of Nashville enjoyed an exalted academic reputation. The

43National Banner and Nashville Whig, January 2, 1829.
university continued the tradition begun by its predecessor of providing a challenging classical curriculum in a solemn, scholarly environment. Although the university constantly suffered from inadequate funding, Lindsley assembled a faculty made up of eminent scholars. These professors demanded that their students wholeheartedly commit themselves to their studies; students who failed to do so did not last long at the University of Nashville. Every year the university graduated a number of young men who later attained positions of great responsibility and leadership. At one point during the 1850s, twenty-eight members of Congress were alumni of the University of Nashville.44

Lindsley maintained the same high admission standards for the University of Nashville that he had for Cumberland College.45 Even though the stringent entrance requirements kept enrollment low, Lindsley and the trustees refused to lower them. In 1848, at a time when the university desperately needed to increase enrollment as a means of bringing in more money, the trustees reaffirmed their commitment to graduating only superior students:

... it is important that no students should be admitted into the University for the mere purpose of increasing the numbers, unless they are qualified from

44Aaron M. Boom, ed., "A Student at the University of Nashville: Correspondence of John Donelson Coffee, 1830-1833," THQ 16 (June 1957), 142.
45Supra, 77.
their attainments & moral standing to do honor to the University, and that the examinations [both entrance and final] should be strict & rigid.  

While relatively few students met the university's admission requirements, those who did usually exceeded the standards by a considerable margin. Entering students could be admitted to an advanced class if the faculty judged them to be "equal to the class for which [they] shall be a candidate." Most students who did qualify for admission to the university also qualified for admission to a higher class. An 1850 report by a committee of the Board of Trustees stated that most new students entered the junior class and that usually two-thirds of the student body were juniors or seniors.

The library played a major role in the university's academic life. Students and faculty relied on the books and other materials in its collection to prepare class assignments or lessons and conduct research. All students paid a fee of two dollars per session for access to the library. However, the university did not limit access to faculty and students. Residents of Nashville could pay three dollars each session for the privilege of using the

46Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of Nashville, May 20, 1848, microfilm, TSLA; originals in Vanderbilt University Library, Nashville.


48Kelton, "University of Nashville," 93-94.
university library. Also, the university's trustees could borrow books free of charge for up to eight weeks at a time, and anyone who donated one hundred dollars in cash, books, or other library materials received lifetime borrowing privileges. However, no one could take a book more than two miles from the college without permission from the Board of Trustees. The books' size determined how many books could be checked out, how long they could be checked out, and the amount of the fine for overdue books. By 1850 the number of volumes in the university library had increased from around 1,500 immediately after Lindsley's arrival in 1825 to 3,594 in 1850.  

The curriculum of the University of Nashville changed little while Lindsley was president. The prescribed course of study for the university was the same as that of Cumberland College. In 1828, however, Lindsley made a significant change in the required curriculum, adding Minerology and Geology when Dr. Gerard Troost, an expert in those two fields, joined the faculty. In 1836 the Board

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49 *Laws of the University of Nashville* (1835), 21-23.

50 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 104. *Laws of the University of Nashville* (1840), 30, states that in 1839 the libraries of the university and of the two literary societies together contained about nine thousand volumes, but it is not known how many volumes each entity owned.

51 Supra, 78.

52 *Laws of the University of Nashville* (1835), 10; Kelton, "University of Nashville," 93, 97.
of Trustees created a professorship of anatomy and physiology and hired Dr. Thomas R. Jennings to fill the position. Neither course was required for graduation, but students could elect to take them for personal enrichment.

Throughout Lindsley's tenure as president, the University of Nashville had a distinguished faculty. The most respected member of the faculty was Troost, who enjoyed an international reputation as a geologist and minerologist. Initially, Troost's contract exempted him from patrol duty after hours, but he agreed to do his share after his colleagues requested that the Board of Trustees either assign him a portion of the disciplinary duties or reduce his salary accordingly. In addition to being an excellent scholar, Troost was a superb teacher; many of his students said that their contact with him was the most valuable experience of their lives. Troost served as professor of chemistry, minerology, and geology from 1828 until his death in 1850. Other professors who had long

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53 Minutes of the University of Nashville, May 2, 1836. The university did not pay this professor's salary; his income came from the fees students paid to attend his lectures. It is not known how long Jennings remained in this position or if he ever held any class meetings. Kelton, "University of Nashville," 134.


55 Crabb, *Personality of a City*, 179.

56 Glen, "Gerard Troost," 76.
careers at the University of Nashville were Nathaniel Cross, who served as professor of ancient languages from 1826 to 1831 and from 1838 until 1850, and James Hamilton, who taught mathematics and natural philosophy from 1827 until 1829, 1831 until 1835, and 1838 to 1849. In addition to his administrative duties, Lindsley taught classes in philosophy, religion, literature, and history.

The professors did an excellent job of disseminating knowledge to their students. One person who had recently moved to Nashville attended the 1834 examinations and was "very much pleased with the information and accuracy which the young gentlemen displayed." The professors also encouraged their students to strive to master whatever subjects they studied. Some students took this advice perhaps a bit too seriously; one wrote, "I do not know as much about Geometry as I ought to know., and I fear very much that I never will rival Euclid or Archimedes." Another student described the methods one professor used in teaching mathematics:

Mr. Tompson [John Thomson, who taught mathematics and natural philosophy in 1830 and 1831] gives us from ten to twelve propositions at a lesson, the time for getting this lesson is at night & on friday morning till eleven & on saturday morning untill ten o'clock

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57 Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 392.

58 Nashville Republican and State Gazette, September 27, 1834.

59 Jethro Petyon Gatlin, Diary, January 27, 1842, in TSLA.
when we go to the recitation room, there is here a large black board some one is called out to do the first proposition he who is called upon goes to the black board and draws the figures and explains it to the class, and if one of us does not succeed in explaining his proposition he is laughed at.60

In August 1849, with the University of Nashville in dire financial condition, Lindsley proposed a radical change in the university's academic organization designed to make the university "virtually self-sustaining."61 His plan, entitled "Hints for a Plan of University Studies," would replace the four traditional classes (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) with five separate, self-sustaining departments or schools, each headed by a professor. The five schools were Ancient Languages; Mathematics and Natural Philosophy; Chemistry, Geology, and Minerology (including Natural History); Ethics and Belles-lettres (including Political Economy, Rhetoric, Logic, Metaphysics, Constitutional and International Law, History, and Evidences of Christianity); and Modern Languages. To earn a degree, students would have to complete the course of study in all the schools except Modern Languages; however, at the discretion of the Board of Trustees, students could use proficiency in Modern Languages to make up for deficiencies in another school. Students who did not complete the requirements for a degree but who completed the curriculum

60Boom, "Student at the University of Nashville," 148.
61Kelton, "University of Nashville," 86.
in one, two, or three schools would receive a certificate of scholarship.\textsuperscript{62} Two months later the Board voted to implement the plan the following year, but the university suspended operation before it went into effect.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{Student Life at the University of Nashville}

The basic rules of student conduct outlined in the 1825 \textit{Laws of Cumberland College} governed student behavior throughout Lindsley's administration. However, Lindsley's efforts to create a scholarly environment at the University of Nashville by weeding out students who had more interest in merrymaking than in their studies did not always succeed. For instance, William Giles Harding, who later became the wealthiest man in Nashville, enrolled in the university in the late 1820s but withdrew after finding his classmates to be "very wild."\textsuperscript{64} In an 1830 letter to his father, John Donelson Coffee described some of his fellow students:

I have become acquainted with several other young men of very study habits . . . but I find some (but few) bad boys . . . some of the young men with whom I became acquainted pointed them out to me and advised me to be formal toward them, or they would be a great pest to me.\textsuperscript{65}

Most students avoided committing serious infractions, as

\textsuperscript{62}Minutes of the University of Nashville, September 7, 1849.


\textsuperscript{64}Crabb, \textit{Personality of a City}, 179.

\textsuperscript{65}Boom, "Student at the University of Nashville," 146.
Lindsley's propensity to request the Board of Trustees to expel students who engaged in wild activities was matched by the Board's willingness to comply with his requests. Despite his strict enforcement of the rules, Lindsley did not oppose fun and recreation at all times. The social highlight of the school year was the annual Commencement Ball given for the seniors by the underclassmen near the end of the academic year.66

Students continued to combine academic life and social life through the literary societies. In 1827 the DeWitt Clinton Society changed its name to the Agatheridan Society. In 1831 the Carroll Literary Society followed suit, changing its name to the Erosophian Literary Society. The literary societies continued to focus on reading current literature and sharpening their members' oratorical skills. The highlight of the school year for the two societies was the annual debate held between them. After the debate a special guest speaker addressed the two groups.67

Religion was an important aspect of student life at the University of Nashville. Although the university was nonsectarian it was committed to promoting Christianity. Lindsley taught courses entitled the Holy Scriptures and Evidences of the Christian Religion. The president and

66 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 108. At all other times students were forbidden to attend balls and dances.

trustees expected students to conduct themselves as proper Christians at all times. In an 1831 letter to his mother, John Donelson Coffee described religious life at the University of Nashville:

We have every evening prayers in the chapel . . . on the first evening of the session we chose which church we would go too accordingly a monitor was appointed to each church who marked every one absent from his church and on monday evening Dr. Lindsley called on those absent for their excuse if they have none & it frequently happens that any one is absent he is reproved for it and if so very often they are suspended or reported at the examination.  

The University of Nashville's Finances

Throughout Philip Lindsley's tenure at the University of Nashville, the school's finances provided him with his greatest problems. The university's weak fiscal condition served as a constant roadblock to his goal of making the University of Nashville the best in the nation. On many occasions the trustees had to provide money so the university could meet its expenses, and once the Board was forced to borrow four thousand dollars from Lindsley to operate the university. Lindsley and the trustees tried to strengthen the university's financial health in various ways, none of which succeeded.

The major source of the university's financial problems was the state's failure to collect and distribute the money

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68Boom, "Student at the University of Nashville," 149-50.

69Kelton, "University of Nashville," 76-77.
due the university according to the terms of the 1806 land agreement.\textsuperscript{70} In 1829, the General Assembly attempted to resolve the situation by granting each of the two beneficiaries of the 1806 agreement, the University of Nashville and East Tennessee College, half of a township south of the Hiwassee River. In return, the two institutions would relinquish their claims to the lands granted them in 1806. Neither school agreed to this solution.\textsuperscript{71} Seven years later, the Board of Trustees of the University of Nashville offered to go along with the 1829 resolution on the condition that the legislature grant the university the state's stock in the Union Bank of Tennessee, which was worth about half a million dollars, and cede to the university the lands set aside for the Lunatic Hospital.\textsuperscript{72} The state did not accept the university's offer.

