DURING the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was a widely held belief that women, being the "weaker sex," could not survive the rigors of an academic education; besides, the higher education necessary to prepare men for the professions would be of little use to their sisters.

The typical female academy and "dame school" of that time taught basic reading and writing and occasionally geography, plus the "ladylike accomplishments" of needlework, drawing, instrumental and vocal music, and elocution. When Veuve Pescay's Young Ladies' Academy opened its doors in 1813 in the frontier city of St. Louis, for example, it offered reading, writing, French grammar, ancient history, sewing, and embroidery. In comparison, the curriculum offered young men in the same community consisted of reading, writing, French and English grammar, mathematics, geography, philosophy, and, in at least one academy, Latin and Greek.

Change, however, was in the air. In 1819 Emma Willard founded at Waterford, N.Y., later at Troy, a girls' school whose curriculum included rhetoric, history, natural and moral philosophy, logic, and elements of geometry, as well as music, drawing and painting, and studies in the French language.

Equally ahead of the times in academic philosophy and curriculum was the Harmony Seminary for Young Ladies in Butler County, Pa. Established in 1817 by the Rev. Jacob Schnee of Pittsburgh, it offered the daughters of Western Pennsylvania a background in basic arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, natural history, philosophy, and the study of foreign languages, as well as art and music. It was to endure for nearly a decade.

Twenty-five miles north of Pittsburgh and 11 miles from the Ohio River on the Connoquenessing Creek in Butler County, Pa., is the town of Harmony, founded in 1804 by George Rapp, spiritual leader of the Harmony Society. This separatist sect migrated to the United States in 1803 to set up a community to prepare for the second coming of Christ, and purchased land in Butler County from Detmar Basse in 1804.

An account of its early American history was printed by Zadok Cramer in the Appendix of his 1810 Pittsburgh edition of F. Cuming's Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country. Cuming's account was extracted by John Melish in 1811, revised and corrected by Frederick Rapp, and published in Melish's Travels in the United States, a popular travel guide used by immigrants going into Western Pennsylvania.

Melish wrote of a Harmonist Utopia:

Having no fear of want, they have literally no care for the morrow; they have no use for money...they can attend to the worship of the Great Spirit with single hearts, and undivided minds, and all the duties of life are easy, because they go in hand with self-interest; in health they have the fellowship of people of the like mind with themselves; in sickness they have the advice and assistance of friends, on whom they can rely with perfect confidence; of a medical man who can have no wish but to render them a service; and of a minister of religion to pour the balm of spiritual consolation into their wounded spirits 'without money and without price'...

Melish's vision caught the attention of Jacob Schnee, pastor of the Smithfield Lutheran and Reformed Congregation of Pittsburgh. As a successful printer in Lebanon, Pa., Schnee had become imbued with piety from printing and publishing some of the German religious classics. Thus inspired, he had entered the Lutheran ministry and begun a second successful career. He was to proclaim of Harmony, "I believe that this would be the most purposeful way to win a happy living in time [and] also...that it comes closest to the true religion of Jesus when one likes having his fellow brother enjoy the same fortune which he himself enjoys."

On June 15, 1814, George Rapp and Associates placed on the market for $200,000 the town of Harmony "with all its improvements, and about 9000 acres of land adjoining." The society was "about to remove to the Indiana territory and settle on the Wabash."
ous of learning more about a society that actually lived the teachings of Jesus, Schnee wrote Frederick Rapp on July 16, 1914, for the rental of a few rooms and kitchen for himself and family in order that he might observe the commune at close range before the members removed to Indiana.

This valuable property had been placed on the market at an unfavorable time. The War of 1812 had begun to depress the American economy into the steady decline that would result, in 1819, in the first great business panic in the history of modern industrialism. Many persons showed interest in the property, but none were able to meet a purchase price satisfactory to the Harmonists.

The rapid deterioration of the vacant town may have been one deciding factor in the Harmonists' acceptance, on May 6, 1815, of a bid made by Abraham Ziegler of $100,000 at $20,000 a year with 8 percent interest. Hard-pressed in 1816 to make his payments to Rapp on time, Ziegler subcontracted in January 1817 to sell the town of Harmony and 500 acres to Jacob Schnee & Company — terms: no money down (as had been his own case with the Harmony Society), and $64,000 at 8 percent interest for seven years. "The above company," Ziegler wrote his in-laws on January 11, 1817, "is going to establish a printery and a high school here."

