

History behind the 1830 School Board Decision

Feeling that the Yankees had created a problem for themselves in 1822. The area was known as the "miserable hovels" on a section of land near the mill district. Initially the group was made up of both business owners and non-business owners. The Yankees tried to maintain a "leave them alone" policy, which resulted in haphazard growth of the Irish neighborhood and the forging of an ethnic identity. See also Lowell school committee report on the subject.

By 1830, however, faced with the influx of newly-immigrated Irish families were not sending their children to the town's schools in the Acre. A school run by the priest of St. Patrick's Church, a rented room, existed in the Acre, and parents made weekly contributions that paid the teacher's salary. Alexander, "from poverty and indifference of the parents," the school was discontinued.¹ The town's school committee voted to "establish a school district for the Irish children" in the Acre, and \$50 for the first year they voted again that the "school district would receive fifty dollars ... [and] that such Irish families not living in the above (the Acre) who do not send their children to the school [should] be considered as belonging to that district." This decision was made by the school committee.

Lowell school committee member recalled his visit to the Acre school in 1830 writing, "...we found the children [] capable of reading and spelling with the prayers of the Catholic Church."¹ This, however, wasn't the norm. In the early years of the school, many Irish parents were concerned that their children would be ridiculed for not speaking English. In 1836, the town reached an agreement with St. Patrick's Church that the school would be operated by the church, and the school would be operated by the church. At the time, the school was operated by the church.

"These schools have now been in operation more than half a year, and your Committee have the satisfaction to believe that the children are making good progress in their studies. It has been observed that the children of the Irish are more intelligent than those of our other schools."¹

