

**THE PROBLEMATIC LEGACY OF JUDGE JOHN HANDLEY:  
R. GRAY WILLIAMS, THE GENERAL EDUCATION BOARD,  
AND PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION IN WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA, 1895-1924**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When the John Handley School opened in Winchester, Virginia in the fall of 1923, the impressive structure and its carefully landscaped grounds were the culmination of a process that began in 1895 with the death of Judge John Handley of Scranton, Pennsylvania, a man who had never lived in the city that was to benefit from his fortune. For reasons known only to himself, Handley left the city of Winchester funds to erect a library and, somewhat more vaguely, to build schools for the education of its poor children. His bequest set in motion a long process of institution building that involved law suits, wrangling over the terms of the bequest, and public controversy that involved the executors of Handley's estate in Pennsylvania; Winchester's mayor and city council; the city council's independent agent, the Handley Board of Trustees; the Winchester School Board; residents of the city; and the General Education Board, a

philanthropic organization based in New York City, to whom the Handley trustees turned for advice and assistance in making its vision of education for Winchester's children a reality.

Thus, Handley's gift became a problematic legacy for the first thirty years after his death, especially with regard to the school. The development of the Handley school was not a simple process that was brought to any inevitable conclusion by benevolent civic leaders. When Handley's gift was announced, consensus did not immediately emerge as to how the money should be used with regard to education. Disagreements arose about the nature of the school to be built and the degree to which the Handley trust would absolve the city's tax-payers of the financial responsibility for the city's public schools. Some members of the community, Harry Byrd among them, hoped to use the funds to create a college, while others hoped the trust would provide all of the support for public education in the city. The burden of carrying out Handley's wishes for Winchester's students fell largely to local lawyer R. Gray Williams, who had been elected to the Handley Board of Trustees in 1913 and to the Board's presidency in 1915. More than any other individual, R. Gray Williams was responsible for the way in which the educational provision of Handley's will was implemented. Williams' already formidable challenge was further complicated by the fact that the nature of both education and philanthropy were changing during this time period.

Given the differences of opinion about how Handley's gift should be used, Williams looked outside the city for expert advice that would help resolve the dispute. He turned to the General Education Board (GEB), a philanthropic institution established by John D. Rockefeller in 1902 and a leading proponent of progressive ideas in education. From its earliest days the GEB had targeted the South as its area of special interest, and by 1915 it was well along in a program to promote the development of state departments of education and enhanced state supervision of local schools.<sup>1</sup>

The records of the General Education Board at the Rockefeller Archive Center in Sleepy Hollow, New York, contain five folders of material that document the role of the GEB in the development of the Handley school. These records illuminate the relationship between R. Gray Williams and the staff of the GEB, and, by extension, Williams's role in guiding the creation of the school. What emerges from this material is a portrait of institution-building in the Progressive era, with political maneuvering and calculation at every turn and the subtle manipulation of ostensibly objective, expert opinion. This case study of educational reform is

also a revealing chapter in the history of American charity and philanthropy, and offers a vivid portrait of small-town progressive reform in action.

The history of the Handley Trust and the Handley school merits some attention, both as an episode in American philanthropy and, more importantly, as a contribution to the on-going debate about possible alternative strategies for funding public education. For a time in the late 1910s and early 1920s, educational reformers had high hopes for the Winchester experiment in using funds from a private endowment to supplement tax money in support of public education. They hoped that the success of this public/private partnership would offer a model for other towns and cities to follow. Now, a hundred years after the creation of the Handley Trust and more than seventy years after the opening of the Handley school, communities across the country are exploring anew other innovative public/private partnerships to meet the increasingly greater needs of public school finance. An especially popular tool since the mid 1970s has been the tax-exempt local education foundation, dedicated to raising an endowment from gifts from alumni, local businesses and concerned citizens and using the money to benefit particular schools or school districts. One recent report estimated that about 2,000 of these local education foundations have sprung up across the country, and, as school finance continues to be a hot and difficult social and political issue, the popularity of this approach surely will increase.<sup>2</sup> The Handley Trust in Winchester is a little-known precursor of these new local education foundations, but its history may hold valuable lessons for its younger counterparts, for the story of the Handley experiment is that of a typical late-nineteenth-century philanthropic bequest transformed into an innovative educational program by careful leadership, by changes in local politics, and by new ideas about education.

### **JUDGE JOHN HANDLEY**

The charitable bequest for the Winchester schools came from an ambitious and rather mysterious Irish immigrant who found success in his new homeland. John Handley (January 27, 1835-February 15, 1895) was a self-made man. His biographer, Garland Quarles, reports that Handley was born in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland, and that he learned carpentry from his father, who, along with Handley's younger sister, died in the famine in 1847. In the early 1850s Handley came to North America, arriving in Canada before crossing the border to western

New York, where he worked as carpenter in Rochester. Handley became a naturalized U.S. citizen in Monroe County, New York, on October 24, 1856. Following the election of James Buchanan to the presidency, Handley moved to Washington, D.C. to take a job in the government. In the late 1850s he married Mrs. Catharine Barnwelle Lovington Thayer of Charleston, South Carolina, a widow with, in the parlance of the times "a son of feeble mind." Handley and his wife later separated, and she returned to the South.<sup>3</sup> Handley never remarried, and he had no children to inherit the fortune that he would accumulate.

While in Washington, Handley studied the law, and in 1860 he moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania, where he was admitted to the bar that August. During the next year Handley served three months in the Pennsylvania militia, but his main occupation during the Civil War was as a lawyer for draftees who sought to avoid military service. His close friend Holmes Conrad, a former Confederate soldier, later described Handley's legal work during the war: "His chief professional employment was before the 'Draft Commissioners' and consisted in obtaining, for a monied consideration, the discharge from military service in the field, of those enthusiastic patriots, who, while clamorous for war, were reluctant to personal participation in it. In this practice he made great gains, and without any imputation of a violation of professional obligations."<sup>4</sup>

However lucrative his law practice may have been, Handley earned his greatest wealth from the business boom that Scranton enjoyed between 1860 and 1870. He profited from his investments in real estate and the rents he collected, and from his service as a bank organizer and officer. The Lackawanna County lands in which he invested contained deposits of anthracite coal, which became, in Conrad's estimation, "the principal source of his princely fortune."<sup>5</sup> In the 1870 census, Handley valued his real estate holdings at \$50,000 and his personal property at \$25,000. His wealth continued to grow in subsequent years through investment and additional land purchases. Between 1864 and 1894, Handley made twenty-five different land purchases. Among them was the Wyoming House in Scranton, which was reportedly "the most luxurious hotel in Pennsylvania at that time." Handley also helped organize and served as president of both the Merchants and Mechanics Bank and the County Savings and Trust Company, resigning the leadership of both in 1875 following his election as judge. He also was "the controlling financial figure" in the Lackawanna Improvement Company of Scranton, and organized the Pork

Packing Company.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to his business endeavors, Handley appears to have been quite active in the Democratic Party, as his move from New York to Washington for a patronage job after the 1856 election would suggest. In 1874 Handley received the Democratic nomination for a judgeship in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. After a bitter campaign, he defeated Republican nominee General Edwin S. Osborne of Wilkes-Barre by a vote of 4,010 to 3,721. He served as a judge in Luzerne County until 1878, when Lackawanna County was created from it and he was appointed judge in that jurisdiction. He lost his nomination for reappointment, however, and his term as judge ended in January 1885.<sup>7</sup>

Despite his political victory in 1874, his decade-long tenure as a judge, and his considerable business success, Handley's life in Scranton apparently was not a particularly easy or pleasant one, even from his earliest days there. "John Handley appeared to the people of Lackawanna County under conditions not favorable to a cheerful reception and an instant confidence," recalled Holmes Conrad. In fact, during the Civil War some Pennsylvania residents thought he was a rebel spy. The fact that he kept portraits of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in his home in Scranton was evidence to many of his sympathies for the Confederacy.<sup>8</sup> Upon his death, friends described him as "much misunderstood" by many of his neighbors, a man "whose life was not a book open to all." The *Scranton Tribune* called him "a misunderstood and, in a public sense, an unappreciated man."<sup>9</sup> He appears to have withdrawn from public life in Scranton after 1884, becoming "somewhat of a recluse" and suffering from hay fever and other health problems. In 1890 his older brother Daniel died, and by the year's end, John Handley had made out his own will.<sup>10</sup>

Popular opinion toward Handley in Scranton may well have been reflected by new political difficulties that he suffered in 1890. These new troubles regarded assessments for paving Lackawanna Avenue, on which Handley's Wyoming House stood. The street had been paved with cobblestones, and property owners were assessed to cover the cost of the work. Soon after this work was completed, however, a movement was begun to repave the street with asphalt and to once again assess the property owners for the work. Since Handley opposed this double taxation, all of the street was paved with asphalt except that part of the street in front of his hotel, which remained cobblestone. City council then passed a pointed ordinance that designated "all

parts of Lackawanna Avenue which are cobbled . . . as a proper place for the sale of hay, farm produce, live stock, etc." Obviously, having a noisy and crowded farmers' market in front of a hotel is not good for business. The *Scranton Tribune* blasted the council for this "cheap form of revenge."<sup>11</sup>

Such maltreatment in Scranton may have helped turn Handley's philanthropic thoughts more decidedly toward Winchester.<sup>12</sup> Handley had become acquainted with the Winchester region after friends from Scranton moved to the area. James Jifkins was an English immigrant who came to the U.S. in 1850 and settled in Scranton, where he operated a grocery. In December 1869, Jifkins and his two sons, James Jr. and Thomas, bought a 436-acre farm in Frederick County, several miles northwest of the city. Handley visited them often during the 1870s, and during these visits made acquaintances with other local residents, including Robert W. Hunter, Frederick W.M. Holliday, Albert Baker, and Holmes Conrad. In the early 1870s Handley began to invest in the Winchester area. On July 2, 1873, he made his first land purchase in the area, paying \$1.25 per acre for 1,375 acres in "the iron ore region" of Frederick County. He also began to acquire local stocks, and soon became "the largest stockholder in the Union Bank of Winchester."<sup>13</sup>

Handley first indicated his general philanthropic interest in Winchester in 1888, when he proposed to buy the land for a public park. Holmes Conrad discouraged the plan, arguing that a park was not needed. What the city really needed, Conrad believed, was "a large, modern hotel, with ample grounds attached, that would serve as an attractive summer resort, and an inducement to the people of the cotton and sugar States to spend their long summer vacations here." Handley responded in the fall of 1889, sending "a huge box containing a mass of printed matter" that detailed his plans for the Equity Improvement Company of Winchester. These plans went far beyond the initial suggestion of a resort hotel. Modeled after a similar Improvement Company Handley had backed in Scranton, the Winchester plan proposed to build a Hotel Winchester, a steam brick yard, a steam sawmill and factory, an ice company, a canning company, cotton mills, an opera house and hall, a ladies underwear company or a silk mill, a tobacco factory, a pork packing company, and a water company. Handley had a severe case of the "boom" fever.<sup>14</sup>

In the age of empire builders like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, Handley's ambitious plan was not just idle or wishful thinking, for he and his local friends acted quickly to

make it a reality. The Equity Improvement Company was incorporated by the Virginia General Assembly in 1890, with Handley as president; Conrad as vice-president; Robert W. Hunter, John T. Richards, and William Richmond as fellow incorporators; and Charles L. Crum as secretary. Shares of the company's stock were valued at between \$5 and \$100. Handley took \$50,000 in stock; by June 1890, all but \$266,000 of the \$1 million capital stock had been subscribed, and Handley took the remainder.<sup>15</sup>

