

## ABSTRACT

BAKER, DELTON ROOSEVELT. Black Education in North Carolina during Reconstruction and Its Aftermath. (Under the direction of WILLIAM C. HARRIS.)

Public education in North Carolina began earlier than in most southern states. In fact, the first step occurred as early as 1776 when the constitutional provision for schools was adopted. This early enthusiasm, however, did not continue mainly because of the traditional southern value that accepting public education would be accepting charity.

In 1825 the second major step occurred with the passage of a state law creating a school fund. This fund was called the Literary Fund, supported by investments in the stock of banks and state railroads.

This early system of schools did not include blacks. A few blacks, however, were able to attend schools and become educated. Many blacks who learned to read and write were able to do so as a result of the play school in which the master's children served as teachers and the slaves as students. Education was needed by many of the house servants and foremen in order to perform their duties, but the education of slaves was made illegal after the Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner revolts.

Because of the fear of educated blacks, only 5 percent of blacks in North Carolina could read or write at the beginning of the Civil War. The years of the Civil War were years of hardship for education generally. The war drained the state's financial resources, and even the University of North Carolina had to be closed due to a lack of money.

The financial status of the state did not improve immediately following the war, but educational activity began to flourish during these early years. Education for blacks had actually begun during the war years under the leadership of the American Missionary Association and other northern religious and benevolent societies. Black education, however, was not a major concern of the state itself prior to the Constitutional Convention of 1868, which established a comprehensive system of schools for both races. Samuel Ashley, the first Reconstruction superintendent, and James W. Hood, his black assistant, worked extremely hard to create a system of education. They faced many problems due to the southern fear of mixed schools, lack of finance, and the unavailability of qualified teachers. The greatest of the fears of North Carolinians was that "social equality" could result from a racially integrated school system. As a result of this fear, many things were done to keep education segregated and to make sure that the education blacks received would be of a southern nature, thereby keeping them in their "proper place."

Even with the hard work of Ashley and others, black education in North Carolina saw violent attacks upon it by organizations, such as Ku Klux Klan, and by 1870 the state political scene had begun to change with the re-emergence of Conservative or Democratic control in the legislature. The new conservative legislature drastically reduced financial support for the schools, prompting the resignation of Samuel Ashley.

Ashley's resignation led to the appointment of Alexander McIver as state superintendent. McIver's administration was somewhat

different from Ashley's because he believed that individuals should make some contribution toward their own education, and also he did not have the genuine concern for black education as had his predecessor. Under McIver and subsequent superintendents, education for blacks continued to drift, but it was never extinguished.

At the turn of the century some progress occurred in public support for black education due to the beginning of white acceptance of it. The white acceptance of black education came basically after legal assurances were made that schools would be segregated. The emergence of the philosophy of industrial education also caused whites to accept black schooling, since it took away the threat of racial equality.

Even with the emergence of industrial education, black education suffered due to segregation. In fact, the financial contributions toward black education never approached that of white education until the school systems became completely integrated in the late sixties and early seventies.

RALEIGH

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APPROVED BY:

*John C. McManis*

*W. H. Hays*

*William C. Thomas*  
Chairman of Advisory Committee

BLACK EDUCATION IN NORTH CAROLINA  
DURING RECONSTRUCTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Delton Roosevelt Baker was born June 5, 1953, in Gates, North Carolina, the son of Theodore Roosevelt and Janet Higon Baker. He attended the public schools of Gates County, graduating from Gates County High School in 1971.

by

DELTON ROOSEVELT BAKER

In the fall of 1971 he attended North Carolina A & T State University located in Greensboro, North Carolina. He graduated in May of 1975 with a Bachelor of Science degree in History Education.

He moved to Raleigh in the fall of 1975 to accept a teaching position at Millbrook High School. He is currently in the graduate program

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requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

in history at North Carolina State University in the spring of 1978. He is currently teaching at Millbrook High School, teaching United States history and the American political process.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

RALEIGH

1 9 8 3

APPROVED BY:

Linda O. McMurry

Ch. Hays

William C. Hains  
Chairman of Advisory Committee

## BIOGRAPHY

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Early Reconstruction historians wrote partly to prove the black man incapable of participating in government and to justify the methods of intimidation and fraud used to overthrow the Reconstruction governments in the southern states. Another group wrote to prove that the Democrats were right and the Republicans were wrong in their Reconstruction policies. Yet at the turn of the century a small group of blacks, writing out of sympathy for members of their race, tried to paint an ideal picture of them during this period and show how bad the whites were. Finally, historians during the last half of the twentieth century have written to apologize for the actions of the carpetbaggers.

<sup>1</sup>"Historians of the Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro History* XLIII (March 1938), p. 17.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Reconstruction period of American history is one that clearly shows how an age's history is perceived depends upon those who write it and when and for what reason or reasons they are writing. Many of the historical accounts of Reconstruction, especially during the early twentieth century, have not met the requirements of historical scholarship, although they were viewed for many years as dispassionate and objective accounts. Historians frequently have shown their biases and have written with little regard to the facts or have failed to provide a balanced interpretation of the period. Thus, it is difficult to obtain a true picture of black education during and after Reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

Early Reconstruction historians wrote partly to prove the black man incapable of participating in government and to justify the methods of intimidation and fraud used to overthrow the Reconstruction governments in the southern states. Another group wrote to prove that the Democrats were right and the Republicans were wrong in their Reconstruction policies. Yet at the turn of the century a small group of blacks, writing out of sympathy for members of their race, tried to paint an ideal picture of them during this period and show how bad the whites were. Finally, historians during the last half of the twentieth century have written to apologize for the actions of the carpetbaggers

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<sup>1</sup>"Historians of the Reconstruction," Journal of Negro History XXIII (March 1938), p. 17.

and scallawags. Because many of these historians used only those facts that would prove their points and disregarded those that would not, it is difficult to develop an accurate account of any aspect of Reconstruction.<sup>2</sup>

Early historians have referred to the period with epithets that illustrate the different interpretations. Titles of books and phrases such as "The Tragic Era," "The Dreadful Decade," "The Age of Hate," "The Blackout of Honest Government," "Reconstruction, the Ultimate Shame of the American People," and "The Period of National Disgrace" are only a few of these colorful but distorting descriptions.<sup>3</sup> For the most part these writers were concerned with proving correct southern conservative action in Reconstruction. One of them, James Ford Rhodes, clearly indicated his prejudice toward blacks and why he thought most of the South's actions were correct when he wrote that blacks were a race in which the children showed an intellectual development equal to the white children up to the age of thirteen or fourteen, after which a cessation of their mental development occurred.<sup>4</sup>

Other early writers on Reconstruction took similar views about the period. Professor John W. Burgess of Columbia University called Reconstruction the "most soul-sickening spectacle that Americans had ever been called upon to behold." He believed a great wrong had been

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877 (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>"Historians of the Reconstruction," p. 18.

committed in placing the whites of the South under the rule of blacks because blacks had never created a civilization of any kind.<sup>5</sup> Early in the twentieth century, another historian, Professor William A. Dunning, also of Columbia University, along with a group of graduate students, expressed a similar view of Reconstruction. The Dunning school's version of the period was that Lincoln, while the Civil War was still in progress, turned his thoughts to the great problem of reconciliation. Therefore, with malice toward none and charity for all, "this gentle and compassionate man devised a plan that would restore the South to the Union with minimum humiliation and maximum speed," but the radical Republicans prohibited this generous plan from taking effect. Because of the Radical Republicans, Dunningites wrote, the South had no other choice but to drive out the blacks, carpetbaggers, and scalawags and restore state and local governments to decent southern white Democrats.<sup>6</sup>

