The Confluence

Manuscript 1072

Mary Easton Sibley's Envisioned Societal Roles Through Education

Andrea Gentry

Introduction

Mary Easton Sibley, the founder of Lindenwood University, was a strong-willed, religious, and socially-devoted woman. Mary Sibley's adolescence provided events which supported her future as an educator and activist. Sibley was born into an upper-class family and her father, Rufus Easton, practiced law, politics, and was involved in real estate investing.[1] In 1800, and at the age of four, she and her family arrived in St. Louis. During this time, she encountered French customs and language, Native Americans, and enslaved African Americans. These encounters provided Sibley with an expansion of her knowledge of society. In her adolescence, Mary Sibley received an education from a boarding school in Kentucky. After achieving a satisfactory education, she returned to St. Louis in 1815 and met her husband, George Sibley, a friend of her father Rufus.[2] George became known for his work for the United States government.

After getting married in October 1815, George and Mary Sibley left St. Louis for Fort Osage, where they lived in their home named Fountain Cottage, and George acted as a trade superintendent to the Native Americans. With Sibley's sister Louisa living at Fountain Cottage, Sibley began teaching her and some of the Native American girls and settlers' daughters, offering them piano lessons as well as instruction in reading and writing.[3] While never formalized, these lessons marked the beginning of Mary's career as an educator.[4] In 1816, there was an increase in population in Fort Osage. Sibley then became concerned about the lack of education for the pioneer children, especially the girls and the Native American children. Sibley taught English to any children who came to her for education. In 1828, the Sibleys moved to St. Charles, Missouri. St. Charles was a growing town; by 1819, "St. Charles has grown, according to the census list, to include 981 whites, 124 slaves, and 5 negro residents."[5]

In 1832, when the Linden Wood School for Girls was founded, Mary Sibley had a religious awakening, which caused her to join the St. Charles Presbyterian Church and begin journaling her religious experiences and progress in her Christian career. Sibley wrote in her diary from 1832 until 1858. In her entries, Sibley describes her attitudes towards movements such as temperance and education for women and minorities, which were justified on religious grounds. From her actions and writings, Sibley displays the promotion of educational opportunities for young women, men, and minority groups. From the young age of 15, Sibley became immersed in education. Starting in 1832, Sibley began documenting her various educational endeavors. This research explores Mary Sibley's vision for proper society and the place of women and minorities, as seen through her promotion of education for all. The ways in which Sibley promoted education reveal the assumptions and opinions she held about society and the ideal place for women and minorities within societal roles.

Kristie C. Wolferman, in her book, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri,* discusses the life of Mary Sibley and her views regarding women's social and political roles, slavery, temperance, religion, and other topics that reflect educational and social developments. Wolferman claims in her journal that Mary Sibley

---

[1] Kristie C. Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008).
[2] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*
[3] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*
[4] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*
[5] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*

expressed attitudes far ahead of her time, including temperance, women's suffrage, and education for women and underprivileged minorities.[6] In a presentation regarding her book at the Missouri State Archives, Wolferman stated Mary Sibley did not let anything block her path in promoting educational opportunities and "education she believes empowered and equalized people and should be available to everyone, ideas that were way ahead of Mary's time."[7] Wolferman is correct in saying Sibley believed education empowered, but she is incorrect in stating Sibley believed education equalized. While Sibley sought to empower people through what she believed were the appropriate roles, she did not seek to equalize them through education.

Mary Ellen Rowe, in her essay "Mary Sibley: Genteel Reformer," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest,* describes Sibley as a complex and conflicted character. Rowe discusses Sibley's struggle with the negotiation between her need to define herself and the definition society had placed on her.[8] Rowe shows while church and social reform movements seemed to offer self-expression, autonomy, and significance, this was illusory because "evangelical Protestantism rested on patriarchal religious and social values."[9] Rowe is more accurate in portraying Sibley as a "genteel reformer." Mary Sibley was a social reformer but was not quite a radical reformer of the time. However, Rowe does not detail Sibley's mission to educate.

