



*ADVANCE SHEET – July 4, 2025*

## President's Letter

In view of recent controversies over college admissions and the student loan program, we tender herewith a biographical sketch of Senator Justin Morrill, whose designs for vocational education differed from those now current.

George W. Liebmann



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## Sometimes Sketchy Is Good

Although it is difficult to get unanimous agreement on any subject, perhaps one that comes fairly close is the manner in which the courtroom sketches done by Beth Otter that adorn various walls of the Mitchell Courthouse have enhanced the appearance of the corridors in which they reside. The good news is that we are in the final stages of having additional sketches placed in the hall outside of Room 504 (The George

William Brown Room). So now, when you are going to one of the multitude of gatherings that are held there, you will have even more to look forward to as well as look at. Just watch your step.

If you would like to “get in on the action,” I suggest that you visit the Bar Library’s Web Page at **[www.barlib.org](http://www.barlib.org)** and go to the Galleries link to the left of the Page. Hover over it until a number of selections come up, then click on Courtroom Sketches, which will in turn bring up 555 sketches. See something you like, and how is it possible not to, we can arrange to have it framed for you and for just a \$100 charge, it’s yours. You can call me at 410-727-0280 or reach me by e-mail at **[jwbennett@barlib.org](mailto:jwbennett@barlib.org)**.

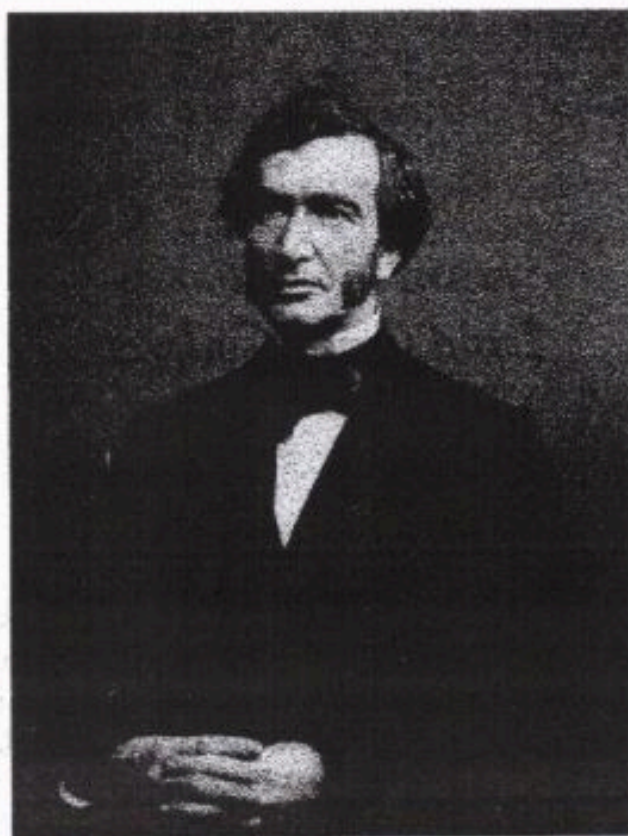
Joe Bennett



## *Justin Morrill and Land Grant Colleges*

The process of establishing state universities was well advanced by 1862, and a number of universities and private colleges had received ad hoc land grants from state governments, including William and Mary College (20,000 acres), Harvard College (3,300 acres), Dartmouth College (40,960 acres), and Dickinson College, Franklin College, and Reading Academy (5,000 acres each). By 1805 there were state universities in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. In 1816, Virginia had established its Central College, converted by Jefferson into the most famous of state universities. Proposals for a national university made by President Washington in his message to Congress in 1790, by Jefferson in a message to Congress in 1806, and by Joel Barlow in 1806 were stillborn because of constitutional objections; similar proposals by Charles Fleischmann in 1838 to use the Smithsonian endowment for a national agricultural college and by Land Office Commissioner John Wilson in 1853 for a university in the District of Columbia also failed.