**Harmony Seminary**

It was during the weeks in 1814 that he lived in rented rooms in Harmony, studying the commune, that Jacob Schnee's vision of a Harmony Seminary for the Education of Young Ladies was born. It embraced the centuries-old Lutheran emphasis on education, the use of the sturdy Harmonist buildings as classrooms, the farms to supply the needs of and to give financial support for the school, a bank to help establish an Eastern market for produce, a press to print not only text books but also a library for the several schools planned, and eventually to publish the scholarly research which would come out of such an assemblage.

Schnee's inspiration may have come from Melish. In the Pittsburgh section of the 1812 edition of his *Travels*, Melish had described such a school:

Laudable attention has also been paid to a branch more valuable, perhaps, than any other — the education of young ladies. When we reflect that instruction is the hand-maid of virtue; that to the female sex belongs the care of man in his early years; that during this period his manners, his habits, and the rudiments of his intellect are formed; then will we appreciate the value of female education, and every true patriot will contribute to support it, as far as he has opportunity.

There was also a personal reason behind Schnee's desire to set up a school for "the education of young ladies": his own school-aged daughters. In 1817-18 Anna Maria turned 11 years of age; Salome, 9; and Louise, 7. A *Leibesbrief* made by Salome in 1827 has survived to show not only her talent but the training she undoubtedly received studying art at the Harmony Seminary.

Schnee's vision is most clearly expressed in his *Address of the Officers and Teachers of the Harmonie Insti-tute to the Members of the Legislature of Pennsylvania*, given before that body in January 1818. This little-known plea for women's right to a higher education extolled the virtues of untutored women and asked, "What might we not expect them to be, if they had the advantage of a proper and well-grounded education?"

We cannot help observing upon the education of females, that it is of much greater importance in its influence upon the happiness of society than it would seem, from the great neglect in this country, to be generally admitted. Indeed, where there is a woman whose understanding has been enlightened by information, whose temper has been improved by early counsel, and whose manners have been polished by education, who knows her duty as a Christian, as a wife, as a parent, and as a neighbor, she may be truly said to be an acquisition to the world, an honor to her husband, a blessing to her children, and an ornament to her country. Such might this generality of our countrywomen be made...if they had the advantage of a proper and well-grounded education.

It is interesting to note that Schnee's application to the legislature "for the encouragement and support" of his seminary for women predated the 1834 act of the legislature requiring compulsory attendance of English-language public schools by all children of the commonwealth. Although the seminary was an English-language institution, the study of German was required, thus preserving a rich cultural and Lutheran heritage.

Schnee noted that the Harmony Seminary, now in its infancy, filled a need for the education of young women. A college for young men had been established at Washington, Pa., 50 miles distant; however, parents who wished to educate their daughters were forced to send them to eastern schools where they were beyond the protection of their families. Harmony would furnish a cultural center in the quiet countryside as an adjunct to the bustling town of Pittsburgh.

The seminary had won the confidence of the people in Pittsburgh and its environs, who had "committed their daughters to [its] care." The importance of a "proper and well-grounded education" for young women was recognized by such worthy members of the Pittsburgh community as Thomas and John Cromwell and Daniel Beltzhoover, and by others from the communities of Erie, Uniontown, Washington, Meadville, and Zelienople who made up the seminary board of trustees.

For a tuition of $150 per annum, the seminary provided a "common English education," as well as board, laundry, books, and school supplies. It was
possible to offer such low terms, Schnee told the legislature, because of the ease with which "we can raise upon our own lands not only an abundance of the necessaries, but even a greater number of the luxuries of life." Additional fees would be charged for study of the classics and the sciences because of the greater expense of procuring properly qualified teachers in these subjects.

The Address, which shows an all male faculty, was signed by Jacob Schnee, minister of the gospel and president of the Harmony Institute; John Schnee, business manager; Frederick Eckstein, principal teacher; Francis van der Meulen, teacher of the French language; I. H. Holtzmuller, teacher of the German language; and I. Conrad Wortman, secretary. It was dated January 1, 1818, in Harmony, Pa. Frau Eckstein, the matron, did not sign.

The Constitution of the Harmony Seminary\(^\text{13}\) opens with these words:

> The establishment of a Seminary of Education for Young Ladies, having been made at Harmonie, its Proprietors, for the purpose of giving energy, character, and stability to the design, have committed its government to a board of trustees, composed of gentlemen of the neighboring country, and have persuaded on the following individuals, some of the most influential and intelligent in their respective districts of residence, to serve as trustees.\(^\text{14}\)

Section I, articles 1 through 3, detailed the levels of education. Classes were divided into "Elementary," "First Class," "Second Class," "Advanced First Class," and a standing elective of music and fine arts. In the First Class reading, writing, and first rules of grammar and arithmetic were taught. In the Second Class the students were taught principles of grammar, composition, geography with use of globes, the principles of arithmetic, elements of geometry, astronomy, natural history, the French and German languages, readings in history, and the English classics. The Advanced First Class introduced students to "the studies of natural philosophy, including astronomy, aided by illustrations and experiments with philosophical apparatus."