The company's officers anticipated a local economic boom, and their optimistic early activities laid the seeds of the plan's demise. They began to buy land in the Winchester suburbs and to subdivide it and mark off streets. Handley objected to this change in the plan, but ultimately acquiesced. Down payments for the land and payments to the hotel's construction contractor soon exhausted the cash. Enthusiasm for the plan quickly faded, and subscribers' payments toward stock purchases ceased. Handley took it upon himself to finish the hotel, and its construction was completed in 1891, but it then set empty until 1900, when it was occupied only briefly. At a meeting on August 11, 1899, the directors of the Equity Improvement Company voted to end the company and sell the land to pay its debts and redeem the stock.<sup>16</sup>

The Equity plan is important for several reasons. First, it reveals something about Handley's character. In the spirit of local boosterism that was widespread during this period, Handley was an ambitious planner and builder, one who always anticipated an economic boom and wanted to be riding high when it came. As we will see, this economic optimism explains some of the provisions of his will that presented problems for his beneficiaries in Winchester. Secondly, the Equity plan suggests the extent of Handley's interest and involvement in the Winchester area. When we focus only on his gifts to the city, we tend to forget that he was a speculative businessman who had other ties and interests in the area. The Equity Company also is of practical importance because it helps to explain why the Handley school was built where it is, on a location that was on the outskirts of town, a location that was opposed by many parents in the early 1920s who thought it was too far for their children to walk to school. On July 21, 1890, the Equity Improvement Company paid \$18,000 for 72 acres of land bounded by Stewart Street and the Valley Turnpike and extending into Frederick County. This land became known colloquially as "The Equity." On July 22, 1904, the company's directors, of which Conrad was president, transferred the 72-acre plot to the Handley Board of Trustees, of which Conrad was

also president. "For many years," Quarles notes, this plot "was used solely as a pasture, a site for circuses and baseball games." It subsequently served as the site for the Handley school and for the city's reservoir, and part of it was sold as home sites.<sup>17</sup>

Guilt over the failure of the Equity Improvement Company has been cited as one possible explanation for Handley's charitable interest in the city. Perhaps, Quarles suggests, his bequests were an attempt "to make up to those, who were not so fortunately situated, for their losses." Still another reason cited for his charity to this small southern town is his interest in the Confederacy.<sup>18</sup> In his study of Handley's life, Garland Quarles could find no clear statement from the Judge himself as to why he devoted the largest portion of his fortune to Winchester. But his death on February 15, 1895, was only the beginning of a long struggle among and between Winchester's leaders to define Handley's philanthropic legacy and to make some version of it a reality.

Handley's will had several provisions relevant to Winchester, but the people of the southern town were by no means the sole beneficiaries of Handley's philanthropy. Handley, like many financially successful men in nineteenth-century America, appears to have conducted during his lifetime a system of personal, private charity, especially for the education of young people. "He has given large sums to charitable institutions," Lemuel Amerman recalled, "and he has educated in different schools, students from five to twenty at a time, and from these he exacted but one condition, that they should never disclose the fact that he was paying for their education."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in his will Handley instructed his executors "to continue paying the Expenses of each boy, and girl, that I may have at School, or College, at the time of my death, until each of said persons shall graduate," and then each was to receive \$500.<sup>20</sup>

Handley did not ignore Scranton in his will. He left substantial trusts to two Scranton institutions, St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum and the House of the Good Shepherd. The former received a \$50,000 trust, and the latter a \$25,000 trust. His housekeeper received his residence, a \$5,000 bequest, and \$1,000 annually during her lifetime. Other individuals also received bequests.<sup>21</sup> In the kinds of institutions he supported and the bequests he made, Handley's will is typical of those of other men and women of his economic standing during the late nineteenth century. Had the popular writer Sarah K. Bolton only known of Handley's bequests, she could have included them along with many similar gifts for libraries, industrial schools, universities,



museums, orphanages, old age homes and other institutions that she described in *Famous Givers and Their Gifts* (1896).<sup>22</sup> However typical they may have been, Handley's bequests made a significant difference in the lives of their recipients.

The people of Winchester clearly benefited most from Handley's philanthropy. Two provisions of his will affected the future of the City of Winchester. The first pertained to establishment of a library. Handley bequeathed the city \$250,000 to be held in trust and invested in Virginia state bonds until the accrued amount totaled \$500,000, at which time the city was to erect a free public library to be called the Handley Library. The second Winchester provision gave "the residue" of his estate to the City of Winchester, which was "to be accumulated . . . for a period of twenty years," and then used for "the creation of School Houses, for the Education of the poor" in Winchester.<sup>23</sup>

Handley's bequest for education was a major boon for Winchester, but it was not the first philanthropic effort on behalf of education in the town. Indeed, the only existing public school structure in Winchester had been built largely as the result of a bequest to the school system by John Kerr, an English immigrant, a cabinet-maker, and resident of Winchester since about 1825. Kerr died, childless, on November 11, 1874. In his will, he left \$7,000 to establish a permanent school site. His bequest had increased to \$10,000 by the time it became available in 1882, when the city council, which had refused to build a school seven years earlier, added \$6,000 to the fund. The new school opened in 1884 with ten available classrooms. Six rooms were added to the school in 1908, but by 1917 the need for classroom space had increased to the extent that five rooms were being rented for classroom use.<sup>24</sup>

## **GOVERNING BODIES: EXECUTORS, TRUSTEES, AND POLITICIANS**

Handley's will soon led to the creation of two new legal entities with claims on his estate: in Pennsylvania, three executors named by Handley were responsible for protecting his estate until the provisions of the will required them to turn over funds to the beneficiaries in Virginia, where the Winchester City Council had turned to the state legislature for authorization to establish the Handley Board of Trustees to take charge of the funds and develop the institutions specified in the will. These three groups -- the executors, the Handley Board of Trustees, and the Winchester City Council -- were soon at odds over the estate and their responsibilities.

Handley named three executors to oversee the disposition of his estate in Pennsylvania. The most prominent was Henry Wilbur Palmer (1839-1913), a lawyer in Wilkes-Barre who had served as the attorney general of Pennsylvania and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Lemuel Amerman (1847-1897) was a Scranton attorney, city solicitor, and city comptroller. John T. Richards (1853-1933) was cashier and later president of the Merchants and Mechanics Bank and a prominent businessman. Richards was the only one of the three to see the final disposition of the estate. Upon his death in 1913, Palmer was succeeded by Mary L. Trescott, another Wilkes-Barre attorney. Amerman was succeeded by his wife, who served for three years before her death in 1900; she was succeeded by L.A. Watres (1851-1937), who, at the time of his election, was serving as the state's lieutenant governor (1899-1904).<sup>25</sup>

The executors waged several early battles to protect the estate. First, they successfully fought to revise the original appraisal of the value of the estate for tax purposes. The initial assessment was \$1,374,669.21; the revised assessment was \$886,869.21, with \$30,000 in estate taxes. The second challenge was a law suit, filed on behalf of Henry Handley and eleven other "alleged" first cousins of the judge. They asked the U.S. Circuit Court of Western Pennsylvania to set aside the residuary clause of the will. The case, argued in Williamsport on September 7-8, 1898, resulted in a decision in favor of the will and the defendants. The cousins appealed, but lost again in 1900.<sup>26</sup> This victory was followed by disaster. On August 4, 1900, the three-story Merchants and Mechanics Bank Building, 420 Lackawanna Avenue in Scranton, part of the real estate holdings in Handley's estate, was destroyed by a gas explosion.<sup>27</sup>

While the executors in Pennsylvania struggled to protect the value of the estate, officials in Winchester organized themselves to manage the Handley funds they anticipated receiving. Upon learning of Handley's bequest to their city, the members of Winchester's city council sought legal advice and were urged to seek from the state the creation of a self-perpetuating board of trustees. Legislation creating the Handley Board of Trustees was passed on February 7, 1896, but the board was not made self-perpetuating.<sup>28</sup> Instead, members of the Handley Board of Trustees were elected by City Council. The initial trustees were Albert Baker; Holmes Conrad, who at the time was Solicitor General of the United States; Thomas J. Cooper; C.M. Gibbens; S. H. Hansborough; George W. Kurtz, a furniture maker and undertaker; William S. Love; Maurice M. Lynch, the school superintendent since 1886; and John W. Rice, cashier of the

Shenandoah Valley Bank. They first met on January 22, 1897 in Conrad's office.

Just as the eventual availability of Kerr's gift had both tantalized and paralyzed the city council in 1875, so too the delayed promises of Judge Handley's gift raised expectations in Winchester and created new difficulties between the announcement of the gift in 1895 and the eventual availability of the money in the 1910s. Winchester residents became anxious to see results from the Handley bequest, and local politicians soon brought pressure upon the trustees to act. During 1900, relations between the Handley Board of Trustees and the City Council grew tense. Communications between the two bodies were so poor that on September 4, 1900 the council established a committee to provide liaison with the trustees.<sup>29</sup>

The problem appears to have begun in February 1900, when the trustees made three proposals to the council. The first regarded approaching the state legislature to empower the trustees to receive the property of the estate, rather than waiting for its conversion to cash. Council agreed to this idea, but did not think state legislative action was necessary. Secondly, the trustees asked council to approach the legislature for an act to make the board of trustees self-perpetuating, a move which, in the eyes of city council members, would deprive the council of its right to appoint new members. Council rejected this idea out of hand. The third proposal was to seek legal relief from unrealistic methods and restrictions of the will, especially the provision requiring investment in Virginia state bonds, which were "no longer so desirable and profitable an investment as it was some years ago." Council concurred with this.<sup>30</sup>

The council met with the trustees on August 18 and presented its reply to the trustees' proposals. The trustees then issued a 32-page pamphlet, which council members found "intemperate and offensive." These disagreements revolved around whether to adhere to the letter or the spirit of Handley's will: whether to follow the exact formula spelled out in the will, which required proceeding with the library project only when the accumulated funds had reached \$500,000; or to follow a more accelerated time table that would be more responsive to the immediate needs of the community. The main issue, of course, was power: which body should determine the needs of the city and the actions to be taken with the Handley money.

The council's August 18 statement shows clearly that council members wanted more action on the library than they saw. "If the investment in the Library and its accessories is to be limited, as we think it should, to \$250,000.00," the council committee argued, "we cannot

understand why this should not be carried into effect at once." "Delay is death," the council statement continued, "death not only to those who should enjoy the fruit of this great gift, but death to the gift itself. If the letter of the will prevails and the wishes of the great mass of the people who desire to see this fund applied to the objects designed by the benefactor, are disregarded, at least twenty-five more years must lapse before -- with the very best management -- the fund can be expected to accumulate to the huge and useless proportions named in the will, and meanwhile with the chances largely in favor of the fund being lost and the whole great plan relegated to the long line of disappointed expectations, which makes up so large a part of the thing we call life."<sup>31</sup> Mayor Robert T. Barton, himself a lawyer, argued that the board of trustees should cease to exist once it had built the proposed library and developed a plan to fulfill the terms of the residuary clause in the will.<sup>32</sup>

Its purpose and existence thus challenged, the Handley trustees sought judicial clarification of its rights, duties, and powers by filing suit against the City of Winchester in Frederick County Circuit Court. Judge T. W. Harrison heard the case of *Albert Baker et al v. the City of Winchester* and issued his ruling on February 5, 1901. "In regard to the control, custody and investment of this fund," he argued, "and its application to the purposes of this trust, except so far as the approval of the ultimate plan of its applications, the said statute removed the common council from having any agency in the premises and substituted the board of trustees." The Board of Trustees "is the agent of the city and its people, and its mouthpiece in all matters pertaining to this trust. It is not that the city has abandoned anything, but that it has substituted a new agency which shall represent it, and which shall represent the people, and which shall speak for it in lieu of the common council, which but for the statute would have been the mouthpiece of the corporation." The city did not appeal the ruling.<sup>33</sup>

The board also asked the judge to rule on the question of investing funds for the library in state bonds and of the necessity of waiting till the fund amounted to \$500,000. On April 23, 1901, Judge Harrison ruled this provision of the bill null and void, and instructed the board to proceed with investments as they saw fit, reminding them that "any ultimate application of the fund shall receive the approval of the City Council."<sup>34</sup>