While Sibley promoted education for all, she did not promote the same education for everyone. Instead, she imagined education tailored to young white women, African American women, and immigrants, which reflected what she considered the "proper" roles played by each in society. Rowe's in-depth analysis of Sibley's personal diary shows while Sibley provided a broader scope of education for young white women, African Americans, and immigrants, she focused on preparing each for what she deemed their "appropriate" societal roles.

Mary Sibley's Diary

While Mary Sibley intended her journal to display her religious journey and devotion, the journal also ends up displaying the social and cultural frontiers she encountered in a period of her life. Sibley makes her first entry on March 23, 1832, writing she has been in possession of her diary for three years, with the impression it would one day come to use by recording her "religious experience and progress in attempts to serve." From the first entry, it is evident Sibley found meaning in her life by serving through the church, which includes teaching and attending to her community.[10] Through Sibley's promotion of education for all, she displays her beliefs about society, gender, and race.

From the period of 1832 to 1858 in her diary, Sibley exhibited strong attitudes regarding gender roles. Sibley strongly believed men were superior, and subsequently, men should receive a superior education. In April 1836, she wrote, "I never wish to see that society in which the nobler sex cannot be looked up to as superior in knowledge, as they are in strength & energy of character. It would destroy half the delight of our associations if we were not permitted to feel that we have a protector in man to whom we can regard as our Superior." This view of men being superior to women is present in her modes of education. Through education

---

[6] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*
[7] "The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri Video Transcript," Missouri State Archives, Missouri Digital Heritage, 2009, https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/presentations/default/sibley.
[8] Mary Ellen Rowe, "Mary Sibley: Genteel Reformer," in *Feminist Frontiers: Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, ed. Yvonne J. Johnson, (Kirksville: Truman State University, 2010), 21-37.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

n, Sibley ensured she performed well in her Christian career. Sibley supplied education through a white Sabbath School, African Sabbath School, Female Benevolent Society, and her Linden Wood School for Girls. Through these institutions, Sibley provided differing education for young white women, young men, African American women, and immigrants. Considering these various groups, Sibley provided a preparatory education to young white women for their future roles as wives and mothers, religious and higher education connections to young white men, and religious education to African American women and German immigrants.

White Sabbath School

Sabbath schools acted as institutions for children providing instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as moral and religious instruction. A school held on the sabbath was for purposes of religious education. "Sabbath or Sunday schools served as an important entry point for public schooling in the first decades of the nineteenth century. These schools provided the basic spelling, reading, and writing instruction often required for admission into public schools."[11] The Common School movement started by Horace Mann, did not occur until 1837. For Sibley and her scholars, the Sabbath School served as an institution for young children to study religious texts and learn how to serve their religious duties.

On April 22, 1832, about a month after the beginning of her diary, Sibley begins mentioning the Sabbath School in which young men, women, and immigrants will be taught. At this time, Sibley was inquiring about the possible use of a schoolroom to commence the Sabbath School. Sibley told the children the Sabbath School opened "today at the little log cabin near Mr. Cole's place," a farmer in the area.[12] Sibley also wrote she felt "a great desire to serve God by serving my fellow creatures in some way but scarce know how to go about it."[13] Sibley was still discovering her precise role in serving her Christian career. Her dedication to starting a Sabbath School displays a gradual process to the ideal of education for all.

By the following week, Sibley discussed the commencement of the neighborhood Sabbath School. However, due to the weather, only two young children were in attendance.[14] Sibley felt conflicted when she was unable to attend an afternoon sermon from Mr. I. W. Douglass because her time with students at the Sabbath School overlapped. Sibley wrote, "I almost regretted having gone as there were so few children but it was my duty as teacher to be at my post."[15] This marked Sibley's first written devotion to her long career as an educator. Even while Sibley had other wants in her daily life, she felt it more important to be present in the classroom and her duty to educate.

