George Atkinson was elected Superintendent of Schools of Multnomah County in 1864. The term was two years, running from July through June, with an annual salary of $400. There were thirty-one school districts in the county. During the next year he also took unpaid positions as a State Penitentiary Commissioner and as Oregon chairman for the United States Christian Commission, a national body providing relief and aid to Civil War soldiers and victims. He was reelected Superintendent in 1866, then stepped down for two years. His third and last term was 1870-2.

He began his work as Superintendent with enthusiasm. Portland, the largest of the thirty-one districts, would not have its own School Superintendent until 1873. Atkinson’s work as Superintendent buttressed his reputation as a capable, determined, visionary leader. He used an innovative approach to communication, writing lengthy newspaper reports in the Oregonian, to inform the public of the needs and activities of the schools. During his six years as Superintendent he published eighteen reports, several of which occupied three full columns of print.

The first of the Superintendent’s reports appeared after his first month, on August 3, 1864. Noting that he had already visited most of the districts in the county, he “found ten public schools in operation in as many districts, and two private subscription schools in other districts.” He offered encouraging, but telling, comments on the appearance and condition of
the school buildings - seven were “comfortable and very neat”, while three “have rude, temporary structures” - before turning to his main subject, the advantages of keeping children in a neighborhood public “common school”, in contrast to sending them away to academies. His challenge:

“Let every district resolve to make its school a first class school. Let every voter attend the school meeting with the sole purpose to vote and pay tax enough to put the house in good order and to hire the teacher for six or nine months [italics in the original].”


Four more reports appeared during the next six months. In one he urged people to visit their schools:

“Fellow citizens of Multnomah County, you must visit your own schools. The teachers will be glad to see you at any time. The children will be glad to see you. I have often noticed that the promising scholars are those whose parents attend most to their schools, and who often visit them.”

In another he discussed the need for proper furniture:

“The plan of the school ought to give form to the building in which it is kept. The idea of the school should lead and not follow the fixtures for it. We do indeed have some attempt at this in the two or three low benches to suit the short legs of the little ones, but even these fail to fit. They have in many cases no backs to rest the weary child. Too often his feet cannot touch the floor and they hang in pain over the edge of the seat. If he lies down he is out of order and must get up. If he slips on to the floor for rest, he is worse off, for a switch will perhaps startle him. His seat too is often inclined out, so that he slides off. In a word, the building committee do not study well the wants of the little ones [italics in the original].”

He addressed a column to teachers, urging them to awareness of the individuality of each child’s method of learning. Noting that successful
adults in the community had learned their skills in varied ways, he wrote that “two things have been true of such a man: first, he has felt an interest in knowing some things, and secondly, he has succeeded.” He then continued:

“These two things are elements in every child. The first day of school you can see interest in every child, however small. His curiosity is all awake. The boy has much to tell pa and ma when he gets home at night. This curious interest of the child is the golden thread which the teacher may take, and which he must take in his hand to guide the child’s mind from one subject to another, and from one truth to another. [italics in the original]”

Another report emphasized primary education:

“The maturest (sic) and most skillful teachers ought to be put into the primary school room. If we take good care of the primary department, the others will succeed with comparatively little difficulty. The labor of the primary departments ought to be well divided among two or three teachers, The tendency is to impose too much upon those who conduct this department. In large schools like the public school in this city, the tendency is to lay too heavy burdens upon those who teach the little ones.”

The first report of his second term focused on a census of student population, pointing out that many children were not enrolled in any school:

“Enrolled in the twenty schools outside the city, there are, according to a pretty careful census, about 536 pupils, and within the city, 722 pupils – giving about five-twelfths to the former and seven-twelfths to the latter. Of 2,333 children between the ages of 4 and 20 years in the county, only about 1,232, or one half are enrolled in the school Registers. Of this deficiency, 850 are in Portland. The Academies and private schools have about 350 of these; leaving 500 unprovided. Two hundred and fifty in the outside districts fail to attend school, or about one-third of the whole number. The population of boys and girls is very nearly equal.”
The same report reviewed the condition of school buildings, complimenting many but crisply noting that “the houses in (districts) 8 and 10 need better seats and desks. No. 18 ought to build a good house. They have a central and fine location. No. 21 need one or two additional rooms to meet the wants of their increasing population, especially to grade the school.” He concluded with an extended discussion of the need, especially in the larger schools in Portland, to build structures with a sufficient number of rooms and teaching stations to enable better separation of subjects and grades.

