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JOSEPH NEEF
AND HIS
METHODS OF TEACHING

JOSEPH NEEF
AND HIS
METHODS OF TEACHING

by
Robert L. Phillips

An extended paper
written in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
EDUCATION

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is the result of interest in the educational significance of the educational experiments at New Harmony, Indiana. There was a limited amount of information to be found when a study was made in Education 458, which is the history of vocational education. The fact that New Harmony is only about sixty miles from my home made the subject of considerable interest to me. Upon an investigation into the various aspects of the movement, it was found that from the standpoint of education, Joseph Neef probably contributed as much or more than anyone else. For this reason he and his work were selected as the basis for this paper.

A considerable amount of thanks and appreciation is due Mrs. Mary A. Bradley, librarian at the New Harmony, Indiana Library. Mrs. Bradley made available to me all of the material used for reference. Many of the books written by Joseph Neef are preserved in the library. The library was established in 1838 by the Workingman's Institute, which was an outgrowth of earlier movements.

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JOSEPH NEEF

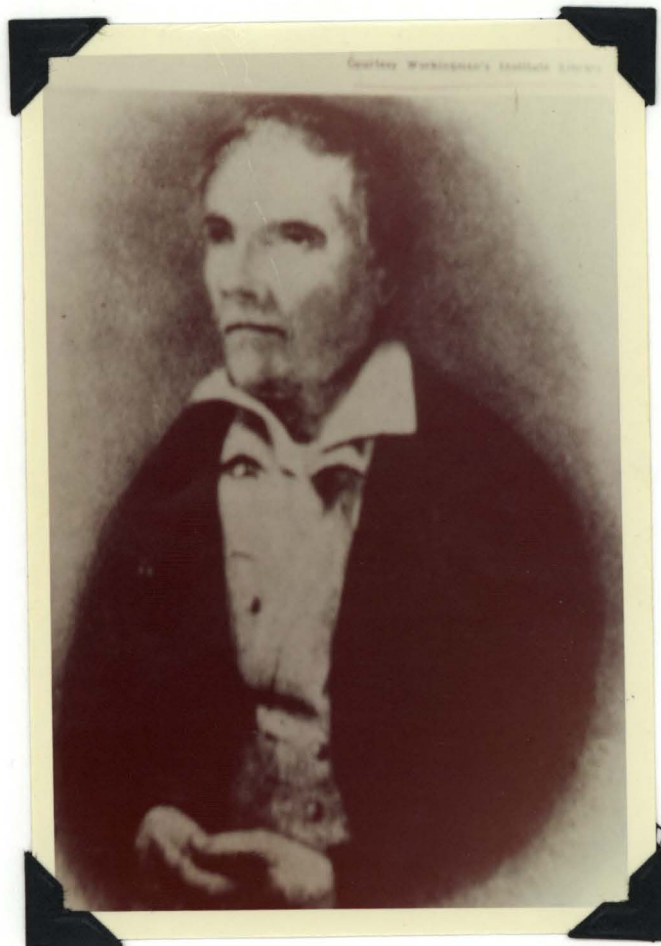


Figure No. 1

"OUT OF DEBT AND OUT OF TROUBLE"

INTRODUCTION

The life and work of Joseph Neef makes an interesting study, not only because of the contributions he made to education, but because his philosophy of life encourages anyone who studies about him to consider him a friend. His magnetic personality commanded the respect and love of all who had the privilege of meeting him.

His work is significant in the fact that he spent only a short period of time in his school at New Harmony, Indiana. There is, however, a long list of firsts in American educational history credited to his work there.

Joseph Neef, like so many important people in the history of man, had died many years before his importance was realized and appreciated. This paper has been an humble attempt to help give a great man a little of the credit he so justly deserves.

JOSEPH NEEF

In a magazine article published in 1894, Will S. Monroe¹ gave an interesting history of the life of Joseph Neef. He was born on December 6, 1770, at Soultz, Alsace, and given the full name of Francis Joseph Nicholas Neef. His father was a miller and desired that his son become a priest. Joseph entered the priesthood but at the age of twenty-one gave it up and joined the French army under Napoleon. Being severely wounded during the famous battle at Arcole, Italy, in 1796, Joseph was forced to retire from the army. After his retirement from the army Neef's attention turned to education. Though no exact date is to be found, Joseph Neef joined Pestalozzi about 1800 and became one of the teachers in Pestalozzi's school at Burgdorf. He taught music, gymnastics and French.

Neef was chosen, because of his familiarity with the French and German languages, to go to Paris, France, and establish a school to promote the Pestalozzi system of education. The school in Paris was an orphanage and attracted the attention of many distinguished educators and philanthropists from Europe and America.

¹Will S. Monroe, "Joseph Neef and Pestalozzianism in America," Education Vol. XIV (April, 1894), pp. 449-460.

In the article Monroe quoted Pompee as follows:

Mons. Neef, a teacher of Burgdorf, was sent to Paris, and commenced teaching in the orphanage, where the administration of the benevolent institutions entrusted a certain number of children to him. Napoleon, wishing to see for himself the results, went to the orphanage accompanied by Tallyrand, the ambassador from the United States, and a large number of distinguished people; he left well satisfied with what he saw Whilst all the governments of Europe were thinking of introducing a new system of teaching into the elementary schools, a private individual, Mr. Maclure, conferred upon his country, the United States, an establishment that could vie with the most important schools of Europe. A singular chance led him toward the improvement of his country's instruction. In 1804 he was in Paris, and had a great desire to see Napoleon. He applied to the ambassador from the United States who took him to the meeting where Napoleon had gone to see the results of Neef's teaching of the orphans. During the whole time that the exercises were going on, Maclure, absorbed in looking at Napoleon, saw nothing else; but, when going away, he heard Tallyrand say to Napoleon, "It is too much for us." This remark struck him; he returned to the room and learned from Neef the object of the meeting; and, as he was deeply interested in the improvement of the condition of the poorer classes, he saw at once all that Pestalozzi's system could do to benefit their condition. He made a very favorable offer to Neef to go to Philadelphia, and later to New Harmony to found a Pestalozzian Institute.¹

The offer that Maclure made Neef was, indeed, a very attractive one. Maclure agreed to pay passage to America, "the sum of Three thousand Two hundred Livres Tournois,"² and to make good to Professor Neef whatever sum as salary he may receive for teaching Pestalozzi's methods, that fell short of Five hundred Dollars per Annum, during the three years or the time Professor Neef may continue to teach the system of Pestalozzi.