It is possible to take the view that the groundwork for the Morrill Act was laid not by Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont but by the great mental health reformer Dorothea Dix. In 1848, she memorialized Congress to grant 5 million acres of land to be divided among the states and sold by them to build facilities for care of the insane. A variant of the proposal passed the House in 1852 and in 1854 Congress approved another version of the bill,



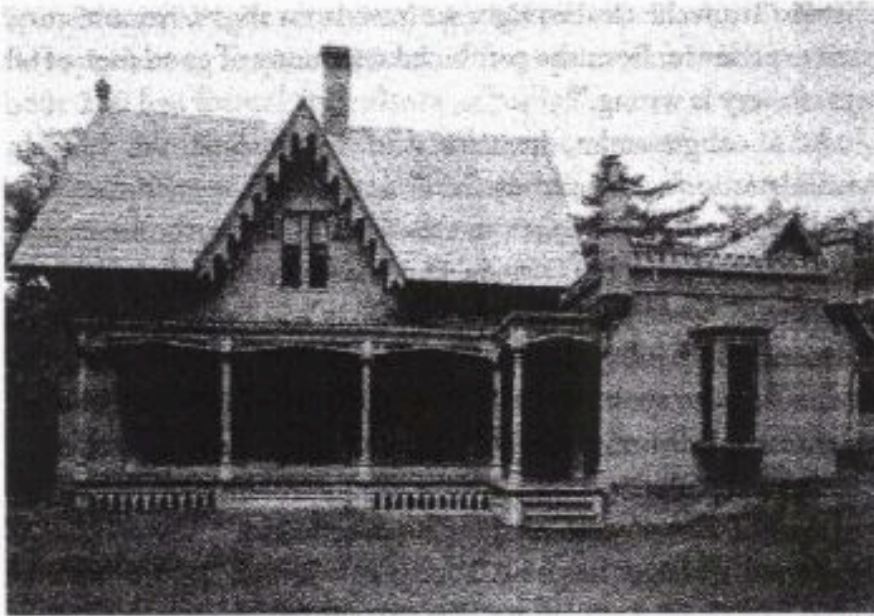
13. Hon. Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont (Library of Congress)

which was vetoed by President Pierce on constitutional grounds. There was a minor precedent for the proposed grant in the form of a federal grant of land in 1826 to a deaf and dumb asylum in Kentucky.

In 1852, Congressman Henry Bennett of New York proposed a similar system of land grants to Western states for railroads and to the non-public land states for common schools. This bill passed the House but ultimately failed in 1855.

A proposal for agricultural colleges had been made by Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Illinois in 1851 and had united agricultural reformers in the coastal states and in the public land states. The original measure proposed a grant of 20,000 acres for each senator or representative in Congress, with scrip exchangeable for Western land instead of land being issued to the Eastern coastal states; the scrip was intended to be sold to third parties to prevent one state





14. Senator Justin Smith Morrill House, Strafford, Orange County, VT  
(Library of Congress)

from owning land in another. The act passed the Congress but was vetoed by President Buchanan.<sup>1</sup> It had been lauded by Stephen Douglas, who regarded himself as a latter-day Jeffersonian, as "the most democratic scheme of education ever proposed to the mind of man."<sup>2</sup>

Justin Morrill was born in 1810. He attended academies in Thetford and Randolph, Vermont, but never went to college. He worked in mercantile establishments in Strafford, Vermont, and Portland, Maine until he was 38; he was successful enough to retire to life as a gentleman farmer. He designed and constructed an 18-room neo-Gothic wooden house, and accompanying gardens, in Strafford; it is now a tourist attraction.

He was a delegate to the Whig convention that nominated General Winfield Scott for president in 1852, and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1855 as a Whig, becoming a Republican two years later; in 1867, he was elected to the US Senate, where he served until his death 31 years later. He opposed the spread of slavery, but was willing to tolerate it where it

existed: "from the clearest light we have from above, from history, from experience, from the combined testimony of good men of all ages, slavery is wrong."<sup>3</sup>

As a congressman, he successfully sponsored the Lincoln Administration's protectionist Tariff Act of 1861, sometimes compared by some in the South to the 1828 Tariff of Abominations. Enactment of the bill was made possible by the secession of Southern congressmen. During the Civil War, he sponsored two additional tariff bills aimed at raising revenues, which raised rates further. He also sponsored the Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862, aimed at practices of the Mormon Church, regarding these as "gross offenses whether in secular or ecclesiastical garb; to prevent practices which outrage the moral sense of the Christian world."<sup>4</sup> Vermonters of the period disliked Brigham Young and Joseph Smith, both of whom had their origins there. The act was effectively a dead letter until the Mormons renounced polygamy in 1890, an incident of Utah's efforts to gain statehood.

