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**Local Civics with
National Purpose**
Civic Education Origins at
Shortridge High School

J. Spencer Clark

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To Fallon and Sydney, with much love!

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

Civics education is a topic that gets far too little attention lately, even if our badly divided nation could sorely use it. But it does have a rich history, to which Spencer Clark has made a very interesting contribution. In this compact study, he explores the development of civics education at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, an institution that later became known for its high academic standards and robust college preparatory curriculum. Clark considers an earlier time, however, when civics education became a progressive focal point of curricular reform and educators began to acquire reputations for their subject expertise.

The narrative focuses on two educators, Laura Donnan and Arthur W. Dunn, and Clark explores the time they both spent working at Shortridge in the early twentieth century. A rather substantial civics education program had appeared there, and he plays something of a sleuth in attempting to discern the roles of these characters in its development. He makes a case for Donnan as the principal architect, with Dunn building upon her work and perhaps later taking credit for her insights. The rub is that Dunn could utilize these ideas for career advancement in ways that Donnan could not, given the barriers to women's advancement at the time. Whether she was, in fact, interested in such matters is yet another question.

The result is a book that explores the dynamics of curricular development in civics education during this formative period, and the powerful gender distinctions that governed the professional lives of educators.

Donnan and Dunn worked together for a decade, but his subsequent career took him up the administrative ladder and off to new cities and additional opportunities. Donnan apparently remained in Indianapolis. Dunn eventually was an author of at least half dozen books, and today has a (brief) Wikipedia article devoted to him. Donnan published one textbook and is hardly known today. Such were the vagaries of fate and gender in American education—and life in general—during the early twentieth century. Spencer Clark is an exceptional guide to the experiences of these important educators and to their times.

Madison, USA
Lawrence, USA

William J. Reese
John L. Rury

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Stan and Betsy Clark, and my in-laws, Saeed and Mariam Farokhi, for their love and unwavering support over the years. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my grandmother, Anna Lee Clark, for her continued love and support, and honor my grandparents Joe Clark, as well as Virginia and Bill Morris.

I would also like to honor my great grandmother, Vera Grimsley (nee Rodman), who I was fortunate enough to spend time with as a child. She graduated from the State Normal College at Maryville, Missouri in 1911,¹ and like many female educators of the Progressive Era, she taught until she married but continued educating through 4-H and other community organizations the rest of her life.

¹Office of State Superintendent of Public Schools “Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri,” (Jefferson City: Carter & Regan, 1911).

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	<i>Chapter Overviews</i>	2
2	Contextual, Argumentative, and Theoretical Introductions	5
	<i>Indianapolis and Shortridge High School Circa 1900</i>	6
	<i>Shortridge High School</i>	7
	<i>Contributions to Understanding the Development of Civic Education</i>	8
	<i>Theoretical Framings</i>	10
3	The Context of Civic Education in the United States Around 1900	17
	<i>The Americanization Movement and Civic Education</i>	20
	<i>Civic Groups Interested in Civic Education</i>	24
	<i>The Creation of the Social Studies</i>	27
	<i>The Rise of Curriculum Ideologies</i>	33
	<i>Donnan, Dunn, and Shortridge as Illustration of the Progressive Era</i>	33
4	Laura Donnan	39
	<i>Early Life and Influences</i>	40
	<i>Education and Early Teaching Positions</i>	43