The Harmony Seminary was in session September through July, with a month-long vacation in August. Presumably there was also a short holiday at Christmas. Examinations were held quarterly, and honorariums — "rewards to industry, good conduct, and encouragement to future exertions" — were awarded on the first Monday of May.\(^\text{15}\)

Section II described the responsibilities of the proprietors: to receive all monies, provide school supplies, "furnish the boarding department," and "propose such increase or diminution of the price for tuition and boarding...as may be found necessary and expedient." They were also to nominate the board of trustees for their approbation, the principal teacher, assistant teachers, and matron.

The principal teacher was always to set a "proper example" to students and teachers, and was responsible for pupil progress and behavior. He supervised the duties of the faculty, and could discharge teachers and suspend students "with the advise and consent of the trustees."

The matron was expected to "endeavor to enforce respect, esteem, and obedience of the pupils." She conducted the Sunday services, reading from the Bible and from a set of sermons prepared by the proprietors and approved by the trustees. She was likewise in charge of the housekeeping, the servants, the kitchen, and the study hour.\(^\text{16}\)

A copy of the eight-page booklet Rules and Regulations, "composed and published" by headmaster Frederick Eckstein, was given to each student, with the understanding that they relate to them daily in every phase of deportment. Religion, morals, good manners, study habits, orderliness in one's surroundings — all were aspects covered by this treatise. A record of the "application and behaviour of each pupil" was kept by the principal.

When the bell rang in the morning, the young ladies were to rise promptly and make their beds before going down to breakfast. They were to let no "part of their dress remain in disorder in their room." and were to greet the matron politely "on first seeing her."\(^\text{17}\)

Classes were held daily from 9 A.M. to noon and from 2 to 5 P.M., "Sunday excepted, as also Tuesday and Saturday afternoons, which the pupil shall devote to study or the keeping in order of their clothes." Students were to appear "in clean and neat attire" promptly at the opening of classes, greet the teacher courteously, and go to their "respective places."

Good order was to be maintained in the classroom.

The seminary had won the confidence of the people in Pittsburgh and its environs, who had 'committed their daughters to [its] care.'

This meant no unnecessary speaking or "loud" studying. All noise "in walking, moving the chairs, desks, &c." was to be avoided. Silence was "the first law of the room."

"Without obedience the usefulness of the teachers would cease"; students, therefore, were to observe not only "strict and cheerful obedience" to their professors, but also a "respectful and ladylike manner." Pupils could not leave their seats or the classroom without permission from the teacher. They were to keep books,
paper, pens, slates — all furnished by the seminary — in order, and would be charged for any careless or intentional damage to their books or school materials.¹⁸

Polite, courteous behavior was constantly emphasized, and the young ladies were encouraged to be “kind and affectionate towards each other.” Gossip was discouraged: “Anyone guilty of giving pain in this manner must necessarily for the first time forfeit the esteem of the teachers and the matron, and will therefore for a second offence of this kind be publicly exposed in school.”¹⁹ Finally the young ladies were forbidden “to leave the house on a visit, walk, or errand without permission from the matron, nor are they to introduce visitors without her approbation.”

Who were the young ladies who had been “committed to the care” of this worthy institution? Unfortunately, no records that would provide an answer to this question exist today. Frederick Rapp, in a letter to George Rapp, May 8, 1815, spoke of Schnee and Company as “the Pittsbughers.”²⁰ Abraham Ziegler believed that the “founders of the ‘Harmonic Institute’ are righteous and rich people.”²¹ Daniel Beltzhoover, the well-to-do-Pittsburgh merchant who had early recognized the importance of a “proper and well—grounded education” for girls, was a communicant of the Smithfield Church, and the family of William Wilkins, a Harmony trustee, had contributed handsomely toward the building of the first Smithfield meeting house in 1791. It is likely, therefore, that the student body was drawn in part from Jacob Schnee’s Smithfield Congregation in Pittsburgh.

The Harmony Seminary was sound and would have succeeded had it not been for the economic conditions of the time. Money was scarce. Over-extension of credit throughout the nation led to increasing inflation.