The land dispute continued until 1838. That year the General Assembly set aside half a township in the Ocoee District for each of the two colleges. In return for this land, the colleges would relinquish all their claims against the settlers of the disputed lands. Under pressure from the legislature, on April 20, 1838, the Board of Trustees agreed

\textsuperscript{70}Supra, 21-22.

\textsuperscript{71}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 80-81.

\textsuperscript{72}Minutes of the University of Nashville, January 2, 1836.
to this proposal. Soon thereafter the Board sold the half township for forty thousand dollars, providing the university with the only cash endowment it ever had.\textsuperscript{73}

The university's leaders tried to find other ways to improve its financial condition. In 1826 the General Assembly authorized the university to raise up to $200,000 through a lottery.\textsuperscript{74} From 1827 until 1832 the trustees negotiated with several lottery firms, but no agreement was ever reached.\textsuperscript{75} In 1835 the Board, believing that the university could earn substantial profits by operating a bank, applied to the state for a bank charter. The proposed bank would be called the Nashville University Bank and have a total capital of one million dollars.\textsuperscript{76} The Board did not specify how it would obtain the necessary capital. Lacking confidence in the university's ability to operate a bank, the state denied the Board's application.\textsuperscript{77} Lindsley constantly addressed the people of Tennessee, exhorting them to contribute money for the support of their university. Had he actually engaged in personal solicitation for funds instead of relying on dignified addresses to large audiences

\textsuperscript{73}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 83.

\textsuperscript{74}Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, \textit{History of Tennessee}, 1:444.

\textsuperscript{75}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 76.

\textsuperscript{76}Minutes of the University of Nashville, November 6, 1835.

\textsuperscript{77}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 82.
he would have been more likely to raise the money necessary to build his ideal university."78

An examination of a detailed financial statement compiled by the trustees in August 1849 for the 1848-1849 school year clearly reveals the extent of the university's financial difficulties. The balance sheet listed total assets of $142,322.44 and total liabilities of $15,392.50, resulting in a net worth of $126,929.94. The income statement more fully revealed the university's financial distress. For the 1848-1849 school year the university's income was $5,935.00, but expenditures totalled $7,200.00, resulting in an operating deficit of $1,265.00 for the year.79 However, because the university had few liquid assets, converting its assets into cash to cover the deficit proved to be difficult. If this pattern occurred over a period of several years, as appeared likely, at some point in the future the university would be forced to close. That point came sooner than expected.

The Resignation of Philip Lindsley and the University of Nashville's Suspension of Operation, 1850

During the 1840s the University of Nashville was in a period of great distress. Enrollment, which had never been high, fell drastically during the decade. The campus was


79 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 84-85.
outdated. A cholera epidemic in 1849 ravaged the student body and faculty, leaving parents reluctant to send their sons to the university to be educated. And opposition to Philip Lindsley, which had been present since his arrival in Nashville in 1825, flared into widespread open hostility. The only certainty concerning the University of Nashville as 1850 opened was that the university could not continue without making major changes.

As the decade of the 1850s opened, many Nashvillians blamed the University of Nashville's problems on a bloated Board of Trustees that had grown complacent and a Yankee president who did not understand the special nature of the South. One citizen clearly expressed the beliefs of this group in suggesting how to improve the university:

Select a president from the South or West, of sound active mind, a well balanced head, which will give him common sense about everything, a man of firmness, of urbanity, and a dash of chivalry in his composition. One who understands well the subject of our domestic Institution of slavery, because the Southern States are the largest fields for patronage. It is not necessary that he should be learned in books, nor a Professor of any of the different creeds of religion.

This person also recommended that the number of trustees be reduced from twenty-one to twelve and that new buildings,

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80 For twenty years the trustees had wanted to move the campus to the 120 acre tract purchased in 1825. On several occasions the Board had voted to do so, but no action was ever taken.

81 Many of Lindsley's detractors disliked him because he was a Northerner.

82 Daily Union, October 23, 1849.
including facilities for schools of medicine and law, be constructed.\textsuperscript{83}

By 1850 Lindsley knew that he had expected too much from the people of Tennessee. He realized that most Tennesseans did not value higher education; in fact, many strongly opposed colleges and universities. His single minded efforts to make the University of Nashville one of the world's best institutions of higher learning had made him many enemies throughout the state. After twenty-five years of hard work he was as far from achieving his goals for the university as he had ever been. Convinced that the university could no longer carry on under his leadership, in early March 1850 he announced his resignation as president.

The students and trustees of the university did not share Lindsley's view that the university needed new leadership. On March 4, the senior class responded to the announcement of Lindsley's resignation by adopting the following resolution:

1st. We do earnestly petition our honored President, that he will at least, if consistent with his own feelings, retain his office until the graduation of the present Senior Class.

2ndly. That he has ever conducted himself toward us as an able and efficient President, and in a manner which has endeared him to the hearts of each and every one of us.

3rdly. That he is undeserving the calumniations with which he has been assailed, and that his merit is only unappreciated, because unknown.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84}Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, March 5, 1850.
On March 26, the Board of Trustees unanimously requested that Lindsley withdraw his resignation. 85 Moved by the feelings expressed by the students and the Board, Lindsley withdrew his resignation on April 2, delaying the inevitable. 86

During the summer of 1850 it became obvious that the university would be unable to continue. Because of the cholera epidemic the previous year, no new students had applied for the 1850 summer session. Lindsley again announced his resignation, effective following the commencement exercises in October. The death of the university's most distinguished professor, Gerard Troost, on August 14 was another blow. 87 In early September the Board of Trustees had little alternative but to appoint a committee to discuss suspending operation of the university. On September 14, 1850, the committee recommended that the university suspend operation until January 1, 1852, for the following reasons: (1) at the end of the current session only one professor would remain on the faculty; (2) the number of students would be so small that tuition fees, in addition to other income, would be insufficient to meet operating costs; (3) the buildings were in poor condition; and (4) there was not enough time before the next session to

85 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 180.
86 Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, April 2, 1850.
87 Glen, "Gerard Troost," 72.
"make judicious selections" of a president and faculty. A week later, the trustees adopted the committee's recommendations and hired Dr. John Berrien Lindsley, son of the retiring president, to serve as curator of the university's property until it reopened.

On October 2, 1850, Philip Lindsley performed his final duty as president of the University of Nashville by presiding over the commencement exercises. Although falling far short of achieving his lofty goals for the University of Nashville, Lindsley had successfully laid a solid foundation for an institution that would eventually become the "cornerstone of the educational prominence of Nashville." These commencement exercises also marked the end of the University of Nashville as it had existed since 1826.

The Medical Department of the University of Nashville

At the time of the University of Nashville's chartering by the state of Tennessee in the fall of 1826 a group of Nashville physicians made the first attempt to establish a medical school associated with the university. The physicians requested that the Board of Trustees determine if doing so was feasible at the time. On January 9, 1827, the Board declared that establishing a medical school was

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88 Minutes of the University of Nashville, September 14, 1850.

89 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 211.

90 Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 20.
"inexpedient" at that time. However, Philip Lindsley strongly supported the idea, declaring in his 1829 commencement address that Tennessee needed a "Medical School, which may be regarded as an essential and as the most important part of a great university." He added, "If Tennessee then is to have such a school, it must be established in Nashville." In 1835 the issue arose again, and the trustees announced that the university would organize a medical school "as soon as circumstances will justify the measure."

The idea of establishing a medical school lay dormant until December 9, 1843, when the Board appointed a committee to determine the "propriety" of doing so. On February 8, 1844, the committee recommended that the university establish a medical school. On February 17, President Lindsley submitted his plan for a medical school. The medical school would be controlled by the University Board of Trustees but would not receive any money from the university. The plan stipulated that only persons who had reached the age of twenty-one and had either earned a

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93Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 10.
94National Banner and Nashville Whig, February 11, 1835.
95Clayton, History of Davidson County, 288.
bachelor's degree or were "found to be adequately acquainted with classical literature and the liberal sciences" would be admitted into the program.\textsuperscript{96} Two days later the Board appointed a medical faculty, but the medical school never went into operation, largely because Lindsley set standards so high that they were impractical.\textsuperscript{97}

Seven years passed before a medical school became a reality in Nashville. By 1849 public support for a medical school had become so widespread that the university commenced planning to establish one, even though it barely had the resources to remain open itself. On November 13, 1849, the General Assembly passed legislation creating the Medical College of the University of Nashville. Perhaps reflecting concerns about the Board's management of the university, the legislature formed a separate Board of Trustees to govern the medical school initiating a conflict between the university's trustees and the trustees of the medical school.\textsuperscript{98} On January 21, 1851, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the two entities were independent

\textsuperscript{96}Minutes of the University of Nashville, February 17, 1844.

\textsuperscript{97}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 137-38. At this time the requirement that entering medical students have a bachelor's degree was almost unheard of. Also, the fact that the Board would control the medical school while not providing it with financial support hurt the venture.

\textsuperscript{98}Acts of Tennessee, 1849-1850, Chapter LXVIII, 222-23.
of each other, settling the dispute.99

While the controversy between the two Boards awaited settlement, the situation became more complicated as a group of Nashville's leading physicians announced their intention to organize a medical school. During the winter of 1849-1850, Dr. John Berrien Lindsley observed medical schools in Louisville, Philadelphia, and New York. Upon returning to Nashville, Lindsley presented a plan for a medical school affiliated with the University of Nashville to Dr. Charles K. Winston, one of the city's most influential physicians. Winston agreed to back the plan and enlisted the support of other doctors.100 On August 30, 1850, Lindsley presented his plan to Return J. Meigs, one of the university's trustees. Meigs, who favored the plan, played a key role in winning the support of the other trustees.101 By September, Drs. William K. Bowling, A. H. Buchanan, Robert Porter, and John M. Watson had joined Lindsley and Winston in organizing the school. This "club" met frequently to discuss Lindsley's plan and make necessary changes. In late September they finalized their plan and unanimously selected Bowling to present it to the University Board of Trustees.102

99Daily Nashville Union, January 23, 1851.

100Windrow, John Berrien Lindsley, 32-33; Kelton, "University of Nashville," 220.

101John Berrien Lindsley, Diary, August 30, 1850, in TSLA.

102Kelton, "University of Nashville," 221-22.
On September 28, 1850, Bowling presented the revised Lindsley plan to the trustees. According to the plan, the trustees would loan the university's buildings to the medical school for a period of twenty years, the physicians would fund and control the school, and any new buildings constructed by the medical school would be the "absolute property of the University," as would the medical apparatus and library.\(^{103}\) Bowling explained to the trustees why the doctors wished to retain absolute control over the medical school:

\textit{First.}--Because experience and the history of similar institutions show that this power is safest with those most deeply interested; and

\textit{Secondly.}--Because this will be an enterprise in which we will have invested no inconsiderable sum of money, and would, on that account, desire to be untrammeled in the management of it.\(^{104}\)

On October 11, the Board approved the plan but fixed the term for the loan of the university's buildings to the medical school at twenty-two years. The trustees also appointed the six doctors who had helped shape the plan to the medical faculty.\(^{105}\)

Immediately after the Board approved the plan the medical faculty put it into operation. They created two offices, the president and the dean, to govern the medical

\(^{103}\)Windrow, \textit{John Berrien Lindsley}, 34-35.

