


2017

"The Whole Building Is A Classroom": An Oral History of a School's Role in the Culture of the Community

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**“THE WHOLE BUILDING IS A CLASSROOM”:
AN ORAL HISTORY OF A SCHOOL’S ROLE IN THE CULTURE OF THE
COMMUNITY**

Dissertation submitted to
Graduate College of Marshall University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Curriculum and Instruction
by
Valerie Free Jones

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Marshall University
December 2017

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

SIGNATURE PAGE

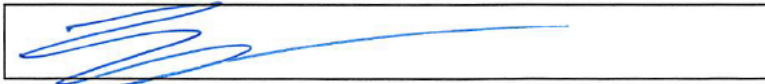
I hereby affirm that the following project meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by my discipline, college, and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With my signature, I approve the manuscript for publication.

Project Title: The Story of Edward Lee McClain High School: An Oral History of a School's Role in the Culture of the Community

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10/04/2017

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

To the alumni of Edward Lee McClain High School who participated in the oral histories—Ron Coffey, Thelma Coffey, Danny Long, Susan Long, Cathy Rivas, Javier Saiz Sanchez, Kristen White, Stuart Beatty, Elizabeth Cockerill, and Brett Pulse—thank you for sharing your stories and your time with me. I will forever be grateful.

To the administration and staff of Edward Lee McClain High School—Superintendent Joe Wills and Principal Jason Potts—thank you for opening the building anytime I needed it and for letting me root around in storage closets and basements for documents over and over.

To Harold Schmidt and the Greenfield Historical Society, thank you for aiding me in my search for records and letters even though it meant you got filthy along with me searching through the dust of old boxes and papers.

To the library staff of Ohio Christian University—Barbara Meister, Mary Schmidt, and Carolyn Steele who aided me in collecting all the materials for my literature review—thank you! I could not have done it without all your help ladies!

To my faculty and staff—Carrie Elder, Angela Flowers, Jayne Stevenson, Rolanda Hurtt, Pam Larson, and Peggy Duvall, as well as my Provost, Dr. Hank Kelly and numerous others at OCU—thank you for all your support, prayers, encouragement, and understanding! I thank God for all of you!

To my chair, Dr. L Eric Lassiter, and my committee, Dr. Elizabeth Campbell, Dr. Linda Spatig, and Dr. Arijit Sen, thank you so much for all your guidance, wisdom, and encouragement throughout this process. I can never thank you enough.

To my fellow doc students—Harley Walden, Angie Abbott, and Josh Cooper—thank you so much for just being there. For checking in on me and providing a listening ear. Josh, thank you for going on this crazy journey with me and for being an amazing friend and brother. I love you all!

To my loving and patient husband, Van, and our beautiful children, Morgan, Grace, Stella, and CJ, and our son-in-law Cody, I love you all more than you know. Thank you so much for all your encouragement and support over the last 5 years. Thank you for being understanding and patient with me in the difficult times and celebrating in the joyous times. There are no words...

To my parents, Chuck and Sandy Free, my siblings, Ross, Lora and Kristen and their spouses, my late grandparents, Max and Janice Knisley, and so many other friends and family, thank you for all your love and encouragement. You have shown me what I Corinthians 13 is. I can only hope to be like you. I love you all.

And finally, to God and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I give all the glory for this and the wonderful things HE has done in my life. Philippians 4:13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
A Moment in Time	1
Problem Statement and Research Questions	2
Methods.....	5
Significance of the Study	5
Organization of the Study	7
Chapter 2	9
Literature Review	9
John Dewey and Progressive Education.....	10
The History of Progressive Education.....	10
Dewey’s Words of Wisdom.....	15
Criticisms of Dewey.....	18
Community and Society	21
The Importance of Community	21
American Society and Appalachian Education.....	23
Community Connections and Social Habitus	27
Art, Culture, and Environment	29
Architecture and Environment.....	33
The Significance of Design.....	33
Studies in Context	40
A Different Viewpoint to Consider	41
Summary.....	42
Chapter 3	44
Research Methods.....	44
Research Context and Study Design: On Oral History and Ethnography	44
Research Participants.....	49

Data Analysis	50
Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses	50
Validity	52
Participant Checking	53
Triangulation	53
Thick Descriptions	54
Conclusion	54
Chapter 4	56
Legacy and Tradition	56
Humble Beginnings	56
The Greatest Good	58
A New Plan for the Ages	65
The Gift of Art	67
McClain’s Murals	74
Conclusions: A Lasting Legacy	79
Chapter 5	82
McClain High School Stories	82
Achievements and Opportunity	82
Purpose, Courage, Duty, Work	91
Conclusion	101
Chapter 6	103
Reflection and Further Research	103
Research Questions, and Some Answers	112
Art as Curriculum	119
Further Research and Some Final Thoughts	122
References	129
APPENDIX A	133
IRB Approval Letter	133
Interview Questions	134

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Freshman Girl's Schedule	61
Figure 2	Edward Lee McClain High School	69
Figure 3	<i>Ginevera</i> by Hiram Powers	69
Figure 4	<i>Athena</i>	70
Figure 5	<i>Sophocles</i>	70
Figure 6	<i>Augustus Caesar</i>	70
Figure 7	<i>Statue of Washington</i>	70
Figure 8	<i>Nike, Winged Victory</i>	71
Figure 9	<i>The Wrestlers</i>	71
Figure 10	<i>Joan of Arc</i>	71
Figure 11	<i>The 54th Massachusetts Regiment</i>	71
Figure 12	<i>An Egyptian Sphinx</i>	71
Figure 13	<i>Holy Grail</i> series	72
Figure 14	<i>The Pageant of Prosperity</i>	75
Figure 15	<i>Apotheosis of Youth</i>	76
Figure 16	<i>The Melting Pot</i>	77
Figure 17	"Scum O' the Earth"	78
Figure 18	Facebook Post	126
Figure 19	Busts of Edward Lee and Lulu McClain	128

ABSTRACT

Edward Lee and Lulu McClain gave the gift of a new high school to the rural Appalachian community of Greenfield, Ohio, in 1915. Inspired in part by John Dewey's Progressive theories of education, the school became the center of the community, both literally and figuratively, providing the best, most modern education for its students. The school was particularly unique in its focus on the arts, with its spaces carefully crafted and developed; its halls and classrooms filled with over 200 pieces of classic and original art, including murals, sculpture, and other works; and its curriculum inspired by art-based ideas of personal development. This study offers an overview of these Progressive ideals and their connections to vernacular architecture, tradition and culture across school and community. It considers the school's history, the story of its building—including those involved with the planning of the physical space and the curriculum that grew out of that planning—as well as oral histories of alumni, which include a successful campaign to save the school from consolidation based on the school's unique history, art, and deep connection to community. Analysis includes a time span of over 100 years, based on the review of original archived personal letters, here compared through time with collected oral histories. "Art as curriculum" is introduced as a concept for further research and analysis.

Findings: Many alumni of Edward Lee McClain High School (ELMS) share a deep respect and gratitude for the school and the progressive education they received there, though they may not have recognized it as such when they were students. Some attribute their values and successes to the education they received there. The school and the community are closely tied together, and deeply rooted traditions are passed from one generation to the next. The habitus of ELMHS affected the students profoundly and continues to affect alumni today.

Chapter 1

Introduction

A Moment in Time

Under the hot September sun, children's excited whispers can be heard above the din of men chiseling and scraping stone. Then, suddenly, a hush falls over the crowd as a copper box rises from its tomb. The box has not seen the sun in 100 years. Reaching through the cement dust, the men hold up the box for all to see, and the citizens of Greenfield, Ohio, give a loud cheer. The time capsule, placed in the Edward Lee McClain High School cornerstone in 1914, shows the stress of 100 years' pressure from the brick and mortar that surrounded it. Yet to the community of Greenfield, the dented and dusty box is a treasure.

The men carefully place the box down and open its lid to reveal the contents. Newspapers, a pamphlet, and a yearbook rest inside. Although aged and worn, the newspapers still proclaim Edward Lee McClain's gift of the school to the community. The yearbook shows pictures of the last graduating class of the former high school. The box holds valuable stories and pictures from the past that are important parts of the community's identity. It is just one tiny piece of the legacy that Edward Lee McClain and his wife, Lulu, gave to this small, close knit town.

I am an alumna of Edward Lee McClain High School. Its lasting legacy, treasured traditions, hallowed halls, and extraordinary educators shaped my life in a way I cannot describe. When I attended the school's Centennial Celebration in September 2015, I was not surprised to see hundreds of other people there. As I approached fellow alumni, asking to interview them for

a personal oral history I was collecting, it was no wonder to me that everyone agreed to help. Although the graduates were from different eras, ranging from 1938 to 2008, we all had one thing in common: McClain High School. The building, its beauty, and the distinctive educational experience we were afforded were things we all shared. Our stories needed to be preserved, so that future generations, as well as those not familiar with McClain and his gift to the community, could hear the story and understand its importance.

As my inquiry progressed, many questions began to surface: What were students' experiences at the school like? Were they similar to mine? To what extent did the school influence students' thinking, work, and careers? As I became more interested in the history of the school, and as my initial curiosity turned into deeper study, I began to wonder if other students were aware of the progressive values upon which the school was built. Did they know that something was being stated with the art in the building? To what extent did they engage with the meanings behind the art? How did they experience the space? Questions like these eventually led me to choose McClain High School as the topic of my dissertation.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Built during an era of social efficiency (an ideology of educating for vocation only to advance society) and industrial revolution, the story of McClain High School is one of progressive ideals coming to reality. McClain High School students' experiences are unusual, compared to the experiences of students in many schools in the region. Yet the school's history also attaches itself to larger progressive movements in education. Built on Deweyan principles, the school was designed to be a community itself. A doctor and dentist were on staff to ensure the health and well-being of the students. A state-of-the-art indoor swimming pool and a library

that spanned the entire third floor ensured that students were educated, as Dewey (1899) advocated, in both body and mind.

Two science labs allowed students to fully engage in experiential learning. Dewey (1899) argued that subjects like physics and chemistry should be taught through doing; it was through experimenting and reflecting that students learned. Later, McClain funded the Vocational Building at the school, where male students learned skills that would help them in the factories, such as welding, wood shop, and drafting. Female students took home economics and stenography. But these students were also required to take literature, Latin, and physics to ensure that they were well educated, not just well trained.

This was the core belief of the Progressive Movement: Educate students to be active, engaged citizens of their community without narrowing their choices to either a vocational or an academic path. Progressives like Dewey argued that the two paths must intertwine in order for true learning to take place (Rury, 2012). Edward Lee McClain High School espoused these beliefs.

Although the theories on which McClain High School were founded are not uncommon, the hundreds of works of art that line its hallways, classrooms, and other gathering spaces set it apart from other schools. Benefactor McClain commissioned enormous painted murals to be focal points above the marble stairway in the grand entrance of the building and in the library. Statues of Sophocles, Winged Victory, and Augustus Caesar still stand watch over students as they go from class to class. Classical art surrounds McClain students every minute that they are in the building. Again, following the principles that Dewey (1934) wrote about in *Art as Experience*, Edward Lee and Lulu McClain wanted the art to be used for “everyday enjoyment” (p. 10), not set aside in a museum, where students might see it only occasionally or not at all. For

many McClain students, including me, to say the school is a treasure is an understatement. The educational experience at McClain profoundly impacted our lives.

The central problem for this study, then, concerned how forces, both particular and universal, affected students' education at McClain High School throughout its history. A key question here is, how did students navigate (and negotiate) both community-based and larger Progressive Movement ideas in this particular educational environment? For example, did students absorb Deweyan progressive ideas via their daily experience with art? And if so, how did they do this and how did it affect them? In my research, I explored questions like these through oral history interviews with graduates and by examining historical artifacts such as letters and blueprints. In the end, I reveal the connection between the students' experiences and the school environment, and discuss the impact the school has made on their lives, both in their student days and today. With my dissertation, I collected oral histories in a collaborative framework, documenting this for the future and benefit of others.

Below are the key questions I addressed in my research:

1. How do former students at Edward Lee McClain High School perceive their experiences at the school? How do these experiences shape the school's overall story?
2. How do former students at Edward Lee McClain High School understand the role of the community in the school's traditions and unique physical environment?
3. How have the school's traditions and unique physical environment affected the lives of former students both in the past and in the present?
4. How does McClain's vision, including displaying art in the building, articulate Progressive Movement values? How are these values negotiated through time at the school and in students' experiences?

Methods

In order to gain insight into alumni experiences, I used qualitative research methods to gather oral histories from my participants. Through personal interviews I sought to create an ongoing discourse about people, space, and art, with the school serving as both the physical environment and cultural context. I conducted interviews with both graduates and faculty of the school. In the fall of 2015, during and following the Centennial Celebration, I talked to dozens of graduates and collected field notes of all the events that took place. These served as the springboard upon which I launched the dissertation research that follows. To aid in this work, I also created a Facebook group page for those interested in interviewing for the project. Nearly 200 participants joined.

In addition to oral history interviews, I examined archived historical documents (Given, 2008). Original blueprints of the school were available, but there were also letters from Edward Lee McClain, the architects, and the artists, who all corresponded about their vision for the school. These documents were invaluable to the overall study.

Significance of the Study

Although schools built with progressive ideals in mind were common in the early 1900s, Edward Lee McClain High School was different. First, the school was a gift from a wealthy family in the community. Interestingly, Edward McClain did not just give generously and walk away. He was involved in every decision about the design of the school, no matter how small. Second, new schools with open floor plans that provided more light, ventilation, and heat were being built all over the country in major metropolitan areas such as St. Louis and New York

City. But to find such a school in an Appalachian town of 5,000 was rare. Thus, the school connected the little town of Greenfield, Ohio, to some of the most influential cities in the country.

Third, the artwork acquired for the building amounts to an important collection housed in a rural Appalachian school. The school boasts three original murals, as well as replicas of masterpieces from all over the world. Without the exposure at McClain High School, the majority of students in this small community would have seen such art only in pictures, if at all. The artwork the McClains selected for the school not only spoke of their beliefs but also of social and political events of the time in America and abroad. The one-of-a-kind collection evidences the McClains' commitment to progressive education.

Finally, while other schools in the area consolidated and built more modern buildings, the community of Greenfield fought the state to keep the original McClain High School building and use new school money to update it and bring it back to its original splendor. Greenfield residents recognized the school as the gift it truly was, and, being stewards of that gift, wanted to protect and save it. They knew its importance to the students and community, and refused to have it torn down, only to be replaced by a generic, state-designed building.

At this point, it is important to note the significance of the oral histories collected for this study. Those interviewed range in age from 25 to 97. Collectively, their memories span eight decades and represent a deeply varied set of experiences at McClain High School. Yet there are striking similarities in their stories as well. Many alumni spoke of traditions and pride in the school. I sought to understand whether they understood the progressive beliefs reflected in the environment and particular spaces that they had occupied. There was an argument taking place in the building between the curriculum and pedagogy and the artwork surrounding the students. I

believe it is beneficial and adds to the storied history of Edward Lee McClain High School. A story such as this one deserves to be told. It is not just a story for those in Greenfield, Ohio, or for graduates of the school. It is a story of benevolence, determination, thoughtfulness, beauty, intelligence, and so much more. Perhaps it would even inspire those with the means or the drive to give a gift for the greater good in their own communities. Maybe it will inspire others to save historic buildings in their towns. I believe this story can contribute important knowledge about the Progressive Movement, art, education, and history on a global level.

The lack of literature concerning the legacy and beauty of McClain High School is a significant aspect of my study. Yet, the stories of those who studied there in the early years and through wars, the Great Depression, and the civil rights movement, and in the modern age of education, with Common Core and standardized tests, are historically important. Their stories are diverse, yet they have similarities, as the space in which they were educated remained practically the same through all of these major events. The oral histories nod to larger historical relationships. I have included them in the chapters where appropriate.

Organization of the Study

Following this Introduction, Chapter Two surveys the literature that provides the context in which Edward Lee McClain High School was built, including writings about the Progressive Movement. The literature review also considers issues related to art in schools, learning spaces, and other environments within schools. In addition, it discusses schools similar to McClain High School in purpose and importance to the community. Chapter Three elaborates further on the research methodologies I used in this study. I have included here discussion of the design and analysis stage of my dissertation research and writing. Chapter Four considers the school's

legacy and contains the history of Edward Lee McClain High School, its benefactor, and the community of Greenfield, Ohio. Chapter Five, titled “A Student’s Story,” explores the interviews I did with alumni, using the interview questions I constructed for this purpose (see Appendix A). Finally, in Chapter Six, I conclude my reflection about the school, alumni, and community, and consider the impact the school has had on its alumni and the community. I also discuss ideas for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

After I decided on my topic, I started searching for literature about McClain High School. I quickly discovered that little literature exists about the school's history. The only piece I found was an article written by Virginia McCormick and published in the *Ohio History Journal* in 2003. From that piece I learned that Edward McClain and the architect, William Ittner, designed the building based on John Dewey's philosophy of education.

In the early planning stages, McClain involved educators as well. Among them was Frank Harris, the new high school's first principal, who was an 1897 graduate of Greenfield High School. Harris also earned a master's degree from Harvard University in 1911. At Harvard, Harris "became well acquainted with the latest educational theory and practice" (McCormick, 2003, p. 20). During this period, the latest theory and practice was connected with John Dewey.

When I began my research, I knew that the community had fought to save the school over the years, and that it was still very much the epicenter of the town. The art collection was an important source of beauty and pride, too, as was the physical environment of the school. After Drs. Lassiter and Campbell and I met for a tour of the school, we talked about many other issues, including how the school's art relates to its architecture, Dewey's progressive values, and the role of these values in the design of the building and the curriculum. A reading list emerged and began to develop. Later, Drs. Spatig and Sen added their expertise as well, and my list grew further.

As I read, definite themes and categories emerged. The category of John Dewey and Progressive Education was at the forefront. Next was the category of community and society, and its relationship with the school. Since Greenfield, Ohio, sits on the edge of Appalachia, this region was also a theme within the community and society category. Other key categories were the importance of art and culture to the school and the architecture and learning environment. The reading shed much light on what Edward Lee McClain envisioned for his gift and its lasting legacy to the students and community.

In what follows, I outline the key concepts of Progressive Education and how they relate to McClain High School. I also include the critiques of those who believed in Progressive Education and its outcomes. In addition, I explore through the literature a school's place in society and its close ties with the community. As I investigated these ideas and theories, their relevance to McClain High School became apparent. The art, culture, architecture, and learning environment of the school meld together as one entity that creates a lasting impact on students.

John Dewey and Progressive Education

The History of Progressive Education

Although Progressivism emerged in the late nineteenth century, its roots can be found in the democratic impulses and ideals upon which this country was founded. In 1820, politician and educational reformer Horace Mann's goal, for example, was to educate everyone equally and thereby create a utopian society. Through public schooling, Mann thought the rich and the poor would find equal ground. Mann believed that if America educated everyone equally, violence and divisions among social classes would decrease, if not cease altogether (Spring, 2016).

Mann's theories triggered many questions for me. Is this idea what the murals at McClain High School are portraying? Does the art express the importance of education in the original mural *Apotheosis of Youth*? Does it show the importance of assimilating, so that we all have an equal chance at success in America's melting pot? Does it convey the importance of working together in another mural *The Pageant of Prosperity*? Such questions were at the heart of pedagogical thinking in Mann's era, and they surfaced in various ways at McClain as well.

After the Civil War and into the 1920s, the focus narrowed to educating the "whole child" (Kliebard, 2004). With the immigration boom of the 1880s, there was more concern for children's health and nutrition. (This concern was evident at McClain High School, as a dentist and doctor were on site.) Through the 1920s and into the 1940s, high school attendance grew dramatically. Young people were staying in school instead of working in factories. Jobs were scarce during the Great Depression and schools promised better training and greater skills. Education, it was thought, would help young people find better, higher paying jobs.

From the 1950s through the 1980s, schools addressed the challenging issues of civil rights. The world and America were changing. Schools became unsegregated and educators began thinking of ways to teach every child. The result was multicultural education. The new goal was to "increase economic growth and prepare students for jobs in the global economy" (Spring, 2016, p. 6). Since the 1980s, education has continued this focus and instituted an abundance of standardized testing (Spring, 2016). This information helped me understand the oral histories as they relate to the time periods in which alumni attended McClain High School.

Overall, many proponents of Progressive Education, including Horace Mann and John Dewey, felt that education was "the great equalizer" (Kliebard, 2004). If given the same education, rich and poor alike could succeed. As I explore in Chapter 4, Edward McClain built

the new high school for everyone in Greenfield, to help ensure the highest quality education in this Appalachian community. He contributed to the greater good of all residents.

Like Spring, Kliebard (2004) explains that American society changed quickly and forced schools to change as well. Social attitudes evolved and some reformers called for a national curriculum. From this, many types of reformers emerged. Among them were the mental disciplinarians, who believed that certain subjects led to the strengthening of certain mental capacities. They believed that students should be well rounded in their education, studying a range of subjects. Drill and practice was the teaching method. As a result, many students dropped out of school to go to work, even in deplorable conditions, to escape the walls of the school. Of course, this was only one reason that they dropped out; many left to make money to ensure the survival of their families.

In this period, education only up to eighth grade was common. Then going to high school became popular. It was thought that students needed training for better jobs and better pay. The prospect of going to college also influenced the curriculum, and schools began asking students to think critically. The humanist Charles Eliot felt that “with the power of reason, sensitivity to beauty, and high moral character” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 10), a student would be well educated. Developmentalists believed that the stage of development of the child should determine the curriculum. They also believed that what students learned would decide their destinies (Kliebard, 2004).

Kliebard (2004) points out that Dewey’s theories have been constantly misconstrued over the decades. Dewey advocated “learning by doing” but with “guided direction” (p. 32). Students studied mathematics, geography, grammar, literature, art, and science. However, the question

was not *what* would be studied, but *how* it would be learned. Dewey said that learning happens naturally and should not be forced (Kliebard, 2004).