¹Ph. Pompee, Etudes sur la vie et les travaux de J. H. Pestalozzi (Paris: 1850) [cited by] Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 451.

²Ibid, p. 452.

Two years were to be allowed for Neef to learn the English language. During this time he was to be paid by Maclure. Neef could see difficulty ahead if he remained in Europe and welcomed the opportunity to see and teach in the new country.

Caroline Pelham tells us the agreement between Neef and Maclure was dated Paris, 19 March 1806. Neef brought his family to America and in seven months had mastered the English language well enough and began to prepare his first book for publication.¹

This interesting hand-written note was at the top of the magazine article written by Monroe.

The reason for Neef's aversion of wearing a hat was because of the pain it occasioned him ever after he was wounded at the battle of Arcole, Italy. The slug was carried in his head for a period of fifty-eight years and was only extracted after his death, when it was found to weigh over half an ounce.²

Mr. Wood tells us that the slug was removed by Neef's son-in-law, Dr. David Dale Owen, and Dr. J. S. Mann, who was a first cousin of the famed Horace Mann.³

Neef opened a school at Philadelphia in 1809, at the Falls of the Schuylkill. After about four years in Philadelphia he went to Louisville, Kentucky, and established a school.

¹Caroline Creese Pelham, Joseph Neef, a typewritten report on the life of Joseph Neef. This report is found in the library at New Harmony, Indiana. p. 7.

²Mrs. Richard Owen, information presented by Mrs. Owen, who was one of Neef's daughters.

³C. H. Wood, "The First Disciple of Pestalozzi in America," Indiana School Journal, Vol. XXXVII (Nov. 1892), pp. 659-660.

This school did not prosper as he had hoped. Giving up the school he purchased a farm near Louisville and remained there until 1826, when Robert Owen induced him to go to New Harmony, Indiana, where he joined the community and supervised the schools there. The New Harmony experiment was given up in 1828, and Neef went to Cincinnati and later to Steubenville, Ohio, where he conducted a school for a short time. In 1834 he returned to New Harmony and remained there until his death on April 8, 1854.

Robert Owen described him as "Simple, straight-forward, and cordial, a proficient in modern languages, a good musician. He had brought with him from Pestalozzi's institution at Iverdun, an excellent mode of teaching."¹

One of Neef's pupils² described him as a giant with a beard, a crabbed face, a severe air, a rude exterior, but he was kindness itself. He enchanted the whole house when he marched with the air of a trooper at the head of sixty or eighty children with his great voice thundering.

Monroe said Neef "was not a pedagogue, he only had the heart of one."³ Mr. Gardette⁴ states that Joseph Neef was an excellent

¹Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way: Twenty-seven Years of Autobiography (London, 1874).

²Johann Ramsaner, Kurze Skizze Meines Padagogischen Lebens (Oldenburg, 1838) [cited by] Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 450.

³Ibid.

⁴C. D. Gardette, "Pestalozzi in America," The Galaxy, (August, 1867) [cited by] Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 453.

swimmer. He also states that Neef was a thoroughly good-tempered, simple-mannered, and amiable man without any false pride or pedagogism.

This quote from Robert Owen gives an insight as to the character of Neef. "To his earlier life, as an officer under Napoleon, was due a blunt, off-hand manner and an abrupt style of speech, enforced, now and then, with an oath--an awkward habit for a teacher, which I think he tried ineffectually to get rid of."¹ His bass voice enabled him, when giving commands to a body of troops, to be distinctly heard by ten thousand men.

One of his Philadelphia pupils related this story.

Mr. Neef had no inclination for society, and, on occasions when it became necessary that he should visit the city, his wife, an excellent and notable woman, would tie a cravat (which he habitually went without) around his neck, and slap a hat on his head, much to his disgust and annoyance. "Alas!" he would exclaim at such times with a mock resignation: "must I again have a rope around my neck." It usually happened, on those excursions citywards, that, taking off his hat in the stage or at the first halt on his route, he forgot all about that superfluous article, and would return to his good lady hatless as usual.²

His wife learned to place his name and address in his hat so it would be returned to him. Those who knew Neef well described him as being "A man of unusual abilities and eccentric character, a profound scholar, a deep and original thinker, a thorough philosopher, and a sincere, honest man."³

¹Owen, op. cit.

²Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 456.

³Ibid.

He had bright dark eyes, and coal-black hair, which he wore quite short. His figure and gait was that of a graceful, well-drilled soldier. His face was that of a Roman Tribune. He had the mind of a wise and prudent man and the heart of a child.

In spite of the fact that he had no inclination for society, there are records to show that he held the degree of Master Mason in the Pennsylvania Lodge No. 69. He was also a corresponding member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

In his last years in New Harmony, Neef was often seen walking about in the sunshine. He was dressed in linen trousers and shirt, always bare-headed, sometimes barefooted, with a grandchild in his arms, and humming to his infant charge some martial air in a wonderful bass voice.

Joseph Neef was buried in the Maple Hill Cemetery at the south edge of New Harmony, Indiana. There is an error in the date on the monument. It incorrectly reads 1853 but should read 1854.

NEEF'S METHODS OF TEACHING

Joseph Neef in one of his books on education¹ explains his philosophy of education. He raises the question as to what education is. He points out that the people who publish spelling books would say that education is the art of spelling, reading, writing and cyphering, while the dancing master would reply that education is the noble art of "cutting capers." Others would say that education is the learning of languages, oratory, poetry, mathematics, natural philosophy, natural history, geography, and chemistry. The clergy will declare that they are all wrong, insisting that the important part of education is their particular creed. Neef hoped that since these people failed to agree with him, they would not be too displeased with him, for his definition disagreed with all of them.

The following quotation from Mr. Neef's book will give a clear understanding of what he thought of education.