In sponsoring the famous statute that bears his name, he declared:

This bill proposes to establish at least one college in every state upon a sure and perpetual foundation, accessible to all, where all of needful science for the practical avocations of life shall be taught, where neither the higher graces of classical studies nor that military drill that our country now so greatly appreciates will be entirely ignored, and where agriculture, the foundation of all present and future prosperity, may look for troops of earnest friends, studying its familiar and recondite economics, and at last elevating it to that higher level where it may fearlessly invoke comparison with the most advanced standards of the world.

Morrill had become interested in agricultural education in consequence of sharply falling crop yields resulting from exhaustion of soils. Wheat and potato production in New England fell by almost half between 1840 and 1850; there was also a sharp fall in tobacco production in Virginia. In 1856, Morrill had unsuccessfully sponsored legislation to create a national agriculture college modeled on the military academies. He was impressed by



the existence of agricultural colleges abroad, such as in England and especially in France, which had five agricultural colleges and about 100 less formal agricultural schools.<sup>5</sup>

After the Civil War, he became a member of the influential Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction. In the 1890s, in the run-up to the Spanish-American War, he was a strong anti-imperialist: he opposed President Grant's proposed annexation of Santo Domingo as well as the annexation of Hawaii and Puerto Rico. As for American designs on Mexico, he declared that Mexico had "more of the Latin race than the stomach of Uncle Sam can safely bear."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, he thought that Canada would ultimately be absorbed by the United States. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Johns Hopkins in 1887. The later stages of his Senate career were informed by three main interests: tariffs, sound money, and the architecture of the US Capitol and its vicinity. He favored tariffs for both protection and revenue, and played a leading role not only in Civil War tariff increases but in the McKinley Tariff of 1890, the Wilson-Gorman Tariff legislation of 1894 and the Dingley Tariff of 1897. His high-tariff legacy, beneficial to the North and Midwest and ruinous to the South, lasted until the advent of the Wilson Administration in 1913. In general, he favored fixed rather than *ad valorem* tariffs, since the latter were less effective as protectionist devices during recessions when they were most needed. Consistent with his views, he also opposed reciprocal trade agreements, including one with Canada, regarding free trade as "a sunlit theory, rejected by every civilized nation." He opposed the use of greenbacks as legal tender during the Civil War: "I protest against making anything legal tender but gold and silver as calculated to undermine all confidence in [the] Republic."<sup>7</sup> He also opposed bi-metallism, and in 1875 was successful in limiting the amount of greenback circulation to \$300 million; in 1863 he had similarly compromised, declaring that "the patient has got accustomed to opiates and the dose cannot be withheld without peril." It was said that "probably his greatest contribution in the Senate was his attempt to restore a sound currency."<sup>8</sup> In his last years in the Senate, prior to his death in 1898, he arranged for construction of what is now the

main (Jefferson) building of the Library of Congress and of improvements to the Capitol and its grounds.

In 1862, a revised act providing 30,000 acres for each member of Congress was signed by President Lincoln. The act contemplated sale of the lands and scrip by the states, and the reinvestment of the proceeds at 5 percent interest. Two states, Illinois and New York, evaded the feature of the act relating to scrip. The state university in Illinois entered 26,000 acres in Minnesota and years later reaped a good return; California realized more than \$5.00 per acre and Minnesota \$4.39, according to Allan Nevins.<sup>9</sup> New York conveyed its scrip to Ezra Cornell, who used it to acquire a half-million acres in Wisconsin, which were actively managed for many years and ultimately yielded the university \$5,765,000, as compared with \$300,000 realized by Wisconsin's agricultural college from the sale of scrip. The single largest allocation was to the New York State Agricultural College at Cornell. In addition to provision for the Northern states, five public land states which had seceded were to receive scrip for 900,000 acres when they re-entered the Union, and Texas, which had much public land of its own, received scrip for 180,000 acres, netting it \$156,000. This delay benefited the five states; Arkansas and Florida got 90 cents per acre for their scrip when sold in 1872 and 1873; the Eastern states got from 40 to 60 cents per acre on their earlier sales. After 1870, the value of unredeemed college scrip rose to \$1.00 or more per acre. The total grant was of 17 million acres; the liquidation of the grants by state governments were resented in the public land states by reason of their depressing effect on the land market. After reconstruction, the Morrill Act was extended to 16 Southern states. In total, 48 agricultural colleges were created or expanded to secure the benefits of the act, including some African-American institutions in four Southern states. New institutions were created in Oklahoma, Indiana (Purdue), New York (Cornell), Texas, and Washington; among existing institutions creating new programs were Brown, Dartmouth, Yale, Rutgers, and MIT. The original act included a provision for the teaching of military tactics by the new colleges, inspired by early Northern defeats in the Civil War, in addition to the provisions for training in agricultural (including forestry, veterinary medicine, and home