Another column, “Change of Teachers in Our Free Schools,” addressed a topic close to the heart, and pocketbook, of local school boards. He discussed qualifications, employment, and evaluation of teachers. He was critical of the practice of some districts that changed teachers annually in order to keep expenses down, pointing out:

“Frequent changes keep salaries low, and tend to make them lower. It is a bid for new candidates. It destroys confidence in free schools, so that the citizens will neither vote for nor pay taxes for them, as they do for that which they value. We hold that the most careful selections should be made for teachers; and then they should not only be assured of their places, but urged to keep them, and fit themselves more and more for their profession.”

“School Books” found Atkinson listing himself as Chairman of the Teachers’ Association, as well as County Superintendent. Since he had pioneered in selecting and bringing the first textbooks for sale in Oregon, his remarks on the topic grew out of two decades of experience. It began with candor: “The failure of our last legislature to appoint a State Board of Education still leaves the choice of school books entirely to the District Committees.”

Decrying the confusion and sizeable (to parents) expense of duplication, he proposed some short term remedial steps, such as coordination of recommendations among the county superintendents. However he advocated for a statewide approach, asking the support of the press: “Those State journals, desirous to promote the welfare of our schools in this matter, are requested to call attention to these suggestions.”

As seen above, Oregon’s 1857 vote to be a free state was followed by a vote establishing strong barriers to prevent the movement of ‘negroes
and mulattoes’ into the new state. Nevertheless, by 1867 Portland had a number of black residents. They rallied behind William Brown, who had sent his children to public school only to have them refused admission. Brown secured the assistance of a young attorney, Thomas Alexander Wood, on behalf of the “colored children” in the district. Wood consulted with the School District directors, Josiah Failing, W.S. Ladd and Erasmus D. Shattuck.

The issue of the Colored School exposed a tension between Atkinson’s two public roles, Multnomah County Superintendent of Schools and pastor of the Congregational Church. Two of the three members of the Portland school district board, Failing and Shattuck, were also members of his church. At the Annual School Meeting held April 1, 1867 the Directors recommended that “a separate school be erected or rented for the colored children of the district.” Shattuck moved that the part of the Directors’ report relating to colored children be taken from the table. Superintendent Atkinson moved: “Resolved that the Directors be and they are instructed to make provision for a separate School for the education of Colored children of the District at an expense not to exceed $800 per annum and for this end they are empowered to rent or build the necessary buildings.”

A newspaper report of the ensuing discussion shows that the Directors had not informed the Superintendent about some of the actions that had preceded the meeting. In response to a question, Director Ladd announced that a District school census had identified twenty-five colored children of school age.

The report continues: “Mr. Atkinson enquired if the colored people applied for the admission of their children to the district school.”

Director Failing replied: “the colored citizens had applied for the admission of their children at the District school and that the Directors had refused to comply with their request but told them to open a school and let the people see that they were trying to do something for themselves and that they thought the taxpayers would then vote money to help them, but they would not promise them anything certain.”

Director Ladd added that “the colored people had held three school meetings, and that they were losing interest for the reason that but very few attended the last meeting.”

Atkinson’s response was firm: ”... the law as it is gave them the benefit of schools and that they could not be refused a school for their children.”
Funding for the separate school was adopted. It opened in the fall of 1867, in a building at Southwest Fourth Street and Columbia, rented from the ubiquitous Shattuck. According to Helen Casey’s research, Wood had learned that the Directors did recognize the claim of the children to a public school education, but were fearful that it would spark a ‘taxpayer revolt’, ending public education altogether. The directors offered to refund the tax money paid by the black families, but Wood refused the proposal on grounds of both unfairness and inadequacy. Wood then proposed a separate school, insisting that the teacher be paid similarly to other public school teachers, with adequate funding of at least $800 per year. Calling upon the legal services of former Mayor David Logan, Wood had commenced court action against the Directors.