In July 1832, the attendance numbers of the Sabbath School increased. Sibley reported an almost full cabin of mostly German children, which Sibley refers to as Dutch. Sibley's goal in educating these Dutch children was to teach them about religion and their duties to God. Sibley described only one of the young Dutch boys attending the Sabbath School spoke English.[16] Subsequently, the boy acted as an interpreter and aided Sibley in lecturing "upon the propriety of keeping silence during the time of prayer."[17] Even though there was a language barrier, Sibley

[11] Paul D. Sanders, "The Sabbath School Movement, Two Early Children's Psalm Books, and Their Influence on the Introduction of Public School Music Education in the United States," *Contributions to Music Education* 43 (2018): 117, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26478002.
[12] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 22, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 29, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 1, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[17] Ibid.

wanted to provide these children with tools to serve under Christianity. Over two weeks later, Sibley accounted few numbers of scholars in attendance at her Sabbath School because the Dutch children started attending the Catholic Church.[18] After attending the Sabbath School in the morning, Sibley spent her evening promoting an education for a large family of children. Sibley wrote, "went in the evening to try and prevail upon a woman who has a large family of children growing up in ignorance."[19] By her wording, Sibley aimed to convince the children's mother to send them to school. Sibley believed without a proper primary and religious education, these children would grow up lacking the knowledge and awareness they could receive in a proper education. Specifically, Sibley wished to send one of the sons to a day school and to send another to the Sabbath School.[20]

Late in July 1832, Sibley displayed her willingness to provide outside educational opportunities for her scholars. As mentioned previously, the Sabbath School was conducted in a log cabin next to the home of Mr. Cole, a farmer. Mr. Cole's son, Hiram Cole, had been attending the Sabbath School constantly for the past month. At this time, Hiram began expressing his educational goals to Sibley, hoping she could assist. Sibley wrote, "he told me yesterday that he had just begun to feel the importance of having a good education & that he wished to go on in the fall to one of the Eastern Colleges."[21] Sibley wondered on what terms Hiram could possibly be admitted to the college. Sibley described Hiram as "a young man who had been a cripple from his birth," and "he is very wicked as far as blaspheming the name of the most High God."[22] Sibley further described, "to one so deformed, so unfit for the enjoyments of this life, if he have not hope of the next how dreadful is his situation."[23] Even though Sibley doubted Hiram's devotion to and ability for higher education, she promised to use her connections to make inquiries on his behalf. Two months later, in September, Sibley reported she spoke to Mr. P about a possible place in a college for Hiram. Mr. P promised to write to Doctor Beecher, the President of Illinois College, to discover on what terms Hiram could be admitted.[24] While this is the last piece in which Sibley discusses Hiram, it displays her connections to higher education. However, these connections to higher education were only exercised for young men.

July 25, 1835, marked the last of descriptive entries in Sibley's diary displaying the events of her Sabbath School.[25] Sibley's Sabbath School upheld a religious education for young girls, young boys, and German children. Throughout her writings on her Sabbath School, Sibley displayed the belief that education should be available to all children and her devotion to her duty as an educator.

African Sabbath School

The first African American schools were created in the late eighteenth century, and by the 1820s, the first African Americans graduated college. While the early and mid-nineteenth century saw progress toward African American education, educational institutions were scarce, limited numbers were enrolled, and they severely lacked funding. The attitudes towards African American education were generally split into two groups. One opposed educated African Americans because of the possibility of slave revolt. The other group believed African

[18] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 15, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 15, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[21] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 30, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Mary Sibley diary entry on September 26, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[25] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 25, 1835, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

Americans required an education to read the Bible and other religious texts and subsequently should receive a further religious education within Sabbath Schools. While owning Linden Wood, George and Mary Sibley owned enslaved African Americans. In 1829, they were known to have six enslaved African Americans, five men and one woman.

Sibley began discussing her involvement with an African Sabbath School on February 17, 1834, around two years after the start of her diary and white Sabbath School. In this entry, Sibley described going through her regular Sunday routines of attending the morning Sabbath School and sermons in the afternoon. However, this day differed from average; Sibley wrote "in the evening commenced an African School which with the blessing of God we hope to continue and make it the means of doing some good."[26] Even though Sibley's ideas of providing a religious education through a Sabbath School to African Americans were not new, it supported her belief of education for all.

