

# XV

## Founding the Public School

*How the freedman yearned to learn and know, and with the guiding hand of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Northern school-marm, helped establish the Public School in the South and taught his own teachers in the New England college transplanted to the black South.*

It was soon after the war that a white member of Johnson's restored Louisiana legislature passed one of the schools set up by the Freedmen's Bureau in New Orleans. The grounds were filled with children. He stopped and looked intently, and then asked, "Is this a school?" "Yes," was the reply. "What, for niggers?" "Evidently." He threw up his hands. "Well, well," he said, "I have seen many an absurdity in my lifetime, but *this is the climax!*"<sup>1</sup>

If a poor, degraded, disadvantaged horde achieves sudden freedom and power, what could we ask of them in ten years? To develop some, but surely not all, necessary social leadership; to seek the right sort of leadership from other groups; to strive for increase of knowledge, so as to teach themselves wisdom and the rhythm of united effort.

This latter accomplishment crowns the work of Reconstruction. The advance of the Negro in education, helped by the Abolitionists, was phenomenal; but the greatest step was preparing his own teachers—the gift of New England to the black South.

If the Negro public school system had been sustained, guided and supported, the American Negro today would equal Denmark in literacy. As it is, he surpasses Spain and Italy, the Balkans and South America; and this is due to the Negro college, which despite determined effort to curtail the efficiency of the Negro public school, and despite a sustained and violent attack upon higher education for black folk, nevertheless, through white Northern philanthropy and black Southern contributions, survived and furnished teachers and leaders for the Negro race at the time of its greatest crisis.

The eagerness to learn among American Negroes was exceptional in the case of a poor and recently emancipated folk. Usually, with a protective psychology, such degraded masses regard ignorance as natural and necessary, or even exalt their own traditional wisdom and discipline over "book learning"; or they assume that knowledge is for higher beings, and not for the "likes of us."

American Negroes never acted thus. The very feeling of inferiority which slavery forced upon them fathered an intense desire to rise out of their condition by means of education. Of the 488,070 free Negroes in the United States in 1860, 32,629 were attending school, and only 91,736 were unable to read and write. In the slave states, there were 3,651 colored children attending schools supported by the free Negroes.

The mass of the slaves could have no education. The laws on this point were explicit and severe. There was teaching, here and there, by indulgent masters, or by clandestine Negro schools, but in the main, the laws were followed. All the slave states had such laws, and after the Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia, these laws were strengthened and more carefully enforced.

As late as May, 1862, Edward Stanley, whom Lincoln appointed Provisional Governor of North Carolina, sought to conciliate the white people when he stopped a Negro school at New Bern. He said that he had been sent there to restore the old order of things, and that the laws of North Carolina forbade the teaching of slaves to read and write; and he could not expect success in his undertaking if he encouraged the violation of the law.

At the time of emancipation, not all the Southern Negroes were illiterate. In South Carolina, a majority of the nearly 10,000 free Negroes could read and write, and perhaps 5% of the slaves. But illiteracy among the colored population was well over 95% in 1863, which meant that less than 150,000 of the four million slaves emancipated could read and write.

The first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the state, in the South, came from Negroes. Many leaders before the war had advocated general education, but few had been listened to. Schools for indigents and paupers were supported, here and there, and more or less spasmodically. Some states had elaborate plans, but they were not carried out. Public education for all at public expense, was, in the South, a Negro idea.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the abolition of slavery, there was no general public educational system, properly speaking, in the Southern states, except perhaps, in North Carolina. In some populous centers, there were free schools; in some localities, academies and colleges, but for the most part, no adequate provision was made for the education even of the poorer whites. Emerging from their bondage, the Negroes in the very beginning manifested the utmost eagerness for instruction, and their hunger was met by a corresponding readiness on the part of the people of the North to make provisions for it.<sup>3</sup>

The original state constitution of North Carolina, in 1775, provided for public education, but there was no appropriation for the schools, and the only direct result was the establishment of the state university. In 1825, a literary fund was established toward defraying the cost of the public schools. A school system was sketched in 1839, but without an executive head, and with small funds. In 1852, a Superintendent of Public Instruction was appointed. His work for a long time was confined to propaganda, and he especially noted

the lack of any demand for public schools, and the feeling that such schools were simply for paupers.

Nevertheless, the work of the first superintendent, C. H. Wiley, was important as propaganda, but only as propaganda, because at the time of the war, "only here and there in the state is there a school-house for whites of very inferior description, and with long distance between." There was no state support of schools. The burden of public education, such as it was, rested on local authorities.

In South Carolina, there was even less effort. In 1811, there was "An Act to Establish Free Schools Throughout the State." It provided for as many free schools in each election district as the district was entitled to representatives in the Lower House. After forty-four years of operation (1811-1855), Governor J. A. Adams pronounced the system a failure, saying of the handling of funds:

Great inequalities prevailed, and during twenty-seven years, returns were made in only five years; the small districts and parishes did not receive regular sums, and the amounts received, did not have proportion to the number of schools, or to the population; after 1815, the annual appropriation was \$37,000 annually, nearly \$1,500,000 in all, of which only \$109,740 was accounted for.<sup>4</sup>

In December, 1855, Governor Adams plead for the appointment of a Superintendent of Education. "Let us make at least this effort, and if the poor of the land are hopelessly doomed to ignorance, poverty and crime, you will at least feel conscious of having done your duty." He was, of course, referring only to the whites, and did not himself seem to believe much in the educability of the poor.

In Virginia, Armstead reports that in 1851, less than one-half the poor white children were attending any schools, and those attended only eleven weeks in the year. "This pitiable result was obtained with a cost to the state of \$69,000." Thomas Jefferson in the eighteenth century had evolved a school system for whites, with industrial schools for Negroes, "but there was bitter and successful opposition" and as Jefferson himself said, "Such a permissive scheme was doomed to failure from the very moment of its inception."<sup>5</sup>

In Georgia, the constitution of 1777 had spoken of schools, but nothing was done. Some private academies were incorporated in 1783, and permission given the Governor to grant a thousand acres of free land for erection of free schools, but few if any grants were made. In 1815, \$250,000 was appropriated, known as the Poor School Fund. Nothing further was done until the legislature of 1851, when something was added to this fund to pay tuition for the children of parents too poor to pay anything.

The whole fund for education as late as 1865 was only \$23,355. Governor Brown urged a system of public schools before the war, but the legislature did nothing but make a small increase of the poor school fund.

In 1858, a movement was started in Atlanta looking toward the establishment of a system of free schools in Georgia. A. N. Wilson went to Rhode Island to look into the public school system there, and on his return, held several meetings, culminating in a meeting October 6, 1858, called by the mayor. The chairman appointed a committee, but some of the members of the committee took charge of the entire movement and blocked it. The original movers, seeing that they had lost control, withdrew, and the proposal fell through. The constitution of 1865 under the provisional government gave the legislature permission to appropriate money for the "promotion of learning and science," and "for the education of the people," and provided "for the resumption of the regular exercises of the University of Georgia."

In the first session of the legislature after the war, a bill to establish public schools was introduced, but postponed until late in 1866. By a vote of 62-58, in the House, and an equally close vote in the Senate, a bill to establish a system of public schools was squeezed through but only on condition that nothing was to be done until 1868. This proposal lapsed because of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867.

Thus although there had been much talk and some legislation on the subject, there had been "no regularly organized system of common schools supported by public taxation in Georgia prior to the Civil War."<sup>6</sup>

Mississippi did lip service to the idea of public education in her earlier constitutions, but little tangible was accomplished. The Sixteenth Section fund given to the states by the Federal government for education, amounting to at least \$15,000,000 in Mississippi, was totally mismanaged and lost, while tens of thousands of white children grew up in ignorance. Florida tried, about 1850, to obtain schools for whites, from taxes on certain sales of slaves, with small results.

Alabama and North Carolina had the best pre-war systems, due to the enthusiasm of certain teachers, but even here, there was no disposition among the planters to accept taxation for public education. Joel Riggs, comptroller of the state treasury in 1851, said: "Perhaps of all trust-funds, none has been so greatly mismanaged as the schoolfund of Alabama."<sup>7</sup>

The experience of the other Southern states shows similar neglect and indisposition to educate the poor whites.

The fact of the matter was that in the pre-war South, there were two insuperable obstacles to a free public school system. The first was the attitude of the owners of property. They did not propose under any circumstances to be taxed for the public education of the laboring class. They believed that laborers did not need education; that it made their exploitation more difficult; and that if any of them were really worth educating, they would somehow escape their condition by their own efforts.