Not satisfied, some black parents again tried to enroll their children in the existing public schools, but were once again turned away. The attorneys filed a petition for a writ of mandamus against the School Directors. The writ was denied by Judge – and School Director - E.D. Shattuck, who appears not to have recused himself despite a blatant conflict of interest. Progress was evident by 1870 when the School Directors, who had opened the first high school a year earlier, adopted an order “that any scholars in the colored school that may be found qualified to enter the high school be admitted there on the same terms as other pupils.”

At the 1871 school meeting a motion was made and passed to continue the colored school, but the following year “J.D. Holman moved that the Colored School of Portland be abolished. His motion prevailed ‘after discussion’.” Racially segregated education ended in Portland after five years, and colored children were enrolled in public schools.

The Superintendent concluded the last column of his second term with a summary of his intentions and efforts in carrying out the responsibilities of the office:

“It has been the aim of the undersigned during his official term to stimulate every district in the county to improve its own school by employing good teachers for longer terms; by improving school houses when needful; by reducing the number and variety of books and thus of classes, and by giving a thorough drill in the common studies. It has also been his aim to encourage and to call attention to those teachers who seem to devote
themselves to this work as a profession, and who love the work. It has not been done invidiously, but from a sense of duty to them and to the friends of education. If there has been any omissions or errors in this matter, or if any statement respecting any district has been at all inaccurate, it has been unintentional. In giving up the care of the public schools of the county to my successor elect, it is with the earnest hope that they have increased prosperity under his supervision.”

George also used his church pulpit on behalf of social and educational needs. Oregonian editor and church member Harvey Scott reprinted the full text of Atkinson’s Jan. 22, 1871 sermon entitled “A Juvenile Reformatory.” The scriptural text was from Psalms 68: 5-6, “A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widow is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families; he bringeth out those that are bound in chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.”

The sermon began by arguing that “the divine method of care for the human race is to set them in families,” and that “in the family are found the chief educating and guiding influences for good.” The thesis of the sermon was set out: “The need for a Reformatory for vagrant children and youth usually springs from some neglect or disruption of households. Society for its own safety is called upon to do what parents ought to have done.”

The preacher attributed much of the source of family failings to the influence of alcohol and gambling, and bemoaned the fact that as youth drift into criminal activity “the city has no proper place for this class of offenders. The officers must be content first to threaten, then arrest and imprison a few days, in the cold, damp jail with other felons, to become more contaminated.”

Atkinson proposed a reformatory because it would “give vagrants a home (italics in the original), not a cell or a prison, associated with the vicious and criminal. Put them under the best available home treatment. Vice engages the mind as well as the heart of its victims. Virtue must do like wise. There is no place like home to do it.” Citing his own research that showed the existence of 350 such entities in Great Britain and Europe, as well as reports from twenty cities and states in the U.S. including Connecticut, Maine, Baltimore, Michigan, and Wisconsin, he affirmed that
“The work is to restore children to what they have lost. It is a method, dictated alike by public safety, by economy, by humanity, and by all the aims of Christianity.”16

In July 1870 Atkinson began his third and final term as School Superintendent. Early the next year he resumed his Oregonian columns. Four appeared within six weeks, all but one in advance of the 1871 annual school district meetings. The first, ‘School Meetings’, began by reviewing, in precise detail, the state law that required organized school districts to hold annual meetings on the first Monday of April. Atkinson suggested that District #1, Portland, consider starting the meeting in the afternoon, recessing for supper, and continuing into the evening. Noting that the previous year’s meeting had rejected a proposal to purchase a block for a new public school, he commented that the decision ‘has proved to the loss of the city’, adding that ‘It is certain that important questions require time and all the light that can be thrown upon them.’ He reported that 800 children of Portland were enrolled in neither public nor private schools.