The Handley Library was built with little additional controversy. The land was purchased in 1902; the building committee was appointed in 1903; plans were approved the following year;

and the cornerstone was laid in 1908. The Handley Library was opened on August 21, 1913.<sup>35</sup>

## **R. GRAY WILLIAMS AND THE ESTATE SETTLEMENT**

With the library built and the 20-year waiting period for the availability of funds for education due to expire in early 1915, the leadership of the Handley Board of Trustees shifted significantly in 1915. Local lawyer R. Gray Williams, who had been elected to membership on the Board on July 2, 1913, was selected as the board's second president, succeeding Holmes Conrad. Williams served as the Board's president for the next twenty-five years until resigning in July 1940.<sup>36</sup>

R. Gray Williams (July 10, 1878-July 24, 1946) was the son of John James Williams, a lawyer who had served as mayor of the city, and grandson of Philip Williams, another prominent lawyer in the Valley. After a stint as a reporter and editorial writer for the *Cumberland Evening Times* in 1896, Robert Gray Williams entered the University of Virginia, where he studied the law. His father's death in October 1899 forced him to leave the university and return to Winchester to take over his father's legal practice. He served as city solicitor for twelve years, but did not follow his father's political footsteps any further. Governor Harry F. Byrd reportedly offered on two occasions to appoint him to the Virginia Supreme Court, but Williams declined each offer. Williams's career was largely taken up with the legal profession, business matters, and civic affairs. He served as counsel for Northern Virginia Power Company and Virginia Woolen Company, division counsel for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and local counsel for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He also served as president and counsel of both the Shenandoah Valley National Bank and the George Washington Hotel Corporation, as president of the Rockingham Publishing Company, and director of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Virginia. In addition he served the University of Virginia as a member and Rector of the Board of Visitors and a member of the Alumni Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund.<sup>37</sup> An early promoter of the Apple Blossom Festival, Williams was a civic booster whose greatest public service was as the guiding force behind the creation of a progressive school system for the city of Winchester.

A number of difficult tasks faced the Handley Board of Trustees in 1915 with its new leader at the helm. First of all, February 15, 1915 marked the twentieth anniversary of the death

of Judge Handley and the end of the twenty-year period stipulated in his will for the funds to be invested before work on the school project began. The Board of Trustees found it "discouraging" that the time had elapsed and the estate still had not been settled by the Pennsylvania executors and the proceeds transferred to the trustees. The trustees were anxious to obtain control over the remainder of Handley's estate. In 1915 the trustees undertook, in Williams' words, "a careful investigation of the Handley estate in Scranton, valued at more than one and a half million dollars, and an earnest though unsuccessful effort to compromise the existing differences with the Handley Executors to the end that this Board might obtain possession of and title to the Handley property." The unsuccessful negotiations prompted the trustees to file suit in the Scranton courts "in the effort to procure the trust property as promptly as possible."<sup>38</sup>

The estate consisted of "valuable realty in the business heart of the City of Scranton, consisting of a big department store, bank building, and other store buildings, valued at from one million to one and a half million dollars, and yielding now an annual gross income of about \$57,000.00." There was also an undetermined amount of cash held by the executors, as well as the assets of the Handley's Equity Improvement Company of Scranton. These assets consisted of a reported \$157,000.00 in cash in the treasury of the company, and a mortgage investment of \$225,000 owned by the company as the result of its sale "of a block of unproductive old houses situate[d] in the business part of Scranton."<sup>39</sup>

On June 12, 1914, the Board had adopted a resolution asking the Executors "to turn over in kind the real estate" stipulated in the will to the City of Winchester. But the executors held to the letter of the will and their directions to sell the property and submit the proceeds to the trustees. The trustees feared that "a sale of so much valuable real estate at one time would depress the market, while an indefinite holding and gradual sale by the Executors would leave the Board uncertain of its financial position in planning for the long future of the schools and would subject the fund to the payment of large commissions and expenses." The trustees also believed that some of the executors' leases were "unwise" and "illegal."<sup>40</sup>

The trustees saw in the existing estate the promise of a sound financial future for the schools. They believed that "more than a sufficient sum could be realized from the assets of the Equity Improvement Company to construct the school buildings and complete the school grounds." They also thought that "the rentals from the realty in Scranton and the other cash

assets could be made to produce a net revenue of at least \$50,000.00 annually for the support of the schools," with the real estate sold gradually, so that "the entire fund might be invested ultimately in giltedge, high-grade bonds."<sup>41</sup>

As early as December 1912 the board had determined to hire a Scranton attorney to represent Winchester's interest in the Handley estate, and engaged William J. Hand for this duty. On April 18, 1914, the Board appointed a committee consisting of Williams and J.E. Cornell to meet with Hand and the executors in Scranton. Negotiations failed, however, and the trustees filed suit in the Orphans' Court for Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. The suit argued that the real estate should be turned over in kind, and charged that the executors had failed to make timely payments to the trustees, had invested funds at too low an interest rate, had charged "large expenses and fees" for their services and in other actions "injuriously affected" the value of the estate. The suit asked for a speedy final settlement on the part of the executors.<sup>42</sup>

On January 29, 1916, Judge M.F. Sando ruled against the trustees on the question of the real estate transfer, but did order the executors "to file their final accounts as executors" within sixty days. The trustees instructed their counsel to appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and the controversy continued throughout 1916. Soon, however, the bulk of the real estate "was sold at excellent prices in a remarkably short time by the Handley Executors," a fact attributed by the trustees to their law suit, and on May 12, 1917, a final settlement was agreed upon. The trustees received securities and certificates worth more than \$1.6 million. At the end of 1917, the investment stood at \$1,640,953.59, bringing in an annual interest of \$72,966.10.<sup>43</sup>

## **PLANNING FOR THE SCHOOLS**

Once the money was in the bank, the political pressure on the trustees to do something with it increased significantly. But the trustees worked carefully and deliberately to make sure that the money would be used wisely, appropriately, and effectively. In 1915 the trustees had established a committee to begin a preliminary study of plans for the schools and hired "a noted landscape architect to develop the grounds for the school site."<sup>44</sup> Appointed by Major Holmes Conrad, the planning committee consisted of Williams, M.M. Lynch, and T.J. Cooper. Their charge was "to visit and study schools and, by and with the advice of an educational expert, to present to the Board a plan for the school system to be established here." The committee

corresponded with William Wirt, the superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana who was attracting much public attention for his reform work there, and by February 1917, Williams had visited the schools in Gary. Such contacts "broadened our educational horizon," Williams reported, "but the clearer vision of our opportunities and difficulties brought sharply home to us the need of disinterested and expert advice."<sup>45</sup>

The committee's task was complicated by the fact that ideas about education were in flux. They had certainly changed dramatically since Handley drew up his will in 1890. When Handley called for his money to be used for "the creation of School Houses, for the Education of the poor" in Winchester, he probably had in mind the kind of industrial schools that other wealthy men were funding for their communities all across the country. His good friend Holmes Conrad probably told him that Winchester had just built the Kerr School in 1884, and the two men may well have reasoned that in twenty years this school would have been outgrown and there would be need for additional schools around town. By the time the money became available, however, circumstances had changed in two ways: first, a movement to improve education had swept across Virginia and much of the rest of the South; and secondly, new, progressive ideas about what education should be, and about the role of the school in modern life, led some to conclude that not just more schools were needed in Winchester, but a new type of education.

The movement to reform Southern education had taken form, interestingly enough, in Capon Springs, West Virginia, during summer retreats in 1898, 1899, and 1900 at the hotel operated by William H. Sale. Attending these meetings were several Winchester residents, most notably Kate B. Conrad, daughter of Holmes Conrad and the only Winchester participant in all three Capon Springs meetings. These meetings of the Conference for Education in the South brought together both Northerners and Southerners interested in working together to improve education in the South. Conference members were interested in improving education for both whites and blacks, but they made a conscious decision to abide by prevailing segregationist laws and customs and *not* to promote the idea of social equality between the races. After meeting for three summers in Capon Springs, conference leaders decided to broaden their movement in 1901 and met that summer in Winston-Salem. The Southern Education Board was formed at this meeting to organize educational improvement campaigns across the South, and it was after this



meeting that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. began to plan the organization of the General Education Board, which, between its incorporation in 1903 and its dissolution in 1964, spent more than \$320 million on education in the United States.<sup>46</sup>

The General Education Board (GEB) contributed no money for education in Winchester, but it did play a significant role in the development of the Handley school, for it was to the GEB that Williams and the trustees turned for their "disinterested and expert advice." On February 17, 1917, Williams wrote to Wallace Buttrick, president of the GEB, seeking advice on the organization of the Winchester schools. After a preliminary exchange of letters, Williams submitted a formal resolution from the trustees inviting "the General Education Board of America . . . to make an educational survey of the City of Winchester and its environs, and to work out a plan for the application of the Handley Fund to educational purposes." In June 1917, the GEB accepted the trustees' invitation, and on July 7 and 8 sent Abraham Flexner to Winchester to meet with Williams and Harry F. Byrd.<sup>47</sup>

Flexner "came here with an open mind," Williams noted in his next annual report, "free from any of the local mists of prejudice or pride of opinion that might unconsciously cloud the vision of someone long interested in the development of the Handley Schools."<sup>48</sup> Williams thus publicly deferred to the "experts" about the future of Winchester's schools, yet, as we will see, he constantly kept them abreast of political developments in Winchester and made clear his own point of view and that of the board of trustees, subtly shaping the supposedly objective report that the "experts" were asked to prepare. Williams' appeals to the objectivity and disinterested nature of the GEB officials and their investigation and recommendations was thus an attempt to calm the political waters and win approval of the educational plan favored by the Handley Board of Trustees. He could use the General Education Board in this manner because his own educational vision closely matched that of the GEB.

From the General Education Board's perspective, the situation in Winchester had national implications. It would be the largest, but not the first, experiment in supplementing tax-supported public education with funds from a private endowment.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it addressed two pressing problems in educational reform. First, the use of private endowment funds for public education held promise at a time when allocating additional public money for educational purposes had become more difficult given the "lively and wholesome competition among social

purposes for all available sums." The second problem the Handley Fund addressed was "the difficulty of so organizing school systems that experimental efforts may be carried on without sacrificing already accepted ends." Because the Handley Trust funds would greatly enlarge the pool of school money available, experimental reforms could be carried out in addition to basic educational programs, not at their expense.<sup>50</sup> "The entire country will watch with interest the outcome" of the Winchester experiment, GEB officials noted. "If successful, the conditions are such as might be reproduced quite generally, for it has proved in America relatively easy to interest philanthropists in education. New and as yet unexplored are the possibilities of bringing endowment funds to the aid of public education in the elementary and secondary fields."<sup>51</sup>

In the end, however, the promising Winchester experiment would not be one that the members of the General Education Board attempted to replicate in other communities. Indeed, they appear to have tired of the Winchester experiment due in part to the unusual position in which they found themselves. As a philanthropic institution which preferred to work behind the scenes and generally relied on its financial clout as an enticement to local reform, the GEB soon found itself awkwardly in the middle of a political dispute as the disinterested experts from whom both sides sought support. Moreover, R. Gray Williams and the trustees appeared too willing to relinquish some of their local authority to the General Education Board, which clearly made GEB officials uneasy.