According to my humble opinion, education is nothing else than the gradual unfolding of the faculties and powers which Providence chuses [sic] to bestow on this noblest work of this sublunary creation, man. This definition may appear new, but I trust that its newness will not prevent its being as solid and true as just and plain. Certainly it requires no superior degree of acuteness to discover, that nature

¹Joseph Neef, Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education, Founded On an Analysis of the Human Faculties, and Natural Reason (Philadelphia: printed for the author, 1808), p. 5.

gives every human being physical, intellectual, and moral capacity. The new-born infant contains the germines of those faculties, as the acorn comprehends the future majestic oak. Teach and accustom the young man to make a just use of these faculties, and your task as an educator is done. The unfolding of those powers is the real object of education, or rather education itself. Our arts and sciences, by the means of which that display is effected, are but accessory things.¹

The methods proposed by Neef are essentially those of the great European educator Pestalozzi. He points out that he does not intend to teach anything new but use only a completely different method of teaching. He said he was not going to initiate his pupils in new arts or in unheard of sciences. Neef stated there is nothing new under the sun and that students will learn no new thing but will learn the old things in a new way.²

Neef, upon observing his three year old son, found that a natural tendency for children to make drawings seemed to exist. They would draw on walls, doors, floors or anywhere with anything that would make marks. The fact that children are punished for this marking and drawing does not seem to keep them from doing it. Neef reasoned, therefore, that a natural impulse should be taken advantage of when teaching them. Because of this interest in drawing Neef believed that one of the first things the child should be taught is to make geometric drawings.

¹Ibid, p. 6.

²Ibid.

He took a slate and pencil and first drew horizontal lines, and then his students would imitate his action. The horizontal line was drawn until the pupils became quite proficient at it; they would then divide the lines into two equal parts, then into four. Observing that children were great imitators, he encouraged them to compete to see who could make the finest drawings.

Neef felt that this instinct should be utilized, for he said: "This instinct, this propensity, this inclination or disposition, so common to all children, are, however, almost universally neglected; but I shall most certainly avail myself of them."¹

To give a clearer understanding of how Neef felt, the following is quoted:

In compliance with their wishes, I shall present each of them with a fine slate and an excellent pencil; and now we shall strive to outdo one another in drawing horizontal lines.

But we shall not confine ourselves to draw very fine and straight lines, but we shall also try to divide them first into two, then into four, and at last into eight equal parts.²

To occupy the tongue, as well as the hand and eye, the pupils would, in turn, loudly, distinctly, and accurately, express and describe whatever they were doing on the slate. Pestalozzi used the method of engaging the hand, eye, and tongue at the same time. Neef improved the method by having the pupils talk about the thing they were doing. Pestalozzi had the students talking

¹Ibid, p. 43.

²Ibid, p. 44.

about something not related to what they were doing, but Neef observed that the pupils would concentrate about one and neglect the other.

The pupils drew the geometric figures in somewhat the following order: horizontal lines, vertical lines, dividing the lines into equal parts, drawing angles of various kinds. Following the angles, squares were drawn, then the squares would be divided into rectangles. The circle was to be the next figure drawn. From that came the various parts of the circle: such as the pentagon, hexagon and the heptagon. Three dimensional objects such as the cube, prism, cone, cylinder and pyramid were then constructed. Neef said:

Our drawing operations will exactly correspond with our geometrical and arithmetical exercises.

That my pupils, once masters of our explained geometrical drawing, will experience little or no difficulty at all in order to become adept in the useful and delightful art of ordinary drawing is, methinks, a truth obvious and palpable to the understandings of my readers.¹

Nature, good models, and common sense were the guides for the drawings. They were to proceed from the simple to the complex by slow degrees.

Neef said that their drawings would be checked with the compass and a scale or rule and that there can be no disputing the degree of exactness.

¹Ibid, p. 46.

Joseph Neef wrote a book on the methods of teaching writing and reading. A portion of that book is copied to give a clear understanding of his philosophy as well as the methods he used to explain his ideas and methods of teaching.

The alphabetical letters or signs employed in the English language being very complicated figures, it is necessary that children, for a considerable space of time, should be practiced in drawing simple geometrical figures before they are taught writing. By this geometrical drawing their eyes will be taught to seize the shape of an object and their hand to delineate it with accuracy; the mere painting of our alphabetical characters, which is commonly styled penmanship and considered as a necessary accomplishment, instead of being a difficult labor, would then be only an amusement for children. Before I teach my children writing, they must therefore learn to draw all kinds of lines, to form all kinds of figures, angles, triangles, rectangles, squares, circles, polygons, &c. &c. with a good deal of exactness.--When I perceive that this geometrical drawing has enabled them to ascertain and to imitate the forms and proportions of our letters, then I begin to acquaint them with the useful arts of writing and reading. I shall here shew step by step the method of teaching, and how little industry is necessary to follow my track. It is not indispensable that you should use exactly the same words I do; if you find any of my expressions not sufficiently clear, you may substitute better.

Teacher: What do you call a tree that bears cherries?
 Pupils: A tree that bears cherries, I call a cherry tree.
 T. Very well. But what have I just now done?
 P. You have asked a question.
 T. And what have you done?
 P. I have answered your question.
 T. But what have we done all together?
 P. We have spoken.
 T. When, therefore, I ask a question, what do I do?
 P. When you ask a question, you speak.
 T. And when you answer a question, what do you do?
 P. When I answer a question, I speak.
 T. But what have I done before I spoke?
 P. I do not know.

- T. Well, do you know what you did before you spoke?
 P. No sir.
 T. Did you not think of cherries and cherry trees before you spoke?
 P. Yes, indeed I did.
 T. And dont [sic] you think I also thought of something before I ask you the above question?
 P. It is very likely you did.
 T. But you told me just now that you thought of cherries and cherry trees before you spoke. Can you tell me what thinking is--or, what you do when you think?
 P. No sir.
 T. Do you now see cherries or cherry trees?
 P. No sir.
 T. But have you ever seen cherries, and cherry trees before this time?
 P. Yes sir.
 T. If you never had seen cherries, do you think you should know what cherries are?
 P. I think I should not.
 T. Then you think we know such things only as we have seen?
 P. Yes sir.
 T. Do you know what taste sugar has?
 P. O! Yes.
 T. Have you ever seen the taste of sugar?
 P. No: you cannot see the taste of a thing.
 T. You know, therefore, something which you have never seen?
 P. Yes: but I have seen sugar.
 T. I agree. But it is not by looking at the sugar you become acquainted with the taste?
 P. No: I know the taste that sugar has, because I tasted sugar.
 T. Very well. Consequently we know those things which we have either seen or tasted. Do you know any other way in which you become acquainted with things?¹

The above quote from Neef's book on methods shows how he proposed to get the students to reason and think as well as to learn the usage of the English language.

