

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION
IN VINCENNES CITY AND VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Education
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by
Clarence Howerton

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TOWNSHIP

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Committee on thesis:

Olis A. Jamison

Helen Ederle

David Koch, Chairman

Representative of English Department:

Olis A. Jamison

Date of Acceptance _____

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND PREVIEW OF ORGANIZATION USED

There has been a growing interest in the study of the geographical factors in the City of Vincennes and in Vincennes Township as they have influenced the establishment and development of schools in this particular part of the state of Indiana. The majority of the accounts, written by authors of the histories of Vincennes and Vincennes Township, have been based upon limited historical observations and have not taken into account specific geographical factors as related to the growth of education.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this study to give the geographical setting and to show how the geography of Vincennes and Vincennes Township has influenced the location of educational centers. Historical, political, and economic influences have also played a part in the educational development, however.

Importance of the study. This study was made to show the location of Vincennes Township, and how it grew from an area at one time almost uninhabitable because of the topography of the land into a well developed agricultural

community; to point out the advantages the township and city have because of their relation to natural resources, commerce, and transportation; and to show how education has developed from the early Catholic schools into a modern progressive public school system.

Post Vincennes was founded in 1732 and later became the hub of the "Old Northwest." A small trading post on the Wabash at the time of George Rogers Clark's conquest of this Indiana Territory in 1779, Vincennes was found to have a very small population made up almost entirely of French and Indians. Today it is an agricultural community having a population of 20,000 in the city and 4,675 in the township.

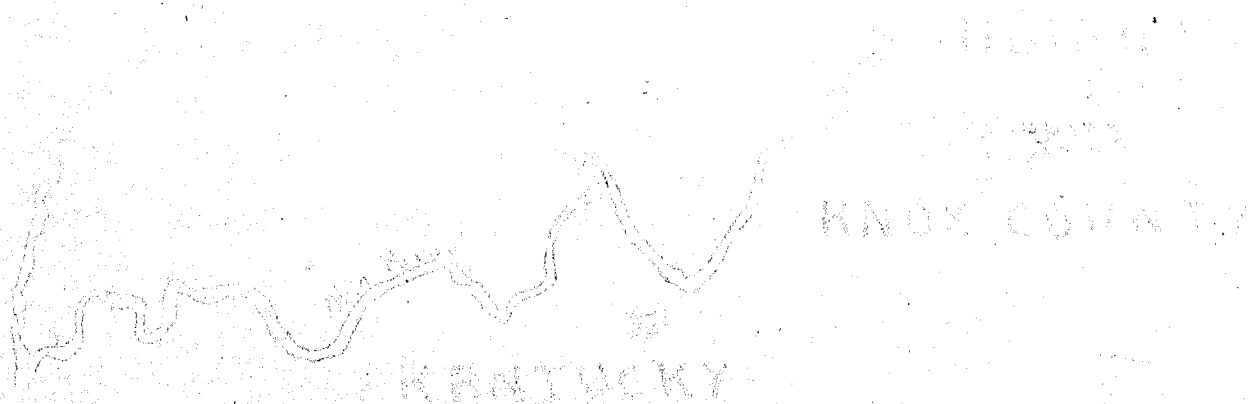
Sources of data. The material for this study falls into the classifications of primary and secondary data. The primary material consists of records of the township trustees of District Number Two, records of the Vincennes public school trustees, and files of the Vincennes Sun-Commercial Daily Newspaper.

The secondary sources include field trips taken with the county surveyor, information from the Knox County Agricultural Agent, information from the Knox County AAA Farm Organization, and information given by life-long residents of the community. Books consulted were Baker's History of Knox and Daviess Counties, Boone's History of Education in

Indiana, Cauthorn's History of the City of Vincennes,
Cottman's Indiana, Its History, Constitution and Present
Government, and the United States Department of Agriculture's United States Soil Survey for Knox County.

II. THE PREVIEW

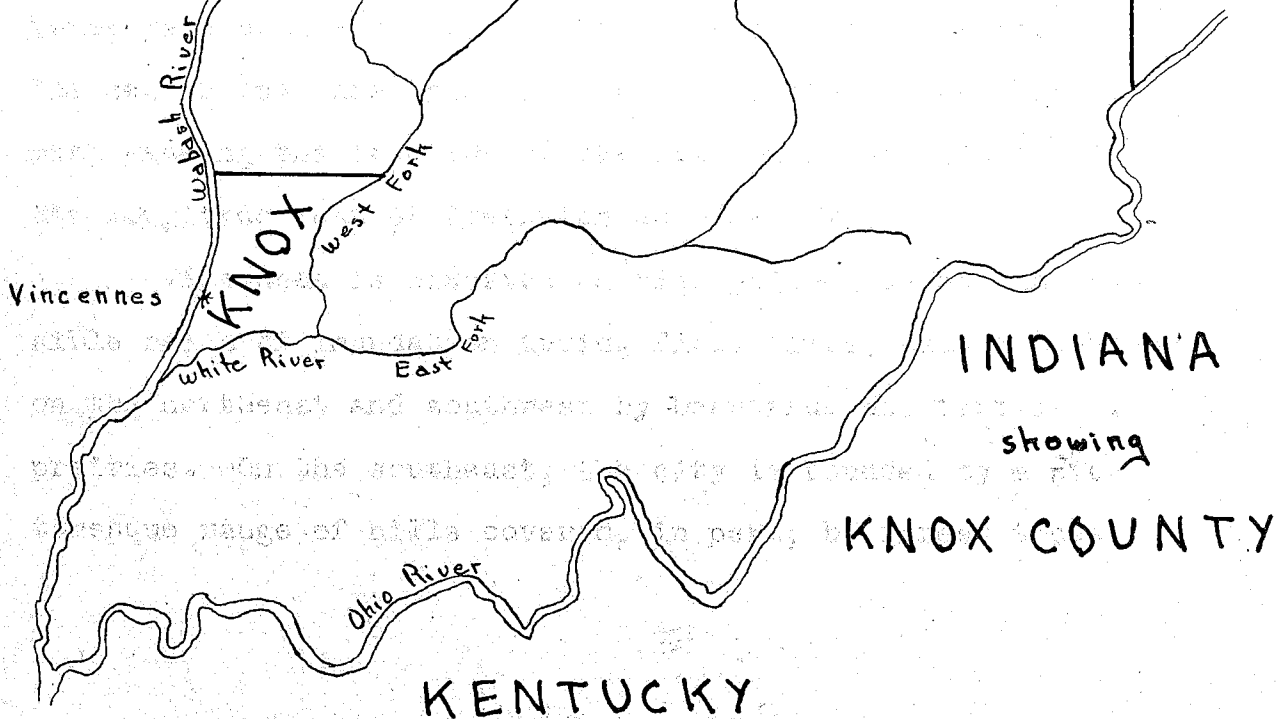
Preview of organization. Throughout this report it is the intention of the author to show the geographical setting and its influence upon the growth of education in the Vincennes city and the Vincennes township public schools from the early time when the first attempts were made to establish public schools to the present time. During this period of development the inhabitants of Vincennes and the township have overcome some of the unfavorable topographical influences and have created a more desirable place in which to live.



MICHIGAN

ILLINOIS

OHIO



Vincennes

KNOX

Wabash River

White River

West Fork

East Fork

Ohio River

INDIANA

showing

KNOX COUNTY

KENTUCKY

CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

Vincennes is situated on the east bank of the Wabash River, 150 miles above its junction with the Ohio River. It is 192 miles west of Cincinnati, Ohio, 151 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri, 236 miles south of Chicago, Illinois, 51 miles north of the Ohio River at Evansville, and 117 miles southwest of Indianapolis, the capital of the State of Indiana.

The United States Government, in 1883, made an accurate geographical survey of the United States. Vincennes was selected as one of the stations for observations. The station there was located near the geographical center of the town, which is off the northeast side of the court house yard and is marked by three stones set in concrete. The center one, nearly flush with the surface, bears an "X" mark showing the latitude of the station as $38^{\circ}40'39''$ and the longitude west of Greenwich as $87^{\circ}31'28''$.

Vincennes is situated on high ground beyond the possible reach of inundation during flood times, and is bounded on the northeast and southwest by beautiful and fertile prairies. On the southeast, the city is bounded by a picturesque range of hills covered, in part, by forest trees.

From the city the range of hills presents an attractive and pleasing landscape view.

The city's location is peculiarly fortunate and safe, occupying as it does a level depression surrounded on most sides by elevated grounds and hills which protect it from the chilly blasts of winter and the destructive storms of summer, which are so prevalent and desolating in portions of the midwest. The surrounding hills operate as a bulwark to divert and elevate the course of passing winds; thus, they shield and protect it from their fury. During the long period of time that the site has been the home of civilization, no occasion for alarm has been furnished, and not the least damage has been done to the life and property within its limits on this account.

