Chapter One
Part III: Female Faculty

The academic life and cultural life of the school also evolved during this period, drawing upon accomplished faculty, many of them female. Unlike colleges and universities from the period, Indiana always had a considerable number of female faculty.

Foremost among them was Miss Jane E. Leonard, who was hired as Preceptress (or Dean of Women), even before the school opened. She also served as a teacher for a variety of subjects. Leonard was born at Leonard Station in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania, in 1840. After attending local schools (including Clearfield Academy), she began teaching. She might have stayed and taught there or married as most women did at the time, but Leonard was “ambitious of preparing herself for better and higher work.” She set off across the state to attend the state’s first and best normal school at Millersville, Pennsylvania, in April of 1861, just as the Civil War was breaking out. Soon she was hired to teach on the Millersville faculty, first as an assistant teacher, and then as a teacher.

As student and teacher she studied under and worked for James Wickersham, the Principal of Millersville Normal School and one of the State’s most respected educators. The experience of studying and teaching at this, the State’s oldest and best normal school, was critical to Leonard. When the Board of Trustees of ISNS approached Wickersham and asked for a recommendation for Preceptress, he suggested Leonard. The recommendation was a good one. Leonard served as Preceptress at Indiana for nearly half a century. Calling upon her own intelligence and erudition and her experience at another normal school, she
would guard and guide generations of young women. She did much to shape ISNS’ culture.

Leonard had many of the characteristics of the “New Woman” that was increasingly being commented upon in the popular literature of the day. In the wake of the Civil War, American women were changing. Moving away from an exclusive focus on hearth and home, they were attending high school, normal schools, and colleges in increasing numbers and increasingly finding work in the public sphere outside of the home. In fact, by 1870, there were nearly three million women in the workforce, representing all of the occupations counted by the U.S. Decennial Census of that year.

A born teacher, she was well-educated and widely read. Her students described her as having “a wealth of knowledge at her instant command.” Over the years she taught History, Geography, School Economy, Mathematics, and Literature. She had strong opinions concerning current events and the duties of citizens, male or female, and was an outspoken advocate of educational and social reforms, particularly temperance and women’s suffrage. Strong-minded, she was a Democrat in a community of Republicans. She was never slow to convincingly argue her opinions with men or women who would join in debate with her. As a dinner guest or after church on Sunday morning, Leonard would not hesitate to share her thoughtful opinions in a spirited though civil manner.

ISNS students, like those who attended all of the normals in the state, were often of

Leonard stands at the center of a group of students during a class outing. She was respected and loved by students who often called her “Aunt Jane” even after they graduated.
moderate means and from rural backgrounds. When they met Leonard, they were
astounded. Martha Cameron, Class of 1881, recalled “When I entered Indiana
Normal in 1880, it was with meager foundations for the work upon which to build an
educational career...Miss Leonard was one of the first really well-informed women I
ever knew. Her well-equipped mind awakened in the untrained girl from the county
school a desire for information and knowledge that has never been satisfied or
quenched.”

For many, Leonard’s rooms in Sutton Hall represented a finer way of life. One
student described them as having “choice pictures, rare volumes, and the familiar Venus
de Milo” and in every way declaring “gentlewoman.” Another recalled that at Leonard’s hands
“many a young woman whose home environment had not been of the best type
received private and kindly lessons on the decencies of life, as essential as any
received in class.” Still another declared that Leonard could give students the benefit
of “her own rich experience and fine culture without the slightest embarrassment to the
limited and untrained “

Leonard was strongly religious, often leading prayer services at chapel, which
meshed well with a school where daily chapel exercises and Sunday worship were
mandatory. She was instrumental in bringing the YWCA chapter to the school and
made certain that they were an integral part of school life, speaking at their meetings
and encouraging their active social justice agendas. The presence of a Young
Women’s Christian Temperance Union, an organization that combined Christian
adherence, advocacy of Temperance, and support of the vote for women is not
surprising.

Though many students were in awe of Leonard, they were also fond of her. As
Preceptress, she was responsible for both the conduct and academic life of the
school's female students. She did this with a judicious mix of discipline and compassion. There were few high schools when the school began, and students often came to Indiana directly upon graduation from the eighth grade. Leonard's impact on young women, who often came to Indiana when they were fourteen years of age, was enormous. Leonard devoted her life to these young people and they came to love her, referring to her as “Aunt Jane.” Under Leonard’s tutelage one recalled, they “ceased to be strangers in a strange land, but became members of one big family sheltered by a common roof-tree.”

Leonard, who enlightened intellectually, guided morally, and cared personally for her students, was a pioneer women professor, providing a role model of an alternative lifestyle to young women who were in their formative years. She had dedicated her life to teaching and she encouraged them to do the same and be worthy of the sacrifice their parents had made to send them there.

Leonard was also a friend and mentor to the many female faculty who worked with her at ISNS. In the first year there were twelve faculty, including the Principal and the Preceptress, who also taught classes. Five of them were female. Two of the women were married to men on the faculty. Anna Sensing was married to the Mathematics instructor, who would become Principal from 1876-1878. She taught English and continued to do so while he served as Principal. Mrs. M. S. Berlin taught vocal music and was married to the Superintendent of the Model School. Not married to other faculty members were Grace Oviatt, who taught Drawing, Penmanship, and Book-keeping, and Miss Maggie Lichteberger, who taught Instrumental Music and, of course, Jane Leonard.

By 1890, women made up 63% of the faculty at ISNS. This was a higher percentage than in any of the state’s normal schools. By then, the Superintendent of the Model School was a woman and she and Miss Leonard had salaries equal or exceeding
those of any male faculty member with the exception of the Principal. (This is particularly noteworthy since at the time it was the practice in schools to pay male teachers larger salaries than female teachers.)

Exceptional students who had attended ISNS sometimes were invited to join the faculty. For example, Sarah Gallaher, a graduate of the Scientific Course, (an advanced degree that was designed to train school administrators, was invited to join the faculty when she graduated in 1888.

Female faculty found a favorable climate at the ISNS School at a time when many colleges and universities would not hire women, but they were still not guaranteed equal treatment. Sarah Gallaher recounted a story concerning Miss Leonard and Miss Mary Butler, a female faculty member from the early years of the school. According to Gallaher’s account, while the male teachers’ rooms were cleaned by the household cleaning staff, the women teachers were expected to clean their own rooms. One Saturday morning, as Miss Mary Butler was at work cleaning her room, a group of male faculty came by, “smiling and joking at the expense of the ladies and their domestic tasks. “ This led Miss Butler to cease cleaning and begin agitating for equal treatment. She spoke with Miss Leonard about the matter. The
two decided that women “had as much right to freedom from Saturday morning toil

as had the men.” The two approached the Trustees and discussed the matter, and it was decided in their favor.

Both female and male instructors at ISNS had full schedules. As of May 1882, each teacher was expected to teach 7 periods of 45 minutes each, unless they had an alternative work assignment for one of those periods. In addition, many were hired with the understanding that they would live in the dormitory and oversee the halls or to supervise students in extracurricular activities. In many cases they ate their meals in the school dining room with students.