Jacob Schnee & Company’s first payment of $8,000 was due Ziegler in April 1817; unable to meet it, Schnee asked for a deferment until November when crops would be harvested. During these months — January to November 1817 — Schnee & Co. was not idle. A bank was established in Harmony, and bank notes were in circulation. Buildings were remodelled, and a board of trustees was appointed to administer the organization and operation of the seminary.

In May 1818, Schnee’s bank at Harmony failed. It had served the community well during its year in operation. We find bank notes today — issued by Jacob Schnee as president of the bank — to John Baker, Frederick Rapp, and George Rapp, all substantial people of the time. It could not withstand the financial panic, however, that sent people “rushing back to him with his notes so rapidly that he could not cash them anymore; thereby they lost their value to such an extent that now one can no longer buy cattle with them, nor do anything else with them.”²²

After the run on his bank, Schnee found himself unable to meet the terms of his contract, and Abraham Ziegler repossessed Harmony and the 500 acres. He then subcontracted to sell to Schnee “the 2 dwellings, the church, the schoolhouse, the granary, [Rapp’s] former dwelling, and the lots which lie there northward on the same side of the street up to the Connoquenessing, together with a part of the orchard; the whole includes 18 acres.”²³

Schnee’s effort to remain at Harmony and continue his school came to an end in July 1818. In a letter dated July 6, David Shields wrote: “Snead [Schnee] has failed entirely, and the sale by Ziegler to him becomes void and of no account.”²⁴

Carl August Voss, in his history of the Springfield congregation, writes that “after five years of successful and blessed work” Jacob Schnee left the congregation in 1818. “He went first to Harmony…where with several partners, he founded a bank; the business did not go well, however, for after a few years the bank failed and was declared insolvent, whereupon Schnee returned to the East and nothing further has been heard of him.”²⁵

Pittsburgh merchants Thomas and John Cromwell, along with Daniel Beltzhoover, spearheaded an effort to keep the seminary alive. A teacher was needed in January 1819, “a Clergyman (having a small family) of liberal character, who has received a classical education. To such a person a handsome salary will be given.” Applicants were advised to write to C. Cist at Harmony or to D. Beltzhoover or T. Cromwell in Pittsburgh.²⁶

Frederick Eckstein left at the close of the 1819 school year to establish his own Seminary for Young Ladies at Wheeling. The Harmony Seminary resumed classes in September under the care of the Rev. A. D. Campbell.²⁷ Tuition remained at $150 per annum, with an extra charge of $6 for the study of music. There was also an additional fee if lectures in botany were desired.

An article written by Henry Muntz for the Butler Sentinel, July 28, 1827, advises that the school had closed its doors by that date. “To the east, and one mile higher up the Connoquenessing is situated the village of Harmony, so celebrated formerly for its vineyards, labyrinth, and manufactories, latterly for the Banking institute, Seminary, and patented inventions; and now for the untrilling industry of its proprietor [Abraham Ziegler], his superior beef, and numerous flocks of sheep.”²⁸

Nothing remains in old Harmony today to suggest the beautiful utopia Melish had once described so lovingly and of which his readers had read so longingly. The seminary building still stands, however, and the enlightened philosophy of its founder has become a standard of modern education.

¹James Neal Primm, Lion of the Valley (Boulder, CO, 1990), 93.
²Mrs. Willard first opened her school in her home in Middlebury, VT, in 1814. Hoping for financial assistance from the New York State Legislature, she moved the school to Waterford, NY, in 1819. Failing to receive the needed help from the Legislature, she moved in 1921 to Troy, NY, where citizens had offered to support her school.
³John Melish, Travels in the United States of America (Phila-
delphia, 1812), 2:81-2.

7Among the inquiries from prospective buyers was a letter from Jacob Schnee & Co., dated January 25, 1815. In it Schnee offered $100,000 for all the Harmony property, payable in five payments at unspecified times. No answer to this letter has been located. Apparently Jacob Schnee & Co. received a counter offer, however, as indicated in a letter dated Feb. 15, 1815, wherein Schnee wrote that he could not afford to buy the Harmony property unless it was offered divided. Arndt, *Harmony on the Connoquenessing*, 944-5.
8Gertrude Mohlen Ziegler, *The Ziegler Family and Related Families in Pennsylvania* (Zelienople, PA, 1970), 20-21. In the letters that describe Jacob Schnee’s role in Harmony we find repeated mention of the creation of a Seminary for Girls. Ziegler informed his in-laws of a high school. The “weaver house” was to be remodelled into classrooms, Frederick Rapp wrote, and a teacher named Eckstein had moved to Harmony from Philadelphia to serve as headmaster. Arndt, *Indiana Decade*, 1:365-6.