The streets of the city are all level and graded with gravel containing a cohesive substance. This gravel when first taken from its bed is of a dull red color, but upon exposure to the air it soon hardens and makes a substantial road bed, forming a good base for the several miles of improved blacktop. In recent years asphalt and concrete streets have been added.

On the southeast side of the city there are beautiful mounds, the most noted and picturesque evidences of the work of the mound builders to be found anywhere. These mounds overlook and are in full view of the city. They add much to

the physical appearance and beauty of the location, and from their summits the best view of the city can be obtained. When seen from their heights, the city, located as it is upon a level plain, with its streets ornamented on either side with shade trees, appears to best advantage and seems to be situated in one large unbroken forest.

There is a legend connected with these mounds. It is said that General Clark, when he first approached the place in February, 1799, marched his troops around one of the mounds in a circle many times to impress the inhabitants with the magnitude of his forces. But no such performance ever took place. General Clark says in his account that he did not wish to surprise the people. He met two Frenchmen of the village at Warrior's Island, two miles below Vincennes, and by them he sent a message to the inhabitants of the town, saying that he did not wish to surprise them, and advising all who were friendly to the "hair-buyer" general, as he called Hamilton, to join him in the fort. Warrior's Island, in the prairie two miles below the city, was in full view of the town, and his forces could easily be seen and numbered there. General Clark, in his report, said that when he sent his message to the inhabitants of the town, by the two Frenchmen from Warrior's Island, he knew that the French inhabitants were friendly to him, as was also

"Tobacco's Son," the most powerful Indian chief in the country.¹

The site of Vincennes has always been admired and praised by travelers who have visited the place. Count Volney, in his account of his travels, refers to it as a garden spot, reminding him of some of the vine-clad provinces of France. It was in 1796 that he visited the place, and he said the village on all sides was surrounded by the most luxurious vineyards from which an abundance of purest wines were made by the villagers. He said also the prairies adjoining the village were covered with the finest fruit orchards he had ever seen. This statement concerning the fruit orchards holds true even to the present time. But the extensive vineyards have almost entirely disappeared, and the grounds have been used in the cultivation of wheat and corn.

In 1765, Colonel Croghan came here to treat with Miami and Illinois Indian tribes. In his report he praised Post Vincennes as "one of the finest situations that can be found." He praised the soil as very rich, "producing wheat and tobacco, and that the tobacco raised here is preferable and superior to that of Maryland and Virginia, and that Post

¹ H. S. Cauthorn, A History of the City of Vincennes, Indiana, from 1702 to 1901. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892.) pp. 27-29.

Vincennes is a place of great importance for trade."

William H. English visited Post Vincennes in 1791. He reported: "In addition to its early settlement and the multitude of interesting incidents connected with its history, its location and surroundings are so attractive that one can readily understand why it was a favorite of the Indians in the earliest times, and subsequently of the French and others of the white race. There are few places where life at all periods has been more thoroughly and philosophically enjoyed than at the 'Old Post' St. Vincents, the modern city of Vincennes."²

² Ibid., pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER III

TOPOGRAPHY OF VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

The topographical location of the site upon which the city of Vincennes stands is remarkable and worthy of attention. The area it occupies may be called a gravel bank, extending from the surface to the water line below. At every point in the area which has been pierced and penetrated, this gravel formation has been exposed. In 1880, the city authorities excavated on Busseron Street, between Second and Third Streets, for a cistern to be used by the fire department. It was excavated to the water line below--only gravel and sand were found in the process of the work.

In 1804, and for many years thereafter, the village was annually surrounded by water and the "pirogues," as they were called, used by the early French settlers, circumnavigated the village at flood seasons and unloaded their cargoes in the rear of the high ground upon which stands the Court House.

The river at Hickman Street was called the stone landing. From that point a pure gravel hill, fifteen to twenty-five feet higher than the present level of the city streets, arose abruptly and extended along the entire river front to the prairie below. It presented an abrupt face to the river but gradually sloped in the direction of First

Street, which parallels the river. The gravel has gradually been removed by the city authorities to grade streets and fill depressions in other parts of the city. The village was originally located between this old gravel hill and the elevated ground upon which the court house stands, and mostly below Broadway Street. This space was in many places unfit for occupation because of the presence of ponds and surface water. From a point near the intersection of Perry and Fifth Streets, running diagonally through the town in the direction of the public cemetery, the ground was low and little better than a marsh. Immediately beyond the high ground upon which the court house stands was an immense pond called "Dinah's Pond," having a depth of several feet, which was sustained throughout the year.


The first road leading from Vincennes eastward in the direction of Louisville, Kentucky, was by way of Petersburg, over what was called the "Buffalo Trace." It was so called, according to old residents who traveled over it, because it had originally been traced through the intervening forest by immense herds of buffalo that passed over it in their annual migrations back and forth from the blue grass regions of Kentucky. They crossed the Kentucky at the "great crossing" in Scott County, the Ohio River at the falls at Louisville, and the Wabash at the ford just below this place; they went thence to the rich prairie of Illinois beyond. The "Buffalo

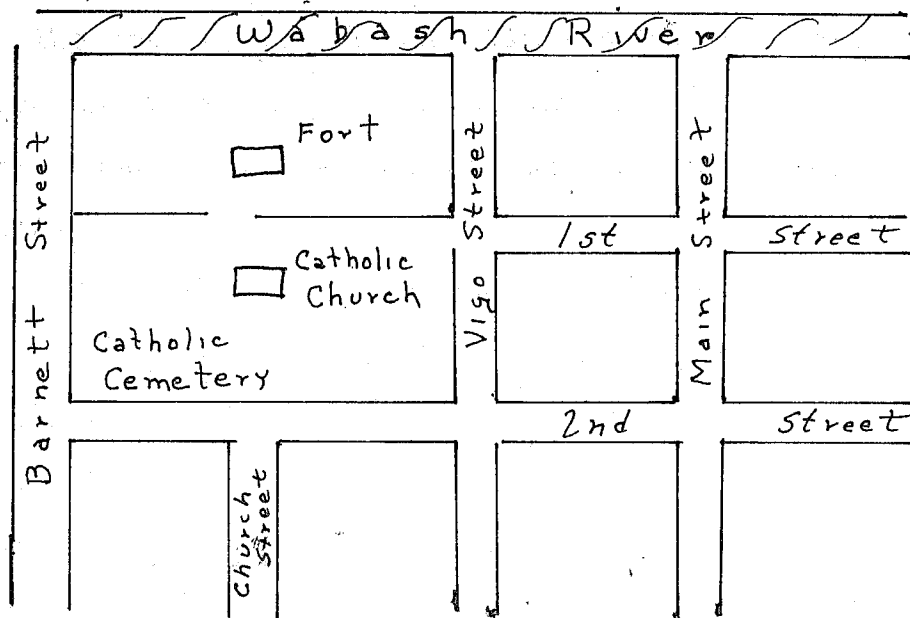
"Trace" was the only route of travel from Vincennes to the East for many years after 1804. As late as 1846, the road to Louisville passed out of town on the southeast and thence to what is now called "Burnett's Heights," over what was then an impassable swamp. The road itself was of artificial construction called "corduroy," and animals running at large would mire anywhere outside the roadway.

The land on the southeast side of town, as far as the high land beyond, was covered with scrub oak bushes that never attained a height greater than ten feet.

The city of Vincennes, located in Vincennes Township, is the center of a rich agricultural community. This may account for its slow growth in population, as cities having an opportunity for manufacturing industries are the ones having a very rapid growth.

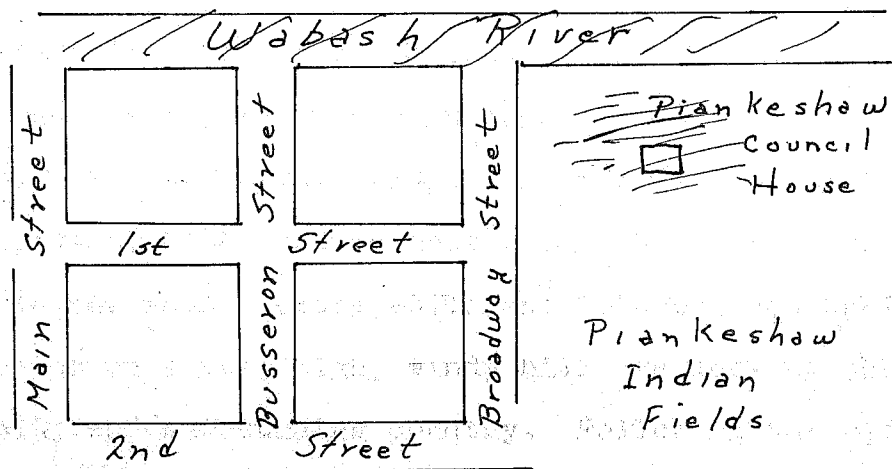
The town at first huddled and centered around the present locality of the Catholic Church. The old fort built by François Morgan de Vincennes, in 1702, was located on the river between what is now the Catholic Church square and the river, and between Barnett and Vigo Streets. The main entrance to the fort was on what is now Church Street. The following diagram will give a better idea of the location of the old fort:





The Catholic Church and the fort formed the nucleus from which the city of Vincennes grew.