Many state accounts of Reconstruction were written by Dunning scholars. All of these accounts were based on the same thesis and done according to the same method: first, endless sympathy for the white South; second, ridicule, contempt, or silence for the black; and third, a judicial attitude towards the North, which concluded that northerners under great misapprehension did a grievous wrong to the South in Reconstruction, but eventually saw their mistakes and retreated.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Stampp, Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>"Historians of the Reconstruction," p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

The Dunning school account of Reconstruction was rarely challenged before the 1930s, when a small group of revisionist historians began to give new life and a new direction to the study of the era. The revisionist historians have included in their ranks Marxists of various degrees, blacks seeking historical vindication, skeptical and liberal white southerners, and latter-day northern radicals. These historians have been highly critical of the Dunning interpretation and have exerted a powerful influence upon the political behavior of many white men, North and South. As ideas about race changed, historians eroded the Dunning view of Reconstruction. The period of the 1960s especially produced many revisionist writers, mainly because of the attention given to black equality during this decade.<sup>8</sup>

Even though time is a great healer in historical writings and revisionism has had its impact, the education of blacks during Reconstruction has received inadequate attention from historians. The Dunning writers presented education as something not needed by blacks or something that would spoil them for work. Writing later, revisionists showed the black zeal for education and the humanitarian efforts of northern white missionary teachers in the South. Black writers of the mid-twentieth century have emphasized the value of education for the newly freed slaves. Despite these commentaries, no extended treatment of black education per se in a southern state exists. North Carolina is no exception; little research or writing has been done on the struggle of blacks in the state to gain an

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<sup>8</sup>Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877, pp. 13, 18, 24.

education. This is true even though North Carolina was one of the leaders in the South in providing free public education for whites prior to the Civil War and had a comprehensive system for both races during Reconstruction.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, a few books on the general educational history of North Carolina relate the Reconstruction story. Edgar W. Knight in his book, Public School Education in North Carolina, devotes an entire chapter to education during this period. He, however, places most of his emphasis on the effects of legislative actions and the general educational practices of North Carolina after the war. He does not spend much time on the education of blacks, but he does show why their schooling was such a complicated issue. He explains that blacks had suddenly been given a place in society without any preparation, and that, despite postwar problems, they fully expected to be treated as lifelong citizens of the state with all of the rights and privileges guaranteed to whites.

Knight brings out an important point in his book that is not made in most studies of North Carolina Reconstruction. He reveals that northern religious organizations not only built schools for blacks in the state but also for white children. The Baltimore Association of Friends during 1869 established for white children forty-four schools with sixty-five teachers and more than three thousand pupils. Other agencies that organized schools for whites

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<sup>9</sup>John Hope Franklin, "Whither Reconstruction," Journal of Negro Education XVII (1948), p. 416.

were the Soldier's Memorial Society of Boston, the American Unitarian Association, and the Peabody Board.

Knight maintains that in North Carolina the lack of educational opportunities after the war was not due to legislative hostility but resulted from the bankrupt financial condition of the state. The early Reconstruction period, he writes, also was a time of mass confusion due to the uncertainties caused by the change from Presidential Reconstruction to military control, although the white citizens had approved a modest amount of financial support for schools of both races.<sup>10</sup>

Other books on the educational history of North Carolina provide coverage of Reconstruction education, but usually much less than Knight's account. M. C. S. Noble in A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina provides an extended account of North Carolina Reconstruction education. He devotes chapters to the administrations of superintendents of public instruction beginning with Samuel S. Ashley and ending with the administrations of Stephen and John Pool, the last superintendents prior to the restoration of Democratic control of the state in the mid-1870s. Even though Noble covers North Carolina education extensively, he writes little about the black struggle to obtain an education. He merely reports the demand of blacks for education at the close of the war. He also indicates that the black system of schools was not successful because of inadequate

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<sup>10</sup>Edgar W. Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 212-238.

financial support and white opposition to it. According to Noble, whites were unable to fund their own schools, much less black schools, since the war had dried up the Literary Fund, the main financial support for the statewide system of schools.<sup>11</sup>

Books by Hugh Victor Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes and A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina, also cover Reconstruction education. These books, however, do not make strong arguments in support of or in opposition to black education. They contain a great deal of factual information that permit the reader to draw various conclusions. The books also provide primary references that give useful information to a serious scholar of North Carolina's black educational experience.<sup>12</sup>

Probably one of the best accounts of Reconstruction education in North Carolina can be found in an article by Roberta Sue Alexander in the North Carolina Historical Review entitled "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction." In this article Alexander shows that North Carolina's freedmen, immediately after emancipation, realized the difficulty in achieving economic independence and true equality without education. Therefore, blacks pushed for education more than any other right or privilege after obtaining their freedom.

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<sup>11</sup>M. C. S. Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1930), pp. 271-273.

<sup>12</sup>Hugh Victor Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, 1964), pp. 17-84; Hugh Victor Brown, A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, 1961), pp. 28-32.

Alexander paints a somewhat different picture of North Carolina residents than many Reconstruction accounts. She indicates that whites were divided on the subject of educating the freedmen. Some supported black education. For example, white churches often started schools for blacks. Planters sometimes requested teachers for their black employees' children. Freedmen's Bureau agents and northern educators noted that most whites in New Bern, Pineville, Goldsboro, Lumberton, and Monroe aided and encouraged black schools in those areas. Many whites, Alexander maintains, believed that blacks would be more profitable members of the community if they were educated in the elements of the English language and mathematics. Town dwellers especially supported black education.

At the same time, Alexander indicates, many whites fought every type of black education. A Morganton woman explained that she opposed educating blacks because it put notions of equality in their heads that made them unfit for servitude. A few whites even threatened or used violence to prevent blacks from obtaining an education. Two black men who tried to open a school in Magnolia were forced to close after one day because whites threatened to burn down their schoolhouse. In several places schools were actually burned and teachers were beaten and abused.

Many North Carolinians, however, looked at black education in a somewhat passive manner, with some eventually, though reluctantly, agreeing to support black schooling. Whites, Alexander notes, also preferred southern teachers to northern ones because of the desire to design and control the curriculum. They believed that instruction for

blacks should be aimed at creating a peaceful, hard-working black population which knew its "proper place" in southern society.

North Carolina opinion on black education varied, according to Alexander, but whites were unanimously opposed to racially integrated education; in fact, most would rather go without education than attend schools with blacks. These problems, however, did not discourage blacks because they often initiated efforts themselves to obtain schools.

Alexander ends her article by discussing the achievements in the education of North Carolina freedmen during Presidential Reconstruction, even before Republican Reconstruction established a comprehensive system for blacks. Because of the efforts of northern benevolent societies, and blacks themselves, many good schools were established, which taught thousands of North Carolina's freedmen. Many other blacks were still deprived of an education due to the lack of funds, causing mainly a shortage of teachers. Alexander also reports that a statewide system of education was not established during Presidential Reconstruction because of the fear of school integration.<sup>13</sup>

A few other studies relating to black education in postwar North Carolina also exist. Nancy Linthicum has written a detailed thesis on the American Missionary Association's efforts in North Carolina after the war. She spends more time, however, discussing the

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<sup>13</sup>Roberta Sue Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction," North Carolina Historical Review LIII (April 1976), pp. 120-132.

organization and its purpose than in describing the society's educational efforts in the state. Marion O'Quinn has written a thesis on the work of carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley, the state superintendent from 1868 to 1871. In her thesis she emphasizes the make-up of the public schools during these years. She often mentions black education but does not cover it extensively.