	<i>School Life</i>	45
	<i>Professional Life Outside of Shortridge</i>	47
	<i>Civic Life</i>	50
	<i>Epistemology and Worldview</i>	50
5	Civic Education at Shortridge High School	59
	<i>The NEA Speech 1889</i>	60
	<i>Primary Source and Text Analysis</i>	61
	<i>Discussion and Deliberation</i>	62
	<i>Experiential and Place-Based Learning</i>	64
	<i>Inquiry-Based Instruction</i>	64
	<i>Simulation</i>	65
	<i>The Extracurriculum</i>	66
	<i>Civic Education at Shortridge</i>	66
	<i>Decision Making</i>	68
	<i>Pluralism and Civil Rights</i>	68
	<i>Civic Activism</i>	70
	<i>Social Science</i>	71
	<i>Values and Moral Development</i>	72
	<i>Final Thoughts on Civic Education at Shortridge</i>	73
6	The Extracurriculum of Shortridge High School	77
	<i>The Extracurriculum in Turn-of-the-Century Schools</i>	78
	<i>The Extracurriculum at Shortridge</i>	79
	<i>Donnan’s Extracurriculars</i>	80
	<i>The Shortridge Senate</i>	80
	<i>The Impact of the Shortridge Senate</i>	83
	<i>The Daily Echo</i>	85
	<i>Coverage of the Senate and Other Extracurriculars</i>	86
	<i>Student Columns, Editorials, and Opinions</i>	87
	<i>Comments on Courses, Teachers, and Arthur Dunn</i>	88
	<i>Significance of Extracurriculum at Shortridge</i>	89
7	Arthur Dunn at Shortridge 1900–1910	95
	<i>Arthur Dunn Before Shortridge: A Clarification of the Literature</i>	96
	<i>Arrival at Shortridge High School</i>	98

	<i>Dunn's "Progressive" Teaching in History and Geography, Not Civics</i>	99
	<i>Connection to National Municipal League—1905</i>	102
	<i>Dunn's Emergence as Civic Expert in Indianapolis—1906</i>	103
	<i>Textbook: 1906–1907</i>	105
	<i>The Study: 1906–1909</i>	107
	<i>Dunn's Departure: 1910</i>	110
	<i>Significance of Dunn's Time at Shortridge</i>	111
8	Arthur Dunn on the National Stage: Local Civics for National Purposes	117
	<i>Departing Shortridge</i>	118
	<i>Arthur Dunn After Shortridge: A Brief Review of the Literature</i>	119
	<i>Dunn and the National Municipal League: 1910–14</i>	119
	<i>Dunn, the Bureau of Education, and the Reports: 1914–16</i>	120
	<i>Dunn the Free Agent: 1916–20</i>	122
	<i>Dunn and the Junior Red Cross: 1920–27</i>	124
	<i>Dunn's Ascension of the Educational Career Pyramid</i>	124
9	Donnan, Dunn, and Their Civic Education Implications	131
	<i>Locating the Influence of Donnan on Dunn</i>	132
	<i>Local Civics for National Purposes</i>	136
	<i>Laura Donnan as Progressive Exemplar: Agency and Enacted Epistemological Practice</i>	139
	<i>Enacted Epistemological Practice</i>	142
10	Conclusion	145
	<i>Revisiting the Main Arguments</i>	146
	<i>Final Thoughts on the Impact of Laura Donnan</i>	150
	Index	155



Introduction

Abstract The introduction will introduce Shortridge High School and two of its faculty who will be the primary focus of this book: Laura Donnan and Arthur W. Dunn. These introductions will be followed by brief chapter overviews.

Keywords Shortridge high school · Laura donnan · Arthur W. Dunn

This book will discuss the development of civic education in the United States, specifically through the examination of Shortridge High School and two of its teachers—one at the center of civic life in Indianapolis, and one at the center of civic education in the nation—during the period of 1883–1927. In the 1880s, an active and engaging civic culture would emerge at Shortridge as the result of teachers and students embracing educational and social trends of the time. Shortridge was like many other city high schools heading into the Progressive Era, as it experienced increased enrollments, course offerings, and community involvement. Yet, it was also unique in many ways, due in part to an exceptional group of faculty.

Specifically, this book will examine two Shortridge faculty members—Laura Donnan and Arthur W. Dunn—who both had very different

relationships to the school. Donnan was born and raised by a well-respected family in Indianapolis, graduated from Shortridge, engaged in social and civic clubs, and taught at Shortridge from 1883 to 1927. Her career reflects deep concerns about the obligation of citizenship and educating citizens, within a democracy that was coping with rapid social change. She welcomed social change and her response to such change positioned her to advocate for values related to pluralism and equal treatment, to be innovative and distinct in her curricular orientation, and more committed to progressive educational ideals in action than many progressive scholars involved in social education. Her position as a social change advocate has been preserved in many records of the extracurricular activities she initiated, as well as recognition in local media and student memoirs or accounts. Donnan was a vital part of both Shortridge and Indianapolis for over forty-five years. This book will recognize Donnan's innovations and achievements and her role in the history of civic and social education.