## **WILLIAMS AND THE GEB**

At the GEB, the task of studying Winchester and developing recommendations for action fell to two experienced school reformers, Frank Bachman and Abraham Flexner. Flexner was well known for his influential study of *Medical Education in the United States and Canada*, published in 1910, which had set in motion an overhaul in medical education.<sup>52</sup>

Following his first visit to Winchester, Flexner spent a few days "carefully considering the best way to proceed with [the Handley trust's] problem" and decided that the first step was to gather the facts: "It seems to me that in the first instance it is necessary to provide ourselves with a complete statement regarding the present educational situation in and about Winchester," Flexner wrote. "To procure this we should make . . . a careful survey of the existing facilities, needs, and opportunities for the community." To conduct the survey, Flexner recommended

Frank Bachman, with whom he had worked on the Maryland survey and who had conducted previous surveys in Portland, Oregon, Butte, Montana, and New York City. Flexner suggested that the Handley trustees pay Bachman a salary of \$500 a month for the work and that they ask the school board to take formal action authorizing cooperation with the trustees on the survey. Williams promptly replied that "the board will follow your advice in employing Dr. Frank Bachman," and he had already requested the school board's cooperation. By the end of July 1917, the Winchester school board had formally invited the GEB to survey the city's educational resources and requirements.<sup>53</sup>

Flexner and Bachman were scheduled to visit Winchester in mid-October to begin planning the survey. Flexner hoped to meet with both the school board and the City Council during this visit. Perhaps in an attempt to insulate the GEB representatives from opposing points of view, Williams discouraged a meeting with the city council: "May I suggest to your consideration that you do not see the Common Council with the School board? It is my opinion that you will accomplish more by postponing your conference with the Common Council until you should have made your educational survey and school census and determined the plan you will recommend. I feel that you can accomplish more with the Council by bringing to their attention a definite plan of the schools you think should be established. You could then show them the amount of money required and consider with them the question of the continuance of the school appropriation."<sup>54</sup>

By November 1, Bachman was in Winchester preparing for the survey. "Mr. Cool took me all over the town," he wrote to Flexner. "With about four inches off of each of my legs I expect to take a horse and buggy this afternoon." Bachman had arranged with Dr. George D. Strayer of the Teachers College of Columbia University to bring four "young men" to Winchester to conduct the survey. Work on the census began on November 5, 1917, under "ideal" weather conditions, according to Bachman, who, writing on November 8, thought the study should be completed by "next Tuesday and probably Wednesday night." "The whole problem is becoming clear as we advance and is proving to be an exceedingly interesting one," he reported.<sup>55</sup>

By November 20, Bachman was back in New York City, working on the census tabulations. Williams wrote to report a problem: "The owners of the Winchester Inn property

have been told by someone that you were considering the Winchester Inn as a good site to recommend to the Handley Board for schools. Two parties interested in the Winchester Inn property have been to see me about it. I told them that the Handley Board had not considered the Winchester Inn property in any way; but that the position of the Board was to keep hands off entirely until the General Education Board recommended a plan for the application of the Handley fund. I assume you agree with me," Williams concluded, "that it is best to keep anyone, especially property owners of proper sites, from obtaining an inkling of your plans." Bachman assured Williams that he "did as little talking as [he] could, being conscious of the danger, and got most of [his] data on the property in the late evening." For Bachman, the incident "simply illustrates how difficult it is to do anything in a small town and keep it secret."<sup>56</sup> The general question of where to build the Handley school, and the Winchester Inn site in particular, would be recurring problems for Williams and local officials, with the GEB caught in the middle.

Flexner kept Williams apprised of the progress of the report, but noted that the census figures were "a more complicated and extensive job than one would have thought." By early February 1918, Williams was growing impatient and feeling political pressure from both state and local officials. "I will be very glad if you will indicate to me when you think you will be able to advise us the plan you recommend for the Handley Schools," he wrote to Flexner. He had been using the promise of the report to fend off state and local political forces. He was "rather apprehensive that some [state] legislation might be proposed that would interfere with our plans," and had "explained to Mr. Byrd that we are awaiting your plan and I felt that it might be preferable not to present your plan to the Board until the legislature adjourned about the middle of next month." At the same time, "the School Board here is insisting upon an increased appropriation in order to meet the minimum needs of the schools." The School Board had requested a total of \$15,000 from the Common Council, but the council was "finding it impossible to meet the proper demands for city appropriations upon the present tax rate" because that state took "nearly all of the revenue from taxes on intangible personal property." Williams feared that the Council would turn to the Handley trustees for assistance from the Handley Trust. "I would prefer to present your plan to the Council before any such move was made."<sup>57</sup>

Williams also wanted Flexner and representatives from the GEB to meet with Byrd and Dr. B.M. Roszel before presenting their plan to the public. Part of his concern related to Byrd's

own vision of how the Handley Trust should be used for education. "Mr. Byrd is still anxious that the Handley Schools should be separate and apart from the public schools of Winchester," Williams noted. "I fear that he does not realize how impossible it would be to establish a college with the small money available. I am also confident that he does not realize how important it is to this community to have a thoroughly efficient public school system." Byrd was at the time serving as a state senator and as state fuel administrator. "You will recall he owns and edits the local daily," Williams reminded Flexner. "I am very anxious, indeed, to have him with us in support of any plan that the Handley board may recommend to the Council."<sup>58</sup>

Flexner responded that the GEB "would be delighted to confer with Mr. Byrd, Dr. Roszel and anyone else that you desire before we come to a final conclusion." Moreover, the GEB's recommendations appeared to be taking shape: "The material which we collected at Winchester seems to us to suggest the kind of policy that ought to be pursued." Work had been delayed, however, after Flexner fell and broke his leg, and complications delayed his recovery. Still, he reported, "the Winchester matter has been in my mind from time to time, and the study of our census material has been going on in the office right straight ahead."<sup>59</sup>

Although Flexner's accident gave Williams one explanation to offer politicians for the delay in the plan for the Handley Trust, a sense of urgency and political foreboding pervaded his next letter to Flexner in mid-March. "Six members of the Common Council will be elected here in June and the complexion of the Council may be changed after September. There are three members of the Handley Board who may be elected almost any time. The present three are holding over for failure to elect their successors. Another member of the board is in the United States House of Representatives and is anxious to resign." These impending political changes worried Williams: "I am anxious to have the plan you will submit considered and passed upon by the present Board. Complete harmony now prevails in our Board, but this harmony may be disturbed by new members who may be elected. I am inclined to think also that I would prefer to have the present Council pass upon the plan."<sup>60</sup>

By early April, at least part of Williams's political concerns had been alleviated. "We have succeeded in having the three present members of our Board re-elected by the Council," Williams reported. "This assures the same spirit of harmony and cheerful co-operation in the Board that we have always had since I have been a member of the Board. I was apprehensive

that new and discordant elements might be introduced into the board before your plan could be presented."<sup>61</sup>

Williams was still feeling pressure to move the project along, however, and he described the sentiments of the public and other members of the board. "The Handley Board has been severely criticized by thoughtless persons for the delay in bringing forward a plan for the schools. I think it is wise, therefore, for us to have the plan to be considered for the Board in May, if possible," he urged. While the public clamored for immediate use of the funds, "at least one member of the Board thinks that we should not expend any part of the principal upon the school plant. He thinks that we should accumulate the income in exact accordance with the directions of Judge Handley's will, expend this income upon the grounds and plant and then be assured of a permanent income of about seventy thousand dollars per year. The practical difficulty" of this plan, Williams understood, "is that the public would not acquiesce in the delay." "Many persons here who are anxious to see the Handley Board furnish all the schooling required in this community," Williams explained, "feel that the children of Winchester are suffering from inadequate public school facilities. They say that the Common Council will do nothing to help the public schools, beyond the customary small appropriation, because the Council looks to the Handley fund to furnish schools in the near future and argues that improvements made in the advance of the plan to be carried out by the Handley board might be money thrown away for a mere temporary improvement. Undoubtedly, the pressure for something to be done by the Board in the direction of the building of the schools is increasing steadily."<sup>62</sup>

Williams sought to clarify several other technical and legal points for the GEB. On the question of whether or not the Board could use the principal for construction, Williams argued that it could. The court had interpreted the will in such a manner that gave the Board the power to invest and use the money as it saw fit. Williams understood that the court had not "expressly declared in its decree that the principal could be used for the building of the schools," but believed that "there is no question that the court here would ratify a plan whereby part of the principal would be invested in the school plant. . . . I think, therefore, that we may use some part of the principal if it becomes necessary to do so in order to build the schools within the next two or three years; but I am certainly opposed to reducing the principal to an amount where the

income would not be more than fifty thousand dollars per year."<sup>63</sup>

Williams then turned his attention to the timing of the public presentation of the report and the upcoming elections for city council. "I . . . think that it would be unwise to give to the public the plan for the schools until after the election of the Common Council" in the first week of June. Williams hoped to be able to present it to the Board in May and to the Council in mid-June. "The moment it is to be presented to the Council and ready for the public I am inclined to think that we must start a campaign of explanation of the plan to the general public both from the press and by public meetings. I am relying upon you with a good deal of comfortable assurance to assist us in this campaign of public enlightenment." He then adds a disclaimer: "You will understand, of course, that these are mere suggestions for your consideration, as I wish you to regard suggestions that come from Mr. Ward, Mr. Byrd or any other citizen of Winchester. Simply consider what I say for what it is worth, as the Handley Board wishes your deliberate and disinterested advice without regard to the personal opinion I may have on what should be done."<sup>64</sup>

The Winchester Inn issue then reappears: "It is rather unfortunate that two of the gentlemen who purchased the Winchester Inn property should be candidates for the Common Council with every prospect of election. I have no reason whatever to state that these gentlemen are inclined to use their influence in the body that elects members of the Handley Board to persuade the Handley Board to purchase the Winchester Inn property; but this is the persistent gossip about the community and there is strong feeling against the consideration of the Winchester Inn as a public site." Recalling that Bachman had mentioned it as one possible public site, Williams reiterates the Board's opposition to it. "It is the feeling of the Board that the Inn property is unsuitable because there is so little land adapted for playground purposes and the present eighty acres owned by the Board is very much better adapted for school purposes and is not more than ten minutes walk from the Winchester Inn property. I merely mention this now in order that you may be brought up to date concerning the local situation."<sup>65</sup>

By mid-May 1918, Flexner could offer some hope about the pending report, suggesting that it would be a ground-breaking work: "School systems are, as you know, planned along general lines, without particular reference to the special characteristics of a given town or neighborhood, so that the schools of one town are usually just like the schools of another. Our

study of Winchester will, I think, show that this is not the right way to proceed; but that, on the contrary, an educational system ought to be planned with direct reference to local conditions. Proceeding in this thorough way we have naturally spent a good deal of time and thought on your problem."<sup>66</sup>

A draft of the report had been completed by late June, and in late July Bachman reported to Williams that "within the next month, at the latest [the report] will be ready for submission to your board." The final revision was being completed, with the final chapter on the use of the fund being written. The final draft was in Flexner's hands in early August.<sup>67</sup>

Even as the final draft of the long-awaited report was reaching Flexner, Williams was writing to reiterate his sense of political urgency. "You have been here on the ground and I assume you know something about the difficulties we will have in persuading the Common Council to appropriate money toward the maintenance of the schools. The Council is holding its financial breath in fear of the increase of taxes in the hope that a prosperous breeze from the Handley fund will relieve its suffering in the near future." In addition to the Council's pressure, potential trouble was brewing within the Handley board: "Two new members of the Handley Board have been elected since I last wrote you. One of them is already a member of the school board and the other is one of the most prosperous business men of this section whose inclinations will be against approving a plan that calls upon the City tax payers to contribute something to the support of the schools."<sup>68</sup>

Williams reiterated his belief that the City of Winchester should continue to make an appropriation toward support of the schools, and proposed a plan that would help ensure Council acceptance of the GEB plan. "I am still inclined to think that we should ask for an appropriation from the City of not more than ten thousand dollars per year . . . . The psychology of the appeal to the Common Council is this: If we can ask them for ten thousand dollars when they are already appropriating fifteen thousand dollars, we can pull some of the teeth of the opposition to any appropriation at all. If, on the other hand, we not only fail to relieve the stringent financial condition of the town but increase that stringency by insisting upon an increased appropriation, I fear very much our capacity to put the plan through." To further buttress his argument for requesting less from the city, rather than more, Williams offered a lengthy explanation of the city's financial problems.<sup>69</sup>



By late August, members of the General Education Board had received copies of the report and were preparing to discuss it. Bachman sent copies of the report to Flexner, Eben C. Sage, Wallace Buttrick, and Wickliffe Rose, and wired Williams that their first meeting to discuss the report would be August 26. Flexner and Bachman still had an unspecified "difference of opinion" regarding the report, but plans were being made to meet with Williams in early September.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps referring to their disagreement, Flexner wrote to Bachman: "Remember this: The Handley trustees will lean towards technical tying up of their funds and retaining authority. We must correct that attitude and tendency. Also, we must leave settlement of details in hands of superintendent."<sup>71</sup>

## **THE GEB REPORT**

The report prepared by Bachman and the GEB staff is a classic statement of progressive educational values and a typical example of the scientific social survey that was growing in popularity among progressive reformers during this period. The survey conducted by Bachman and the team from Teachers College was an occupational survey designed to indicate the types of jobs that were available to Winchester's young people. They believed that this data would reveal the educational needs of the city, thus making it possible for the General Education Board to propose an appropriate design for a modern school system that would fulfill local needs.