\(^{104}\)Clayton, \textit{History of Davidson County}, 289.

\(^{105}\)Kelton, "\textit{University of Nashville}," 226. The medical faculty made all subsequent faculty appointments or dismissals.
school. The president called and presided over faculty meetings, while the dean was responsible for the school's daily operation and management.\footnote{Ibid., 244. Throughout the decade Charles K. Winston served as president and the following professors filled the office of dean: John Berrien Lindsley (1850-1856), Paul F. Eve (1856-1858), and William K. Bowling (1858-1868).} In January 1851 the faculty obtained the use of St. John's Hospital as a clinical facility.\footnote{Nashville True Whig and Weekly Commercial Register, January 24, 1851.} Dr. Paul F. Eve, one of the nation's most distinguished surgeons, and Dr. William T. Briggs joined the faculty in 1851.\footnote{Kelton, "University of Nashville," 252; Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, February 7, 1852.} On November 3, 1851, the Medical Department of the University of Nashville began its first session with a lecture by Winston. This lecture was open to the public, and a large crowd, including the members of the General Assembly, attended.\footnote{Nashville American, November 4, 1851.}

The Medical Department's program was thorough and challenging. The curriculum was divided into seven broad areas, each headed by one professor: Surgical Anatomy and Clinical Surgery, Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children, Surgery, Materia Medica and Clinical Medicine, Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry and Pharmacy, and
Institutes and Practices of Medicine. To graduate, students had to meet the following requirements: three years of service in the office of a practicing physician; two full years of attending lectures in a medical school, with the final year spent in the Medical Department of the University of Nashville; completion of a thesis on some medical topic, to be filed with the dean by the middle of the year of graduation; and be at least twenty-one years old and of good moral character. The only exception to these requirements was that students who had successfully practiced medicine for four years had to attend lectures for only one year. In 1854 the faculty made one addition to the graduation requirements, stipulating that students had to acknowledge the right of the faculty to revoke the degree of graduates who engaged in any irregular or unprofessional activities.

The medical school developed new programs designed to foster professionalism in its students. One of these new programs was a summer school. Initially, one full course of lectures consisted of two four-month terms. However, the American Medical Association pressured the Medical Department to institute a longer course of study. Thus, in

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110 Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, February 7, 1852. The eighth faculty member was the Demonstrator of Anatomy.

111 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 267; Windrow, John Berrien Lindsley, 38.

112 Kelton, "University of Nashville," 268.
1855 the faculty introduced a summer term, which was practical in nature. Enrollment in the summer term was voluntary, but all students who enrolled in the winter term were required to pay tuition for the summer term regardless of whether they attended the latter.\textsuperscript{113} Also, during the 1853-1854 session, a group of faculty and students organized a medical society to encourage research in medical subjects not often discussed in classroom lectures.\textsuperscript{114}

The success of the medical school exceeded all expectations. During the first year 121 students from throughout the South attended classes and 33 graduated. Enrollment nearly quadrupled throughout the decade.\textsuperscript{115}

The increasing enrollment forced the school to expand its facilities. During its first year the college obtained the use of the Tennessee State Hospital as an additional clinical facility.\textsuperscript{116} In 1854 the medical faculty requested aid from the Board of Trustees for the expansion of the East Wing, which served as the medical college building. The trustees granted the request and sold some university lands

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 271. Windrow, John Berrien Lindsley, 39.

\textsuperscript{114}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 881.

\textsuperscript{115}See table 2 for enrollment figures. The first year's graduates apparently had already practiced medicine at least four years or attended another medical school for at least a year; otherwise they would not have met the graduation requirements.

\textsuperscript{116}Windrow, John Berrien Lindsley, 39.
Table 2.--Enrollment, Medical Department of the University of Nashville, 1851-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>GRADUATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851-1852</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852-1853</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853-1854</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854-1855</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855-1856</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>1856-1857</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857-1858</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858-1859</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859-1860</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for decade</td>
<td>2,790</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Clayton, History of Davidson County, 292.

to obtain the money.\textsuperscript{117} That summer two wings were added to the medical building, and the facility was completely modernized. Two of the lecture halls accommodated five hundred people, the anatomical rooms were equipped with skylights to provide adequate lighting and ventilation, and gas lamps were installed.\textsuperscript{118}

The costs of opening and expanding the medical college greatly taxed the school's resources during the 1850s. Donations and student fees were the school's only sources of income; the individual professors kept all the tuition

\textsuperscript{117}Minutes of the University of Nashville, February 11 and 18, 1854.

\textsuperscript{118}Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 35-36.
revenue from their classes. When expenditures exceeded income, however, the faculty imposed an assessment on each professor. According to the college's rules, if a professor believed his assessment to be unfair his only recourse was to resign. If a professor failed to pay his assessment within ninety days, that fact was taken as his resignation. However, during the medical school's early days the professors "cheerfully" paid their portion, knowing that doing so helped the institution grow and develop.\textsuperscript{119}

By the late 1850s the Medical Department of the University of Nashville had established itself as the South's most prestigious medical school. So many young men applied for admission to the Medical Department that the school had to turn away many qualified candidates for lack of accommodations. The school's reputation increased even further when the American Medical Association elected Eve as its president in 1857. By 1860, mostly because of the success of the Medical Department of the University of Nashville, Nashville was second only to Philadelphia as the nation's leading center for medical education.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{The Law Department of the University of Nashville}

In the early nineteenth century few lawyers received any formal legal training. The usual method of preparation

\textsuperscript{119}Clayton, \textit{History of Davidson County}, 291.

\textsuperscript{120}Walter T. Durham, \textit{Nashville, the Occupied City: The First Seventeen Months - February 16, 1862, to June 30, 1863} (Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Society, 1985), 5.
for a legal career was a type of apprenticeship in which prospective lawyers worked in the offices of practicing attorneys and in their spare time read law books prescribed by their employers. While many lawyers who received their legal education in this manner were capable, others entered the profession with little actual knowledge of the law. In response to this problem, formal programs in legal education were established.

The Board of Trustees of the University of Nashville first expressed interest in creating a law school in 1835. However, they did not act on this idea until 1843, when they voted to establish a law school. The Board stipulated that "no portion of the funds of the University" would be used to support the law school, even though that body would manage its operation. On February 19, 1844, the Board adopted the plans for the law school, but they never reached fruition.

The Tennessee General Assembly reopened the issue on February 6, 1850, when it passed an act creating the Law Department of the University of Nashville, which was to be governed by a separate Board of Trustees. The University

\[121\] *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, February 11, 1835.

\[122\] *Minutes of the University of Nashville*, December 9, 1843.

\[123\] Kelton, "University of Nashville," 139.

\[124\] *Acts of Tennessee, 1849-1850*, Chapter CCLXX, 533-34.
of Nashville Board of Trustees strongly objected to the creation of a separate Board for the Law Department. In 1851 the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the legislation establishing the Law Department did not specifically connect the Law Department with the University of Nashville; thus the two entities were totally autonomous.\textsuperscript{125} The whole issue became moot, however, because the proposed law school never opened.

In late 1853 the University of Nashville Board of Trustees resumed plans to open a Law Department under its control during the autumn of the next year. The trustees selected Francis B. Fogg and William F. Cooper, two of Nashville's most distinguished attorneys, to operate the school; the Board planned to add a third professor later.\textsuperscript{126} On February 11, 1854, Fogg and Cooper outlined their goals for the Law Department to the Board of Trustees:

The design of the Law Department of the University of Nashville is to furnish a course of legal education for those who design to devote themselves to the profession of the law and also a systematic course of instruction for those who for particular purposes desire to confine their studies to one or more branches of the law . . .\textsuperscript{127}

The trustees attempted to ensure that enrollment in the law school would be as large as possible. The law school

\textsuperscript{125}Daily Nashville Union, January 23, 1851.

\textsuperscript{126}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 465-66.

\textsuperscript{127}Minutes of the University of Nashville, February 11, 1854.
had no entrance examinations and no prerequisites. Students could enter the school at any time during the academic year. Unlike the university, the law school allowed students wide latitude in selecting courses from a broad-based curriculum. Instead of offering students instruction in specific areas of the law, the curriculum focused on developing mental discipline and reasoning ability in students. The entire course of study required two years to complete, but students could take only the parts of the curriculum they wished to study. The curriculum appears to have been designed as a way for future lawyers to develop their skills voluntarily.\textsuperscript{128}

The Law Department's location in Nashville, the state capital, gave it certain advantages over other area law schools. The Tennessee Supreme Court met in the city, regularly bringing many of the state's best legal minds to Nashville. The meetings of the General Assembly gave students the opportunity to view the legislative process firsthand. Also, at least one of the Davidson County courts of law and equity was always in session.\textsuperscript{129} Students were expected to spend much of their free time observing the above-mentioned bodies in action.\textsuperscript{130}

In addition to location, another advantage of the

\textsuperscript{128} Kelton, "University of Nashville," 466-68.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 469.

\textsuperscript{130} Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 37.
University of Nashville Law Department was library access. The school's law library consisted of the private libraries of its professors. Law students also had access to the university library. Most of the city's practicing attorneys agreed to grant the use of their private libraries to law students as well.\textsuperscript{131}

The trustees scheduled the opening of the Law Department for the first Monday in October 1854. Fogg and Cooper rented rooms in the Davidson County Court House in which to hold classes. However, the law school appears to have never opened; if it did, it closed within a few days or weeks.\textsuperscript{132} In March 1855, John Berrien Lindsley reported to the Board of Trustees that the Law Department "closed [its] doors because of the failure to complete its organization & rooms last autumn."\textsuperscript{133} After this failure, the University of Nashville made no further attempts to establish a law school.

\textbf{The Reopening of the University of Nashville}

As 1852 began, the University of Nashville was nowhere near being ready to reopen.\textsuperscript{134} The trustees had not selected a new president, every faculty position remained unfilled,  

\textsuperscript{131}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 471.

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 471-72.

\textsuperscript{133}Minutes of the University of Nashville, March 9, 1855.

\textsuperscript{134}The trustees had intended to reopen the university January 1, 1852. Supra, 99.
and the Medical Department occupied the existing university buildings. On April 30, the Board approved plans for a new college building which would cost seventy-two thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{135} However, the trustees soon realized that they could not raise such a large sum, and on February 19, 1853, they abandoned the idea. At the same time the Board formed a committee to prepare the university to reopen in the fall of 1854. A new building, not to exceed thirty thousand dollars in cost, was to be erected on the remainder of the 120 acres purchased in 1825.\textsuperscript{136} To oversee this project, the trustees chose John Berrien Lindsley as General Agent of the University of Nashville. In this position Lindsley served as a liaison between the trustees and the building contractors, and he also managed the university's financial affairs.\textsuperscript{137}

The committee moved rapidly to reopen the university. On April 7, 1853, in an elaborate, highly publicized ceremony, the cornerstone of the new building was laid. The committee chose to build the new structure of stone, even though it was more expensive than brick, because a stone building would be sturdier and last longer.\textsuperscript{138} In November

\textsuperscript{135}Minutes of the University of Nashville, April 30, 1852.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., February 19, 1853.