He reviewed issues that commonly arise in meetings, defending the need for School Directors to occasionally hire a carriage to visit outlying schools, or to travel to a neighboring city to study alternative ways of organizing school work. He chided the East Portland district for failure to erect an adequate building, leaving them with “two small buildings on hand which can accommodate only about 90 of their 265 pupils,” urging the district to erect a two story center building, making wings of the two small existing buildings.17

The second in the series, ‘School Teachers’, began with a review of state laws governing teacher certification and employment. Atkinson noted:

“The law further requires that teachers shall maintain order in school, so conduct as to command the respect of pupils, commence school at half past eight o’clock A.M. and close at four o’clock P.M. each day, giving one hour for recreation at noon, unless otherwise ordered by the directors, labor incessantly during school hours to advance the scholars in their studies, to create in their minds a desire for knowledge, principle, morality, politeness, cleanliness and the preservation of physical health, to keep a register of daily attendance, and hand a copy of the same
to the District Clerk quarterly, and give a public examination on
the last day of the quarter, and invite the County Superintendent
to be present.”

Looking to the future, the superintendent offered five recommenda-
tions about employment, oversight, and support of teachers. They are sum-
marized here:

“1. Give material encouragement to the teacher’s work. Pay the gentle-
man or lady whom you employ to teach your children according as
you value the minds and hearts, the intelligence and virtue of those
children.

2. Employ the same teachers, if possible, term after term, and year
after year, and make them feel sure of their places, and thus encour-
age them to prepare themselves better for the work.

3. Provide the best buildings and grounds, and furnish the best helps
for teaching, such as charts, books, blackboards, platforms, and
good seats.

4. Visit the schools, become intelligent respecting its modes, its
excellencies and defects, encourage its discipline and sustain its
reputation, not only by good words, but by sending your children
regularly.

5. Give teachers a day or two every quarter to attend County Insti-
tutes, and require them to attend, and to show eagerness to improve
in their art.”

The third article, ‘School Grounds’, began with the Oregon School
Law, observing that School Directors, ‘when authorized by a majority vote
of the district, shall purchase, lease or build school houses, and buy or lease
lands for school purposes.’ He then added, perhaps sarcastically, ‘the lands
specified evidently mean sites for school houses – not fields or farms.’

The article strongly recommended that all schools have sufficient land
for recreational and drill activity on school grounds, noting that many older
large cities had not made such provision, but that Portland, in all cases but one (the Harrison School, located on half a block) had purchased full blocks (115,200 square feet) for each school. The superintendent concluded with some recommendations for playground supervision:

“School grounds are a part of the teacher’s domain as much as school rooms. Two teachers, in our large schools, a gentleman and a lady, should always oversee the pupils, during recess and in intermission, on the play grounds, or in any basement, or room appropriated to recreation. In no other way can quarrels, or bad words, or vexatious and oppressive conduct of older, and stronger, pupils over the younger, weaker, and more timid ones, or immoral tendencies be checked or repressed, and the best manners and habits be cultivated. The most common evils of our schools, and the chief complaints, arise from the rude, wild, improper and some reckless conduct of a few pupils during recess and intermission. Good order in the playground will secure it in the recitation room.”

The fourth article, ‘School Houses’, appeared on April 29, 1871, and began with a statement of architectural philosophy (anticipating Louis Sullivan’s “Form Follows Function”):

“The object of a building should govern its construction. The clearer and more comprehensive the idea or aim, the more distinct will be the outline, and the more simple and harmonious all the parts. A dwelling for a family must differ from a store, or a church, and a school room should be unlike a hot-house, a furnace room, or an ice cellar. A prison even ought not be underground, or destitute of good light and air, in order to gain the ends of punishment, discipline or reform; but rather to be built so that light, air and comfort, as well as confinement and toil, may serve these ends, and thus impress the benevolence of justice, as well as its power. The brightness of a school room ought to be adapted to the wants of the human eye, not glaring, not deeply shaded, and its temperature ought not to be oppressive or chilly.”
Drawing on information from Boston and New York, the superintendent proposed standards for school buildings regarding light, ventilation, temperature, ceiling height, desk arrangement, and class size. His conclusion was a restatement of one of his core beliefs: “A good free school draws and binds to itself the families that comprise the real strength, physical, social, intellectual and moral, of every community.”  