The first chapter of Bachman's report describes the population and industries of Winchester. Canvassing the city and the immediate vicinity of the county surrounding the city, Bachman and his colleagues counted 6,469 people in the area served by Winchester's schools. The population was 86% white (5,561 people) and 14% black (908). The homogeneity of the population struck Bachman and his colleagues as "unusual." More accustomed to large immigrant populations in urban areas like New York City, Bachman expressed surprise at finding such a home-grown enclave: 82% of the white population had been born in Virginia, he noted, and 99% was American-born, while only one black resident had been born abroad. "Winchester enjoys an unusual degree of social solidarity," he concluded of the white population, "its people having similar standards of living and conduct."<sup>72</sup>

Winchester and the surrounding vicinity were largely agricultural, Bachman noted, with few prospects for change in the near future. Natural resources to promote industrial development

were lacking and what textile industries had "taken root" in the area were more the product of "the enterprise of individuals" than "natural advantages." "The population of Winchester is thus largely engaged in occupations directly or indirectly connected with agriculture," Bachman reported, "and in such businesses, trades, and professions as are required to sustain the life of a rural community and rural town."<sup>73</sup>

The survey produced an interesting portrait of life in Winchester in November 1917. Only 19% (387 of 2,064) of white women worked outside the home, the results indicated, while 43% of black women had outside employment. Nearly all of the employed black women (96%, or 141 or 147) worked in domestic or personal service, but only a quarter (25%, or 95 women) of white working women were in domestic or personal service. Almost as many white women -- 82 -- found employment in the two local textile mills as in domestic service; 61 white women held professional positions, most as teachers; 50 were bookkeepers, clerks or stenographers; and 35 were saleswomen. Black women clearly had fewer employment opportunities: of the six black working women not engaged as domestic servants, one worked in agriculture, two were dressmakers, and three were either nurses or teachers. A similar pattern prevailed among employed black men, where the vast majority -- 202 out of a total of 260 -- worked as common laborers.<sup>74</sup>

Winchester's white men were engaged in a wider variety of occupations in agriculture, trade and manufacturing. Agriculture was dominant, Bachman argued, especially when related industries, such as barrel making and vinegar production, were taken into consideration. Yet agriculture accounted for only 91 jobs for white men (13 black men held agricultural jobs), while many more were employed in the skilled (325) and semi-skilled (295) positions. An additional 239 white men worked as common laborers; 343 were employed in the trades; 85 in the professions; and 67 in clerical positions.<sup>75</sup>

From this statistical portrait of Winchester's workforce Bachman drew conclusions about the educational needs of the city. The skilled hand trades "involve a minimum of general knowledge and general training and a maximum of experience and skill," but there are so many different trades, each with its own peculiarities, that attempts to train students in particular skills would be impractical. Moreover, taking note of the few young men among the skilled tradesmen in Winchester, Bachman concluded that "the openings . . . for young men in the skilled trades is

therefore very limited." Bachman also concluded that the kinds of semi-skilled employment open to Winchester's graduates would not "require prolonged apprenticeship, or special educational preparation," and, by definition, neither would the many opportunities for common laborers. Special preparation in the schools was more important to meet the employment needs in the banking, retail, and wholesale trades. "There is a considerable body of knowledge and technique common to all kinds of business," Bachman noted. "A part, at least, of this common knowledge and common technique can be made a matter of school training."<sup>76</sup>

Having examined both the population and the occupations in Winchester -- those "two local factors that must be taken into account in deciding the kind of public schools to be provided at Winchester" -- Bachman turned more fully to educational matters. All schools faced two central questions: "(a) How to prepare young people to live full personal, family, and community lives; and (b) how to prepare them to make an honest and honorable living for themselves and those dependent upon them." The answer to the first was agreed upon by "most thoughtful persons," Bachman continued, who believed that "the schools prepare the young to lead full lives when they give to all the children of the community, white and colored, the best possible general education -- an education general in the sense that it equips them to meet the obligations of personal, family, and community life." But the answer to the second question depended upon several variables, including "the natural interest and ability of the child, on his probable vocational destination, and on his occupational opportunities." Thus, local conditions were important considerations in developing the best possible "general education" that "most thoughtful persons" agreed upon as appropriate.<sup>77</sup>

"A general education . . . is the best possible preparation for doing well and effectively what most of the workers of Winchester will find to do," Bachman argued. Given local opportunities, a trade school would be impractical for Winchester, as would "specialized industrial training," which is better left to on-the-job instruction. Instead, Bachman argued that local conditions indicated that "the first and most obvious kind of practical instruction [needed in] . . . the schools of both the white and colored is work in the household arts," such as "sewing, cooking, . . . home sanitation and home decoration." This would be the best training for homemakers who remained at home as well as for those who sought work in domestic service. For boys, the schools ought to provide ample opportunities to learn manual and shop skills,

"including at least woodwork, sheet metal, forge, and machine shop practice." Bachman's statistics further indicated a need for "practical instruction in business in the schools for the whites" in order to expose students to "the common body of knowledge and technique underlying all business and clerical occupations." Finally, Bachman argued that the schools of both races should provide instruction in agriculture, which is "the foundation of [Winchester's] prosperity, present and prospective."<sup>78</sup>

Having assessed the city's educational needs, Bachman turned his analysis to the question of how well the current educational program met these needs. Not surprisingly, he found the system wanting. After a brief review of the history of public education in Winchester, Bachman concluded that the increase in both school attendance and public expenditures revealed a "growth in public confidence" in the schools that suggested that "the idea of public education at public expense has won a victory at Winchester, and the schools are becoming more and more the schools of all the people."<sup>79</sup> While public support for education had grown, support was still not sufficient, and the schools' educational program remained inadequate. Winchester's elementary school program "is still decidedly bookish," he argued, and the high school program, which had been improved more than the elementary program, still "compare[d] unfavorably with the better high schools of the country." "The programs are still too bookish," Bachman complained, and "lack[ed] particularly provisions for physical education, science, and practical work such as manual and shop instruction for boys and household arts for girls."<sup>80</sup>

Winchester's schools were unsatisfactory in other areas in addition to the curriculum, Bachman argued. Classes contained too many children, and the teachers employed to instruct these large classes lacked adequate training. "Not more than six of the twenty white teachers of Winchester can be said to be adequately prepared for their work," Bachman reported, assuming adequate preparation to be two years of normal school training for elementary teachers and a college degree for high school teachers. Winchester could not attract quality teachers because it offered "exceedingly low salaries." While teachers' salaries had risen over the years, Winchester still lagged behind other Virginia cities of comparable size, Bachman's research found.<sup>81</sup>

School buildings and classrooms also were unsuitable, and for this Bachman partly blamed well-meaning but unwise philanthropy. In the 1870s city council refused to use any public money for school buildings because John Kerr had stipulated in his will that the residue of

his estate go toward "the education of the poor white children of the city." Money from Kerr's estate did not become available until after 1882, and the public school built with those proceeds was sufficient for all of the city's students for only a few years. Renting additional space for classroom use was a normal practice in Winchester, but the five rented rooms in use in November 1917 all were "unsuited to school purposes." Bachman suggested that the city had consistently skimmed on public expenditures for school facilities for both white and black students, expending only \$23,000 to build schools for white students and \$800 for schools for blacks in nearly 50 years of public education. "No other city of Virginia of equal size has spent so little," Bachman reported.<sup>82</sup>

The GEB seemed intent upon shaming Winchester to action by unflattering comparisons with other cities in the Commonwealth. "Winchester lags far behind other Virginia cities in taxing liberality," the report noted. "Land at Winchester is assessed unusually low, and the tax rate is also unusually low. Both are probably lower in Winchester than in any other city in Virginia." Although he acknowledged that public expenditures for educational purposes had increased over the years, Bachman argued that "the present per pupil expense is extremely small -- even small when compared with that of other Virginia cities of about the same size." Indeed, Winchester spent such a small amount per pupil, he argued, that "good modern schools cannot possibly be provided at any such pupil outlay." This unwillingness to raise taxes and spend money on the schools was the cause of nearly all of the city's educational shortcomings, Bachman concluded.<sup>83</sup>

The report's final two chapters turn from analysis to prescription. "What are the needs of the Winchester schools," it asked, "if they are to render full service to the community and to the youth of the city?" After offering a concise two-paragraph summary of progressive educational goals and values as a reminder of what is favored by "most competent contemporary thought," Bachman argued that "nothing short of a complete reconstruction of the public schools of Winchester will answer if they are to do effectively the work that lies before them." First, Winchester's schools needed to be reorganized away from the simple elementary school/high school division to the more progressive "six-three-three" plan that introduces a junior high school. Secondly, the educational program of each these units -- the elementary, junior high, and high schools -- needed to be extended beyond "the so-called fundamental studies" to include

music, drawing, nature study, gardening, play and recreation, and physical education.<sup>84</sup>

Personnel changes were also necessary. To adequately oversee the schools and supervise the teachers, the GEB report called for the creation of a position for a full-time superintendent of schools. The new curriculum and school organization would require more adequately prepared teachers, some with special training.<sup>85</sup>

The report discussed at greater length its final prescription for improving Winchester's schools: "proper building facilities and educational equipment" to create "a modern school plant." The attention given this issue in the GEB report undoubtedly stems from Williams's coaching and his desire to resolve the question of where the school should be located and, given the trustees' preference for the Equity site, the looming agitation for an additional elementary school in the north end of town. Members of the GEB staff refused to endorse a specific site in the report, but by arguing that building and maintaining a single school would be more cost efficient than two schools, they gave Williams the ammunition he needed to argue that they had endorsed, at least implicitly, the Equity site. What would it cost to build a modern school plant in Winchester? The cost depends on whether one or two schools are built, the report noted, and "the single plant is undoubtedly preferable on the score of economy and efficiency."<sup>86</sup>

The authors of the report probably cared less about where the building was located, given two sites roughly equal in size, than they did about the school's appearance and symbolism. "Of scarcely less importance [than economy and efficiency] is the civic significance of a single, imposing plant in a small community," the report noted. "Such a plant inevitably quickens respect for the public schools and arouses pride in them. It . . . readily becomes the intellectual, recreational, and civic center of the entire community. By thus fostering growth of mutual respect and fellow feeling, a central school contributes powerfully to civic unity and democratic solidarity. A single school for Winchester is, therefore, economically, educationally, and socially desirable."<sup>87</sup> This is the extent of the report's supposed endorsement of the Equity site. Staff would later refer partisans in the debate over the school's location to these pages in the report.