A month later, in March, Sibley described her new regular Sunday routine of attending the white Sabbath School in the morning, listening to sermons in the afternoon, and attending the African Sabbath School in the evening. On Sunday, Sibley instructed the white Sabbath School on their duties concerning the lesson, but the lesson for the African Sabbath School differed.[27] Sibley wrote, "Attended the African school for the evening and gave the whole school advice & exhorted them to repent explaining to them the meaning of repentance. They were very much disposed to give attention to what was said."[28] Sibley wanted education for African Americans, but the education provided in her Sabbath schools depended on what she deemed assisted them the best.

Within the same week, Sibley gave a more detailed update on the African Sabbath School. Sibley found the exercises and discussion of the African school to be interesting.[29] Since the last commencement of the African school, the number of attendees increased, and Sibley described the school as growing fast.[30] However, the increase in members soon declined. Sibley wrote, "Some however came & returned their books and said they were forbid to attend by their Masters. One woman appeared to be grieved about it very much."[31] This marked the beginning of resistance to Sibley's African Sabbath School. As mentioned previously, some enslavers did not deem providing enslaved African American an education appropriate. Sibley accounts the resistance to her African Sabbath school to a man who has been, for some time, spreading misrepresentations of the school around St. Charles.[32] Sibley wrote, "We told the poor girls to pray for their masters and be obedient & all would be well with them if they served God."[33]

In April 1834, Sibley gave an update on the African Sabbath School. Sibley attended the Sabbath School for white children in the morning, heard two sermons, and then attended the African Sabbath School in the evening.[34] Sibley described, "The black people appear very much interested. The simple prayer of these poor people at the closing of the school is really affecting."[35] Sibley believed her African Sabbath School assisted the attendees in a positive

[26] Mary Sibley diary entry on February 17, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[27] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 30, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 31, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 31, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 24, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[35] Ibid

manner. Sibley continued by writing, "I have felt happier after closing this school of an evening than I have done for a long time in the performance of any single duty."[36] Not only did this African Sabbath School aid its scholars, but it also aided Sibley in her duties as an educator. Sibley believed the school persevered and became "instrumental of doing them soon good."[37]

More resistance to Sibley's African Sabbath School occurred at the beginning of August of 1834. Sibley spent her day completing domestic work and came to read an article in a political paper which was "attacking individuals for helping Sunday Schools for Slaves."[38]

> Our African School has succeeded her in some respects better than we expected–we who are engaged in it, think it our duty to do something to enlighten the minds of those poor benighted creatures on their souls Salvation–We think if the bible should be sent all over the world to heathen nations & is entitled as the word of God to the attention of all His rational Creatures it would be strange inconsistency to say our slaves shall not be taught to read it or shall not know its contents. I believe it to be peculiarly the duty of every Christian head of a family to instruct his servant in the Bible himself or else place them in the way of being instructed.[39]

Sibley's statement displays her devotion to the education of enslaved African American and her belief all people, no matter societal rank, should receive an education from the Bible. Sibley's wording of "heathen nations" shows she wished for all nations who did not subscribe to Christianity to receive religious education in the Bible. She claims it might be strange to have the goal of converting "heathen nations" in Christianity but not the enslaved African Americans of the United States. Sibley even more displays her ideals when saying it is the duty of the head of households to educate their enslaved. Sibley continued this discussion of the African Sabbath School by writing, "The Lord grant that who have undertaken to teach the few slaves who attend the S.S. of St. Charles may do our duty faithfully, and never be deterred by any persecution from serving our God according to the dictates of our conscience."[40] Even through resistance to the African School, Sibley hoped she and the other educators at the school may complete their duties through the "persecution" and provide support to the enslaved African Americans who were allowed to attend.