Atkinson’s role in public education did not lessen his interest in Pacific University. He wrote to the AHMS about the achievement of Pacific:

“Its growth is slow, yet sufficient to be obvious to the communities of Oregon & to command increasing confidence. The institution has been born and nourished in the breath of prayer, & we trust it will be a blessing to our churches & work for the extension of freedom, intelligence, truth & piety through our part of the nation & even regions beyond.”

As already shown, George was a strong and consistent advocate of educational opportunities for women. Records of the Pacific’s Trustees show a sequence of events, involving Atkinson, which led to the admission of women to Pacific University. On May 8, 1867 the Trustees approved an action “that the faculty be hereby offered to give ladies the opportunity to pursue the college course, and also that they be authorized to add French & German – optionally to the students – to the college curriculum.”

Although the minutes give no reason for this decision at this time, a donation from George appears to have played a role leading to adoption of the new policy. In 1857 he had purchased twenty acres, originally donated to the school by a Mr. Catchings, from the University. The purchase apparently served two purposes: (1) providing needed operating funds to the school; and (2) serving to retain the land for future use by the school. On Feb. 4, 1862 the Trustees approved a motion: “Resolved that the 20 acres of land on the Catchings claim, sold to Mr. Atkinson as per vote, be received again from him at his request and be appropriated for female instruction in the Institution as he requests.” This action is the only time that the minutes of the Trustees show discussion of admission of women before acting on their inclusion in 1867.

Continuing financial progress at Pacific University was achieved under the leadership of President Marsh. On June 16, 1867 he reported to the
Trustees that his second fund-raising trip to the East, recently concluded, had brought $25,228.04 into the coffers of the school. A third trip, in 1869, produced $20,942.75.  

1873 found the trustees of Pacific University troubled by a change of policy and procedures by the American College and Education Society. The issue first appears in the records of the trustees’ annual meeting, on June 3:

“June 3, 1873. Pres. Marsh submitted blank bonds from the Secretary of the College Society to be filled in duplicate to prevent alienation of gifts to State or Ecclesiastical control.” The ensuing discussion is not recorded, but the next day’s minutes show an action: “June 4, 1873, Resolved that G.H. Atkinson and E.D. Shattuck be a committee to consider and report upon the proposed bond to the College Society.”

The minutes are silent regarding discussion, but the third day of the meeting brought with it an important change to the Constitution of the school, possibly in response to the policy change of the ACES:

“June 5, 1873 – The following Preamble (was) passed: Whereas Tualatin Academy and Pacific University is not and cannot ever be by its corporate law or Constitution under any state or ecclesiastical control, resolved that it will welcome the friendly sympathy and aid of the State and of any and all denominations of Christians. Resolved, that by virtue of its origin it seeks and expects the fraternal cooperation (especially) of all the Congregational churches of our state and region.”

The change of policy and procedure at the ACES had come shortly after the death of its founding executive, Theron Baldwin, the man who, in 1847, had challenged Atkinson to build a college in Oregon. Baldwin had been an unabashed enthusiast for starting colleges and seminaries in the west. The ACES now wanted more accountability over the purposes for which the schools used funds received through the Society. The proffered blank bonds seem to have raised hackles among Pacific’s trustees, and quite possibly the trustees of other schools receiving aid from the Society, as well.
Resolution of the matter dragged on for at least two years. Atkinson received a letter, dated July 23, 1875, from H.P. Butterfield, Baldwin's successor. Butterfield's letter shows that at least one of the causes for the Society's new policy was unhappiness about events in California that had changed a church college in Berkeley into a state school. The brisk tone of his writing would not have sat well with recipients:

“Now about the Agreement. I think you misunderstand its scope.

1. As I understand the matter, it can never have any retroactive [force] whatever.

2. In any case, it renders you liable to pay back only such sums as shall hereafter go to you through this Society & be covered by specific receipts drawn in accordance with, & in reference to the Agreement. I have no copy of the printed form of receipt at hand, or I would inclose it.