Interestingly, others believed that curriculum should be decided based on the stage of child development as it pertained to a period of history. For example, because children at age five still exhibit primitive behaviors, it was thought that they should study early history and primitive cultures. This was also a reflection of an evolutionary approach that informed both science and education at the time. These reformers believed that literature taught in schools should contain morals, and that science should be of equal importance. Kliebard (2004) reports that Dewey welcomed this type of thinking, as he was against social efficiency and believed that a narrow curriculum must not decide a child's future role in society. As Dewey (1899) explains,

... this means that these occupations in the school shall not be mere practical devices or modes of routine employment, the gaining of better technical skills as cooks, seamstresses, or carpenters, but active centers of scientific insight into natural materials and processes... (p. 33).

Dewey (1899) instructed schools to first find the child's interest and then use that as a guide to help the child learn. He labeled this "self-expression" (p. 49). Dewey believed that education was wasted if one subject was taught at a time. He thought it should involve an overall "experience." He also found that new curriculum worked best if educators were involved in constructing it as opposed to government entities (Kliebard, 2004).

During the Industrial Revolution, vocational education became the focus of public education. Some reformers thought a classic education (that of the arts, sciences, history, and so on) should be reserved for those who wished to attend college. The history curriculum was changing to include civics and economics. Students learned practical innovations, including

scientific farming practices. Boys learned drafting and carpentry, and girls were instructed in dressmaking and homemaking (something I most definitely saw at the McClain Centennial Celebration).

Jane Addams, head of Chicago's Hull House and John Dewey's friend, cautioned the American public that the new vocational education would train students to be slaves of industry, rather than skilled and highly valued workers. Addams also felt that girls should be able to decide what they want to learn. Dewey (1914) agreed with her, and argued that an overemphasis on vocational education could cause people to believe they had no other purpose in life than to work. Kliebard (2004) asserts that vocational education was born because society needed it. It was politically driven. Boyd Bode believed that a purely vocational curriculum would cause students to lose the ability to think and analyze (Kliebard, 2004). In Chapter 4, I explore Edward McClain's insistence that students take a core curriculum that included the humanities, science, and the arts, as opposed to a strictly vocational curriculum.

I can certainly see that Edward Lee McClain designed the original school with Dewey's theories in mind. It was a minicommunity with a dentist, a doctor, and other important elements of modern society. There are photographs of young women learning how to cook and serve a proper meal. There are also photographs of young men in an industrial shop and at a drafting table. McClain later funded the construction of another building he called the "Vocational Building," where students who did not wish to continue with higher education could go to learn a trade (After all, that is how he made his millions). Yet, all the while, the students were surrounded by art, and they were taught literature, science, and math.

The curriculum at McClain High School, even in its earliest years, evolved with national educational trends, as Kliebard and Spring have described them. I further explore national

influences on McClain High School in Chapter 4, with examination of historical documents, and in Chapter 5 with oral histories.

Dewey's Words of Wisdom

With a brief history of post-Civil War education theories established, I think it is important to focus on some of John Dewey's key ideas and how they are relevant to my study. Dewey's *The School and Society* (1899) immediately comes to mind. This book is composed of three lectures that Dewey gave in 1899 for those interested in the University Elementary School, which became known as the Chicago Laboratory (or "Lab") School. In the first of the three lectures, titled "The School and the Social Process," Dewey outlines the role of schools in society and the role of society in schools. He asserts that successful schools cannot simply involve parents, students, and teachers; the community must be included as well. Dewey (1899) understood that the curriculum must change as society changes. He was living in the age of the Industrial Revolution. In this era, education changed to a factory-like pedagogy, where students went from class to class, learning different subjects in different rooms, and only what they needed to perform a job that was already decided for them. This troubled Dewey. He further explained that the era when all things were made in the home had ended. By making necessities in the home, such as clothing, children learned discipline and a strong work ethic. Everyone in the household had his or her own responsibilities and carried them out "faithfully and in the cooperation of others" (Dewey, 1899, p. 24). Dewey thought that this was how learning should take place—with everyone invested. Dewey (1899) pointed out that anyone can memorize, but true learning occurs through doing and knowing the purpose and importance of the task. He

made the point that vocational training was not an evil thing, but vocational courses should only be one part of a student's education, not the WHOLE education (Dewey, 1899).

Dewey (1899) explained that "we learn from experience" (p. 31), and that effective learning does not take place when students sit in rows in silence. In addition, art, science, and history should be woven into all subjects. Dewey believed that occupations become meaningful only when people learn everything about their job.

Dewey (1899) further reminded his audience and his readers that different students are meant for different occupations. Not everyone could be a professor; some might become factory foremen. But all learning is the same, and all members of society should be working toward the greater good. A worker has no investment in a product he or she did not make, and it is the same with students. They will not have any investment in knowledge that they did not discover or learn on their own.

Dewey (1899) pointed out that the Industrial Revolution made knowledge cheaper and easier to obtain through mass publication of books and other print material. "Knowledge," he wrote, "is no longer an immobile solid; it has been liquefied" (p. 40). This statement was true then, and even more so today with the advent of the internet and social media. Dewey ended his first lecture by explaining the importance of art in education. He warned that the factory method of education was squelching the creativity that humans need to live fully (Dewey, 1899).

Of course, this reminded me of McClain High School, where students are surrounded by great examples of creativity and are encouraged to be creative. Mr. and Mrs. McClain understood the importance of this, being proponents of Dewey, and enabled students to be educated in the midst of fine art. More information on this is included in Chapter 4.

In *The School and Society*, Dewey (1899) explained that “Waste in Education” does not concern a waste of money, time, or resources but a waste of bad education on capable children. Dewey proposed several designs for schools, some of which bring McClain High School to mind. One of his designs for the first floor of a progressive school included the kitchen, dining room, textile industries shop, and library, with the library positioned in the middle. He insisted that all of the vocational classes center around the library. As stated before, Dewey (1899) believed that workers should know every aspect of their product, so researching in the library was critical to students’ success.

On the second floor, music and art rooms and science labs were positioned at either end of the floor and a museum occupied the middle. Dewey (1899) emphasized that layout should not prevent students from going from floor to floor, or room to room. He believed learning should occur at every level, in every room, by all students. Dewey promoted the concept of art in every classroom (as Edward McClain did). He felt that all departments and content areas should work together to ensure learning and success for each student. At the conclusion, Dewey (1899) explained that he did not expect all schools to follow his plans exactly. Teachers and administrations must work together to decide how to adapt these theories to their schools and students. In Chapter 4, I review how McClain High School stakeholders adapted Dewey’s theories to their own school.

As I read Dewey, I certainly saw some of the concepts that Edward Lee McClain took from him, and how McClain incorporated Dewey’s theories on curriculum and physical space into his own design for a school. These are ideas I explore further in the coming chapters, but suffice it to say that many connections to Dewey are present in the McClain High School curriculum, building layout, and art installations. Indeed, art is everywhere in the school, just as

Dewey suggested it should be. Here, youth have thrived, with a “fuller mind and an even healthier body” (1899, p. 97).

Criticisms of Dewey

While it is important to discuss Dewey’s progressive ideals and how supporters brought them to McClain High School, it is also important to consider Dewey’s critics. They voiced an alternative view that also affected development of the school over the years.

In the essay “Dare the School Build a New Social Order?” George Sylvester Counts (1932) argued that progressive education did not go far enough. Counts believed that focusing on the individual student was a wonderful idea, but it fell short in many ways. He argued that all progressive educators were upper-middle-class academics who could not possibly understand poverty and the needs of minorities. Counts felt that society and government had stifled schooling. He further believed that schools had the ability to change the world but had not been given the opportunity. Counts also believed that progressives saw the world through rose-colored glasses that filtered out the harshness and hardness of the world around them. It was through this filter that the progressives taught; Counts considered this no education at all.

“Any defensible educational program,” he wrote, “must be adjusted to a particular time and place, and the degree and nature of the imposition must vary with the social situation” (Counts, 1932, p. 18). Though, ironically, he may have helped to make Dewey’s case, Counts stated that teaching Latin or the classics no longer had a place in American education, as the society was rapidly changing. Counts believed that schools should educate children to be flexible and adjust as the world changed. He thought the progressive way of teaching young children would never survive in the modern world. Counts (1932) wrote, “Society requires great numbers of persons

who, while capable of gathering and digesting facts, are at the same time able to think in terms of life, make decisions and act” (p. 22).

Counts (1932) stated that it should be teachers, not philosophers or reformers, who make crucial decisions about curriculum and instruction. Teachers should be the connection between the school and society. Interestingly, Counts (1932) saw the Industrial Revolution as an evil thing, whereby the rich would get richer and the poor would get poorer. Individualism would die and give way to mass production. Education would be denigrated as well. Counts’ predictions came true, as social efficiency and the factory model of education were implemented. Although Counts (1932) believed, incorrectly, that capitalism would die, he was very right about many aspects of education that were to come. Without individualism, progressive education could not exist as this ideology focuses on the individual student.

Edward Lee McClain presumably did not think that capitalism would die. As an inventor, he made his millions by running a factory full of employees; but obviously, he felt that he needed to help the community he was living in by giving the schools and the church as well as an athletic field, a bus garage, and houses.

Counts was not the only critic of Dewey and the progressives. In *Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, Henry Edmonson (2006) provides a sobering account of what he calls “Dewey’s Troubling Legacy.” Edmonson argues that Dewey and his disciples are the reason American education is in crisis today. Like Counts, he believes Dewey’s theories to be romantic notions that do not work in the real world. Using schools to solve social problems does not work, he argues. Even worse, he adds, progressive education led to the oversimplifying of today’s students. Edmonson explains that according to Dewey, if an idea worked for some, then it would

work for all. Educators know through experience that this is not true; even Dewey admitted that his ideas were experimental.

Some critics (Edmonson, 2006) claim that Dewey was never interested in student success but only in the success of his political and social agenda. Others (Edmonson, 2006) point out that Dewey hated educational objectives and goals; it was the process and the learning that he was interested in, along with the social aspect of education. Moreover, Edmondson (2006) argues that the vagueness of Dewey's writing caused confusion, as people thought they could pick and choose, and interpret it in any way they wanted.

In "How Progressive Education Gets It Wrong," Williamson Evers (1998) argues that Dewey did not want children to be in total control of the classroom, but other progressives interpreted it that way. They began using a "child-centered" (Evers, 1998) curriculum, through which children were encouraged to learn by self-discovery. Dewey did not espouse this idea. Instead, he believed learning should be "hands-on" (Evers, 1998) (constructive) and developmentally appropriate, with the teacher as a guide. (Evers, 1998). Lastly, Dewey believed that our morals and values are formed by society. Change society and people will change, he believed (Edmondson, 2006).

Cornel West (1989) argues in *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* that Dewey took a "narrow" (p. 101) view of the world. Dewey wanted his theories about education to be used globally, but, argues West, he only saw his theories "through an American lens" (p. 71). Dewey's solutions to problems in American society such as poverty were to advocate "radical journalism," (West, 1989, p. 80) assimilate immigrants, and teach educators proper and effective methods of instruction. Simply put, from Dewey's perspective, intelligence, knowledge, and education provided answers to all problems in the United States.

West (1989) asserts that this response did nothing to solve the problems. On the contrary, Dewey's theories and schools, West posits, ultimately failed because of Dewey's narrow "emphasis on culture," which led him "to promote principally pedagogic and dialogical means of social change" (p. 106). In other words, Dewey's focus on creating a specific culture as a means to change society did nothing more than apply generic methods to already existing pedagogies. This reproduced existing class divisions and did little to restructure society and solve serious social problems. While Dewey's vision for changing society through education was not fulfilled, the literature shows that this was not the sole cause of the failure of progressive schools. I discuss this more in the next section.

In summary, it is important to understand the history of progressive education and the criticisms that accompany it, to understand the context in which McClain High School was conceived. The school was built with John Dewey's principles in mind. Many of these principles remain in practice today.

Community and Society

The Importance of Community

In an important book, *Reading Dewey*, James Campbell (1998) explains that Dewey believed that humans have no choice but to be social. It is by being a part of a community that we "become human" and "an individually distinctive member of a community" (p. 24). Every person has talents, intelligence, beliefs, and values that they contribute to a community to make it thrive. Within that society, there are certain customs that are important to the community and placed above everything else. These may include raising children, practicing religion, and supporting education. These customs then become traditions valued by the community. If anyone

goes against these traditions, they may be considered marginal or outside the norm. Change is difficult because these customs and traditions become a part of each member of the community, and if they are abandoned, a part of the society is gone forever (Campbell, 1998). Perhaps this is one reason why the citizens of Greenfield fought so hard to keep their school. Losing it would have been like losing a part of themselves, their traditions, and their customs. (This concept is further explored in the oral histories section.)

Though some misinterpreted him, Dewey was never interested in creating a utopian world. He was more interested in using a community that already existed and working to make it an ideal one. He believed that great communities exist because each member has an individual identity and an identity within the community.

According to Campbell (1998), the concept of community rests on three criteria. Community members (1) promote “shared action” (involvement together), are “like minded” (shared values), and (3) “attach meaning to things,” e.g., places, events, traditions, and customs (p. 34). It is through these interactions that community is created. Campbell further writes, “According to this egalitarian approach, we have all received unearned benefits from the prior efforts of the human community and this debt must somehow be repaid” (p. 35).

Do the people of Greenfield feel they are indebted to Edward Lee McClain for the gift of the school and the education they received there? Is this why they saved the school and today carry on the customs and traditions they shared as members of the school community? This question is explored with the oral histories and discussed in Chapter 5.

Dewey’s concept of “the common good,” which Edward Lee McClain espoused, asks that all members of the community work toward what is best for everyone and help resolve problems together (like the problem with The Ohio Facilities Commission and the funds offered-

the community of Greenfield worked together to solve that problem along with many others as covered in Chapter 5). Communities are strengthened by members working together. The more issues they work through, the more they are solidified. But how is this learned? Strengthen the schools and the community is strengthened, and vice versa (Campbell, 1998).

American Society and Appalachian Education

In addition to the philosophical context provided by Dewey, the Appalachian context of McClain High School is important to consider. In *All That Is Native and Fine*, David Whisnant (1983) points out that understanding schooling in this region is also very much about understanding a “politics of culture” (p. xxxv).

The Hindman Settlement School in Eastern Kentucky, founded in 1902 by Katherine Pettit and May Stone, is a case in point. Settlement schools began in England to educate and to provide culture to the poor. The idea eventually spread to America, first with Hull House, established in Chicago, and then to schools in Eastern Kentucky and the rest of Appalachia. The Hindman Settlement School began in simple tents. A kindergarten was included. There were lessons in cooking and reading. Yet, over time, more outsiders came. These outsiders were politicians, educational theorists, and others who had no connection to this tiny community in any way. Pressures from the outside world began to weigh heavily on the school and its administration. Coal companies exerted their influence as they took advantage of people in Eastern Kentucky. As a result, the Hindman School’s curriculum changed to be less progressive, although some of the old ways were preserved. The utopia the school and its reformers had tried to establish eventually failed. The school still exists today but not in its original form (Whisnant, 1983).

The same sorts of tensions were apparent in experimental schools throughout Appalachia. A similar case is the well-known Foxfire program. In *Foxfire Reconsidered*, John Puckett probes the Foxfire craze started by Eliot Wigginton. In particular, Puckett “wanted to know how Foxfire worked ... who its beneficiaries were and how they had benefited” (p. 2). Puckett interviewed staff and students, and then examined records. Next, he interviewed those who participated in Foxfire (such as students and teachers) and attended Foxfire events. Puckett (1989) set out to discover what Foxfire achieved and compare it with “its own ideals, intentions, and potential, and its national reputation as a model educational program” (p.4).

While the book largely describes the school “Wig,” as he was called, created in Rabun County, Georgia, it also covers the trials, tribulations, and benefits of the Foxfire program. Like students in the folk schools, Wig’s students learned core subjects through doing. For example, Wigginton formed a school newspaper that the students wrote for and published. It eventually became a worldwide phenomenon, as the student writings were published as full-length books. He also hired artisans to teach furniture-making skills, and he recorded interviews with graduates of the program to preserve their stories for future generations. (Puckett, 1989).

In 1984, Wigginton met with his staff to revamp the Foxfire curriculum to align more closely with John Dewey’s principles. They had to find a middle ground, where the instructors were teaching both academics and Foxfire principles. Wigginton felt that teachers focused on the product and not the process. He and his staff compiled four lists of teaching objectives. They included (1) skills needed for the state test, (2) skills needed for success in college and skills needed if a student chose not to attend college, (3) skills for employability, and (4) other skills specific to each course (Puckett, 1989).

Puckett (1989), comparing Wigginton to Dewey, points out that in areas where Wigginton did not follow Dewey's principles, problems occurred. For one, the Foxfire curriculum did not build in opportunities for reflection, a key feature of Deweyan learning. The students were not reflecting on what they were learning about the culture they were working to save. Even the skills that they did learn did not transfer to other courses (Puckett, 1989). However, Foxfire did incorporate some of Dewey's principles. There was experimental learning occurring and Wigginton believed in a social/community connection. He taught his students social reform, pride, and empathy (Puckett, 1989). As the years passed, Foxfire exhibited less and less of Wigginton's original vision for the curriculum and the school. Eventually, it failed, just as the Hindman School had (Puckett, 1989).

The Arthurdale Community School, a Great Depression era project of Eleanor Roosevelt's, is another example. In *The Arthurdale Community School: Education and Reform in Depression Era Appalachia*, Sam F. Stack (2016) tells the story of this experimental school, including who was involved, what was at stake, and the outcome of the experiment. Much like the Foxfire program, the school centered around John Dewey's philosophy of education (The director, Elsie Ripley Clapp, was a student and close friend of Dewey's.) and progressive principles, including community involvement. Stack writes,

Schools of communities implies reciprocal and cooperative responsibility on the part of community schools-cooperative endeavor for community affairs. It involves shared responsibilities of the community for the school and the school for the community. This involves action of the school in community life because of its interests and investment of interest and activity as well as money by the community in the school (p. 53).

The experimental aspect of the Arthurdale Community School was the creation of a self-sustaining planned community, with the school at its center, that relied on members of society to make decisions concerning the good of the community. The school curriculum incorporated all subjects into everyday life, much like Foxfire and the folk schools did. Art and music were also part of the curriculum, as Dewey believed art to be a significant part of life, not just an afterthought (Stack, 2016).

The Arthurdale homesteaders built buildings that were simple yet functional. Young men learned furniture making and young women wove rugs and stockings, much like they did at Foxfire and the folk schools. Progressives saw this as a way for community members to have pride in their contributions and to invest in the school and community. The progressives had good intentions; however, there were major issues such as unfinished buildings, lack of transportation, growing expense, malnutrition, and the poor health of the students and community members. Later, unemployment was an issue. The community pushed on, however, starting a fire department and a women's club (Stack, 2016).

After years of trying, the Arthurdale Community School was turned over to the county. By 1940, progressive education was no longer practiced in the school. Why? It seemed as though the parents never really grasped the vision of the school. The culture, music, and art being taught at school were not taking place at home (Stack, 2016). I think, perhaps, that this was because the involvement of the community never went beyond manual labor. Most members of the school board were outsiders, as were the teachers. If the community had real control of and investment in the school, as Edward McClain exhibited with his gift, would the Arthurdale school have failed? The impact of society and community was evident in the schools mentioned above. In the

coming chapters, it is interesting to see why McClain High School has continued undeterred for the last century.

Community Connections and Social Habitus

In addition to the philosophical, historical, and regional contexts for McClain High School, it is also important to understand the role of community-based practices, such as schooling, as they move through time. James Garrison addresses connection with community practice in his essay “John Dewey’s Philosophy as Education” (1998). Garrison explains that Dewey’s “occupational education” (p. 76) did not simply mean education to train for an occupation; it meant that education extended into citizenship. Dewey knew that people learned their role or place in society. “Education is crucial for cultural reproduction,” writes Garrison. “It takes an entire society to educate a child, and good community requires good communication” (p. 76). When a community holds values and beliefs in common, up to a point, the groundwork for positive growth is laid. By this argument, had the Arthurdale School let the community have control over the school, perhaps the outcome would have been more positive.

This idea is further explored in “Social Class, Social Action, and Education: The Failure of Progressive Democracy” by Aaron Shutz (2010). Shutz points out that Dewey was a “collaborative progressive” (p. 70). He believed that religious leaders, scholars, activists, and others should join together to solve problems and to create a more equal society. As Shutz notes, these practices, or habits, created a social and cultural context in which Dewey’s ideas could flourish.

Shutz (2010) argues that the philosophical idea of *habitus*, comes into play here: Societies, communities, and groups reproduce themselves over time through certain socially

constructed habits. Shutz gives the example of social class and how we might act and interact in different environments based on the habits of our class. A laborer, for instance, would act differently in a lawyer's office than she would in a factory among those of her own social class (Shutz, 2010).

Was this what Edward Lee McClain was attempting to do? Was he trying to reproduce himself and his class? Or was he trying to somehow create a new social environment, one more informed by the equality of relations, as imagined by Dewey and other progressive educators? Some evidence suggests the latter. For example, McClain provided excellent working conditions and salaries for his 250 employees. In 1903, in Atco, Georgia, McClain built an entire town for his employees. He built more than 100 "homes [that] had running water and electricity, free garbage pickup and paved streets. Rent was a dollar a month per room. McClain also built a non-denominational church, a store, and a private school" (The Greenfield Historical Society, n.d.). There were also parks, a swimming pool, and a movie theater (*The Dragon*, 1934).

Unfortunately, I could find no record of what factory workers were paid when McClain was at the helm of the American Pad and Textile Company (the name of his Greenfield factory). The Greenfield Historical Society gave me some data from 1939 concerning women's pay (although McClain died in 1934). A woman's weekly salary was between \$20 and \$23. The paperwork did not specify whether the woman was a secretary or a worker in the sewing room. All of the employees of the once-thriving business have died, so I could not obtain any data or oral histories of the working conditions (Harold Schmidt, personal communication, October 19, 2017). I will say, though, that after researching further, I found in *The Handbook of Labor Statistics* (1941) that a secretary in New York State made an average of \$22.88 per week. The women in the Greenfield factory were making as much as those on the East Coast.

In any case, it is evident that society has an impact on schools and those associated with them. The struggle to connect local culture with curriculum and new concepts is a theme that flows through the literature. Its relevance to my study is evident. McClain High School was built for a community and given to the community to control. Is that why it has persevered through the last 100 years, when other similar schools in the region have closed their doors? What is the role of the school in the culture of the community and vice versa? I explore these questions in more depth in the following chapters.