Near the church and fort were located the Piankeshaw Indian Village and fields. The Piankeshaw Council House was located on a high gravel hill near the center of their village.



The country surrounding Vincennes gives the town a location unsurpassed in beauty. Vincennes was originally situated between two large prairies, one above the city, and one below.

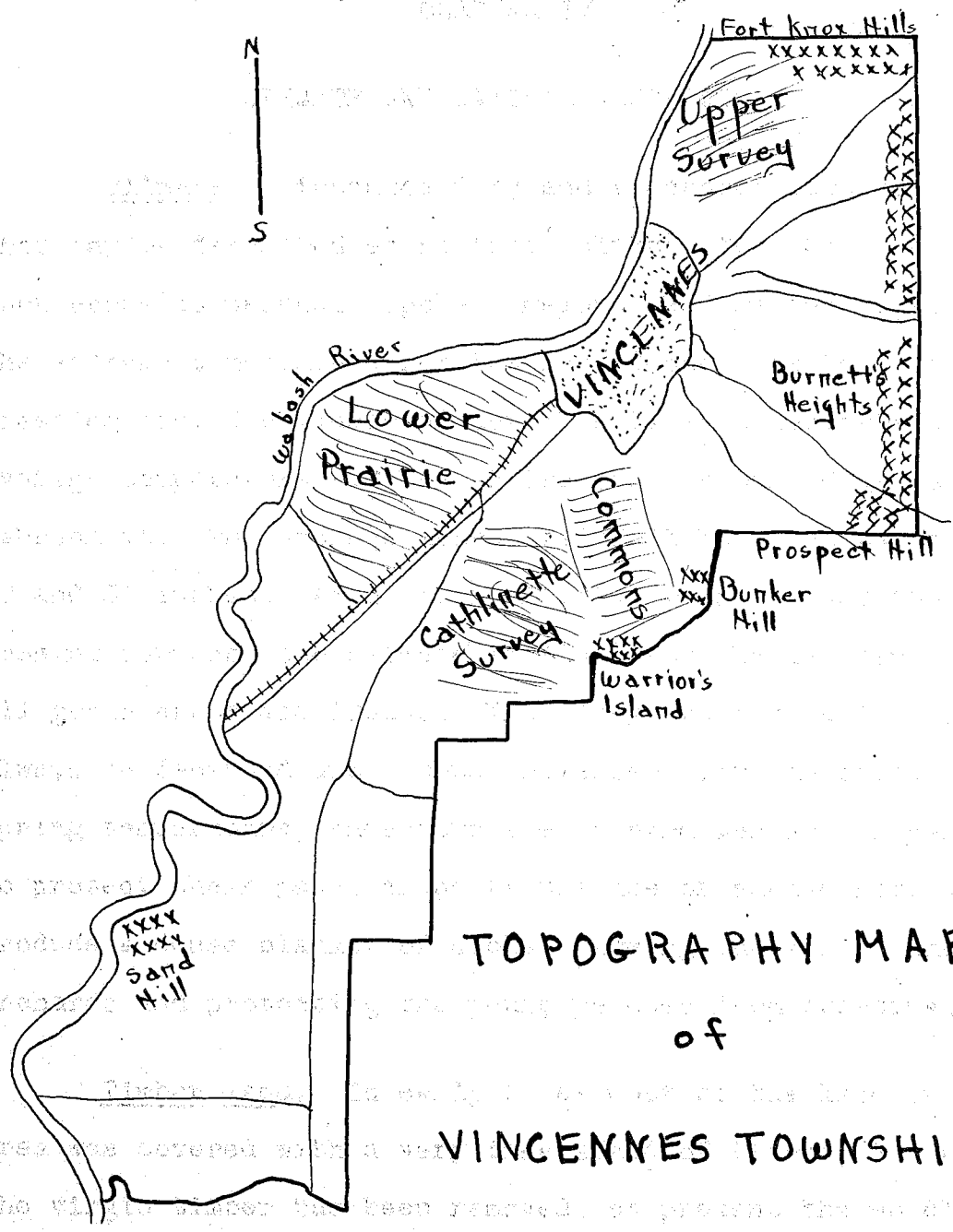
The upper prairie extended two miles from the city limits of the town to Prairie Creek on the north, but this prairie now has become a part of the city. The lower prairie, which may be divided into two levels, the upper and the lower, extended about six miles south of the town. This land was originally granted to the early French settlers by the commandants of the fort.

Mention has already been made of their relation to the geographical setting of Vincennes, but this elevation of hills, partially surrounding the city, also plays an important part in the establishment of some of the outstanding landmarks.

Beginning at the extreme northern point of Vincennes Township, we come upon the picturesque hills known as the Fort Knox Hills. On these was located old Fort Knox, overlooking the village of Vincennes approximately two miles to the south. Following this ridge, or moraine, to the south and east, we find one of the most modern and beautiful sanitariums in the entire state--Hillcrest Tuberculosis Sanitarium, located on a very high, windy hill overlooking the entire city and surrounding country. Following the ridge

farther south and east, we find it near the city, and at this point is the part of the hills called Burnett's Heights, over which passed the second road leading from the city. Another portion of this ridge, still farther south, has been called "Prospect Hill." Near it is located the famous Indian mound, called Sugar Loaf Mound, now owned by the Historical Society.

From this point of the ridge there is an abrupt decline. The surface falls into the lower bottom lands and does not rise again until some two miles south of the city, where we find an elevation rising out of the low land surface as if some giant hand had molded it. This hill, known as Bunker Hill, is only about one half mile long, but it rises some three hundred feet above the surrounding land and continues southward about three-fourths of a mile to where another giant hill arises above the surrounding lowland. The second hill was known as the Warrior's Island, but was later called LaPlante Hill, and sometimes even Bunker Hill, in confusion with the hill previously mentioned; but it is a separate and distinct hill from Bunker Hill. Some distance to the south and near the Wabash River, a large sand hill, known as Sand Hill or Sand Ridge, rises above the low bottom land. It serves as a refuge for the inhabitants of lower Vincennes Township when the Wabash River floods all the surrounding lowlands.



TOPOGRAPHY MAP
of

VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

The village center has been removed, or perhaps the road
 in center appeared. The larger portion are found on land
 that would require considerable preparation before it could
 be cultivated. Fort Knox Hills are covered with a thin

CHAPTER IV

CLIMATE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Climate. Vincennes City and Vincennes Township have what may be described as an ideal climate for the growing of such crops as peaches, apples, melons, and garden vegetables. The average temperature for the last decade has been above freezing from the middle of April until late September. The average temperature for the entire year is 55.1 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual rainfall has been between 40 and 50 inches. With the sufficient rainfall and the long growing periods, the climate is ideal for the maturing of all grain crops and fruits. This long growing period cannot always be depended upon, however, especially the early spring temperature; therefore the orchard men are prepared to protect their peach crops by the use of smudge pots which produce a dense blanket of smoke, warming the air in the orchards and protecting the young peaches from freezing.

Timber land. In early times most of the land in this area was covered with a very fine stand of timber, but all the virgin timber has been removed; at present the woodland is rather scattered. The larger portions are found on land that would require considerable preparation before it could be cultivated. Fort Knox Hills are covered with a fair

stand of timber consisting of beech, oak, walnut, hickory, elm, poplar, tulip, and sycamore trees.

In the southern portion of the township several small areas of timber are found. The largest area consists of some two hundred acres known as the Blood's Woods. This is a classified forest which contains water oak, bur oak, white oak, hickory, walnut, cottonwood, sycamore, elm, soft or water maple, hackberry, and pecan trees. This present stand of timber is a portion of what was once a six-hundred-acre forest, but the wooded area now is limited to land that is very low and is covered with water too much for safe farming. This entire land was purchased a number of years ago for \$1.25 per acre. Then about fifteen years ago the timber was cut and sold for \$95 per acre. The farm land at present is worth \$150 per acre and is considered among the best farming land in the township.