economics) and mechanical (engineering) arts. The contemplated training was to be "without excluding other scientific and classical studies."<sup>10</sup> The military training provision, which in the early years consisted of little besides drilling, was greatly expanded by the National Defense Act of 1916, which gave rise to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps system that had trained 50,000 officers by World War II, three-fourths of all active military officers; half of the reserve officers were trained in the land grant colleges. The land grant colleges are credited with fundamentally altering the pre-existing class basis of American higher education.<sup>11</sup>

The land grant colleges had a profound effect on high schools, which were virtually nonexistent outside the North-east; many of them could only obtain a student body by giving preparatory courses to entering students. The availability of college training to students of limited means stimulated the creation of high schools, the colleges functioning as accrediting agencies in many states. Morrill's purpose was:

to largely benefit those at the bottom of the ladder who want to climb up, or those who have some ambition to rise in the world, but are without the means to seek far from home a higher standard of culture. This and more was sought to be accomplished by bringing forward at less cost of time and money, courses of study, [...] of greater use in practical affairs than those then largely prevailing, which seemed to offer little of lasting value beyond mere discipline imposed.<sup>12</sup>

The beginnings of the land grant colleges were humble. Daniel J. Boorstin has observed that among the 48 recipients of grants were new state colleges and universities in 11 states, eight new "agricultural and mechanical" (A&M) colleges, and six colleges for African-Americans.<sup>13</sup> Virtually none of the students at the African-American colleges did college work; it was not until 1930 that college students at those institutions exceeded the students in preparatory programs. The influence of the act caused the number of non-military engineering schools to increase from four in 1860 to 70 in 1872. By 1976, about 40 percent of all engineering degrees were granted by land grant colleges.<sup>14</sup> A conference

of the new institutions took place in 1871 at which Daniel Coit Gilman of Yale, later president of Johns Hopkins, lamented the state of public schools: "we have hardly anything to prepare for the scientific schools," a situation that continues to obtain. In 1867, Gilman had described the land grant colleges as, potentially, "national schools of science."<sup>15</sup>

There were further conferences in 1872, 1881, 1883, and 1885; in 1887 an association of land grant colleges was formed which thereafter held annual meetings. In 1882, after 20 years, total land grant enrolment was only 2,243 but it rose to 25,000 in 1895; 135,000, one-third of the students in higher education, by 1916; and 400,000 by 1926. By 1910, according to Boorstin, only one-third of the financial support of land grant colleges came from the federal government and that proportion had dropped to one-tenth by 1932. In 1935, additional federal funds of \$17.5 million per year for instruction, research, and extension work, mostly the latter, were provided by the Bankhead-Jones Act. In 1887, Congress, by enacting the Hatch Act, gave each state a \$15,000 annual grant for the creation of agricultural experiment stations, usually attached to the A&M colleges; from them came the soybean industry, hybrid corn, and streptomycin. In 1906, Congress passed the Adams Act, according each experiment station an additional, phased-in \$15,000 per year, but requiring them to submit proposed projects to the Department of Agriculture. The Purnell Act in 1925 provided an additional \$60,000 for each station. Many colleges established engineering experiment stations with state funds, but the appropriations for these never exceeded about one-tenth of what was spent on the agricultural stations. The Smith-Lever Act in 1914 provided for dissemination of agricultural research through a federally funded extension service attached to each agricultural college; each state received \$10,000 plus an additional appropriation to be matched by the state based on its rural population. By 1919, 75 percent of the nation's counties had county extension agents and 35 percent had home demonstration agents who visited farms.<sup>16</sup> By 1951, total federal appropriations amounted to \$5 million for instruction, \$12.5 million for experiment stations, and \$32 million for extension work. In 1966, a Current Research Information System



for agricultural research was established that may be a model for other disciplines.