Art, Culture, and Environment

Given the prominent role of art at McClain High School, a brief review of art as it relates to Dewey and the school is especially relevant. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934) explained that after fine art is put into the classic canon, it becomes separated from the process by which it was created. He thought that the study of art should illuminate the connection between the art itself and the reason for its creation. He also thought that it should explore the commonalities and differences between art's esthetic value and its relevance.

To explain this further, Dewey (1934) gave the analogy of a man stoking a fire. The man knew that this act would make the fire grow, but in acting, he saw the beauty and wonder of fire. He explained that from mankind's beginning, there was art—from paintings on cave walls to modern prose, paintings, and drama (Dewey, 1934). Dewey (1934) spoke to the environment in which art is viewed and experienced. He pointed out that, unlike educators, artists rebelled against the Industrial Revolution and continued to seek self-expression. As McClain High School was built on the principles of Dewey, perhaps this was also a reason that the McClains wanted

the art to be a constant presence? I take this up again in coming chapters, but suffice it for now to say that, as stated previously, Dewey argued that art should be used for “everyday enjoyment” (p. 10) and not set aside in a museum where the piece is out of its natural element.

Dewey (1934) pointed out that there can be no laziness in creating art or perceiving it. One must be immersed in it to truly experience it. This raises an important question: How many McClain students had a true experience with art in the way Dewey imagined? This question was raised in the oral histories and is discussed in Chapter 5.

Dewey (1934) stated that although the creator of an object may intend it for one purpose, the observer might experience it differently. The art represents something to the observer based on past and present experiences. William Wordsworth’s poem “Tintern Abbey” is an example. Dewey (1934) claimed that although Wordsworth uses wonderful imagery when describing the Wye River Valley, a painting of that place will always be a better representation than a poem, as “words cannot duplicate the expressiveness of the object” (p. 90). However, like a writer, a painter has a bias when painting. The painter comes to the canvas with prior knowledge, with a vision. It cannot be helped. The scene painted is reinvented according to the artist’s wants.

In a similar vein, Dewey (1934) also addressed abstract art. He explained that, in a way, all art is abstract, as it can never be exact. It is always the artist’s own experience. These ideas led me to think of the murals in McClain High School. The painter had a vision, and so did Edward McClain. Both had biases toward this art, as have all those who have viewed it over the last 100 years. I uncover this further in the chapters ahead.

In essence, the artist uses art to speak to an audience. Dewey (1934) stated that a poem or work of art may be old, but each time a person reads or experiences it, it is new to that person. This reminded me of *The Melting Pot*, the mural in the McClain High School library. I have

looked at it countless times over the last 20 years, but it was only recently that I actually saw the Asian immigrant who is featured so prominently in the art. This revelation raised new questions for me. The mural was created during a time when Asian immigration was extremely controversial in America. Was the artist making a statement with an Asian immigrant in the foreground, looking directly at the viewer? And did students—then or since—receive that message from the artist?

Dewey (1934) wrote that “a work of art ... is recreated every time it is esthetically experienced” (p. 113). Indeed, students today will not have the same experience viewing this art as did those who walked the halls when the doors of McClain opened. For each student, it is a personal experience, as I explore in the oral history chapter that follows.

In terms of personal experiences, Dewey (1934) also addressed subject matter and art. Importantly, he recognized that “first comes subject-matter, then the substance or matter of the work; finally, the determination of topic and theme” (p. 116). By studying the correspondence between Edward Lee McClain and the mural artist, Vesper Lincoln George, I hoped to see how they came to agree on the theme of each mural. I will come back to this in Chapter 4, but suffice it to say for now that Dewey (1934) also spoke of the senses and art’s esthetic value. He even commented on architecture. He claimed that some architecture is an “exquisite adaptation(s) of lines and spaces, they meet a similar organic need of the sensorimotor system” (p. 129). I am positive McClain High School fits this description. Art is not about adornment. It must match the setting in which it is placed. This is evident at McClain. Whatever the medium, the artist must intend to speak to the audience, and the observer must experience and interpret the art for him- or herself. The observer must question what meaning he or she finds in it, and it must be more than just beauty.

It is also important to note that Dewey (1934) examined numerous theories of what makes art esthetic. While he agreed with some theorists that experiencing art is both physical and mental, he argued that it is more. Art must wrap up the observer in a larger range of experience. The observer's entire being is affected: emotions, senses, and soul. Again, Dewey (1934) stated that the old art, as well as the new, is recreated with every interaction. The observer uses imagination, an important component of the esthetic experience, to complete this change. It is through a shared sense of imagination that human beings have a shared experience with art. Dewey (1934) wrote that "art is the extension of the power of rites and ceremonies to unite men through a shared celebration, to all incidents and scenes of life" (p. 282). Experience of the art is a strong thread that ties all McClain alumni together.

Moreover, Dewey insisted that art must be present in everyday life to be truly appreciated and understood (Alexander, 1998). He believed that the art "spoke" to the environment that contained it, as it "projected" emotions to its surroundings (Alexander, 1998, p. 10). Art was also a way for human beings to prove that they existed. Dewey also believed that art gave humans the ability to communicate from one generation to the next, instilling what is important culturally to those who came after (Alexander, 1998).

In sum, art and the experiences associated with it are important parts of life. The person who is viewing the art must discover what that piece is saying to her or him. Is the message different from generation to generation, or is it constant for all? What effect did the art have on McClain students while they were students and after they graduated? I delve into these questions with my oral history interviews.

Architecture and Environment

The Significance of Design

In the essay “A School House Well Arranged,” Peter Kurtze (1995) explores in depth the history of Joseph Lancaster and school design. Kurtze explains that, according to Lancaster, A school house well arranged, having sufficient light, well-ventilated and properly heated in cold weather, with good order reigning within its walls, has great influence not only over the social but also the moral sentiments of the scholars: it gives character to the people who have institutions among them (p. 70).

Lancaster felt that if a school was well designed and comfortable, with students who were in control of the classroom and curriculum, then students would be happy socially and have excellent character as well. Like Dewey, Lancaster believed that learning space was just as important as curriculum to student success (Kurtze, 1995). He felt that architecture could have a positive influence on students’ interest in subject matter. He used Greek Revival architecture on the outside of schools he designed to “produce a pleasing effect...” (p. 73). Unfortunately, Lancaster’s method of having more than 400 students in one room with one instructor failed after 10 years, as the students were not learning.

Also theorizing on school architecture, Johanna Miller Lewis (1989) points out that “architecture reflects the society that surrounds it” (p. 125). Lewis recounts the story of the Unity of Brethren, or Moravians, who settled in North Carolina in 1753. The group wanted to create a self-sustaining, utopian society, much like the folk schools and Arthurdale Community School tried to establish. However, it also wanted to connect with the rest of the world by building a “center of manufacture and trade” (p. 125).

Basing their curriculum on the Bible and Latin, the Moravians educated girls and boys equally. This was unheard of at the time. Unlike most schools of the era, the Moravians did not use rote memorization, as it was thought that learning should be fun and interactive. News spread of the Moravians' revolutionary school, and outsiders began asking to send their children there. They later built a girl's boarding school in response to a growing demand for their type of schooling. The school eventually became Salem College, the first women's college in the United States. (Lewis, 1989).

Moravian architecture used a Federal design with English influences that was familiar to community members. However, unlike other buildings, the school was rectangular, as it was thought that this would make it look educational. After the school opened, space became an issue, so three new buildings were constructed. All of them matched the original building in design and decoration, to ensure that the campus would keep the educational look. Years passed and, in 1849, Greek Revival architecture reached Salem. (During the Industrial Revolution, wealth equaled success, and Greek Revival architecture conveyed this message.) In 1856, construction of the Main Hall was finished. Twenty years later, the original building, South Hall, was remodeled to match the Main Hall.

Over the next few decades, the campus buildings began to fall into disrepair. Then, in 1929, a historic preservation and renovation movement spread throughout the United States. The town of Salem rallied and formed the Old Historic Downtown committee to help save and preserve the campus. In 1964, restoration began on South Hall. The rest of the buildings followed. The school is still in operation today. Interestingly, the Moravians built the school to benefit the community. Yet, during the Industrial Revolution, they let the buildings deteriorate. In the end, the community saved the school (Lewis, 1989), as did the citizens of Greenfield,

Ohio, when they banded together to preserve McClain High School. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

The stories of the Moravians and Lancaster are just two examples of American architectural experiments that took place before, during, and after the development of McClain High School. Another important book, *America's Country Schools*, gives a broader and more in-depth history of American education, beginning with the one-room schoolhouse. Built after Thomas Jefferson signed the Northwest Ordinance, the tiny, rural schoolhouses were oftentimes cold, dirty, and cramped. Yet, they were the centers of the communities. Every important event took place at the schoolhouse, among them weddings, funerals, dances, debates, and poetry readings. In addition, schools also housed the community during attacks by Native Americans and served as hospitals during sickness outbreaks. Importantly, schools began to hold reading and writing classes for adults at night. Thousands came to the classes. To raise money to build their schools, communities held *box socials* (during which box lunches, specially prepared by community members, were bid on) and other events. Farmers gave land for the schools and every member of the community was fully invested in them (Gulliford, 1996).

With the 1930s and 1940s came a wave of consolidation and a movement to abandon the one-room schoolhouses. These consolidations were due to shortages of funds and resources. Gulliford (1996) writes that “the closing of the one-room country schools forever changed the rural American landscape and diminished close community ties and a sense of social cohesion among rural Americans” (p. 44). With consolidations came unrest among many rural people. They understood the important connection between school and community, and taking the local school away was devastating. But the closings continued.

Today, people are preserving the old schools through state and federal grants and private donations. Gulliford (1996) explains that “if a campaign must be launched to save an endangered school, it is important to gain public support for preservation as well as meet with all parties concerned to explore all options and seek possible solutions” (p. 235). I raise this here because this is exactly what the people of Greenfield, Ohio, did for McClain High School. I explore this further in Chapter 6.

It is clear that a school’s design is important, and that its meaning goes beyond being a physical space. Ford, Hutton, and Seward (2007) state in *A Sense of Entry* that architects design schools to be “places that enhance the learning experience ... and acknowledge the significant role that the school facility plays in the lives of children and teachers ... [and] contribute to its place within the community” (p.8).

According to Ford, Hutton, and Seward (2007), architects develop “themes” for the structures they design. The first is identity. Every building tells a story that relates to those who use it and the community that surrounds it. The architect takes the history and culture of the community into consideration. The placement of the building is another theme. If the school is urban, it may or may not be close to the street. If it is in a rural setting, the design may depend on how much space and how many buildings are allotted. Lastly, the theme of *procession* pertains to entry into the school. The main entrance is just one entry. Typically, there are many entrances into a school that connect one part to another. Entrances suggest transition. For example, the entrance to McClain’s marble steps, which is explained in Chapter 5.

Sadly, “schools built since the 1950s have typically been more about utilitarian accommodation, with little investment in the architectural form. As a result, school buildings

began to resemble office buildings and even factories” (Ford, et al., 2007, p. 15). Budgets no longer allow for artful design and beauty (Ford, et al., 2007).

Dell Upton (1991) speaks to artifacts such as art and ornamentation in his essay, “Form and User: Style, Mode, Fashion, and the Artifact.” Upton explains that artifacts speak from the creator to the audience, but the question is, what, exactly, has the creator said? The style of an artifact also gives it a place and time. Notes Upton, “Style is pervasive. It provides a context, or system of common understanding, for members of society” (p. 160). Further, environments (buildings and spaces) are human inventions so “we look for relationships we expect, and we find them because we put them there” (p. 162). Interpretations of a space can vary, but it is when everyone in a society shares the interpretation that it becomes truth. Upton refers to this interpretation as the “otherness” (p. 162) of an artifact—that is, the message it conveys and how it is perceived, not just the physical aspects of it.

Upton (1991) says that fashion is different from style in that fashion was only for the elite of society and their particular preference for artifacts. With the Industrial Revolution, fashionable artifacts became more available to everyone in society. “Producers now emphasized the quick acquisition of generally available goods and ideas over restricted access to scarce commodities” (p. 165). Due to the influx of these artifacts, fashions changed quickly. but it was the art that was recurrent. It was the thing that stayed constant (Upton, 1991).

With all of this in mind, how does one study architecture and artifacts as they pertain to their culture and time period? Researching vernacular architecture—that is, exploring a building’s era, form, context, and function—is one way. In *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture*, Carter and Cromley (2005) explain that “people need things—objects, artifacts, however they are referred to—to live in a world, and we make those things, not randomly or by

chance, but systematically and intentionally through our culture” (p. xiii). They further state that vernacular architecture is “the study of those human actions and behaviors that are manifest in commonplace architecture,” and that “vernacular architecture research implies a marriage of sources: oral history, written documents and the buildings themselves” (p. xvi). Researching vernacular architecture helped me understand the meaning of McClain High School’s architectural design and its hoped-for effect on students.

Vernacular architecture is pervasive, but Carter and Cromley (2005) trace its initial popularity to the late 1880s and early 1890s. After this first interest, it was not until the late 1970s, groups formed in New England to protect the colonial architecture that was quickly disappearing. Also, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 required surveys to be taken of buildings to see if they were eligible to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Vernacular architecture was born out of this (Carter & Cromley, 2005).

Further, vernacular architecture can also refer to a pervasive style in a region, locality, or era. Architectural commonalities create “vernacular communities.” The belief is that nothing in a building’s design is by accident; it is all planned to fulfill the needs of society at that time and in that place. “Vernacular builders make design decisions about space, form, community values, and architectural meeting each time they build” (Carter & Cromley, 2005, p. 15). This also pertains to social categories such as ethnicity, class, and gender (Carter & Cromley, 2005). While Edward Lee McClain High School might be in Greenfield, Ohio, someone from another city, state, or even another part of the world could find a connection to it or a familiarity with it due to the architecture.

The study of vernacular architecture is complex. Other buildings in the community and region should be studied, too, for comparison. Analyzing a building involves looking at how it is

constructed and what ornamentations and embellishments were added because “construction, materials, and finishes all have their own stories to tell about a building’s history and meaning” (Carter & Cromley, 2005, p. 40). Beyond design and construction, vernacular architecture is what a building is trying to say about the culture that surrounds it. For example, if there is repetition in the building of a certain feature, it is significant. At McClain High School, the theme of the artwork, which is present throughout the building, is significant.

In addition, it is important to ask why a building was built at a certain time and why it was placed where it was. Concerning a building’s style, Carter and Cromley (2005) explain that “style is not particularly one thing or another, but rather a remarkably fluid concept that implies both a degree of formal constancy, which has a unifying effect within a culture ... which serves to distinguish various subcultures within the whole.... (p. 55).

Function plays an important role in the design of the building. Within function, there are two subcategories: *social milieu* and *cultural symbolization*. Social milieu refers to how “the building ‘transcends’ the functional frame to materially express such things as economic status, inclusion in or exclusion from a group, a particular role in society, or even the ‘social system as a whole’” (Carter & Cromley, 2005, p. 60). Cultural symbolization is used to express the beliefs and values in a culture through interior spaces. I explore these topics in Chapters 4 through 6.

Finally, in “Recording Historic Buildings: Everyday Architecture in the Mid-Atlantic,” Lanier and Herman (1997) explain that

...architectures and their landscapes are often sometimes telling indicators of their individual and community values. Thus, while field recording documents a building at a specific point in time, it also identifies sequences of historical changes and raises questions about social values that motivated those changes (p. 316).

Attention is paid to building materials, ornamental features, and floor plans because architecture tells about the people who built and occupied the buildings. McClain High School was built during the Progressive Education era, after the Industrial Revolution, by a self-made millionaire who traveled the world and who was educated in the arts. It was interesting to see, as my study unfolded, how his experiences and values were manifested in the school building.

Studies in Context

As I considered whether McClain High School alumni linked their successes to the environment in which they learned, it was important to consult other studies that asked similar questions. Although controversial, many studies have concluded that physical environment can have a critical impact on student learning and success.

Take, for example, a study titled “Assessing School Facilities for Learning” led by Jeffrey Lackney (1999). The Lackney research team looked to a study done by Maureen Edwards that marked a 5 to 11 percent improvement in student scores based on building condition. Using action research, the Lackney researchers decided to assess the buildings by three criteria: (1) condition (Does the building meet health and safety requirements?), (2) educational adequacy (Does the building adequately meet educational objectives?), and (3) connection to student scores. The study was carried out on five elementary schools in Baltimore from 1993 to 1995. There were problems and needs identified by the Lackney research team, teachers, and administrators at each of the schools. Overcrowding was the lowest concern, while physical comfort and health were the highest. Sensory stimulation was almost the least of their concerns, and aesthetics and appearance were of moderate concern. The team ranked these aspects of each building and then compared those with test scores. Although the study was

controversial because, researchers concluded that student academic achievement is linked to physical environment (Lackney, 1999).

The study notes, however, that “the quality of the physical environment is in the eye of the beholder” (Lackney, 1999, pg. 4), and while causative arguments are suggestive, they make the case that no single factor can ensure student success. Rather, student success is tied to a wide range of factors. For example, Lackney (1999) cites the State of California, which spent a billion dollars decreasing class sizes from 30 to 20. However, classes were held in gyms and libraries, as well as in modular classrooms. Student scores did not improve, for the most part. Lackney (1999) suggests that there are many different factors, such as class size, social interaction, environment, and teacher performance that effect student performance.

A Different Viewpoint to Consider

With everything that I have uncovered in my literature review, I assume that the physical environment at McClain High School somehow affected (and still affects) student success. It is, indeed, an assumption that I took into the research that follows. But, I should note, some would disagree with this. For example, while doing the research, I stumbled upon an article titled “A Modern High School,” written by I. F. Hall in 1911. As I began to read, I realized that this article was about a high school given to the community of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, by Henry Huttleston Rodgers. I was astonished. I had not heard of another millionaire gifting a school to a city at almost the same time that McClain gifted his. Hall argued a very different idea of the impact of environment on the student. While many people would be enamored with the beauty of Fairhaven High School, Hall chose to focus on the education going on during that time. He stated that education came first. Everything in the core curriculum was college preparatory. Next, he

visited classrooms. He observed a physical education course that was concerned with turning boys into men and girls into women. Hall then went to vocational classrooms such as cooking, mechanics, drawing, and agriculture. The agriculture class emphasized scientific methods, but only boys could enroll in it. Girls were required to take cooking classes their first two years. (They could choose to enroll in them the final two years.) In addition, Hall noted, mechanical drawing was for boys and free hand writing was for girls.

Hall (1911) concluded with opinions concerning the school's physical layout. Though he loved everything about the schedule, the classes, and the rigor, the building itself, he argued, was not necessary to achieving success in learning or teaching. But for those so advanced and who work so hard, like those in Fairhaven, the beautiful, modern school was well earned (Hall, 1911). The town of Fairhaven has kept and restored its gift like those in Greenfield. There are many similarities between the schools in their architecture and environment as well.

Summary

John Dewey's legacy in education and society cannot be denied. His theories and philosophies are in use today, just as they have been for over a century. Although Dewey has many critics, his views about educating the whole child (with hands-on learning in an environment rich with art and beauty and surrounded by a loving and supportive community) still hold promise for teachers and students alike. All-important is an active community, with the school at its center. All decisions are made for the betterment of the school and the community. Through the literature, I have seen schools that have tried and failed at progressive education. While McClain High School is not strictly of the progressive era today, it is evident that the

education students receive there and the legacy that they carry with them is different from any other.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Qualitative research is primarily descriptive and inductive, elaborating meanings of places, events, and people (Given, 2008). “Researchers who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2011, p. 7). Using qualitative research methods, I recorded and analyzed the stories and opinions of the graduates of Edward Lee McClain High School. I ultimately sought to tell the story of Edward Lee McClain and his gift of the school (and art) to the citizens of Greenfield, to elaborate on the experiences and education of the students, and to expand on the school’s role in the community. This approach to narrative collection and analysis is labor intensive, but the rewards far outweigh the work required to tell this story thoroughly.

Research Context and Study Design: On Oral History and Ethnography

This study used the approaches of oral history and ethnography. The primary approach was collecting the oral histories of graduates of McClain High School, its faculty, and its administrators. In *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, V. R. Yow (2005) thoroughly explains the process of conducting an oral history.

Yow states that “oral history research ... becomes crucial to obtaining a picture from the total society because the viewpoints of the non-elite, who do not leave memoirs or have biographies, are presented” (p. 11). Personal stories, then, are a way to get to know and understand people from all social levels. In addition, oral histories “provide a specificity and richness of experience that general accounts did not offer” (p. 16).

After choosing a subject and doing a literature review of previous studies, Yow recommends that the researcher accumulate multiple sources, including primary documents such as personal letters and journals. The researcher should check these documents against each other and look for contradictions and similarities. Participant interviews are one of the most important aspects of oral history collection. Yow (2005) instructs researchers to create an interview guide and a basic outline for the interview. The researcher should know before the interview what open-ended questions she or he will ask. With this in mind, I created a list of open-ended questions to guide me in each interview, with the understanding that the participants and I would not be restricted by it. The guide helped me to return to key topics when the conversation strayed too far from the main questions.

Yow (2005) suggests that the list of interview questions should be crafted with an explicit strategy; it should begin with very broad questions and gradually move to more narrow ones, or vice versa. The researcher should be flexible, however, as some participants will do better with broad questions and other will do better with more narrow ones. For this study, my questions were open-ended and somewhat scripted, but I always allowed the conversations to stray from these questions if the discussion proved valuable to my study. It is important to note that while a conversational style of interview is fine, the researcher must give attention to how she or he phrases questions (Yow, 2005). My interview questions were as follows:

1. What is the story of your experiences at Edward Lee McClain High School?
2. How do these experiences fit with the story of your life?
3. Can you describe some of the school's traditions that you remember? Did they have an impact on your schooling? On your own understanding of yourself?
4. What role do you feel the community plays in the history of the school? In its traditions?
5. Thinking specifically about the building and how physical environments may affect people, do you think the physical layout of the building, its hallways with artworks, its classroom spaces, affected you in any way? If so, how?