¹Joseph Neef, The Method of Instructing Children Rationally, in the Arts of Writing and Reading (Philadelphia, printed for the author, 1813). pp. 5-7.

of the things of nature that were all around them. Monroe goes on to explain the steps of instruction in this order. First, the object as a whole would be studied. Second, the various parts of an object and how these parts are related to other objects were to be studied. The number of things would be examined, then their position or situation would be pointed out. The qualities, then the form or shape of the object, would be studied. The uses made of the various objects were to be pointed out. Similarities and differences of objects were to be compared. The last step was to analyze the findings pertaining to the various objects.¹

In an account by one of Neef's students, Ramsaner,² we are told that they enjoyed marching two by two, holding hands and singing, but their joy was at its greatest when their gymnastic master, Neef, took part in the singing. Neef seemed to be happiest when he was with the children. He played, walked, bathed, climbed, and threw stones in a childish way. This close relationship with his pupils and his understanding of them gave him unlimited authority over them. He was, without a doubt, their favorite teacher.

Mr. Gardette quotes one of his relatives who had been a student of Neef's. He tells of the methods used by Mr. Neef at his school in Philadelphia.

¹Will S. Monroe, History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States (Syracuse, N. Y.: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1907), p. 83.

²Ramsaner, op. cit.

I lived at the school for four years (from my seventh to my eleventh). During this period I saw no books, neither was I taught my alphabet. The chief subjects taught us orally, were the languages, mathematics, and the natural sciences; and the idea was to make us understand the object and application of all we learned.¹

Neef and his students spent much of their time out of doors but seldom wore hats. When the weather was nice many of his students were barefooted. They hiked about the countryside as Neef talked with them about botany, agriculture, mineralogy, and the like in a most descriptive way. Not only did they talk of these things but he pointed out their practical illustration in the grain fields and gardens. They studied the rocks and streams along their route. The group of bareheaded boys became known as "the Neef boys from the Falls."²

Joseph Neef's moral ideas were of the highest type. He tells us that man is essentially an active and a sociable being and what he does very definitely has an effect on his fellow-man. If man's actions do not benefit, then they must harm one another. He goes on to say that the man with refined morality feels that it is his duty not only to be good, but to inquire in what situation and through what means he may be able to do the greatest amount of good for his fellow-man. Neef said, "It is my ambition and duty to become a useful member of society. The education of children and the rearing of vegetables are the only occupations for which I feel any aptitude."³

¹Gardette, op. cit. p. 5.

²Ibid.

³Wood, op. cit. pp. 662-663.

He goes on to say that he had seriously inquired in which of these two activities he could render the greatest service. After mature deliberation, he became fully convinced that in the capacity of his faculties as a teacher or educator he could render a service most beneficial to his fellow "creatures" as he referred to them. Thus he became a teacher or educator.

Mr. Wood, in an article from the Indiana School Journal in 1892, gives the following information.

His system of education was almost entirely oral and objective. "Books," says he, "shall be the last fountain from which we shall endeavor to draw our knowledge." Writing was to be taught before reading, because "Cadmus had to write before he could read."

He made much of the value of physical exercises, gymnastics and military evolutions. "My boys shall run, jump, climb, slide, skate, bathe, swim, just as much as they please." He dispenses with textbooks in teaching grammar, modern languages, morals, and also with notes in teaching music. "For do you believe the first singer learned to sing by note?"¹

It should not be assumed that Neef had no respect for books. Neef believed that books should be considered as useful pieces of equipment to be used later in the educational life of the child.

Joseph Neef believed there were four orders of human knowledge. They are distinguished according to the four different bases on which they are founded. The first, he believed, was on our natural senses. All truth, therefore, rested on our senses and information was derived from them.

¹Ibid. p. 663.

This source of information is probably the most reliable of all. The second order contains the knowledge which is possessed through our mental power. All truths which we are able to establish through the use of our senses are then at our disposal to be recalled through the faculty of our mental powers. This phase of knowledge is very extensive and of extreme value to us. The information we draw from memory is not as accurate as that we derive from our senses. The third kind of knowledge is our ability to analyze the known to determine the unknown. This kind of knowledge is subject to error. The fact that this method of obtaining knowledge depends upon our memory, which in itself is subject to error, makes the possibility of error even greater. The fourth and final order of knowledge is that which we acquire through the testimony and evidence of our fellow men. This testimony is the basis and foundation of history and tradition. This information cannot be overlooked as not being important. We must, however, keep in mind that all information obtained from this source is not reliable. With experience we will learn who will give us reliable information and who will not.¹

The method of teaching numbers and calculations is referred to by Neef as follows:

From the moment a child learns to make the first use of its nerves, nature presents, unceasingly, to its eyes, a variety of objects; from which, at a very early period of its existence, it abstracts the notions of unity and plurality.

¹Neef, Sketch of a Plan op. cit. pp. 12-14.

Here, therefore, we find a new faculty, and a precious one to be sure; the unfolding and improving of which, I shall, most assuredly, not neglect.¹

Mr. Neef states that if his readers have been reading with some attention, they will know that the methods he will employ will be quite different from the methods previously used. He said that calculating and cyphering were generally believed to be the same. He points out that there is as much difference in cyphers and numbers as in the spoken and written language. Neef tells us that cyphers are no more numbers than a letter is a sound, but they are both arbitrary signs or figures which represents numbers and sounds. Neef felt that the power of combining numbers is one of our noblest powers but the schools had reduced it to a mere mechanical exercise. The method proposed by him was to develop and unfold the calculating power of his students. This was to be done by using small movable objects such as beans, small stones, marbles, and similar items. The following lines have been quoted from his method book to show his reasoning on the subject.