Oil. Vincennes Township has been explored only on a small scale for oil, and the only oil wells thus far opened are on the Ed Sannaman farm about ten miles south of Vincennes. Their production was gauged at two hundred fifty barrels per day in 1940, but had decreased to one hundred barrels per day in 1945. The other oil wells are on the Brevoort lands near the Wabash River, from three to ten miles south of the city. The oil flow from the five wells

on those lands is only about one hundred barrels per day.

Coal. A geological survey of the township shows that the land in and around Vincennes is underlaid with a good supply of coal, but as yet this field has been explored by only two mines, which are now vacated. One of the mines, known as the Prospect Coal Mine, was located one half mile east of the city and was operated as a wagon mine, but due to lack of proper mining machinery it ceased to operate thirty years ago. The other mine was opened within the city proper, but due to lack of water control, it was closed about thirty years ago too. The coal mined from these two mines was considered very good coal.¹

Gas. Vincennes City is supplied with natural gas from gas wells in both Illinois and Kentucky.

¹ State Geological Department, Indianapolis, Indiana.

CHAPTER V

EARLY HISTORICAL SITES

In the city proper the first houses to be erected by the French settlers, as well as those erected by their Creole descendants, were of timbers set upon end, thatched with straw, and plastered with adobe.

The first church, erected in this way for St. Francis Xavier, was used for church purposes for about eighty years.

The building occupied by the Territorial Government during the time Vincennes was the capital of the Territory, was situated on the southeast side of Main Street, about midway between Second and Third Streets. This two-story frame building was removed about ninety years ago to its present site on upper Third Street just below Harrison Park, where it still stands. The upper prairie survey, now occupied in part by Harrison Park, was covered on the river front by many handsome brick residences.

The Harrison mansion, the oldest building in Vincennes, is truly an ancient landmark, even today. Many interesting stories are woven around this building and its various occupants and uses, such as: the home of Governor Harrison; a library, the first one in Vincennes; the home of General James P. Drake, who was the receiver of public money; a storage building for wheat and corn; a hotel; a

place General Harrison and Chief Tecumseh planned to use for, the signing of a treaty of peace, which, according to history, was never signed because neither Harrison nor Tecumseh trusted the other. Tecumseh was to have appeared unarmed, but came with seventy armed warriors. Harrison also was to have met Tecumseh unarmed, but summoned a number of his friends, all well armed. Tecumseh, noting this precaution by Harrison, became angry and calling Harrison a "liar," left without signing a peace treaty. The Harrison mansion still stands and is occupied by a caretaker; anyone wishing to visit there is welcomed and shown through the building.

A large brick building, erected in 1807, bounded by Fourth and Sixth Streets, and Perry and Hart Streets, was used as the first seminary. It was later sold to Bishop Hailandiere, who started Saint Gabriel's College under the management of the Udist Fathers. In 1844, this building was used as an orphans' asylum, and continued so until the orphans were removed to Terre Haute. The seminary was then turned over to the Sisters of Providence, who established there the St. Rose Academy. The old seminary was torn down in 1883, and the land was sub-divided. A portion, however, remained in possession of the Sisters, and a new building was erected on Fifth Streets, between Perry and Shelby Streets. This building is still known as St. Rose Academy.

As late as 1850, the area which has been called in part Judah's Addition, was enclosed by a rail fence and used for farming purposes.

The part of the town back of the Court House was unoccupied and was used as a race track.

The first building used for court purposes was a log structure, situated on the north corner of Second and Broadway Streets. After it was abandoned for such purposes, it was used by Federal troops as a hospital for sick, wounded, and disabled soldiers. The second building used for court purposes was located on the west corner of Fourth and Buntin Streets; the county jail and the estray pen were on the north corner of the same streets. The Court House now occupies a complete city square, bounded by Seventh Street on the north, Eighth Street on the south, Broadway on the east, and Busseron Street on the west. The building occupies one of the highest elevations in the city.

CHAPTER VI

COMMERCE

Wabash River. Vincennes has always been favorably located for commerce as the Wabash River is a natural highway. When there were no roads or other means of intercommunication in the Northwest, the Wabash River was the great artery of commerce for all the inhabitants along its course. From the introduction of steamboats until the advent of railroads, the Wabash River was in its glory. Steamboats from New Orleans, St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh were daily visitors to the Vincennes port during the boating season, which lasted about five months in the year. After the building of the lock and dam at the Grand Rapids (Mt. Carmel) the season was much longer. It was then no uncommon sight to see three or four steamboats from the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers at the Vincennes wharf at the same time, as well as the flatboats, called "broadhorns," which carried the produce of the country to the southern markets.

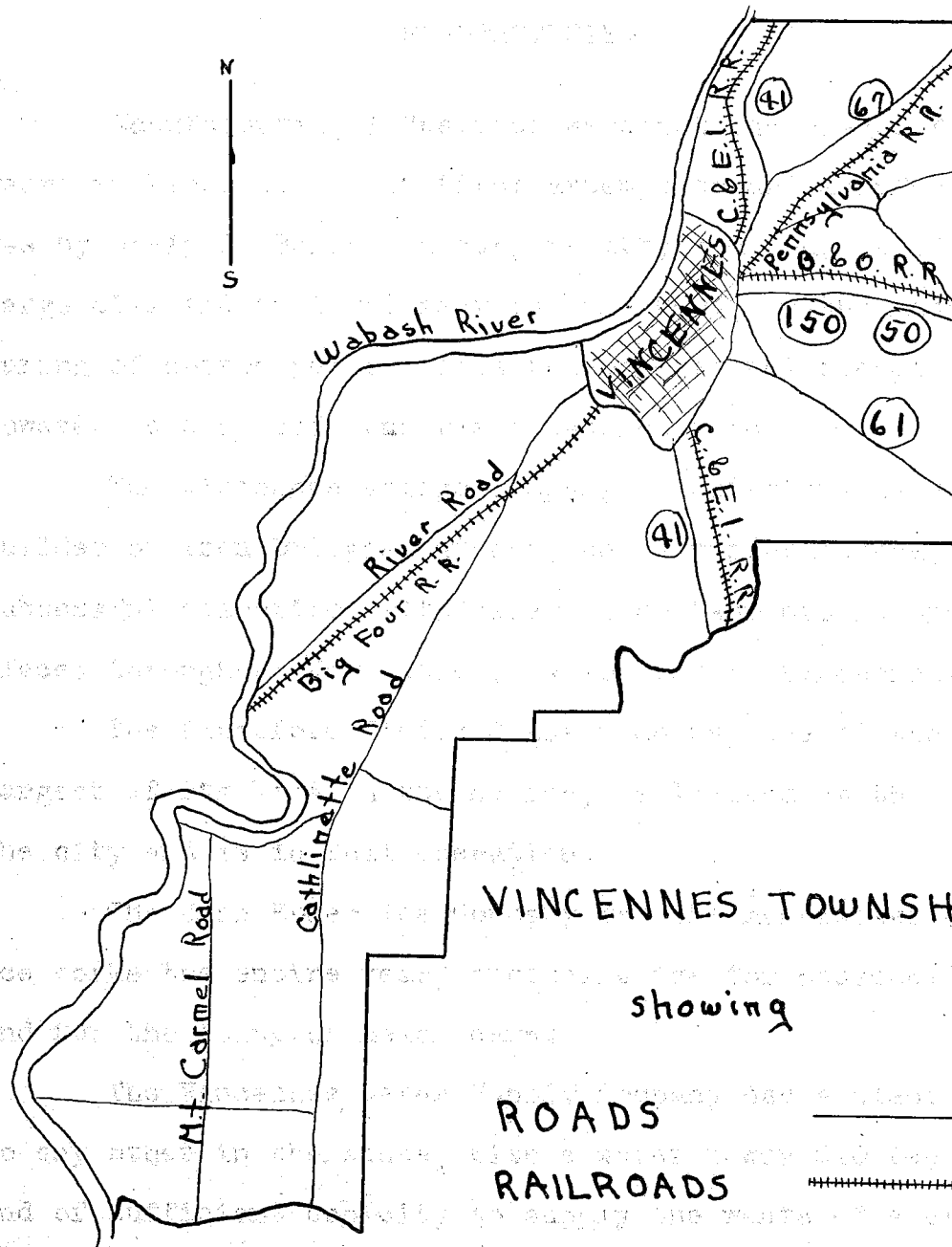
Today the Wabash River has lost its prestige as an artery of commerce to transport the produce of the Wabash Valley to market. The advent of the railroads has robbed the Wabash River of its glory as a waterway of commerce for general purposes.