9It was Schnee’s intention also to establish a school for young men: “Induced by the advantages held out by these spacious and commodious buildings...we have already opened a school for the tuition of females in a part of the town at some distance from the buildings intended for pupils of the other sex.” Address...to the Legislature of PA.
10Melish, *Travels* (1812), 2:59. Thomas Jefferson, although not a proponent of advanced education for young women, had written in 1783, concerning the education of his daughter Martha, “The chance that in marriage she will draw a blockhead I calculate at about fourteen to one,” and of course that the education of her family will probably rest on her own ideas and education without assistance. With the best poets and prose-writers I shall therefore combine a certain extent of reading in the graver sciences.” Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, (Boston, 1948), 405.

11The Address, printed in Harrisburg by C. Gleim, Printer, is the property of the Zelienople Historical Society. The transcriber of the Address is unknown; the original has not been located. Evidently the copy at Zelienople was used as a lecture, and the notations are interesting. “Influences, Jefferson, Locke, Luther, Rousseau, Wordsworth, and De Foe’s Essay on the Education of Women” are listed. Under paragraph 3 is noted, “the just rights to which nature...entitle them.” The notation for paragraph 8 is “status of women an index to character of civilization.”

12As the German-American became assimilated into the English-speaking mainstream, his ethnic identity and cultural heritage were gradually eroded. While German pastors realized the importance of English in the everyday world of business and trade, they strove to maintain the German language in their schools and churches, believing that only in the beauty of the German tongue could their heritage be fully appreciated.

13The Constitution and the Rules and Regulations, small handbooks of eight pages each, printed by Eichbaum & Johnston of Pittsburgh, are the property of Zelienople Historical Society.

14The Board of Trustees consisted of the following: Jas. Ross, Henry Baldwin, Wm. Wilkins, & Walter Forward, of Pittsburgh; the Hon. John Young of Greensburg; the Hon. Robt. Moore & James Allison, of Beaver; Wm. Ayres & John Gilmore of Butler; Daniel [David] Shields of Washington, Pa.; John Kennedy of Uniontown; Rufus Reed of Erie; Stephen Barlow of Meadville; P. I. Passavant & Christian Buhl of Zelienople.

15Constitution, Section I, Articles 5 and 6.

16Ibid., Sections IV and V.

17Rules and Regulations: “Chamber Rules,” 7. Similar regulations remained in effect in some U. S. women’s colleges until the close of the second World War.

18Ibid., “Duties of the Pupils,” 4-5.

19We see Schnee’s guiding hand here. In a sermonette published in the 1816 almanac, *Der Neue Pittsburger*, he had stressed good manners as an extension of “the greatest of all fundamental laws of morality: do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you,” and called upon the reader to consider the feelings of his fellow man, mitigate as much as possible distress and sorrow, and treat everyone with deference and courtesy.

20Arndt, *Indiana Decade*, 1:126: “Tomorrow I will give [Ziegler] the deed. I have nothing more to do with the Pittsburghers.”

21Ibid., 1:523: “...people liked to take [Schnee’s bank notes], because they were of the opinion that ‘The Harmony Institute’ was founded by a company of righteous and rich people...”

22Ibid., 1:522. Six months later the Bank of the United States took steps to curtail credit. Its branches were ordered to accept only their own bills, to present all state bank notes for immediate payment, and to refuse to renew personal notes and mortgages. The result was to hasten the nationwide panic that broke loose in 1819. Samuel Elliot Morrison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York, 1965), 403.


24Ibid., 546.

25Carl August Voss, *Gedenkschrift zur Einhundertjahrfeier der Kanzel der Evangelischen Kirche zu Zelienople* (Zelienople, 1907), 53. A memorial stained glass window, dedicated to “Rev. Jakob Schnee (1813-1818)” and “Rev. Johann M. Ingold (1818-1820),” picturing Jesus with the children, is mounted and back-lighted in a meeting room of the present Smithfield Church. Across the top is written the Biblical quotation, “Lasset die Kindlein, und wehret ihnen nicht, zu mir zu kommen; denn solcher ist der Himmelreich.”

26Advertisement in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1819.

27Advertisement in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Aug. 31, 1819: “No pains or expense have been spared to render this institution as desirable as any in the United States for the education of Young Ladies. It will be under the care of the rev. A. D. Campbell, who will occasionally deliver lectures on Rhetoric and History...”

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