Within the following week, Sibley further discussed the effects of a political paper attacking individuals helping Sabbath School for enslaved people.[41] Sibley discovered the political paper was particularly focused on the discussion of the St. Charles Sabbath School for Africans and described the attack as "most gross and outrageous."[42] Even with the negative words spoken about the African Sabbath School, Sibley hoped, "the Lord be pleased graciously to open the eyes of the writer of this article to his own true situation and lead him to repentance &
faith."[43] Sibley had a strong faith and consistency in improving society through education. August 5, 1834, marked the last entries describing the St. Charles African Sabbath School. In the last entry, Sibley mentioned a series of events contributed to the end of the discussion of the African School. Sibley wrote, "At the time the abusive article was probably written, one of the

---

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 1, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[39] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 1, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 5, 1834, Lindenwood Archies, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 5, 1834, Lindenwood Archies, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

principal teachers was dying, another was absent attending a sick husband & another was mourning over the recent sudden death of a Father–hat will sin not do–and what a Hell would this Earth be was it not for the sustaining grace of God."[44] Sibley's involvement in the St. Charles Sabbath School for enslaved African Americans shows her dedication to the belief in education for all. From her writings describing the duty of enslavers to educate their enslaved in the words of the Bible, Sibley supported a more formal education for enslaved African Americans along with the religious education she provided.

Female Benevolent Society

Female Benevolent Societies have been historically known to be nonprofit organizations with the purpose of doing good within their communities. During the nineteenth century, these benevolent societies served as institutions for women to work together to achieve the goals they deemed necessary. Like others, Sibley's doings in the St. Charles Presbyterian Church Female Benevolent Society focused on religious, educational, and activist themes. A year after Sibley's first connection with the Presbyterian Church of St. Charles, she wrote about her membership in a Female Benevolent Society attached to the Church.[45] In this first meeting, Sibley discussed in her diary it was pleasant, and the subject of conversation was religion.[46] The members "proposed to the Society to do all in their power to have a Colonization Society formed in St. Charles and to contribute towards it by a yearly subscription as the donation of the Female Benevolent Society of St. Charles."[47] While not education related, this displays Sibley's views of the proper and possible roles of African Americans within American society. She provided education through her African Sabbath School to the enslaved African Americans of St. Charles. However, by supporting the founding of a Colonization Society in St. Charles, she did not believe African Americans could fully integrate into the society they lived in.

By April 1, 1833, Sibley began the promotion of education through the Female Benevolent Society. On this day, after the church was dismissed, Sibley visited a "poor woman" in an attempt to convince her to send an orphan child to school.[48] In response to the offer, Sibley reported the women appeared very grateful and much affected, "She consented to send the boy and on returning to town I made arrangements with the teacher to take him and our Female Benevolent Society would pay for his schooling."[49] While Sibley was unable to provide a formal education to young men at the time, she wished for all children, regardless of class, to have access to an education. A similar situation occurred over two weeks later; Sibley wrote, "went to St. Charles to get the consent of a Dutch family to send their daughter to school in place of an orphan girl who had been sent by the female benevolent society and had removed to Illinois."[50] Previously, Sibley discussed sending a young man to school. Within the same month, through the Female Benevolent Society, Sibley arranged to send two young girls from different families to school. Even though Sibley did not directly educate these three children, she shows through her actions the promotion of education for all children.

Continuing through Sibley's diary entries in 1833, she sparingly discusses her involvement of the promotion of education for young children through the Female Benevolent Society. In one of her last detailed entries on the Female Benevolent Society, Sibley mentions

[44] Ibid.
[45] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 23, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[48] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 1, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 15, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

visiting yet another family. After attending the meeting for the Female Benevolent Society, she was sent to an unwell neighbor.[51] Sibley describes the family as universalistic and said she, "Could not introduce the subject of religion, but prayed that if they construe the Bible wrong (as I think they must) that their eyes may be opened to see the truth. Left two or three tracts in the Bible which belonged to the house."[52] Sibley could not support this family through her usual way of business: discussing religion or providing the children with an education. However, this entry displays her willingness to support all different families and children. About six months later, in October, Sibley reported low numbers of attendance at the Female Benevolent Society meeting, so they were unable to conduct society business.[53] At this time, in the last half of 1833, Sibley did not further discuss the Female Benevolent Society of St. Charles because they lacked the members to continue to offer educational opportunities to children of the community.

Linden Wood School for Girls

The early nineteenth century had differing views of how women should be educated. Some individuals expected women to be independent thinkers, while others placed emphasis on domestic skills.[54] Society placed a women's value of worth in their ability to effectively participate as a wife and mother. The early nineteenth century also saw a rise of providing "book learning" to women. Sibley's diary entries discussing her Linden Wood School for Girls displays themes of domestic duties, book learning, and independent thinking.

