A HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY SEMINARY
AND ITS FOUNDER

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

There is no collected and chronologically arranged history of the Washington County Seminary and its founder, John I. Morrison. In the Salem Public Library there have been numerous calls for a collected history that can be loaned and read. It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to present a composite history of John I. Morrison and the Washington County Seminary.

B. Statement of the Problem

A study was made by the writer to determine the contribution of the Washington County Seminary and of John I. Morrison to the field of early education in Indiana. Time and research were used to locate sources and collect information about the history of the school. Above all, in compiling the history of the Washington County Seminary, the information about John I. Morrison, the Founder of the Institution, was to be the outstanding part of the research.
C. Method of Procedure

In order to discover the information desired several procedures were used. Persons who had had some indirect connection with Morrison or the Séminary were interviewed. Search for information was made in the Indiana State Teacher's College Library, the State Library, the City Library of Terre Haute and the Salem Library. The writer found it interesting to study the old papers and materials in the Historical Room of the Washington County Court House. Much of the information was obtained from the speech of Barnabas C. Hobbs, "History of Washington County", and old clippings possessed by Mrs. Harvey Morris, Chairman of the Washington County Historical Society.
CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
A. Early History of Washington County

Organization of the County.-Prior to the seventeenth of January, 1814, that portion of Indiana now known as Washington County was located in the old territorial counties of Clark and Harrison. At that early date, when Indiana was yet a territory and while the War of 1812-1815 was yet in progress, Washington County came into existence, by an act of the legislature January 17, 1814, for the formation of a new county out of the counties of Harrison and Clark.

The acts describing the boundaries of the new county are too detailed to mention in this brief history. Suffice it to say that the starting point in surveying the county is known as Freeman's Corner, near Orleans, in Orange County. The junction of several Indian boundary lines near Orleans was known as Freeman's Corner, which point was established in June, 1803, by the treaty of Fort Wayne. Freeman was the name of either the surveyor or the squatter who located there at an early date. These early boundaries show that the original
county was a very extensive territory.¹

In December, 1815, both Orange and Jackson Counties were created by taking a large tract of land from Washington County, thus reducing it (with the exception of Scott County, which was withdrawn in 1820) to its present limits. It might be mentioned here that in the Constitutional Convention of 1816, which was held at Corydon, then the capital of the territory, this county was well represented by John Depauw, William Graham, William Love, Samuel Milroy, and Robert McIntire.²

Settlement of the County.—Long before any white family made a permanent home in Washington County, and while the Indians and wild animals were sole owners of the soil, hunters, prospectors, adventurers, and squatters visited its borders. This carries the reader back to the year of 1800 and earlier, for it is certain that soon after the new century started settlers located here, and they were always preceded by that semi-nomadic class of human beings known as squatters. The first settlers found evidences of white occupancy at Royce's Lick and at other places along the principal streams where living springs poured their welcome waters from the cool caverns of the ground. Small Indian villages were to be seen in a dozen places in the county, and the heavy forests, broken here and there by small tracts of prairie, were full of deer and

¹Weston Goodspeed, The History of Washington County (Chicago, Goodspeed Brothers 1884) pp. 706-709.
²Ibid., p. 709.
bears, wolves, raccoons, panthers, turkeys, and other wild game.³

The First Settlers.—The names of the first permanent settlers cannot be indicated with certainty. Weston Goodspeed lists George Brock as the first settler. He was a hardy German who came from the Old Dominion, settled at different times in several places in what is now known as Washington County in 1807, living upon the game killed in hunting. He was a good hunter and was prospecting with a view of bringing his family out for permanent settlement. He was followed by his son, George Brock, and sons-in law, Adam Barnett and Frederick Neidiffer.⁴

Stevens says Thomas Hopper was the first settler of Washington County. He landed at the Ohio Falls in the spring of 1803, and after learning all he could about the lay of the land, decided to push into the interior of the county to select a home. He followed the Indian trail leading to Vincennes until he came to the point where Hardinsburg now stands, and laid claim to ten thousand acres of land. The first white man to locate with his family in the central part of the county was Jesse Spurgeon. He lived at Royce’s Lick for some time in 1804. In the spring of 1809, he brought his family out and built a small cabin on the branch about a mile east of Royce’s Lick, near Harristown.⁵

³Weston Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 682.
⁴Ibid., p. 683.
General Description of the County.—For beauty of natural scenery and variety of contour, Washington County is not surpassed by any other in the state. In the southern parts are extensive barrens, which embrace nearly one-eighth of the entire area of the county. These barrens were originally (and to a limited extent are yet) thickly covered with wild grass, brush, timber, and shrubs. Some parts are diversified with sink-holes varying in size and shape, showing the cavernous nature of the earth beneath. This part in later years has been brought into cultivation. About one-fifth of the county is bottom lands and in many parts, especially along the water courses, quite broken. It is well adapted to the raising of cereals of all kinds. Its underlayer of limestone makes it especially adapted to blue grass. The county is traversed by a number of streams, many of them fed by never-failing springs of pure cold water, making the county one of the foremost for stock-raising.  