\textsuperscript{137}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 458.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., 458-65.
the trustees appointed four faculty members; they added a fifth the next year. In a second, more elaborate ceremony, the Literary Department of the University of Nashville opened its doors on the first Wednesday in October 1854.\textsuperscript{139}

The curriculum of the Literary Department was the same as the old university curriculum except that an elective course in Civil Engineering was offered for an extra charge.\textsuperscript{140} In a departure from tradition, the university offered two programs leading to the Master of Arts degree. To earn a master's degree, students either had to demonstrate proficiency in two modern languages other than English or pursue an additional year of study at the university. In the past, students automatically received a master's degree three years after earning their bachelor's degree, without doing any additional work.\textsuperscript{141}

Just before the university reopened, John Berrien Lindsley submitted a proposal from the university trustees to the Nashville Board of Education which would link the public schools and the university in such a way "as to render the latter virtually members of the public school system of Nashville." The trustees would provide the Board of Education with a number of scholarships to the Literary Department of the University of Nashville, for which the

\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., 473-79.

\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., 480-81.

\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., 484-85.
city would pay two-thirds the amount of regular tuition. The Board of Education would grant these scholarships to the most qualified seniors who wished to attend the university. Scholarship recipients who graduated from the university would then have the privilege of attending either the Medical Department or the Law Department for free. The Board of Education accepted the offer and unanimously recommended that the Board of Aldermen approve the proposal.\textsuperscript{142} On September 29 the aldermen accepted the proposal, but the bright hopes raised by the proposal came to naught. On February 10, 1855, every member of the Literary Department faculty resigned over some dispute which remains unknown today. The trustees persuaded Lindsley and Alexander P. Stewart, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, to teach until the end of the current session; Frank Crosby, one of the public high school's teachers, assisted them.\textsuperscript{143}

The failure to reopen the University of Nashville convinced the trustees that the university had to be completely reorganized before it could successfully operate. On February 19, 1855, the Board of Trustees created a new position of chancellor to manage the entire institution -- the Literary, Medical, and Law Departments. That day the

\textsuperscript{142}Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, September 20, 1854.

\textsuperscript{143}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 493, 501-503.
trustees unanimously elected John Berrien Lindsley chancellor.\textsuperscript{144}

The Western Military Institute and the University of Nashville

Before his appointment as chancellor, John Berrien Lindsley had formulated a plan to reorganize the University of Nashville. This plan was based on the possibility of a merger between the university and the Western Military Institute (WMI); Lindsley had corresponded with Colonel Bushrod Johnson, Superintendent of WMI, for several months to arrange the merger.\textsuperscript{145} On March 9, 1855, Lindsley submitted his plan to the trustees. He recommended the adoption of the military system to "preserve good order & strict discipline among the usual dormitory system." He also called for the creation of a fourth department, the Science and Philosophy Department, to teach subjects not included in the Literary, Medical, or Law Departments, and he urged the trustees to revitalize the Law Department. The Board adopted Lindsley's plan.\textsuperscript{146} The next day Lindsley and

\textsuperscript{144}Minutes of the University of Nashville, February 19, 1855.

\textsuperscript{145}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 538. WMI had been established at Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1847. Over the next seven years WMI sought a more suitable location, moving to various sites in Kentucky before crossing into Tennessee in 1854. The institute spent 1854 and the early part of 1855 at Tyree Springs, about twenty-five miles north of Nashville. Up to the start of the Civil War, WMI styled itself as a Southern West Point.

\textsuperscript{146}Minutes of the University of Nashville, March 9, 1855.
Colonel Richard Owen, Commandant of WMI, drew up the articles of union between the two institutions, which was then approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.\textsuperscript{147} A few weeks later the whole Board formally approved the merger.\textsuperscript{148} The joint entity became known as the Collegiate Department of the University of Nashville.

Public reaction to the merger was mixed at first. The press generally expressed support for the union:

We have confidence in the energy and capacity of the new Chancellor. . . . We have now faith in a brilliant career for the University of Nashville; and our citizens ought to promptly and cheerfully raise the fund necessary to perfect the new plans.\textsuperscript{149}

These plans if successfully carried out, cannot but result in making the University the leading institution of the South-west, and in giving to Nashville the proud position of the EDUCATIONAL METROPOLIS OF THE SOUTH.\textsuperscript{150}

Some Nashvillians, however, viewed the combination of military and collegiate training with suspicion. To address these concerns, Lindsley gave a public address March 17, 1855, in which he explained the nature of the merger. He emphasized that the university would offer the same courses and grant degrees as before. Addressing those hostile or indifferent toward higher education, Lindsley pointed out that the new Science and Philosophy Department would teach

\textsuperscript{147}John Berrien Lindsley, Diary, March 10, 1855.

\textsuperscript{148}Minutes of the University of Nashville, April 4, 1855.

\textsuperscript{149}Nashville Union and American, March 14, 1855.

\textsuperscript{150}True Whig, March 14, 1855.
subjects that had practical applications in an agricultural society, such as Chemical Engineering, Agricultural Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, and Geology. He estimated that the students would provide the city with an annual revenue of half a million dollars.\textsuperscript{151}

The organization of the Collegiate Department was based on that of WMI, with the exception of the top two levels. The University Board of Trustees exercised ultimate control over the entire institution. The Chancellor carried out the decisions of the Board and supervised the university as a whole. The chief official of the Collegiate Department was the Superintendent, who supervised the department's daily operation. The Commandant of Cadets supervised military exercises and most aspects of student life, including discipline. The Treasurer was the chief financial official and reported directly to the Superintendent. The Adjutant managed student records and served as secretary of the faculty. The department was divided into six academic schools: Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Languages, Chemistry and Natural History, Belles-lettres, and Tactics.\textsuperscript{152}

Before the Collegiate Department could open, the university's facilities had to be upgraded. The Board authorized Lindsley to construct dormitories to accommodate

\textsuperscript{151} *Nashville Union and American*, March 21, 1855.

\textsuperscript{152} Kelton, "University of Nashville," 556-61.
two hundred students. However, funding for the dormitories would have to come from private donations; Lindsley was instructed to inform the contractors that the university would not be liable for "any moneys due" for the construction of the dormitories. ¹⁵³ Apparently Lindsley found a contractor who would construct the building on credit; during the summer of 1855 a three-story brick building measuring 154 feet by 54 feet and costing thirty-two thousand dollars, which had not yet been raised, was started. ¹⁵⁴ By mid-1856 the faculty had raised eighteen thousand dollars through public subscriptions, leaving a debt of fourteen thousand dollars on the new building plus another six thousand for furnishings and landscaping. Chancellor Lindsley called on the residents of Davidson County to provide the remaining twenty thousand dollars, "a sum so small to expect from the citizens of so wealthy a city and county." ¹⁵⁵

The Collegiate Department opened for instruction in the fall of 1855 with forty students. ¹⁵⁶ School officials were disappointed, but they ascribed the low enrollment to

¹⁵³ Minutes of the University of Nashville, April 4, 1855.

¹⁵⁴ Kelton, "University of Nashville," 552.

¹⁵⁵ John Berrien Lindsley, Appeal to the Citizens of Davidson County, in Behalf of Their University (Nashville: Cameron & Fall, 1856), 5.

¹⁵⁶ Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 393-94.
rampant sickness throughout the Mississippi Valley, which caused many parents to keep their sons home. The initial session was difficult because the dormitories were incomplete and not all faculty positions were filled. To make matters worse, the winter of 1855-1856 was "remarkable for its severity."\(^{157}\) Despite these difficulties, the first session of the Collegiate Department was successful, proving that military and collegiate instruction could be merged.

Numerous rules governed every aspect of student life. Upon entering the Collegiate Department all students were required to take the following oath:

> I hereby pledge myself, upon my honor as a gentleman, strictly to observe the Rules and Regulations of the Western Military Institute, the Collegiate Department of the University of Nashville, during my connection with it as a Cadet or student, cheerfully to obey all orders of its constituted authorities, to be punctual in attendance, at recitations and roll calls and in the performance of every other duty -- to apply myself faithfully and methodically to my studies, and to give all proper aid in promoting the highest order of discipline in the Institute. And I hereby certify, on honor, that I have delivered into the hands of the Commandant, all my private arms and ammunition.\(^{158}\)

The specific rules of conduct and the punishments for violating each rule were detailed in the *Regulations of the Military and Literary Departments of the University of Nashville*.\(^{159}\) Students were forbidden to drink liquor, play


\(^{158}\)Kelton, "University of Nashville," 560-61.

\(^{159}\)Ibid., 893.
cards, or leave the campus without permission. They could not chew tobacco during drill, vandalize university property, engage in mutinies, or form "combinations."
Students were allowed to smoke, but only at certain times and places.¹⁶⁰ All reported violations were publicized weekly. Students received from one to ten demerits for each infraction; those who accumulated 150 demerits in a single session were expelled.¹⁶¹

Students had little freedom in planning their daily schedules. The rules prescribed how students were to spend nearly all of their time. Reveille and morning roll call occurred at daybreak, followed by study hours or classroom recitation until breakfast. Breakfast was at seven-thirty from September 10 through March 10; the rest of the year it was at seven o'clock. Guard Mounting was after breakfast and lasted from eight until nine. From nine in the morning until one in the afternoon students either observed study hours or attended classroom recitation. Dinner lasted from one to two and was followed by study hours until four o'clock; during this study period students could visit in each other's rooms. Drill began one hour and fifteen minutes before sunset; free time for the students was between four o'clock and the beginning of drill. Drill ended at sunset, when retreat and the evening roll call took

¹⁶¹Kelton, "University of Nashville," 578-80.
place. Supper was served immediately after retreat for an hour and fifteen minutes. Study hours resumed when supper ended and continued until tattoo, at nine-thirty. Taps came at ten o'clock, after which students were to be in bed with their lights out. There were no classes or drills on Saturday afternoons, and on Sundays students were free from all academic and military duties except roll call. However, they were required to attend church on Sundays unless excused by the Superintendent upon the written request of the student's parent or guardian.\textsuperscript{162}

Despite the numerous restrictions on their time and activities, students in the Collegiate Department did enjoy some diversions. The literary societies continued to be a popular means of social activity. The Agatheridan and Erosophian Societies were revived when the university reopened in 1855, and WMI students brought their own societies, the Addisonian Society and the Arathenean Society, when the two institutions merged. The faculty suggested that the four societies combine into two, but the students rejected this idea until 1856. That year the Addisonian Society joined the Agatheridan Society and the Arathenean Society united with the Erosophian Society.\textsuperscript{163} Students also enjoyed the annual Military Ball, which was the main social event of the year. Held on the evening of

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 568-70.