To one bean we shall add one more, and after having carefully verified the sum resulting from this addition, we shall say, not one and one make two, nor one bean and one bean are two beans; but one time one bean, more one time one bean, is equal to two times one bean.²

Teaching ethics and morals was considered by Neef as a part of his duty. He realized the difficulty of teaching morals from a religious standpoint because of the many different dogmas presented by the many different religious beliefs in existence.

¹Ibid, p. 15.

²Ibid, p. 16.

He believed that every religious belief had two distinct parts; these are dogmas and morals. Among religious groups no agreement has been reached on the dogmas. The second, however, is generally agreed upon by all. All of the religious groups abhor in the same degree fraud, theft, murder, and the many other crimes so common. This is the basis upon which he proceeded to teach morals in his school. Example is the best teacher and Joseph Neef made good use of this method. He taught, through example, love and kindness with plenty of understanding. Honesty and fairness was the rule in his association with his students. What better way can anyone teach such things? The Golden Rule is the basis for the teaching of morals.

Neef cites some of the uses of music and how it has been a part of people's entire lives. He believes it has a part in the educational plan. He said, "I should therefore, think myself to be guilty of rebellion against an all-wise Providence, were I to exclude music from my plan of Education."¹ A complete understanding, according to Neef, of the musical language may be considered as being composed of three distinct parts: speaking, writing and reading. To acquire a knowledge of each of these distinct parts he said we would want three distinct operations which will successively engage our attention. He would begin

¹Ibid, p. 136.

by fixing their attention upon the tones of the human voice. These tones would be very carefully examined. He was sure that it would soon be discovered that one tone was higher or more acute than another. It would also be discovered that the intervals of which these notes are susceptible could soon be determined.

The fact that two or more tones of various intervals produce a pleasing harmony and that others create a discord, or unpleasing sound, will be considered and studied. Neef believed that as a result of the study of various parts of music and what constitutes a pleasing or unpleasing sound will lead to the desire on the part of his pupils to want to create these sounds. This, of course, will lay the groundwork for lessons in singing or playing a musical instrument. The method employed in the teaching of music that is used in all phases of his teaching and the reason for its use is best explained by Neef, himself, in the following quote from his book.

That we shall begin by the plainest point and by slow degrees proceed to the greatest difficulties, is quite useless to mention, because it is a supreme law with which Pestalozzi's genius forbids us ever to infringe.¹

Theodore Schreiber makes the following comment about the teaching methods employed by Neef.

¹Ibid, p. 137.

Whatever could not be learned by means of the five senses and the support of reason in creation's workshop was not for him. Neef taught his pupils about everything that grew, lived and moved, preferably in the classroom of the out-of-doors.

Had not Emerson said that we were students of words, shut up in recitation rooms and coming out with a big bag of wind; that we did not know an edible root in the woods, that we were afraid of a horse, of a cow, of a snake, of a spider?¹

Neef's Plan of Education is said to be the first strictly pedagogical book written and published in the United States. The full title is: Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education Founded on the Analysis of the Human Faculties and Natural Reason, Suitable For the Offspring of a Free People and For All Rational Beings.

The following is an outline of the chapters and the titles of each which shows the extent to which Neef prepared methods for teaching the many subjects he believed to be important.

Chapter one.....	Speech or Speaking
Chapter two.....	Numbers and Calculations
Chapter three.....	Geometry
Chapter four.....	Drawing
Chapter five.....	Reading and Writing
Chapter six.....	Grammar
Chapter seven.....	Ethics and Morals
Chapter eight.....	Natural History
Chapter nine.....	Natural Philosophy

¹Theodore Schreiber, "First Pestalozzian in the New World," The American-German Review, Vol. IX (Oct. 1942), p. 26.

Chapter ten.....	Chemistry
Chapter eleven.....	Gymnastics
Chapter twelve.....	Languages
Chapter thirteen.....	Music
Chapter fourteen.....	Poetry
Chapter fifteen.....	Geography
Chapter sixteen.....	Lexicology

The following quotation is taken from Neef's book.

It would be next to insulting the good sense of my readers should I attempt to tell them upon what footing I shall be with my pupils, for they know enough of me and my system to perceive that the grave, doctorial, magisterial, and dictorial tone shall never insult their ears; and that they shall never hear of a cat o' nine tails; that I shall be nothing else but their friend and guide, their school-fellow, play-fellow, and messmate.¹

Of the methods he used, Joseph Neef had the following to say.

That it is my misfortune to be frequently, if not always in contradiction with our learned men; that my mode of instructing is the very reverse of theirs, is very true; but I cannot help it, and because I cannot help it, I do not care, since so it is. The only question to be examined and decided on, is whether I am right or wrong. Examine, therefore, and decide if you chuse; [sic] for I think it is not my business to do it. As to my being a prodigy of wisdom, there is nobody under the sun who is better convinced of the contrary than my own dear self. But, when you pretend that I acknowlege [sic] no authority; that I take no advice from, nor consult

¹Neef, Sketch of a Plan, op. cit. p. 165.

anybody; there you are under a very serious mistake; which, to put you perfectly at ease with yourself and out of conceit with me, I am going to remove, with your permission, I mean.¹

A system of object teaching will not only help the children acquire vocabularies but will help them acquire skill in the expression of thought and a capacity to form judgments. All possible knowledge which can be derived from the five natural senses and immediate sensations shall be exclusively derived from them. Where it is impossible for students to get information first hand through experiences, they will have to rely on their memory. The third resource shall be analogy. Human evidence shall not be neglected, but we shall only have recourse to it when all the foregoing means prove insufficient and unsuccessful. Books shall be the last source from which information will be taken. Neef, as did Pestalozzi, had a profound distrust for "bookish knowledge."

Pestalozzi is reported to have said:

A man who has only word wisdom is less susceptible to truth than a savage. This use of mere words produces men who believe they have reached the goal, because their whole life has been spent in talking about it, but who never ran toward it, because no motive impelled them to make the effort; hence, I come to the conviction that the fundamental error--the blind use of words in matters of instruction--must be extricated before it is possible to resuscitate life and truth.²

¹Ibid, p. 138.

²Monroe, History of the op. cit. p. 85.