After the withdrawal of the Southern states from Congress, it was no longer seen as necessary to use land grants rather than cash appropriations to avoid constitutional constraints. Nonetheless, there were further abortive proposals for aid to women's colleges and for public schools in the District of Columbia, which had been excluded from the Morrill Act. In 1872 and 1873, measures to grant lands to agricultural colleges passed one house, and another measure passed the Senate in 1872. Finally, in 1890, the Second Morrill Act was passed after a lapse of 28 years, granting \$15,000 for each state and territory for its land grant institutions each year, rising by \$1,000 per year to \$25,000. These sums seem modest, but they exceeded the sums spent by land grant institutions on agricultural education in 1890 and were greater than the income the institutions received from the endowments provided from the sale of the lands granted in 1862. The 1890 act denied funds to colleges "where a distinction of race or color is made in the admission of students," but allowed grants to predominantly African-American institutions. The institutions that became South Carolina State University and Kentucky State University became land grant institutions in 1896 and 1897; 11 African-American land grant institutions were created in all as a result of a requirement in the Second Morrill Act that the states fairly divide funds between black and white institutions, with annual reports to Congress. In 1968 the District of Columbia, with a grant of \$7.24 million, and in 1994 29 Native American tribal colleges were added to the system.

The act was significant in that it did not provide for micro-management but looked toward the creation under state auspices and the permanent endowment of new types of institutions. It required participating states to formally accept its terms within two years, required annual reports, and required return of granted funds if a college was not in operation within five years, but otherwise did not constrain the states. Income from the original grant of 17 million acres amounted in 1953 to only about \$1,750,000, but the act was a vital catalyst when it was enacted, even though most of the states received only enough annual income to pay



two or three professors, and received no capital funds. In spite of its modesty, the subsequent structure of experiment stations and extension services led Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager to call it "the most important piece of agricultural legislation in American history."<sup>17</sup> The existing state universities, whose creation had been stimulated by the reservation of two townships in each state provided for by admission laws following the Northwest Ordinance, began to themselves offer agricultural and engineering programs, and the A&M colleges for their part offered liberal arts programs. By 1963, the convergence was so complete that the Office of Education ceased maintaining separate statistics on the land grant institutions.

By the beginning of World War II, state university systems had grown, but had not reached their present importance. Their total enrolment was roughly equal to that in private colleges, many of them of denominational origin. The impetus to the post-war explosion of public higher education was found in the GI Bill of Rights and subsequent federal scholarship and loan programs. Private institutions were more conservative than their public counterparts in grasping the opportunity for growth presented by the new legislation; whether from civic apathy or the reduced vitality of religious denominations, few new private institutions were founded after World War II (Brandeis University is probably the most noted one), although more recently there have been new institutions inspired by religious fundamentalism (Liberty University, Regent University, Patrick Henry College, Bob Jones University, Oral Roberts University, and the Catholic Ave Maria University). State governments have proliferated new campuses, and some of their efforts have been impressive: for example, the state university system in New York and the North Carolina community college system. Typically, the new institutions in the public sector have been currently funded rather than endowed. Some of the developments under state charter school laws have promise; however, in all but a few states (Arizona and Louisiana being the exceptions), little has been done to bring them up to scale; one may contrast the recent British legislation providing for creation of secondary school academies, some enjoying private sector or sectarian assistance, which already account for

2,456 British secondary schools.<sup>18</sup> There also has been little effort, in either the public or private sector, to create schools for the gifted and talented, like the recently revived Speyer School in the New York City public school system, or specialized language and science high schools, all of which could usefully be initially endowed by federal or state governments. Instead, all energies and funds are devoted to the feeding of, and futile efforts to reform, the present system.

The GI Bill of Rights, enacted in 1944, has received astonishingly little attention from American historians, law professors, and political scientists. In the 60 years since its enactment, only two books about it have been published, one a short monograph issued by the University Press of Kentucky and the other a book by a retired journalist issued by a small commercial publisher. Had the bill been a product of the Roosevelt or Kennedy Administrations, America's lemming-like academics would be falling over themselves acclaiming its wisdom. The difficulty is that the bill in its entirety was prepared by obscure officers of the American Legion; its principal Senate sponsor was Senator Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri, known for his alcoholic propensities, and its House manager until just before its enactment was Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi, second only to Senator Theodore Bilbo as Congress's most notorious racist. Both, however, were exceptionally able parliamentarians.