\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., 859-60.
graduation, the Military Ball was a grand affair, attended by the students, their parents, and "nearly all the elite of the city."\textsuperscript{164}

After the merger, the university relaxed its admission requirements to allow boys who had reached the age of thirteen (fourteen beginning in 1859), could read and write, and could "present proper testimonials of moral character" to enroll. New students who were not prepared to enter the Collegiate Department were placed in the Preparatory Department. The Preparatory Department had a two-year program that consisted of spelling, reading, penmanship, geography, grammar, composition, arithmetic, elements of algebra, history, Latin grammar, Caesar, Greek grammar, and the Greek Testament.\textsuperscript{165} After completing the preparatory course, students began the four-year collegiate program.

The Collegiate Department combined a traditional classical education with military training and instruction in applied science. Students studied Latin and Greek during all four years of the program. Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors practiced infantry and artillery drills, while seniors studied the duties of commanding officers and evolution of the line. Mathematics and science provided the

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., 908-909; Daily Nashville Patriot, June 8, 1860.

\textsuperscript{165}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 559-61; Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 39. This was the first preparatory school affiliated with the university since the early 1820s, when it was Cumberland College.
foundation of the curriculum. Courses in composition, elocution, rhetoric, and the humanities completed the curriculum. Optional courses in modern languages, sword exercises, commercial bookkeeping, and civil engineering were offered for an extra fee.\textsuperscript{166} The program was rigorous. Students who were judged on the basis of their performance on the public examination at the end of each session to be academically deficient were not allowed to advance. Students whose deficiencies were determined to be the result of negligence in their studies were expelled.\textsuperscript{167}

In 1856 the University of Nashville broadened its academic offerings. That year the Science and Philosophy Department opened as a branch of the Collegiate Department. The new department awarded the Bachelor of Science degree to its graduates. The university also returned to the traditional system of granting master's degrees to graduates three years after they earned their bachelor's degrees without requiring any additional work.\textsuperscript{168}

The Collegiate Department enjoyed considerable success throughout the latter half of the 1850s. For the first time in its history the University of Nashville enjoyed a degree of financial security, although it was far from being a wealthy institution. Looking to the future, in 1856

\textsuperscript{166}Kelton, "University of Nashville," 562-63.

\textsuperscript{167}Ibid., 565.

\textsuperscript{168}Ibid., 565-66.
Chancellor Lindsley saw the opportunity to build the grand university his father had dreamed of over thirty years earlier, with its "schools for the special benefit of agriculturists, manufacturers, miners, engineers, etc. . . . [and its] observatories, museums, and galleries of art."\textsuperscript{169} Unfortunately, the Civil War shattered Lindsley's vision for the university's future.

\textit{Shelby Medical College}

The University of Nashville was not the only institution of higher learning in Nashville during the antebellum era. In 1857 the state of Tennessee chartered Shelby Medical College. Sponsored by Dr. John Shelby, one of Nashville's most respected physicians, Shelby Medical College was to be one department of Central University, which the Methodist Church intended to open in Nashville in the near future.\textsuperscript{170} Even though the Medical Department of the University of Nashville had "succeeded beyond expectation," the \textit{Nashville Daily News} reported that several of the city's "most eminent physicians are satisfied of the demand for another institution of equal capacity; not for the purpose of rivalry, but that there may be abundant facilities for the swarms of pupils who prefer Nashville

\textsuperscript{169}Lindsley, \textit{Appeal to Citizens}, 7.

\textsuperscript{170}Crabb, \textit{Personality of a City}, 93. The Civil War postponed the opening of Central University until the early 1870s, at which time it was renamed Vanderbilt University.
over other . . . localities."\textsuperscript{171} The physicians appear to have been correct in their assessment of the demand for additional medical education in Nashville. On November 1, 1858, the first session of Shelby Medical College began.\textsuperscript{172} Eighty-five students enrolled in the first session; two years later enrollment reached 120.\textsuperscript{173}

Shelby Medical College had an extensive campus that included a museum containing numerous specimens, a laboratory furnished with the period's most modern equipment, two lecture halls, and the city's pauper's hospital. By the terms of an agreement between the college and the city, the city paid the college $1.50 per week for each patient in the pauper's hospital, an arrangement that received much criticism from the city's press.\textsuperscript{174} Various editorials spoke out against the idea of "giving out a sick man's life to be cared for by the lowest bidder" and argued that a sufficient number of nurses could not be employed nor the patients properly fed for such a low rate.\textsuperscript{175} However, it appears likely that patients under the care of Shelby Medical College did not receive worse care than they had before the college assumed control of the pauper's hospital.

\textsuperscript{171}Nashville Daily News, July 17, 1858.

\textsuperscript{172}Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 48.

\textsuperscript{173}Clayton, History of Davidson County, 293.

\textsuperscript{174}Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 48-49.

\textsuperscript{175}Nashville Daily News, July 24, 1858.
Shelby Medical College employed a faculty composed of many of Tennessee's most "eminent" physicians. Of eight faculty members, only one came from outside Tennessee, although that one enjoyed a national reputation as a surgeon. With the combination of a distinguished faculty and equipment which ranked with the nation's best, Shelby Medical College offered students an excellent medical education. However, the college became an early casualty of the Civil War, closing in 1861.

The Success of Higher Education in Antebellum Nashville

By 1860 Nashville's institutions of higher education enjoyed their greatest prosperity. The Medical Department of the University of Nashville and Shelby Medical College made Nashville the South's leading center for medical training. The University of Nashville's enrollment reached record levels after its merger with the Western Military Institute. The high academic and moral standards which each of the city's institutions of higher learning expected of students contributed to those institutions' exalted reputations. On the eve of the Civil War, Nashville was recognized as one of the South's chief educational centers and was well on its way to becoming the Athens of the South.

176Clayton, History of Davidson County, 293.
177Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 48.
178Crabb, Personality of a City, 93.
CHAPTER FOUR
PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ANTEBELLUM NASHVILLE

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Nashvillians relied on their city's numerous private schools to educate their children. However, even the least expensive private schools were inaccessible to children from poor families. As the city grew and became an industrial and commercial center, its leading residents noticed the problems which resulted from having a large group of uneducated citizens -- poverty, crime, and a large number of people lacking the basic skills necessary to be productive. People also began to express concern for the way a lack of an education limited the moral and intellectual development of poor children. Over time, the idea of establishing state-funded schools for poor children became popular; however, the stigma of poverty was associated with these schools, so many poor families refused to send their children. Gradually, the notion of providing public education for all children, regardless of income, gained acceptance and came to pass in Nashville during the 1850s.

The "Pauper Schools": Early Attempts by the State to Provide Education for Poor Children

In the years immediately following the War of 1812, the
Tennessee General Assembly passed a series of acts relating to education. These laws created a legal environment in which local governments could appropriate money for schools to educate poor children. In 1815, the General Assembly enacted legislation permitting counties to levy taxes for common schools for "those poor orphans who have no property to support & educate them."\(^1\) Two years later, the legislature passed a law mandating that any money realized from the rental of the lands set aside for the support of academies which had not already been appropriated for that purpose be set aside for common schools. This act also made all children eligible to attend the common schools.\(^2\)

By the early 1820s many Nashvillians realized that some system of educating poor children at public expense was necessary if the city was to avoid the problems caused by having a large number of uneducated residents. Taking advantage of the opportunity created by the recent state legislation, the Board of Aldermen and a group of the city's leading citizens joined together to establish the city's first publicly funded school early in 1821. The following announcement praised this action:

> In consequence of the high price of tuition in this place, many persons are unable to educate their children; to remedy this evil and afford the means of education to all classes of the community, the

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\(^2\)Ibid., 174.
Corporation has liberally appropriated a considerable sum for the purchase of a lot of ground, and erection of a house for the Common School. -- A liberal sum has also been subscribed by the citizens for the same purpose. 3

Although this school, known as the common school or the Nashville English School, would be open to all children who wished to attend, it was intended for the children of the poor.

Work on the Corporation Schoolhouse proceeded rapidly, but finding a teacher for the school proved more difficult than expected. In July 1821, Mayor James Condon issued the following advertisement for the position:

Teacher Wanted,

For the Nashville English School. None need apply but a person of good moral character, well qualified to teach English Gramatically; writing and arithmetic. A married man would be preferred; it is intended to have a female assistant, the teachers family would have a preference if qualified; the school house will be finished about the first of September next. 4

The mayor's advertisement ran for seven weeks before the city hired a Mr. Heron to teach the school. 5 Not long afterward, work on the schoolhouse was completed.

The Nashville English School opened September 1, 1821. Initially, enrollment was high, as many working class families, desiring to save money, sent their children to this school. As time passed, however, nearly all of these

3Nashville Clarion, February 28, 1821.
4Ibid., July 11, 1821.
parents withdrew their children and enrolled them in private schools because many of the city's residents associated the common school with poverty. Many poor families who could not afford private schools withdrew their children as well, even though they wanted them to receive an education, because they were embarrassed to have to send their children to a "pauper's school," as the common school was labeled. In 1823 Heron gave up his position, probably because of the sharp decline in enrollment.\(^6\) It is not known how long the school continued after Heron's departure, but by 1828 it had closed.\(^7\)

The Nashville English School showed that a school intended specifically for the poor could not succeed, but the General Assembly did not alter its policy. In 1823 the legislature established a Common School Fund to provide money for "poor schools" in each county. Like the Nashville English School, these schools became associated with poverty, and many parents who otherwise could not educate their children refused to send them to the common schools.\(^8\) Over the next fifteen years the General Assembly passed legislation intended to increase enrollment in the common schools, but these efforts failed. In 1838, the legislature

\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^7\)The Lancasterian school occupied the Corporation Schoolhouse that year. Supra, 35.

passed an act which allowed each county to charge tuition for their common schools; children from poor families would be exempt from paying tuition. This act also required each student to provide fuel for the school's use, but again children from "indigent" families were exempt from this requirement. This legislation had little effect; enrollment in the common schools remained low, and nearly all students in the common schools came from poor families.

Despite the fact that schools for the poor had yet to succeed in Tennessee, in 1839 Davidson County decided to implement the conditions of the 1838 act. On November 12, the Nashville Board of Aldermen, unwilling to attempt to operate another common school, granted the county common school the right to use the Corporation Schoolhouse free of rent. For over a decade the common school struggled to establish a solid reputation. However, most of the city's residents viewed it with disdain. According to the son of a prominent minister, "No one attended except the children of the very poorest people. It was regarded as a disgrace to be a free [common] school boy. . . . Even the negroes spoke of it with contempt." By the early 1850s, the statewide system of public common schools was widely considered to be

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10Minutes of the Nashville Board of Aldermen, November 12, 1839, in Nagy Collection.
11Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 182.
"dead or dying."\textsuperscript{12}

The Creation of the Nashville Public School System

The failure of the state system of common schools convinced many prominent Nashvillians that the focus of public education should shift from the education of the poor to the education of all children. They believed that only by creating a system which did not differentiate between children of different classes could public education succeed. Throughout the late 1840s and early 1850s these citizens worked tirelessly to bring about the creation of a city public school system.