3. You must be guilty of a real breach of trust before you can become liable to pay the sums covered by these receipts. We give to you & encourage others to give to you as a Christian College. Now if you take out the “Christian,” & make the College heretical: or if you destroy the grade, & make the College a high school, or a mere academy, you break the implied condition on which Christian men give you money, & we, under the Agreement, can recover everything for which we hold your receipts. And do you think that a hardship? Would it not be hard, if we could not recover? Do you think we look with any kind of patience upon THE OUR CALIFORNIA BRETHREN SECULARIZED IN TURNING IT OVER TO THE STATE UNIVERSITY? Fifty years hence your successors may want to do some such foolish & unjust thing: but if they find they must pay this Society $40,000 or so, before doing it, they may hesitate. So, my good bro. this Agreement will not load your Academy or shadow your University. It will only be your formal & legal pledge to us that the money it covers shall never be diverted from the object you had in view in asking & the givers had in view in bestowing it. ‘Only that & nothing more.’ It can never restrict your liberty as Trustees, till you try to do
wrong in these two ways just described. The sooner you execute it the better.
Very Cordially, H. Q. Butterfield”

Atkinson responded to Butterfield one month later, accepting the agreement:

“While we wish to assure the College Society that the former funds received have been sacredly kept and their income used for the Collegiate expenses, and that the Trustees hold this sacred purpose for the future, we shall recommend our Board to enter into the ‘Covenant and agreement with the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education & their Successors’ with reference to all funds entrusted to us through their agency in future after this date. We will call a meeting of the Board at as early a day as is Convenient and inform you of their action.

H. W. Corbett, G. H. Atkinson.”

Atkinson had long prided himself on his relationships with Theron Baldwin, the ACES, and its predecessor society, but in the matter of the covenant with the ACES he seems to have been in full agreement with the Trustees and, it may be assumed, President Marsh. A recent history of Pacific University argues that Trustee Secretary George Atkinson and President Sydney Harper Marsh were on opposing sides of a controversy that is variously described as over “ecclesiastical control” or “Congregational control.” Yet the above material shows, as does Atkinson’s earlier letter to his uncle, Josiah Little, that Marsh and all of the trustees, including Atkinson, were in substantial agreement as they shaped their response to the change of policy and procedure by the ACES.

The ACES, of course, continued to provide modest financial aid to the University, as it did to each of the colleges that it had approved for support. The Annual Reports of the ACES are unclear about the amount of direct aid given, but in the thirty year period between 1853 and 1883 their reports show a total of $96,176.20 received by Pacific University. Marsh’s own fund-raising efforts account for the bulk of those funds. The report for the year 1883, however, includes a listing of twenty-eight eastern churches and individuals who together contributed $8,113.46 to Pacific University.
Included are Frederick Billings ($1,000) and his wife Julia Parmly Billings ($300).

Marsh chose the twenty-fifth anniversary of his Pacific presidency to give a lengthy address reflecting on his work. The audience was limited to Pacific’s Trustees, at their annual meeting. In one portion he referred to denominational relations:

“I must refer to another matter about which there has been much needless agitation, viz., the denominational relations of the institution.” He began by setting out his understanding of what it meant for Pacific to be Congregational in character. . . .

“believing that I know and approve the doctrines as well as the polity of the old historic denomination I have believed that as I individually worked for Christ as a Congregationalist, while not working for Congregationalism, so the institution while following the methods, exercising the moral discipline and working out in instruction the ideas that originated our old New England colleges, knew no such object as advancing the interests of the denomination.”

He then clarified his stance regarding the independence of the school from ecclesiastical control or direction:

“There is a tendency in some Congregational conferences to assume a special right of visitation or supervision, for which composed as they are sometimes of members differing widely in theological and educational views, they are altogether disqualified. The Institution is under a Board of Trustees that fills its own vacancies, a majority of whom are Congregationalists that will maintain this connection, not to make it sectarian, but to shut off all sectarian controversy and like true Congregationalists preserve it free from the influence of an outside body, and see that it is conducted in the true, simple Christian spirit to which we have referred.”