B. Early History of Salem

Locating the town.—In the preparation of an historical sketch of Salem, the writer is compelled to be brief, because it will be impossible to notice in chronological order all the early events. The history of Salem began with the appointment of three commissioners by the Territorial Legislature to select the site for the seat of justice of Washington County. In February, 1814, the commissioners met at the house of William

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6Weston Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 667.
Lindley, who then resided on the south side of the creek where Salem now stands. They spent more than a week's time viewing the several sites offered, and selected a site in the forks of Blue River and Brock's Creek. One hundred and seventy-four acres were purchased from Benjamin Brewer and William Lindley for the site of the new county seat. The commissioners agreed to name the town Salem, as suggested by Mr. Lindley, who came from Salem, North Carolina. 7

Planning the town.—Early in 1814 the Legislature appointed General Depauw agent for the town of Salem. The first court ever held in the county was held on what is now known as the Dennis Farm in a small brick house. The court ordered General John Depauw to proceed to lay out said town, advertise, and sell the town lots. 8

First Residence.—The first house to make its appearance in Salem was a peculiar one. It was built by Simeon Lamb, out of long poles set upon the ground. It was completed early in 1814. Houses soon sprang up all over the site and people began to seek their places in the community.

Early Merchants.—The first merchandise was sold in Salem by Lamb and Mendenhall. Their store's shelves were made of clap-boards. The partners were followed by many other energetic merchants who did a prosperous business. 9

7 C. C. Menaugh, "History of Salem" in History of Washington County, (Goodspeed Brothers, 1884), pp. 757-758.
8 Ibid., p. 759.
9 Ibid., p. 760.
Manufacturing Enterprises.—The first person to engage in commercial production was William Lindley. Early in 1814 he erected a horse-power saw mill. Stephen Coffin erected a horse-power carding mill a few years later. These were followed by a woolen mill, a cotton factory, other saw mills, a weaving plant, carriage plant, wood shops, wheel factory, and a smith shop.10

C. Early Schools

It would be an unpardonable omission to pass over the educational history of the county. Early schools had a hard struggle to exist, though Indiana at that time headed the list, especially in Mid-Western and Western States, in making provisions for educational facilities. Barnabas C. Hobbs stated that Indiana was first in her "investigated" school fund, (commonly known as sinking fund), and ranked fifth from the top in number of schools.11

There is no need to describe the pioneer school buildings, for that has been done many times. In this sketch we bring back only some of the reminiscences of early scholars. The rough school buildings were made of hewed logs, had puncheon floors and huge fireplaces with capacious chimneys. Seats were without backs and two long pins in the wall above the teacher's desk supported his whips.

Bullington states that schools were founded in Washington County as early as 1800. Several log schools were built through-

10 C.C. Menaugh, "History of Salem" in History of Washington County (Goodspeed Brothers, 1884) p. 761.
out the county. An unnamed author, according to Bullington, writes, "In one of these log huts Xenophon's Greek and Cicero's Latin were taught as thoroughly as they were in Cambridge and Oxford. It was the teacher and not the cabin that made the schools; it is the teacher and not the castle that makes the college." 12

A subscription school was held in a cabin southwest of Salem in the winter of 1809-1810. Subscription schools were held in Salem at various times from 1811-1818. The first records show that a school was organized there in 1816 and another in 1818, the former being called the Salem Grammar School. In about 1816, an association of citizens organized the Salem Grammar School in which the higher branches of learning were taught. They maintained this organization until 1824 when it was incorporated under the state law and continued under the latter plan until 1828. It was then reorganized and called the Washington County Seminary, the subject of this study. 13

The Quakers established a school in their meeting house, located two miles northeast of Salem, in the winter of 1815-1816. A few years later they built a two-room log school house near the same location, and called it Blue River Academy. The house had the distinction of having glass windows. 14

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14 Warder Stevens, op., cit., pp. 332-336.
D. Importance of Seminaries and Academies

This early seminary period, later called academy period, was one of the most important and fruitful of good of any school period in our history. The seminary and academy provided inspiration and help to the elementary schools. They furnished teachers, fed colleges, cemented community interests, invited settlers and civilized the frontier, as no other influence could do. Their mission was elevating and sympathetic. Notwithstanding occasional opposition from "tax-savers" the schools continued to exert a conservative and wholesome influence, and those influences remain in the better educational movements of the present time.  