Railroads. Vincennes is now connected by rail with Terre Haute and from there by direct connection with Chicago, the greatest railroad center in the world. The railroad to Indianapolis, the capital of the state and the second railroad center in the Midwest, gives it connections with all points in the East. The railroad to Cincinnati and its Louisville branch open up the entire East and Southeast. The railroad to Evansville and its southern connections open up the South. The railroad to Cairo at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers opens up the entire Southwest, and that to St. Louis opens up the entire West.

Roads. Federal Highway 50 and 150 passes through Vincennes from east to west and connects the city with the large markets on the Atlantic sea coast and those of the Pacific Coast states. Federal Highway 41 passes through Vincennes from north to south, connecting the city with the large markets of Chicago and the markets of the Gulf coastal states.

State Highway 67 connects Vincennes with the state capital, Indianapolis, and State Road 61 connects the city with the large coal fields of Petersburg and Winslow.

A network of county roads forms a commercial outlet to all the nearby agricultural and industrial cities of the surrounding counties.

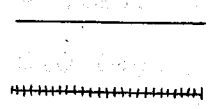


VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

showing

ROADS

RAILROADS



much larger than Vincennes.

The Vincennes Paper Company, sometimes called the
Simon Board Company, for the manufacturing of paper, runs

CHAPTER VII

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing industries were not encouraged for many years in Vincennes. The first attempt toward manufacturing was by David S. Bonner, a very wealthy man, who built a large mill and employed many men and women in the manufacturing of cotton yarns. This venture was not successful, however, and caused Bonner's financial ruin.

The Vincennes Bridge Company, manufacturer and builder of iron bridges, arches, and structural work, a successful competitor with older establishments in other places throughout the nation, is located in Vincennes.

The Blackford Window Glass Company, one of the largest of its kind in the nation, is located at the edge of the city and is in full operation.

The John Ebner Ice Company for the manufacturing of ice works the entire year, producing ice for household uses and for the icing of melon cars.

The Vincennes Water Supply Company has a plant equal to any other in the state, with a water tower 210 feet high and of sufficient capacity to supply the wants of a city much larger than Vincennes.

The Vincennes Paper Company, sometimes called the Straw Board Company, for the manufacturing of paper, runs

night and day and makes splendid use of the wheat straw from the surrounding wheat fields.

The Atlas Mills and the Baltic Mills for the manufacture of flour and corn meal are in full operation throughout the entire year.

The Vincennes Canning and Packing Company for the canning of vegetables, specialists in the canning of tomato products, has become known the world over.

The Pomeroy's Corrugated Paper Company employs several workers in the manufacturing of corrugated paper boxes, egg case fillers, and corrugated sheet paper.

The Central Fibre Paper Company, manufacturer of paper products, works all year producing various types of paper.

The Vincennes Sand and Gravel Company is one of the largest in the state for the furnishing of sand and gravel for all kinds of building construction.

The Meadow Gold Creamery, Reed's Creamery, and several local dairies have been an aid in supplying milk and milk products to the entire community.

Sources of entertainment and education. The Vincennes Sun-Commercial Newspaper has ample means of supplying the surrounding community with the latest news.

The WAOV Radio Broadcasting Station helps in supplying the latest news and Mutual Network programs for the entertainment of the people. Three theatres also furnish entertainment and a means of spending leisure time for the people.

The Vincennes Public Library, one of the most complete and up-to-date libraries in the state, furnishes a source of educational and recreational reading for the community. Gregg Park, Harrison Park, and Kimmell Park supply an adequate means of further enjoyment to the public. The large Rainbow Swimming Beach is also a source of pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORICAL GROWTH OF EDUCATION IN VINCENNES TOWNSHIP

The Federal Enabling Act of 1816, which made it possible for Indiana to become a state, provided for Section Sixteen in every township to be granted to the inhabitants of such township for the purpose of schools. The location of the schools in the area under consideration was controlled to a great extent by land elevation. A great portion of the township when first surveyed was nothing more than low marshy ponds, but that condition has since been improved by man. Land areas have been drained, woodlands cleared, and the land area reclaimed for agricultural purposes.

The first schools of the township were more or less a community service, but their location was controlled by land elevations. Schools were re-located in the city, while, in the township, consolidation began, in 1912, in the northern part, and was completed by 1925.

Until 1912, all the schools of the township were one-room elementary schools including all grades from the primary through the eighth grade. These schools were located in communities which had become sufficiently populated to afford a teacher. Before 1850, there had been an

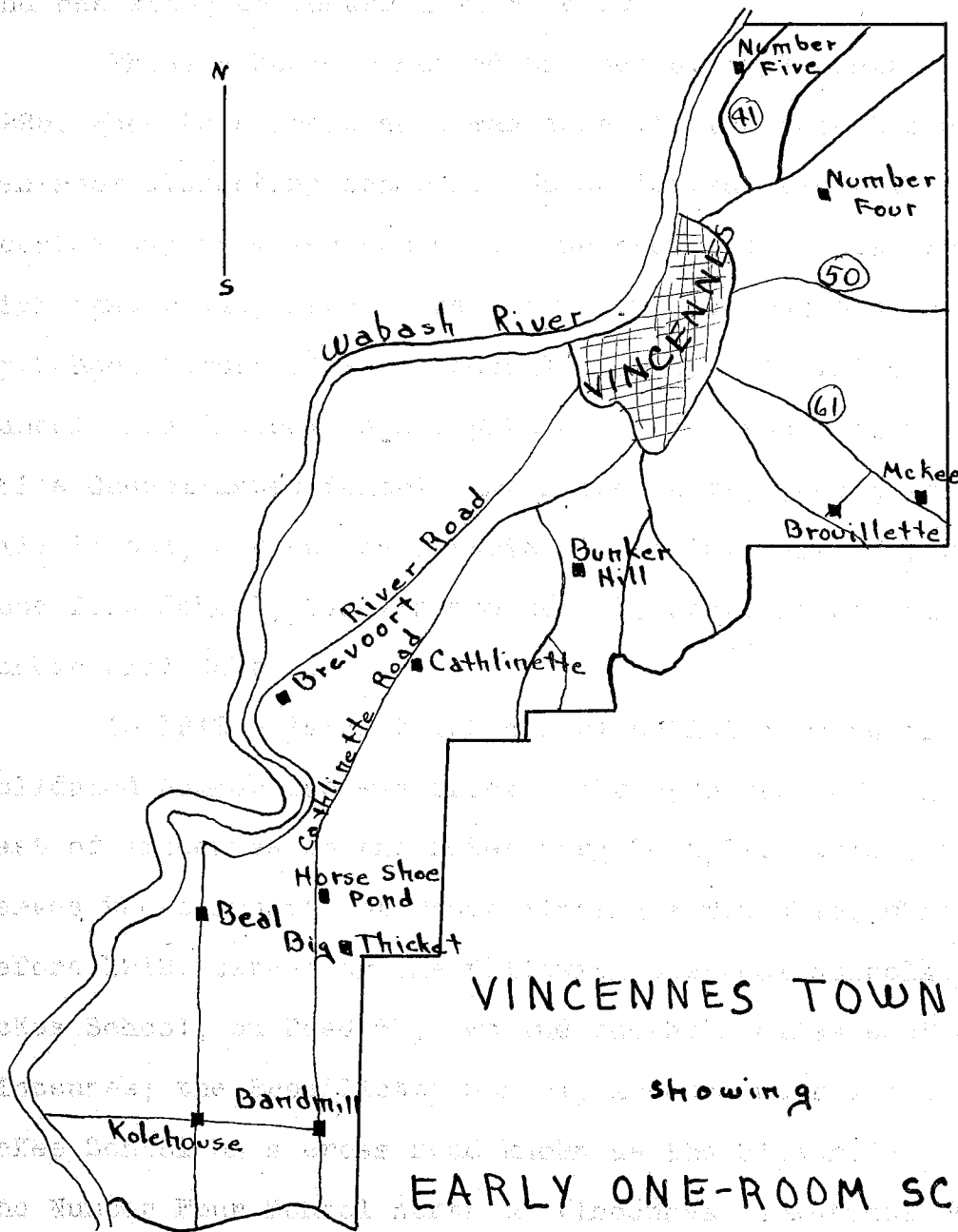
effort made to establish schools by self-taxation, but this plan proved very unsatisfactory.