With few exceptions, accounts of the beginning of black education in North Carolina have not adequately told the story. Historians have missed a golden opportunity, for a great deal of activity in black education occurred during the postwar period, including the era after Reconstruction when blacks struggled to maintain the system of schools that had been so optimistically created in the bright aftermath of their freedom.

By this time education had the support of the state leadership, as was emphasized in the governor's address to the General Assembly that established the school fund. The governor declared that education was more important than internal improvements, which were then receiving the attention of many North Carolinians.

The education system was not supported by tax money gathered each year, but received most of its support from the Literary Fund which in turn obtained its revenues from state investments in the stock of banks and state railroads. During the Civil War the Literary Fund was almost completely depleted. Then immediately after the war, tax funds

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar Knight, *Public School Education in North Carolina* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 81.

## CHAPTER II

THE ROOTS OF BLACK EDUCATION IN  
NORTH CAROLINA

When the Civil War ended, blacks in North Carolina found themselves hopelessly wandering in the wilderness with few skills or tools for survival. This was true even though the state had a strong antebellum base for education that did not exist elsewhere in the South, although it was for whites only. The first important step in North Carolina education had occurred as early as 1776 when the constitutional provision for schools was adopted. This provision did not produce mass free public education, but it did keep the dream alive. In 1825 the second step for education was taken with the passage of a law creating a school fund. By this time education had the support of the state leadership, as was expressed in the governor's address to the General Assembly that established the school fund. The governor declared that education was more important than internal improvements, which were then receiving the attention of many North Carolinians.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 81.

were not forthcoming, and during 1865-1868 the legislature was unable to appropriate any money for educational purposes.<sup>2</sup>

Even though North Carolina succeeded in establishing the Literary Fund to support education in the antebellum period, difficulties arose in maintaining the fund. North Carolina's people had a distaste for taxation, and the endowment created for free school was frequently used for other than educational purposes. Often, the endowment also was mismanaged and exploited for private ends.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did North Carolina face problems maintaining the fund, but problems also arose in convincing people of the desirability of free public education. Many North Carolinians actually believed that education was not a proper function of government and that, for the individual, it was humiliating to accept free education.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this lack of support one-third of North Carolina's white population in 1840 could not read or write. Compounding the problem was the fact that the infant school system lacked central supervision.<sup>5</sup> During the 1850s this situation began to change when Calvin H. Wiley was appointed state superintendent of education.<sup>6</sup>

Even though public schooling for whites was fairly widespread in North Carolina by the time of the Civil War, many blacks also had to

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<sup>2</sup>Richard L. Zuber, North Carolina during Reconstruction (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

be educated in order to perform their duties. For example, a house servant had to be able to distinguish among the different newspapers his master ordered him to select, and black foremen had to be educated enough to keep daily plantation records. Because of the needs of their masters, many of the early slaves were educated through various means. A popular method was the "play school," which occurred when black children played with the master's children. They played school, with the slaves serving as students and the master's children as teachers.<sup>7</sup>

With the spread of antislavery literature by northern abolitionists, North Carolina, along with other southern states, adjusted its laws to restrict the teaching of blacks. North Carolina whites feared that antislavery literature would inspire blacks to revolt. Reportedly, several educated southern blacks had led revolts against their masters, causing whites to be fearful of educated blacks in their midst. Some of the incidents that caused such massive fears were the Denmark Vesey revolt in 1822; the publishing of David Walker's Appeal in 1829, which urged all slaves in the South to rise up against their masters; and Nat Turner's revolt in 1831, in which a black man believed that he had orders from God to kill all whites.<sup>8</sup> The Nat Turner revolt had an especially strong impact, hindering

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Allen Bullock, A History of Negro Education in the South (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 14; Sing-Nom Fen, "Notes on the Education of Negroes in North Carolina during the Civil War," Journal of Negro Education III (1948), p. 25

severely the pre-Civil War development of black education in North Carolina and in the South.

Prior to Nat Turner's revolt, white North Carolinians were generally opposed to black education but had done little to prohibit it. As in several other southern states, North Carolina's blacks had attended class with their white masters and in some places had operated schools. Schools that opened with black students after Nat Turner's revolt faced serious legal restrictions, the greatest being that a white had to be present at all times. In most places, except for underground teaching, black education ended in the early 1830s. The underground teaching, which by its nature was restrictive, did not meet the needs of the black masses, and at the beginning of the Civil War only 5 percent of all blacks in North Carolina could read or write even crudely.<sup>9</sup>

North Carolina's school system suffered tremendously during the Civil War. Buildings were destroyed; others were used as hospitals; and the state's school funds were used to finance the war. The war, however, did not completely wipe out black education. Several small black private schools were maintained, and others were started through black initiative during the war. Union commanders in the occupied

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<sup>9</sup>William Preston Vaughn, Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South 1865-1877 (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), p. 11; Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 209-210; Leon F. Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 472.

eastern part of the state also set up schools for blacks as early as 1862.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, significant development in black schooling actually began in occupied North Carolina and in the southern areas prior to the conclusion of the war. Northerners were in the South teaching before the last battles were fought. Early in 1863 more than forty northern educators were on the Sea Islands of South Carolina instructing about three thousand students in more than thirty schools.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the Civil War education for southern blacks was under the leadership of missionary groups and private relief agencies. In its opening meeting the National Freedman's Relief Association, a northern philanthropic group, resolved: "That we highly commend the action of this association in establishing schools among the freedmen, believing that the only safety of a republic is in the education of her people." For various reasons other groups also put a great deal of effort and money into black education. Many northern groups saw education as a must if blacks were to be elevated to first class citizenship. Other northern groups, such as the Quakers, contributed to black education due to certain "guilt feelings" on their part for the existence of the institution of slavery in America.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Zuber, North Carolina during Reconstruction, p. 59.

<sup>11</sup>Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, p. 210.

<sup>12</sup>Sing-Nom Fen, Journal of Negro Education, p. 27; Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson, New Perspectives on Black Educational History (G. K. Hall & Co., 1978), p. 4.

Most members in these agencies and organizations refused to admit that the African race was completely equal to whites, but neither would they concede that blacks were necessarily inferior. On several occasions the missionary societies and the Freedmen's Bureau, a federal agency to aid black adjustment to freedom, worked together. The organizations in fact were so closely tied together that it was often impossible to distinguish the efforts of one from the other.<sup>13</sup>

North Carolina blacks, like those in other southern states, benefitted from northern educational efforts during the Civil War. This education was sponsored mainly by the American Missionary Association. The section of North Carolina in which blacks received the earliest wartime schooling was along the federal-controlled coast in seaport towns such as New Bern, Wilmington, and other areas of the Cape Fear River Valley. The AMA immediately followed the Union troops into the state and began teaching on a minor scale in the East as early as 1861 with the fall of Forts Clark and Hatteras, located on the Outer Banks.<sup>14</sup>

On March 30, 1862, General Ambrose E. Burnside, who commanded the Union Army in the occupied eastern part of the state, appointed Vincent Colyer as superintendent of the poor for the department of North Carolina. He immediately opened two schools for blacks in New Bern, one for those who did not know the alphabet and one for those

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<sup>13</sup>Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, p. 477; Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), p. 458.