The Roosevelt Administration's planning for veterans had been affected by the president's previous record of opposition to bonus proposals put forth on behalf of World War I veterans and his rhetoric favoring universal and not veteran-centered programs. Planning for veterans had been confined during the war to the National Resources Planning Board, which the Republican opposition saw as the potential architect of a planned economy and which was killed by Congress in June 1943 after it had started to produce an American equivalent of the Beveridge Report. The administration's planning for rehabilitation of disabled veterans also earned disfavor by its attempt to confine their care to agencies dealing with the disabled population generally, and to direct their training toward areas of industry where it was projected that need for workers would exist under conditions of full employment.



A committee under Frederick Osborn studying postwar education of veterans similarly recommended that training benefits be limited to areas of industry projecting a need for trained workers, and budgetary concerns restricted the administration's proposal to one year of training plus a limited program of merit scholarships for up to three years more; the Office of Education and the Labor Department would be heavily involved in administration of the program. Unemployment benefits for veterans, in the administration's view, should be incorporated in a new federal unemployment system.

In December 1943, there were Senate hearings on the administration education bill, featuring unchecked quarreling among federal agencies. In January 1944, the American Legion published its own proposal, an omnibus bill covering a variety of subjects, almost all the provisions to be administered by the Veterans' Administration. The education benefits in the Legion's initial bill were limited to one year as of right plus a chance for an additional three years, but the limitation as to courses of study was rejected. The benefits were restricted to persons who had served for nine months or more and whose education had been interrupted, allowing them \$300 per year for tuition and a living allowance of \$50 for single students and \$75 for married students. A title relating to home and farm loans was added; while the administration had considered the grant of small amounts of surplus lands to veterans, it had put forth no loan program. The unemployment benefits were simple: 52 weeks at \$20 per week, to be administered, like virtually all the provisions of the bill, by the Veterans' Administration. The loan proposals called for 95 percent loans of up to \$7,500 or \$12,500 for farms, with the states to put up a dollar for every four federal dollars, and interest rates to be 1 percent on the federal share and 5 percent on the state share.

The Legion bill passed the Senate unanimously on March 24, 1944, with only minor revisions. Allowable tuition was raised to \$500, the required period of military service was lowered from nine months to six, the requirement of interruption of education was eliminated as a condition of benefits, and only \$1,000 of a loan was federally guaranteed, with an interest rate of 3 percent.



However, a House Committee under Rankin restored the "interruption" requirement for education benefits and limited unemployment benefits to 26 weeks; the loan guarantee amount was set at \$1,500 with an allowable interest rate of 6 percent. The House diluted the "interruption" requirement by presuming interruption if the veteran had been in school within two years of induction and was under the age of 24 when inducted, and Rankin agreed to raise the loan guarantee to \$2,500. After Rankin tried to deadlock the conference committee over the unemployment benefit provisions, which he did not wish to be made available to African-American servicemen in the rural South, the deadlock was broken when Congressman John Gibson, whose proxy Rankin held, was flown back to Washington for the crucial vote. The conference bill, approved by the House and Senate, provided for 52 weeks of unemployment benefits, raised the cut-off age for presumption of interrupted education to 25, and provided for \$2,000 federal loan guarantees with a maximum interest rate of 4 percent and maximum term of 20 years. The monthly stipend for single students was \$65 and for married students \$90. President Roosevelt signed the bill on June 22, 1944. In December 1945, the act was amended by dropping the "interruption" provision and liberalizing the loan guarantees, which were set at \$4,000 with a maximum term of 25 years; in 1950, the amount was raised to \$7,500 or 60 percent of the loan, whichever was less, with a maximum term of 30 years. In 1948, student stipends were raised to \$75 for single students, \$105 for couples, and \$120 for families.

The homes sold on VA mortgages in 1945 numbered 43,000 of the 324,900 built in that year, or 12.5%. In 1946, the liberalized guarantees raised the number of VA homes to 412,000 of the total production of 1,015,200 (40.5 percent), and in 1947 to 542,000 of 1,265,100 (42.8 percent). By 1950, the program still accounted for 498,000 of 1,908,100 homes (26 percent). Among World War II veterans, a total of 7.8 million had received education benefits, 2.2 million of them for attendance at two-year and four-year colleges, and 3,782,000 had benefited from the home loan program. Elaborate efforts to stimulate industrial and prefabricated housing for veterans failed; by 1947, Davis Ross wrote, "The only continuing element of veterans' housing could

be found in [...] the mortgage insurance system provided under the G. I. Bill of Rights in 1944."<sup>19</sup> One effect of the education benefits was to eliminate, at least for a time, the economic sorting of students among colleges. Because the \$500 tuition allowance was higher than the tuition at even the best colleges, those students who could academically qualify flocked to them. Of the students using benefits at four-year colleges, 41 percent attended the 38 most prestigious institutions; the remaining 712 schools shared the remaining 59 percent.<sup>20</sup>