CHAPTER III
HISTORY OF THE SEMINARY AS A NORMAL

A. Purpose

A story of the Civil War and a story of Abraham Lincoln would, of necessity, have much of the same material. The picture of the Revolution could not be painted without including George Washington. The story of the Washington County Seminary is so closely interwoven with the story of the life of John I. Morrison that one cannot be discussed without the other. We will study here the school and its influence and then, if we are to understand its background and significance in Indiana educational history, we must repeat something of Morrison's life and works.

The administration of John I. Morrison, comprising nine years in the County Seminary, was as fruitful of good to the common schools as to the seminary and its immediate pupils; indeed the seminary was a sort of training school for principals and teachers as well. The work was almost wholly academic, providing only occasional talks on didactics. It is no small privilege, however, to have learned even the simplest lessons from a real teacher. The ways of the Salem school were significant of the best method, so that many teachers went away from a term or a year with Morrison having clearer aims and purer motives, as well as studious habits. They were better teachers, primarily because they were better men.
and women, but equally because of the enthusiasm for truth and unselfish interests incident to training in a real school. A large percentage of the students from Salem later taught, and the school in this way came to be regarded as a training class for the township schools--indeed, not infrequently for other seminaries as well.

B. Salem Grammar School

As early as 1824 the progressive citizens of Salem saw the need of establishing a school for more advanced instruction than could be obtained at the ordinary winter term of school of the Salem Grammar School which had been organized eight years before. A conference was held and it was decided to build a commodious house and obtain one of the best educators in the country to conduct the school. The house was a one-story brick, situated two hundred feet from where John Hay was born and where George Telle lived for a number of years. John I. Morrison was chosen to head the school.

On the first Monday in April, 1825, under the supervision of an intelligent board of managers, young Morrison began his labors. The new school was a grand success from the start and Morrison became a power in the community. During the winter of 1825-26, the Grammar School was full to overflowing; in fact, a number who sought admission had to be turned away for lack of accommodations and a new school was planned. 1

C. Washington County Seminary

By an act of the Legislature of the State of Indiana, approved January 24, 1827, Washington County was authorized

1Warder Stevens, op. cit., pp. 343-344.
to establish a county seminary and Benjamin Park, Alexander Little, Beebe Booth, John J. Henderson, and Burr Bradley were appointed as trustees of the seminary with authority to purchase the necessary site and erect a building. On July 29, 1827, they purchased two acres from the Mary White estate for one hundred dollars and it was conveyed to them by deed.\(^2\)

The tract conveyed was eighteen rods wide east to west, extending north from Hackberry Street to the alley. On April 24, 1828, Andrews Pitts conveyed to the trustees a strip of ground one rod wide and extending east from the northeast corner of the Seminary lot, so as to include the spring with the right to fence it and use it jointly with Mr. Pitts.\(^3\)

Empowered by the act of the legislature the county accumulated a fund sufficient to erect a commodious seminary building on the two-acre lot. Work was begun in the spring of 1828, and was completed in time to permit school to begin in October. The building was a two-story brick, forty by sixty feet, and stood the long way, east and west. The end walls had no openings. On the end the boys constructed a ball alley. On the west end was a large chimney, with huge fireplaces on both floors. Ten feet on the east end was cut off for the hallway, in which the stairway was located. One end of the upstairs hall was fitted up for a sort of laboratory. The eastern end was surmounted by a cupola, adorned with a weather cock and supplied with a bell.\(^4\)

\(^2\) Recorders' Office, Washington County, \textit{Deed Book D.}, p. 259
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 413.
\(^4\) Warder Stevens, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 343-345.
D. Sex Classification

Male Seminary

The Salem Grammar School was strictly for men students, and the same policy was carried over in the Washington County Seminary. There were no facilities for female students in the first organization. Mr. Morrison was not against women attending the higher institutions of learning, so he began to emphasize that women had the same right for education as men. The Seminary held strictly for the enrollment of male students until 1835. By this time Morrison's wide influence for female education had spread to such an extent that he embarked upon another very important educational enterprise.

Salem Female Collegiate Institute

He planned, built, and put into operation the Salem Female Collegiate Institute. This, he located on the corner lot immediately west of the seminary. It was a three-story brick building, forty by fifty feet. It had a steep roof with the ridge running east and west and with three dormer windows in the south slope. Four large chimneys were symmetrically placed, two at the east end and two at the west. There were also two large half-moon windows in the ends, one in each of the two gables. Seven or eight pine trees grew in front of it. It was planned by a Philadelphia architect and cost eight thousand dollars. This was completed in 1834, and was operated in con-

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\(^5\)Ibid., pp. 344-45.
nection with the seminary for young men. One may judge the amount of work that Morrison did, the interest taken and the good accomplished when informed that there were about one hundred young ladies and as many young men going to his school at one time.