6. Thinking specifically about artwork now, did the many artworks scattered throughout ELMHS have any effect on you? If so, how? Can you be specific? Are there any specific murals or other pieces of art that affected you on a personal level?
7. Can you describe some of the curriculum you learned or academic training you received while at ELMHS? Did it affect you in any way? How?
8. The community chose to spend the state's resources on restoring the school instead of building a brand new school. Why do you think they did that? What would you have done?
9. Scholars point out that ELMHS's building design and curriculum were based on the values of educational thinker John Dewey. Dewey believed that (1) students should learn by doing, in a natural way, with subjects not separated from each other; (2) that a school is only successful with community involvement; (3) that vocational and core curriculum should be taught together; and (4) that art should surround students at all times. What do you think of that? Do you think that Dewey was right? Why or why not?
10. If you were asked to describe your experience at ELMHS to a group of outsiders who had never seen the school, what would you say? What are the most important things to remember about ELMHS?

In addition to in-depth interviews, I posted pictures of McClain High School spaces and artwork to a Facebook group and asked for responses. The responses I received are reported in Chapter Five.

These are the kinds of conceptual strategies that I brought to this study. As previously stated, in addition to the oral history interviews, I collected numerous other types of qualitative data. First, I included information taken from my field notes, which included observations recorded during the school's Centennial Celebration and other events. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that field notes are "an important supplement to other data-collecting methods. In conducting taped interviews, for example, the meaning and context of the interview can be captured more completely if ... the researcher writes out fieldnotes" (p. 119).

Using field notes, of course, allowed me to develop thick description of the school and its graduates. Campbell and Lassiter (2015) write that, in part, "doing and writing ethnography itself

rests on . . . direct participation and genuine engagement in the day-to-day lives of others [which] . . . can provide unique insights into how various and diverse ideas and activities generate meaning” (p. 56). While I am a graduate of McClain High School, I have not lived in the community for more than 20 years, and I had no extensive experiences with the school before the time I attended. Yet, by combining my field notes with recordings and notes from my conversations with graduates, I was able to expand on several “unique insights” and use them to “generate meaning,” as Campbell and Lassiter propose.

Reflection, in addition to thick description, is a key element in observation. As Campbell and Lassiter (2015) explain, “Ethnographic fieldwork demands that we open ourselves to the process of observing experience itself, reflecting on that observed experience in the moment, and seeking out dialogue with others as this reflexive practice unfolds” (p. 64). They further add that “field notes require us to take careful notice of our own and other’s ideas and activities, and to pay special attention to when and where different conceptions and experiences come across to one another” (p. 69). It was these field notes, along with the oral histories, that yielded the most extensive data on the school, the graduates, and the community.

In addition to collecting field notes and oral histories, tracking down official documents published by the school and others was key to my study. The documents I found included yearbooks and newspapers. Also, personal documents, such as letters written by Edward Lee McClain, Lulu McClain, the architect, and many others, provided what Bogdan and Biklen (2007) call a “first-person narrative,” [which] . . . “describes an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs” (p. 133). Lastly, I used photography. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that “photographs provide strikingly descriptive data, are often used to understand the subjective, and are frequently analyzed inductively” (p. 141). The pictures of McClain High School and its

benefactors, students, and surrounding community, taken in the last century, number in the thousands. They were an informative link to the school's history, from its earliest days right up to the present.

My goal was to construct a community case study using, in part, the methods of collaborative research suggested by Spatig and Amerikaner in *Thinking Outside the Girl Box* (2014). While I did not use a team to do my research as they did, mine was a collaborative ethnography of sorts. Lassiter (2005) writes, for example, that “ethnography is, by definition, collaborative. In the communities in which we work, study, or practice, we cannot possibly carry out our craft without engaging each other in the content of our real, everyday lives. Building on these collaborative relationships between the ethnographer and her or his interlocutors, we create our ethnographic texts” (p. 16). The importance of encouraging study participants to be involved with the research and its conclusions as they unfold cannot be understated. Spatig and Amerikaner (2014) worked with the girls in their study to write research questions, and the girls even conducted some of the interviews. While I wrote the research questions by myself, I did use collaborative methods when I conducted an informal survey at the Centennial Celebration, asking potential participants what topics they would be interested in researching. Everyone that responded had input, just as the girls did in the study done by Spatig and Amerikaner (2014).

The girls in Spatig and Amerikaner's (2014) study also helped with the analysis and writing. I included my participants in the analysis as it unfolded, asking them to respond, for example, to my various interpretations. Given the restraints of time and of the dissertation process, though, I did not involve them with the initial write-up of the study. However, I hope that this dissertation might serve as a jumping off point for the participants and me to take the next step and write a collaborative text in the future.

Research Participants

Among the participants in my study were alumni who graduated as early as 1938 through those who graduated in 2008. Community members who are also alumni were included in this group. I also interviewed current and former faculty and administration members who are also alumni. I conducted the majority of the interviews in person, but there were a few that I had to conduct through Skype, including that of an alumnus who lives in Spain. I recorded, logged, and strategically transcribed all of the interviews. After the initial interviews, I conducted several follow-up interviews, as well as meetings, so that participants could fact check information.

Yow (2005) indicates that oral histories can be extremely complex when it comes to choosing participants and deciding who to include in the narrative. She advises researchers to ask for volunteers first, as I did, and then ask for recommendations for citizens to interview, as some who might be helpful to the study may not feel comfortable stepping forward to participate. Yow (2005) also warns not to interview community leaders exclusively. The researcher should look for lesser-known individuals and groups, and get their opinions and stories. She recommends interviewing 10 percent of the population. For my study, that would be one person for every 10 who graduated over the last 100 years—a daunting number. However, Yow (2005) also states that when the researcher begins getting the same answers over and over, she or he can discontinue interviewing because the research has achieved saturation.

Rather than choose an arbitrary number of people to interview, I chose to begin my interview process with saturation in mind. I interviewed as many people as I could in the amount of time that I had. I interviewed 11 alumni and included my own story, but I also used social media (my Facebook group) to gather information. Among the participants that volunteered were

community leaders and everyday citizens. Following Yow's (2005) instructions, at least at the outset, provided me with excellent oral histories.

Data Analysis

Once I collected all the data, I began interpretation and analysis. I transcribed all of the interviews using a transcription service. After I completed this, I began coding my data. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain that the researcher should “search through [the] data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics [the] data cover(s), and then write down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns” (p. 173). The codes helped me to organize the data for interpretation. I then applied the interpretations and analysis to my research questions.

Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses

I believe the strengths of my study to be many. First and foremost, I used many forms of primary-source documentation. These sources contain the personal thoughts and feelings of those who were involved in planning, building, and maintaining McClain High School through time. Second, I spoke personally with McClain alumni, as well as with those who have worked, or are working, at the school in some educational capacity. These additional primary sources provided important first-person narratives. Finally, the saturation that occurred during the oral histories strengthened this study.

In any study of oral history, several weaknesses can become apparent. Yow (2005) explains that limitations are generally threefold. First, a participant's view of his or her own life and experience can be “narrow, idiosyncratic, or ethnocentric” (p. 17). What a person knows is

limited to his or her own situations and experiences. Yow, however, says that she doubts that participants can be truly idiosyncratic, if one person's story is compared with others in the same group or society. The researcher can point out relationships within individual interviews and across interviews to provide internal validity. Second, participants recalling information accurately (especially if much time has passed) can sometimes be a problem in oral history. It raises questions about what a participant remembers and what she or he has forgotten. What might the participant be omitting? Third, what the researcher pulls from the narrative could also be perceived as ethnocentric and too narrowly focused on the researcher's interest and other subjectivities. This may also affect who the researcher selects and who comes forward. Though this is arguably true of any study, Yow (2005) suggests researchers pay close reflexive attention to this and be open to other points of view as they emerge in the study. I am thus cognizant that as a graduate of McClain High School, with my own experiences and my own perspectives, I have a narrow view of the school's overall narrative. To build a larger, more inclusive narrative, I gathered others' stories; I did not rely on only my experience to develop the school's story.

For me, another potential weakness to consider is the danger of glossing over differences that surface in the McClain High School story. For example, what if the participants who volunteered to be interviewed only shared positive experiences? After completing the oral histories, I realized that all graduates, in fact, only shared positive stories, but they were also realistic in saying that the town was not like it once was, and that the school was one of the positive elements that was bringing the town back.

As an oral history researcher, I sought to develop the broadest perspective possible, realizing that any story I told would be incomplete and partial. The best perspective, to me, is Bogdan and Biklen's (2007), who advise researchers to "objectively study the subjective states"

of study participants (p. 37). That is to say, I understand that I have perspective and bias, but I also sought to be transparent, and to be as nonethnocentric as possible when evaluating others' points of view.

To address the larger weaknesses of oral history research, Yow (2005) further suggests supporting participant's memory with historical documents, providing questions that continue to delve into the participant's story in order to discover truths, and cross-checking one person's story with another's. She suggests searching for those persons to interview who may have never had a voice and may not have a positive view. The researcher must then be prepared for how that point of view will be perceived in the community.

I did discover some information that had been incorrectly reported. For example, the story had always been that Edward McClain was in Europe when they named the building after him. In my research, I found this not to be true. As insignificant as this point may be to some, to others it could be disheartening. Still, I was transparent with the information.

Validity

In a 2007 article, Freeman, Marrais, Preissle, Roulston, and St. Pierre explain that "qualitative researchers have always discussed how to evaluate their science, the quality of their analyses and theoretical interpretations of the data" (p. 26). As qualitative research involves narrative, the researchers must set out to evaluate their findings through a number of different methods, such as participant checking, triangulation, and thick descriptions. I employed all of these methods in my research.

Participant Checking

As I conducted interviews with my participants, I provided them the opportunity to check my interpretation of their words, to ensure I understood what they were intending to say. The subject had a chance to review the written text, and make changes and additions if they wished. This helped to make the data more trustworthy. As Campbell and Lassiter (2015) explain, “Ethnographers produce, share, and negotiate texts with or alongside participants” (p. 130). Not only do the researchers develop relationships with those they are working with, but the participants also become stakeholders in the project. They take responsibility for their story and what the audience will read. In this way, and many others, it is a shared commitment between the researcher and the participants. Although this method was time consuming, it was an important part of proving the validity in my study.

Triangulation

Triangulation simply means to use many different credible sources to conduct research, rather than just one (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Addressing validity was simple, as I interviewed many alumni and faculty and administration members, whose stories spanned many decades. I also studied letters written by Edward Lee McClain; the architect, William B. Ittner; Lulu McClain; and other prominent players in the design and building of McClain High School. I read and studied the words of many others as well, to ensure that all sectors of the community were represented. I feel that this strengthened my research. The cross-referencing of all these sources of information gave validity to my study. Erickson (1986) explained that interviews, letters, and other documentation are not the data in a qualitative study; instead, the data comes from

comparing and analyzing information from the sources. This data ultimately leads to a conclusion.

Thick Descriptions

Described by Geertz (1973) as it applies to ethnography, *thick description* details accounts of events that have occurred in the field and relates them to the cultural and social contexts in which they occur. Attention to details is the key, as is applying those details to other situations and people. From thick descriptions of context, I framed the particulars of my interviews and thus provided another layer of internal validity. My hope is that the historical and social context I provided in the following chapters will help give meaning to the stories told by the study participants. This added to the rigor of my study, as the traditions of McClain High School were articulated and understood as unique within the culture of the community.

Conclusion

My study is filled with the oral histories of Edward Lee McClain High School graduates, faculty, and administration members; community members; and local historians. Participants were chosen on a volunteer basis, as well as by purposeful sampling. Through interviews, participant observation, and historical documents, the story of this school and its surrounding community began to take shape. Data analysis consisted of strategically transcribing interviews, coding them for themes, and then analyzing them for meaning. I also compared the interview data with information I gained from historical documents. Triangulation, member checks, and thick descriptions helped to build the validity of my study, as well as provide answers to my

research questions. Above all, I hoped to relate a legacy and traditions that are worthy of Edward Lee McClain.

Chapter 4

Legacy and Tradition

The legacy of Edward Lee and Lulu McClain is now more than a century old. Theirs is the story of humble beginnings to riches—the American dream. But their story is also one of giving back. They were philanthropists who committed their lives to doing “the most good to the greatest number for the longest time” (E. L. McClain, personal communication, May 30, 1923). The McClains began fulfilling their commitment by building the Methodist Church in Greenfield. (They were devout Methodists.) The church was completed in 1904, but it burned down in 1910. It was rebuilt by the McClains once again.

As Edward McClain’s business flourished, he and his wife began to think about what more they could give to their blue-collar, Appalachian community of just over 5,000 people. At first, they considered a YMCA or a library, but they finally settled on a new high school. The high school, they felt, would best fulfill their personal criteria for community service, as stated above. But I’m getting ahead of myself here. What follows is a more in-depth telling of the McClains’ story from their humble beginnings to their successes, to their philanthropic activities, and, finally, to the building of the high school.

Humble Beginnings

Born May 30, 1861, in Greenfield, Ohio, to William Page McClain and Margaret Ann (Parkinson) McClain, Edward Lee McClain lived a modest early life. He began working in his

father's horse harness shop at the age of 15. McClain's mind always seemed to be working, even at a young age. He had many ideas, but one in particular took hold: "Conceiving the idea of a horse collar pad for the general trade," noted *The Dragon*, the school yearbook, "and constantly alert for the improvement of his product, the idea of the elastic steel hook presented itself to his active mind" (1934, p.11). With his new invention, putting a collar over a horse's head became an easier task. It could be done without scaring the animal.

McClain eventually patented his idea, and by the time he took over his father's business, the idea had boomed. So much so that in 1903, he opened another factory near Cartersville, Georgia, to supply cotton for his product. For his Georgia factory community, McClain built a church, school, swimming pool, and playground (*The Dragon*, 1934).

McClain had a spirit of benevolence, a strong sense of the importance of giving back. Upon the dedication of the Vocational Building, he wrote,

All my life, as I recall it, there has been a natural tendency on the part to accord consideration, in various directions, in behalf of the betterment of a cause, whatever it was. Therefore, it gave me pleasure to assist, in what I thought was in fair proportion, in keeping with my means, which included all the churches of Greenfield as well as cases more like charity. Also, local civic activities and some World War participation, like Food Control Commission, the Red Triangle of the Y.M.C.A., and the local War Chest (E. L. McClain, personal communication, May 30, 1923).

Yet, McClain's biography is only half of the story. On December 17, 1885, McClain married Lulu Theodosia Johnson, who was born on July 19, 1867, to Joseph and Theodosia Schofield Johnson. Lulu was born into a more affluent family than her husband was. She was educated in private schools and at Hughes High School in Cincinnati, Ohio. Hughes High School

was an immense building, filled with art and beauty. It was there and in the culture of Cincinnati that Lulu developed her love of the arts. She continued her education at Glendale Female College, where she studied vocal and instrumental music (Blake, 1932).

Lulu McClain, like her husband, was a benevolent soul. As two of her sons served in the military, Lulu was especially interested in helping the troops and their families at home during the wars. She was a member of the Red Cross, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of Children of the American Revolution, Daughters of the Founders and Patriots of America, and many, many more organizations. Social work and work for her country were both very close to her heart (Blake, 1932).

The Greatest Good

While Lulu McClain was educated in the finest schools the large city of Cincinnati had to offer, Edward Lee McClain was educated at Greenfield Central School—a school “of fairly good quality” (E. L. McClain, personal communication, May 30, 1923). McClain, always striving to make something good even better, decided to give his beloved town a school that would rival any school in the country with its beauty, function, and advanced design. On December 5, 1912, The town awoke to this headline in the local newspaper: “In Her Stocking: Greenfield Will Find a Magnificent New High School Building, Erected on a Beautiful Campus in the Heart of the City” (*Greenfield Republican*).

Immediately following the announcement, McClain began receiving letters congratulating him on his gift and offering services for construction of the building. While reading the letters, it quickly became evident to me that McClain was a shrewd businessman; he expected excellence and expedited work. If someone did not meet his expectations, he relieved

them of their duties. For example, one of the first letters in McClain's files was from David Davis, the architect hired to rebuild the Methodist Church after it burned. Davis wrote that he would gladly offer his services for the building of the new school. McClain responded by telling Davis that he was too slow in his work and that he would be looking for an architect who was "honest," and who had "common sense and mechanical knowledge" (E. L. McClain, personal communication, December 9, 1912). McClain did, however, ask Davis to be a consultant on the project, and he expressed how fearful he was that the cost would be more than \$100,000. He also wondered whether they would be able to find enough teachers in the area (E. L. McClain, personal communication, December 9, 1912). In a letter dated January 23, 1913, McClain told Davis that he was leaning toward William Ittner to be the architect for the new high school. McClain explained that Ittner came highly recommended by many in Cincinnati, and that he was a fellow Methodist. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Ittner had a reputation for building fine schools throughout the country (McCormick, 2003). (At the end of his life, he had designed 430 schools in 28 states, including Central High School in Columbus, Ohio [McCormick, 2003]). McClain was impressed with Ittner's credentials, and while he wanted to find someone local to do the job, he ultimately did not.

While McClain was researching architects to build his gift, he was also in contact with Dr. F. B. Dressler, who was, at the time, a professor of philosophy and education at the University of Alabama. It is clear from his letters that McClain wanted Dressler's advice about the curriculum and the health and hygiene of the students. McClain stated that he knew the school should offer domestic science, manual training, business classes, and a gymnasium, but he was concerned that the small town could not maintain equipment and keep up with changes that may occur over time (E. L. McClain, personal communication, December 24, 1912).

Dressler responded with a different idea for McClain—a “group system” for the buildings.

Dressler explained,

Instead of trying to accommodate all departments in one building ... you follow the plan of a central building containing an assembly room, administration offices, and library and then grouping about this according to an architectural unit, a building for language and history, one for sciences, and one for the manual arts, one for the gym and baths, etc. (F. B. Dressler, personal communication, n.d.).

McClain responded that this would be a great cost to him and asked Dressler’s opinion about Ittner. Dressler thought highly of Ittner, saying that he knew him to be an honest man who built very frugally, often coming in under budget (F. B. Dressler, personal communication, January 7, 1913).

Interestingly, from the letters, it is evident that Dressler’s main concern was proper ventilation, hygiene, and light. (Dressler stated his fears about the proposed pool, the size of the windows, and the fumes from the science classes many times.) In a letter dated February 15, 1913, Dressler gave his view of vocational training, which is very telling:

Manual training and work of that sort is not for the purpose of teaching boys a trade, but simply of teaching boys. No education is complete unless it finds an expression in some real purposeful activity. An education in English which does not end in making the student more sensitive to pure English, more desirous of speaking and writing correctly and elegantly, and a deeper appreciation of the ethical and artistic significance of good literature, is not real education. In the same way, I feel that if a boy undertakes to make a chair, for example, and does not go at it simply as a means of teaching himself to understand the difficulties of such work and the great carefulness in planning and

constructing it, he can never have a real appreciation of a good piece of furniture ... manual training should never be imposed on anybody, neither should Greek, but opportunity for selecting it should be furnished.

Dressler was obviously a progressive in his thinking. He believed that students should understand and appreciate what they are studying and choose subjects because they interest them. McClain valued and took Dressler's advice in planning the curriculum of the new high school. After reading the letters from McClain to others concerning the curriculum, I am certain that he wanted it to be state of the art. It was also clear that he wished to extend course offerings to every student, no matter their race or socioeconomic status. Latin was available to all students, as was chemistry, literature, ancient history, and sociology. Courses such as manual training, stenography, and agriculture were also available to all. McClain felt that this would ensure that all students became well-educated, active, engaged citizens, not just workers.

Figure 1: Above, an example of a freshman girl's choices of courses from the 1922-1923 school year

Photo by author

Another confidant and advisor to Edward Lee McClain was the principal of Greenfield High School, Frank Raymond Harris. Harris graduated from Greenfield High School in 1897. He then attended Ohio Wesleyan University, where he obtained his bachelor of arts degree. Later, he earned a master of arts degree from Harvard University. He did further work at the University of

Wisconsin, Cornell University, and the University of Chicago. At the latter university, the teachings of John Dewey were thought to have influenced Harris. Dewey had taught there and had begun his Laboratory School in Chicago in the years before Harris attended.

With this background, Harris suggested the “open plan” (Blake, 1932, p. 12) for the new high school that Ittner and McClain ultimately used (Blake, 1932). In fact, Ittner sent his first sketches to both Harris and McClain, offering two schemes to choose from, as Harris had proposed (W. Ittner, personal communication, September 14, 1912). In letters he wrote during the 1912-1913 school year, McClain routinely sent Harris articles from the *New York Times* concerning what schools around the country were doing with the sciences. Unfortunately, the article clippings are no longer with the letters. The two men wrote often about the curriculum and design of the new building, including the wording for the inscriptions to be placed on the buildings. Interestingly, included with the letters was Harris’s “1915-1916 Principal’s Report to Edward Lee McClain.” Harris reported that there were 190 students enrolled taking the following courses: music, commercial subjects, science, manual training, physical education, domestic science, agriculture, Latin, math, history, English, and German. He noted that students presented the Oscar Wilde play *The Importance of Being Earnest* that spring. The school offered night classes for the community that included domestic science and men’s and ladies’ physical education. Harris suggested adding household physics and chemistry, which would cover physics and chemistry through household chores such as baking—a very Deweyan idea (F. R. Harris, personal communication, July 16, 1916).

Working with the open-plan design proposed by Harris, in January 1913, Ittner sent his proposal for the school to McClain, stating that it would cost \$100,000 to build, without

equipment. This worried McClain, as he only wanted to spend \$80,000 (E. L. McClain, personal communication, January 24, 1913).

While all of the letters indicate that McClain and Ittner worked together on the school, it was obvious that they did not always agree. Differences usually ended with McClain getting his way. Two examples stand out: The first was the placement of the school on Jefferson Street in Greenfield, the main street that goes through the town. At first, Ittner proposed that the school face west, toward 6th Street. McClain told Ittner that his building would be facing south. In a letter dated February 1, 1913, he wrote to Ittner, "Your suggestion that the building be made to face west does not meet with my approval, and I sincerely trust that it can be arranged otherwise.... The main street of the town is south of the ground ... I can't bring myself to feel that it will look right if made to face any other direction." McClain got his wish, maintaining that an important building such as the school should be featured prominently on and face toward the main street.

