CHAPTER FIVE

Part II: Female Faculty

The Depression caused considerable unemployment, and this led to widespread popular opinion condemning the employment of married women. Across the nation, schools adopted policies that women who were married must give up their employment. The governor of Pennsylvania issued an executive order that prohibited state employment of near relatives living under the same roof under the higher salary classifications. This executive order impacted the few married couples who taught at ISTC.

Mathew Walsh was a longtime Dean of Instruction. He had come to ISNS in 1920 with his wife Louise. Together, they authored History and Organization of Education in Pennsylvania. Louise was a part-time instructor at ISTC.

With the executive order there was pressure to dismiss Mrs. Walsh, but Dr. Foster went to the Board of Trustees to try to continue her employment. The Trustees Minutes show they did not support his motion, and her contract was not renewed. (May 7, 1935),

Though it was not always the woman who was forced to seek other employment, in the case of the Walshes, it was Mrs. Walsh who was let go.

Politics and the Presidency of ISTC

Soon Dr. Foster would be arguing for his own position, and with as little success. Dr. Charles Foster was the first ISTC President since Dr. Keith, who had led the development of the normal school to a teacher’s college, resigned before it had been officially renamed.

Foster quite successfully led the school through the difficult early years of the Depression. Well-liked by the students, faculty, and community, he had made the economic challenges shared ones and
brought the employees together in spite of the hard times. He had also been a community leader, serving as the Chairman of the Indiana County Relief Board and leading the campus in relief efforts on behalf of the suffering in the surrounding region.

In January of 1935, a Democrat, George H. Earle, III, was elected Governor of Pennsylvania. This was the first time a Democrat had held the office in nearly half a century. Once Earle took office, he appointed new members to the ISTC Board of Trustees. Soon after, two of these new members called a meeting of the Board to discuss removal of the president and the school’s accountant, William Schuster.

Foster argued the move was political. In response, the entire ISTC faculty met and composed a missive of protest which they wired to the Governor and other state officials expressing confidence in Foster and disgust at the process which they perceived to be politically motivated. The next day, they sent a letter with signatures of the entire faculty to the same individuals. The Trustees met on May 28th and voted 5 to 4 to remove Foster and Schuster and declared the presidency vacant as of August 31st. Foster and Shuster refused to remain and resigned, leaving the college with no president and no accountant and telling reporters that “the morale of the college was badly shot.” Dr. Walsh, Dean of Instruction, reluctantly agreed to serve as Acting President until a replacement was found.

After a complicated interlude during which people were nominated to be ISTC president, the Governor rejected the nominations, some people resigned from the Board, and others were removed, in the middle of November a nomination was made that was accepted by the Governor. The person appointed was Dr. Samuel Fausold, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Fausold faced many challenges. Indiana County was a Republican strong-hold, and Fausold came with close ties to the new Democratic governor. He also replaced a highly popular president who most believed as relieved on the grounds of his political affiliation. In addition to these obstacles, Fausold
was ill most of the less than two years that he would serve as president.

While he was able to restore the 1931 10% pay cut for ISTC employees, and oversaw a large federally-funded building project that brought the campus badly needed construction, including an auditorium and a new training school, he was never able to capture the hearts of the community and alumni and it is not surprising that changes he made were met with resistance. His removal of Miss Ackerman was a good example.

In May of 1938, Fausold met with the Board of Trustees, and led one of their members to resign declaring that he was “definitely opposed to Dr. Fausold’s policies, “and that he was "not willing to assume any further responsibility for the mistakes which are being made in the administration of the affairs of a fine college." The action which had led the trustee to resign was the announcement that Jennie Ackerman was retiring and that she did so because Dr. Fausold asked her to step down to the post of director of placement. After the meeting Ackerman declared "I certainly did not resign because I wished to retire." Others were being also asked to retire because they were over 62 years of age, including Hope Stewart, (to be replaced by Florence Kimball, Assistant Dean of Women), and Dean Walsh.

Dean Walsh, who had recently served as Acting President charged that 70 was the official retirement age and that did not believe his work "indicated a degree of senility that would indicate that I am not able to do my work." The Penn lamented the loss of Ackerman who they argued “launched the successful careers of thousands of alumni and influenced many schools.” (May18, 1938) Ackerman did not retire from the field of education, but served for the next decade as the Dean of Women at Drew Seminary.

Fausold suffered a coronary thrombosis in the summer of 1937. By the fall 1938, he was still recovering. In January of 1939, the Republicans again won the office of Governor. Perhaps reading the writing on the wall, in February of 1939, Fausold resigned, citing ill health. He was replaced again by Dr. Walsh who served as Acting President until Leroy King was appointed President. Some who had been appointed under the Fausold administration, including Dr. Richard Madden, a psychology instructor, who had been chosen to
replace Ackerman as head of the Training School, were summarily fired.

A New Generation of Female Administrators and Faculty

During this period Hope Stewart, a longtime ISTC Dean of Women, would step down and be replaced by Florence Kimball, a representative of new generation of academic women on campus. Hope Stewart, who retired in 1938 at the age of 63 had been trained by Jane Leonard and had overseen female students for decades. But the students of the 1930a had substantially different expectations than those who had attended the normal school years before. Many would have agreed with Fausold that it was time for her to retire.

In 1935, the school hired Florence Kimball as Assistant Dean of Women. Kimball was, at 44, a much younger woman. She also had an undergraduate degree from Hood College, and had gone to France, Holland, and Britain during WWI to offer YMCA relief services to the troops. After the war she returned to school and earned an MA from Columbia’s Teacher’s.

Stewart and Kimball’s respective manners of dealing with students reflected their varied backgrounds. Stewart followed the pattern begun by Leonard and by the 1930s with students calling for changes to what they considered outdated school rules, it was time for a change. Kimball had meetings that were more like classes that dealt with issues such as “traditions of school,” “appropriate dress,” “table manners,” “good form in public,” or “living with others.”
While the number of male faculty members increased during this period, in many departments female faculty members continued to be the most numerous. English had no male faculty members. One of its professors was Rita Perkins, who earned her doctorate in Education from the University of Pittsburgh in February 13, 1931. This made her the first woman to receive a doctorate from Pitt’s School of Education, and the first woman from any of the state’s teachers colleges to earn a doctoral degree.

Edna Lee Sprowls was also in the English Department. Sprowls played an active role in many of on-campus productions. She was a graduate of California Pennsylvania’s Normal School, but went on to attend the Emerson College of Oratory in Boston, MA. After graduation she taught aesthetic dancing and elocution at associations and normal schools. She joined the faculty at ISNS in 1915 and taught classes on topics from Shakespeare to appreciation of photoplays for nearly three decades. She was the advisor to the Leonard Literary Society and directed many plays and radio broadcasts.

Other women were the only women in their departments. In 1936, Nora Zink joined the ISTC faculty with impressive credentials, including a PhD in Geography from the University of Chicago. She inspired her students to be interested in the world, traveling widely herself and leading educational trips for her students. She also supported the visits of international students, adding to the diversity of the campus.