The early school law in regard to buildings and equipment states that a building shall be eight feet between floors, and at least one foot from the surface of the ground to the first floor. The building shall be furnished in a manner calculated to render comfort to the teacher and pupils with a suitable number of seats, tables, lights, and everything necessary for the education of all children within the district. The furniture and equipment consisted of a split-bottom chair for the teacher, and rude benches made of slabs for the children. These benches were arranged so as to get the benefit of the warmth from the huge fireplace and of the light from the windows. Add to this a broom, a water bucket, and a tin cup or gourd and the equipment was complete.¹ The early one-room schools were located near the center of the district from which they drew their students but were also located on land that was considered above the flood stage. The names given to the schools were quite often indicative of the location.

Beginning at the extreme southwestern part of the township was a school known as Number Eleven, located on the

¹ Cauthorn, op. cit., p. 150.

highest ridge in that immediate neighborhood. It served the people within a two-mile radius. This school was sometimes referred to as the Kolehuse School, taking the name from a well-known farmer in that district. Two miles east from Number Eleven School was the Bandmill School, located near a large sawmill. This location also was above the flood stage of the river and served a community of about a two-mile radius. About two miles north of Bandmill was a school known as the Big Thicket School, built on a ridge above flood waters and almost surrounded by woods. Directly west from Big Thicket School was School Number One, better known as the Beal School. It was situated in a small village above extreme flood stage. North of Big Thicket School another one-room school was located close to Horse Shoe Pond School, whose name comes from the peculiar formation of a nearby pond, shaped like a large horse shoe. Four miles north of the Horse Shoe Pond School was one of the most outstanding one-room schools in the township, established by the early French settlers and located so as to serve the inhabitants of the Cathlinette district. Directly west of the Cathlinette School, at a distance of two miles, was the Number Nine School, better known as the Brevoort School, located on a narrow sand ridge and well above flood stage itself, but sometimes cut off by water in the low drains. The last



VINCENNES TOWNSHIP
 showing
 EARLY ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS

ferred to as the Kelsey School, and was located about two
 miles north of Vincennes on Road 41. These two one-room
 schools and a fraction of Bunker Hill District were in the

school located south of the city was situated on Bunker Hill and was known as Bunker Hill School.

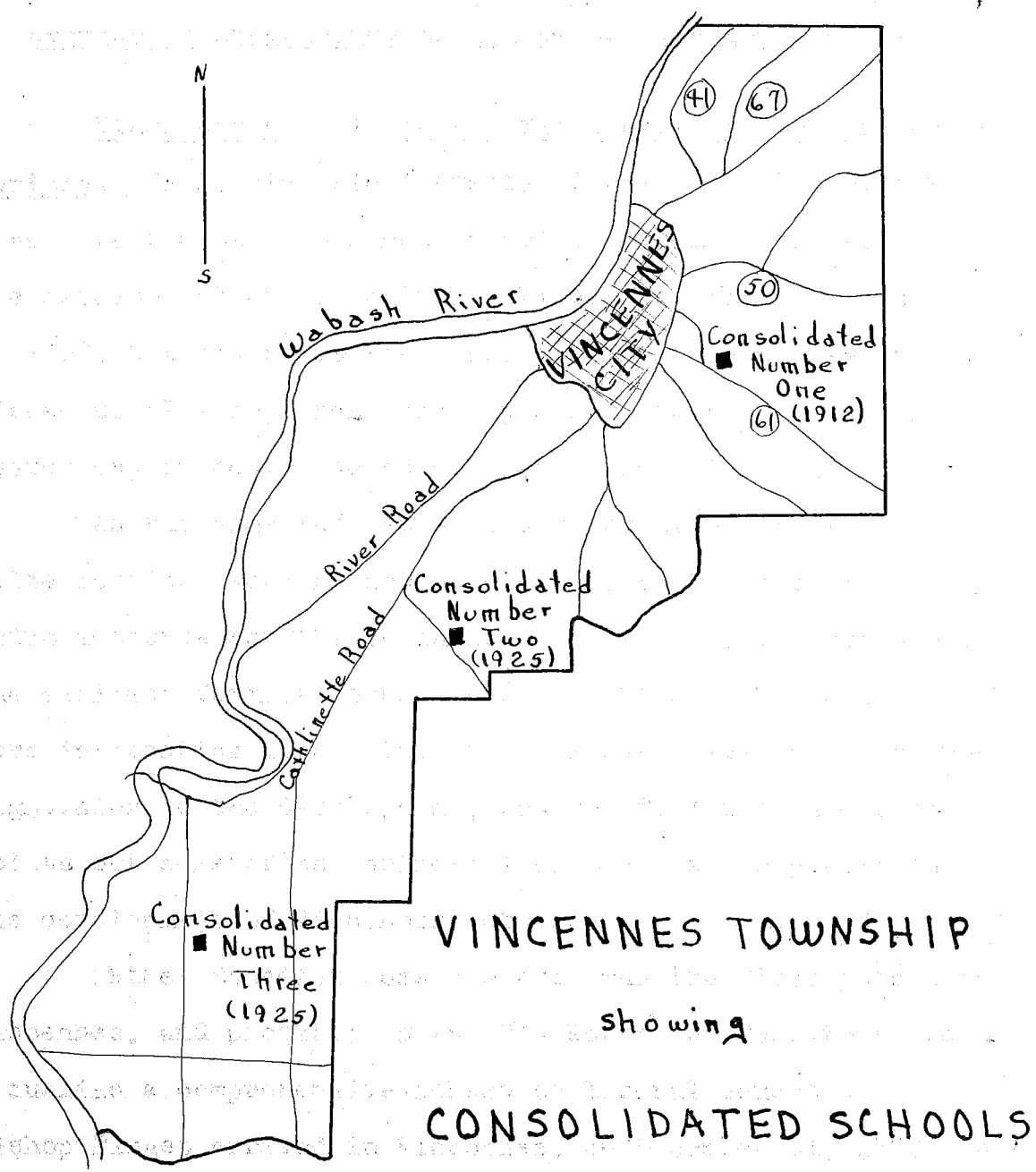
These schools remained the educational centers until 1925, when this great area was consolidated into two modern ten-room elementary schools. Consolidated Number Three, located twelve miles south of Vincennes and erected on a high sand ridge, serves the community that was once served by School Number Eleven, Bandmill School, Big Thicket School, Beal School, and a part of Horse Shoe Pond School; while Consolidated School Number Two, better known as Bunker Hill School, serves the district including part of Horse Shoe Pond School, Cathlinette School, Brevoort School, and Bunker Hill School.

In 1912, a large brick school building known as Consolidated Number One was erected three-fourths of a mile east of Vincennes on the Petersburg Road 61. This building serves the community of Upper Vincennes Township, which was, before 1912, served by the following one-room schools: the McKee School, on Road 61, two and one-half miles east of Vincennes; the Brouillette School, located near south of McKee School on a cross road known as the Siewers's Corner; the Number Four School north of Vincennes, sometimes referred to as the Kelso School; and Number Five School, farther north of Vincennes on Road 41. These four one-room schools and a fraction of Bunker Hill district make up the

enrollment of Consolidated School Number One.

The children of Consolidated School Number One were transported to school by a school hack drawn by horses until 1926, when the motor-driven school buses were first used. Consolidated Number Two and Number Three have always used the motor-powered system of transportation.

The three consolidated schools offer courses in agriculture for the boys of the eighth grade and home economics for the eighth grade girls. Though the teachers of these two subjects are not required to have special training to teach in these departments, preference has been given to teachers specially trained for these subjects. Nevertheless, all teachers are asked to have the proper license and to teach in the department in which they are licensed to teach.



CHAPTER IX

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN VINCENNES CITY

Vincennes schools in the first half of the nineteenth century. Early historical events of United States history have affected the Vincennes school development as well as the development of the nation. Vincennes Post was founded in 1732, but the first free public school was not established until 1855; therefore, by some, its public school system may be estimated as not being old.

As the name indicates, the majority of the earliest white settlers were French people of Catholic religion, which accounts for the influence of the Catholic Church upon the earliest form of education of any kind in Vincennes. More interesting information than is here given would be enlightening to the development, but the following account points out some of the principal characters and places in the development of Vincennes schools.

Father Benedict Joseph Flaget was the first person in Vincennes, and probably in the Old Northwest Territory, to visualize a comprehensive scheme of liberal education. Bishop Flaget arrived in Vincennes, on December 31, 1792, in company with General George Rogers Clark. It was at a time when savage Indians were still lurking around the streets of the old Post that Bishop Flaget organized the first school.

This was between the years of 1792 and 1795, the exact date not being recorded.

The Old Catholic Church, located on the present site of Second and Church Streets, near the bank of the Wabash River, was used as the first school rooms. The land that it occupied was granted to the Catholic Church by the King of France, who had obtained it through his missionaries from the savage Indian tribes. The building was a simple structure of logs set in the ground perpendicularly. The open spaces between the logs were filled with adobe or mud. A single door was the only opening, save a hole in the roof to allow the smoke from the log fire to escape. There was an earthen floor, and on this, Puncheon benches were provided.