Four months after the start of her diary, Sibley made an entry discussing her role in boarding and teaching young girls. Sibley reported, at the request of parents of the young girls, she now "consented to board and teach about half a dozen young ladies a year."[55] The young girls under Sibley's care were from upper-class families. One girl, Theodosia, belonged to the Catholic Church and was a granddaughter of a judge.[56] However, Theodosia's mother had some stipulations upon placing her in Sibley's care. The mother "particularly desired that no undue influence should be exerted over her to induce her to abandon her religion."[57] Young women had limited educational opportunities during the early and mid-nineteenth century, especially West of the Mississippi River. Due to limited educational institutions for girls, Theodosia was placed in Sibley's school, even though their religious beliefs differed. Sibley wrote, "I, of course had no disposition to take particular pains to make a convert of her unless the simple assertion of what I believed truth should have that effect; if it did, I would not justly be blamed with deceiving her Mother, yet still as I consider it my duty to act differently in some things now from what I did."[58] Sibley was steadfast in her faith but was still willing to alter her normal teachings for Theodosia.

Sibley provided a copy of a letter she wrote to Theodosia's mother addressing concerns of religious conversion. Sibley assures Theodosia's mother she has "endeavored to deal with the utmost candor" towards the mother's hopes for Theodosia's education and welfare.[59] Sibley further claims her religious duties have had and will continue to be of the slightest influence on the girls under her care.[60] When Theodosia was placed under her care, Sibley was not yet a

[51] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 18, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Mary Sibley diary entry on October 12, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[54] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*
[55] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

"professor of religion," so, Sibley offered the mother to send Theodosia home if she feared the education Sibley provided.[61] Then Sibley provided the mother with an update on Theodosia's progress, saying "not as rapidly as I would wish. She does not possess an investigating mind and wants application . . . extremely amiable and is gifted in several excellent traits of character. We are all attached to her, but if your judgment decides it would be more to her advantage to place her somewhere else I shall cheerfully acquiesce to your decision."[62] From the first years of boarding and teaching young girls, Sibley was certainty confident she provided a good education for the young girls, even when parental concerns arose.

In May 1833, almost a year later, Sibley's sister brought two young ladies who remained under her care for a year. At this time, Sibley believed the responsibility of educating youth to "be very great" and hoped she was "enabled to perform my duty as one who is to give account for all I have received."[63] By August of the same year, Sibley began to face trials under the nature of teaching. Sibley prefaces this entry by writing,

> I commenced this spring the little school I had last year consisting of seven or eight young girls–on the plan I have long thought necessary for the good of the rising generation. That is the women instead of being raised helpless & dependent beings should be taught a habit of industry & usefulness. Especially that they should be made to consider it a privilege and duty to wait upon themselves to be perfectly independent of the enervating effects that slavery has produced almost universally upon the character of the people of west and South.[64]

Sibley wished for all young girls, not just the ones under her care, to learn usefulness in their further societal roles. Sibley aimed to achieve this education of industry and usefulness in her "little school."[65] However, while carrying out her plan, Sibley was faced with stories of her "domestic arrangements" which became of concern to some of the parents of the young girls under her care.[66] The parents wished Sibley to alter the particulars of the education provided to the young girls. Sibley reassured her purpose in writing, "I endeavored to do my duty to those under my care from a sense of responsibility to a higher tribunal than any erected by the opinions of the world or a few intermeddling individuals."[67] Sibley also stated if the parents did not have confidence in her promotion of the best interest of the girls, then they could send them back home.[68]

Two days later, Sibley provided a copy of a letter to parents addressing the arisen concerns. Sibley began the letter stating the reports had been false and were circulated by children, servants, and "ill-natured and intermeddling persons."[69] Sibley continued to write in the letter about a "pernicious system of education" she describes as,

> so common, especially in slave countries, which turns upon the world thousands of my sex helpless dependent creatures, mere Doll babies dressed up for exhibition decorated with external accomplishments, very pretty to hold in the Drawing room or

[61] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 5, 1832, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Mary Sibley diary entry on May 4, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[64] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[65] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[66] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 17, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

> Ball room but of no manner of use either to ourselves or their fellow creatures, when called upon to take their stations in society as wives, mothers & heads of families.