Zebeulous B. Sturgess said:

It was a mixed school, and all the better for that, as I look at it. True the boys and girls occasionally fell in love with each other; but they will do that anyway, and they will be far less likely to make serious mistakes in this respect when they have studied and recited together and taken measure of each other's mental caliber. Their presence made the boys behave better and they were put on their mettle not to be excelled by them.

E. Changing the Name of the Institution

The Salem Presbyterian Female College

In 1849, Morrison sold the school buildings to the Presbyterians and the name was changed to "The Salem Presbyterian". Rev. B. M. Nyce, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was put in charge. His father was a wealthy merchant and he studied for the ministry and came west as a missionary. When Mr. Nyce took charge of the seminary he brought his sister with him as an assistant. Miss Nyce brought with her the first piano that came to Salem. Every young lady in the town wanted to take lessons and Salem thus became locally noted for its music. Mr. Nyce was a finished scholar, especially well educated in Chemistry. During his first year in Salem, there was a great revival in religion, and he became so absorbed in religious work that he gave up the school at the close of the first year and became a celebrated

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preacher. His successor was George Bradley, a graduate of Marrietta College, Ohio. Near the close of the year under Bradley the school buildings caught fire and burned to the ground.\footnote{Warder Stevens, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 345.}

One new house was built which was similar to the one used by "The Salem Female Collegiate Institute". Mr. Morrison was again called to head the institution and was principal for two years. It again took the name of Washington County Seminary. Mr. Morrison then retired from the teaching profession and was succeeded by Professor Blackington, who conducted the school for two years, when, the school not being self-sustaining, the buildings were sold at the sheriff's sale--Marcus C. Hobbs being the purchaser. He conducted the school for three years, with considerable success. He sold to Professor Wilson, and he to Professor Biggs, who carried the school up to 1858. At that time a stock company, headed by James G. May, purchased the buildings and grounds and Mr. May was put in charge of the school.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 346.}

May Academy

From March 1, 1858 to February 2, 1872, Mr. May sustained a continuous private school, a portion of the time being assisted by his son, W. W. May, known as one of the best instructors that ever taught a school in southern Indiana. Since the two Mays were the main instructors and James G. May the principal, the
seminary was popularly called the May Seminary.

The Mays preferred to call the new organization "Salem Male and Female Seminary" because they did not care for the publicity for their name. The May Seminary was widely known, and numbered among its boarding pupils students from Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The course of study embraced, in addition to the usual English branches, Latin, Greek, French, German, Rhetoric, English Literature, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Geology, Botany, and Astronomy; and in mathematics, high Algebra, Trigonometry, and Analytic Geometry. The high intellectual quality which characterized Mr. Morrison's work was present in no less degree in the work of the Mays, making them worthy successors in a work worthily begun. Literary and debating clubs were zealously kept up, lectures and public exercises were frequent. Throughout the whole period of their labors these men were constantly striving to arouse and stimulate a healthy interest in all human affairs and in the world around. The frequent Friday night lectures, readings, and exercises of various kinds had this for their main object. The readings, for instance, were from the best authors, and were intended not merely to entertain, but more especially to arouse and promote a love for literary work of the better class. The scientific lectures with illustrative experiments always had a similar aim. 8

Eikosi Academy

In 1870, W. W. May was called to act as Principal of the Male High School in New Albany, which position he held for several years. Then, under an agreement with the late W. C. Depauw, he opened a college preparatory school, largely for the benefit of Mr. Depauw's three sons. Under the contract the school was limited to twenty pupils, whence came the name "Eikosi," the Greek word for twenty. In the meantime, the town of Salem had erected a fine new school building and had chosen Professor James G. May as superintendent of the school. Thus the old Seminary ceased and the old building (the one which stood on the Thompson lot) was burned about 1877.

In 1878 Professor W. W. May returned to Salem and opened the school under the title of the "Eikosi Academy," that name having proved popular, although the number limit was now removed. The school continued to prosper under his management until his death in 1885; after which time it was successfully conducted for four years by James W. May, and Benjamin A. May, sons of W. W. May until they were called in the summer of 1889 to take charge of Depauw College in New Albany.

The school was kept up for a short time longer, first by Professor Montgomery, and afterwards by Professor Philips, until the property was sold to the town of Salem for the use of the high school. Thus ended an interesting and important chapter in Salem's educational history.  

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9 Ibid., p. 13.
CHAPTER IV

JOHN I. MORRISON, THE HOOSIER ARNOLD

A. The Founder of the Institution

Anne Morrison Coffin, daughter of John I. Morrison, contributed the following sketch of her father's life:

My father, the youngest of twelve children, was born near Chambersburg, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, 1806, the adopted home of his parents who had exchanged the green fields of Ireland for the fresh American soil.