Supporters of a city public school system launched a vigorous propaganda campaign to explain the benefits of creating such a system. Numerous articles supporting public education appeared in the city's newspapers, particularly in the Nashville \textit{Whig}. These articles stated that the tax money each person would pay for the public schools would be less than the amount of tuition one would have to pay at a private school. They also declared that a system of public education would unite the community and break down class distinctions, strengthening republican virtue in the city. Furthermore, they claimed that offering all students the opportunity to receive a solid education would prevent

\textsuperscript{12}Polmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, \textit{History of Tennessee}, 1:438.
poverty and allow more people to advance economically.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the leading figures in this early campaign for public education was Joseph Holt Ingraham, an Episcopal clergyman who also taught a private school for girls. In 1848 Ingraham published a report explaining why Nashville needed a public school system. Appealing to his readers' hatred of tyranny and love of liberty, Ingraham wrote, "The grand lever that shall move the world is Public Education! It will shake the thrones of despotism till they fall. . . . It is the bulwark of liberty and the conservative element of a Republic."\textsuperscript{14} Ingraham also exhorted the citizens of Nashville to support public education because people could not read the Bible unless they had been taught to read. Implying that God wanted the city to establish public schools for this purpose, Ingraham declared, "Therefore, in commanding the Bible to be written with pen and ink, [God] had in view the education of mankind . . . The BIBLE looks to the SCHOOL!"\textsuperscript{15} Ingraham also offered practical reasons for people to support public education:

\textellipsis by far the largest proportion [of people in jail] have grown up \textellipsis in lamentable ignorance and neglect; that few of them know how to read and write, and scarcely any have received a moral and religious

\textsuperscript{13}Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 182.


\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 6.
education in early life. . . .

Better, far better, that society should pay for his early education, than afterwards be compelled to contribute to his punishment.16

The propaganda campaign succeeded in convincing a majority of the city's residents to support public education. In a referendum held in the fall of 1848, 668 people voted in support of creating a public school system while 137 voted against the idea.17 However, the Board of Aldermen did not act until November 13, 1851, more than three years after the people had expressed their support for public education. At that time, the Board appointed a committee to determine the "practicality of Commencing during The present municipal Year, The whole organization of a system of Free Schools."18

The committee determined that the city could begin making plans for a public school system in 1852. That year, the Board of Aldermen levied a property tax to fund public education.19 The Board also selected one of its members, Alfred Hume, who taught one of the city's most respected classical schools, to observe several public school systems in the North and the East and to make a public report based

16Ibid., 25.


18Minutes of the Nashville Board of Aldermen, November 13, 1851, in Nagy Collection.

19Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 184.
on his findings. Throughout the summer of 1852 Hume visited schools in Cleveland, Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. The Boston school system impressed him more than the others, and he based most of his report on that city's system.20

On August 26, 1852, Hume presented his report, which became the basis for the Nashville public school system, before a large public audience at the Odd-Fellows' Hall.21 He cited several advantages of public schools over private schools:

Buildings perfectly adapted to schools can be erected by the public. These buildings can be furnished in better style, with all necessary furniture and apparatus. Teachers of the highest qualification can be procured always. Better work can be demanded of them, because they will be independent of the influence of parents, and because they will be compelled to teach a fewer number of sciences . . . Public Schools can be subjected to a much more rigid examination than any private schools can possibly be.22

He recommended that the public school system be divided into three levels -- the primary school, the grammar school, and the high school.23 Hume also called on the Board of Aldermen to establish a Board of Education to supervise all aspects of the public school system, create the office of

20Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 52-53.

21Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 443; Clayton, History of Davidson County, 249.


23Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 53.
Superintendent of Public Schools to manage the day-to-day operation of the school system, and appoint a committee to construct a school building on a suitable site.\textsuperscript{24} Asserting that "the great interest that parents themselves, and citizens generally, take in these schools, makes them what they are," he warned the city's residents, especially the parents of schoolchildren, that their wholehearted support was necessary for the public school system to succeed.\textsuperscript{25}

Soon after Hume presented his report, the Board of Aldermen began making plans to put his recommendations into effect. The city purchased a lot measuring 270 feet by 185 feet on which to construct a school building. On May 19, 1853, in an impressive ceremony, the cornerstone of the new building was laid.\textsuperscript{26} On September 7 of that year, the Board of Aldermen passed an ordinance organizing the city's school system. The ordinance created a popularly elected Board of Education consisting of six members and authorized the new Board to devise rules for the government of the public schools, subject to the approval of the mayor and Board of Aldermen. It also stipulated that the city be divided into a number of school districts, with a primary school and an

\textsuperscript{24}Hume, \textit{Report on Public Schools}, 21.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{26}Wooldridge, \textit{History of Nashville}, 443; Clayton, \textit{History of Davidson County}, 249.
intermediate school to be located in each.²⁷

On October 14, 1854, the Board of Aldermen appointed the members of the Board of Education, which held its first meeting on November 5.²⁸ At that meeting the Board chose Joshua F. Pearl as Superintendent of Public Schools at an annual salary of twenty-five hundred dollars.²⁹ Pearl immediately proved to be an able, professional superintendent who fought hard to keep the public school system from regressing into a group of pauper schools. He convinced the Board of Education that neighborhood schools were the best way to prevent the public schools from becoming pauper schools. He also successfully resisted an effort by the Board of Aldermen to conduct two daily sessions in the school buildings, which would allow each building to accommodate twice as many students. Pearl argued that the double sessions would create problems in keeping track of each student and would make it difficult to clean the schools.³⁰ From 1854 until 1861, Pearl served as superintendent, and under his guidance the Nashville public school system built a solid foundation.

In early 1855 the first school building, named for

²⁷Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 443-44.

²⁸Ibid. Future Boards of Education were elected by popular vote.

²⁹Nashville Board of Education, Minute Book No. 1, 1, in Nagy Collection.

³⁰Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 184.
Alfred Hume, was completed. On February 26, the new school opened its doors to students. The number of students who enrolled in the public school system far exceeded the capacity of the Hume School. In early March, the Board of Education rented the building that housed the private school of John T. Edgar, Jr., and obtained permission from the Board of Aldermen to use the old Corporation Schoolhouse.\(^{31}\) On April 5, Pearl reported to the Board of Education that out of 1,155 students who had been admitted to the public schools 951 had attended classes. Of these students, 739 were placed in the Hume School (which had been designed to accommodate 712 students), about 130 boys had been placed in the Corporation Schoolhouse, and about 80 girls were in Edgar's school building. However, Pearl warned that when the weather became hot, conditions in the latter two buildings would be almost unbearable.\(^{32}\) The only solution to the overcrowding problem was to find additional facilities as soon as possible.

The Growth of the Nashville Public School System

From its beginning the Nashville public school system succeeded beyond the expectations of its most ardent supporters. Because enrollment was so high, the schools were overcrowded and there was a shortage of teachers. Despite constant attempts by the Board of Education to


\(^{32}\)Nashville Union and American, April 15, 1855.
improve conditions, overcrowding and an insufficient number of teachers plagued the school system throughout the 1850s.

In 1854 Nashville annexed the adjoining city of South Nashville, which in 1851 had established a public school known as the South Nashville Institute. In 1855 the Nashville Board of Education assumed control of the school, increasing the number of students in the Nashville public schools as well as obtaining the use of another building. On October 28, 1857, the Board changed the name of the South Nashville Institute to Trimble School.

The city constructed new schools throughout the decade, but the capacity of the buildings never met the level of enrollment. On November 2, 1855, the Board of Education approved the purchase of a lot measuring 180 feet by 90 feet at the corner of Line and Summer Streets. In January 1857 Hynes School opened on this lot; at this time the Board removed all classes from the Corporation Schoolhouse, which the city then sold. During the 1857-1858 school year the Board opened Lincoln Hall School. In 1859, M. M. Howard donated a lot on College Hill for a school, which was

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33For a brief history of the South Nashville school, see Wooldridge, *History of Nashville*, 439-42.
34Nashville Board of Education, Minute Book No. 1, 86, in Nagy Collection.
completed and opened the next year. This school was known as both College Hill School and Howard School. Thus, by 1860 the city had five public schools in operation. However, they could not accommodate all the public school students, and the Board of Education continued to rent additional rooms and buildings for classes.

The large number of students also made it difficult for the city to maintain an adequate number of teachers. By 1860 thirty-one teachers worked in the public schools teaching 1,892 students, an average of 61 students per teacher. Apparently because few Southern males applied for teaching positions, Superintendent Pearl hired eleven Northerners and sixteen women as teachers. The Board of Education readily accepted female teachers (if they were Southern), but Pearl had to work hard to convince the Board that employing Northerners was necessary. Perhaps one reason that the Board eagerly hired women was that it could pay female teachers less than male teachers. Only one woman earned more than six hundred dollars per year, while only

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38Wooldridge, History of Nashville, 444.


40Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 54.

41Some of the teachers were both Northerners and women. These are included in both numbers.

42Goodstein, Nashville, 1780-1860, 184.
three men earned less than six hundred dollars per year.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Organization and Curriculum of the Nashville Public School System}

The Nashville public school system adhered to a centrally controlled organizational structure during this period. The Board of Education and Superintendent Pearl closely supervised practically every aspect of the public schools; principals and teachers had little autonomy. The Board and the Superintendent established the curriculum and rules for the entire system. They believed that by keeping everything under their control they could better prevent the public schools from degenerating into pauper schools.

The Board of Education organized the public schools based on gender and age. The Board divided the schools into two broad departments, one for boys and one for girls. These broad departments were then subdivided into four levels -- primary, intermediate, grammar, and high schools.\textsuperscript{44} These levels were further broken down into grades; there was a total of twelve grades in the four levels. Unlike most private schools, in which each teacher taught several grades at the same time, in the public

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 184-85.

\textsuperscript{44}Nashville Board of Education, \textit{Rules for the Government of the Free Schools of the City of Nashville} (Nashville: W. F. Bang & Co., 1855), 3.
schools each teacher taught only one grade. An examination administered by the Superintendent determined which grade a new student entered.

The school year was divided into two five-month sessions. The first term began on the first Monday in September and ended on the last Friday in January, and the second term started on the first Monday in February and lasted until the final Wednesday in June. In 1859 the Board scheduled a one-week intermission at the end of the first session. School holidays included the week from Christmas to New Year's Day, May 1, and any "days of Fasting or Thanksgiving" declared by civil authorities. In 1857 Washington's Birthday (February 22) was added as a holiday. The school day lasted from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon from November through March and from eight until one from April through October. The Board insisted that there be no "intermission exceeding fifteen

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45 Journal of Alexander Cotton Cartwright (1895), 28-29, in The Hobday Collection, Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green.