Sibley wished to overturn a long-standing tradition of education which was gradually harming women in the process. Sibley wished for her girls under her care to be more than just a show piece of society. To correct this long-standing pernicious system of education, Sibley suggested the young girls needed to be "practically & experimentally & what is worth more than all habitually acquainted with all the various duties of Domestic economy & arrangement."[70] Along with this essential knowledge, the girls also needed a liberal education.[71] Sibley believed only then do these girls "become the pride, the comfort, the stay of their relatives and friends, whereas on the other hand they become a burden to all with whom they are connected."[72] Sibley's use of "they become a burden" further showed she wished to prepare the girls under her care for their future roles in society as wives and mothers. To help achieve her goal of preparing these young girls, Sibley demanded to be in control of all their time, employments and "everyone should be created precisely alike and obliged to conform to the same rules."[73] She further points out "the young lady who when at home may have ten or twenty slaves at her heels should be on exactly the same footing as the one who is dependent upon her own exertions for a livelihood."[74] Sibley wanted the girls to be proficient in their duties and the duties of the people who will serve them in their future households.

In her letter to parents, Sibley continued by being critical of the girls brought up through what she described as the pernicious system of education. Sibley states these girls are delicate enough, they could not "bear the idea of helping herself to a drink of water."[75] With this delicate nature, Sibley believed women became an object of scorn because of their inability to take care of themselves.[76] Also, the women could be capable of filling their station "with honor in consequence of her practical & useful acquirements."[77] Another aspect of the education Sibley provided young girls was a focus on domestic duties. This included producing food and clothing, cleaning, and other activities essential to run a household. Sibley had the girls under her care complete tasks the servants regularly ensured were accomplished.[78] As Sibley had complete confidence in her integrity in the education of young women, she required the parents of her students to hold this confidence as well. Sibley reported in her letter that some parents had acknowledged the improvement of their children as a cause of being taught by her, and because of this acknowledgement, Sibley found no reason to alter her course of education.[79] Sibley ends her letter to parents by commenting about an overwhelming amount of people encouraging "luxury, indolence, and efficiency."[80] With a last message to parents with conflicting views of Sibley's provided education, she wrote, "I will not be accessory to the guild of bringing up immortal beings in the manner too many are brought up in our land."[81]

---

[70] Ibid.
[71] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[72] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[79] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

In response to this letter, Major P., a parent of one of Sibley's students, declined to send his daughter to return to the school.[82] However, two weeks after Sibley provided a copy of her letter to students' parents in her diary, she received Mr. Ridgely's daughter to be educated. Mr. Ridgely sent a letter in support of Sibley's teachings.[83] Even with her boarding school coming under criticism, Sibley persevered with confidence in her teachings. Three months later, Sibley was writing letters to friends, one of whom resided in Louisiana. Sibley gave him an overview of her plan of action in terms of education for young women and "requested that he would mention to some of his friends that might send their daughters here."[84] Sibley hoped she could educate some "young ladies of the South" because they carried strong principles of the Christian religion.[85]

In March 1834, Sibley again faced criticism for her teachings to young women. Mr. N. mentioned to Sibley some found her "suffering" of the schoolgirls to dance by the piano for a half hour in the evening to be bad practice.[86] The following year in July, Sibley commented on her lessons to the young women. She read them a chapter, led them in prayer, and then gave them a music lesson.[87] Sibley described this day as a series of lessons "a great trial of patience."[88] In the same entry, Sibley wrote about a discussion with one of her students and wrote "Talked with one of the young ladies on her state of mind and told her of the good she might do after she goes home by keeping Sabbath School in her neighborhood and setting a good example." Not only did Sibley prepare the young women under her care for their set roles within society, but she also pushed for some of the girls to continue a similar life in education as her own. Sibley wrote about the trials of teaching various times: "the trials of a teachers life are great & many and surely none would undertake the task unless they had a higher motive than earthly gain."[89] While Sibley faced backlash from parents, students, and community members concerning her teachings to young women, she held her devotion strong in preparing the girls for what she deemed the appropriate roles as wives and mothers their personal connections could be proud of.