That same month, McClain and Ittner wrote back and forth and also met in St. Louis to discuss school plans. There was some disagreement about the pool. McClain said that he wanted a pool in the center of the building but was willing to drop it from the plans if it meant saving money. He also wanted the auditorium and gym to be separate. Ittner replied that McClain's new plans would cost upwards of \$150,000. This worried McClain (W. Ittner and E. L. McClain, personal communication, February 1913). After much discussion and many revisions to the plan, on March 12, 1913, all parties agreed on a final plan. Ittner wrote to McClain,

The plan as finally developed, I consider to be ideal, and one of the best things I have ever done. The fact that it is unlike any other school has everything to commend it. It is worked out to fit the conditions and will be a big step in advance of what is now being

done throughout the state in schools that size (personal communication, , March 12, 1913).

The final plan had a separate gymnasium and an auditorium with upper and lower galleries to accommodate as many members of the community as possible who came to the school for events. Manual and domestic classrooms would be on the ground floor, along with restrooms and other classrooms. Chemistry and physics classrooms would be on the first floor, with a lecture room positioned between them. On the second floor would be the library and a very large study hall, along with society rooms for meetings and administrative offices (W. Ittner, personal communication, March 12, 1913). Ittner submitted the plan to the state for approval. The pool, though not in the original plans, did eventually find its way into the vocational school, which was built in 1923.

From April through July of 1913, while they awaited approval of the initial plans from the state, McClain and Ittner continued to correspond about McClain's concerns regarding storage rooms, lockers, sinks, the number of toilets, the color of the chalkboards, handles for the doors, and many other issues. From a review of his letters and other papers, it becomes quickly evident that McClain was a very particular man who liked order and symmetry. He was also very anxious about the delays caused by the state. As they awaited the state's approval, contractors began making bids for different aspects of the project. On July 30, 1913, McClain learned that the state board rejected Ittner's plan due to violations of the state code and issues with the auditorium. On August 1, Ittner wrote to McClain saying he was "at a loss." He could not understand why the plan was not approved, as he had "never planned a building which [he] considered to be safer or better" (W. Ittner, personal communication, August 1, 1913). Ittner was offended. Nevertheless, the two men began work revising the building plans.

A New Plan for the Ages

In order to meet Ohio state code, the state asked Ittner and McClain to tour the high school in Washington Court House, Ohio, a town about 20 minutes west of Greenfield. McClain explained to Ittner that he had seen the building and was not impressed, and that he did not want to pattern his school after it (E. L. McClain, personal communication, August 12, 1913). By August 15, 1913, Ittner had revised the plan and submitted it to McClain. The assembly hall was abandoned to save the auditorium. There were also two exits to the courtyard added from the auditorium to meet fire code (W. Ittner, personal communication, n.d.). (As a performing arts student in high school, I always questioned why there were exits off the wings of the stage. Now I know why!)

In September 1913, Ittner mentioned the organ placement in the auditorium for the first time. The organ, one of only five school organs in the country, was crafted by Skinner, the nation's premier organ maker (Mitchell, 2016). McClain would spare no costs when it came to things of beauty and art. At this point, the gymnasium and the auditorium had been placed on the rear of the building. Ittner explained that he would design the school to be on "terraces," which would give "the building the effect of a high and dignified setting from the front" (personal communication, September 9, 1913). He also noted that he had removed all marble work except at the main entrance, to help with the ever-increasing cost. It is interesting that the famous marble stairs apparently were the only marble feature that was spared due to budget restraints. McClain warned that he was willing to give up some things to help with cost but only things "that will neither be pleasing in appearance nor satisfactory in use" (personal communication, September 12, 1913). Though there were budget constraints, it seems clear that McClain still wanted the very best for his building.

From October through December of 1913, McClain and Ittner wrote back and forth while waiting on the State of Ohio to review their plans yet again. These letters reveal just how particular McClain was. He worried about the number of forges in the mechanical room and about keeping noise to a minimum in the classrooms. He was also concerned with the exposed pipes and vents. He realized the mechanics were necessary, but because they were exposed, he worried about what that might do to the aesthetic value of the building. He even worried about the walls and the jagged corners in the hallways. He wanted the plaster to be curved (personal communications, October and December 1913).

More than a year after the announcement in the town newspaper, on January 26, 1914, the state approved the plans for the new high school. Soon thereafter, construction of the school began. What McClain and Ittner created, in consultation with other experts, was arguably the most modern and beautiful school building of its time. Frank Raymond Harris described its architecture as an “adaptation of the late English Gothic and of the Italian and French Renaissance” (personal communication, July 13, 1915). A newspaper in Oregon said it lent itself to “the fast-growing tendency to make the school building the center of all community activities,” and that this concept was “encouraged and aided by bringing semi-public rooms in easy reach of all....” (*Hood River Glacier*, June 4, 1914). In the new school, horticulture, agriculture, physical education and outdoor study, such as horticulture and agriculture, would take place on the rooftops, which were lined with tile, and in the open courtyards. Science labs were equipped with chemicals and gas, and the domestic science room contained a dining room for the students to practice what they learned (*Hood River Glacier*, June 4, 1914). The school emphasized community involvement and learning through doing, not by sitting behind a desk—all core progressive education concepts at the time.

During the construction phase, McClain and Ittner corresponded regularly, and Ittner made frequent trips to the site. McClain asked for Ittner's advice on "hangings" on the walls of the building. This is the first mention of artwork to be included in the building. McClain noted that "the collection should include ... prints, in addition to the reproduction of the standard works of the old masters and a few appropriate plaster casts" (personal communication, May 23, 1914). Unfortunately, a written response from Ittner does not exist because the two men spoke about the possible artwork in person. However, both men spoke of the artwork in later letters to others. McClain mentioned that Ittner suggested two companies for acquisition of artwork: Curtis and Cameron, a company in Boston, Massachusetts, that made prints of classical artwork for buildings all over the world, and Theodore Dillaway, an art dealer in Boston (W. Ittner, personal communication, n.d.).

Interestingly, when the school opened in September of 1914, it contained no art. In the 1915 commemorative copy of *The Dragon*, photographs of the building, as well as a written dedication, are featured, but no art adorns the walls or hallways. This was perhaps due to delays in the construction. In any case, the art would come later, and come it did—a story to which I now turn.

The Gift of Art

In July of 1916, McClain wrote to Curtis and Cameron, and sent them the 1915 edition of *The Dragon*, in order to get an idea of what they would suggest for artwork for the school. When Curtis and Cameron replied, they suggested a hand-colored series of the *Holy Grail* as the largest piece, as well as several other titles that they considered suitable for school buildings (personal communication, July 17, 1916). McClain worried that too much of one subject could present an

overstatement, so Curtis and Cameron sent him a complete list of “pictures which are particularly desirable for school decoration” (personal communication, August 3, 1916) and suggested that he form committees to make final decisions concerning the artwork.

After some delays due to repairs on the new building, in December, Curtis and Cameron sent the list of artwork, along with prices. The prints would be \$2,613.25 without framing. On December 22, 1916, McClain wrote back with his final input on the art. The artwork chosen for each room was based on the subject. For example, for the forging room, Curtis and Cameron suggested *Genius of the Workers in Iron and Steel* and *Spirit of Vulcan*. For the cooking lab, they chose *The Cook*, *Woman Peeling Apples*, and *The Herring Seller*. McClain seemed pleased with the choices but again mentioned the *Holy Grail* series. He worried that they would be “over-doing” it, and that this art was too much for the corridor of the first floor (personal communication, December 22, 1916).

Curtis and Cameron responded to McClain in a most revealing way as to why they felt strongly about the art they recommended for the school. They wrote,

As to the “Grail” in color on the opposite wall of the corridor, we feel strongly this is one of the very best and most inspiring series of pictures that could be selected from the whole range of art, —not only for decorative purpose at this commanding position in the corridor, but for the stimulation of the observation and imagination on the part of the pupils that see this wonderful frieze, class after class as the years goes by.... The teachers would find the pictures excellent material for composition work as well as addresses and the more pupils were informed as to the meaning and purpose and quality of the various subjects that come before their eyes, the more interested they would be, and the more general

taste and knowledge would be cultivated (personal communication, January 5, 1917).

Curtis and Cameron also offered to send guides to the teachers to help them plan lessons around the art, again stating that they believed that the more students knew about the art, the greater their interest would be (personal communication, March 31, 1917). McClain eventually agreed, noting that he felt the art would be of great benefit to the teachers and students.

Unfortunately, these guides, originally sent to McClain on April 27, 1917, are now nowhere to be found. The March 31, 1917, letter written by Curtis and Cameron, however, offers some clues as to what was included in the guides. The company recommended that teachers ask the students to write compositions on the various artwork “showing what they observe and how they think and feel on such matters.” They explained the reason for their recommendation this way: “We fear that the general tendency today in this country is for people to acquire mere facts about art. We hope that some of the matters we have written about will open their inner as well as outer eye.” This letter implies that, from the very beginning, the art in the school was meant not only to be decorative but to stir the students’ imaginations and to cause them to think deeply about the subjects and their feelings about them.

The importance of this point—that art can inspire imagination, not to mention change in students—cannot be underestimated. It is, indeed, very much in line with the progressive thinking of the day and John Dewey’s argument that art had clear benefits for instruction, edification, and imagination (Dewey, 1934). At the end of their correspondence, Curtis and Cameron asked McClain for copies of the commemorative issue of *The Dragon* to distribute to other high schools all over America. They considered McClain “probably the most distinguished high school in the country” (personal communication, August 28, 1917).



Figure 2: Front Entrance, Edward Lee McClain High School
Photo by author



Figure 3: *Ginevra* by Hiram Powers
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 4: *Athena*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

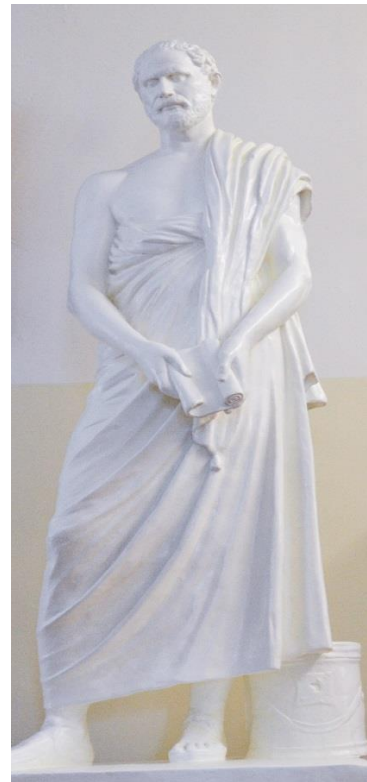


Figure 5: *Sophocles*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 6: *Augustus Caesar*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 7: *Statue of Washington*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 8: *Nike, Winged Victory*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 9: *The Wrestlers*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 10: *Joan of Arc*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 11: *The 54th Massachusetts Regiment*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

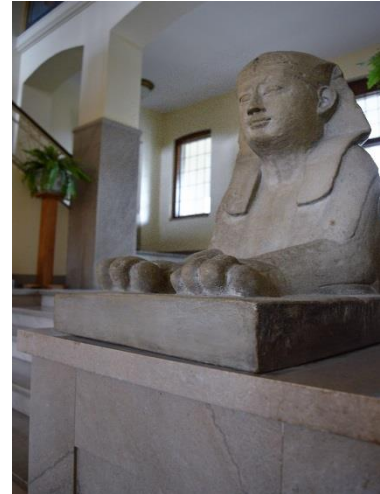


Figure 12: *An Egyptian Sphinx*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography



Figure 13: One of the *Holy Grail Series* paintings
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

We do not know how widely Curtis and Cameron distributed their copy of *The Dragon*, but it most likely had an impact, as others outside of Ohio heard about the school. While McClain was corresponding with Curtis and Cameron, he was also in contact with the P. P. Caproni and Brothers company, also based in Boston, Massachusetts. The correspondence began with the Caproni Brothers' unsolicited letter to McClain, written on January 20, 1916. The company offered their services to decorate the building with statues. At the time, the Caproni firm was setting up art collections at the New Germanic Museum at Harvard University and at MIT. They

assured McClain that they would be able to send a representative to Greenfield to review the “blank spaces” for statues, friezes, and busts. A list of this art was sent to McClain, and at this point, McClain divulged his problem. A statue of Minerva was donated to the school by the “colored people of the town.” McClain explained that they must leave room for it, and he felt that it would be best suited with the *Augustus Caesar* statue. McClain expressed over and over in his letters that he wanted everything to be balanced and not “over-done” or over the top; he wanted the presentation to be “harmonious”—as he often put it (personal communication, December 23, 1916). There was only problem: the *Minerva* statue was “very poorly done,” according to the Caproni Brothers (personal communication, December 28, 1916). McClain knew that the statue must be included, but he also knew that it needed to match the quality of the other statues in the building. Mulling over the problem, McClain wrote, “I have to handle this Minerva question very carefully, for one I don’t want to start any race question here, and aside from that would not intentionally give an affront to the colored citizens of this place who were certainly generous and well-disposed when they purchased a copy of Minerva....” (personal communication, February 12, 1917). After much discussion back and forth, Harris and McClain asked the black citizens to donate another statue of Minerva that matched the others, and they agreed to do this. But this question still remains: Why did local African American citizens donate their statue to the school in the first place? I will return to this question, as well as the rest of this story, in Chapter 5.

Among the statues the McClains chose to include were *Joan of Arc*, *Statue of Washington*, *Lorenzo and Guiliano De’Medici*, *Demosthenes*, *Nike of Samothrace*, *Sophocles*, and *The Wrestlers*. They also chose numerous friezes and busts of famous thinkers, writers, and others, including Shakespeare and Thomas Jefferson.

McClain's Murals

There are three murals that grace Edward Lee McClain High School, all original works and all immense. Two are displayed on either side of the library, which served as the study hall until the late 1980s and is on the third floor. The third mural is located above the grand entrance, opposite the marble staircase. As stated previously, Dillaway was an art consultant who advised McClain for a time. Dillaway suggested commissioning Vesper Lincoln George to paint the murals that McClain wanted in the larger spaces of the building. Like Caproni Brothers, George was from Boston. Educated in both New York and Paris, he founded his own school of art in 1924, after studying under famous French artists such as Jules Lefebvre and Lucien Doucet. Before that, George was the head of the department of design at the Massachusetts School of Art (Blake, 1932).

Unfortunately, the letters from McClain to George have been lost. Perhaps that is due to the close, personal connection the McClains and George were reported to have had. It is possible that McClain kept these letters in his home instead of with the other paperwork in his office. I exhausted every avenue in my search for these letters. The superintendent allowed me to go into the storage area and search through all the dusty boxes of documentation, but I found nothing. I also contacted the Greenfield Historical Society to inquire about the letters. The society had recently published *McClain High School: A Century of Tradition*, and I thought perhaps they had the letters, but nothing surfaced. I researched George's daughter, his successor at his art school, and found that she had passed away, and that all the personal items given to her by her father had been sold at auction. I contacted the Smithsonian Institution in hopes that they would have something—still nothing. I reached the archivist at the Massachusetts School of Art, where George was working at the time of his commissioned works for McClain. She searched through

700 boxes of material and found nothing relating to McClain High School. Fortunately, there was no lack of information from books, journal articles, and newspaper reports to give me some indication as to the relationship between the McClains and George, and the intent behind the commissioning of the school's murals.

When unpacking the story of the murals, one is inevitably led back to Lulu McClain, who was closely involved in their selection and design. She also selected many other art pieces for the school (Blake, 1932). Lulu was a great believer in the power of art. She was an “ardent proponent of a philosophy concerning art for the masses called the Picture Study Movement. Because America had been experiencing an influx of immigrants, the hope was to ‘Americanize’ and educate these newcomers and their children through art” (Greenfield Historical Society, 2015). Like Dewey (1934), who believed that all artists attempt to speak through their art, Lulu seemed convinced that surrounding people with art could eventually yield an understanding of the message behind the art. This is no more evident than in the murals, which seem to convey a range of messages. If we can assume that Lulu and Edward Lee McClain and the artist believed this, what were they attempting to say?

The first mural, installed in 1918, was *The Pageant of Prosperity*. “This painting,” as Blake (1932) noted, “symbolizes Prosperity toward which all men are striving, the ideal civilization, a land overflowing with milk and honey, where peace and plenty reign” (p. 21). The painting shows an ox cart laden with a bountiful harvest and surrounded by those who worked toward that harvest. The people are rejoicing in the fruits of their labor. The mural is accompanied by the Scripture “To rejoice in His labor, this is the gift from God” (Ecclesiastes 5:19 King James Version). It is obvious that McClain believed that hard work was necessary to create a utopian society. He had worked extremely hard for what he had accomplished and, just

like those in the painting, he was enjoying and sharing the fruits of his labor by giving the school and the art to his community.



Figure 14: *Pageant of Prosperity*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

Apotheosis of Youth, completed in 1919, “represents the service of education in the evolution of the citizen (Baker, 1932, p. 21). The allegorical piece features a young man in the center, surrounded by Education (symbolized by Alma Mater), Science, Literature, Art, Manual Training, and Domestic Science. The young man, now a graduate, has received his training and is now ready to “assume his responsibilities in the affairs of men” (Blake, 1932, p. 21).

Opportunity, Courage, Hope, Providence, Labor, Industry, and Thrift are there waiting to greet him as the “necessary accompaniments to successful endeavor” (Blake, 1932, p. 21). It is evident that the McClains valued education as the way to prepare young adults to take their place in society. As stated previously, this was one of the core beliefs of the Progressive movement.



Figure 15: *Apotheosis of Youth*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

In 1920, the final mural, *The Melting Pot*, was completed. This mural may be the most telling of the three. The “painting represents ... the process of the Americanization of the foreign elements that come to America through immigration” (Blake, 1932, p. 21). This painting, much like *Apotheosis of Youth*, features America, represented by a woman on a throne in the center of the mural. To the left are immigrants exiting a ship, representing Italians, Slavs, Scandinavians, and Chinese, “each bringing his contribution of gifts to our complex American civilization” (Blake, 1932, p. 21). As they add their gift to “the melting pot,” they are changed into American laborers, farmers, artists, musicians, and so on. Their gifts become part of American society, and they take their place as productive contributors. At the bottom of the painting, the Scripture inscribed is “And God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the Earth” (Acts 17:26 King James Version).



Figure 16: *The Melting Pot*
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

It is interesting to stop here and consider some things being “said” with this mural. On the left is a Chinese immigrant, prominently displayed in the front of the painting. This mural was painted in the late nineteenth century, when sweeping immigration laws had just been

enacted. Among these was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which kept Chinese workers from entering the United States. The General Immigration Act of 1882 taxed employers who hired immigrants and prevented “undesirables,” such as “idiots, lunatics, convicts, and persons likely to become a public charge” from entering the country (Primary Documents in American History, 2015). It was also through these mandates that immigration blocked the entrance of many other immigrants who were considered undesirable due to cultural differences and physical features. These included the Chinese and the Slavs, who are represented in the mural. In 1892, the Chinese exclusion law was updated with The Geary Act to allow Chinese immigrants into America. However, the Chinese were forced to register with the government and carry papers with them at all times. The law was made permanent in 1902 (“Chinese Immigration and Chinese in the United States,” 2016).

With this mural, the McClains seemed to be saying that all people are welcome in America. The Scripture under the mural supports that view (see above). Another framed inscription just a short distance from the mural drives home the same point. It is a poem penned by Robert Haven Schuffler in 1879 and titled “Scum O’ the Earth.” Meant to accompany the mural, it was selected by the McClains and decorated with painted fruit and flowers by Vesper Lincoln George. The poem presents a satiric view of calling immigrants the “scum of the earth.” It calls attention to the fact that the Greeks produced Socrates and the Spartans, the Polish claim Chopin and Dvorak, the Italians claim Caesar and Dante, and so on. Yet, many Americans considered immigrants the “scum of the earth.” The last few lines of the poem ask for pardon:

Newcomers all from the eastern seas,
Help us incarnate dreams like these.
Forget, and forgive, that we did you wrong.

Help us to father a nation, strong

In the comradeship of an equal birth,

In the wealth of the richest bloods of earth (Schauffler, 1879).

Again, it is evident that the McClains were progressives, but they were also inspired by traditional Christian charity and benevolent philanthropy. That particular mix—as exhibited by Horace Mann—yielded a view that all people, no matter their socio-economic status or cultural background, deserved an education and a place in American society.

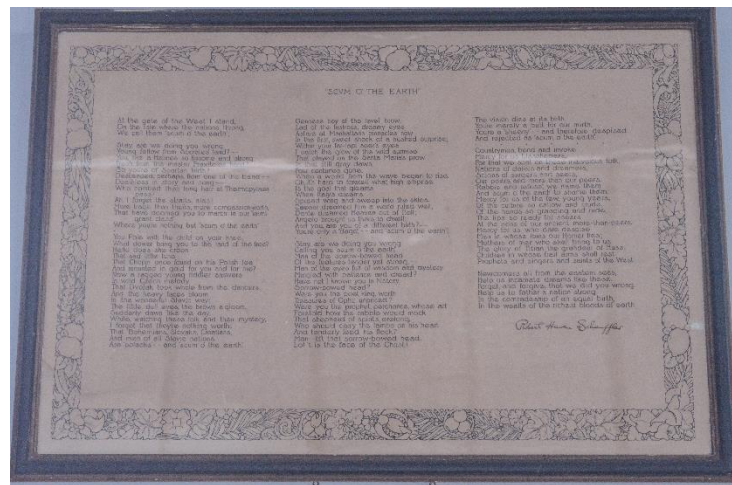


Figure 17: “Scum O’ the Earth”
Photo by Morgan Kate Photography

This was a very controversial subject in those years, much as it is today. Interestingly, I found nothing in newspaper reports about the controversial nature of the mural. All articles raved about the gift of the building and the art, and praised their function and beauty. While it may have been spoken about in small social circles, I found no evidence of any public renouncement of the mural or the other works of art due to their controversial subject.