Neef did not consider books suitable for the education of youth before they reached the age of ten or twelve years. Monroe gives an interesting and informative insight into Neef's feeling about books when he quotes the following from Neef himself.

It is irrevocably decided and determined that my pupils shall pry into no book, turn over no books, till they are able not only to comprehend what they read, but also to distinguish perfectly well, good from bad, truth from falsehood, reality from chimera, and probabilities from absurdities. God's beauteous and prolific creation--all nature--shall be their book, and facts their instructors. But as soon as they shall have reached the necessary maturity, then and only then, shall they read; then their reading will be really useful, and both instructive and pleasing to them.¹

It was Neef's conviction that the mechanical phases of reading and writing started far too soon in the early school-life.

Mr. Gardette tells us that Mr. Neef would whistle three times in a peculiar way to call the boys together rather than to ring a bell in the usual way.²

Probably as a result of his early military training with Napoleon, Neef believed in physical fitness. He permitted and even encouraged wrestling and fighting. This of course met with considerable opposition and condemnation from the patrons of the school. His answer to their criticism was that it was necessary for every young man to be able to defend his life and liberty against all kinds of invaders.

¹Ibid, p. 102.

²Ibid, p. 103.

NEEF AT NEW HARMONY

The arrival of Joseph Neef and his family at New Harmony was noted by Carolyn Pelham as follows.

The New Harmony Gazette published Wednesday, March 22, 1826, says: "The steamboat Highland Laddie, Captain M'Cullum, in two days and a half from Louisville, bound for Vincennes and Terre Haute, anchored before New Harmony on Sunday night last, at 10 o'clock. The night was unusually stormy; the passengers and merchandise for this place were therefore not landed till the following morning. The passengers landed are Mr. Neef and family, and Mr. Smith, who have come with the intention of joining the community . . ."¹

The Neef family, at that time, consisted of the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Neef, one son, Victor, and five daughters. The son and probably two of the daughters, Louisa and Wilhelmina, were teachers in the community school. The three younger daughters were on the roll of school Number Two in May 1827.²

The Neef family made their home in Community House Number Two and here the infant school was conducted by Mrs. Neef and Mrs. Fretageot. The laws of the social system provided that at the age of two the children became the property

¹The New Harmony Gazette, (March 22, 1826) [cited by] Caroline Creese Pelham, "Joseph Neef," a typewritten report on the life of Joseph Neef. p. 13.

²Ibid.

of the community. At the age of two the children were placed in the infant school where they were taught various games. This school had over one hundred students. At the age of five, the children were transferred to the higher school which was a true Pestalozzian school. Joseph Neef was the principal of this school which had an enrollment of one hundred and eighty to two hundred students in its best days. Both boys and girls were taught in this school. Although there were public township schools in New England, there were no public schools for both boys and girls in the United States before the school at New Harmony.

Will Monroe explained the New Harmony community as an experiment in cooperative socialism. The purpose was the instruction of changes in the social structure for increased productive power, to establish cooperative industry, and to organize society into communities of fifteen hundred or two thousand people. The inhabitants would own land and houses in common. One of the main goals of the school was for "equal education for the sexes."¹

Though there were many teachers named in the New Harmony educational system, Joseph Neef was the Head Master and William Maclure was the Superintendent. The boys and girls received

¹Monroe, History of the op. cit. p. 109.

the same kind of education, however, in different rooms. The boys and girls, being property of the community, lived in boarding schools.

Mr. Monroe tells us that shortly after the organization of the school there were about four hundred children belonging to the community, besides those of strangers from various parts of the country. Three large buildings were required to house these students.¹

Monroe describes one of the buildings as being sixty feet by forty feet and two stories high. The second floor was to be used for a hundred or more boys to sleep while the first floor was divided into workshops where the boys were taught shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, tinsmith, stocking weaving, and other trades. All of the boys were required to spend part of their time working in these shops as a part of their recreation. The boys were also employed in the fields and gardens where the latest methods of agriculture were employed. These exercises were substituted for the gymnastics of the old schools. They not only received the physical training they needed but also learned a trade which would be helpful in occupational life.² It was believed that with the proper management these boys could soon supply the needs of the community with many of the articles they made.

¹Ibid, p. 113.

²Ibid.

In addition to the trade the boys also learned arithmetic, geography, mathematics and other subject matter. The trades were used instead of play and amusement as a relief from the mental work.

Girls of all ages, under the direction of Madame Fretageot, were taught the same basic subjects as the boys. The older girls were divided into classes. These classes took turns doing the cooking, washing, keeping the house in order, and manufacturing cotton and wool cloth. Since this was a social community and there were no servants, it was necessary that everyone learn trades and share in the work of the community. All were required to work but no one was required to work at any one task for any great length of time. Through the teaching of agriculture to the students and their sharing in the work in the fields and gardens, it was believed they would be able to feed themselves.

Monroe relates an article from the June 1826 American Journal of Education which tells of more than a hundred packages of books, the most splendid that could be purchased, that had just arrived at New Harmony from New Orleans. These books were the latest on natural history, antiquities, architecture, and agriculture. There was also an extensive collection of paintings and prints. Monroe stated the following: "We do not hesitate to say that this place offers advantages for education which are not surpassed, if equalled, by any part of this country."¹

¹Ibid, p. 115.

The cost for educating and for board was not over one hundred dollars per annum per student. When the school was fully organized they expected that cost to be cut in half. The credit for the school must go to William Maclure because of the great generosity with which he established it.

To add to the educational experiences of the students, lecture halls, reading rooms, a library and museum of natural history and mineralogy were provided. Both Robert Owen and Maclure were strong advocates for what we think of as university extension and intellectual improvement of the adult members of the society.

To further express the thought behind the idea of the children being self-supporting, the following is quoted from a publication by the school of industry.