<sup>14</sup>John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 67-84.

who did. He used two African churches for school rooms and put up sheets for blackboards. The schools were taught by soldiers, mostly from New England regiments.<sup>15</sup> These early schools faced many problems due to the fact that the teachers were highly mobile and frequently changed commands. Problems also existed because of the poor attendance of the students, which often was less than 50 percent each class day. In addition, school supplies were almost nonexistent.<sup>16</sup>

These schools were short-lived. In fact, they only lasted for about six weeks. The schools were ordered closed by the newly-appointed military governor, Edward Stanly, a native of North Carolina. Stanly was more interested in restoring peace and in following Lincoln's plan of hesitancy in committing the federal government to a specific program of reconstruction. Stanly even allowed people who swore an oath of allegiance to the Union to regain their slaves. In closing Colyer's and other schools, Stanly cited the North Carolina statute that forbade teaching slaves to read and write. However, after visits to Washington by both Stanly and Colyer, the schools were allowed to reopen.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Vincent Colyer, Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army in North Carolina, in the Spring of 1862, after the Battle of New Bern (New York: May 1864), pp. 43-44.

<sup>16</sup>Nancy Linthicum, "The American Missionary Association and North Carolina Freedmen, 1863-1868" (M.A. thesis, North Carolina State University, 1977), p. 44.

<sup>17</sup>Norman D. Brown, Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel "Conqueror" (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1947), p. 203; Herman Belz, Reconstructing the Union: Theory and Policy during the Civil War (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 85.

Despite its early effort, the AMA did not become actively involved in sending missionary teachers into North Carolina until the summer of 1863. By September of that year the Front River Camp School in New Bern, the showcase AMA school during the war, had as many as 280 students attending on a single day.<sup>18</sup>

These early black schools received enthusiastic students who stood in fear that their dreams of an education would be taken away. When school closed for the summer and teachers visited in the North, students and their parents longed and prayed for the return of their teachers.<sup>19</sup> The buildings used were very rudimentary. Many of them were churches erected by the blacks, comfortable only in good weather and crowded to the utmost capacity.<sup>20</sup>

Early teachers in North Carolina were able to motivate their black students by impressing upon them that they were being closely watched by "rebel" enemies who wished that their experiment in learning would be a failure.<sup>21</sup> This motivation was strengthened on a few occasions by Confederate attacks on black schools.<sup>22</sup>

The work of the missionary and benevolent societies, along with the federal agencies, were greatly needed. When the Civil War ended,

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<sup>18</sup>Report of Colored Schools, October 1, 1863, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters, American Missionary Association Archives, Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana (Microfilm).

<sup>19</sup>H. S. Beals to Secretary of AMA, October 5, 1863, ibid.

<sup>20</sup>E. Roper to Mary Burroughs, July 20, 1863, ibid.

<sup>21</sup>A. L. Etheridge to Mr. Biggs, June 6, 1864, ibid.

<sup>22</sup>George R. Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 169.

These societies continued into the postwar period to make a great many freedmen still embraced and cherished their old slave habits, but they quickly transferred their dependency upon their masters to the newly formed benevolent societies. Many northerners did not view the black development of dependency in a bad light. They felt that the Union soldiers had completed the liberation of the slaves from physical bondage, and now northern teachers would free them from mental indolence and missionaries, usually doubling as teachers, would lead them out of the "synagogues of Satan."<sup>23</sup> The work of the missionaries and benevolent societies was needed not only to transform morally the newly-freed slaves but also to make sure that blacks were instructed in reading and writing, along with their rights and responsibilities in freedom, and to insure that the antislavery purpose of the Civil War did not fade with the smoke of the last shots.

At the meeting of the North Carolina legislature in 1865 under President Andrew Johnson's program of reconstruction little of educational significance was accomplished with the exception of an act to abolish the office of superintendent of public instruction and the office of treasurer of the Literary Fund. The General Assembly, however, did appropriate \$7,000 to the state university to avoid temporary financial embarrassment. As a result of such action by the state legislature, only the missionary and benevolent societies gave the black man any hope of immediate instruction and a chance at education.

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<sup>23</sup>Roberta Sue Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction," North Carolina Historical Review III (April 1976), p. 125.

These societies continued into the postwar period to make a great impact upon the newly freed blacks of North Carolina<sup>24</sup> even though many blacks tried to aid themselves as indicated by the demand for education at the annual convention of the freedmen in Raleigh during September of 1865.

Even though black education developed in the northeastern part of North Carolina during the war, most of the state remained an active part of the Confederacy until 1865, when federal troops moved into the interior and Confederate resistance collapsed. By 1865 black education flourished along the coast of the state, and black enthusiasm for education remained great, but it was sometimes subdued by fear of reprisals from whites.<sup>25</sup>

Education began in earnest in the Wilmington area, with the coming of the American Missionary Association, soon after the fall of the town in early 1861. Among the early AMA teachers arriving in North Carolina was Reverend Samuel S. Ashley, who was later to become one of the most influential men in North Carolina education. Many of these teachers were highly motivated and spent personal funds to insure the success of their activities; others made almost equally significant sacrifices, such as taking family time to teach black adults at night and visiting homes to give oral instruction in house-keeping and nursing the sick.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Edgar Wallace Knight, Influence of Reconstruction on Education (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), p. 18; Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, pp. 501-507.

<sup>25</sup>Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina, pp. 262-284.

<sup>26</sup>William T. Briggs to George Whipple, April 10, 1865, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters.

Because the teachers gave of themselves freely to the needs of the freedmen, they often met hostility from the white community. Nevertheless, Ashley requested that the AMA send only whites and not black teachers. His view was based on the belief that black teachers from the North would be totally rejected and face even greater hostility than white northern teachers.<sup>27</sup>

The AMA schools established in the eastern part of the state became the basis for expansion into other areas of the state. After the war, in July 1865, the AMA had extended its work as far as Raleigh. It sent three teachers to the state capital where they assumed control of a black school in an African Methodist Episcopal Church that had originally been founded and set up by blacks.<sup>28</sup>

Much of the inland education, however, resulted from the initiative of private individuals. One such individual was Henry Martin Tupper, a former Union soldier and the founder of Shaw University. Tupper was discharged from the army on July 14, 1865, but prior to his discharge he had appeared before the officers of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in New York and had requested to be sent as a missionary to the freedmen of the South. He was given his wish, and he went South to serve without compensation. Tupper chose to come to Raleigh, partially for health reasons. Raleigh also was the place where he had had a close encounter with death during his service as a

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<sup>27</sup>Samuel S. Ashley to Samuel M. Hunt, January 22, 1866, ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Samuel S. Ashley to George Whipple, May 15, 1865, ibid.

soldier in Sherman's army, and he had a compelling desire to return there after the war. Tupper reached Raleigh on October 10, 1865.<sup>29</sup>

Immediately after his arrival, Tupper contacted the pastor of the white Baptist church and informed him of his plan to select talented freedmen for instruction in the Bible in order that they might become leaders and establish churches, associations, and conventions needed to perpetuate the work of the denomination in the area. The pastor, however, refused to allow Tupper to preach to the black congregation that met in the basement of the church. Therefore, Tupper held meetings where he could find a place. On December 1, 1865, he organized a class that met in a room in the old Guion Hotel, provisions for which were made by the Freedmen's Bureau, and in March 1866, Mr. Tupper formed a class for females in his home.<sup>30</sup>

In February 1866, Tupper wrote the Baptist Home Mission Board in the North indicating his readiness to advance money to purchase a site for a building, one story of which would be used for a school and the other for a church. Upon receiving a reply, he began work, paying \$500 of his own money for a site on the corners of Blount and Cabarrus streets and running south. Work began on the structure in the spring, aided by people (both black and white) in the community. The first story was completed in the summer of 1866 at a cost of \$1,300. On October 15, 1866, Tupper opened the school with three teachers whom he had secured with the help of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society.