Conclusions: A Lasting Legacy

As a student, alumna, and now researcher of Edward Lee McClain High School, I have often questioned why a man would build such a beautiful high school and donate it to such a small

town, with no expectations of receiving anything in return. In a letter placed in the vocational school cornerstone, McClain explains exactly why he did it:

I chose to beautify this high school with original murals and copies of world famous sculptures and pictures, in abundance. This was done with the idea of teaching refinement and appreciation for the higher ideals of life—to cultivate a taste for the beautiful and ethical. ‘Finally, education alone can conduct us to that enjoyment, which is, at once best in quality and infinite in quantity’ [a quote by Horace Mann]. In order to try to relieve this statement from the realms of presumption, I wish to say that another element of human nature was taken into account, as well as what has become common practice, namely, that in communities, and this is more especially true in the smaller places, public affairs are not as well and carefully looked after by those who are elected to the offices as is generally true of matters more private and personal ... Such electives would frequently undoubtedly do things differently if they could—that is to say, if they had the funds, and if they received the right kind of moral support from the community ... Consequently, feeling it to be a privilege, and is unquestionably the privilege of any citizen to undertake something well-meant in behalf of the community in which he lives, I chose to do this thing ... what would be better, what could be better, than something in which we would have interest in common, in which we could work together as one family for the good of all? The question answers itself—the public schools ... the schools belong to us, not one more than another but to all. The public school is the keystone upon which our republic must endure. It is for democracy’s sake (May 20, 1923).

There is no doubt in my mind that the McClains were heavily influenced by the thinking of Horace Mann and John Dewey. Edward McClain referred to education as the most important aspect of democracy, and he believed in the importance of education for all. These are both core values of the Progressive Era. The effort and funds McClain put into the building are evidenced in his countless letters to Ittner, Dillaway, Dresslar, Harris, and the art dealers. McClain was concerned about every detail and aspect of the school and wanted it to be a source of pride for the people of Greenfield. He wanted the students to graduate with a sense of “refinement and appreciation” for art and the aesthetic value of things. The graduates and the community saved the school from demolition and were awarded with monies to return it to its original beauty. One hundred years later, the students are still surrounded by the same beauty as the students were in 1920. McClain fulfilled his promise and made his benevolent dream a reality.

But how effective were McClain’s strategies? Did students actually “receive” the intended messages? If the students received the messages, were they affected by them? Did they make a difference? Do they continue to be affected by them? I’ll take up these questions in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

McClain High School Stories

I vividly remember my first day at Edward Lee McClain High School. I was scared and nervous—not because it was my first day of high school, but because I was beginning school at a very foreign place. From kindergarten through eighth grade, I attended Buckskin School. Buckskin was an “outlying” school of the Greenfield Exempted Village School District (GEVSD) and one of three schools that had consolidated with GEVSD in the 1960s. The school I had attended for nine years was very small, with only one class per grade level. It was a very tight-knit school with a family-like feel. Edward Lee McClain High School seemed massive compared to little Buckskin School. My father, who graduated from ELMHS in 1972, had not told me much about the school, other than that it had artwork in it. I had no idea what to expect.

As I walked up the stairs, I looked up, and inscribed in stone over the main entrance were the words “Achievement--live in deeds, not years; Opportunity--act in the living present.” Accompanying this inscription were others: “Purpose, Courage, Duty, Work.” Edward Lee McClain personally chose these words to inspire and evoke thought from all students who entered under them. Interestingly, as I began to conduct and collect interviews from alumni, these graduates recalled these words and their sentiments often, and I heard them repeatedly. The graduates came from all walks of life, different ages and generations, and yet, their words all echoed these words chosen by McClain.

Achievements and Opportunity

Stereotypically, one might not consider an Appalachian education opportunistic, but the alumni of ELMHS do not see it that way. They feel that the experiences and the education they received provided them with opportunities not even offered in some large, urban areas. Kristen White, a 2008 graduate, is today beginning her pediatric residency at Dayton Children's Hospital. She says that the opportunities and education she was given at McClain continue to affect her daily. She attributes this feeling of opportunity to McClain's gift:

[It's the thought that] someone from Greenfield [McClain] started out with nothing ... to build this empire that he [McClain] continued to put money back into the community. I think it has instilled in me this sense of I should do the same thing.... You have people who continue to come back to the community and continue to try and teach the same values that we were taught.... I think that's what I love to tell people is that the school is producing awesome people. You know, we have people who work at Disney World and create amazing things because they were inspired at McClain in their drama and creative arts program. And then you have people working in research labs because they were inspired at McClain in their science department. And then you have people working for news channels because we had a TV and radio class that inspired them to go into the television network. And you have physicians and lawyers and ... I mean multitudes of people in different areas of life because we had so much to offer and you got a dabble of everything while you were there (personal communication, April 13, 2017).

Kristen is not the only one who is affected by the opportunities she received at McClain. Javier Saiz Sanchez is another. He was a foreign exchange student from Bilbao, Spain, and graduated from ELMHS in 1993. Javier came to Greenfield, Ohio, from a city with a population of well over one million. Many would find it hard to believe that his experience at ELMHS could have

affected him to the extent that it did, but he explained the opportunity the school provided him this way:

It changed my life ... the teachers were very good teachers ... the school gave me the chance to do something I was not comfortable with, and helped develop myself and meeting people.... The school was completely different than the school I was studying here in Spain.... (personal communication, March 2, 2017).

Javier said that the courses he took at McClain and the activities in which he was involved could have never happened where he grew up in Spain. He recalled his meaningful time in show choir, for example, and singing, dancing, and acting in the school musical. He told me about his time in Mr. Crusie's art class, when he was permitted to sit among the statues and artwork to sketch them. He spoke about debating other students in Mr. Chapman's government class. He explained that at McClain, "you have more things to do ... the light doesn't finish after class.... You can do more things ... you can be at math at nine in the morning and then you can be singing at three.... It gave me a lot of confidence and also a lot of imagination.... It's by far the most important experience in my life" (personal communication, March 2, 2017). The opportunities provided to Javier impacted his life then and they still do today.

As an alumna, I felt much the same way when I walked the halls of ELMHS. I never felt pressured or led to study one thing or another. My teachers encouraged me to try many different courses and activities, find what I was passionate about, and then work hard to succeed at whatever I put my mind to. My experience is different than most because as a senior, at age 17, I became pregnant. Besides my parents and family, it was my teachers who pushed me, saying this is something life changing but not life destroying. You are going to go on and you are going to do well and accomplish much. The opportunities and support I was given at ELMHS gave me

the ability to do just that. When I became a high school English teacher, I implemented many of the traditions that we had at ELMHS. I knew this would be a good way of bringing the students and the community together, while providing opportunities that my students would not have had otherwise.

* * * * *

Danny and Susan Long, 1964 and 1970 graduates respectively, were both teachers at ELMHS as well. Danny taught industrial arts and was later the guidance counselor. Susan taught English language arts and humanities. Both spoke of the opportunities given them by the education they received and the experiences they had as both students and teachers. Danny and Susan also remember fondly their playing Edward Lee and LuLu McClain during the Centennial Celebration. They spent hours researching the parts. Danny, in particular, was impressed with Edward Lee McClain's progressive approach and insistence on opportunity for all. Danny explained,

Edward Lee McClain was very progressive. He thought way ahead.... There's a statue in the hallway ... it's a statue of Athena.... Mrs. McClain didn't put that in there. It was put there by the black community of Greenfield because one of his [McClain's] stipulations was that the black children in Greenfield would go to this high school. They didn't want to go someplace else. And keep in mind this was in 1915. In the early 1950s, Hillsboro [a neighboring, larger town] still had a separate school. He was way ahead of his game and he put ideas into the building itself and he had help. F. R. Harris was very smart too. These guys worked together very well and they came up with ideas they felt the kids needed at the time because it was very much agricultural [at the time]. But they were smart enough to know things were going to change, and they put other components in the

school so those kids could get a head start in a woodworking shop or metal working, and they put in graphic art studios.... He [McClain] went to Greenfield schools. Greenfield schools at the time were very shabby, drabby places that were not very conducive to learning, poor working conditions for the teachers. And he had a vision because he had the means to make that vision come true and his vision was to put together a school where our students in Greenfield would come into that building and have the opportunity to learn and get the foundations and the basics they needed to go out and do anything they wanted to in life.... I think it's been a golden opportunity for our kids to have gone through this system to have a chance in this plan he has set for us. This plan was set up 100 years ago and I think it still holds true. We have a great place for kids to learn (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

As Danny Long notes, from the very beginning, it seems that McClain was thinking about providing opportunities for all young people in many different ways. Nowhere is this more evident than in the story of Thelma Coffey, who graduated in 1938. Coffey, who is one of the oldest alumni still living, taught in the elementary school behind the high school for 32 years.

Thelma explained that she was required to take home economics her freshman and sophomore years, but that experience gave her the opportunity to attend conferences at The Ohio State University, get dressed up, and stay on campus with her teacher and other students. She told me that this was not an experience she would have had without the class at ELMHS. She did say, however, that women were not strictly relegated to taking home economics. A female friend of hers wanted to take woodworking and she was allowed to do so. This was progressive thinking for the time period. Thelma had a sister and three brothers, all of whom were educated at ELMHS. Her sister was a realtor, one brother was a dentist, another brother was an

orthodontist, and the last brother was a minister. All of her siblings went to college and had very successful careers. She told me, “I was very fortunate.... Well, our whole family was fortunate” (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Edward Lee McClain was not the only person to provide opportunities for students. Wilfred Konneker was a 1930 alumnus who went on to study at Ohio University in Athens, earning a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree. He then earned a doctorate of nuclear physics from Washington University. Much like McClain, Konneker gave back to the community and the school that had given him his educational start, establishing the Manasseh Cutler Scholar Program in 1995. This scholarship is given to one graduate of Edward Lee McClain High School each year. The student must be in the top 10 percent of the class and complete a rigorous interview and essay process. The winner is given four years of paid tuition, room and board, and a study abroad experience at Ohio University (*The Highland County Press*, 2016). While I was unable to interview Konneker before his death in January 2016, I was able to interview one of the recipients of his scholarship, Elizabeth Cockerill, class of 2002. She explained,

He [Konneker] just wanted to give back to the community where he was raised....

He knew that Greenfield is not the wealthiest community to be in, and that’s where he was raised. He lost his mother at a young age and went there to live with his aunt.... He felt very grateful to the community for helping raise him.... They [Dr. Konneker and his wife] just had all this money, and he was a very selfless man.... They would rather see the money go to benefit future endeavors for others rather than themselves (personal communication, January 25, 2016).

This sounded very reminiscent of McClain’s words concerning why he built the school for the community. Elizabeth is also grateful for the education she received, the opportunities given to her, and the achievements she has reached. She is now an optometrist in Columbus, Ohio.

The opportunity to attend McClain was also something that was mentioned again and again. Alumni from my study Facebook page often used words like “unique,” “beautiful,” “respect,” “pride,” “tradition,” and “inspirational” to describe their experience and the images they were left with. In my Skype session with Javier Saiz Sanchez, he made these comments:

There is something that you feel—even if you don’t know anything about the art or nobody explains it to you.... It was great to run down the stairs ... from one class to another ... looking up at the sculptures.... It gave me the sense like [I] was already in the classroom. You don’t have to open the door and get in the classroom. The whole building was a classroom. The sense of space, that the art is not one art but one space, another background. A space of respect and knowledge. I don’t know how to specify it ... like a warm feeling ... a lot of knowledge surrounded by sensitivity (personal communication, March 2, 2017).

During my research, I discovered that the art was indeed taught to students and used in the curriculum, just as the McClains had hoped it would be. Cathy Rivas, a 1972 graduate and art teacher at Greenfield Elementary, told me about her instruction to her young students:

It’s my intention that every year we do a full-scale tour of the building, starting in the fourth grade. The sixth grade and the eighth grade social studies teacher [has] always made sure that on the last week of school, before the eighth grades moved on to the high school, that we took a tour and talked about the pieces.... We’ve

used *The Melting Pot* to compare and contrast what was happening in the United States in 1920, when the painting was done, and what is happening now, with immigration and opportunity and so on. They are wonderful teaching tools, which I think was Mrs. McClain's intention when the pieces were put in.... We talk about *Joan of Arc* a lot in terms of ... an amazing story (personal communication, April 12, 2017).

Rivas is not the only teacher to draw students' attention to the art in the building. Susan Long explained in similar way:

Ms. Adelaide Shaw [the Latin teacher] really made me appreciate our school. [We would] go around to all the Latin inscriptions that were inside and outside, and the statues that were from ancient times, and we had to translate and really think what those sayings were about. They were about being industrious. They were about the importance of science, the importance of knowledge, the importance of literature, and I realized that this is what the McClains valued.... I realized it was the whole human ... it was all of human development. Not just physical but intellectually.... Mrs. McClain put in over 200 pieces of artwork and I just felt every day that I walked in was a day of inspiration because you were greeted by philosophers and heroes and even the common man and Joan of Arc. You just could not help but be inspired, and for being in a rural area like this, I look back now and realize how many of our students went on to excel in so many professions because of the inspiration that surrounded them.... I remember as a young person looking at the *Apotheosis of Youth*, just looking at it and seeing the young man looking out on the horizon, the proverbial horizon, and just the idea of

seeing opportunities outstretch to seize the moment, to seize that opportunity (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

As Susan Long suggests, the opportunity to be in the environment and the instruction she was given expanded her outlook and, she believes, that of other alumni as well.

Students become aware of the art in the school on first arriving (it's hard to miss), but as their education continues, they also become aware of its purpose. This is explicitly taught both in art classes and the regular curriculum in ways similar to how McClain and Dillaway imagined in their original letters to one another (see Chapter 4). Along these lines, many of the graduates mentioned the opportunity to receive the education they did, and to be exposed to art in Appalachia. Kristen White explained:

You go through the school, and coming from a rural community that has never seen pieces of art like there are in the high school, I think you have a sense of awe, that you respect the value but also respect that someone gave it to you as a gift.... It is the pride of our community ... it's given employment, given housing, it's given education, it's given trade, it's given so much to not only the members of the community in this time period but their parents and their grandparents.... It was built on principle. It was built on the foundation of a gift and gratitude and then pride and these core principles that I think were also instilled to us as students.... It made you stand a little taller because you were from McClain ... so I'm grateful, and I'm inspired and I'm passionate and I'm thankful for what I was given (personal communication, April 13, 2017).

* * * * *

At Buckskin School, I was not given the opportunity to have a walk-through and education of the art before I entered McClain High School as a freshman. I remember vividly seeing the art for the first time and being in awe of it. As time went on, I noticed it less and less, but I recall always being aware of its presence and that unspoken rule of respect for it. I can remember staying after school for drill team and musical practices when I, along with other students, could have easily done something to a statue or run up the marble stairs. But we did not dare; we had too much respect for the beauty and tradition of everything in the school.

Purpose, Courage, Duty, Work

Reading McClain's letters, it becomes evident that he had a purpose in building and designing the school. It took a certain amount of courage to envision and build one of the most progressive and modern schools in the country. His letters make clear that he believed it was his duty to use his wealth for the "greater good" and build something that would impact the most people for the longest period of time. He also believed in excellent work and working hard, and he expected that from everyone around him. The words "Achievement—live in deeds, not years; Opportunity—act in the living present" and "Purpose, Courage, Duty, Work" were thus not admonitions chosen without thought or purpose. And as my interviews proved, the sentiments were not lost on the students.

McClain's purpose for building the state-of-the-art high school was to prepare young persons to become productive, successful members of their community and to provide the community with a place to gather, learn, and socialize. My oral history work suggests that the school's purpose to prepare young persons to be productive citizens has been fulfilled. But what about the school's role in the community? What about students' roles in the community? And how is the community involved in the school?

After I conducted the interviews, one particular theme came to the surface: the strong connection between the school and the community, with each one relying on the other. Elizabeth Cockerill, for instance, told me that “the community surrounds the school.... It’s not just the school being separate from the community.... They’re pretty intertwined, and I think it’s a nice thing you don’t find in every town” (personal communication, January 25, 2016). Cathy Rivas made a similar point, saying it is “pride, I think.... It’s an identity thing. It’s an identity for us as a community. I think it is the center of a lot that happens in our community ... and we have something that not too many places have ... pride, and an identity. A history, a proud history of good memories” (personal communication, April 12, 2017). Kristen White echoed Cathy’s sentiments:

[The school] sits in the middle of the town and really our whole community revolves around the school.... When you go to a musical and you can’t find a parking spot because people have their children there ... and you see basketball games and there’s people from 85 down to newborns there.... They’re there whether they have a child on the floor or whether it’s somebody’s friend of a friend.... You have to think that people support all these different activities at McClain and how people are inspired because they feel supported. The support of the community is something you don’t get everywhere. The scholarships that I received to go to college or scholarships that people received to go to trade school or to start a business are amazing.... I think that it’s just the backing that you have from this community that we continue to put into people that are coming out that makes people want to come back and keep it going” (personal communication, April 13, 2017).

Greenfield is not a wealthy city, but the community has a mentality much like that of Horace Mann. Ronald Coffey, the city manager of Greenfield and a 1967 graduate of ELMHS, explained it this way:

I've seen the implication that the community was very supportive of the school.... We've always had a reputation here in Greenfield of being a hardworking community of maybe not wealthy people but working people.... They didn't have as much maybe as folks in other communities, but they had jobs and they lived the dream. They owned homes and they raised their families.... We don't turn our backs on any segment of the population.... The community has always been active with groups like the Rotary and the Lions Club and so on. We needed physicians back in the '60s, they got together and raised some money and they recruited some doctors. It's been like that for all the institutions around here.... They've all kind of bonded together and, if there's a need, people in Greenfield step up and try to meet it (personal communication, March 6, 2017).

As Coffey states, as much as possible, no member of the Greenfield community is left out; if there is a need, it is met, whether it be at the school or elsewhere. The community serves institutions such as ELMHS, and the school, in turn, serves the community by producing excellent citizens, whether they stay in the community or leave to make an impact elsewhere. Even Javier Saiz Sanchez, who only spent a year in Greenfield, understood this mutual reliance and connection: "It's not just a school ... it's not just the art ... it's that thing that makes the people feel completely different than any other city, and the people are proud of that building because it represents history and it represents the city.... It represents the roots" (personal communication, March 2, 2017).

The oral histories suggest that McClain's goal to develop strong school-community connect has been realized. But what about his goals for placing a great deal of art in the school? McClain remarked in his letters that the art's purpose was to inspire thinking at a deeper level within the curriculum, which is a very progressive idea. But was that purpose fulfilled? As stated previously by Cathy Rivas, Javier Saiz Sanchez, and others, the art was and is, indeed, involved in the curriculum and students are asked to think about its meaning. Did and does it inspire students? During the collection of the oral histories, I asked each participant to name their favorite artwork out of the more than 200 pieces. Without hesitation, the majority named *Ginevra*. This sculpted bust is one of only two in the world carved by the artist Hiram Powers. It was donated to ELMHS in 1928 by William Moler. For years it sat in the middle of the first-floor hallway on a pedestal with no protection. No one ever dared touch it. Cathy Rivas was so inspired by the piece that she wrote her master's thesis on it.

Rivas had more to say about other art in the building. In particular, she described being especially drawn to the mural in the library, *The Melting Pot*. She said,

I just like what it says about our country. If we look at the figures that are on the left-hand side of the painting, as they're coming off the boat, they're coming from all parts of the world, and they're identified by the Scottish person, the Chinese guy, the Italian man with the monkey on his back, all those different people coming from all those different places, that have just suffered through the first World War.... And they bring with them lots of wonderful things, even though they come with basically the shirts on their back. They bring their recipes, they bring their stories, they bring their dances and their traditions.... And those are the things that they have to offer us as a country and as a culture. And for them,

coming to America, on this side, the things that we have to offer are the opportunity to get an education, the opportunity to work, as symbolized by the man with the blacksmith's apron, and then the soldier that represents the freedoms that we enjoy. And there are all kinds of other little things, the factory in the background, the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, and the different little things that are also incorporated in the painting, I just think make it a wonderful, wonderful piece for discussion. And then, looking forward from that, now can we say those same things about what is going on in America today? (personal communication, April 12, 2017)

In a similar vein, Susan Long also remarked that all the art in the school “speaks” to viewers beyond what this or that piece might offer within the context of instruction. She reminded me, for example, of the progressive art throughout the building, such as the paintings of the Trail of Tears and of The 59th Massachusetts Infantry, the first African American infantry allowed to fight in the Civil War. Long felt that this helped to illustrate McClain’s celebrated attitudes about diversity, which “needed to be remembered and needed to be honored” (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Given that this artwork was installed in an era when many Americans openly resisted inclusivity (Trail of Tears in 1889 and 54th Massachusetts Infantry in 1863), it attests to the ideals of courage, work, and duty that were, and still are, encouraged at McClain High School. All of the graduates I interviewed spoke of the hard work they did while students at ELMHS and the challenges they faced and overcame. Brett Pulse, for example, a 1982 graduate and currently the principal at Fort West High School in O’Fallon, Missouri, said, “I would go back [to Greenfield] today if I had to make that choice over.... The morals and values that I learned in

Greenfield ... and the work ethic, I believe, has helped me” (personal communication, January 5, 2016). Javier Saiz Sanchez told me of the courage he had to muster as he stepped out of his comfort zone and tried new things like show choir and track. As I conducted more interviews, three final themes began to emerge from the personal histories and the history of the school and community.

Evidence of courage came in many forms. The citizens of Greenfield most certainly exhibited a kind of courage when, in the early 2000s, the school faced destruction. The community, the school, and its alumni were tested in ways few could have imagined. They would eventually pass with flying colors, making it clear, to many alumni at least, that if Edward Lee McClain had wanted them to think of the word *courage* each and every time they entered and exited the school, then those admonitions had not gone unheeded. Danny Long explains:

The Higher Facilities Commission [of Ohio] said, “Okay, if you raise four million dollars, we will give you \$15 million to renovate your buildings,” and we passed the levy. Well ... they came back and said, “We’ve decided you can’t renovate, you have to tear it down,’ and thank goodness level heads got together and said, “You want to come down and look at this building and see what it is?” And they had never seen anything like it before. They said this was a museum and they [the community] said no, this is our high school building. We’re not going to tear it down. You can take your money and do whatever you want with it. It [The Higher Facilities Commission] ended up giving us 32 million dollars. It worked out well. The people of Greenfield would not have let that building be torn down. It would not have happened (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Cathy Rivas echoed Danny Long's sentiments: "It was almost like it wasn't an option. You know, when somebody hands you [millions] and you say, sorry, but we don't care to take your money. And it did involve many different people stepping up and making the effort.... People stood up and said, 'This can't happen.' And, fortunately, they made their case in such a way that the state saw logic in what they had to say" (personal communication, April 12, 2017).