These sheets will contain observations [sic] on the possibility of improving practical education, by separating the useful from the ornamental, and thereby reducing the labor and fatigue of instructing youth, and we will endeavor to prove that children can educate, clothe and feed themselves by their own labor when judiciously applied to produce articles of real value.¹

The rule that was to be followed was that utility should be the scale for the application of all of the arts and sciences. Methods of cooking were to be taught because the feeling was that the methods used in this country at that time were not in the best interest of good health. Dying, soap-making and washing

¹School of Industry, The Disseminator of Useful Knowledge, (collected, edited and printed by the young men of the School of Industry) New Harmony: Vol. 1, No. 1. January 16, 1828, p. 1.

were to be taught for these were useful things to know, and the demands for these services were growing. To provide for the greatest efficiency the latest methods and materials were to be used to teach these services. Health was to be taught with emphasis on cleanliness and the prevention of diseases. This is best expressed in the following quote.

Hygia [sic] is the means of preventing disease by a well regulated and moderate use of the physical appetites, as constituting an essential part of the comfort and happiness of mankind shall occasionally occupy our pages, by comparing the momentary and short duration of all physical pleasures with the long torments and distressing pain that certainly follows all exercises in the indulgence of them.

We shall endeavor to prove the vast advantage and durability of the moral pleasures and gratifications, which strengthen by practice and leave behind them at every recollection, a lasting and permanent satisfaction, which only ceases with life.¹

Mr. Wood states that the book, Sketch of a Plan . . . by Joseph Neef was a prospectus of the school which he proposed to establish at New Harmony, Indiana under the patronage of William Maclure.²

Sir Rowland Hill tells us that the New Harmony school is a specimen of the advantages of the system. The naturalists let the students know what their wants were and the children would swarm through the woods and bring back specimens. The children brought back such an abundance of specimens that several collections were formed. Some of these collections

¹Ibid, p. 2.

²Wood, op. cit.

were presented to other communities and some were traded for collections from other parts of the world.¹

There was an editorial in the Indianapolis Sentinel on the influence of New Harmony, in which the author pointed out that Joseph Neef, a disciple and associate of Pestalozzi, was in charge of the mental and manual training of the colony. He also tells us that in addition to the schoolroom lessons there were often lectures given on various subjects, and the methods of all branches of industry and agriculture were introduced.²

¹G. Birbeck Hill, Life of Sir Rowland Hill (London, 1880) [cited by] Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 454.

²J. P. Dunn Jr., "New Harmony's Influence," Indianapolis Sentinel, (March 30, 1890) [cited by] Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 454.

NEEF'S FAILURES AND SUCCESSES

From the information available it would seem that Joseph Neef was both a failure and a success. The purpose of this part of the paper is to point out some of his failures along with some of the possible reasons for those failures. An attempt has also been made to show some of the accomplishments which made his name worthy of being recorded in the history of education in the United States.

In 1894 Monroe said that when the history of education is written, Joseph Neef and his efforts to introduce the theories of Pestalozzi in America will be an important part of that history.¹

One writer had the following to say about the reason Joseph Neef did not succeed in his attempt to establish and maintain a school. "The thoroughly honest man with the heart of a child was a poor administrator and hardly a good mixer, not because he could not move gracefully in society, but because he did not care to."²

Monroe believed that Neef's work lacked permanency. He felt that if Neef had stayed in Philadelphia where his ideas

¹Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 459.

²Schreiber, op. cit. p. 27.

were appreciated and endorsed, he might have enjoyed much greater success. He might have become one of the best-known educators in the history of American education. Monroe continued that Mr. Neef was easily discouraged and easily persuaded. This last characteristic caused him to follow the poor advice of many well-meaning friends.¹ Monroe gives the following reason for Neef's apparent failure.

There is, however, a deeper meaning to be attached to Neef's seeming failure: he came to America twenty-five years too soon. At the time of his coming, only a few generous souls like Maclure were interested in the improvement of the schools. The renaissance in American education had not yet begun. A quarter of a century later, the intellectual revival which ushered into active service such men as Henry Barnard, Horace Mann, Walter Johnson, Thomas Gallaudet, and James Wadsworth, would have given Joseph Neef foremost rank in the great movement which developed the American public school.²

J. P. Dunn Jr. had the following to say about the influence of the work of Joseph Neef at New Harmony. "But beyond their immediate labors, there was certainly an educational influence in the New Harmony work that must have been widely felt."³

According to Monroe, Neef, a man endowed with an observing mind, was forcibly struck by the vices, follies, and extravagances of the superior ranks, and the ignorance of the inferior ranks. He believed it was from these sources that all

¹Monroe, Education, op. cit.

²Ibid, p. 460.

³Dunn, op. cit.

miseries and afflictions of his unhappy fellow-men came. Being a man of compassion he was determined to search out the causes and attempt to remedy the situation.¹

According to Mrs. Guthrie, Joseph Neef committed the whole dictionary to memory after he learned English.² This would give evidence of his earnest desire to be a success in his endeavors in the new country.

Maclure, the man who was instrumental in bringing the Pestalozzian method of education to this country, said:

Mr. Neef, has taught the Pestalozzian system in greater proportions than ever it was taught before. Neef, like all men, has his failings, but as a teacher, he has made more clever men for the number he was allowed to educate, than I believe, ever came from any school on earth. Only two out of seventy of his pupils have gone astray.³

Some of the things that are remembered as important and for which Neef was responsible are: the first infant school, the first kindergarten, the first trade school, the first free public school system for both boys and girls, the first woman's club, the first free public library, and the first town dramatic club in America were established at New Harmony, Indiana. The credit for these firsts goes to Joseph Neef.

¹Monroe, Education, op. cit.

²Letter from Mrs. Guthrie, April 25, 1894. (Taken from the card file, concerning Joseph Neef, in the library at New Harmony, Indiana).

³Letter from Mr. Maclure, (taken from the card file in the library at New Harmony, Indiana).

Monroe believed that had Neef spent more time training teachers to carry on his beliefs, his work might have been still more lasting and that his name would be much better known than it now is. Neef did invite any young man who felt inclined to teach to become a teacher. There seems to be no evidence that any took the invitation; perhaps this is due to the short period of time he spent in any one place.¹ Monroe thought that Neef's splendid experience and towering intellectual strength merited much more credit than he received.²

One of Neef's students from Village Green, the famed Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, had the following to say of the training he received under Mr. Neef:

We were taught to swim and climb, and were drilled like soldiers--branches of instruction to be accounted for, probably, by the fact that the old gentleman had been one of Napoleon's celebrated guards. I do not regret the time passed at this school, for it has been of service to me all my life.³

A. Carman has the following to say about Neef's first book.

This work is faultless as to grammatical construction, and was the first strictly pedagogical work published in the English language in this country. It would interest any modern teacher who has read the numerous pedagogical works of today to give this quaint little volume a careful perusal. There were, at the time of

¹Monroe, Education, op. cit. p. 124.