In addition to teaching the principles of the Church, Flaget organized singing classes. He also had looms made and the art of cloth making was taught. He encouraged agriculture and domestic manuculture. He purchased adjoining lands with a view to teaching different trades.

Bishop Flaget was recalled to Baltimore in 1795, however, before he had sufficient time to carry out all his plans. He was succeeded by Reverend John Rivet, who arrived in 1796. His good work attracted the favorable notice of the federal government, and on the personal recommendation of George Washington, Congress granted him an annual salary of two hundred dollars, to aid him in his educational work.

Rivet, through his efforts in education, has been called the first public schoolmaster in Indiana.

In 1806, the Territorial Legislature passed an act for the incorporation of a university in Indiana Territory. The tract selected included 23,040 acres of the best land then available. Twenty-three trustees were appointed and formed an organization with William Henry Harrison as the president. The trustees sold 4,000 acres of the land and out of the proceeds erected a brick building, which cost \$6,000, at the corner of what is now Fifth and Seminary Streets. Thus Vincennes University was opened in 1811, with Reverend Samuel T. Scott, founder of the Presbyterian Church in Vincennes, as its first president. It was planned to finance the University by lottery but this did not prove successful. A small tuition fee was charged, but lack of funds caused the University to be suspended in 1824. Later the building was leased to a stock company for Vincennes Academy.

In 1823, Bishop Flaget sent to Vincennes four Sisters who founded a school for young ladies. This school was a small brick building, which still stands in the rear of the Old Cathedral Library on Second Street, and was known as the St. Clare's Convent and Female Academy. The Sisters conducted school here until 1834, when they were recalled. They were replaced by four more Sisters, however, and the Convent operated until 1843.

In 1837, when the Catholics purchased the Vincennes University Building, it became known as Saint Gabriel's College. This college was closed in 1845, and the old building became the home of St. Rose Academy. The present building, now used as the St. Rose Academy, was constructed in 1884, and it is still used as a Catholic Girls' High School.

In 1856, Vincennes University was reinstated at the corner of Fifth and Busseron Streets, its present site. In 1878, the present brick two-story structure was erected, and the school is now accredited as a junior college.

Thus, according to all records examined, all the schools of the first half of the nineteenth century--the school system of Vincennes--were of a parochial or private school type.

Vincennes schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The earliest public schools of Vincennes were township schools, as the city of Vincennes was known as School District Number Two of Vincennes Township. The boundary is thus given: "Commencing at the Wabash River and running along the center of Vigo Street in a direct line of said street until it strikes the Congressional Township line. Thence along said County line to the Petersburg Road, then N.W. along said Road until it strikes the center of Broadway Street. Then along said street to Wabash River.

Thence down said River to place of beginning."¹

The first schools of this district were Number One, taught by Sister Mary Magdalen in her home; Number Two, taught by Dr. B. B. Killikelly in his home; and Number Three, taught by a Miss Gassett in her home.

The city public school system was fully inaugurated, in 1853, by and through the trustees elected by the people.

The first school enumeration of Vincennes children between the ages of five and twenty was taken by the clerk of the Board of Trustees in 1855.

April 16, 1855, was the opening day of the first free public school in Vincennes under the organization of the city board of trustees. S. M. Reed was employed to teach in the school in the engine house near Fourth and Main Streets for a term of three months for a salary of \$120. Caroline Laughton was to teach in the Old Court House at Fourth and Buntin Streets, and Sister Mary Margaret was to teach in the Bishop's Home at Second and Church Streets. Both women were to receive \$89 for a term of 65 days. In May, another teacher, M. P. Roberts, was added to the staff to teach for a period of three months for \$120.

The school trustees continued to rent buildings for school rooms until sufficient funds had accumulated to build

¹ Records of School Trustees, District Number Two, October 1, 1842.

school buildings. In order to raise money to build school buildings, a tax of \$0.02 per \$100 was levied by the people themselves.

In 1857, James Kerr was employed for a \$50 fee to draw plans and specifications for a public school building. He was also engaged to do all the carpenter work and to construct a wooden fence seven feet high around the school property. The building itself was of brick, was completed in 1861, and called "Central School." Mr. H. P. Hall was made superintendent.

There were four departments of the public school system: the primary, the secondary, the grammar, and the high school. The primary department included instruction in the simpler elements of language, numbers, geography, drawing, and vocal music. Before being advanced to the secondary level, a pupil had to be able to read the Second Reader accurately, repeat the multiplication tables, and name all the states and territories of the United States.

The secondary department continued reading, spelling, and geography. A pupil, in order to be promoted to the grammar department, must be able to read the Third and Fourth Readers.

The grammar department continued reading, arithmetic, geography, elocution, and composition. A test was given in United States History and the Fifth Reader in order to enter

high school.

In 1869, the need for a school in the part of town called "Goosetown" (North Vincennes) caused the purchase of a house and lot; then another school was opened.

In 1870, the necessity for a colored children's school was considered, and one was established at the corner of Thirteenth and Hart Streets. Later it was moved to a two-story brick building at Twelfth and Seminary Streets. The Negro population did not increase very rapidly, however, so this school was finally closed, in 1933, and the students were transferred to the school for white students.

In 1878, the southern part of town, known as "French-town," had developed sufficiently to call for a grade school to take care of the children. The school was erected and was known as the French-town School, later called the Froebel School.

In 1884, a new building, now known as the Harrison School, was erected to replace the old Goosetown School. Part of an iron fence built around this school playground still remains.

In 1891, the population of the town had spread eastward, making it necessary to build a school at Eleventh and Hickman Streets. This was first called the Hickman Street School, but later its name was changed to the Riley School.

In 1897, a new high school building was erected at Fifth and Buntin Streets.

The first kindergarten department was established and directed by Miss McDonald.

In 1906, a new school was built on the corner of Eberwine and Second Streets to replace a township school that had been in a territory annexed in 1903. This was known as the Oklahoma District School, but the name later was changed to Tecumseh School.

In 1907, in an opposite part of town, a school known as the Vigo School was established at Fifteenth and Main Streets.

The first Manual Training School was established in 1910, and was later incorporated with the new junior high school known as the Clark Building, one of the finest and most modern in the State of Indiana.

Again attention was turned toward the eastern expansion of the city, and the Washington School was established in 1924. This building, with one of the most modern athletic fields, occupies a part of the old Knox County Fair Grounds.

In 1926, the Vincennes Public School Athletic Association was granted the right to erect a new gymnasium on the school grounds of the junior high school. This building

is now known as the Coliseum and is one of the most modern in the state.

The latest school addition to the city was the Lincoln High School, established in 1928, and built on the corner of Sixth and Buntin Streets, facing the junior high. The two buildings are connected by an under-pass built under Sixth Street.

The latest elementary school to be built was one constructed in 1927, known as the Lasalle School. This was to replace the old Frenchtown, or Froebel, School.²

² Records of Vincennes School Trustees, 1927.

CHAPTER X

PEARL CITY

"Pearl City," a shanty town on the banks of the Wabash, was about as bad a slum district as could be found in any city. Rows of hovels, made of packing cases and old tin, sprawled on a series of ridges between the levee and the river. Deep pits, dug when the levees were built, stood full of stagnant water the year round, breeding mosquitoes. Hordes of rats swarmed through the section, often biting the inhabitants. Hogs wallowed in pens adjoining or near the hovels. Garbage, hauled in to feed the hogs, drew swarms of flies.

There were no sanitary facilities whatever. The city sewer emptied into the river just below, and the waters, discharged from a large factory, ran through the settlement in an open ditch. When the river was at flood stage, the inhabitants were driven into Vincennes, bringing their rats, disease, and vermin with them.

Authorities for many years had pointed to Pearl City as a menace to the whole city's health, but nobody did anything. Then in the early part of 1936, a committee of the Social Welfare Foundation, a non-partisan, non-profit civic organization, decided to do something. Pearl City must go. But there were no other houses into which the people to be

dispossessed could move. The only way was to build some.

Foundation leaders went to the city administration, which donated five acres of land just outside the city limits and offered the services of regular city departments. The box factory, which owned Pearl City, agreed to donate the land to the city. Bricks were obtained from dilapidated buildings all over town, the owners agreeing to give the bricks if the city paid the cost of wrecking the structures. Other materials were furnished by local dealers at cost. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration furnished the labor. Surveying, landscaping, and trucking were done by regular city departments. What each needed was given by citizens of the city.