An adequate but imposing modern school for white students could be built for about \$400,000, the report estimated, and a new school for the city's African-American students would cost about \$50,000. In planning for the school for black students, the report pointed to the

considerably smaller black student population, "their special need of practical education," and the general needs of the city's black residents. Black students required only a kindergarten, an elementary school and a junior high school, since few blacks continued into high school. Given the occupations that were open to Winchester's blacks, "the industrial arts for boys and the household arts for girls" required significant attention in the curriculum, with additional attention to agriculture and gardening for the boys. The black school also should serve the adults of the black community by "endeavoring to elevate their standards of living and their sense of civic and personal responsibility."<sup>88</sup> In Winchester as throughout the South, the GEB acceded to the local customs and traditions in race relations as one of the prices it paid for trying to improve public education in general and black education in particular. Its Winchester report for the most part gave significant attention to black education, whereas Williams generally ignored the subject in his correspondence with the GEB.

In the report's last chapter, the GEB finally addressed specifically how the Handley trust could be used to benefit education in Winchester. First, however, the report rejected several suggestions that had been put forward in Winchester regarding the use of the trust. It first attacked the suggestion that the endowment could be used to support a college: a college would not meet the stipulation in Handley's will that the money go toward education for the poor; a sufficient number of colleges existed in the area; and the endowment was not large enough to get a strong college off of the ground. A technical high school was impractical since not enough jobs would be available to employ its graduates. The GEB also rejected the idea that the Handley trustees take over "financial support and educational management" of the high school, leaving the school board and the public purse responsible for the elementary schools. This plan would limit the benefits of Handley's gift to a relatively few who pursue their education in the high school, the GEB argued. GEB staff also doubted the legality of this proposal, and pointed to the impracticality of providing an "elaborate high school" for students educated in only "an ordinary elementary school," a scheme comparable to "building an elaborate house on an inadequate foundation."<sup>89</sup>

The GEB also rejected the proposal that the Handley money be used to create a totally private school system that would accept responsibility for educating all of Winchester's public school students, thus replacing the public school system and freeing the city's taxpayers from the

burden of financial support for the schools. This "tempting proposal" also was determined to be impractical, unwise, and illegal. Handley's endowment would provide an annual income of \$59,000 a year, a sum "not large enough to do for the children all that an adequate school system can do for the children of a community." More importantly, however, private assumption of the public schools would deprive the community of the great civic and spiritual benefits of this unifying communal endeavor: "Nothing in the world is as wholesome and energizing for a community as the effort, sacrifice, and pride involved in solving its educational problems. Wholly to relieve the community of such responsibility would prove nothing short of a public calamity. It would affect unfavorably public interest in the schools, check the present healthy growth of self-sacrifice, and keep Winchester from performing an inspiring service to the country at large." Drawing upon several decades of philanthropic experience on the part of its founder and other charity workers, as well as its own policies, the GEB articulated the view that there were wise and unwise approaches to philanthropic giving, as they had intimated earlier in reference to the John Kerr gift in the 1870s: "Public benefactions are best employed when they stimulate public interest and public participation in social enterprises that the public cannot otherwise for the time being undertake. Such use fosters the development of sound public opinion, enlarges the field of public activity, and deepens the sense of public responsibility."<sup>90</sup>

Having rejected these ideas for the use of the funds, the GEB made its own recommendation. "To us it seems that the wisest use the Handley Trustees can make of the funds at their disposal is to cooperate with the people of Winchester in establishing a system of superior public schools." By pointing up the many shortcomings and inadequacies of the curriculum, organization, facilities, and financial support of the current schools against a background of contemporary progressive educational thought, the report offered a blueprint for developing this "system of superior public schools." The analysis was thus transformed into a plan of action.<sup>91</sup>

The GEB called upon the Handley trustees and the school board to enter into a legal agreement of cooperation with regard to the schools. One part of this agreement, the GEB suggested, should stipulate that the City Council provide annually at least \$15,000 toward the operating expenses of the schools. It also recommended that the Board of Education create the position of superintendent to administer and manage the schools. Selection of a "high class



superintendent" was one of the two most important steps in developing this superior school system, the GEB argued; the other was deciding upon the "general plan."

The GEB report, then, proposed a new school system for Winchester, one which included a large, imposing modern school building; an expanded progressive curriculum for a reorganized system of elementary, junior high, and high school students; taught by more adequately trained and better paid teachers; administered and managed by a full-time superintendent; with the ultimate goal of educating students for employment within the existing occupational patterns of Winchester and life in a rural agricultural town for which there was little prospect of change. The report was a prescription for both change and the *status quo*; indeed, it proposed change for the sake of a better *status quo*.

### **THE REPORT'S IMPACT AND AFTERMATH**

After the Handley trustees had met to discuss the GEB's long-awaited report, Williams wrote Flexner a long letter. He had presented the report to the trustees at a full meeting "on Friday night," he reported, and had described his negotiations with the GEB over portions of the report. "I explained to them that you felt that the Council should make an appropriation larger than the one now made," he wrote, "but that all of us had now agreed that the best plan was to ask the Council simply to continue the appropriation they are now making for the schools." Williams credited the GEB report with changing the minds of several trustees: "one of the new members of the board, who had heretofore expressed himself as anxious to relieve the City of all school taxes, said that he was convinced by your report that the Council should begin now with an appropriation at least equal to the present amount expended for public schools and that the Council should be willing to make a gradual increase in this appropriation after the schools had been actually established." Moreover, "one of our oldest and most conservative members said that you had let day light in upon all of his difficulties." Williams was now confident that the Board "is a unit on the principle of your report and that there will be no difficulty except the detail of selecting a site" for the schools.<sup>92</sup>

Williams then turned his attention to the school site, which was the major political hurdle to be overcome. Since members of the GEB were to meet separately with several members of the school board and perhaps "Mr. Byrd," Williams wanted to be sure that the GEB understood

the school site issue, the benefits of the Equity site (which the trustees already owned), and the problems inherent in the Winchester Inn site. "The feeling of a majority of the Handley board in the selection of a site is that we should determine to build the schools upon the present site owned by the board and arrange to haul the children under twelve years of age who live more than one mile from the school." "There is no other site available in Winchester that offers sufficient land for athletic fields and playgrounds," Williams argued. In addition, the Equity site "offers an ample acreage of land for agricultural purposes, for a building site and for school gardens on a large scale." While some argued it was too far from the residential areas of the town, Williams believed that the town soon would build out to meet the school site. "The board is confident that Stewart Street will immediately be built up in excellent condition for the four or five blocks yet to be completed to the school site. Already Washington Street is entirely completed to the school grounds and Main and Braddock Streets are built up to and beyond the school grounds." The other alternative, the Winchester Inn property, was "not well adapted to athletic fields and the lay of the ground is by no means good for playgrounds," Williams argued. In addition, it was not "sufficiently central" to justify deciding against the "more available" and more adaptable site. Moreover, the topography of the Equity site "will give the schools a commanding appearance and make them, together with their large grounds, the dominating feature of Winchester. This is in line with your report."<sup>93</sup>

As if he had not made himself clear, Williams added a handwritten post-script: "We are determined to insist upon one school plant site for whites. If we encourage objections to the 'Equity' site, . . . we will feed the advocates of two school sites. If we take firm ground in favor of the 'Equity' site we will be apt to win out and put down the advocates of two sites." Bachman assured Williams that the GEB "will place no difficulties in your way" as to site selection.<sup>94</sup>

On September 17, two members of the school board, Robert Ward and Dr. Lacy, met with Buttrick, Bachman, and Flexner. Williams described Lacy as "a Presbyterian minister and prominent member of the school board. . . . whose influence will be valuable in maintaining harmonious relations between the Handley Board and the School Board."<sup>95</sup> After spending a day reviewing a draft of the report, the two local board members met with the GEB representatives for dinner. Flexner reported that the two "made some excellent suggestions but, in general," reacted much as had Williams and his colleague, Maurice M. Lynch. "They seem to regard the

report as a sound solution of your problem." Williams later agreed: Ward and Lacy's views "are entirely agreeable to me. I am very glad to say that there is every prospect of complete harmony between the Handley Board and the School Board." They even agreed that it was "necessary to select the site [of the school] before we take the plan to the Council," and soon they agreed that the Equity site was the proper one for the school.<sup>96</sup>

Seeking to draw upon his experts again, and having already made the preference of the trustees known, Williams wanted the GEB to settle the thorny political problem by recommending a site for the schools. Flexner was cautious: "We do not feel that we know enough to take a final position now, even if it were wise of us to do it. I am wondering whether it would not be best in this report for us to side-step that issue in the hope that perhaps the Handley Board, the Board of Education, and the Town Council might join in requesting us to take this up independently and make a suggestion." But Williams was insistent that Buttrick, Bachman, and Flexner visit the town, review the proposed sites, and make a recommendation. His reasons were entirely political: a single site strongly recommended would prevent divisiveness and facilitate adoption of the GEB proposal. "If it be possible to have both the School Board and the Handley Board in agreement with the report on the site made by the General Education Board, I have little apprehension about the approval of the Common Council." However, "if . . . several sites are suggested as possible the Council will split into advocates of different sites and we will have confusion worse confounded." Williams eventually prevailed upon Flexner and Buttrick to visit the city in mid-October during a tour of the South, but their trip was delayed because of the influenza epidemic.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, Bachman was preparing the printed version of the report. From progressive urban school districts he solicited "pictures of modern activities" to illustrate what could be done in the schools.<sup>98</sup>

On Tuesday night, December 17, 1918, Buttrick and Bachman again visited Winchester to formally present their report on the use of the Handley fund. A few days after the presentation of the plan, 1,500 copies of the report arrived for public distribution. "Quite general approval of the plan is the verdict here," Williams reported to Flexner. George Baetjer, the chairman of the Council's school committee, "is enthusiastic over your report," Williams wrote. "He has read, studied, and absorbed its every detail." There had not even been objections to the Equity site, he

reported. In the public presentation, Buttrick "came out unequivocally in favor of the Equity site," reported Williams, who credited Buttrick's "stirring talk" with swaying opinions: "His own vivid enthusiasm stirred the feelings of his audience."<sup>99</sup> Buttrick and Bachman "explained it quite convincingly to the Council," Williams reported, and the Common Council adopted the plan on January 9, 1919. "After two hours of debate Council unanimously approved your plan," Williams reported to Buttrick via telegram. "Visits contributed a great deal to this happy event."<sup>100</sup>

The City Council had made some changes to the resolution approving the plan, however, one of which Williams accepted as politically expedient. It "provide[d] for the establishment of night schools under the rules and regulations to be adopted by the Board. One member of Council was very insistent upon this point," Williams wrote, "and I felt it wise to concede rather than incite his opposition to the resolution."<sup>101</sup>

Once the plan was adopted, Williams moved on to the next two hurdles. On January 13, the Handley trustees appointed a three-member committee to work with the school board to petition the State Board of Education to make Winchester a single school division, separate from Frederick County. By early April this request had been granted.<sup>102</sup>

A bigger problem was that of superintendent. "I am anxious . . . to have the superintendent appointed," Williams wrote to Flexner. "Delay will tend to bring out some local candidates. This would be undesirable." Williams and his fellow trustees once again turned to the GEB for assistance: "The resolution of the Handley Board adopted last night also provides that the superintendent shall be elected by and with the advice of the General Education Board."<sup>103</sup>