The second obstacle was that the white laborers did not demand education, and saw no need of it, save in exceptional cases. They accepted without

murmur their subordination to the slaveholders, and looked for escape from their condition only to the possibility of becoming slaveholders themselves. Education they regarded as a luxury connected with wealth.

It was only the other part of the laboring class, the black folk, who connected knowledge with power; who believed that education was the stepping-stone to wealth and respect, and that wealth, without education, was crippled. Perhaps the very fact that so many of them had seen the wealthy slaveholders at close range, and knew the extent of ignorance and inefficiency among them, led to that extraordinary mass demand on the part of the black laboring class for education. And it was this demand that was the effective force for the establishment of the public school in the South on a permanent basis, for all people and all classes.

If the planters opposed schools for poor whites, they all the more regarded Negro schools as absurd. The unalterable conviction of most white Southerners was that Negroes could not and would not learn, and thus their education involved an unjustifiable waste of private property for public disaster.

D. R. Grattan, a native Virginian, testified before the Reconstruction Committee in 1866: "They cannot educate themselves; they are not disposed to educate themselves."<sup>8</sup>

In the face of this, listen to the words of Booker T. Washington:

Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for education. It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn. As fast as any kind of teachers could be secured, not only were day-schools filled, but night-schools as well. The great ambition of the older people was to try to learn to read the Bible before they died. With this end in view, men and women who were fifty and seventy-five years old, would be found in the night-schools. Sunday-schools were formed soon after freedom, but the principal book studied in the Sunday-school was the spelling-book. Day-school, night-school, and Sunday-school were always crowded, and often many had to be turned away for want of room.<sup>9</sup>

The first educational efforts came during the war, when the Negroes, refugees and soldiers were taught at various camps and places of refuge at their own pressing request. This was followed by the efforts of philanthropic societies. Schools were started among the Negroes of the peninsula of Virginia and of Port Royal, South Carolina, as soon as they were captured.

In Virginia, when Federal authority was established in the Southeast, the American Missionary Association asked to work among the freedmen and was welcomed by Governor Butler.

The first day-school was established on September 17, 1861, in the town of Hampton in a small brown house near the Seminary, a school formerly used by the whites. This school was taught by Mrs. Mary Peake under the auspices of the American Missionary Association. Mrs. Peake was a mulatto, whose

father was an Englishman. She was born a free woman and received a fair education at her home in Alexandria. She wanted to help her race, and she had gone among the slaves during slavery to teach them to read and write. She held her school at Hampton, however, only until the next spring, when she died of consumption at the early age of 39. Her school was not only the first one at Hampton but the first of the kind in the South. Around the small school she began followed the other schools in the Hampton vicinity, all of which led to the Hampton Institute of today.<sup>10</sup>

In January, 1862, Solomon Peck had opened a school at Beaufort, South Carolina, and Barnard Lee, at Hilton Head. In February, 1862, "Edward L. Pierce and General Thomas W. Sherman, sent out a call to 'the highly favored and philanthropic people' of the North to send volunteers to teach 'both old and young the rudiments of civilization and Christianity.'"<sup>11</sup> Freedmen's Aid Societies were formed at Boston, New York and Philadelphia, and forty-one men and twelve women teachers went to Port Royal in March. Eight schools were in operation by May, and within a year, thirty, with three thousand students. Officers held schools for black soldiers; and many Negroes, who had bought abandoned lands, opened schools at their own expense. Port Royal schools in 1855 had sixty teachers.

Schools for their children had been supported by the free Negroes of Charleston since 1744, openly at first—clandestinely after the law forbade them. When Johnson was inaugurated, the event was celebrated in Charleston, South Carolina, by opening the public schools to all children without distinction of color. Twenty-five of the forty-two teachers were colored. The *Tribune* said, March 10, 1865:

So the thing is done. The loyal white people—the Irish and German population, have shown that they are quite willing to let their children attend the same school with the loyal blacks; although it is true, that no attempt to unite them in the same room or classes would have been tolerated at the time. But in the play-grounds, white and black boys joined in the same sports as they do in the public streets; and there can be no doubt that now that this great step has been made, all the prejudice against equal educational advantages will speedily vanish, and indeed, it is the veriest hypocrisy in the city where very old families have aided in obliterating all the complexional distinctions by mingling their blood with that of their slaves.

In the rooms where the colored children assembled, there were many children with clear, blue eyes, pure, white skins, long, silky hair without kinks, and yet, they were classed with the Negro population by the former rulers of the city.<sup>12</sup>

A month later came a significant celebration. I walked to the square with William Lloyd Garrison. Think of the great pioneer Abolitionist of Boston in the streets of Charleston! As Mr. Garrison entered the square, he was introduced to about two thousand children by Mr. James Redpath, Superintendent of Public Instruction. When the children were told who Mr. Garrison was, they surrounded him; threw up their hats and caps; caught hold of him; fell down and over each other, and sent up shout after shout of such welcome and greeting as I may safely say was never before witnessed on the soil of South Carolina.<sup>13</sup>



Many private schools were established; one by Jonathan C. Gibbs, afterward Superintendent of Schools in Florida; another by F. L. Cardozo, who became State Treasurer of South Carolina, and others in various parts of the state. In the second year of freedom, 23 schools in different localities were built by Negroes, aided by the Freedmen's Bureau and philanthropy. The freedmen contributed to the support of school teachers \$12,252, and \$500 to school-houses. In Beaufort, the Negroes opened a building for a free high school bought and supported entirely by them as early as 1867.

In the West, General Grant appointed Colonel John Eaton, afterwards United States Commissioner of Education, to be Superintendent of Freedmen in 1862. He sought to establish and regulate schools and succeeded in organizing a large system.

Louisiana had schools for free Negroes, supported by them before the war. Afterward, the army established a large system. On March 22, 1864, General Banks, on his own responsibility, had made provisions for the establishment of schools for freedmen by an order issued which did not meet the approval of many in Louisiana. He appointed a Board of Education of three persons, and granted it large powers. It was to establish one or more common schools in every school district defined by the provost-marshal; to acquire by purchase or otherwise, lands for school sites; to erect schoolhouses and to employ teachers as far as practicable among the loyal citizens of Louisiana; to furnish books; to provide every adult freedman with a library costing two dollars and fifty cents, this amount to be deducted from the wages of the said freedman; and, finally, to levy for these purposes a school tax on real and personal property in every school district.

When the collection of the general tax for Negro schools was suspended in Louisiana by military order, the colored people were greatly aroused and sent in petitions. One of these petitions, thirty feet in length, represented ten thousand Negroes, who signed mostly with marks. They offered to pay a special tax, if the schools could be kept going.

When the Confederates returned to domination, the public schools, which had attained a degree of efficiency never before reached in the South, were greatly curtailed. One hundred and ten of the teachers, many of them native-born, were dismissed at once, and their places filled with intolerant Confederates.

The most noted of the clandestine schools for free colored children was opened in Savannah in 1818 or 1819 by a colored Frenchman named Julien Froumontaine, from Santo Domingo. Up to 1829, this school was taught openly. After December 22, 1829, it was made a penal offense to teach a Negro or free person of color to read or write. Froumontaine's school, however, flourished clandestinely for many years, and in a sense, laid the foundation of the new state system of public instruction, which gave equal school privileges to all children regardless of race or color.

The public school system of Georgia started in the conference in Savannah, December, 1864, when Stanton, Secretary of War, and General Sherman met five or six leading Negroes, and decided upon schools. It was a notable gathering. The colored committee consisted of eight or ten leading colored ministers of Savannah. Secretary Stanton was astonished at the wisdom and tact of those untutored blacks and observed that the men's replies to his questions were "so shrewd, so wise, and so comprehensive. They were the picked men of the race in Georgia, of great native ability and would have attracted attention in any assembly."<sup>14</sup>

It was decided to have the schools opened at once for all the colored people who should apply. A time was set for examination of teachers, and a number of colored men and women applied. The colored citizens of Savannah were greatly encouraged and assisted in their efforts by the Rev. James Lynch, of the A. M. E. Church, an educated colored man, who afterwards became Secretary of the State for Mississippi. Early in January, 1865, the Rev. J. W. Alvord, Secretary of the American Tract Society, Boston, who had done business in Savannah for a number of years before, gave his assistance. He and Mr. Lynch examined the teachers. Ten colored persons were found competent. It was very difficult to find buildings in which to locate the schools. The most available place was the "Old Bryan Slave Mart," which had recently served as the pen from which relatives of many of these Negroes had been sold. The bars which marked the slave stalls were knocked down to make more space for seating. To this and other places flocked the freed people of every age and shade, eager for that book learning which really seemed to them the key to their advance.