46 Board of Education, Rules for Free Schools (1855), 6.

47 Ibid., 3-4.

48 Daily Gazette, February 3, 1859.

49 Board of Education, Rules for Free Schools (1855), 4.

minutes at a time" during the school day. 51

The Board prescribed the curriculum and textbooks for each grade. The primary level, which was for children four to eight years old, taught the alphabet, reading and spelling in one and two syllables, primary arithmetic, writing on slates, drawing, and singing. Particular attention was given to discipline and moral instruction at this level. 52 At the intermediate level students received instruction in reading, spelling, "intellectual arithmetic," geography, writing on slates and paper, drawing, and vocal music. The grammar school educated students in reading, spelling, writing, geography, natural history, drawing, English grammar, modern languages, mental and written arithmetic, declamation, composition, history, and vocal music. 53 In 1857 the Board changed the curriculum for each level, adding phonetics and primary geography to the primary school, orthoepy and numeration to the intermediate school, and orthoepy, Watts on the mind, and ancient languages to the grammar school. Also, the grammar school no longer taught spelling. 54

The high school was divided into three separate

51 Board of Education, Rules for Free Schools (1855), 4.
52 Ibid., 3; Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 53.
53 Board of Education, Rules for Free Schools (1855), 3.
54 Board of Education, Rules for Public Schools, (1857), 7.
departments, two for males and one for females. The Classical High School was intended for young men who planned to attend college. The English High School provided a "good English education" to males who were not going on to college. The Female High School was designed to give young ladies the "advantages of recitations, lectures, experiments &c., suited to their attainments."\(^{55}\)

The high school established stringent admission requirements. The minimum age for entering the high school was twelve. All applicants had to produce a written statement from the principal of their most recent school certifying that they had "sustained a good moral character, been regular in attendance, (unless duly excused,) diligent in study, orderly in deportment, and that in the opinion of [the principal] . . . qualified for admission to the High School."\(^{56}\) Applicants also had to pass a written examination over reading, writing, spelling, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, composition, American history, and Watts on the mind. Students seeking admission to the Classical High School were also required to demonstrate knowledge of rudimentary Latin.\(^{57}\) The examination appears to have been extremely difficult. On June 23, 1858, the Board of Education stipulated that

\(^{55}\)Ibid., 15.

\(^{56}\)Ibid., 16.

\(^{57}\)Ibid.
applicants had to answer 40 percent of the questions correctly to gain admission into the high school.\textsuperscript{58}

Each department of the high school had its own curriculum designed for the specific purpose of the department. All three branches taught English grammar, reading, spelling, penmanship, composition, algebra, history, natural philosophy, physiology, geometry, and vocal music. Both male branches required their students to study declamation. The four-year curriculum of the Classical High School consisted mostly of Latin and Greek literature and composition. Few differences between the courses of study for the English and Female High Schools existed. In addition to the courses listed above, both departments taught geography, chemistry, the American Constitution, rhetoric, astronomy, mental philosophy, political economy, logic, and elective courses in French and Latin. The only differences were that the English High School offered instruction in surveying, plane trigonometry, and mensuration, while the Female High School taught botany.\textsuperscript{59}

Classroom instruction was often monotonous and dreary. Lessons in arithmetic and penmanship were often quite repetitive, as students recited multiplication tables or wrote the alphabet in the flowery script of the day until

\textsuperscript{58}Nashville Board of Education, Minute Book No. 1, 92, in Nagy Collection.

\textsuperscript{59}Board of Education, Rules for Public Schools (1857), 17-19.
they perfected these tasks. In grammar classes, teachers generally taught students what not to say, rather than what to say, in an attempt to eliminate grammatical errors common in Southern speech and writing.\textsuperscript{60} However, students looked forward to some of their lessons, especially in vocal music and declamation. Singing time gave students a break from their books and slates. In declamation classes, young men practiced the verbal artistry and gesticulating which were essential aspects of nineteenth-century oratory. Of all parts of their lessons, students most enjoyed the Friday afternoon spelling bees. Originating during a February 1857 reading and spelling exhibition at Hynes School, the spelling bees gained such popularity that they were held weekly at all the schools.

**Rules and Discipline in the Public Schools**

In addition to providing students with an academic education, the public schools also sought to instill in them a respect for authority and a knowledge of right and wrong. To do this, the Board of Education established many rules governing student conduct, to which most teachers added their own rules. Students who violated the rules were promptly, strictly, and often harshly punished.

Students were expected to attend school faithfully and punctually. Students who were absent two consecutive days, three days in one week, or six days in one month without

\textsuperscript{60} Frank, *Five Families and Eight Young Men*, 97-98.
obtaining a leave of absence in advance or were habitually late were suspended and could be readmitted only by the Superintendent.\textsuperscript{61} Those who missed any examination or public school exercise without permission from their teacher were punished in the same manner.\textsuperscript{62} Students were forbidden to leave school early unless they were ill or there was some dire emergency. Parents had to submit satisfactory written excuses for all absences or tardiness.\textsuperscript{63}

The public schools tried to train children in the proper ways to conduct themselves in public. Students were expected to maintain "cleanliness of person and clothing" while at school. They also had to keep their desks and supplies "neat and in perfect order." They were required to treat everyone they encountered at school or on the way to or from school according to the "rules of politeness and propriety, which are ever considered binding in good society." To that end, "profane and indecent language" was forbidden of all students.\textsuperscript{64}

Other rules were designed to keep classes operating smoothly. Students who brought to school any books which did not pertain to their lessons risked having those books

\textsuperscript{61}Board of Education, \textit{Rules for Public Schools} (1857), 14-15.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 13-14.
confiscated. The use of tobacco by students was strictly prohibited. Students who damaged school property had two weeks to pay to repair all damages or be suspended; only by vote of the Board of Education could they be readmitted.\textsuperscript{65} Students also could not talk to or smile at each other in class; those who did quickly received a few smacks on the hand.\textsuperscript{66} Such minor violations occurred frequently; severe infractions were more rare but harshly punished. For example, on March 26, 1856, the Board suspended a student indefinitely for wearing a loaded pistol to school.\textsuperscript{67}

Public Education on the Eve of the Civil War

By 1860 Nashville's public school system had been in operation for five years. During that time the schools were forced to deal with overcrowding and a shortage of teachers, but those problems were viewed in a positive light because they meant that enrollment was high. Any fears that the public school system would be viewed as a group of pauper schools quickly disappeared as students from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds attended the public schools. Under the direction of Superintendent Pearl and an able and dedicated Board of Education, the Nashville public school system provided students with an education comparable to

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{66}Frank, \textit{Five Families and Eight Young Men}, 99.

\textsuperscript{67}Nashville Board of Education, Minute Book No. 1, 48, in Nagy Collection.
that offered by most private schools. The Civil War interrupted the prosperity of the public schools, but they had built a foundation strong enough to allow them to recover after the end of the war.
CONCLUSION

ANTEBELLUM NASHVILLE'S EDUCATIONAL HERITAGE

For over a century, Nashville, Tennessee, has been widely known as the Athens of the South because of its status as an educational center. The first use of the term occurred in 1840, when Philip Lindsley referred to the city as the "Athens of the West."\(^1\) Over the next few decades, the nation's westward expansion changed Nashville's geographical position from the West to the South. At the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in Nashville in 1897, Tennessee Governor Robert Taylor, perhaps borrowing from Philip Lindsley, called Nashville the "Athens of the South." By the last decade of the nineteenth century people frequently used the phrase in reference to Nashville.\(^2\)

Nashville's citizens have exhibited a strong commitment to education since the city's founding in 1780. According to one of the city's most respected historians, "Nashville was accredited from its very beginning as a community where the attributes of learning . . . were reflected in the

\(^1\)Crabb, Personality of a City, 170. Until the late 1850s, Nashville was considered to be in the West.

\(^2\)Ibid.
leadership of its men and women in all walks of life."³
Most early settlers taught their children at home, but a few
sent their children to small schools taught by other
residents. Once the Indian threat subsided in the early
1790s, increasing numbers of parents sent their children to
school. From the end of the eighteenth century until the
1850s, most of Nashville's children who received a formal
education did so in private schools.

Unlike many areas, Nashville provided ample
opportunities for its young ladies to obtain a formal
education. According to one of the city's most prominent
historians, "Nashville has always favored schools on the
various levels for girls."⁴ In the first half of the
nineteenth century several girls' schools opened in
Nashville. Most of these schools closed after a short time,
but a few enjoyed a long-term presence in the city. The
most famous of these was the Nashville Female Academy which
opened in 1817. For nearly half a century, the Academy
provided a superb education to girls from some of the most
prominent families in the South. At the outbreak of the
Civil War, the Nashville Female Academy was the largest
school for young ladies in the United States, and possibly
in the world.⁵

³McRaven, Athens of the South, vii.
⁴Crabb, Personality of a City, 194.
⁵Ibid., 174.
"Appreciation of higher learning" has characterized Nashville since its founding. Nashville had an institution of higher learning earlier in its existence than any other American settlement. Five years after the city's settlement, some of its leading citizens established Davidson Academy, the second institution of higher learning in the territory that would become Tennessee (Martin Academy, later Washington College, near Jonesborough, had been founded in 1780). Davidson Academy grew slowly but steadily, providing the sons of the city's leaders with the classical education considered necessary for one to be a gentleman. In 1806, Davidson Academy was reorganized as Cumberland College, and for ten years the sons of Middle Tennessee's most prominent families studied there. However, in 1816, financial difficulties forced the institution to suspend operations.

In 1825 Cumberland College reopened. The next year, the state of Tennessee rechartered the school as the University of Nashville. For a quarter of a century, the University of Nashville, under the leadership of Dr. Philip Lindsley, was recognized as one of the South's finest

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6McRaven, Athens of the South, 23.

7Crabb, Personality of a City, 171. Here, the term "institution of higher learning" refers to one which provided an advanced education, not one which granted bachelor's degrees.

universities. Several of the professors were prominent scholars; some had scholarly reputations that were international in scope. Many of the university's graduates attained positions of leadership throughout the South. However, the university constantly suffered from inadequate funding. In 1850, Lindsley, who had become unpopular among many Tennesseans, resigned. Later that year, the university temporarily closed due to financial problems and a cholera epidemic in the city.

In 1851 a group of physicians established the Medical Department of the University of Nashville. John Berrien Lindsley, son of the former university president, served as the first dean of the medical school. The medical school became an immediate success, and by the end of the decade it was one of the leading medical colleges in the nation. The success of the medical school encouraged the younger Lindsley to revive the University of Nashville. In 1855 the collegiate branch of the university reopened after combining with the Western Military Institute. The "new" University of Nashville combined academic learning with military training. For the remainder of the decade, the University of Nashville experienced increasing prosperity.