A tiny village, named Sunset Court, was laid out. It called for twenty brick houses arranged in a quadrangle, with a four-acre court in the center. Fourteen of the houses were of two rooms; six, of three rooms. Health and sanitation were first considerations, but nothing unnecessary was added to the plans. Each house was to have a drilled well, coal shed, chicken house, garden plot, and modern sanitary unit.

When the houses were built, the Foundation appealed to the citizens for furniture. It was donated in quantities that made it possible to furnish every house with rebuilt furniture, dishes, curtains, and other necessary commodities.

The Pearl City people were eager to move in. Old people and married couples with children were given first choice.¹

The problem of educating the inhabitants of Sunset Court to a new way of living was undertaken by a group of teachers through the Works Progress Administration. Mothers and fathers were taught child psychology and community hygiene. The children of the Sunset Court community were now outside the city limits and could not attend the city schools. Therefore they must attend school in the township's Consolidated School Number Two; this change has caused an overcrowded condition in that school. It has been necessary to re-route the Number Two District and give to School Number One a share of this extra overcrowded condition.²

¹ The Evening Independent, St. Petersburg, Fla., March 2, 1936.

² The Vincennes Sun-Commercial, June 14, 1936.

CHAPTER XI

GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT ON EDUCATION

All the schools as described in Chapters VIII and IX on the historical growth of education in both the city and the township were established in their particular locations because of the necessity of erecting buildings on a site which was above the flood water stage. All of Vincennes Township is a part of the Wabash lowlands and is flooded many times during the year. All of the inhabitants build their homes on the highest ground possible.

Only four of the one-room schools of the township were entirely free from flood dangers. The schools in the lower part of the township were oftentimes surrounded by water and had to be closed until the water subsided. The schools in the city were located on the highest ground in the city. The fear of floods retarded the rapid settlement of the community for many years; thus it accounted for the slow growth of schools. Then the building of a levee along the east bank or Indiana side of the Wabash River caused a rapid settlement of the township and also an increase in the building of industries in the city.

Schools needed to be enlarged for the increased population--during the school year of 1945 there were 610 children enrolled in the three elementary consolidated

schools of Vincennes Township, and in the Vincennes City Schools there were 962 enrolled in the high school, 3,025 in the public elementary schools, and 285 in the parochial schools.

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CHAPTER XII

VINCENNES UNIVERSITY

In 1807, the General Assembly of the Territory passed an act to incorporate "'the Vincennes University,' 'for the instruction of youth in the Latin, Greek, French, and English languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, ancient and modern history, moral philosophy, logic, rhetoric, and the law of nature and nations.'" In the preamble to this act the territorial legislature declared that 'the independence, happiness, and energy of every republic depended (under the influences of the destinies of heaven) upon the wisdom, virtue, talents, and energy of its citizens and rulers;' and that 'science, literature and the liberal arts contributed, in an eminent degree, to improve those qualities and acquirements;' and that 'learning had ever been found the ablest advocate of genuine liberty--the best supporter of rational religion, and the source of the only solid and imperishable glory which nations can acquire.'¹

Thus Vincennes University was established, endowed by the government with a large tract of land, which was to be sold and the proceeds used to benefit the growth of the

¹ John B. Dillon, A History of Indiana. (Indianapolis: Bingham and Doughty, 1859.) p. 566.

University. In the transaction of this land area, the money was turned into other channels; Vincennes University did not get the aid needed to promote the growth of the school. The University did not, however, cease to function; it struggled on with gifts and appropriations from individuals and tuition fees from students, and eventually became the established junior college which it is at the present time.

Because of the efforts of some of the citizens, Congress, in 1945, authorized the rebuilding of Vincennes University on the tract of land known as Harrison Park. This new establishment is to be a living memorial to William Henry Harrison. The Old Post Association has authorized the deeding of the northern half of the property on First Street, between Hickman and Park Streets, to the trustees of the University. The Territorial Hall, now located in Harrison Park, will be moved to this lot under the University plans, and thus will be adjacent to the Harrison Home. Congress has passed legislation authorizing the use of Harrison Park for the University campus, and the Federal Government holds title to the entire park.²

² The Vincennes Sun-Commercial, September 9, 1946.

CHAPTER XIII

LEVIES

No attempt will be made to give the assessed valuations of individual property, or those of the business concerns of Vincennes or of the township, but a table showing the tax rate for each, assessed in 1945, and payable in 1946, may help to explain why the teachers receive only the minimum salary for teaching.

		Vincennes Township	City
State Rate	1. School Revenue for Tuition	.07	.07
	2. State Teachers' Retirement Fund	.0415	.0415
	3. State Board of Agriculture	.0035	.0035
	4. State Forestry Fund	.005	.005
	5. War Memorial	.01	.01
	Total State Rate	.13	.13
County Rate	1. County General Fund	.51	.51
	2. County Bonds & Interest	.01	.01
	3. Public Welfare Fund	.23	.23
	4. Vincennes University Fund	.05	.05
	Total County Rate	.80	.80
Civil Town- ship Rate	1. Township Fund	.04	.04
	2. Township Poor & Commissary	.11	.11
	3. Township Poor Bonds & Interest		
	4. Civil Township Bonds & Interest	.03	.03
	5. Judgment Fund		
	Total Civil Township Rate	.18	.18
School and Library Rate	1. Tuition Fund	.29	.48
	2. Special School Fund	.86	.70
	3. School Bonds & Interest		.22
	4. Library Fund		.10
	5. Vocational Fund		
	6. Sanitary School Fund		
	7. Recreation Fund		
	Total School and Library Rate	1.15	1.50
Corpora- tion, City and Town Rate	1. Corporation General Fund		1.16
	2. Corporation Bonds & Interest		.275
	3. Policemen's Pension		.025
	4. Firemen's Pension		.05
	5. Electric Light Fund		
	6. Park Fund		
	7. Water Works Fund		
	8. Garbage Disposal Fund		
	9. Recreational Supervision Fund		
	Total Corporation Fund		1.51
Total Rate	Total Rate	2.26	4.12
	First Installment	1.13	2.06
Poll Rate	1. State Revenue	1.00	1.00
	2. State School	.50	.50
	3. Local Tuition		
	4. Local Special School	1.00	1.00
	5. Corporation		1.00
	Total Poll Rate	2.50	3.50

Paul V. Nierste, Knox County Auditor, December 26, 1945.

CHAPTER XIV

SUMMARY

Vincennes Township is located in the Wabash River lowland, its northern boundary fringed by a range of hills known as the Fort Knox Hills. Extending from the Fort Knox Hills in a southeastern direction are the hills called Burnett's Heights and Prospect Hill, and farther south are those known as Bunker Hill and LaPlante Hill, or Warrior's Island. This range of hills forms a wind break, protecting the city of Vincennes from damage by severe storms. On the western boundary is the Wabash River, which extends along the entire length of the township.

In addition to a beautiful natural setting, Vincennes enjoys a pleasant moderate climate, ideal for the raising of peaches, apples, melons, and garden vegetables. In early days the land was covered with a good stand of timber, but most of it has now been cleared to make way for farm land. Other natural resources include coal and oil, which have not been exploited to any great extent.

Its natural beauty and fertile farm land attracted the early settlers in this region, so Vincennes has a long and honorable history. A number of the buildings erected in its early heyday may still be seen, chief among them being the famous Harrison Mansion.

In addition to being the hub of an agricultural community, Vincennes has long been a commercial center. In the early days the Wabash River provided the principal means of trade and communication. Now the steamboats and flatboats have been superseded by freight cars and trucks, as trade and travel move by rail and road today.

Due to the lack of proper building sites, little attention has been given to manufacturing industries.

The early settlers of Vincennes were of French descent. They belonged to the Catholic Church, and the first schools established by them were parochial schools. The public schools were established during the middle of the nineteenth century, and continued to grow into one of the most modern and progressive systems of the state. The township schools were of the one-room elementary type until 1912, when consolidation was begun--now the township is served by three modern consolidated schools.

Vincennes is honored by having the oldest established university in the Northwest Territory. Vincennes University was opened in 1811, and after a rather checkered career, seems about to enter a new era in its long history, since Congress has authorized its rebuilding in Harrison Park, where it will be a living memorial to William Henry Harrison.

The establishment of schools was inevitable in the growing community, but those of Vincennes City and Township

seem to have been erected where they were because of the necessity of escaping the frequent floods. The schools were built on high ridges to secure freedom from inundation. The Vincennes City public schools were slow to develop due to the lack of proper drainage of the lowlands of the city. After the construction of a levee along the Wabash River in 1914 and 1915, and with a proper drainage system in the city, the development of schools began to show a rapid growth.

Vincennes is known primarily for its historic importance, and the slogan has been given to it as a city--"Historically Old but Progressively New."

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