Radical Social Purpose in 19th Century Teacher Education:
Normal Schools and the Port Royal Experiment

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Abstract
State normal schools and the professionalizing of teaching broadened women’s vision and the public and political spheres of their work. The opportunity for higher education and career inspired teachers to improve the lives of children and the health of the nation. Despite the intentions of founding legislators aiming to prepare teachers for the common schools; despite criticisms that the curriculum was too limited, or, conversely, too taxing; despite claims that “normalites” lacked “scholarship,” even “knowledge and interest in human life,” countless graduates left with a passion to do good, do it well and do it with a sense of adventure. Their journals that they had read widely, thought critically, and accepted social responsibility in critical times.

Using primary sources, we will trace the ways in which gender, purpose and politics informed normalites and sent them geographically and philosophically beyond the expectations set for them. In particular, we will share stories of graduates who went South to the sea islands during the Civil War with radical reconstruction in mind to provide freed people with tools for independence, self-reliance and citizenship.


ii For example, Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimke, Francis Grimke Papers Box 40-46 Folder 1820; Manuscript Div., Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University; Diaries of Annie Heacock,Whittaker-Glanville Family Papers, 418, MS96, Special Collections, Marshall University, Huntington, WV; Penn School Papers #3615, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
Presenter vitae:

Mary-Lou Breitborde is Professor of Education and former Associate Dean, Department Chair and Director of the Center for Education and Community at Salem State University in Massachusetts, where she teaches courses in the social and historical foundations of education and sits on the boards of the university’s Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Center for Childhood and Youth Studies. She has co-authored two books, Teaching on Principle and Promise: The Foundations of Education (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) and Educating the Global Village: The Child in the World (Prentice Hall, 1999, 2003), and is co-editor of Remembering Massachusetts State Normal Schools: Pioneers in Teacher Education (Institute for Massachusetts Studies, 2014). She writes on women teachers of the freed people during and following the Civil War and has book chapters and other articles on community schools, and culture and education in American Educational History Journal, The Journal of Teacher Education, Educational Studies, Teacher Educator, Childhood Education and The Australian Journal of Teacher Education. Among her national and international presentations are papers on women’s education in the 19th century; history race, class and gender in reconstructionist schools; and power and authority in the “feminization” of teaching, these for meetings of, for example, the History of Education Society, the Organization of Educational Historians, the New England Historical Association, the Nordic Conference on Feminist Pedagogies, and the International Conference on Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations. Dr. Breitborde received the 2008-2009 Guion Griffis Johnson Visiting Research award from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill’s Wilson Library Southern Historical Collection and been a Visiting Scholar in the history of women in U.S. education at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. She is particularly interested in the place of the school in the community, both historically and in modern times, and its role with respect to social change. Dr. Breitborde received her Ed.D. and master’s degrees in Humanistic and Behavioral Studies (formerly the Foundations of Education Department) from Boston University and her A.B. in Sociology from Wheaton College (MA). She is at work on a full-length biography of Laura Towne, co-founder of the Penn School in South Carolina during the Civil War.

Louise Swiniarski, Professor Emerita at Salem State University and co-director of the Northeast Global Education Center, teaches, researches and writes on global education and early childhood education. She has been a Visiting Professor at Leeds Metropolitan University in the UK and Visiting Practitioner at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education’s Principals’ Center and received an International Research Scholarship from the Finnish Government for work on the history of early education in Finland. In 2013 she was awarded a Community Advocate for Young Learners Institute Fellowship for her contributions to early education in Massachusetts. Dr. Swiniarski completed her B.S. and Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of education at Boston College. Her interest in Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Susan Blow began with her dissertation. Currently, she is researching the correspondence between Elizabeth Peabody and William Wordsworth at Dove Cottage, Wordsworth’s home and library in the U.K., and has presented there. She presents nationally and internationally at conferences of associations of early childhood educators and educational historians, and comparative education societies. Dr. Swiniarski has written articles and book chapters in Educational Studies, Childhood Education, The Australian Journal of Teacher Education, The International Journal of Play, Major Trends and Issues in Early Education and Lang’s Working with Children and Young People: Ethical Debates and Practices across Disciplines. Dr. Swiniarski is co-author with Dr. Breitborde of two books on educational foundations: Teaching on Principle and Promise: The Foundations of Education and Educating the Global Village: The Child in the World, edited World Class Initiatives and Practices in Early Education: Moving Forward in a Global Age (Springer, 2014) and is currently at work co-authoring Early Years Pioneers in Context: Understanding Theories about Early Childhood Education and Care for Routledge in which she focuses on Peabody and Blow.