Underlying the success of these programs was the notion of reciprocity underlying them: in the words of Davis Ross,

one by one the New Deal attempts to link indissolubly veterans' benefits with general needs of the population failed: the G. I. Bill of Rights emerged as a veterans' measure, rather than a direct subsidy to education or home building.<sup>21</sup>

The Korean GI Bill of Rights did not have the same effects. From 1955 to 1977, newly discharged veterans were provided with a stipend from which tuition had to be paid. This was payable for one-and-a-half months for each month of service up to a maximum of 45 months, the adjusted value of which in 2003 was \$376 per month for those with no dependants, \$448 with one dependant, and \$510 with two dependants. Of those enrolling in colleges, only 20 percent enrolled in private colleges, as against 52 percent of their World War II counterparts.<sup>22</sup> From 1977 to 1985, no fixed amount was provided by statute; the education benefits were permitted to be varied by regulation and focused so as to be used as a recruiting tool. The basic scheme provided for 36 months of benefits. Individual servicemen could contribute up to \$2,700 to the scheme, which the government would match in a 2:1 ratio; maximum contributors thus could get an extra \$225 per month in benefits. Since 1985, a new scheme has been in place: those with three years' service were provided \$900 per month in 2003 and \$985 in 2004; those with two years' service received \$732 in 2003 and \$800 in 2004. Voluntary contributions matched by the government can add about \$150 per month to these figures.



Those waiving educational assistance on enlistment get an extra \$100 per month in base pay for 12 months. Those in technical schools with high tuition can receive 60 percent of tuition over a shorter period.<sup>23</sup> There was a later further liberalization sponsored by Senator James Webb.

In summarizing the lessons to be drawn from the GI Bill, Theda Skocpol, generally known as a champion of state programs, has observed, in a discussion of "The G.I. Bill and U.S. Social Policy": "the G.I. Bill fits the mould of many successful U.S. social policies; it encompassed both more and less privileged Americans, and it joined benefits with service, citizenship rewards with citizenship responsibilities."<sup>24</sup> In this, it resembled Morrill's design for land grant colleges, from which it was descended.

## **Happy Birthday U.S.A.**

I do not like birthdays. To be more precise, it is my birthday that I am referring to, the annual commemoration that I am in fact another year older. Really do not see anything to celebrate about that. "Three cheers for the continuing diminution of whatever cerebral or physical attributes I might have at one time possessed?"

For a country, however, age is not synonymous with decline. Each year presents as much as anything, an opportunity for growth: to learn from those 365 days: to see how things should and should not be done. The key is observation and extrapolation, or in the words of George Santayana "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." In 1948, before the House of Commons, Winston Churchill phrased it as "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

Much has changed in the United States since 1776. Some might posit that a more accurate statement might be that everything has changed, but I do not believe that to be an accurate assessment of the case. The principles that this country were founded on are as relevant and cherished today as they were 249 years ago. Where problems have arisen is the means by which those principles and goals are to be pursued and obtained. We have never been a people particularly good at seeing the other point of view. Perhaps that's a good thing. More often than not compromise both in the history of our country as well as the world at large, has led less to success and more to disaster.

So, in between the hot dogs and smores, try to remember what an honor it is to be an American. If you disagree, say so. As an American, it's your right to do so: a right, by




the way, that many around the rest of the world do not have. Perhaps that's why so many still want to come here. Anyway, Happy Birthday America, you don't look a day over 240.

Speaking of not looking their age, how about that Baltimore Bar Library? Since 1840, the Library has been guided, like the United States, by the principles that it was founded on. The means have changed, but the goal remains the same: providing the bench and bar what is needed to best achieve their legal objectives. With the Harry A. Cole Self-Help Center those that the Library seeks to serve has grown to include the self-represented. I ask for your continued support to help us in our efforts. Library support furthers your interests as well as the interests of justice, which is the essence of what this most noble of professions is all about.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett



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