By December, 1865, the colored people of Savannah had opened a number of schools with five hundred pupils, and they were contributing a fund of a thousand dollars for the support of the teachers.

In January, 1866, the Negroes of Georgia organized the Georgia Educational Association, whose object was to induce the freedmen to establish and support schools in their own counties and neighborhoods. In 1867, 191 day schools and 45 night schools were reported as existing. Of these, 96 were reported either wholly or in part supported by the freedmen, who also owned 57 of the school buildings.

Persistent propaganda represents the South after the war as being largely in favor of Negro education. This is a flat contradiction of plain historical evidence. Dunning says: "The Negroes were disliked and feared almost in exact proportion to their manifestation of intelligence and capacity"; and there were many reasons in the utterances of Southerners to support his generalization. "Education of the Negroes, they thought, would be labor lost, resulting in injury instead of benefit to the working class."

"The teachers of the Freedmen's Bureau or of private philanthropies 'interfered with labor—and encouraged directly or indirectly, insolence to employers.'"



“Schooling,’ felt the South, ‘ruins a nigger.’”<sup>15</sup>

The American Freedmen’s Commission reports that the Negroes’ “attempts at education provoked the most intense and bitter hostilities, as evincing a desire to render themselves equal to the whites. Their churches and school-houses in many places were destroyed by mobs.”

“Nigger teachers” was one of the most opprobrious epithets that the Southern vocabulary furnished. Even in the North this prejudice existed among some of the avowed friends of the freed people, and it is a singular fact that one of the early Freedmen’s Aid Societies was rent asunder by the unwillingness of a part of its members to co-operate in any movement looking toward the education of the Negro, though they were willing to provide him with food and clothing, in order to prevent suffering and death.<sup>16</sup>

The teachers who went down from the North were soon disillusioned, if they were at all influenced by any other than the most serious missionary spirit. Ostracism is a mild term for the disesteem with which they were regarded as “nigger teachers.”<sup>17</sup>

“The white people of Virginia were shocked at the efforts of Northern philanthropists to educate Negroes, and the papers sneered at them.”<sup>18</sup>

There was some gradual change of sentiment among the better class of whites in Virginia, but still the mass of whites remained bitterly opposed to the schools, and some had become brutal. Teachers were proscribed and ill-treated; schoolhouses burned, and threats so strong that many schools could not be opened. And others, after a brief struggle, had to be closed.

In Virginia, I heard a man who did not know who I was, make a remark in reply to something that had been said about establishing a school at Wytheville for the teaching of colored children. He said that he hoped that the “damned rascal who attempted to teach niggers would be shot.”<sup>19</sup>

In North Carolina, instances are found where persons who taught in Negro schools were assaulted, schoolhouses burned, and threats made against the lives of those engaged in the work.

Two women school-teachers who were recently sent from Wilmington to Fayetteville [North Carolina] to establish a school for colored children, were informed by the sheriff of the county that they would not be allowed to start their schools, nor would they be allowed to land; but they might remain on the steamer until her return to Wilmington, inasmuch as they were women; if they were men, they would receive such treatment as was awarded to such meddlesome characters before the war.<sup>20</sup>

In South Carolina, General Saxton said that teachers of colored schools throughout the state gave it as their opinion that they would be unable to remain there for a day, but for the protection of United States troops.

In Mississippi, bitter opposition was manifested against Negro schools. Colored men in some instances themselves gave the money to prepare and furnish a school, and then were forbidden to use it.

“Four young men in Adams County conspired to murder the teacher of a Negro school. . . . They maltreated him somewhat barbarously.”<sup>21</sup> One wonders just what “somewhat barbarously” would be.

In Louisiana, it was said: “If military protection were withdrawn, our schools would cease.” Conway said of Louisiana in 1866:

The feeling there is unanimous that they shall not own an acre of land or have any schools. They are more hostile to the establishment of schools than they are to owning lands. They had broken up some of our schools at the time of my departure, and since then I have official reports from those who have charge of the schools that upon the withdrawal of the military from the parishes of St. Mary and Lafourche the freedmen’s school-houses in those parishes were, before night, burnt or pulled down, the schools disbanded, and the teachers frightened away.<sup>22</sup>

In many regions, this opposition was very persistent. Along the coast it was usually tacit and suppressed. There teachers and schools for Negroes were ignored. But, in the interior of Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Maryland, it was given full and free expression. Negroes were dispossessed of their school buildings, teachers were not allowed to enter upon their duties, and churches and schoolhouses were sometimes burned.<sup>23</sup>

A few voices cried in the wilderness that

A due regard for the public weal imperatively requires that the Negroes be educated, taught at least to read and write—steeped in ignorance, they can never be made to understand the responsibilities that rest upon them as freedmen.<sup>24</sup>

But others only admitted that “The sole aim should be to educate every white child in the commonwealth.”<sup>25</sup>

I am in favor of providing ways and means for the education of freedmen—but not in favor of positively imposing upon any legislature the unqualified and imperative duty of educating any but the superior race of man—the white race . . . our pecuniary condition does not allow us to do it.

Often this objection took an even more ungracious form:

I say that the levying of a tax upon us, to pay for the education of a race we expect to be torn from us, is an indignity. Why are we called upon to educate these Negroes? No, sir; I will never be so dishonest as to disgrace myself by such a vote.<sup>26</sup>

In the midst of these efforts of Negroes and the general opposition of whites came the Freedmen’s Bureau. The Freedmen’s Bureau found many schools for freedmen already in existence maintained by tax commissioners, by Negroes, and by the army. The original Freedmen’s Bureau act made no provision for Negro education; but notwithstanding this, the funds derived from the rent of abandoned property was used for education, and government buildings were turned into schoolhouses. Transportation was given to

teachers and subsistence granted. By act of 1866, the educational powers of the Bureau were greatly enlarged, coöperation with benevolent associations, teachers and agents was sanctioned, and buildings leased. The sum of \$521,000 was appropriated for school purposes, and other sums provided by the sale and lease of property formerly belonging to the Confederate Government. Teachers were sent from the North, and the Quakers, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and especially Congregationalists, took part.

The efforts thus begun in the army and by philanthropists, and taken up later by the Freedmen's Bureau, expanded into a system which penetrated the whole South, although naturally it touched but a fraction of the Negro population.

Between 1865 (June 1st) and September 1, 1870, the Bureau spent on education a sum which represented about one-half of the expenses of the schools. The rest was met by benevolent associations and the freedmen themselves. For some years after 1865, the education of the Negro was well-nigh monopolized by the Freedmen's Bureau, and the missions sustained by the Northern churches and organizations allied with them. Schools of all grades, from the kindergarten to the college, were established in each state. The Freedmen's Bureau alone appropriated \$3,521,934 to schools from 1868 to 1870, while the churches and societies spent \$1,572,287 during the same period.

"Among the Northern teachers were many men and women of unusual sincerity of purpose, zealous as only religious enthusiasts can be. 'The Negro was only responsive to efforts in his behalf as far as his economic conditions would permit.'"<sup>27</sup> It is nevertheless both interesting and astonishing to realize that during 1866-1870 the freedmen contributed in cash \$785,700 to their schools.<sup>28</sup>

In 1866, Alvord, the Superintendent of Education under the Freedmen's Bureau, reported that in eleven former slave states and the District of Columbia, there were 90,589 Negro pupils and 1,314 teachers in 740 schools. From 1865 to 1866, teachers in the Negro elementary schools were almost exclusively Northern whites. Gradually Negro teachers came to be used.

The annual amount which the Bureau voted to school purposes increased from \$27,000 in 1865 to nearly \$1,000,000 in 1870, and reached a total in 1865-1870 of \$5,262,511.26. In July, 1870, there were 4,239 schools under their supervision, with 9,307 teachers and 247,333 pupils. Notwithstanding this, of the 1,700,000 Negro children of school age in 1870, only about one-tenth were actually in school.

The public school systems, in most Southern states, began with the enfranchisement of the Negro. For instance, in South Carolina,

the constitution of 1868 was a notable departure in the educational history of the state. Not only was education mentioned for the first time in the organic law, but the

state for the first time was given the outline of an educational system in keeping with the advanced thought of the age. The General Assembly was obligated to establish a system of universal education as soon as practical.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps no state illustrates the relation of the Negro and the public school system better than South Carolina, and the story of the debate in the convention of 1868 is worth following.