Person after person told me the same. The alumni and community members stood up to the State of Ohio and turned down millions of dollars, since it meant their high school had to be torn down. It took courage to do that, especially when every other town in Ohio had torn down their old schools to make way for modern ones. Elizabeth Cockerill remembered the conversation in her home at the time:

My dad ... he's from an even smaller town.... [They] tore down their old high school and built a new one. My dad thinks Greenfield should have done the same thing ... and my mom, who was a Greenfield graduate, totally disagrees with this statement. She's like, "No! We have a beautiful, unique high school. Why would you tear it down? You'd never be able to build something better." So that's how I feel. I'm glad to see they rallied.... There's so many schools, when you drive around, they all look alike because they were all built around the same era.... I mean, we've taken our friends there and they just think it's so different than anywhere else they've been to school.... I feel like it makes it unique (personal communication, January 25, 2016).

The community showed courage and determination when facing the Higher Facilities Commission, but what was the reason behind it? As I conducted interviews, the answer quickly became evident. They felt it was their duty to do so. Stuart Beatty, a 1997 graduate who is now

an associate professor of clinical pharmacy at The Ohio State University, explained: “[It’s the] recognition that it’s not just a high school, it was a gift given to a community.... And the high school holds a special place to people because it was a gift and because of the uniqueness with the artwork and the statues. So that’s why they fought back.... (personal communication, January 26, 2016). The alumni and the community felt it was their duty to protect their high school because it was a gift from a man who was one of their own, and, it was a thing of beauty to be preserved. There was a feeling of gratitude for it. Brett Pulse said, for example,

I don’t know that I appreciated nearly as much what we had when I was there, but when I compare it to other places, there’s no comparison. And that’s the big difference.... People weren’t disrespectful. They took care of the building....

There wasn’t trash lying around. There were not people walking on the marble staircase that weren’t supposed to be on the marble staircase. People took care of it.... Nobody stuck their gum on the back of the statues or anything like that.... I think there was some pride in that. And I think that went from year to year, from class to class, that got passed on, that tradition of being respectful to the surroundings.... The community is only alive because of the school. I think the community would have died a long time ago if it hadn’t been for the school....

The school is still a gem ... and when it came right down to it, when they were going to tear it down and build a new school, people didn’t want a new school.

So they fought to keep it (personal communication, January 5, 2016).

* * * * *

As I reflect on these words and those of so many others, it seems more obvious to me that many buildings erected by the Ohio Facilities Commission look sterile and almost like prisons, as if to

suggest that learning should be more disciplined and controlled. There is no sense of beauty about them. ELMHS, in contrast, exudes a sense of beauty around the process of learning. It says, “This is a place for learned people, and when you enter these doors, you will be learned as well. When you exit these doors, you will be more knowledgeable and ready to take your place in society.” The newer buildings I see now seem devoid of this important message.

I’m not the only one who feels this way. By collecting the oral histories, I learned that other alumni of Edward Lee McClain High School also believe they were given priceless opportunities, that they achieved much, and that they gained a sense of purpose, duty, and courage, and a work ethic that still affects them today. They still carry with them the traditions and respect they learned. The gratitude they feel toward the town, the school, and its benefactor are evident. It is clear that they understand the community’s role both in the school’s traditions and unique physical environment. Their traditions are something that they treasure and pass down from generation to generation. Their gratitude for the art and beauty is still apparent. It was McClain’s vision to do the greatest good for the longest time and expose the community of Greenfield to art and culture. It is clear that he succeeded. As McClain had hoped, alumni are aware of the messages the artists intended with their works, and each person has had his or her own experience with the art as well.

The oral histories reveal much about the art and the alumni experiences with it. All of the alumni spoke of the beauty of the art and the feeling they had when they were surrounded by it day after day. Many spoke of their memories of seeing it as students and the positive effect it had on them, then and now. All participants told me of the uniqueness of the building and their appreciation for having attended and graduated from Edward Lee McClain High School. While most of the alumni did not see the progressive messages in the artwork, some did.

Importantly, E. L. McClain wished for the art to be used to enhance the curriculum. Through the oral histories, I discovered that, indeed, it was. One alumnus described it as the entire building being a classroom; the learning took place all over the building and it did not end after the school day was over (Javier Saiz Sanchez, personal communication, March 2, 2017). The art spoke to all the alumni differently, as Dewey (1934) suggested it should. Some, like Susan Long, related to it personally, as she pictured herself as the young man in *Apotheosis of Youth*, just ready to begin her life after graduating (personal communication, February 20, 2017). Others, like Cathy Rivas, appreciated *The Melting Pot* for the message it gave about hoping for and achieving the American dream (personal communication, April 12, 2017).

All of the alumni I interviewed spoke of the respect they had for the school's art and traditions. In 100 years, not one statue or other piece of artwork has been vandalized to anyone's knowledge. The alumni attributed this not only to students' appreciation for the art but also to the unspoken rules passed down to incoming freshmen year after year. Overall, the alumni recognized the precious gift of the art and wished to honor it.

It is easy to imagine how the alumni's sentimental attachment to the school's artwork and architectural features could play a prominent role in keeping the school from being torn down. Indeed, had the sculptures and murals, the pool, and the Oxford-like classrooms not been present, would the community have worked so hard to save it from destruction? That is a very difficult question to answer. But from the information I gathered from the oral histories, I would say that, yes, it actually still would have. While alumni spoke highly of the artwork and the beauty of the school, their testimonies ultimately pointed back to McClain's altruistic intentions, to which many alumni felt obligated and responsible.

Conclusion

Oral histories reveal much about the people and places on which they are focused. While a survey can give numeric data about a certain event, place, or space, oral histories can reveal the deeper meanings behind a story. As oral historian Yow (2005) explains, oral histories “provide a specificity and richness of experience that general accounts” often do not provide (p. 16). Oral histories can provide extensive and contextualized insights into the lives of those who experienced the event, place, or space firsthand.

Along with the oral histories, I have included information from many of the letters written by the major figures involved with the design, construction, and execution of Edward Lee McClain High School (especially in Chapter 4). Together, these first-hand accounts give much more detailed data and provide insight into McClain’s vision and reason for building the school. These sources illuminate the experiences of many different people, and from different decades. Collectively, they tell a story across time that has much to offer those wishing to understand the meaning of McClain High School to the local community, including McClain parents, teachers, students, and alumni.

While my intent has been to present a multi-faceted story about McClain High School via a variety of sources, at this point, I wish to point out several important concepts that surfaced from the oral histories.

1. The physical environment at Edward Lee McClain High School was an important aspect of alumni learning experiences. Interviewees felt that they were in a place of learning, achievement, and opportunity, and that their surroundings contributed to their learning.

2. Doing things for the greater good can affect countless numbers of people. The interviewees felt that the McClains' gift of the school could not be measured, and the education and opportunities it has provided for generations were priceless. The oral histories described an excellent curriculum, a love of community, and generations of young citizens who have taken their place in society fully prepared.
3. The interviewees said the community and the school were very much intertwined. The community supports the school financially, physically, and even emotionally at times, and the school supports the community in much the same way.
4. The interviewees said that the art in the building affected them and that they learned from it. While the messages they received may not have been what the artist intended, the art still affected them in important ways.

While all the alumni oral histories were different, stories of achievement, opportunity, appreciation, and love for the school were present in all of them. All said that the excellent education and guidance they received fully prepared them for what they encountered in the world after graduation. The opportunities provided had a lasting effect and changed their lives.

Importantly, the loyalty engendered by the McClains' perceived gift led the community to fight the Higher Facilities Commission to save its school from destruction. While these people of Appalachia are not wealthy, as a community, they are rich in tradition, pride, education, work ethic, and a duty to honor and protect a legendary gift. In Chapter 6, I will reflect on this and explore my research questions and further research, as my dissertation comes to a close.

Chapter 6

Reflection and Further Research

When I first began considering Edward Lee McClain High School as my dissertation topic over two years ago, I could not have predicted the effect it would have on my appreciation of my alma mater, the man who built it, and the education I received there. The letters I read and the stories I collected added an even more powerful meaning to my own story. As I read, Edward Lee McClain became more real to me than ever before. The time, effort, and care that he put into planning his gift to his community is astounding to me. As I listened to the alumni oral histories, I saw that their gratefulness to McClain for the education they received echoed my own. I was honored to have heard about their experiences, and I am indebted to them for sharing their stories with me.

In this final chapter, I present a study summary, which includes a brief reminder of the main research topic and its questions, and a review of pertinent literature as it relates to the research's findings. I also include a recap of the study methods and how they were applied, and a brief summary of the history and culture of McClain High School, as explored via primary documents, field notes, and oral history interviews. I follow this with an exploration of the study's research questions and then consider art as curriculum. From this base I offer some suggestions for further research, as well as some final thoughts about the study's significance and possible impact.

Study Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced topics that I discuss in depth in subsequent chapters and presented concepts such as progressive ideals, John Dewey and his philosophy of hands-one learning, community involvement, and “art for everyday enjoyment.” I also introduced my research questions, which were designed to probe how alumni perceived their experiences at the school, how they understood the role of the school and its relationship to community, how the school’s traditions and unique physical environment affected them, and how the school and its art articulated Progressive Era values. Finally, I briefly outlined the combination of qualitative research methods I used for this study, including collecting oral histories and developing them within frames of collaborative ethnography. I will return to both research questions and methods in this summary.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature concerning the history of education in America, John Dewey and the Progressive Movement, education in Appalachia, and art and the school environment. I also reviewed literature on architecture and its effects on school environments. After much reading and research, it seems evident that these writings relate to ELMHS in a very direct way. Horace Mann, whom E. L. McClain often quoted and looked to for inspiration (see Chapter 5), believed that equal access to education would help to address many of society’s ills. He, along with John Dewey and many others, saw drill and practice, memorization, and recitation as failed educational approaches and instead argued for hands-on and natural learning as the best methods. Dewey (1899) explained that “we learn from experience” (p. 31). Following this, progressive educators—and people who put their ideas into practice, like McClain—believed that students should be well-rounded and broadly trained. Students accomplished this

by being exposed to art, the classics, mathematics, and the sciences, as well as vocational training. No one should ever be prepared for just one particular job, or one track in life; all should be prepared to contribute multiple skills and deeper knowledge to society. Of course, progressives like Dewey had their critics, who claimed that the progressives favored the rich and saw the world through rose-colored glasses. Critics also stated that philosophy and the humanities were irrelevant for job placement and had no place in an industrial society that needed only workers, not intellectuals. They further said that individualism, at least in education, was not feasible in a modern society and that Dewey pushed a social agenda meant to disrupt modernization, not help it along (Counts, 1932; Edmundson, 2006).

Community involvement was also a very important aspect of progressive education. “We have all received unearned benefits from the prior effects of the human community,” stated Campbell (1998), “and this debt must somehow be repaid” (p. 35). It was through education that citizens would become positive contributors to their communities and thus achieve “the common good” (Campbell, 1998). Progressives of the era believed that people should contribute their talents, beliefs, and values to their communities. While Dewey was not interested in creating a utopia, he did want every person in a community to contribute and to be inspired by community members who came before them. McClain put these ideas into practice as he conceptualized and built the school.

Important to my discussion of the literature in Chapter 2 is how McClain High School must be viewed in the context of Appalachia, where education has a long history of successes and failures. I included discussion of literature that covered Dewey’s methods and progressive philosophies as they were applied in Appalachian schools. Schools like the Hindman Settlement School in eastern Kentucky, the Foxfire School in Georgia, and the Arthurdale Community

School in West Virginia all tried to practice progressive ideas in education. Although in different eras, all of these schools used Dewey's principles in the design of their buildings, the curriculum, and the involvement of the community. All of these schools had great successes, but they all ultimately failed. The overlying theme in these failures was that Dewey's principles were not strictly put into practice, and community involvement was superficial, with those outside the community making all the decisions (Puckett, 1989; Stack, 2016; Whisnant, 1983). These successes and failures provide important context for the development and evolution of McClain High School, which I explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

Another important aspect of my discussion of the relevant literature in Chapter 2 included Dewey's philosophy of art and its relationship to education. He argued in favor of the rich educational environment that art creates and its role in the everyday classroom experience, where it is used to inspire, edify, and educate. Dewey believed that art, its creative process, and the way it speaks to a viewer should be included in the curriculum in a natural way, as part of both the student's environment and education (Dewey, 1934). In Chapters 4 and 5, I explored how these assumptions about the impact of art were incorporated into McClain's vision for the high school. I also considered how McClain's vision for the architecture contributed to the school environment. Chapter 2's literature review included works about how early educators saw architecture. In essence, these educators felt that schools must not only be comfortable and well-suited for learning, but should also have an educational look (that is, the building has an environment of architecture and light). As I pointed out, during the Industrial Revolution, wealth and success were symbolized in Greek Revival architecture. These buildings created an environment of prestige and *social habitus*, and signified the emerging "habits" of modern society. Yet many modern school buildings look more like offices and factories than places of

learning (Ford, Hutton, & Seward, 2007). Supporters of progressive education like McClain must have had these office-like buildings in mind when they imagined alternatives like McClain High School.

Ultimately, McClain High School turned out to be much more than just a building. Community members embraced it as something to be respected and honored in their community. As my discussion of vernacular architecture revealed, places like McClain High School are much better understood through “a marriage of sources: oral histories, written documents, and the buildings themselves” (Canter and Cromley, 2005, p. xvi). A school like McClain, then, is best understood as not just a school but as a deeply meaningful intersection of curriculum, people, community, art, and architecture.

With this context as my backdrop, I turned to qualitative research methods, in part, to comprehend where these elements crossed, what their meaning was, and what they could tell us about McClain High School and its legacy. I chose qualitative research because it helps to tell the story of people, places, times, and spaces. In Chapter 3, I discussed the particular methods of qualitative research used in this study. Primary source documentation, for example, turned out to be among the greatest strengths of this study. It provided historical information directly from those involved with school construction, art installations, and curriculum design—especially Edward Lee McClain. As Yow (2005) suggested, the oral histories were particularly important in making significant connections across materials. In addition, field notes helped me to develop *thick description* (Geertz, 1973). As Campbell and Lassiter (2015) explain, “Ethnographic fieldwork demands that we open ourselves to the process of observing experience itself, reflecting on that observed experience in the moment, and seeking out dialogue with others....” (p. 64). My field notes, along with oral histories and primary documents such as personal letters,

newspaper articles, photographs, and yearbooks, provided reliable, essential information. I sought to construct the research collaboratively, in that the participants had input as to what they wanted to know more about; however, due to time restraints, they could not help with the final write-up of the study.

As I noted in Chapter 3, I interpreted the data as the study unfolded. Participants were all alumni of Edward Lee McClain High School. I collected the oral histories through face-to-face interviews, Skype, FaceTime, or over the phone. Some participants volunteered for my study. I enlisted others who were suggested to me. Some I connected with via the group Facebook page I set up. In total, more than 150 alumni volunteered to be interviewed and more than 200 volunteered through the Facebook page. Data analysis of the oral histories was done by transcribing a minimum of 10 participants. I interviewed 11 participants and added my own oral history as well. After collection, I completed coding of the data and then applied it to the research questions. I will discuss this further later in this chapter.

Chapter 4 further illuminated the life histories of Edward Lee McClain and his wife, Lulu; the history of McClain's business; and his gift of the high school to the community of Greenfield. McClain was born in 1861 into a family that owned a horse harness business. His was a very humble beginning. At the age of 15, McClain invented an adjustable horse collar and as a result, the family business boomed. This eventually led to the construction of two large factories. In 1885, McClain married Lulu Johnson, a woman from a more affluent family in Cincinnati, Ohio. She was well educated and loved the arts. The McClains were both devout Methodists who believed in giving back to their community. They first funded a magnificent Methodist church in Greenfield. Then, in 1912, they announced that a new high school would be built as their Christmas gift to the citizens of Greenfield. McClain began looking for architects

and chose William Ittner, who came highly recommended. McClain also consulted education experts, including Dr. F. B. Dressler, who had strong opinions about ventilation, hygiene, and light. Dressler's views of vocational training were that students should be educated wholly, not just in one subject or for one job. Dressler and McClain wanted graduates to be active, well-educated, engaged citizens, not just laborers. McClain also consulted F. R. Harris, the first principal of the new high school, who had graduated from Greenfield schools. Harris earned degrees at Ohio Wesleyan University and Harvard University, and he also studied at the University of Chicago immediately after John Dewey created his Laboratory School in that city. Harris helped McClain with the curriculum and architectural design of the school. He insisted on the inclusion of hands-on labs for classes such as household physics and chemistry, which would teach the sciences through household chores.

Renowned architect William Ittner designed and built many schools, including Central High School in Columbus, Ohio. His plan for McClain High School was an "open" design in the shape of an *H*. Using this design, the classrooms and public spaces would be on the outside edges of the building and thus more accessible to the community. McClain insisted that the school be in the center of town, facing the main street, to show its importance in the community. McClain and Ittner's plan had a separate gymnasium and auditorium, with upper and lower galleries to accommodate as many community members as possible who came to school events. Manual and domestic classrooms were on the ground floor, along with restrooms and other classrooms. Chemistry and physics classrooms were on the first floor, along with a lecture room that was positioned between them. On the second floor were the library and a very large study hall, along with society rooms and administrative offices (Ittner, personal communication, March

12, 1913). A Skinner organ (one of only five in the world) was placed in the auditorium. McClain attended to every detail, from the handles on the door to the number of windows. What McClain and Ittner created, with advice from other experts, was arguably the most modern and beautiful school building of its time. Its architecture was described as an “adaptation of the late English Gothic and of the Italian and French Renaissance” (Harris, personal communication, July 13, 1915). Others said the school lent itself to “the fast-growing tendency to make the school building the center of all community activities,” and that this concept was “encouraged and aided by bringing semi-public rooms in easy reach of all...” (*Hood River Glacier*, June 4, 1914). Horticulture, agriculture, physical education and outdoor study, such as horticulture and agriculture, would take place on the rooftops, which were lined with tile, and in the open courtyards. Science labs were equipped with chemicals and gas, and the domestic science room contained a dining room for students to practice what they learned (*Hood River Glacier*, June 4, 1914). The school emphasized community involvement and learning through doing, not by sitting behind a desk—all core progressive education concepts at the time.

When the school opened in 1914, it was devoid of art. But soon McClain began his work adorning the building with fine art. Curtis and Cameron, an art dealer in Boston, Massachusetts, gave suggestions for prints to use in the classrooms to reflect what was being learned. For example, *Spirit of Vulcan* was placed in the forging room. The second floor corridor displayed a *Holy Grail* series. But this was more than just art decorating a building; the art was to be used in the curriculum and to inspire the students viewing it. P. P. Caproni and Brothers Company was hired to make the statues and busts. These were of great leaders and thinkers such as George Washington, Joan of Arc, Augustus Caesar, Sophocles, and the goddess Athena, among others. There were three original murals that were painted by Boston artist Vesper Lincoln George.

These were Lulu's gift to the school, as she was a proponent of the Picture Study Movement (education through art). The murals are *Apotheosis of Youth*, which shows a young man, his learning complete, entering the world with his knowledge; *Pageant of Prosperity*, which shows a group of people who are rejoicing in the fruits of their labors in an ideal society; and *The Melting Pot*, which shows immigrants arriving with their gifts and talents. Their gifts become a part of American society and they take their place as productive contributors.

Chapter 5 included oral histories from McClain High School alumni. Inscribed over the entrances to Edward Lee McClain High School are the words *Achievement, Opportunity, Purpose, Duty, Courage, and Work*. In the interviews, many alumni repeated these words regularly and referred to them often. They spoke of the opportunity they were given to get a well-rounded education, during which they were free to choose their own path and what they wished to study. This led to new experiences and great achievements after they left ELMHS.

All of the alumni spoke of the excellent educational foundation they received at McClain High School. Some spoke of the equality of education practiced there, citing McClain's insistence on African Americans being able to attend and also women being free to take drafting and carpentry courses. (These were very progressive ideas at the time.) All participants spoke of the school and its art as a gift. Some said the whole building was a classroom, where the learning never ended. They told me of the respect and traditions they developed there and still have today. They spoke of the Greenfield community and its close relationship to the school.

Many spoke of McClain's purpose in building the school—to accomplish the “greatest good”—and said that they had a duty to take their education and do something with it. They also felt a sense of duty to save the building when the State of Ohio wanted to tear it down. This was perhaps one of the most important stories about the school, mainly because it emphasized that

the town had the courage to stand up to the Higher Facilities Commission and fight to keep and restore the school. All of the graduates spoke about their hard work as students at ELHMS. They felt it was a privilege to attend the one-of-a-kind school.

Research Questions, and Some Answers

As my research continued, I began to see the answers to my questions unfold. It was a very natural process. In Chapter 5, I presented the oral histories of the graduates, which helped to answer the first set of research questions: How do former students at Edward Lee McClain High School perceive their experience with the school? And how does this experience shape the school's overall story?

The oral histories revealed that the alumni with whom I spoke perceive their experiences to be extremely positive, even life changing. They value the education they were given and are grateful for the beauty that surrounded them during their time there. Many of them attended college, and they said they felt fully prepared for it. Some returned to Greenfield to teach, begin a professional practice, or open a business. Those who did not return to the small town to live spoke fondly of reunions and bringing friends back to see the school. Their experiences shape the school's overall story because theirs *is* the story of ELMHS. Importantly, the alumni, by telling their stories and sharing their experience with others, help to pass down the narrative tradition and values to the next generation of students. But their experiences are not isolated; they are not just stories from the past. They mobilized those stories into action, giving back to the school and community by saving the school from destruction. These alumni have also continued to support the high school by giving money for fundraisers (note the donation of the busts of Mr. and Mrs.