The resolution on their proposed role in selecting a superintendent shocked officials of the General Education Board. This new development seriously misconstrued their relationship with the Handley trustees. It was a serious enough matter to warrant a response from the GEB president, Wallace Buttrick. "We are . . . somewhat alarmed," Buttrick informed Williams, "by this sentence in your letter: 'The resolution of the Handley Board adopted last night also provides that the superintendent shall be elected by and with the advice of the General Education Board.' I can well see how you would wish that the superintendent should be appointed by and with the advice and consent of the Handley Board of Trustees, but it would be a grave mistake to provide

that he should be elected by and with the advice of any outside organization, such, for example, as the General Education Board. In making this report we were simply aiding your Board. It is really the report of the Handley Trustees. Now that the report has been accepted by your board, by the School Board, and by the Common Council of Winchester, the responsibility of the work should be entirely in the hands of the public school authorities in cooperation with the Handley Board of Trustees. We shall at all times of course be happy to advise with those administering this great trust, but we can be of most service if you good people come to us in future [sic] as you have in the past, of your own free will, and without any legal requirement." A few days later he reiterated these points: "for your sake as well as ours it is not wise for you to adopt resolutions that could even imply that the officers of this board have any possible veto power in your selection of a superintendent of schools. We shall always be at your service for counsel, but we like to have such relations rest on a basis of friendly confidence rather than of formal resolution." Thus chastened, Williams promised to have the resolution amended appropriately.<sup>104</sup>

Members of the General Education Board staff did, in fact, lend their expertise and contacts to the search for a suitable superintendent. Abraham Flexner made inquiries of his colleagues at leading universities to solicit candidates for the job and to ask about the "personality, ability, training and experience" of specific candidates. After interviewing eight candidates, Winchester officials selected Frederick E. Clerk, the assistant superintendent of schools in Cleveland, Ohio. Formally inaugurated at the Empire Theatre on September 12, 1919 in ceremonies attended by Buttrick and Flexner of the GEB and Frank A. Spaulding, superintendent of schools in Cleveland, Clerk began his duties that fall.<sup>105</sup>

Despite the progress that had been made for the future of education in Winchester, the current schools had been neglected, and people expected to see some tangible and immediate benefits from the Handley money. The John Kerr School building was seriously overcrowded. It had room for only 500 pupils, yet 987 white children were enrolled in the system. Additional, poorly adaptable buildings had been rented in prior years by the school board, which was reluctant to do anything more permanent with the Handley windfall looming on the horizon.<sup>106</sup>

In the spring of 1919, the school board asked the trustees for help. Specifically, they proposed that the trustees build a temporary, one-floor wooden building on the Equity site; this could be better ventilated, was more easily adaptable for schooling than older buildings, and

might also be utilized in conjunction with the newer building. Williams reluctantly acquiesced. "The application of the School Board does not convince me of its wisdom," he wrote to Flexner, "but I am satisfied that it will be best for the Handley Board to grant the application rather than cause any sharp division of opinion between the boards. . . . The relations of the two boards are perfectly harmonious and it will be better to sacrifice this much of our badly needed money rather than create any resentment in the School Board." The trustees paid \$22,842.88 for the buildings and equipment, of which \$2,270.80 was spent for equipment that could also be used in the new building. The trustees also approved a \$5,000 appropriation for 1919 to enable the superintendent to begin upgrading the teaching staff for the system.<sup>107</sup>

Plans for constructing a new central school did not move as smoothly as hoped, however. In June the trustees and the school board hired an architect, Walter R. McCornack, supervising architect of the Board of Education in Cleveland. By late November McCornack had sketches ready for the boards, but he also gave them a disturbing recommendation. Given the unsteady nature of the building industry, he suggested a year's postponement in construction. "The prevailing high and rapidly shifting prices of materials of every description" made estimates unreliable, Williams noted in his annual report for 1919.<sup>108</sup> Still, planning continued, and on November 20, 1920, McCornack unveiled his model of the Handley school and grounds. The red-brick building with white "stately columns," set atop a hill overlooking a large stadium, would become, Williams imagined, "the intellectual and civic center, as well as the outdoor playground of this town and region."<sup>109</sup>

By March of 1920, however, local citizens had revived the debate about the proper site for the school. Williams had been on the mark in his assessment that the location of the school would be the most important political issue regarding the Handley plan. Public pressure would not let it go away. Many parents who had sent their children to the temporary school built on the Equity site found the location unsatisfactory. Opponents urged that officials either find a more central location for the single school to be built, or else erect two schools, a large one for some elementary school students and all older students on the Equity site on Valley Pike, and a smaller elementary school for young students from the north end of town. The arguments were tinged with class resentments, anger at the Handley Board's apparent arrogance and refusal to accommodate local concerns, implications that the plan favored some parts of the town over

others, and suggestions that the proposed Handley school was far too extravagant. Arguments about efficiency and convenience were hurled back at Williams and the town's other progressive leaders. Both sides in the debate appealed to the General Education Board to intervene on their behalf to clarify the situation; beyond referring both sides to what it said in its report, the GEB declined to comment further.<sup>110</sup>

Between 1920 and 1924, Williams and Clerk continued to write periodically to Bachman and Flexner to keep the GEB informed of the progress in Winchester. They reported on new difficulties, including problems planning for an adequate and cost-efficient school building, cost-containment during work on the foundation and grounds, acquisition of land for the school for black students, and the problems created by the city's annexation of part of the county, the resulting increase in the school population, and Clerk's request for additional funds from city council beyond the \$15,000 agreed upon as part of the Handley school plan. "My resignation was one of the so-called desperate measures made with a view of bringing to our community the seriousness of the situation," Clerk reported in conjunction with the latter problem.<sup>111</sup> These appear to have been difficult times for Williams and Clerk as the planning for the new school dragged on, and their continuing correspondence with the experts in New York may have been subtle appeals for moral, if not practical and political, support. The GEB, however, played no more of a role and no longer had a stake in the issue, and made only polite replies to their correspondence. Members of the GEB appear to have offered no final assessment of the Handley school upon its completion.

## CONCLUSION

In the optimistic days following the adoption of the Handley plan by the school board and the city council, R. Gray Williams allowed himself to turn his gaze to the future and expressed his own starry-eyed, progressive vision for local education:

It is a happy future that awaits the children of this community. In the great institution that will be here a monument to the wise generosity of Judge Handley the bodies of children will be made clean and strong, the hands of children will be made quick and skilled and the minds of children will be made full and vigorous.

The great imposing buildings will be significant of the spirit of enlightenment that will dwell in these schools and radiate its broadening and liberating influence into every corner of the community.

Not alone the children, but all of us will learn to come into contact with these schools as the central, civic dynamo of community action. Public lectures in the school auditorium will keep us in touch with the best that is being thought and done in the world. The practical instruction in sanitation, in cooking, in making the home attractive, in the rules and practices of right and healthful living will bear rich fruit in a wider material comfort and intelligent living throughout our community.

And the teachers in these schools, under the leadership of a trained and progressive superintendent, will in themselves form a body of educated men and women valuable to the civic broadening and betterment of Winchester. Selected alone for their trained fitness to do well the work assigned them these teachers should stimulate the tone and temper of this entire section.<sup>112</sup>

Williams envisioned the schools as a force in the growth of the community. "It is obvious that Winchester will be a good place to live and to educate children. . . . The singular size and scope of the schools here will arrest attention by the very fact of their location in a town so small. Desirable people will come here to live: not with the unhealthy rush characteristic of a 'boom,' but in a steady, gradual flow that will mean a progressive prosperity for the community."<sup>113</sup>

The degree to which progressive educational ideas had permeated the city was evident also in the speech by Robert M. Ward, the president of the school board, at the inauguration of the superintendent in September 1919. "The new schools should not be merely, or even mainly, preparatory schools of the academic type," he argued. "Our present High School has already too much the aim and exclusive curriculum of the private academy. . . . It is those who are to become the workers in industry -- in the shop, behind the desk, and on the farm - those who are to enter the ordinary business pursuits and employments - whose appropriate training has been neglected. A free-school system demands a curriculum which is truly representative of all the conditions that are to be found in a democratic society." The school's "special purpose and function will be to educate all the children of this community in the direction of their life work -- not away from



it. It will be an institution complete in itself: equipped to afford a really thorough and well rounded practical training, suited to the occupational life of the community. . . . It will, in fact, be the finishing school -- the end and crown of the school life -- of that large number of our boys and girls who must earn a livelihood in some non-professional occupation or employment, and, therefore, need an education not for leisure but for efficient production." On an even higher plain, Ward argued that the new school "can and should be made the supreme social force of Winchester, the source and fountain head of its citizenship. The public schools, to an extent even greater than the church, are fitted to become the moral guardians of our social life."<sup>114</sup>

Winchester's leaders clearly had a progressive vision for their schools and the leadership role the schools would play in the entire community. Whether this vision was shared by other citizens -- whether the average person would agree that the public school was more fitted than the church to be the moral guardians of society -- is doubtful. These citizens were willing to defer to the experts on matters they had little experience with, such as the design of a school system. R. Gray Williams could call in impressive experts from the General Education Board and have no one question their authority on technical matters regarding curriculum and school organization and administration. But when it came to matters with which people had some experience -- the safety of getting their children to school, and the most convenient locations for schools -- people were less willing to accept a dubious call to defer to the experts and more willing to challenge the wisdom and decisions of their leaders.

Power, however, rested not with the people in the case of the Handley school, but with the paternalistic, progressive leaders of the community, men like R. Gray Williams. Creation of the Handley Board of Trustees served to insulate John Handley's gift from easy political control, and Williams, faced with the burden of developing a plan to fulfill the provisions of Handley's will, added further insulation by recruiting a disinterested group of national experts from New York City to advise the trustees and other local officials on the use of this gift. There appears to have been little questioning of the plan the General Education Board put forth in 1918, but as we have seen, Williams played an important role in guiding and shaping the GEB's work to the extent that the final report is hardly the objective report it was reputed to be. Thus, the GEB files on the Handley School offer an illuminating glimpse behind the scenes of small-town Southern progressivism in action.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For a general history of the General Education Board, see Raymond B. Fosdick, *Adventure in Giving: The Story of the General Education Board* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). A number of other, more recent studies discuss specific aspects of the GEB's work; examples include James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) and *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> See Linda Saslow, "Foundations Give 'Extras' to Schools," *New York Times*, October 16, 1994, Long Island Section, pp. 1, 12; George P. White and Nicholas H. Morgan, "Education Foundations Catalyze Support for Schools," *The Education Digest*, January 1991, pp. 59-61; and W. Ben Nesbit, "Establishing a Local Education Foundation," *The Education Digest*, May 1987, pp. 21-23.

<sup>3</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 1-14, 31; Report, Library opening, 1913, p. 5. Handley's principal biographer, Garland Redd Quarles (1901-1966), was himself closely associated with the city's school system. He came to Winchester in 1925 to head the English department at the high school in the recently opened Handley School. Appointed principal of the high school in 1928, he also became superintendent of the city's schools in 1931 and served as both high school principal and school superintendent until his retirement in 1966. See *Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society Journal* 1 (1986).

<sup>4</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, p. 7; also quoted in Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 26-32.

<sup>7</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 20, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, pp. 7, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Lemuel Amerman and a Mr. Wells are quoted in Report, Library opening, 1913, pp. 7-8; the *Tribune* is quoted in Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 57, and the date is given as February 16, 1895.

<sup>10</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 52-53. His will was dated December 29, 1890.

<sup>11</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 53-54. The newspaper is quoted on p. 54 and the date given as October 1, 1890.

<sup>12</sup> Quarles warns that "it is possible to overemphasize" this 1890 "haymarket" affair in analyzing Handley's turn toward Winchester. He points out that Handley already had expressed a charitable interest in helping the people with a park and already had bought a burial plot in Winchester in July 1889. Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 68.