On Saturday, January 18, 1868, Beverly Nash, a colored member, offered a resolution on education; and A. J. Ransier on Tuesday, January 21, presented another resolution which read: "Resolved, That the Committee on Education inquire into the expediency of establishing a Board of Education, consisting of three from each Congressional District. Such Board shall have power to divide the state into school districts, and provide for a thorough system of common schools, elect a Superintendent from among their number, and make all needful regulations for the education of youth, no distinction to be made in favor of any class of persons."<sup>30</sup>

The Committee on Education was named January 20, and F. L. Cardozo, the Negro leader, was chairman. Three white men and five colored men served on the committee.

Robert Smalls, of "Planter" fame, desired that a system of public schools be established, and that they be open to all classes of people, and he wanted compulsory education. B. F. Randolph wanted institutions for the insane, blind, deaf and dumb, and poor fostered and supported by the state.

The matter of compulsory attendance brought considerable discussion. Ransier, afterwards Congressman, supported compulsory attendance, contending that ignorance was a cause of vice and degradation, and that civilization and enlightenment were the consequence of the schoolmaster, and if force was necessary to secure the benefits of education, it ought to be resorted to. One or two able Negroes were against the compulsory feature, but two white delegates were in favor of it. One of them, Jillson, said: "In South Carolina, where there has never been any system of free public schools, there is one person in every eight who cannot read and write."<sup>31</sup>

Finally, it was decided that the compulsory feature should not be insisted upon until a thorough and complete system had been organized.

The Constitution as ratified provided for the establishment of universal education as soon as practical and for compulsory attendance for all children between the ages of six and sixteen, but this was not to become effective until the system had been completely organized. It provided for a normal school and a school for the deaf, dumb and blind.

After the termination of the convention, the General Assembly enacted a law to provide for the temporary organization of the education department. On November 20, 1869, one year after this, J. K. Jillson made a report on the school situation, incomplete because many counties had not reported. There

were at that date 16,418 children in school, of whom 8,255 were white, and 8,165 colored. There were 381 schools with 528 teachers. Among the teachers, fifty were colored.

The temporary act proved inadequate, and Governor Scott urged in November, 1869, an efficient and comprehensive law. This led to the Act of February 16, 1870,

“to establish and maintain a system of free schools for the state of South Carolina.” An examination of its provisions reveals that it is no gross exaggeration to state that it was the most comprehensive and most beneficial legislation the State of South Carolina has ever enacted.

Textbooks were to be provided at cost or free to the poor.<sup>32</sup>

June 4, 1870, there were 30,448 children in 769 schools, and the average pay of the teachers was \$35 a month. The superintendent complained of the inexperience of the school officers, want of suitable schoolhouses, scarcity of good teachers, and the apathy and opposition to the new system, and also of the inadequacy of the appropriation. Besides this, there was deep prejudice against mixed schools. The public press of the state had held the whole educational system up to ridicule, abused officials and belittled their efforts, or else had remained silent.

The number of colored pupils attending school in 1869 was 8,163; in 1870, there were 15,894. The number of white pupils in 1869 was 8,255; in 1870, 11,122.

“The repeated failure on the part of the State to meet in full its appropriations for school purposes had been a fruitful source of sore perplexity to these officers, and a very serious detriment to the cause.”<sup>33</sup> Evidently, the “school system was operated in a most inefficient manner, and there was a gross misappropriation of the school funds.”<sup>34</sup>

From year to year, Jilison was able to report progress. . . . When he left office in 1876, there were 123,035 students attending 2,776 schools taught by 3,068 teachers, and the school revenue was \$457,260. We may assume that had the reconstruction government not been overthrown in 1877, it would have given to the state an excellent school system.<sup>35</sup>

F. J. Moses, Jr., while governor, said:

No greater eulogy can be written upon the reconstructed administration of government in South Carolina than that when it came into power it was a statutory offense against the law of the land to impart even the rudiments of a common school education to a South Carolinian, because, forsooth, he was black, while the reconstructed government has made it a statutory offense to hinder or prevent any child in the State, of whatever color, from obtaining a common school education. Nay, we have even gone further, and demanded, by our Constitution, that their attendance at school be compulsory.<sup>36</sup>

The Reconstruction Constitution of Georgia in 1868 provided for a "thorough system of general education to be forever free to all the children of the state," the details to be worked out by the Legislature.

In August, 1869, the Georgia Teachers' Association, composed of white and colored teachers, met for the first time at Atlanta; the subject of public education was thoroughly discussed and a plan proposed by which the educational provisions of the Constitution could be put into operation.

It was not until 1870 that the legislature took up the subject. Practically all of the Negro Senators and Representatives introduced bills on education. Senator Campbell, who was one of the group that met Stanton and Sherman at Savannah, presented a bill asking for a thorough system of a public education. He also presented a very lengthy resolution describing how the money for education was to be secured.

White Georgia, however, long resisted the establishment of the public school system. The first public school law was enacted in October, 1870, and amended in 1872. Its details were the result of recommendations made by a committee of the Georgia Teachers' Association. The plan was more elaborate than that of 1866 and had a state school commissioner and a State Board of Education, and a special school fund was provided. There would be separate schools for whites and blacks, but equal facilities. The first public schools were taught in the state during the summer of 1871. The schools were suspended in 1872 because of reaction and the alleged lack of funds. In 1871, there was \$500,000 in the school fund, but the legislature had diverted it to other purposes. The schools were put in operation in 1873, and in 1874, there were 1,379 schools for whites, and 356 for Negroes.

It is a coincidence that the passage of the act of 1870 came on the hundredth anniversary of a previous act passed by the Georgia legislature, making it penal to teach a Negro to write or read. "This was a great day for Georgia."

There were over a half-million Negroes in the state, and less than 1% of them were able to read and write in 1870. Perhaps not over 500 colored people, when the public schools were opened, were more or less capable of taking charge of a primary school. In 1871, 6,664 colored children were enrolled in private schools while in 1880, after ten years of free schools, the enrollment of colored children was 86,399. By that time, too, most of them were taught by colored teachers. Along with the public school system, there were 3,719 pupils in private schools, and a few in college, making a total enrollment, in 1880, of 97,174.

The new state constitution of Mississippi of 1868 made it the duty of the legislature to establish "a uniform system of free public schools, by taxation or otherwise, for all children between the ages of 5 and 21 years."<sup>37</sup>

Before this . . . the only free schools in the state were those maintained out of the proceeds arising from the sale or lease of the so-called sixteenth section lands, granted to the state by Congress in the early part of the century. But as most of these lands had been lost by mismanagement, the number of such schools was not very large.



The reconstruction convention was thoroughly imbued with the idea of education for all. The Constitution made it the duty of the legislature "to encourage by all suitable means the promotion of intellectual, scientific, moral, and agricultural improvement by establishing a uniform system of public schools for all children between the ages of five and twenty-one years. Constitutional provision was made for a permanent school fund, and the legislature was empowered to levy a poll tax not exceeding \$2 per capita."

Many difficulties were encountered in the early life of Mississippi's new school system, and its progress was slow. Objections to Negro education were early apparent. The school report of 1873 says: "Again it is objected that a general tax compels white men of the state to educate the children of the Negro. But as the Negro forms a majority of the entire population of the state, and in an eminent degree a majority of the producing classes, as such classes of every population—the laborer, tenant and consumer—indirectly bear the burdens of taxation, it follows that an assessment upon the property of the state would be principally paid by the Negro and, therefore, the ground of complaint, if any, against a general tax is with the colored people and not with the white."<sup>38</sup>

During the first year of free education in Mississippi, State Superintendent Pease reported that more than 3,000 free schools had been opened with an attendance of 66,257 pupils. Of the 3,500 teachers employed, all except 399 were white. The total expenditure for public education for the year exceeded the government expenditures for all other purposes.

Alabama, in 1850, out of 176,657 persons 5-20 years of age, reported 62,728 pupils, mostly in private academies and pay schools; which meant that the bulk of the white poor had no schools. The established public schools were without a state board, and in 1854, spent only \$2.50 a year on each enrolled pupil.