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<sup>29</sup>Wilmoth A. Carter, Shaw's Universe (Rockville, Md.: D. C. National Publishing Inc., 1973), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

During its first year the school had 250 day pupils and 100 students who attended at night, and it was partially supported by the Freedman's Bureau but received most of its money from the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. During the first four years of the school's existence approximately 1,000 men, women, and children attended the institution.<sup>31</sup>

Extended recruitment of students for Tupper's school began in the summer of 1867 when a circular was issued announcing that, in accordance with a vote of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, increasing attention would be given to educating colored ministers and securing ministerially inclined students from all parts of North Carolina. The school continued to grow and later became Shaw University, being named after Elijah Shaw, a large financial contributor.<sup>32</sup>

Immediately after the war, Raleigh was also the site for the development of another major school for blacks, which became known as St. Augustine's College. This school developed with a somewhat different purpose than Shaw University. Its goal was to educate teachers of both sexes for the instruction of black children. Unlike Shaw, St. Augustine's was not the result of the determined labor of one individual, but instead it was the result of the Freedmen's Commission of the Episcopal Church. This commission was also aided by the Freedmen's Bureau, which gave \$6,243 for the erection of buildings.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Cecil D. Halliburton, A History of St. Augustine's College 1867-1937 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Co., 1937), p. 1.

St. Augustine's opened at a critical time during Reconstruction. The day after its opening, the 1868 Constitutional Convention assembled in Raleigh with the responsibility for meeting congressional requirements for the state's restoration to the Union. Possibly as a result of this event, no report was made by the local newspapers about the launching of the new school. The first day of school witnessed an attendance of only four students. This poor beginning, however, was not discouraging to its leaders because they wanted only a select group as teacher trainees and the transplanners of knowledge. By December 1868, the school had grown to forty-three students, twenty-six of whom were boarding students. The students were not charged a fee, but they were required to work in the gardens or perform other tasks.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the Reconstruction period progress was made at St. Augustine's, even though at times the school had to contend with serious problems on account of racial and political agitation and financial strings. The students were able to convince the leaders of the school that blacks were capable of learning and that their abilities were no different from that of whites.<sup>35</sup>

During the postwar years black education in North Carolina, whether in the interior or on the coast, produced a great deal of white opposition. Schools were tolerated in large towns like Raleigh, New Bern, and Wilmington, but establishing and maintaining

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-5.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

schools in smaller communities was almost impossible. This was especially true if the teachers from the North were black. They were denied decent housing, and many of the early leaders of black education in North Carolina, such as Samuel S. Ashley, only requested white teachers. However, the early white teachers were also treated badly, scorned by many, and in a few cases saw dogs set upon them.<sup>36</sup>

Even though black teachers were discouraged by leaders of the benevolent societies, some did make their way into North Carolina. When this was the case, according to available reports, schools with black instructors were well attended and well taught. For example, the Raleigh Sentinel reported that a white missionary teacher in New Bern claimed that blacks there preferred to attend the private schools taught by members of their race rather than the Freedmen's Bureau and missionary schools taught primarily by northern whites. In the 1865 statewide Freedmen's Convention, which met in Raleigh, the delegates passed a resolution urging blacks to employ black teachers whenever possible.<sup>37</sup>

Whether black or white, the early teachers were often disappointed by nonteaching tasks assigned them and would give more time to one aspect of their work than to others. They often complained about their assignments, many times writing directly to the AMA office in New York and bypassing Ashley or other persons in charge. Eventually,

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<sup>36</sup>Samuel S. Ashley to Samuel M. Hunt, January 22, 1866, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters.

<sup>37</sup>Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction," p. 127.

many of the teachers returned to the North, in part also because of their discouragement with the financial situation or the lagging interest of blacks.<sup>38</sup>

Although many teachers became disenchanted, others were filled with enthusiasm. Their enthusiasm came chiefly from the excitement for education felt by the students, the joy of seeing progress, and the willingness of students to pass on knowledge that they had gained. Adult blacks also were swept up in the enthusiasm. One teacher upon her arrival in Beaufort found a thirty-year-old man conducting classes in the ABC's and possessing a great zeal for further knowledge for himself.<sup>39</sup>

Many of the teachers were sustained by their acceptance of the difficulties in which they found themselves. Their schools were often in the basements of churches or in other buildings. Attendance also would vary from day to day, usually being the smallest during planting season. Many teachers were able to overcome low daytime enrollments during the work season by holding additional night classes. Teachers also were able to transcend disappointments by simply being willing and ready to accept a challenge.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Linthicum, "The American Missionary Association and North Carolina Freedmen," pp. 141-168.

<sup>39</sup>Rev. E. P. Smith to Rev. S. Hunt, December 25, 1866, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters.

<sup>40</sup>E. B. Eveleth to M. Smith, December 31, 1866; Sarah A. Beale to Rev. S. Hunt, April 30, 1866; H. S. Beale to Rev. S. Hunt, February 28, 1866; H. S. Beale to Rev. S. Hunt, November 6, 1865, ibid.

By the close of the Presidential Reconstruction period in early 1867 blacks were being educated in impressive numbers. In fact, the percentage of blacks being educated was greater than the percentage of whites being educated. The state government, launched by the conservatist President Johnson, had done nothing to aid the cause of black education. Blacks had asked Governor William W. Holden and the Constitutional Convention of 1865 to provide for legislation for the education of their children. Their pleas had fallen on deaf ears, for this convention failed not only to provide legislation for black education, but also for white education. As a result of this action of the convention, hostility toward black education in North Carolina increased because many blacks continued to be educated by the missionary societies while no state provision had been made for whites. In Beaufort, the black citizens were jeered for having a separate school for themselves, with whites claiming that blacks were making a distinction on account of race. This taunt served as another form of harrassment of black education in that area of the state.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the late Civil War and the two-year period of Presidential Reconstruction marked the beginning of large scale black education in North Carolina. Enrollment for the late Civil War years was as follows:

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Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen, Race Relations during Presidential Reconstruction, 1863-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) (Department of Photoduplication, 1980) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago), p. 626.

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<sup>41</sup>L. H. Beale to Rev. Hunt, November 14, 1865, ibid.

