

ABSTRACT

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Educational Foundations
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THE ROLES OF PRAYER, PETITION AND POWER IN FUNDING
PENNSYLVANIA HIGHER EDUCATION: THE RESPONSE OF COLLEGES AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF
1872-1873 (310 PP.)

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Pennsylvania's fourth Constitutional Convention met from 1872-1873. Convention delegates were authorized to recommend reforms to the State Constitution. One thrust of these reforms was to limit the power of the General Assembly to pass special legislation. Special legislation, because it was often used to provide funding for local interests, was often viewed as a corruption of power wielded by the General Assembly.

In their zeal for reform, the delegates passed resolutions that negatively affected some institutions of higher education. The new Constitution appeared to eliminate the tax exempt status for colleges and alter the previous process of petitioning for resources through special legislation. Colleges struggled and often could not survive without State assistance. Thus, in January 1874, within weeks of the new Constitution becoming law, college leaders and State representatives worked to reverse its effects.

This study provides a review and analysis of the political context behind the Constitution of 1874. The dialogue of the delegates, the members of the General Assembly, and leaders of higher education from October 1872 through June 1874 was

examined. The purpose of this work was to identify if Pennsylvania politics in the 1870s generated a Constitution which limited and shifted State resources from higher to elementary education, from private to public schools, and from sectarian to non-sectarian institutions.

The study found that some changes affecting higher education were driven by the delegates' focus on the common schools in the State. Other changes, such as the elimination of authority to grant tax exempt status, affected higher education as collateral damage while delegates tried to address issues of State-level corruption. Some higher education stakeholders were not well represented during the Convention deliberations. Finally, the new Constitution changed how appropriations were sought by the higher education community.