The public school system of Alabama was established by the State Constitution of 1867, and organized in the following year. It was in continual financial difficulty owing to the bitter opposition of the whites. Irregularities and defalcations in the educational department were charged, and finally, owing to the lack of funds and non-payment of taxes, as well as other conditions, the schools closed in 1873, as the result of the triumph of reaction. But the demand for education was now strong, and the effect of the Northern opinion too great, so that the new Constitution made by the Democrats in 1875 kept something of the system, but abolished the Board of Education, and sought, as far as possible, to return to the ante-bellum status. Separate schools for the races were ordered; the administrative expenses were reduced; no money was to be paid to any denominational school or private school. And the constitutional provision of one-fifth of the state revenue for school use was abolished. The United States Commissioner of Education gave a disapproving account of these changes, and said it was exchanging "a certainty for an uncertainty."<sup>39</sup>

This was in fact a restoration of education to local reactionary control, and cutting off all higher training of Negroes from public help. Alabama felt the result of this narrow policy for many years.

The Freedmen's Bureau schools in the state reached only a small portion of the Negroes, and there were a few missionary schools. "It is likely that for five years there were not more than two hundred Northern teachers in the state, and a majority of the white people were hostile toward the education of the Negro."<sup>40</sup>

In Florida, a school at Fernandina was established in 1862 by the Rev. Dr. Barrows, who was superintendent, with a half-dozen white Northern teachers. In Jacksonville, the Odd Fellows Hall was seized by the United States Provost General and turned over to Dr. Barrows for a school building. Here a school was opened both for Negroes and for whites. When the white children remonstrated against attending school with black children, Mrs. Hawks, the lady principal, said, "Very well, the colored children will be educated even if you will not." It is reported that this type of argument proved effective, and the two races got along harmoniously in school for a time.

Several disturbing factors prevented this experiment in democracy from continuing. First, the schools were built upon military force and outside workers, rather than the community itself, and secondly, public education was new to Florida, and came at a time when it could least afford to have it from the point of view of finances and personnel. Schools were closed in 1864, but education continued in Federal military camps.<sup>41</sup>

Negro schools began again under the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, helped by missionary societies, including two colored groups: the A. M. E. Church, and the African Colonization Society of New York. The Constitution of 1865 under Johnson's reconstruction established a uniform system of education without specific provisions. There were thirty schools at the close of 1865.

The committee on Negroes recommended immediate education for Negroes, but the legislature of 1866 compromised by establishing a state "system" of Negro schools under which Negroes were to pay for their own schools. E. B. Duncan eventually became Superintendent of both the state and the Freedmen's Bureau schools.

This system of schools was based on the plan of making the poor pay for their own education. The schools for freedmen were to be supported by a tax of one dollar upon all male persons of color, between one and fifty-five, and a tuition fee to be collected from each pupil, and the fee for a teacher's certificate, five dollars, was also to go to the school fund for freedmen. The superintendent was to establish schools for the freedmen when the number of children of persons of color in any county or counties should warrant it: "Provided, the funds provided for shall be sufficient to meet the expense thereof."<sup>42</sup> The freedmen themselves erected schoolhouses and provided further school funds.

Some good schools were established under the superintendency of the Rev. E. B. Duncan, an able and conscientious man, who worked hard to establish colored schools in every county. "At that time railroad facilities were very poor, and I have known him to walk from county to county in South Florida to establish colored schools."<sup>43</sup> Gradually, the Bureau schools were absorbed into the state system, although the Bureau was the paramount authority during the period of military rule, 1866-1868.

Under Negro suffrage came the law of 1869, and "all of Florida's educational historians grant that this was the real beginning of the public school system in this state."<sup>44</sup>

Near the end of the Radical Republican administration, conditions in education among Negroes of Florida were improved. The field of primary education was virgin; 71,000 inhabitants over ten years of age were illiterate; 18,000 of them were white. By the end of 1870, 331 schools were open with 14,000 pupils in attendance, one-third of whom were Negroes.

Probably the most outstanding character in the early life of the Florida public school system was a Negro, Jonathan C. Gibbs, whose colorful and efficient career has been noted in Chapter XII. After acting as Secretary of State for three years, he was appointed, late in 1872, Superintendent of Public Instruction, an office which he held until his death in 1874.

It was then a post of considerable difficulty, as the first enthusiasm for a new school system had subsided and political complications and embarrassment about school funds had come in to hinder progress. But by his energy and enthusiasm in the cause he so far succeeded that, in the month of August, 1873, he had the pride and pleasure of saying before the National Educational Association: "The census of 1860—ante-bellum—shows that Florida had in her schools, 4,486 pupils, at an expense of \$75,412. Today, Florida has 18,000 pupils in school, at an expense of \$101,820; fully four times as many pupils, at an increase of only 33 per cent expense."<sup>45</sup>

In 1876, when the Republicans were driven from power, 676 public schools had been established with 28,444 pupils, black and white, costing \$158,846.36.

In North Carolina, Negroes early pushed toward public education. There had been private schools for free Negroes before the war and they had the example of John Chavis, who studied at Princeton and at what is now Washington and Lee University. Among his white pupils were a United States Senator, a governor of the state, and the sons of a Chief Justice. "All accounts agree that John Chavis was a gentleman." When the law stopped him from teaching white students, he taught a school for free Negroes in Raleigh. In 1867, it was reported that many instances had come to notice where the teachers of a self-supporting Negro school had been sustained until the last cent the freedmen could command was exhausted, and where these last had

even drawn on their credit in the coming crop to pay the bills necessary to keep up the school.

The most severe critics of Reconstruction must admit that the convention of 1868 and the legislature of 1868-1869 set up a fine school system for North Carolina, so far as it could. The poverty of the state made the realization of this system immediately an impossibility, but no one can "place at their door the laxity and graft of the administrative officers which afterwards characterized the department of public instruction." Their work was to provide a system of public schools for the state of North Carolina, and this they did. "The only error with which one may charge them is that they did not set up a system calling for separate schools for Negro and white children, and many people there are, who would not class this as an error."<sup>46</sup>

Article IX of the new Constitution, the section dealing with education, made provision for a general system of public schools, with tuition free to all persons between the ages of six and twenty-one. The counties were to be divided into school districts in which at least one school must exist and run for a minimum term of four months. The entire state system was to be governed by a Board of Education, composed of the Governor of the State, the Lieutenant-Governor, the Secretary of State, the Treasurer, the Superintendent of Public Works, the Auditor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Attorney-General. The money to support this system was to come from appropriations from the State Treasury, from county taxation, certain fines from the courts, and certain other funds, such as the pre-war Literary Fund. "The school laws were more thoroughly set forth than at any other time in the history of the state."<sup>47</sup> S. S. Ashley, a Northern white man, who favored mixed schools, was selected superintendent.

The new Superintendent of Public Instruction made his first report of the status of education in North Carolina in November of 1868. The new school laws had just been passed, and sufficient time had not elapsed for any considerable amount of constructive work to be accomplished. The act authorizing the organization of a system of schools was not passed until April, 1869. One hundred thousand dollars was appropriated, chiefly to come from the poll tax.

This report showed that there was a total of 330,581 children between the ages of six and twenty-one in the state; of this number 223,815 were white, and 106,766 were Negroes. There were 1,900 schoolhouses or buildings being used for school purposes, of which 178 could be definitely classed as "good," and 685 were just as definitely to be thought of as "bad"; the remainder of the buildings were probably neither very good nor particularly bad. On the assumption that the Legislature would appropriate the \$100,000 called for in the school law, Superintendent Ashley apportioned this sum among the counties; the capitation tax was supposed to supplement this so that the total from the state to the counties was reckoned at \$165,209.50, or fifty cents per

census child. This was only an "apportionment," as the first money out of the State Treasury which actually went for the support of public education was not yet distributed.

Ashley's second report, issued in the autumn of 1869, gives one an idea of the general situation, and is especially helpful in the matter of Negro education, as it contains the report of the Rev. John Wesley Hood, the Negro who had been appointed as the Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction in charge of the Negro schools.

J. W. Hood, afterward bishop in the A.M.E. Zion Church, had been given his position by the Board of Education, but it appears that no legal provision had been made for this office. In calling attention to this report, Ashley simply states that he had been secured as an agent of the Board of Education and as Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction. Hood had visited every section of the state in compiling his report, and Ashley asked that attention be given to it, "as it represents a more intelligent and complete view of the work of education among the colored population of this state than has yet been given."<sup>48</sup>

Hood reported that there were 257 Negro schools, with an enrollment of 15,647, chiefly carried on by churches and missionary societies. Ashley estimated 25,000 colored pupils in all, but the financial support of the public schools was bad. It improved, however, by 1872. That year, \$412,070 was appropriated, and a property tax helped to raise the funds. Just as success seemed in sight, the Democratic Party in North Carolina entered upon its historic policy of white control.