My grandfather and grandmother were both born in Ireland; his father was of Scotch descent. My grandmother's father's name was John Irwin after whom my father was named. My grandfather was of more humble birth than my grandmother, hence her parents discarded her for her courtship with the elder Morrison. Despite this, they were married and after a few years of living in Ireland, they came with their first child, Ellen, to this country, to begin new struggles in an unknown land far from pitiless kith and kin.

My father's first possession was a pig, which he exchanged for a Latin Grammar and with coveted possession fairly laid the foundation of his accurate and ready scholarship. Headache had been an excuse when work in field, which a child could do, had been demanded, but it was a headache that now ceased itself upon the Latin Grammar, and soon became established in the family that little John was to be a scholar, and no brother nor sister but wished and did contribute to the result. Perhaps the taste sprang from some tradition of family love upon the part of my grandmother. She herself had a tutor at home and was instructed, for the day, and perhaps the venerable ministers of the extraordinary powers of learning, (I have heard my father say they were mighty men) as to stimulate a budding mind to extraordinary effort.
The story of my father's preparation for college, has been given by his sister. She relates that two of his sisters had the wool cut off the sheep's back, washed it, carded it, spun it, colored it, wove it, cut it, made it into a complete suit, pantaloons, vest and all, in two days and a half from the first. It was blue jeans, a fine piece of cloth, and in it he went to college.

He began to teach at the early age of fifteen, and ventured to test his self-command and courage as a teacher in the neighborhood of his nativity. There were rebels in the school-room in that early day as now, and the largest boy in the school challenged to measure his muscle with his master, but was conquered. The little schoolmaster went home that evening with a sadly agitated nervous system, and sought a place to weep. He wept long--night came on, and he sought the balm of sleep, but in the night watches, still weeping, he begged to come near his loved and loving mother. She soothed the grief of her nurseling, too soon grappling with the stern realities of life. In the morning, calm and self possessed, he rose to assume his duties and bear the burdens of life on his young shoulders with renewed courage and strength.

The Call of Indiana

Mrs. Coffin concludes with the account of young Morrison's coming to Indiana:

Mr. Morrison entered life when our State was in its formative period. About the year 1824, the rich lands and genial climate attracted the Morrison family to the West. They found a home a few miles north of Salem in Washington County. Here he taught school at Walnut Ridge and the following spring he was given charge of the Salem Grammar School.

John Morrison's introduction to the citizens of Salem is very ably presented by James G. May, a citizen of Salem, and very nearly the same age as his venerated teacher. He relates:

In December, 1824, in what was then Brown

1 Anne Morrison Coffin, A Sketch of Her Father's Life for Barnabas C. Hobbs in his address "The Commemoration of John I. Morrison", at an Old Settler's Annual Meeting, Salem, August 8, 1883, found in Salem Democrat, August 15, 1883.

2 Ibid., Salem Democrat.
township, I first met John I. Morrison. Congress had set apart every sixteenth section of land for common school purposes. A liberal provision was also made for a State University. To render the system complete, provision was made by the State for academic instruction in every county, by County Seminaries, whose graduates from the common schools could prepare to enter college. Buildings were erected generally for this purpose, but this part of the system failed to be a success by lack of capable teachers.

The trustees of the sixteenth section met to elect three congressional trustees. These trustees had control of the funds, etc., arising from the lease of the sixteenth section. Mr. Morrison on that occasion read the law governing such elections. He was at that time a youthful schoolmaster, employed to teach a school on the Walnut Ridge. He was nineteen years old.

The trustees of the Salem Grammar School would inform the public that they have employed Mr. John I. Morrison to take charge of said school. He will commence on the first Monday of April 1825. The Latin and Greek languages, mathematics, etc., will be taught as well as various other branches of an English education; those wishing to send will find a subscription paper open with the Treasurer, Hugh McPheeters, Esq. where they may ascertain terms, etc., by order of the board of trustees, February 25, 1825.3

Principal of Seminary

Salem in its early days enjoyed an enviable reputation and stood prominent among the cities of the State in matters of education. This was due largely to the influence of a rather remarkable group of intelligent and public spirited men whose lives were identified with the early history of the place. A number of these men were well educated, some of them college graduates, all of them keenly alive to the importance of setting up for the new town a high standard in all things intellectual.

It was such atmosphere as this that first brought John I. Morrison to Salem, in 1825, when he was placed in charge of the Salem Grammar School. It was because of the wide influence of his work at Walnut Ridge, a small school northwest of Salem, that he was considered for the principalship of the Grammar School. Morrison was capable and earnest and under his management the Grammar School became a complete success.