Typical of early nineteenth century communities, Nashville offered few educational opportunities for children.

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9Boom, "Student at the University of Nashville," 142.
10Crabb, *Personality of a City*, 95.
of poor families. Because private academies were too expensive for most working-class families, in the 1820s the state government began funding schools in each county to educate the children of the poor. These schools were commonly called "pauper schools." Many parents refused to send their children because these schools were associated with the stigma of poverty.¹¹

Over the next two decades, demands for a system of public education for all children, regardless of class, arose in Nashville and across the state. When these efforts failed to create a state public education system, the citizens of Nashville voted in 1848 to establish a public school system. In 1852, the city board of aldermen sent Alfred Hume to observe various public school systems in the North and make recommendations based on his observations. Upon his return, Hume submitted his Report on the Subject of Public Schools in the City of Nashville to the board. His report became the cornerstone of the Nashville public school system,¹² one of the first for any city in the South.¹³


¹²Clayton, History of Davidson County, 249; Davenport, Cultural Life in Nashville, 52.

¹³Frank, Five Families and Eight Young Men, 95, and McRaven, Athens of the South, 90, both declare that Nashville was the first city in the South to establish a public school system. However, in an 1848 report to the Nashville Board of Aldermen, Joseph H. Ingraham stated that Natchez, Mississippi, had created a public school system in 1845. This school system was supported by a property tax,
Nashville's first public school opened February 26, 1855. Immediately, more students than the single school building could accommodate enrolled. Over the next five years the city built additional school buildings, but increasing enrollment forced the city to rent other buildings for classrooms. By 1860 the Nashville public school system was flourishing.

Although quite successful according to the standards of the day, Nashville's educational institutions had numerous weaknesses. No professional guidelines or standards for teachers existed, nor were there any formal teacher-training programs in Tennessee. Anyone, whether qualified or not, could teach school. Another problem the city's schools faced was the lack of adequate facilities and equipment. Most schools were located in whatever buildings were available; few met in buildings specifically constructed to serve as schoolhouses. Many schools did not have educational aids such as blackboards, maps, or globes. Most schools also had a high ratio of students to teachers. This made it difficult for even capable teachers to instruct each pupil adequately. The system in which one teacher taught several grade levels further diminished the overall quality of instruction.

The greatest problem faced by the city's educational
institutions was public apathy or even hostility toward advanced education. While most Nashvillians favored providing all children with the opportunity for a basic education, even if tax money was used to do so, a large number of the city's residents resisted the establishment of academies and colleges. Generally, opponents claimed that advanced education was undemocratic and available only to the wealthy. They also argued that education which went beyond the basics was a waste of time because it did not have practical everyday uses. Included among the enemies of advanced education were several members of the Tennessee General Assembly, who used their influence to defeat proposals providing state aid to colleges and universities, including the University of Nashville. Although these opponents of higher education could delay its development, they could not stop it.

Despite its weaknesses in education, antebellum Nashville built a solid academic foundation. In 1860 the city's leaders could look back proudly on eighty years of progress. The city was home to one of the most prestigious female schools in the nation. The revitalized University of Nashville looked toward a future in which it could achieve the greatness its leaders had envisioned. Nashville's two medical schools made the city second only to Philadelphia as a national center for medical learning.\textsuperscript{14} The rapidly

\textsuperscript{14}Durham, \textit{Nashville, the Occupied City}, 5.
growing public school system provided educational opportunities for all the city's children. Private schools, which catered mostly to the wealthy, continued to educate a portion of Nashville's youth, easing some of the strain on the crowded public schools. Nashville looked toward a bright future as a national center of learning, but the Civil War thwarted the city's educational progress. However, the foundation constructed during the city's antebellum years allowed its educational system to recover quickly and achieve greater educational prominence in the years following the war.
APPENDIX A

TRUSTEES OF DAVIDSON ACADEMY, CUMBERLAND COLLEGE, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE, 1785-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustee</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Trustee</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Craighead</td>
<td>1785-1813</td>
<td>Robert Weakley</td>
<td>1809-1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh Williamson</td>
<td>1785-?</td>
<td>John Childress, Jr.</td>
<td>1809-1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Smith</td>
<td>1785-1805</td>
<td>George M. Deadrick</td>
<td>1810-1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Polk</td>
<td>1785-1791</td>
<td>Elihu S. Hall</td>
<td>1811-1852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Bledsoe</td>
<td>1785-1788</td>
<td>James Trimble</td>
<td>1813-1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Robertson</td>
<td>1785-1805</td>
<td>Wilkins Tannehill</td>
<td>1814-1817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lardner Clark</td>
<td>1785-?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephraim McLean</td>
<td>1785-?</td>
<td>Thomas Claiborne</td>
<td>1815-1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hays</td>
<td>1785-1805</td>
<td>Michael Campbell</td>
<td>1815-1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Jackson</td>
<td>1791-1805</td>
<td>Jesse Wharton</td>
<td>1816-1825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McNairy</td>
<td>1800-1804</td>
<td>Edward Ward</td>
<td>1817-1825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Shelby</td>
<td>1800-?</td>
<td>Harry Crabb</td>
<td>1817-1828</td>
</tr>
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<td>James Winchester</td>
<td>1802-1820</td>
<td>Jenkin Whiteside</td>
<td>1817-1822</td>
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<td>Moses Fisk</td>
<td>1804-1818</td>
<td>James Roane</td>
<td>1820-1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert C. Foster</td>
<td>1805-1845</td>
<td>Alfred Balch</td>
<td>1820-1839</td>
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<td>David McGavock</td>
<td>1805-1825</td>
<td>Andrew Hays</td>
<td>1820-1831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Coleman</td>
<td>1805-1818</td>
<td>Nathan Ewing</td>
<td>1823-1825</td>
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<td>Robert Whyte</td>
<td>1805-1818</td>
<td>Ephraim H. Foster</td>
<td>1823-1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Searcy</td>
<td>1805-1813</td>
<td>John Bell</td>
<td>1823-1869</td>
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<td>Samuel P. Black</td>
<td>?-1820</td>
<td>Charles I. Love</td>
<td>1823-1837</td>
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<td>William Dickson</td>
<td>1806-1816</td>
<td>John Catron</td>
<td>1823-1825</td>
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<td>William Hume</td>
<td>1806-1808</td>
<td>James Overton</td>
<td>1823-1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dickinson</td>
<td>1806-1810</td>
<td>W. L. Brown</td>
<td>1824-1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel Lewis</td>
<td>1806-1816</td>
<td>L. P. Cheatham</td>
<td>1824-1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Maury, Sr.</td>
<td>1806-1807</td>
<td>John O. Ewing</td>
<td>1825-1826</td>
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<tr>
<td>William P. Anderson</td>
<td>1806-1813</td>
<td>Robert Paine</td>
<td>1825-1830</td>
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<td>Duncan Stuart</td>
<td>1806-1808</td>
<td>Moses Norvell</td>
<td>1826-1833</td>
</tr>
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<td>Thomas Johnson</td>
<td>1806-1820</td>
<td>William Carroll</td>
<td>1827-1829</td>
</tr>
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<td>John K. Wynne</td>
<td>1806-1811</td>
<td>Boyd McNairy</td>
<td>1828-1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas T. Perkins</td>
<td>1806-1825</td>
<td>G. W. Gibbs</td>
<td>1830-1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randal McGavock</td>
<td>1808-1809</td>
<td>Thomas Washington</td>
<td>1830-1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John E. Beck</td>
<td>1808-1820</td>
<td>George W. Campbell</td>
<td>1830-1840</td>
</tr>
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<td>Willie Blount</td>
<td>1809-1815</td>
<td>Henry M. Rutledge</td>
<td>1831-1844</td>
</tr>
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<td>John Haywood</td>
<td>1809-1812</td>
<td>David Craighead</td>
<td>1832-1849</td>
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<td>Felix Grundy</td>
<td>1809-1840</td>
<td>Jo W. Horton</td>
<td>1834-1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry W. Humphreys</td>
<td>1809-1815</td>
<td>John M. Bass</td>
<td>1834-1851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Robertson</td>
<td>1809-1865</td>
<td>John L. Hadley</td>
<td>1834-1867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Washington Barrow' 1834-1839 Charles K. Winston' 1852-1882
1845-1866 S. R. Cockrill' 1852-1861
Return J. Meigs' 1836-1861 A. V. S. Lindsley' 1852-1885
Robert H. McEwen' 1837-1866 T. T. Player 1852-1853
Edwin H. Ewing'' 1839-? Jacob McGavock' 1852-1878
John Trimble' 1839-1884 John M. Lea' 1852-1875
William Williams' 1844-1862 W. T. Berry' 1852-1889
S. D. Morgan' 1844-1880 James W. McCombs' 1852-1863
Charles Ready' 1847-1878 A. L. P. Green' 1852-1875
Andrew Ewing' 1851-1864 James Woods' 1853-1875
Russell Houston' 1851-1866 R. C. Foster III' 1854-1871
Alex Allison 1851-1857

*Serving as of 1860.
**Also served 1867-1878.
***Serving as of 1892 (when source was written).

Source: University of Nashville Board of Trustees, Laws of
North Carolina and Tennessee, 3-7.
APPENDIX B

ENROLLMENT IN THE NASHVILLE FEMALE ACADEMY, 1817-1860

Table 3.—Enrollment, Nashville Female Academy, 1817-1843

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>109</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1828</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1837</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1843</td>
<td>153</td>
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</table>


The early records of the Nashville Female Academy list only the total enrollment for each year. Beginning in 1844, as shown in table 4, the academy's records also provide the numbers of boarding students, students in the Ornamental Department, teachers, and graduates for each year. The number of students given for the Ornamental Department includes young ladies not enrolled in the academy who took ornamental classes as well as regular academy students, so totals for this department may exceed the total number of regular academy students.
Table 4.--Enrollment, Nashville Female Academy, 1844-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boarders</th>
<th>Ornamentals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
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<td>175</td>
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<td>1849</td>
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<td>590</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>593</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61</td>
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</table>

APPENDIX C

ENROLLMENT IN CUMBERLAND COLLEGE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE, 1825-1860

Table 5.—Enrollment, Cumberland College and the University of Nashville, 1825-1850

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825-1826</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1826-1827</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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<td>1827-1828</td>
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<td>1828-1829</td>
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<td>1830-1831</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97</td>
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<td>1831-1832</td>
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Sources: University of Nashville Board of Trustees, Laws of North Carolina and Tennessee, 14-15; Catalogue of Officers and Graduates, 7-16, 26-27.
Table 6.--Enrollment, Collegiate Department of the University of Nashville, 1855-1860

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
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Nashville Daily News.
Nashville Gazette.
Nashville Patriot.
Nashville Republican and State Gazette.
Nashville True Whig and Weekly Commercial Register.
Nashville Union and American.
Nashville Whig.
Nashville Whig and Tennessee Advertiser.
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