<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Schools</u>	<u>No. of Teachers</u>	<u>Pupils</u>
December 1865	-	-	8,500
January 1866	100	132	10,459
May 1866	136	158	10,971
June 1866	119	135	9,084
October 1866	80	75	3,763
November 1866	94	96	5,732
December 1866	118	122	9,673
January 1867	130	134	9,961
February 1867	145	152	11,714
March 1867	156	173	13,039 <sup>42</sup>

Even though the state did not give assistance, black education flourished throughout the period and set the precedent for educational expansion in North Carolina through the development of a strong private-supported black school system in the state.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Roberta Sue Alexander, North Carolina Faces the Freedmen, Race Relations during Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867 (Chicago: University of Chicago Regenstein Library Department of Photoduplication, 1980) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago), p. 628.

<sup>43</sup>Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction," p. 130.

## CHAPTER III

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF 1868  
AND BLACK EDUCATION

The Civil War and early Reconstruction had launched black education in North Carolina, but the work of the Constitutional Convention of 1868 expanded it into a public system. This convention met in accordance with the first Congressional Reconstruction act, passed in March 1867, which placed North and South Carolina in the second military district under General Daniel E. Sickles.<sup>1</sup>

On January 14, 1868, the North Carolina convention convened in an electric atmosphere unlike any other assembly that had ever met in the state. This tense excitement resulted basically from the enfranchisement of blacks and the temporary disfranchisement by Congress of some southerners, specifically those who had earlier taken an oath to uphold the constitution and had later joined in rebellion against the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The disfranchisement of southerners and the enfranchisement of blacks produced a new breed of politicians in the state. As a result the 1868 convention had a large majority of Republican delegates. Of the 120 delegates elected to the constitutional convention, 107 were Republicans and only 13 were conservatives. The 107 Republicans included 18 carpetbaggers or transplanted northerners, 74 scalawags

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<sup>1</sup>Merton E. Coulter, The South during Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>William McKee Evans, Ballots and Fence Rails: Reconstruction on the Lower Cape Fear (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 94.

or native white Republicans, and 15 blacks. Of the 13 conservatives only seven had actively participated in the Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

The convention was unique for blacks because it was their first participation in North Carolina politics. One prominent visitor to the state found only black men and women in the gallery and in the hall itself, and he commented, "every here and there is dotted a woolly-headed negro and oftener than is proper the voice of the African is heard where none but the Anglo Saxon had been heard before."<sup>4</sup>

The fifteen Negro delegates included both the previously slave and free, with only one known to have been born in the North. A high proportion of them were active and able men who played prominent roles in the convention. However, this new breed of politicians was not viewed favorably by many of the new conservatives of that day, who believed that the property and earnings of the industrious would not be safe under political leaders elected by universal suffrage. As a result they sought property qualifications for office and other curbs on democracy. Their press ridiculed the "Gorilla Convention," "Black Republican Convention," "Nigger Convention," and "Bones and Banjo Convention." Josiah Turner, the editor of the Raleigh Sentinel, a conservative newspaper, lamented: "Yes, we have a new North

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<sup>3</sup>Marion O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley and His Role in North Carolina Education, 1865-1971" (M.A. thesis, North Carolina State University, 1975), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Otto H. Olsen, Carpetbagger's Crusade, The Life of Albion Winegar Tourgee (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 93.

Carolina, and every true son of the state hangs his head in humiliation and sorrow as he looks upon the evidence of the metamorphosis."<sup>5</sup>

Southern white Republicans were not overlooked in the convention; however, their sentiments were influential as they chaired eight of the original thirteen committees drafting constitutional articles.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the two most active conservative delegates were Plato Durham and John W. Graham, recent Confederate officers. Durham was a Ku Klux Klan chieftain and Graham was the son of William A. Graham, ex-governor and chief architect of the white supremacy program. Durham introduced the first racist note in the convention with an appeal for white supremacy and the preservation of racial distinctions. He also bewailed the presence of Negroes in seats once occupied by eminent whites. Other conservatives demanded constitutional provisions for a segregated militia, where "no white man shall ever be required to obey a negro officer," segregated schools, a ban on intermarriage, and a ban against Negro guardianship of any white ward.<sup>7</sup>

Conservative historians, such as Joseph G. de R. Hamilton, have also looked at the convention in a very negative way. In their works they highlighted the bad or improper actions of the convention. Hamilton emphasized certain improper proceedings, like the widely-criticized "twenty-dollar lawyer" resolution which admitted to the practice of law anyone who would pay a twenty-dollar license tax and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 95; J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), p. 376.

<sup>6</sup>Olsen, Carpetbagger's Crusade, pp. 93-94.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

was also of good character, the latter requirement being effective only in theory. According to Hamilton, the measure was passed, based on the argument that it was favorable to the Negroes.<sup>8</sup>

Hamilton further attempted to show that the new breed of politicians was of poor quality, claiming that the members' deportment was never good and became worse as the session progressed. Abusive and profane language was common in debate, he said, and there were occasional personal encounters. Horseplay and buffoonery were usual, and on the day of adjournment for the Christmas recess, a brass band was brought into the hall and played from time to time. On the same day, according to Hamilton's account, a large number of the members bought fox horns from a peddler, and throughout the capitol, including to the top of the dome, they blew them constantly. A great number of the delegates were supposedly drunk at the time of their frivolous activities.<sup>9</sup>

Even though some events in the convention could have been of such a tone, generally the work of the delegates was exemplary, as recent historians like Otto H. Olsen have pointed out. The actions of the convention elected under Negro suffrage proved that political rights for blacks might not be as disastrous as conservatives claimed.<sup>10</sup> Many things of a positive nature came out of the convention, including a lasting constitution for the state that survived

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<sup>8</sup>Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina, pp. 376-380.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 380-386.

<sup>10</sup>Olsen, Carpetbagger's Crusade, p. 113.

until 1968. The convention, under the leadership of delegate Samuel S. Ashley, former AMA leader in North Carolina, also established provisions for public education. Ashley had a high interest in public education as a result of his background in the state. Because of this background, he was appointed chairman of the "committee on education, university and their means of support." When the committee reported to the convention, the main point of controversy arose over the issue of racially mixed schools. Conservative Plato Durham almost immediately offered the following amendment: "The General Assembly shall provide separate and distinct schools for the black children of the state, from those provided for white children."<sup>11</sup>

Ashley and his fellow carpetbaggers acutely wanted to keep the issue of separate schools out of the convention, lest the matter destroy the effort to create the school system. They were unsuccessful. Following Durham's proposed amendment, a coalition of conservatives and southern white Republican delegates issued a resolution of intent declaring that the happiness and interests of the two races could best be achieved by separate school systems.<sup>12</sup>

Because Ashley's committee made no statement to guarantee that the races would be separated in the classrooms, conservatives campaigned against the mandatory school clause of the Ashley report. They were highly skilled in presenting the philosophy that a poor man

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<sup>11</sup> Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of North Carolina at Its Session 1868 (Raleigh: Joseph W. Holden Publisher, 1868), p. 342.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

who could not afford to educate his children by private means would be forced to send his children to mixed public schools.<sup>13</sup> Such an appeal effectively played on the racial prejudices of southern white Republicans in the convention. However, the final draft of the constitution did not have a statement demanding separate schools.