All of this stimulated the desire of Mr. Morrison and his friends for something larger and better. The Grammar School was a success and was becoming known through this part of the state, but those early educational leaders decided that they should take still another step toward providing better facilities for educating the young men.

They decided to found the Washington County Seminary. The logical head of the school was John I. Morrison.

That Mr. Morrison was impressed by the responsibility that came to him with the founding of the new school is shown by the fact that he first desired to better himself for the place as its head. While the building was being prepared, so was the man. Mr. Morrison found it necessary to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the subjects he would teach in the new seminary, so while carpenters were erecting the structure in 1827 he sought the needed education at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.4

4James G. May, op. cit., p. 10
His daughter stated:

"My father wore the same blue jeans suit that he wore when he attended college in Pennsylvania. He had grown taller, however, and his pantaloons were about three inches too short—that did not distress him. I heard him say to one of his sons upon a similar occasion when the son was asking for a broadcloth suit, "Yes, sir! and I graduated in the same suit". This may be accounted for (and its not wearing out although he was fond of outdoor exercise) by his graduating in one year—taking two years in one and entering two years in advance."5

In the fall of 1828, he returned to Salem and began vigorous teaching in the Washington County Seminary building. Soon he made the school a power, and the fame thereof spread far and wide. In 1835 he organized the Salem Female Collegiate Institute in addition to Washington County Seminary. Under his active, skillful leadership a school of wide-spread reputation, and eminent usefulness, grew up. He continued to be principal until 1840, without a broken term except when he attended Miami University. From 1840-44 the Seminaries were headed by James G. May, while Morrison was Professor of Ancient Languages in Indiana University. He returned to the Washington County Seminary as principal for four years. On account of financial difficulties, he was unable to carry on the institutions, so he sold them in 1849 to the Presbyterians.6

He remained out of teaching for one year. The Old Seminary was destroyed by fire later in 1850, but a new building was constructed immediately, and he was called back and acted as principal for two years, then resigned to go into the newspaper business.

5Anne Morrison Coffin, op., cit., Salem Democrat, August 15, 1883
6Warder Stevens, op., cit., pp. 344-345.
This was the end of his teaching so far as being in the schoolroom was concerned, but his technique, morals, and instructions never have ceased.7

B. Aiding the University

1. As Professor—Because of his teaching ability, Mr. Morrison was elected Professor of Ancient Languages in Indiana University. He was efficient and popular as a professor and highly esteemed by his colleagues and students. In 1844, he resigned to go back to the Washington County Seminary.8

2. As a Trustee.—In 1847, he was selected as a member of the University Board of Trustees, serving from 1847-1855, being President of the board from 1854-1855. He was again called back to Washington County to superintend the construction of a new building, the fire which destroyed the original structure occurring while he was a member of the University Board of Trustees. He was again a member of the University Board from 1873-1878, and again president from 1874-1876.9

C. Legislative Work

Occasional attempts at legislation had been made even during the territorial period to provide for the schools by enactments concerning school lands, the appointment of officers and the regulations of leases. Educational needs were seen by more people over the State, so the demands for schools were

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7Warder Stevens, op. cit., p. 346.
some of the issues in the legislative bodies of 1840-1850. Finally, the demand became so urgent that the issues became intermingled in the debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1850.

Mr. Morrison represented Washington County in the House of Representatives from 1839-40, and in the State Senate, 1847-50. Here he labored to get a law passed for uniformity of education in Indiana, but he met with very little success.10

On January 15, 1849, the Legislature had voted to submit the question of a Constitutional Convention to the people. The movement was received with favor, and at the election in August of that year the privilege was asked by a large vote. In accordance with this expression the assembly at its next session, January, 1850, passed an act formally ordering an election of delegates.11

John I. Morrison was chosen as a member of that group named to rewrite the State Constitution. Because of his prominence in the educational field, he was chosen as chairman of the committee on education. In this capacity, he drafted with his own hands, and by strong personal influence and exertion secured the adoption of, that portion of the State Constitution which gave Indiana its present effective public school system.12

Dunn pictures Morrison as debating before the committee:

"Every gentleman must be aware that our common school system has not answered the purpose for which it was devised. The truth is we have no uniform system. In one county a

12 Ibid., pp. 129-130.
particular course of instruction is pursued; in an adjoining county the course is altogether different. If we wish to have a system that will be general, uniform, and efficient, we must have an officer whose special duties it will be to direct, control, and guide that system. 13

In this position as education committee chairman he gave invaluable services. He is said to have been responsible for the creation of the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction and largely responsible for the provision for a "uniform system of common schools." 14