Arthur W. Dunn arrived in Shortridge in 1900 and left in 1910. His position at Shortridge was the longest he had held in his career, typically moving from position to position every few years. Dunn is remembered for his role in the community civics curriculum initiatives, his community civics textbook, and his role in the creation of what we now refer to as the social studies. He is remembered as a progressive educator who was trained at the University of Chicago as a sociologist, to which many scholars have attributed his innovations in civic education curriculum. After Shortridge, he moved into more nationally prominent roles culminating at the National Bureau of Education as a Civic Education Specialist. However, most scholars have overlooked his time at Shortridge, choosing to instead look at his experiences before and after his time in Indianapolis because his experiences provide a logical trajectory and archetype for progressive educators of the era. This book will illustrate Dunn's time at Shortridge and provide a better understanding of how his time in Indianapolis shaped his career.

CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

Chapter 2 will provide a glimpse of Indianapolis and Shortridge around 1900, discuss the contributions of this book, and the theoretical framings used to examine the careers of Donnan and Dunn. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the history of civic education in the United States

around 1900. It will use literature to situate city schools at the-turn-of-the-century and their interest in developing civic education, for several distinct Progressive Era purposes. Several influences will be examined that contributed to the development of civic education around 1900, specifically the Americanization movement, the influences of civic groups, the creation of social studies, and the progressive curricular ideologies.

Chapter 4 will introduce Laura Donnan and her career at Shortridge. She was a well-educated teacher, aware of major educational trends and scholars of the time. She had developed a reputation in civic education before Dunn arrived at Shortridge in 1900. The literature on Donnan demonstrated she had both a local and regional reputation regarding her civic pedagogy and created a civic culture at Shortridge that influenced many.

Chapter 5 will focus on Donnan's NEA presentation in 1889 in which she outlined a framework for civic education in schools and developed a rationale for mandatory civics curriculum as a graduation requirement based on her own teaching and curriculum. In her speech, she outlined a range of progressive activities that comprised her innovative pedagogy. All of these activities contributed to the civic culture at Shortridge, by allowing multiple ways for students to engage with the content. Donnan's presentation suggests that progressive "social studies" pedagogy was in classrooms well before 1916.

Chapter 6 will discuss several activities that were part of the extracurriculum or, as we know them today, clubs, groups, and academic teams. Donnan was the sponsor for many of these extracurricular activities and created the Shortridge Senate, which gained nation-wide notoriety. These activities, especially the Senate, contributed significantly to the civic culture at Shortridge. Donnan's sponsorship also included the *Daily Echo*, the first daily high school newspaper in the United States. The *Daily Echo* was a significant contributor to the civic culture at Shortridge, and provided invaluable detail about the civic culture at Shortridge.

Chapter 7 will introduce Arthur Dunn, who is well documented in the existing literature. However, the literature focuses very little on his time at Shortridge and has focused more on his regional and national leadership roles. Dunn's time in Indianapolis will be pieced together through multiple data points that include his publications and textbook, records kept at Shortridge, and the *Daily Echo*. Coupled with his research training, Dunn's time at Shortridge was pivotal to his career.

Chapter 8 will focus on Arthur Dunn and his rise to the national educational stage. This chapter will make connections among Dunn's awareness of progressive trends, his arrival at Shortridge, and his elevation to the national stage. These connections raise new questions about Dunn and the correlation of his training, his position at Shortridge, and his quick rise to national distinction. His longest professional position was at Shortridge for ten years, and his arrival at Shortridge appears to be serendipitous, considering the impact it had on his career.

Chapter 9 will discuss Donnan and Dunn comparatively, as contemporaries working toward the same goal, but from different ideologies. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how Donnan's distinct epistemology, shaped by the gender ideologies of the era and enabled by the Shortridge educational context, afforded her the ability to consistently achieve agency as an educator, citizen, and activist.

Lastly, the conclusion will revisit the main arguments of the book and consider Donnan and Dunn comparatively. Utilizing newspapers of the time, the conclusion will also consider how each educator was remembered after their deaths. It is difficult to come to a concrete conclusion about Donnan and Dunn's relationship. However, combined they individually had a major impact on the history of civic and social education in the twentieth century.