The failure of the convention to include in their report a prohibition against mixed schools also allowed the Democrats or conservatives to have an issue upon which to campaign against the ratification of the constitution. The conservatives were able to capitalize on the fact that the Republicans were not united on this issue. Nevertheless, they were unable to muster enough support to defeat the constitution solely on this ground.<sup>14</sup>

Although the mixed school issue was the most controversial part of the committee's report and the 1868 constitution, the main feature of the public school article was the provision establishing a financial base for the ambitious educational system. The system would be financed by three main sources. First, the article provided that the proceeds from the sale of swamp lands, plus all state funds, stocks, bonds, fines, penalties, and forfeitures of lands, should be invested in an irreducible fund from which the annual income would be applied toward financing the public school system.<sup>15</sup> Second, the article

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<sup>13</sup>Raleigh Sentinel, March 9, 19, 28; April 8, 1868.

<sup>14</sup>Journal of the Constitutional Convention, p. 473; Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina, p. 610.

<sup>15</sup>Constitution of the State of North Carolina: Together with the Ordinances and Resolutions of the Constitutional Convention Assembled in the City of Raleigh, January 14, 1868 (Raleigh: Joseph W. Holden Publisher, 1868), Article IX, Section 4.

required that "so much of the ordinary revenue of the state as may be necessary, shall be faithfully appropriated for establishing and perfecting the state system of free public schools."<sup>16</sup> Third, 75 percent of the proceeds from the state and county poll taxes would go to the support of public education.<sup>17</sup>

A still further step toward the growth of public education in the state came when Ashley was elected as state superintendent of public instruction. His nomination by the Republican delegates was looked upon by conservatives as one of the greatest mistakes of the convention because they believed it assured the racial integration of the schools.<sup>18</sup>

Ashley, a native of Massachusetts and supporter of mixed schools, became the first superintendent of the Reconstruction era because of a strong campaign in which he nevertheless pointed out that the General Assembly would decide the issue of mixed schools, and since that body had a white majority, it would probably not upset racial mores. After he assumed office, he appointed J. W. Hood, a black clergyman who had moved to North Carolina from Pennsylvania, as his assistant. Hood had made such a strong stand for equal rights at the 1865 convention that his life had been threatened.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Article V, Section 2.

<sup>18</sup> O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley," p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> Hugh Victor Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, 1964), pp. 20-21; Robert C. Morris, Reading, Riting and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 334.

As a result of Ashley's election, conservatives believed that carpetbaggers had taken over the state government, despite the presence of Governor Holden and other scalawags in high office. They believed, in particular, that the new public school system would soon be under carpetbag control. They tried to counteract their fears by proposing legislation assuring that school districts would provide at least two schools, with the financial apportionment for black and white schools being the same.<sup>20</sup> These conservatives called for the establishment of a general and uniform system of free and racially separate schools; but in other respects they did not propose differences in the character of the schools or in the provisions made to support them. Conservatives were not successful in getting these provisions passed, but later they had a hand in developing the curriculum. They also agreed with Republicans that textbooks and all other publications used by the public schools should be free. In this way they wanted to be sure education would not have a partisan bias in either religion or politics.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the continued opposition of many conservatives, education flourished in North Carolina after the inauguration of the Republican government in 1868. Ashley's report in 1869 indicated that scarcely any sister state of the union surpassed North Carolina in its provisions for education. Indeed, he claimed that Virginia, South

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<sup>20</sup>Edgar Wallace Knight, Influences of Reconstruction on Education (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1913), p. 23.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

Carolina, and Georgia sought to copy the educational example of North Carolina.<sup>22</sup>

The elaborate constitutional and legislative provisions for public schools, enacted in 1868 and 1869, served well as the framework for a system of education for the children of both races. The new system, however, was not without obstacles due to the changed political status of the Negro in the Reconstruction order. Many conservatives might oppose his education, but they were in no position to prevent it, and many came to accept the reality of black schooling.

Despite the early success of public education, many conservatives still viewed the changes as detrimental to North Carolina. In his history of Reconstruction in North Carolina, Hamilton claims that the chief purpose of the northern settlers in the state was to establish an effective system of common schools based upon an alien New England plan. He believed that the members of the 1868 convention ignored entirely the system which had already been established and which was temporarily inactive. Regardless of the cost, Republicans, Hamilton insists, made their demand for the creation of schools for all one of their main purposes of Reconstruction.<sup>23</sup>

Hamilton's views on postwar education in North Carolina are harsh and recent historians have challenged his conclusions. Otto H. Olsen in his book, Carpetbagger's Crusade: The Life of Albion Winegar Tourgée, points out that Hamilton showed his own strong biases and

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina, p. 69.

unwillingness to accept black education. Olsen indicates that the convention took a number of positive actions, noting that the Republicans had done nothing to justify the vituperation hurled against them. While the Republicans had encouraged democracy and liberalism, they had displayed caution and catered to conservative desires, according to Olsen. They certainly did not live up to the dreadful expectations of their opponents. Republican delegates had proven rational and able in both debate and action. Scalawags and carpetbaggers, Olsen insists, had displayed ability and independence, and the much-maligned Negro had shown unexpected ability and moderation. Conservative fears had been realized only in the extension of democracy and social welfare and the affirmation of civil and political equality for the Negro.<sup>24</sup> One such important reform was the creation of a comprehensive system of public schools for both races.

The emergent state public school system was soon challenged by a violent attack on the Republican regime. Because of its reputed radicalism, the Republican ascendancy triggered the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina. The Ku Klux Klan's first public notice evidently appeared prior to the April 1868 election.<sup>25</sup> At first the Klan was unable to sway many opinions, and the Republicans won a sweep of offices and the ratification of the new constitution by a substantial majority. Scalawag William W. Holden defeated Democrat Thomas Ashe for governor by almost 20,000 votes, 92,253 to 73,549, and

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<sup>24</sup>Olsen, Carpetbagger's Crusade, p. 113.

<sup>25</sup>Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina, p. 284.

Ashley soundly defeated Braxton Craven for the position of state superintendent of public instruction by a vote of 92,487 to 73,376.<sup>26</sup>

Although more than 29,000 North Carolina registered voters did not participate in the election, the people of the state did show a concern for progress and bringing North Carolina back into the Union, even if it meant such a radical step as free education for blacks. The first school census in which black children were included was taken in 1869, before the education system was in place. It showed a total of 223,815 whites and 106,766 black children between the ages of six and twenty-one.<sup>27</sup> The Constitution of 1868 committed the state to the education of these children.

Much of black education, however, was still supported by private means since the school law was not implemented until 1870. The total number of privately supported black schools, according to an 1869 report, was 152, which benefitted 11,826 pupils.<sup>28</sup>

The work of the convention not only aided blacks in receiving elementary and secondary education, it also spurred interest in higher education for them. At the reopening of the University of North Carolina in 1868, Chief Justice Richmond M. Pearson offered a resolution to the state legislature that would provide for the

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<sup>26</sup>O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley," pp. 78-79; William Woods Holden, Memoirs of W. W. Holden (Durham: The Seeman Printery, 1911), p. 98.

<sup>27</sup>Hollis Moody Long, Public Secondary Education for Negroes in North Carolina (New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1932), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes, p. 30.

education of black students at some place other than Chapel Hill. He proposed a black department of the university be located elsewhere and also the acquisition of land script exclusively for the use of pupils of color. This resolution was adopted by the legislature on November 20, 1868, and by the trustees of the university in January 1869. The instruction provided for in the resolution included agriculture and mechanics, along with such classical studies that would prepare students for the university. Even though this resolution was relatively progressive for its day, the Republican legislature failed to follow up its intention and provide a department for black students.<sup>29</sup>

A new plan for black higher education at the college level was proposed in 1869, but it met the same fate as the earlier plan even though it had the support of Governor Holden. Like the previous body, the legislature of 1869 paid no heed to the proposal, leaving the matter of Negro higher education to later conservative administrations.