D. Later Life

During the Civil War he was appointed Commissioner of Enrollment for the draft, by President Lincoln, with his office in Jeffersonville. He made Union speeches in many places in the Southern part of the State and men would stand around the buildings with their muskets and one by one would come inside and listen to his wonderful and convincing words. When he thought they might be getting tired, they would exclaim, "Go on! John I., Go on!" His daughter stated that she heard and saw this. He never carried arms; the confidence in his bravery inspired that of his body guard. 15

In 1864 Mr. Morrison was elected State Treasurer and changed his residence to Indianapolis. He managed the finances of the State carefully during those troublous times and was the intimate friend and counsellor of Governor Morton. He served two years and was succeeded by Nathan Kimball, one of his former pupils at Salem. 16

13 Jacob Pratt Dunn, op., cit., pp. 487-488.
15 James Woodburn, op., cit., p. 184.
16 Barnabas C. Hobbs, Address at Old Settler's Meeting at Salem. Salem Democrat, August 15, 1883.
In 1872 he moved to Knightstown, where he continued his public services as township trustee and secretary of the school board.

He died of heart's disease, at his home in Knightstown, on Monday, July 17, 1882. He was buried in the Knightstown Cemetery. In the death of John I. Morrison, Indiana lost one of its truly great citizens, who had contributed his full share to the betterment of his fellowmen.17

In regard to his death Barnabas C. Hobbs reports:

On the 17th day of July, 1882, telegrams were wired to relatives and friends and to the daily journals that the Honorable John Irwin Morrison had ceased to live on earth. There are men and women from the Atlantic to the Pacific and especially among the teeming population of the Mississippi Valley in whom the sad tidings awakened deep and loved memories. He belonged to a type of man who in their very boyhood study the true ideal of a worthy manhood and make everything contribute to that ideal.18

E. His Contribution to Philosophy of Education in Indiana

John I. Morrison was a man who gave character to the surviving educational sentiment of his respective neighborhood; a man who left enduring marks upon local institutions, and made or reformed the communities' reputations. His school furnished the standard by which the efficiency of public schools was estimated and compared with the efficiency of seminaries in other states.

17Knightstown Banner, July 21, 1882.
18Salem Democrat, op. cit.
A large-hearted man of scholarly habits, Morrison was possessed of mental balance and sound intentions; he was democratic enough to reach the majority, but withal so familiar with the peculiar and exclusive privileges that belong to a deep and persistent spiritual culture as to attract the few most ambitious youth, nobly aspiring to a broader field of labor and privilege and seeking the means of co-operation with the world's rich life. Students came to Salem not alone from Washington and adjoining counties, but from distant parts of the State and from neighboring states. The principal became widely known and while the school was not the largest in the State, its reputation for thoroughness, for a far-seeing, practical preparation for business or professional life and the intelligent fitting for higher studies, drew a superior class of mature, thoughtful, earnest students.

Such are a few of the many instances of the far-reaching touch of the Salem School. In seminary and college, in public office and social life, in science and in culture, wherever generous sentiment and philanthropic interest were needed, for fifty years might be found men who gratefully acknowledged their indebtedness for both learning and inspiration to the Salem teacher--the Hoosier Arnold. 19

19. Richard Boone, op., cit., p. 55
CHAPTER V

MORRISON'S SUCCESSORS AND STUDENTS

A. Successors

James G. May—No man in the county or possibly in the State ever had as varied an experience in the school room as James G. May. He was noted for four things, first, he began teaching in the county the same year that Morrison began his work; second, he was an outstanding pupil of John I. Morrison while the latter was principal of the Salem Grammar School; third, he was Mr. Morrison's main assistant at different times; fourth, he succeeded Mr. Morrison as principal and carried on the high intellectual work of John I. Morrison.

Daniel Hough gives a short biography of May which is as follows:

James G. May, a native of Kentucky, emigrated to Indiana in 1824, being nineteen years of age. In a cabin, Brown Township, northwest of Salem, Mr. May began the important work of training boys and girls. Then he was under the instruction of John I. Morrison but soon commenced teaching around Salem, then for five sessions as assistant for Mr. Morrison. From 1832 he was editor of the Western Annotator. He was then principal of the Decatur County Seminary at Greensburg until 1839. During the next three years he practiced law. In 1843, he took charge of the Corydon High School, which he conducted for eight years, when he left to take charge of the New Albany schools, over which he presided for six years. In 1858, he again returned to
Salem to take charge of the Washington County Seminary. This he conducted until 1871, when he was elected superintendent of the Salem graded Schools, from which position he retired in 1874. He is at present teaching classes at his residence. Professor May has had many pupils, who are today the living monuments of the faithful work of an instructor to whom no eulogy can do justice.¹

W.W. May--Not much account can be found of the life of W. W. May, except that he was the son of James C. May. His different places of teaching and work have been cited in the last chapter. Complete records of his life apparently are missing.