Despite the criticism and misinformation brought into the discussion about her African Sabbath School and Linden Wood School for Girls, Sibley was her own worst critic. In January 1833, Sibley wrote in self-reflection and disapproval of her diary.[90] She evaluated her long intermissions between entries and deemed them a negative representation of her religious service. Sibley wrote, "as I wish to keep up the history of events connected with my spiritual welfare as well as to record the exercises of the mind in my progress, I shall whenever I can keep the link unbroken by relating such circumstances as are interesting to me which may have occurred between the dates of the entries in this desultory diary."[91] In consequence of the intermissions, Sibley believed her diary lacked a plan and purpose. However, Sibley was exceedingly mistaken in her evaluation.

Sibley's diary encapsulates her dedication to her duties as an educator and member of society. Not only did Sibley promote education for all within her community, but she was also

---

[82] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 19, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[83] Mary Sibley diary entry on August 31, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[84] Mary Sibley diary entry on November 8, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Mary Sibley diary entry on March 8, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[87] Mary Sibley diary entry on July 4, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Mary Sibley diary entry on January 11, 1833, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[91] Ibid.

concerned for the growing young generations. Sibley had educational connections in Illinois, Louisiana, and Missouri. In one entry, Sibley described supporting another Sunday School in the area by providing them with books.[92] Sibley was also aware of other institutions which provided women's education. In January 1836, Sibley expressed her opinions on Mrs. Willard's Seminary in Troy, New York.[93] This school was founded in 1814 as a preparatory academy for young girls.

It also provided secondary and post-secondary instruction. However, Sibley defined their education system as the pernicious system she had discussed years prior. On this topic, Sibley wrote, "If the domestic instruction Held a more prominent part I think the plan would be an excellent one, but I am opposed to the plan of making learned women at the expense of destroying their fitness for the peculiar duties allotted them in the station of life in which by the providence of God they have been designed to move."[94] Sibley supported more advanced instruction for women, but was partial to the study of domestic duties because it was the station the majority of women held in society. Sibley continued to explain "book knowledge" was not as necessary to women as it was to men, and she never desired to live in a non-male superior society.[95]

Upon this analysis of her diary entries, while Sibley promoted education for all, she did not promote the same education for everyone. Kristie C. Wolferman does an excellent job of showing how Sibley empowered others through education, but she was incorrect in stating Sibley equalized people.[96] Sibley did the exact opposite in her educational endeavors. She supported educational opportunities for groups which aligned to what she deemed their roles within society. Sibley accomplished her ideals of appropriate societal roles for young white women and men, African American women, and immigrants through her work in education, the church, and the surrounding community. The main instruments which aided Sibley in her ideals were the white Sabbath School, African Sabbath School, Female Benevolent Society, and the Linden Wood School for Girls. It is through Sibley's stubbornness and confidence in education that she contributed to a legacy in Lindenwood University.

---

[92] Mary Sibley diary entry on April 28, 1834, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[93] Mary Sibley diary entry on January 21, 1836, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Mary Sibley diary entry on January 21, 1836, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.
[96] Wolferman, *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley.*

DOI: 10.62608/2150-2633.1072

Bibliography

Missouri State Archives, "The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri Video Transcript." Missouri Digital Heritage. 2009. https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/presentations/default/sibley.

Rowe, Mary Ellen. "Mary Sibley: Genteel Reformer." In Feminist Frontiers: *Women Who Shaped the Midwest*, edited by Yvonne J. Johnson, 21-37. Kirksville: Truman State University, 2010.

Sanders, Paul D. "The Sabbath School Movement, Two Early Children's Psalm Books, and Their Influence on the Introduction of Public School Music Education in the United States." *Contributions to Music Education* 43 (2018): 117. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26478002.

Sibley, Mary. Personal diary, Lindenwood Archives, Lindenwood University, Missouri.

Wolferman, Kristie C. *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008.