²Ibid, p. 125.

³Ibid, p. 107.

this writing, only six known copies in existence.¹

In September 1962, there were six copies in the library at New Harmony, Indiana. Another work, Method of Teaching Children to Read and Write, was published by Neef in 1813.

In the closing paragraph of his book, Neef, unknowingly, predicted his own fate when he said, "Hear it, ye men of the world! To become an obscure, useful, country schoolmaster is the highest pitch of my world ambition!"²

¹A. Carman, "Joseph Neef: A Pestalozzian Pioneer" The Popular Science Monthly, Vol. XLV (July, 1894), pp. 373-375.

²Neef, Sketch of a Plan op. cit.

APPENDIX I
CHRONOLOGY OF NEEF'S LIFE

- 1770 December 6, Joseph Neef, born at Soultz, Alsace
- 1791 Neef entered French army under Napoleon
- 1796 Wounded in battle of Arcole, Italy
- 1800? Joined Pestalozzi, interested in education
- 1803 July 5, married Eloise Buss (one of his pupils)
- 1803 Went to Paris to take charge of school
- 1805 William Maclure visits his school
- 1806 Came to the United States
- 1808 His first book published
- 1809 Opened school in Philadelphia (one hundred pupils)
- 1812 Member of Academy of Natural Sciences
- 1813 Moved to Village Green, Pennsylvania (not a success)
- 1815 Became a Mason at Chester, Pennsylvania
- 1815 Went to Louisville (went to live on a farm)
- 1826 Maclure asked him to come to New Harmony, Indiana
- 1826-1828 New Harmony educational movement
- 1828 Went to Cincinnati, Ohio
- 1828 Went to Steubenville, Ohio
- 1834 Returned to New Harmony where he spent his remaining years
- 1854 April 8, death of Joseph Neef

APPENDIX II
CHILDREN OF JOSEPH NEEF

Joseph Neef's family consisted of one son and five daughters, whose names are listed below.

1804-1837	Victor Neef
1807-1860	Louisa Neef (Mrs. Oliver Evans)
1809-1842	Wilhelmina Neef (Mrs. John Salmon)
1812-1842	Zulima Neef (Mrs. Crew)
1815-1894	Caroline Neef (Mrs. David Dale Owen)
1819-1895	Anne Eliza Neef (Mrs. Richard Owen)

APPENDIX III

The following is a letter written April 10, 1854, by Louisa Evans (Neef's oldest daughter) at New Harmony, Indiana, to Anne Eliza Owen (Neef's youngest daughter), of Tyree Springs, Tennessee. This was copied from a photostatic copy which is in the New Harmony, Indiana, library.

My Dear Sister

From my last letter you will have been prepared for the melancholy news I have to impart. Our dear Father has gone to rest. He died on the 8th. about mid-day, and to us who had watched by him it was a relief to see him sink to sleep. I have the consolation that he had every attention that could be given, being able to devote all my time to him, and whenever I needed assistance Dale was ready to give it. Caro sent me my meals, so that I never left him. I slept on the sofa for more than three weeks.

Father was confined entirely to his bed for a little more than a week before that he passed a part of each day on the sofa.

Dr. Mann made an examination of the head and found the ball (which Dale now has) it had entered about half an inch beyond the wound and dropped down and rested on the palate of the mouth. It weighs something over half an ounce.

It was evident that it, was the whole cause of the diseased [sic] state of his head. I will write you more particularly or get Dale to do so soon.

Love to Richard and the boys from your affectionate sister.

Louisa Evans

HOME OF JOSEPH NEEF



Figure No. 2

NEEF'S SCHOOL AT NEW HARMONY



Figure No. 3

MONUMENT OF JOSEPH NEEF



Figure No. 4

MONUMENT OF JOSEPH NEEF

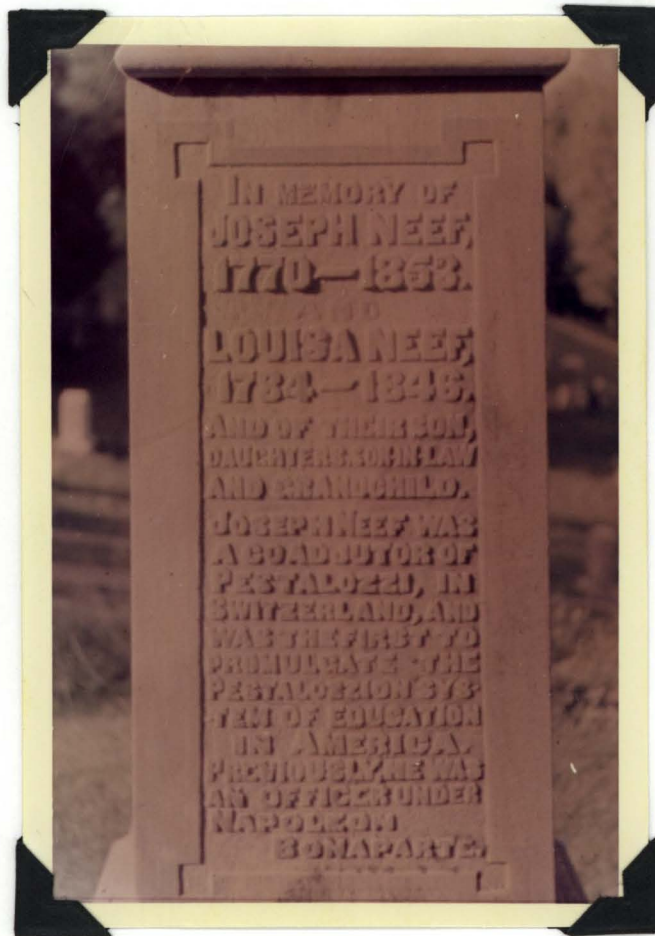


Figure No. 5

SOME OF NEEF'S BOOKS



Figure No. 6

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