Marsh did not refer to Atkinson personally in his comments and, as we have already seen, Atkinson had elsewhere expressed himself in agreement
with Marsh’s position in favor of non-sectarian teaching. Still, it can safely be assumed that Marsh spoke against “conferences that assume the right of visitation and supervision” because he had had to fend off such efforts. Those would-be influences must have been ministers in Oregon, since no other Congregationalists were nearby. Further evidence of tension between the two can be found in a letter that Atkinson had written to the AHMS two years earlier:

“Prof. G.H. Collier has left Forest Grove for the same reason that Bro. Ellis did. He has accepted the professorship of Mathematics in Willamette University reluctantly but for the sake of peace he says. So far as our missionary & Christian work is concerned, I am often tempted to regret efforts for the college and almost wish it had never been, but out of the darkness I still hope for light. It has done good. It could do much more for the churches if permitted.”

Atkinson’s 1873 move from local pastor to general missionary did not end his activities on behalf of public education. His successor as County Superintendent, Unitarian pastor Thomas Lamb Eliot, served two terms, but early in the first the region served by the County Superintendent’s office was reduced when Portland established the office of City Superintendent of Schools. S.H. King was selected City Superintendent in 1873. In 1877 King was succeeded T.H. Crawford, who continued in the office until 1888. King’s first annual report states:

“At a meeting of the Board of Directors, May 26, 1874, Dr. Atkinson was selected to serve on the Examining Committee. This committee was instructed to conduct an examination in the various departments of the public schools.”

Atkinson soon reported:

“The candidates for the High School were fairly tested in ten studies . . . of forty-seven sets of papers the average credit of 70 per cent and over was given to twenty-three or twenty-four numbers, thus authorizing them to pass to the High School at
the beginning of the next term in September . . . It is well for those pupils, and all others, and their parents also, to see how they stand in every study. It will guide the parent and stimulate the child to make up deficiencies and move on and up for surely the next time.”36

The exams, which Atkinson continued to administer, were given in February and July. His commitment to community service was sorely tried by the amount of his schedule given to travel, but his name appears each year in the Annual Report of the Multnomah County Superintendent of Schools.

2. Ibid., Aug. 24, 1864.
3. Ibid., Nov. 22, 1864.
4. Ibid., Jan. 7, 1865.
5. Ibid., Jan. 19, 1865.
6. Ibid., July 19, 1866.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., August 10, 1866.
9. Ibid., January 24, 1867.
11. Failing and Shattuck were also associated with Atkinson in other educational efforts (Failing at Pacific University and Shattuck at both Pacific University and Clackamas County Female Seminary).
12. Daily Oregon Herald, April 2, 1867, 3. This writer is indebted to Tim Hills, Historian for McMenamins Pubs and Breweries, Portland, Oregon, for this research.
14. Reynolds, History of the Public Schools of Portland, Oregon, 1845 to 1871.
15. Atkinson, Oregonian, June 17, 1868.
17. Ibid., March 24, 1871.
18. Ibid., March 29, 1871.
19. Ibid., April 5, 1871.
20. Ibid., April 29, 1871.
21. Atkinson to AHMS, May 6, 1864. AHMS Archives, Amistad Research Center at Tulane University.
22. Cited elsewhere in this work are his visits to Wailuku Seminary (Maui) in 1848, Mt. Holyoke Seminary (Massachusetts) in 1852, and Benecia Seminary (California) in 1868, as well as his efforts, strenuous but ultimately unsuccessful, on behalf of Clackamas County Female Seminary in Oregon City.
23. Trustees, Tualatin Academy and Pacific University, minutes, May 8, 1867. Pacific University Archives.
24. Ibid., Feb. 4, 1862.
26. Trustees, Tualatin Academy and Pacific University, minutes, June 3-5, 1873. Archives, Pacific.
27. The “College of California”, begun in Oakland (with aid from the SPCTEW) by Congregationalists and Presbyterians in 1855 and then moved to Berkeley. It had become a state institution, the University of California, in 1868. Website, University of California, accessed May 22, 2007.
31. See chapter seven, endnote 26.
32. ACES, Annual Reports, Congregational Library, Boston MA.
33. Marsh “Reflections”, Trustees, minutes, June 5, 1878. Pacific U. Archives. Marsh’s use of the word ‘conference’ to characterize the churches of a region shows his eastern background. The term would not begin to be used among western Congregationalists for another thirty years. In 1878 they were still calling all regional organizations ‘associations’.
34. Atkinson to AHMS, September 14, 1876. AHMS Archives, Amistad.
36. Ibid.