The results of the return of the whites to power were soon shown. In 1870, the salary of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was reduced from \$2,400 to \$1,500, and his appropriations for travel and clerks cut off. The state lost the services of both Ashley and Hood.

From yet another quarter was Negro education to receive a blow in the same year. The legal life of the Freedmen's Bureau had expired before this time, but the agents had remained in the field, winding up its affairs. The last of the reports dealing with the educational work of the Bureau is dated July, 1870.

The very fact that it was generally disliked by the Southern whites is testimony in favor of its effectiveness. And though it did antagonize the whites on the question of educating the Negro, it stood behind the schools for these same Negroes until such time as they had become pretty well established. Without the support of the Bureau, it is doubtful if any of these schools for Negroes would have existed very long; reasons of local hostility and financial stringency make this seem probable.<sup>49</sup>

A professor of the faculty at the University of North Carolina, Alexander McIver, was appointed by the new governor to fill out the unexpired term of Ashley. McIver served in this position until January 1, 1875, when he was succeeded by Stephen D. Pool. Pool promptly stole the money of the Peabody Fund entrusted to his care, proving that theft in North Carolina was

not confined to Negroes and carpetbaggers. He was removed from office the following year.

In 1872, there were 119,083 white pupils and 55,000 colored pupils in school. For a long time, there was continual fear of mixed schools, but an amendment to the Constitution finally eliminated this.

In Virginia, the Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868 had twenty-five Negroes, and they and some of the whites were eager to educate the children. The attempt to establish a public school system was vigorously opposed by the reactionaries, but with the backing of the Negroes, the Constitution provided for a uniform system of public schools to be established not later than 1876. This was adopted by the voters in 1869, and W. H. Ruffner became Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1871. The Constitution did not provide for separate schools, but the laws under it did, and the support of the schools was to be obtained from a corporation tax of \$1 and a small property tax. The first schools were opened in 1870, and by the end of the year, there were 2,900 schools, with 130,000 pupils, and 3,000 teachers. Of these, 706 were Negro schools, with 38,554 pupils. The Negroes were eager for the schools, but the whites were largely indifferent. There was a scarcity of Negro teachers and many white teachers were used.

In Arkansas, there was a so-called school system before the war, but the Governor in 1860 called it "radically defective" and noted "only twenty-five common schools organized and kept up in the whole State, from the common school funds." The "beginnings of popular education in Arkansas" were under the Reconstruction government in 1868.<sup>50</sup>

Negroes themselves after 1865 established the first free schools in Arkansas. This they did at Little Rock, where after paying tuition for a short time, they formed themselves into an educational association, paid by subscription the salaries of teachers, and made the schools free.

In July, 1865, General Sprague appointed William M. Colby, General Superintendent of Refugees and Freedmen, to cooperate with the state authorities, and, if possible, work out a system of education for those classes. Little progress had been made in Negro education under the lessee system, and Colby had little to build on. Many Arkansas whites did not approve education under the Bureau because they feared it encouraged "social equality."

Under the Freedmen's Bureau, Negroes built schoolhouses and sometimes furnished as much as 33% of the cost of instruction. This civil government did little toward the encouragement of Negro education. As has been stated earlier, little free school education was furnished for anyone. The Legislature of Arkansas on July 2, 1867, provided for a rather pretentious public school system, but all benefits were limited to whites. This was in direct contradiction to the ordinance passed at the constitutional convention of 1864.

The Constitution of 1868 provided for the maintenance of a system of free public schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in the state



between the ages of 5 and 20 years. On July 23, 1868, Governor Clayton approved the law under which education was to be carried on. A state board of education had been begun under the lessee system and continued under the Freedmen's Bureau, but this was the first time the civil government had made any provisions for it.

The expense of public school education was to be taken care of by taxation. The masses, black and white, were unprepared for this. Competent teachers were scarce, and school officials were often indifferent. This made the situation very trying. Nevertheless, the work of organization was begun August 1, 1868, with Thomas Smith as State Superintendent. The Freedmen's Bureau turned over to school authorities all schools under its control, and entered heartily into the development of Negro schools under the new order.

In March, 1869, a few schools were reported organized. On June 15, 1869, the *Daily Republican* claimed that there were "in successful operation nearly, if not quite, three hundred schools."<sup>51</sup>

The school funds were reduced somewhat in the fall of 1869 because of tax collectors' squandering the proceeds. As a result, many school terms were cut, and others were closed completely, but some continued. Teachers were, as a rule, inefficient. White teachers in Negro schools were held in contempt. The textbooks were usually fixed by the school board, and occasionally the Democratic press demanded that only books of Southern production be used.

J. C. Cordon, a Negro graduate of Oberlin, was State Superintendent of Education from January 16, 1873, to October 30, 1874.

Under the Democratic administration, the schools were closed during the years of 1874 and 1875, and the attendance in 1876 was only 8 per cent of the school population; but from that time onward, it gradually increased from year to year. "The year 1870 remained the high-water mark in school attendance for a period of at least twenty years."

In Texas, as a result of the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, the educational work, which was under the charge of Lieutenant E. M. Wheelock, advanced to such an extent that by the end of January, 1865, there were in operation twenty-six day and night schools with an enrollment of about sixteen hundred pupils. These schools were supported partly by voluntary contributions, partly by a small tuition fee. The number of pupils enrolled in the schools September 1, 1866, was over four thousand five hundred, with forty-three teachers.

When the State Republican party was organized, they advocated free common schools and free homesteads out of the public lands, open to all without distinction of color or race.

During the convention of 1868-1869, the Committee on Education reported that there were provisions for increasing the existing permanent school fund by adding to it all money to be received from the sale of the

public domain, and for applying all the available fund to the education of all children within the scholastic age—from six to eighteen years—without distinction of race or color.

The public school system in Texas was at first in a large measure a failure because of popular hostility to the admission of Negroes to the public schools, coupled with inefficient management by counties.

In the convention which reconstructed Louisiana in 1864, the Banks system of schools was discussed, and there was a motion to declare it unconstitutional, but it was finally approved by a vote of 72 to 9. There was, however, a great diversity of opinion as to the ways and means of providing for the system. It was decided at first to establish schools for whites supported by the white taxation and schools for Negroes to be supported by black taxation. It was argued that unless this measure was adopted, whites and blacks might be compelled to attend the same schools.

The friends of the freedman feared that he would suffer by separate taxation. The mover of the previous resolution, Terry, moved some three weeks later that there should be no separate taxation of the races, and that the legislature should provide for the education of all children between the ages of six and eighteen by the maintenance, by taxation or otherwise, of free public schools. This provision, being adopted by a vote of 53 to 27, was incorporated into the Constitution.

By the Constitution of 1868, all children were admitted to the public schools regardless of color. The law thus provided for compulsory mixed schools, a condition which prevailed until 1877. As a matter of fact, there were not a great many cases where colored children were pupils in white schools, so that the mixed schools were not universally prevalent. The children of Governor Pinchback, for example, were escorted to a white school by a policeman, but often run off by white hoodlums after the policeman had disappeared.

The Freedmen's Bureau was the salvation of Negro education in Kentucky. By the middle of 1866, 35 Negro schools had been established with 58 teachers. The number increased to 139 in 1869. In 1866, there were 58 teachers with an enrollment of 4,122 pupils. An average attendance of 3,215 was maintained. In 1869, the number of teachers had reached 1,080, and the pupils 18,891.

Most of the teachers were Negroes with a few whites from the North. The revenue for these schools was obtained from state taxes levied on Negroes, private donations, and sometimes tuition fees. By a law passed in 1866, all Negro taxes, including a poll tax, were to be divided equally between Negro schools and Negro paupers. In 1867, an additional poll tax of \$2 was levied on Negroes, but it was soon repealed in 1871, after considerable Negro opposition. In 1873, Negroes also threatened to appeal to the State and Federal courts to obtain, by legal process, equal school advantages.

Not until the advent of Sach F. Smith as State Superintendent of Education in 1867 did public school education in Kentucky take on new growth. In the

1869 elections, the people voted an increase in school taxes to 20 mills on the dollar. By 1871, the school receipts had increased from less than \$400,000 in 1869 to almost one million dollars; the number of districts from 4,477 to 5,177; the number of pupils from 376,000 to 405,000.