McClain in Figure 19) and scholarships. Indeed, alumni continue to believe in the power of McClain's gift. As their stories recount, the school inspired them to have loyalty and a purpose.

Though their comments were overwhelmingly positive, alumni were careful not to project ELMHS or Greenfield as utopia. Just like other small, Appalachian towns, Greenfield faces its share of problems. Some factories closed during the financial crisis of 2008. The town and the region also have an ongoing heroin problem, which feeds crime, and a host of other problems, including the need for foster care for the children of addicted parents. These issues affect schools directly, and ELMHS is no exception.

Once a school with a 93 percent graduation rate, the number for McClain High School fell to 85 percent in 2017. The number of graduates attending college also fell from to 25 percent. Though these numbers have descended, there are some positive trends: Of the alumni who go to college, 77 percent graduate in four years and 85.3 percent graduate in five years. Factories have returned, along with the jobs lost in 2008. Slowly, the town and surrounding area are beginning to recover, although the drug epidemic continues. This is not unique to Greenfield—it is a problem throughout the country (Sandy Free, personal communication, October 13, 2017). Despite this backdrop, the school, its traditions, and its ongoing story remain a source of pride and something that continues to sustain the community.

The status of the community offers information that directly relates to this research question: How do former students at Edward Lee McClain High School understand the role of the community in the school's traditions and unique physical environment? More than a few alumni described the community as “a revolving door” that is “intertwined” with the life of the school. One cannot minimize the relationship of the school to the community. McClain recognized this, and he and Ittner and Harris (as evidenced in excerpts from their letters,

included in Chapter 4) built the school around this intention from the very start. The building, for example, was constructed with an “open design,” so that the gym, auditorium, and classrooms could be easily accessed by both students and the community. In addition, in Harris’s principal’s report, he spoke of night classes offered for the community, including domestic science, and men’s and ladies’ physical education (Harris, personal communication, July 16, 1916). Alumni all spoke to this connection between the school and community. The statement Kristen White made in Chapter 5 bears repeating:

[The school] sits in the middle of the town and really our whole community revolves around the school.... When you go to a musical and you can’t find a parking spot because people have their children there ... and you see basketball games and there’s people from 85 down to newborns there ... they’re there whether they have a child on the floor or whether it’s somebody’s friend of a friend.... You have to think that people support all these different activities at McClain and how people are inspired because they feel supported. The support of the community is something you don’t get everywhere. The scholarships that I received to go to college or scholarships that people received to go to trade school or to start a business are amazing.... I think that it’s just the backing that you have from this community that we continue to put into people that are coming out that makes people want to come back and keep it going” (personal communication, April 13, 2017).

To “keep it going,” as White says, the alumni and students continue the traditions of the past into the present. One example is the reverence for the marble stairs, described in Chapter 5, and the respect for the artwork. These are passed down from class to class and from student to student, albeit with new experiences and new stories. These stories make and remake the school, as it

continues to evolve and change. Importantly, the community continues to uphold these traditions and respect them. The alumni with whom I spoke talked about the pride they felt for the traditions and the beauty of their alma mater. Here, I want to return to Susan Long's point:

Ms. Adelaide Shaw [the Latin teacher] really made me appreciate our school. [We would] go around to all the Latin inscriptions that were inside and outside, and the statues that were from ancient times, and we had to translate and really think what those sayings were about. They were about being industrious. They were about the importance of science, the importance of knowledge, the importance of literature, and I realized that, this is what the McClains valued.... I realized it was the whole human ... it was all of human development. Not just physical but intellectually.... Mrs. McClain put in over 200 pieces of artwork and I just felt every day that I walked in was a day of inspiration because you were greeted by philosophers and heroes and even the common man and Joan of Arc. You just could not help but be inspired, and for being in a rural area like this, I look back now and realize how many of our students went on to excel in so many professions because of the inspiration that surrounded them.... I remember as a young person looking at the *Apotheosis of Youth*, just looking at it and seeing the young man looking out on the horizon, the proverbial horizon, and just the idea of seeing opportunities outstretch to seize the moment, to seize that opportunity (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Long's words echo the many positive stories I heard from alumni about their time at ELMHS. Though I am sure that there are those who had negative experiences at the school or with the community, none of the alumni I interviewed chose to say anything negative about their

experiences. I found this particularly interesting, especially as it relates to how the school's story continues to unfold as a positive force in the community.

Be that as it may, this fact, at least in part, helps to provide some answers to this research question: How have the school's traditions and unique physical environment affected former students and their lives, both past and present? The alumni with whom I spoke regularly recalled the positive impact of the school's traditions, taught to them by an adult or simply through an unconscious process at the time they were learning it. All said the traditions held by their fellow students compelled them to have respect and appreciation for the school, its spaces, its artwork, and its curriculum.

Several alumni connected this learned awareness to the values they have today. Most, but not all, said that they did not truly appreciate the art and the beauty of the school like they should have while they were students, though all said that they respected the art. However, in reflecting about their experiences, they had a much deeper gratitude for the art now, and it continues to affect them today. With this in mind, many said they felt privileged to have been educated at Edward Lee McClain High School. They further said that attending ELMHS was an inspirational experience that has stayed with them. Alumnus Javier Saiz Sanchez made an interesting point in Chapter 5 when he told me about the effect the school had on him and how it still affects him today:

There is something that you feel—even if you don't know anything about the art or nobody explains it to you.... It was great to run down the stairs ... from one class to another ... looking up at the sculptures.... It gave me the sense like [I] was already in the classroom. You don't have to open the door and get in the classroom. The whole building was a classroom. The sense of space, that the art is

not one art but one space, another background. A space of respect and knowledge.

I don't know how to specify it ... like a warm feeling ... a lot of knowledge

surrounded by sensitivity (personal communication, March 2, 2017).

Sanchez explained that the experience he had at ELMHS changed his life and made him the person he is today. His and other overwhelmingly positive stories—told at the expense of other memories, perhaps even negative experiences or memories—speak to how the story of ELMHS continues to unfold in ways that positively connect the school, community, and individuals.

I am not naïve enough to think that all McClain alumni were affected as profoundly by their education as the graduates I interviewed were. I know that many graduates struggled in different aspects of life and even with drugs after they left ELMHS. But these stories don't surface when people talk about the school. In this sense, ELMHS's story—at least among many of its alumni with whom I spoke—is a kind of “sacred narrative,” one that emphasizes the overwhelming power of school and community, one meant to inspire and edify rather than rationalize and explain. I speak again to this issue later in this chapter.

As I continued to explore alumni stories, read letters, and do other archival research, I began to better understand how the McClains, the artists, and the art in the building all articulated Progressive Era values. I also began to understand how these values have been negotiated through time in the school's constructed space and in student experience (my last research questions, presented in Chapter 1). According to their letters, the McClains envisioned a school that produced active, engaged citizens, both rich and poor, who learned by doing in both vocational and academic arenas, with involvement from the community. These were Progressive Era values, and the school's art, in particular, mirrored and emphasized these values. The presence of the classic art and statues, as well as the original murals, gave students great

exposure to art. The connection of that art to the curriculum from the school's start reinforced the role of art in education.

Of the different progressive values that permeate the school's hallways, American diversity and equal access (emphasized at a time when such values were being openly challenged) are perhaps the most interesting. McClain, for example, insisted that African American youth attend the new high school, as reflected in the statue of Minerva. He also commissioned paintings like *The Trail of Tears* and *The 54th Massachusetts Infantry*. *The Melting Pot* (discussed in Chapter 5), with a young Chinese boy prominently featured as a future citizen, was clearly a comment on the Exclusion Acts popular in America at the time. Danny and Susan Long, as well as Cathy Rivas, a 1972 graduate and art teacher at ELMHS, spoke about their interaction with the art as being progressive in nature. Cathy still teaches these ideals to her students today and it bears repeating:

It's my intention that every year we do a full-scale tour of the building, starting in the fourth grade. The sixth grade and the eighth grade social studies teacher [has] always made sure that on the last week of school before the eighth grades moved on to the high school, that we took a tour and talked about the pieces.... We've used *The Melting Pot* to compare and contrast what was happening in the United States in 1920 when the painting was done, and what is happening now, with immigration and opportunity and so on. They are wonderful teaching tools, which I think was Mrs. McClain's intention when the pieces were put in.... We talk about Joan of Arc a lot in terms of ... [it being] an amazing story (personal communication, April 12, 2017).

The values about which Cathy speaks are still expressed in McClain High School's hallways and classrooms today. The art is still used to teach core curriculum. Hands-on methods are still used, in science classes especially. However, most of the alumni said that with the implementation of standardized tests and Common Core state standards, using these methods and incorporating all subjects while teaching have become more difficult.

As for community involvement, it is still strong. Again, the stories that alumni told me about the school emphasize that working together to achieve the common good is something everyone in the school and community cherishes and upholds. The citizens of Greenfield see themselves as active and engaged in support of the school, and they proved this when they saved it from destruction. To be sure, people care about this school, and its sacred narrative continues to emphasize this.

Did McClain alumni recognize the school's progressive values when they were students? Some did, but the majority did not. Most only expressed pride, respect, and gratitude for the time they spent at ELMHS. While they did have experiences that Dewey would have deemed progressive, most did not recognize them. Overall, the alumni who were involved with this study regard their education as a cherished experience that affects them even today. They all said that they owed so much to Edward Lee McClain, the school, and the community. Though they are from different generations, their love of the school ties them together.

Art as Curriculum

Cited in Chapter 2, Dewey's (1934) *Art as Experience*, I believe, needs to be further explored here. It could serve as an important point of departure for the continued research I plan to conduct. In the final chapter of this book, titled "Art and Civilization," Dewey spoke to the

critical importance of art in human life. He said that art, including music and literature, connects all human beings and causes us to communicate as nothing else can. Yet he also pointed out that the language of art does not correlate with science and industry in the modern world. He stated that the Industrial Revolution and the nature of society caused this rift between art and science, an unnecessary and arbitrary separation. As society pushed for more and more production and profit, the arts were seen as futile, a waste of time. Beauty and aesthetics were devalued.

Dewey responded to the devaluing of art in his era, but we continue to experience these forces in education today. With testing and scores being of the utmost importance, schools are designed to educate the largest number of students in the fastest period of time. Art and music programs are the first to be cut when school district budgets are slashed. Also, when schools are built, there is little regard for beauty and aesthetics. Few schools like ELMHS are built today, especially in small Appalachian towns. Dewey, I think, would have absolutely loved McClain High School. Not only was the school leadership concerned with offering students a good education, but it did so by being attentive to the whole child in ways that Dewey advocated. The art that lines the hallways of McClain High School is an enormous juxtaposition to the times in which it was built.

Here, I introduce the concept of *art as curriculum* or the Greek *Eupheus Techne*, which, when translated, means the pursuit of knowledge/skill through art. As evidenced in Chapter 4, it was E.L. McClain's wish that art be placed in the school to teach, inspire, and invoke imagination, not just adorn. Dewey (1934) explained that all art has a message that the artist wished to convey, but it is the observer that makes meaning of it. The meaning will be different for different individuals. Regardless, art is the thing that connects us, inspires us, and invokes emotion, and learning is as much about these processes as it is about the acquisition of skills.

This idea is technically not a new concept. Many have studied the impact of art on learning. For example, Shirley Brice Heath (1998), in a 1987-1998 study, argued that the effects of the arts on young people can be profound. She believed that

learning in the arts ... captures their imaginations, talents, and social commitments. By occupying responsible roles in programs that focus on visual, performing and media arts, young people develop organizational skills, sound budgeting strategies, and the capacity to communicate with adults in their own neighborhoods as well as in the office and boardrooms of their local businesses, corporations, and foundations (p. 2).

ELMHS not only contains visual art such as paintings, murals, and sculptures, but it also offers vibrant art courses and performing arts and media arts programs. Greater social and life skills, as described by Heath (1998), are not the only outcomes of art as curriculum. She also explains that the arts “encompass listening, writing and reading as well as mathematical, scientific, and social skills and strategies” (p. 2). This type of learning could be called *Eupheus Techne*—the pursuit of knowledge/skills through art. If we take art and music away from the curriculum, much, to be sure, is lost.

From this, many questions arise. Is art the thing that sets apart the graduates of Edward Lee McClain High School? Are the alumni of this particular school more successful than others in the same region and with the same demographics? To what extent did art have a positive effect on their education? Could this success be duplicated in other schools all over America and even the world? To what extent does the habitual experience of the art match Dewey’s notion of “art as experience”? Could this be evaluated or measured through further study? If so, how? Is the building itself seen as an actor in shaping experience? If the answer to many of these questions is yes, then this could be an exciting development in the realm of pedagogy and

learning environment, and in the connection between the two. This leads me to discuss further research.

Further Research and Some Final Thoughts

After the Centennial Celebration, I was approached by the superintendent of Greenfield Schools and a few members of the school board concerning my dissertation. They inquired as to whether I was going to publish something. They explained that they were contemplating creating a class for all freshmen at ELMHS that would explain the school's history and its art, and include oral histories of graduates as well. They felt it was important for all students to learn about McClain and his legacy.

Interestingly, I had already thought about attempting to publish the information before they approached me. Although there is a book about the last 100 years of ELMHS that was published by the Greenfield Historical Society, it is more of a coffee table book with pictures. It contains nothing about the stories of graduates. I would like to continue to compile oral histories from alumni, as well as a complete history gleaned from the letters and newspaper articles I have read. Once I have completed this and find a publisher, I would hope that the school could use it in its freshman course. I would hope that McClain alumni would want to read it and historians as well. I am excited by the possibility of collecting more oral histories and discovering more stories of alumni and their time at ELMHS. As stated previously, I would also like to investigate the concept of art as curriculum in future research.

It is important to stop here and point out that many of the oral histories, and even my own story, come out of a very nostalgic view of Edward Lee McClain High School. Certainly, those who provided their oral histories had negative experiences and issues at the school while they

were students. As a researcher, it is important for me to stop, highlight this, and accept it. Those who participated shared their love for the school, its beauty, and their experience there, and said that these things connect them as a community, no matter where they are. It is emotional. It is comfortable. It is familiar. It is a sentiment that connects them (us) to a very particular habitus of experience with the school, and—importantly—to its memory and its unfolding legacy.

Many academic researchers might dismiss such overly positive attributions solely because they are too positive. But this nostalgia should not be so quickly dismissed. Indeed, the participants' sentiments are key to understanding how such views affect both world views and actions. It is important to point out, for example, that community nostalgia and love for the school were important elements in mobilizing a successful fight against consolidation by the Ohio Facilities Commission. This leads to another question for future research: To what extent do positive experiences and nostalgia affect how stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, and other community members—view their schools and their futures, possibilities, and threats? Along these same lines, another subject I would like to explore further is school consolidation. Bard, Gardner, and Wieland (2006) point out that most formal research concerning school consolidation has been done by those who see it as something positive. Columbia University, however, has completed research that shows leaving schools unconsolidated revealed “strengths [that] included higher numbers of students taking academic courses, more attention by teachers due to a lower pupil/teacher ratio, and students who had a close connection to their communities” (Bard, Gardner & Wieland, 2006, p. 42). In addition, fiscal impacts of consolidation include small community businesses, property value, and higher costs due to increased transportation and personnel (Bard, Gardner & Wieland, 2006). Further, Elliot (2012) argues that communities become “isolated” from one another when schools are consolidated, and there is “declining

student performance and parental involvement” (p. 53). In addition, research shows that larger, consolidated schools had “higher rates of violence ... lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates at the high school level” (p. 54).

Bard, Gardner, and Wieland (2006) include research studies that found a significant correlation between small schools and student achievement, including finding that “students from less affluent communities appear to have better achievement in small schools” (p. 44).

Elliot (2012) agrees with these findings. He writes,

School officials find themselves administrating schools that symbolize the last bastion of community survival, “providing the community with a sense of identity, a source of employment and common meeting place.” This “default” setting becomes more visual when the community faces crisis, such as an industry closure or the decline of agricultural income (p. 55).

This brings to the forefront some of the problems challenging the community of Greenfield today. The opiate crisis and the financial crisis of 2008 exacted a heavy toll on the town and the school. Many alumni told me that the school is the only thing holding the town together, and that when it was threatened, community members were inspired to “take back their town.” What would have happened if ELMHS had been torn down and the local schools had been consolidated? The community did not let that happen, and their victory was rare. I would like to research the area of school consolidation and its impacts on students and communities further.

What might others research? In addition to the questions about art as curriculum offered above, further research might investigate these questions: How can other communities replicate the successes of ELMHS and Greenfield, Ohio? What can schools do to save or even start arts programs when budgets are slim? How can art as curriculum enhance student learning? How can

saving schools from consolidation strengthen students, communities, and the educational system in America? These questions would be a fertile beginning for further research

When I began my research, I wanted to discover whether other graduates of Edward Lee McClain High School had the same experiences as I had. I also wanted to share the untold story of McClain and his gift, and the students who benefitted from it. During my research, I very quickly realized that McClain cared so deeply for the Appalachian community of Greenfield, Ohio, that he spent many hours and many thousands of dollars to ensure that the youth there had the best education possible. He wanted to educate them all fully, so that they would have choices about the places they would take in society. He wanted to enrich their lives with art and beauty rarely seen in their small corner of the world.

I recognized that while the alumni included in the study were involved in different activities in different time periods, we all had the same sentiments for the school: pride and gratitude. Although many of the graduates did not realize they were receiving a progressive education in a progressive environment, they were, nonetheless, very thankful for it. There are still remnants of Dewey's original vision in the school today, but time and the requirements of Ohio Department of Education have resulted in some changes. Standardized testing preparation has changed the curriculum extensively in recent years. It should be noted, however, that teachers are still using the artwork in their curriculum to engage their students.



McClain High School

3 hrs · 🌐

Seniors in Mr. Streitenberger's Ancient World History class locate "Ares, the Greek God of War" on the "Frieze of the Parthenon" which adorns the first floor wall of McClain High School. Students are learning about the Ancient Greeks and exploring Greek art and architecture found on campus.



Figure 18: A Facebook post from the ELMHS page shows students in an Ancient World History class learning about ancient Greece from the frieze adorning the hallway right outside their classroom.

The art in McClain High School exists both in a pragmatic and theoretical context. The students are creating art and studying the art, but they are also analyzing art as they study other subjects such as ancient Greek history, current events, literature, and other core curriculum. The art is being used, but so is the idea of the art. This leads to the question, is the building trying to make a person feel a certain way? Dewey (1934) would insist that it is. All the alumni I interviewed spoke of how the building made them feel. All, including me, agreed that the environment is an important part of the educational process. And while it would be expensive to do so, it is my opinion more schools should be built like ELMHS instead of on the model of the modern, unremarkable schools constructed today. ELMHS is, unique, to say the least, but the experiences of its graduates are very similar. It is my belief that Edward Lee McClain fulfilled his personal commitment to do “the most good to the greatest number for the longest time.”

Many questions have been answered with this study, but many have also been brought to the surface for future research. Art as curriculum—*Eupheus Techne*—and the role of art in the curriculum of ELMHS are very much connected. Heath (1998) understood the connection

between art and student learning, and she researched and wrote about the profound effect of art on a student's ability to excel in core subjects. This is especially interesting as the American educational system experiences a period of budget cuts. Time and money spent on the arts seems to be the first thing on the chopping block when a school district must balance the budget. However, at ELMHS, this is not the case. The art still surrounds the students (and has even been restored, with major resources spent on this task). Various forms of art—performance and media, among them—continue to be funded, practiced, and celebrated at ELMHS.

Yet art is not the only thing that has been preserved at McClain High School. The building was also saved from being torn down in favor of consolidation by members of the community. Elliott (2012) and Bard, Gardner, and Weiland (2006) explained that when schools are shut down and consolidated, especially in poor socioeconomic areas, the effects can be very harmful on the students and the community. Shutz's (2010) concept of habitus speaks to the way a person feels and behaves in certain spaces. At Edward Lee McClain High School, students' experience is very much affected by the physical environment, the art, the curriculum, the unspoken respect, and much more. These factors affect the way they feel and behave in that space. All of these aspects—the role of art and art as curriculum, the important connection with the community, the role of habitus—make Edward Lee McClain High School what it is. To paraphrase Javier Saiz Sanchez, "The whole building is a classroom."



Figure 19: Busts of Edward Lee McClain and Lulu Johnson McClain

Unveiled and dedicated to ELMHS on July 16, 2017

Funded through donations from the ELMHS Alumni Foundation

Photos by author

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

February 9, 2017

Eric Lassiter, PhD
Graduate Humanities Program

RE: IRBNet ID# 1016292-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Lassiter:

Protocol Title:	[1016292-1] The Story of Edward Lee McClain High School	
Expiration Date:	February 9, 2018	
Site Location:	MUGC	
Submission Type:	New Project	APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review	

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire February 9, 2018. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Valerie Jones.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What is the story of your experiences at Edward Lee McClain High School?
2. How do these experiences fit with the story of your life?
3. Can you describe some of the school's traditions that you remember? Did they have impact on your schooling? On your own understanding of yourself?
4. What role do you feel the community plays in the history of the school? In its traditions?
5. Thinking specifically about the building, and how physical environments may affect people: do you think the physical layout of the building, its hallways with artworks, its classroom spaces affected you in any way? If so, how?
6. Thinking specifically about artwork now: Did the many artworks scattered throughout ELMHS have any effect on you? If so, how? Can you be specific? Are there any specific murals, or pieces of art that affected you on a personal level?
7. Can you describe some of the curriculum or academic training that you learned while at ELMHS? Did it affect you in any way? How?
8. The community chose to spend the state's resources on restoring the school instead of building a brand-new school? Why do you think they did that? What would you have done?
9. Scholars point out that the ELMHS building was designed and curriculum implemented based on the values of an educational thinker, John Dewey. Dewey believed (1) that students should learn by doing, in a natural way, with subjects not separated from each other; (2) that a school is only successful with community involvement; (3) that vocational and core curriculum should be taught together; and (4) that art should surround students at all times. What do you think of that? Do you think that Dewey was right? Why or why not?

10. If you were asked to describe your experience at ELMHS to a group of outsiders who had never seen the school, what would you say? What are the most important things to remember about ELMHS?



Under *The Wrestlers* where I spent so many hours writing as a high school student---I will forever be indebted---Valerie Free Jones