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- <sup>13</sup> Report, Library Opening, 1913, pp. 11-12; Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 33, 38-40.
- <sup>14</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, p. 12-13; Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>15</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>16</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, p. 13; Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 44, 48, 50.
- <sup>17</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 44, 50, 51.
- <sup>18</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 68, 69.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Report and Library Opening, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>20</sup> "John Handley's Will," reprinted in Quarles, *Bequests*.
- <sup>21</sup> "John Handley's Will," reprinted in Quarles, *Bequests*.
- <sup>22</sup> Sarah Knowles Bolton, *Famous Givers and Their Gifts* (New York and Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1896).
- <sup>23</sup> John Handley's Will," reprinted in Quarles, *Bequests*.
- <sup>24</sup> Harper, "Education in Winchester," p. 115; Frederic Morton, *The Story of Winchester in Virginia* (Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1925), pp. 240-241; and Garland R. Quarles, *The Schools of Winchester, Virginia* (Winchester, Virginia: Farmers and Merchants National Bank, 1964), pp. 56, 63.
- <sup>25</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 67.
- <sup>26</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 79.
- <sup>27</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 83.
- <sup>28</sup> Report, Library opening, 1913, pp. 15, 16; Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 74. The legislature amended the law on February 6, 1904, enabling the board to purchase property, confirming the election of members, validating all of its acts to present, giving it a corporate seal, and generally reaffirming its standing. See Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 76.
- <sup>29</sup> "Report of the Committee of the Common Council upon the Relations of the City and the Council to the Handley Board and Fund," September 1900, pp. 3, 4, 19. This report is in a bound collection entitled "Virginia Locals" at the New York Public Library.
- <sup>30</sup> See the section "Paper Read by the Committee to the Handley Board, Saturday Night, August 18, 1900," pp. 22-39 of "Report of the Committee of the Common Council upon the Relations of the City and the Council to the Handley Board and Fund," September 1900.

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<sup>31</sup> "Paper Read by the Committee to the Handley Board, Saturday Night, August 18, 1900," pp. 36-37, 38 of "Report of the Committee of the Common Council upon the Relations of the City and the Council to the Handley Board and Fund," September 1900.

<sup>32</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 84.

<sup>33</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 84-85. Conrad, in Report, Library opening, 1913, pp. 17, gives the date of this ruling as October 1, 1900.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 85-86; Report, Library opening, 1913, pp. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>36</sup> "R. Gray Williams Dies at Height of Legal Career," *Winchester Evening Star*, July 25, 1946, p. 1, 9.

<sup>37</sup> See "R. Gray Williams Dies at Height of Legal Career" and "Robert Gray Williams," editorial, in *Winchester Evening Star*, July 25, 1946, p. 1, 9; *Who Was Who in America*, vol. 2, p. 581; and biographical sketches in Robert C. Glass and Carter Glass, Jr., *Virginia Democracy* Vol. 3 (Democratic Historical Association, 1937), pp. 190-193; and *Proceedings of the Virginia State Bar Association* (Richmond; Richmond Press, Inc, 1946), pp. 303-306.

<sup>38</sup> R. Gray Williams, "Annual Report of R. Gray Williams, President of the Handley Board of Trustees, Submitted to the Annual Meeting Held Monday, January 10, 1916," in *Annual Report of the Handley Board of Trustees for the Year Ending December 31, 1915* (Winchester, Virginia, 1916), p. 3, 4. These annual reports hereafter will be cited as Williams AR, with dates.

<sup>39</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, pp. 6-7; Quarles, *Bequests*, p. 93.

<sup>43</sup> R. Gray Williams, "Supplement to the President's Report; Handley Case Decided Saturday, January 29, 1916," in Williams AR, 1/10/16, p. 13; Williams AR 16/17, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Williams AR, 1/10/16, pp. 7-8; Williams to Buttrick, February 28, 1917, box 305, folder 3179, "Winchester Survey 1917," in General Education Board Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York [hereafter cited as GEB box: folder]; Williams AR 16/17, p. 5.

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<sup>46</sup> On the Capon Springs meetings, see William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*, pp. 100-104 and "Proceedings of the First Capon Springs Conference" (1898), "Proceedings of the Second Capon Springs Conference for Education in the South, 1899" (Raleigh, North Carolina: Edards & Broughton, Printers and Binders, 1899), and "Proceedings of the Third Capon Springs Conference for Education in the South, 1900" (Raleigh, North Carolina: St. Augustine's School, 1900).

<sup>47</sup> Williams to Buttrick, 2/28/1917; Buttrick to Williams, 3/2/1917; Flexner to Williams, 3/7/1917; Williams to Flexner, 5/23/1917; Flexner to Williams, 6/1/1917, Williams to Flexner, 7/10/1917, Flexner to Byrd, 7/9/1917; Byrd to Flexner, 7/12/1917, in GEB box 305, folder 3179, RAC; Williams AR 16/17, p. 5. For Flexner's trip to Winchester, see his handwritten itinerary notes in GEB 305: 3179.

<sup>48</sup> Williams AR 16/17, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> In the course of their research on the Handley Fund, GEB officials learned that three other public school districts received funds from private endowments: the New Orleans Public Schools received support from the McDonogh Fund; the Port Deposit, Maryland, Public Schools received funds from the Jacob Tome Endowment, and the Alexis I. DuPont School in Wilmington, Delaware, enjoyed support from the Dupont Fund. See H.R. Bonner to Bachman, April 19, 1918, GEB 305: 3180. Bonner was a statistician with the Bureau of Education in the U.S. Department of the Interior.

<sup>50</sup> General Education Board Annual Report, 1917-1918, pp. 31-32.

<sup>51</sup> General Education Board Annual Report, 1917-1918, pp. 32-33.

<sup>52</sup> On Flexner's career, see Steven C. Wheatley, *The Politics of Philanthropy: Abraham Flexner and Medical Education*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> Flexner to Williams, July 11, 1917; Williams to Flexner, July 10, 1917 and July 19, 1917; and Robert M. Ward to Flexner, July 31, 1917, GEB 305: 3179.

<sup>54</sup> Williams to Flexner, October 13, 1917, GEB 305: 3179.

<sup>55</sup> Bachman to Flexner, November 2, 1917; November 5, 1917; and November 8, 1917, Bachman to George D. Strayer, November 19, 1917, GEB 305: 3179. The young men who conducted the survey were identified in the correspondence only as Crow, P.S. Barnes, Douglas, and Hotz. They "were all fine fellows and did a good job," Bachman reported to Thayer, "I thank you very much for letting us have them." Bachman to Thayer, November 19, 1917, and P.S. Barnes to Bachman, November 18, 1917, GEB 305: 3179.

<sup>56</sup> Williams to Bachman, November 20, 1917; Bachman to Williams, November 26, 1917, GEB 305: 3179.

<sup>57</sup> Flexner to Williams, December 15, 1917; and Williams to Flexner, February 7, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.

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- <sup>58</sup> Williams to Flexner, February 7, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>59</sup> Flexner to Williams, February 9, 1918. GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>60</sup> Williams to Flexner, March 13, 1918, GEB 305: 3180. On using Flexner's accident to explain the delay, see Williams to Flexner, May 6, 1918, GEB box 305, folder 3180.
- <sup>61</sup> Williams to Flexner, April 6, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>62</sup> Williams to Flexner, April 6, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>63</sup> Williams to Flexner, April 6, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>64</sup> Williams to Flexner, April 6, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>65</sup> Williams to Flexner, April 6, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>66</sup> Flexner to Williams, May 14, 1918, GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>67</sup> Flexner to Bachman, June 26, 1918; Bachman to Williams, July 25, 1918; and Flexner to Bachman, August 8, 1918, GEB 305: 3180. "I have received your precious Winchester report," Flexner wrote to Bachman.
- <sup>68</sup> Williams to Bachman, August 8, 1918, GEB 305: 3180. These two new members were Shirley Carter, who served on the board from 1918-1937, and John I. Sloat, whose service was 1918-1949. See the Appendix in Quarles, *Bequests*.
- <sup>69</sup> Williams to Bachman, August 8, 1918, GEB 305: 3180. Williams had expressed these views to Buttrick and Flexner during a conversation "some months ago."
- <sup>70</sup> See Bachman's letters to Flexner, August 16, 1918; to Sage and to Buttrick, both on August 20, 1918; and to Rose, August 21, 1918; and telegram to Williams, August 23, 1918; and letter to Flexner, August 27, 1918, in GEB 305: 3180.
- <sup>71</sup> Flexner to Bachman, undated, GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>72</sup> General Education Board, *Private Endowment and Public Education: A Report on the Use of the Handley Fund*, with an introduction by R. Gray Williams (New York City: General Education Board, 1919), p. 5. The report appears to have been written largely by Frank Bachman, with assistance from other members of the General Education Board. Cited hereafter as *Private Endowment*.
- <sup>73</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>74</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 8, 12, 13, and the table "Occupations at Winchester" on p. 14.



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- <sup>75</sup> *Private Endowment*, p. 14.
- <sup>76</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 9-12.
- <sup>77</sup> *Private Endowment*, p. 15.
- <sup>78</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 16-18.
- <sup>79</sup> *Private Endowment*, p. 22.
- <sup>80</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 24, 27.
- <sup>81</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 28, 29.
- <sup>82</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 30-31, 33.
- <sup>83</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 34-35.
- <sup>84</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 36-39.
- <sup>85</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 42-43.
- <sup>86</sup> *Private Endowment*, p. 45.
- <sup>87</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 46-47.
- <sup>88</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 47, 49, 50.
- <sup>89</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 52-55.
- <sup>90</sup> *Private Endowment*, pp. 55-56.
- <sup>91</sup> *Private Endowment*, p. 57.
- <sup>92</sup> Williams to Flexner, September 9, 1918, GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>93</sup> Williams to Flexner, September 9, 1918, GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>94</sup> Williams to Flexner, September 9, 1918; Bachman to Williams, September 12, 1918, GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>95</sup> Williams to Flexner, September 9, 1918, GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>96</sup> Flexner to Williams and Williams to Flexner, both dated September 24, 1918, in GEB 305: 3181.
- <sup>97</sup> Flexner to Williams, September 24, 1918; Williams to Flexner, September 26, 1918; Flexner to Williams, September 28, 1918, and Williams to Flexner, October 30, 1918, in GEB 305: 3181.

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<sup>98</sup> See Bachman to Miss Louise Klein Miller, Department of School Gardens, Cleveland (Ohio) Public Schools, October 17, 1918, in GEB 305: 3181.

<sup>99</sup> Williams to Flexner, December 20, 1918, GEB 305: 3181; Williams AR 1918, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Williams AR 1918, p. 3; Williams telegram to Wallace Buttrick, January 10, 1919, in GEB 305: 3182; Quarles, *Bequests*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>101</sup> Williams to Flexner, January 14, 1919, GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>102</sup> Williams to Flexner, January 14, 1919, and April 3, 1919, GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>103</sup> Williams to Flexner, January 14, 1919, GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>104</sup> Buttrick to Williams, January 18, 1919, and January 23, 1919; Williams to Buttrick, January 25, 1919, in GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>105</sup> Williams AR 1919, p. 4; Williams to Flexner, February 27, 1919; Flexner to Professor Charles H. Judd, University of Chicago, March 1, 1919, in GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>106</sup> Williams AR 1919, p. 4-5.

<sup>107</sup> Williams AR 1919, p. 4-5; Williams to Flexner April 3, 1919, GEB 305: 3182.

<sup>108</sup> Williams AR 1919, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Williams AR 1920, pp. 3-4.

<sup>110</sup> See William M. Lupton to Abraham Flexner, undated first letter, and October 9, 1920, GEB 305: 3183; and "Pointed Questions Asked By 'Mother'," a letter to the editor, undated, probably from the *Winchester Evening Star*, which Clerk sent to Bachman with a letter in early March 6, 1920. See Clerk to Bachman, March 6, 1920, GEB box 305, folder 3183, and a copy of the incomplete clipping, GEB 305: 3184.

<sup>111</sup> Bachman to Flexner, April 19, 1923; see also Clerk to Flexner, December 16, 1923; and Williams to Flexner, February 18, 1922; September 23, 1922; and February 6, 1924, GEB 305: 3183.

<sup>112</sup> Williams AR 1918, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Williams AR 1918, pp. 6-7.

<sup>114</sup> Robert M. Ward, "Aim and Scope of the Handley Schools," in "Inauguration of Superintendent of Schools, Empire Theatre, September 12, 1919," in Williams AR 1919, p. 31.

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