

History of School Supervision in Wisconsin

[Address of Rev. W. C. Whitford, President of Milton College, before the State Teachers' Convention at Milwaukee, July, 1868.]¹

At the request of your Executive Committee that I should present a paper on some theme connected with the progress of the schools in our State, I have ventured to write on the one under consideration, as furnishing facts of general interest; and I shall be more than pleased, if my treatment of it shall meet with your approbation. I do not desire to trace from the beginning the history of the care and control of our schools, for the sake of exciting the curiosity, or indulging our reverence for former ideas and institutions. Our inquiry is in regard to the origin and the effects of our school laws and usages, that we may better understand our present system of school supervision. A traveler in crossing a river, not well known by himself, naturally asks, where are its sources, what is its length, and what are the general features of its whole course?

The search, indeed, would be interesting if we should pass beyond the genesis of the schools of our State, and find the germs of our own educational organization and management in

¹This paper appeared in the *Milwaukee News*, August 12, 1868, with this editorial commendation: "All concerned in the educational affairs of Wisconsin will be deeply interested in the Address of Rev. Mr. Whitford, of Milton College, delivered before the late State Convention of Teachers, and published in our columns to-day. The Address is a concise historical statement of the progress of the educational movement in our State from the earliest settlement of Wisconsin Territory until now, together with a brief exposition of the prevailing system of public education as established by the laws of the State."

After a brief *resume* of the ante-Territorial school facilities—or, rather want of them—discussed more fully in the preceding paper, Mr. Whitford enters into a succinct history of the introduction of the free school system into Wisconsin, and of the principal changes that have taken place in the administration of the school laws of the Territory and State; and he has accomplished his purpose with an evident care, research, candor and good judgment, that merits the acknowledgment of the friends of educational progress in Wisconsin. L. C. D.