In the District of Columbia, Negroes began their self-supported schools in 1807. Led by three former slaves, a great educational movement began. Other schools followed during the early nineteenth century, and finally, efforts to start a free school system for Negroes in the district were made in 1856. The project was overwhelmingly defeated by white voters at the polls. In 1862, May 21, Congress passed an act providing that 10% of the taxes collected from colored people be appropriated to establish public schools for Negroes.

Three trustees for the Negro schools in Washington and Georgetown were appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, but even the meager funds thus provided were only in part turned over to the Negroes. For two years, only \$736 had been credited to the colored school fund, and the first public school for Negroes was not opened until March, 1864.

In 1864, another act became the fundamental school law for the whole district. This provided that the authorities should set apart every year from all its receipts for educational purposes

such proportionate part thereof, as the number of colored children between the ages of six to seventeen years in the respective cities bear to the whole number thereof, for the purpose of establishing and sustaining public schools in said cities for the education of colored children.

In 1866, Congress appropriated \$10,000 to purchase school sites and erect buildings, and after these laws, the Negroes began to receive a just proportion of the school funds.

It was not until the year 1867 that these trustees obtained sufficient funds to undertake the establishment of any considerable number of schools. Previous to that time, for about three years, from 60 to 80 colored schools had been maintained at a large expense by various benevolent associations in the Northern states.<sup>52</sup>

There were 26 private schools in 1864, and between 1860-1864, \$135,000 was contributed by philanthropists for the work.

After this, for several years, the white and colored school systems were practically separate, each with their own superintendent. Finally, about 1890, one general superintendent with white and colored assistants under him combined the two school systems.

In Delaware, early attempts at the education of the colored youth were made by the Negroes themselves, and it was not until 1875 that schools for Negroes had any recognition by the state. By personal taxes, tuition fees and voluntary contributions, these people were able to keep up the work of education until the general assembly of the state assumed the responsibility

in 1881. Since that date, the work of educating Negroes has been a matter of public concern, with much discrimination against the colored schools.

In the other Border States, the development of the Negro schools was somewhat different. Missouri and West Virginia established free schools about the same time that the other states did, and made provisions for Negroes. Tennessee was slower, while Maryland, like Delaware, refused to provide for colored children at first, and for a long time granted them only the taxes raised among themselves. Not until 1880 were the colored children generally in Border States put on a legal footing with other children in education.

It will be noted that in nearly all the Southern states there were continual and well-proven charges of peculation and misuse of public school funds. This was not a part of the general charge of stealing and graft, but was the fault of local county officials. In most cases, the leading white landholders, who took no part in the administration of the state, nevertheless kept their hands upon local taxation and assessments, and were determined that the impoverished property-holder should not be taxed for Negro education. By various methods, direct and indirect, they thus continually diverted the school funds, and this class of white people were primarily the ones responsible for such dishonesty as there was in the administration of local school funds. On the other hand, there were Negro and poor white officials, here and there, who were guilty of waste and theft.

During and after Reconstruction, diversion of school funds was common. In North Carolina, \$136,076 was collected for education in 1870, but the Department of Education received only \$38,931. In Louisiana, \$1,000,000 worth of bonds for the school fund were used to pay the expenses of the legislature in 1872. In Texas, a large part of the income and public lands which belonged to the education fund was lost. In 1870, the school funds in Georgia were partially used for other purposes, and in 1874, Alabama school funds were diverted. In Tennessee, from 1866-1869, only 47% of the school taxes were spent on schools.

In nearly every state, the question of mixed and separate schools was a matter of much debate and strong feeling. There was no doubt that the Negroes in general wanted mixed schools. They wanted the advantages of contact with white children, and they wanted to have this evidence and proof of their equality. In addition to this, they were strengthened in their stand by white Northern leaders, who pointed out the practical difficulty of two separate systems of schools, which must, to an extent, duplicate effort, and would certainly greatly increase cost. In many of the states, the matter was left in abeyance, and in some states, like Louisiana, mixed schools were established.

This raised a fury of opposition among the whites, but for reasons of economy and democracy it was obviously the best policy. The propaganda of race hatred made it eventually impossible, and the separate school systems

so increased the cost of public education in the South that they resulted in the retardation of the whole system and eventually in making the Negro child bear the burden of the increased cost; so that even to this day throughout the South, the Negro child has from one-half to one-tenth as much spent on his education as the white child, and even then, the white child does not receive sufficient funds for a thorough elementary education.

Separation by race was prohibited in the Constitutions of South Carolina and Louisiana. In Atlanta, the Board of Education wanted mixed schools, but allowed separate schools when they were desired. The trustees of the Peabody Fund caused the dropping of a clause prohibiting separate schools in the original draft of the Federal Civil Rights Bill of 1875.

One Southern Congressman's speech represents the strength of this fear.

Woe be unto the political party which shall declare to the toiling yeoman, the honest laboring poor of this country, "Your children are no better than a Negro's." If you think so, you shall not practice on that opinion. We are the rulers; you are the servants! We know what is best for you and your children. We, the millionaires—we, who are paid out of your pockets, will take your money and will send our children to select high schools, to foreign lands, where no Negroes are, but you, you who are too poor to pay, shall send your ragged, hungry urchins to the common schools on such terms as we dictate, or keep them away to stray among the treacherous quick-sands and shoals of life; to wander on the streets and learn to syllable the alphabet of vice and crime, or stay at home, and like blind Samson, in mental darkness, tramp barefoot, the tread-mill of unceasing toil!<sup>53</sup>

In the Reconstruction constitutions, state taxation for schools was a new feature, unknown in the previous school laws of Alabama, Florida, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. "The principle of direct taxation was undoubtedly the most important contribution of the Reconstruction régime to the public school movement in the South." It was perpetuated in all the revisions of these constitutions after 1876, except in Alabama. The victory of home rule in 1876 was followed by a period of hostility or at least indifference to public education. In 1879, in Virginia, \$1,000,000 belonging to the school fund had been used for other purposes. In Georgia, the legislature of 1876 destroyed \$350,000 worth of bonds belonging to the school fund. Tennessee, in 1869, abolished the general tax for school purposes, and the administrative system. The Alabama Constitution of 1875, instead of allocating one-fifth of the state revenue to education, which was the provision in the Constitution of 1868, substituted direct appropriation. In Arkansas, the income from land sales belonging to the school fund was used for other purposes. There were similar reductions of school revenue in Louisiana. In Texas, a voluntary county system was substituted for the state system in 1875 and 1876. The public school system of the South was helped by the gifts of the Peabody Fund in 1867 and 1869.

On account of the influences mentioned, it became common throughout the South, for all parties to pledge themselves to the cause of public schools. Yet, by some of those strange fatalities of history, the strongest of all influences for educational progress was the very one which during and just after the Reconstruction period undoubtedly checked the cause. That was the race issue. The movement to eliminate the Negro as a factor in politics involved an appeal to passion, to prejudice, and sometimes a misrepresentation of the part of the colored man in Southern progress.<sup>54</sup>

It is fair to say that the Negro carpetbag governments established the public schools of the South. Although recent researches have shown many germs of a public school system in the South before the war, there can be no reasonable doubt that common school instruction in the South, in the modern sense of the term, was founded by the Freedmen's Bureau and missionary societies, and that the state public school system was formed mainly by Negro Reconstruction governments.

Dunning says: "Free public education existed in only a rudimentary and sporadic form in the South before the war, but the new constitutions provided generally for complete systems on advanced northern models."<sup>55</sup>

Colonel Richard P. Hallowell adds: "The whites had always regarded the public school system of the North with contempt. The freedman introduced and established it, and it stands today a living testimony."<sup>56</sup>

From the beginning of the public school system under Reconstruction, and after, the fight between local and state control and supervision has been bitter. Local control meant the control of property and racial particularism. It stood for reaction and prejudice; and wherever there was retrogression, particularly in Negro schools, it can be traced to the increased power of the county and district administrators. This accounts for the difficulties, corruption, and failures in Alabama and South Carolina, particularly, and in most of the other Southern states.

For the first success of the Negro schools, the South deserved little praise. From the beginning, most of the Southern states made the Negro schools just as bad as they dared to in the face of national public opinion, and every cent spent on them was taken from Negro rents and wages, and came back to the property-holders tenfold in increased opportunities for exploitation.

It is said, for instance, in one state: "There were to be free public schools. The blacks were to be the chief beneficiaries of the new system, but the whites would pay the taxes. Whites considered such education either useless or positively dangerous to society." Of free, self-sacrificing gifts for the sake of Negro uplift and intelligence, the vast majority of Southern white people contributed almost nothing.