Other Successors--No sketch of the work or life of the other successors, except their names, can be found. They are as follows: Rev. M. Nyce, whose short biography was given above; Professor Biggs, Professor Montgomery, and Professor Phillips.²

B. Students

Stevens names some of the outstanding men as follows:

Among the men who were educated in Morrison's schools and at one time made their mark in the world were: Dr. Elijah Newland, one of the foremost physicians of the State in his day and at one time State Treasurer; Dr. Edmund Albertson, a noted physician and educator; General Robert Allen, who distinguished himself during the Civil War; Minard and Zebulon Sturges, who held responsible positions at the nation's capital; General Nathaniel Kimball, a celebrated soldier and Treasurer of the State; W. C. Depauw, a most successful financier for whom Depauw University was named; Barnabas C. Hobbs, one of the foremost educators of the State; John C. Campbell, the originator of the Rodman gun during the Civil War; Newton Booth, at one time governor and United States Senator of California; James G. May, noted educator, assistant and successor of John I. Morrison.³

¹Daniel Hough, "Eminent Educators" in James Smart's Indiana Schools of 1876, (Cincinnati: Wilson, Hinkle and Company, 1877), p. 65.
²Tbid., p. 65.
³Warder Stevens, op. cit., pp. 343-344.
"There are only names from the better known", says Boone. "Many of his pupils became teachers, indeed, not a few entered (the Salem School) for that purpose. His more capable students became his assistants and later principals or assistants in other county or private seminaries and academies, or filled chairs in colleges."  

C. Statements of Representatives

The writer was unable to find many statements of representatives of Morrison's school. What few were found were mostly clippings that had been kept and preserved by Mrs. Harvey Morris of Salem. The one of most importance was the reminiscence written by Zebulon B. Sturgess for Barnabas C. Hobbs to give in an address before the old Settler's Meeting at Salem, August 9, 1883.

I was a pupil of Mr. Morrison from a very early age before the seminary was built. I remember after more than fifty years, the day we first entered with pride that building. It was then not a common thing for girls to learn Latin, and I well remember my surprise at Laura and Cornelia Leonard reading Horace to Mr. Morrison. The seminary became famous. Pupils flocked in not only from Washington County, but from adjoining counties. The house was too small to hold all of the pupils. Many families of the town took boarders who attended the seminary. Mr. Morrison's education was very exact and thorough as he made his mark on all whom he taught for any length of time. His mere presence in the school room secured order such as other teachers obtained only by strategy.

The school was always opened with prayer in which the petition, "That we may know Thee, the only true God, whom to know aright is life eternal."

4Richard C. Boone, op., cit., p. 54.
Now there happened to be two brothers in the county, Levi and Noah Wright, who were sheriffs of the county alternately for many years. It puzzled my small brain not a little, though as it was in a prayer, I never ventured to make my wonderment known why Mr. Morrison should always pray for Noah Wright (know aright) and never once for Levi. I have seldom seen him laugh so heartily as he did when I told him long afterwards of this perplexity.

The following was written by Dr. Elijah Newland, of New Albany, who was student of the Seminary for two years. He writes as follows:

As a teacher, Mr. Morrison had the rare combination of ability to impart instruction and to govern a school. He had a fine natural sight, superior mathematical talent as well as knowledge and extended experience in surveying, having been surveyor of Washington County for several years.6

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5 Salem Democrat, August 15, 1883.
6 Ibid., August 15, 1883.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Every influence of the institution and of its founder was vitalizing and elevating. Mr. Morrison was personally an initial factor or a leading spirit in a series of social movements that made Salem for many years a kind of Mecca—a center of learning and civic discussion, of public enterprise and social improvement of the State, sharing with New Harmony the credit of making southern Indiana known.

Even though citizens of Washington County have lost all records of the Washington County Seminary and its founder they pride themselves in mentioning the fact that their grandfathers and great grandfathers had the opportunity to receive some inspiration and ethics from the Hoosier Arnold—John I. Morrison.

By a considerable number these seminaries, however, were looked upon with distrust—patronized by the aspiring mediocre and attended by a few; well enough used by the would-be teacher or professional man, but furnishing an education undesirable for the pioneer laborer; an expensive, impractical institution,
aristocratic, and to be feared. John I. Morrison fought this idea and his democratic viewpoint of education influenced students until all classes of pupils became interested in morals, ethics and in work to benefit those in financial distress.

Today the buildings records and equipment of Washington County Seminary are all gone. A picture of the school's great founder and a few yellow clippings and sketchy recollections of the school are all the material things that remain, but the spirit and the educational influence of the school go on.
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