In recent years under the influence of educational leaders like Atticus Haygood and James Dillard, the support of Negro education in some Southern states has become more enlightened and generous. This is particularly true in North Carolina, West Virginia, and Texas. Improvement over unusually



bad conditions may be noted also in Louisiana, Virginia, and Delaware. The situation in South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi is still reactionary and deplorable, while the improvement in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky is not great.

Finally, the movement that saved the Negro public school system was not enlightened Southern opinion, but rather that Northern philanthropy which at the very beginning of the Negro education movement contributed toward the establishment of Negro colleges. The reason for them at first was to supply the growing demand for teachers, and was also a concession to Southern prejudice, which so violently disliked the white teacher in the Negro school.

This led to the establishment by 1879 of eighty-four normal and high schools and sixteen colleges, with over twelve thousand students. But these institutions soon saw a higher mission. In the midst of reaction and disfranchisement, of poverty and growing caste, they became the centers of a training in leadership and ideals for the whole Negro race, and the only fine and natural field of contact between white and black culture.

The fathers of forty years ago anticipated the criticisms of later years as to the wisdom of colleges for the development of a backward race. So, they said, let it be granted that other lines of education are imperative; colleges also certainly are needed, and we must set the standards for the education of the race now! Thorough training, large knowledge, and the best culture possible are needed to invigorate, direct, purify, and broaden life; needed for the wise administration of citizenship, the duties of which are as sure to come as the sun is to shine, though today or tomorrow may be cloudy; needed to overcome narrowness, one-sidedness, and incompleteness.<sup>57</sup>

Howard University and Freedman's Hospital are survivals of the Freedmen's Bureau. Howard University was chartered in 1867 and General O. O. Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, was made its first president. Succeeding as presidents were W. W. Patton, J. E. Rankin, who wrote "God Be With You Until We Meet Again," and John Gordon, a lineal descendant of Jonathan Edwards. On its governing board have been Douglass, Langston and Bruce; it has the largest Negro medical center in the United States, and has furnished about half of the Negro lawyers.

Berea College was started by John G. Fee, a Kentuckian, who became an abolitionist. After the war, colored students were admitted, and a brother of the President of Oberlin was at the head of the school. For forty years, colored students attended Berea, but finally, in 1904, the institution was by law closed to Negroes.

Hampton Institute was founded by General S. C. Armstrong, near where the Negroes were first made "contraband of war," and where a colored woman founded the first colored school. Among its trustees were Mark Hopkins, Phillips Brooks, and John G. Whittier.

Atlanta University was founded by Edmund Ware in 1867.

To have gone on as President Ware did during those early years there must have been in his heart deathless love and pity for men who needed what he could give them—a faith in the gospel and eternal righteousness that never wavered, and a love for God that made work easy and suffering joy.<sup>58</sup>

Add to this the picture of DeForrest at Talledega, Cravath at Fisk, and others at Biddle, Knoxville, New Orleans, and Central Tennessee. There were those two influential schools at the edge of the South, Lincoln in Pennsylvania, and Wilberforce in Ohio.

Nearly all of these educational leaders were either nominated by Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, as in the case of General S. C. Armstrong, or received from him the most thorough-going cooperation. There is no greater tribute to the Freedmen's Bureau than this.

Propaganda has centered the attention of the world upon these Northerners who took part in the political reconstruction of the South, and particularly upon those who were charged with dishonesty, while of the history of this astonishing movement to plant the New England college in the South, and to give the Southern black man a leadership based on scholarship and character, almost nothing has been said. And yet this was the salvation of the South and the Negro. These "carpetbaggers" deserve to be remembered and honored. Without them there can be no doubt that the Negro would have rushed into revolt and vengeance and played into the hands of those determined to crush him. As it was, when reaction triumphed in 1876, there was already present a little group of trained leadership which grew by leaps and bounds until it gripped and held the mass of Negroes at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Had it not been for the Negro school and college, the Negro would, to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery. His economic foothold in land and capital was too slight in ten years of turmoil to effect any defense or stability. His reconstruction leadership had come from Negroes educated in the North, and white politicians, capitalists and philanthropic teachers. The counter-revolution of 1876 drove most of these, save the teachers, away. But already, through establishing public schools and private colleges, and by organizing the Negro church, the Negro had acquired enough leadership and knowledge to thwart the worst designs of the new slave drivers. They avoided the mistake of trying to meet force by force. They bent to the storm of beating, lynching and murder, and kept their souls in spite of public and private insult of every description; they built an inner culture which the world recognizes in spite of the fact that it is still half-strangled and inarticulate.

There is wide wide wonder in it all,  
That from degraded rest and servile toil

The fiery spirit of the seer should call  
These simple children of the sun and soil.  
O black slave singers, gone, forgot, unfamed,  
You, you alone, of all the long, long line  
Of those who've sung untaught, unknown, unnamed,  
Have stretched out upward, seeking the divine.

James Weldon Johnson

### Notes

1. J. J. Alvord in *Report of Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, Part II, p. 247.
2. Boyd, *Educational History in the South Since 1865, Studies in Southern History and Politics*, pp. 260-261. Boyd claims 595,306 pupils enrolled in Southern public schools in 1860. This is clearly an exaggeration and no detailed figures are adduced to prove the claim.
3. *Results of Emancipation in the United States*, p. 28.
4. Thomason, *The Foundation of the Public Schools of South Carolina*, p. 147. Cited in Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period*, p. 50.
5. Sadler, *The Education of the Coloured Race*, p. 13.
6. Wright, *Brief Sketches of Negro Education in Georgia*, p. 30.
7. *House Reports*, No. 22, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 170.
8. *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 1866, Part II, pp. 162-163.
9. Sadler, *Education of the Coloured Race*, p. 21.
10. *Journal of Negro History*, X, p. 137.
11. Simkins and Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 427.
12. *New York Tribune*, March 10, 1865.
13. *New York Tribune*, April 15, 1865.
14. Compare Wright, *Brief Sketches of Negro Education in Georgia*, pp. 16, 17.
15. Lewinson, *Race, Class and Party*, p. 36.
16. *Results of Emancipation in the United States*, p. 29.
17. *Results of Emancipation in the United States*, p. 29.
18. Beard, *Reports of American Missionary Association*.
19. Testimony of Wood, *Report of Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 1866, Part II, p. 86.
20. *Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, Part I, p. 93.
21. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, p. 236.
22. Testimony of Conway, *Report of Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 1866, Part IV, p. 82.
23. Pierce, *Freedmen's Bureau*, p. 80.
24. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, II, p. 177.
25. *Charleston Daily Courier*, July 4, 1865.
26. Lewinson, *Race, Class and Party*, pp. 35-36.
27. Boyd, *Educational History in the South Since 1865, Studies in Southern History and Politics*, p. 282.
28. Du Bois, *Atlanta University Studies*, No. 6, p. 32.
29. Simkins and Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 434.
30. Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period. Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of 1868*, Charleston, SC.
31. *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of 1868*, Charleston, S. C.

32. Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period*, pp. 30, 32.
33. Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period*, pp. 48-49.
34. Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period*, p. 50.
35. Simkins and Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 442.
36. Williams, *A History of Education and Charitable Institutions in South Carolina During the Reconstruction Period*, p. 51.
37. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, pp. 354, 355.
38. Du Bois, *Atlanta University Studies*, No. 16, p. 72.
39. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, p. 634.
40. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, p. 468.
41. Davis, *Reconstruction in Florida*, p. 236.
42. McPherson, *History of the United States During Reconstruction*, p. 41.
43. Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida*, p. 35.
44. Lanier, *History of Negro Education in Florida*, p. 21.
45. Du Bois, *Atlanta University Studies*, No. 6, p. 39.
46. Clement, *A History of Negro Education in North Carolina*, p. 47.
47. Clement, *A History of Negro Education in North Carolina*, p. 45.
48. Clement, *A History of Negro Education in North Carolina*, p. 50.
49. Clement, *A History of Negro Education in North Carolina*, pp. 58, 59.
50. Powell, *The Aftermath of the Civil War in Arkansas*, pp. 221, 230.
51. *Daily Republican*, June 15, 1869.
52. Du Bois, *Atlanta University Studies*, No. 6, p. 37.
53. Norwood, Speeches delivered in the United States Senate on April 30 and May 4, 1874.
54. Boyd, *Educational History of the South Since 1865, Studies in Southern History and Politics*, p. 270.
55. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic*.
56. Hallowell, *Why the Negro Was Enfranchised*. p. 33.
57. Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood*, p. 149.
58. From *Servitude to Service*, p. 166.