The convention of 1868 therefore set the stage for the development of two systems of education in North Carolina, even if such prominent members of the convention like Ashley opposed separate schools for blacks. Black education for some time was still mainly supported by private means, and the legislature refused to accept the plans adopted for black higher education at public expense. Even though the state government appropriated money for the school system,

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

no school actually received any money from Raleigh until much later. Despite the organization of a central system for administering the schools, the almost exclusive source of support came from local communities and counties. Soon, most of the support went to white schools. Public elementary schools for blacks did exist, at a rudimentary level, but it was not until about 1900 that they began to receive systematic financial aid from state funds.<sup>30</sup>

Mainly because of the poverty in the state, pleas for large appropriations for public education fell on deaf ears. Educational funding was also overlooked due to the fact that many white citizens doubted whether public support for education was really a proper function of government. In addition, many whites resented spending money for black schooling. However, the George Peabody fund made it easier for doubting whites to acquiesce in black education.<sup>31</sup>

The Peabody fund was established in 1867 by George Peabody, a wealthy merchant of Boston. He created a trust fund of one million dollars to aid southern education, and he added another million in 1869. The policy of this northern fund was to cooperate with state authorities by contributing initially a sum of \$300 for each enrollment of 100 pupils, \$600 for an enrollment of 200, and \$1,000 for an enrollment of 300 pupils. The fund required a school term of ten

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<sup>30</sup>Long, Public Secondary Education for Negroes in North Carolina, p. 3.

## CHAPTER IV

## BLACK EDUCATION DURING THE REPUBLICAN ERA

The work of the 1868 convention was a positive step for black education in North Carolina. However, North Carolina's blacks continued into the early 1870s to receive education mainly through private means, especially through church groups. Public education, in general, remained in dire straits in North Carolina, primarily due to the general poverty caused by the war and the fundamental fear that taxation for any purpose would make the situation even worse.

Mainly because of the poverty in the state, pleas for large appropriations for public education fell on deaf ears. Educational funding was also overlooked due to the fact that many white citizens doubted whether public support for education was really a proper function of government. In addition, many whites resented spending money for black schooling. However, the George Peabody fund made it easier for doubting whites to acquiesce in black education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh Victor Brown, A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, 1961), p. 28.

months. It applied to blacks as well as to whites, but blacks usually received only two-thirds of the amount allowed to white schools.<sup>2</sup>

Several incidents in North Carolina showed that the fund was not completely color blind to the recipients of its generosity. In 1871 Washington had a white school with 132 pupils and a black school with 451 pupils. The Peabody fund granted \$300 to the white school and \$600 to the black one, which represented a smaller proportion of the money than its enrollment suggested. Beaufort, with a white school of 150 pupils, was promised \$450 if it continued ten months and \$400 for the black school of 200 pupils on the same condition.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the Peabody fund was active in North Carolina, it did not meet with an overwhelming response. The fund mainly stimulated town schools. Nevertheless, it tended to ease the sectional bitterness and hatreds of the post-Civil War era. In 1868 the state received \$22,000 from Peabody officials, but later allocations were tied to what the school districts could raise to aid themselves. Wilmington was offered \$1,500 on the condition that it raise \$3,000; New Bern, \$1,000 if it raised \$2,500. Raleigh and Charlotte were also to receive \$1,000, provided each of them could raise \$2,500.<sup>4</sup> Black schools continued to receive less allocations than white ones. From June 1872 to July 1873, a black school at Warrenton received \$400; Fayetteville, \$400; and Oxford, \$300. The fund continued to

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

contribute to education in North Carolina throughout the period and, until its dismantling in 1878, about \$14,500 were distributed to graded schools and normal institutions and for general educational promotion. The fund also took into account the need for teacher preparation by aiding in teachers' institutes and granting scholarships to normal schools. The Peabody fund was not the only northern one assisting North Carolina education. The Soldiers' Memorial Society of Boston and the American Unitarian Association gave assistance to both black and white education in the state during this period, although not on the large scale of the Peabody organization.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the efforts of benevolent societies, education, and especially black education, still had a problem of gaining acceptance in the state during the Republican Reconstruction era.<sup>6</sup> Partly due to human nature, whites were unable to support black education. Whites found it difficult to accept such a transformation of the Negro as was implied by his education so soon after emancipation. Many were outraged at the idea of black educational equality, which had political implications during Reconstruction because Republican support for public schools solidified black support of the party.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 30; Hugh Victor Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, 1964), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley," p. 83.

Because of extreme conservative opposition, school houses were often burned and northern teachers ostracized and frightened away.<sup>7</sup>

Most conservative whites, however, did not engage in Ku Klux Klan-style terror against black schools, but they did maintain an attitude of indifference or nonviolent opposition toward public education for the exslaves.<sup>8</sup> This attitude was illustrated by the comments of N. A. McLean, a Lumberton minister and a member of North Carolina's General Assembly, in a letter to Superintendent Ashley. Writing soon after the framing of the 1868 constitution, McLean noted that while no opposition would be made to Ashley's work, neither would there be any demonstration of delight.<sup>9</sup>

While indifference and disapproval of black education were dominating attitudes of many white North Carolinians during Reconstruction, a preference existed for the type of education that black people of the state should receive. Many old citizens believed that the best education for blacks would come from a southern white faculty teaching a curriculum designed in the South. In this way the instruction of blacks could be aimed at creating a peaceful, nonpolitical, and hardworking black population that knew its "proper

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<sup>7</sup>Horace Mann Bond, The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1966), pp. 31-32; George R. Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1970), p. 182.

<sup>8</sup>Knight, Influence of Reconstruction on Education, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup>N. A. McLean to Samuel Ashley, April 21, 1868, Superintendent of Public Instruction Correspondence, 1868-1873, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

place" in southern society and would be a part of a well-disciplined labor force that benefitted whites.<sup>10</sup>

Regardless of these attitudes, one of the greatest drawbacks to the implementation of public education in the state was the need for trained teachers, even though their qualifications under the law needed only to be rudimentary. The school bill of 1869 simply required a teacher to furnish to the county examiner evidence of good moral character and pass an examination in spelling, writing, geography, history, and English grammar. White North Carolinians had suffered a tremendous shortage of teachers because of the closing of many academies and the state university during the Civil War. Obviously, the problem among blacks was even more serious. Despite the dispatch of northern teachers to North Carolina by various missionary organizations and the availability of some of them for the public schools, the problem of teacher supply was critical. Because of this great need the public schools of North Carolina continued to suffer throughout the late nineteenth century. In order to reduce the shortage for trained teachers, the "Redeemer" or Democratic legislature in 1877 passed an act to provide normal schools for both races. The first such institution for blacks was immediately established at Fayetteville in 1877.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Roberta Sue Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction," North Carolina Historical Review III (April 1976), pp. 120-132.

<sup>11</sup>Brown, A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina, pp. 31-32; School Laws of North Carolina, as Ratified April 12, A.D. 1869, with Instructions, Forms, Plans of School Houses, and Directions for Arranging Desk, Grounds, etc. (Raleigh: M. S. Littlefield Publishers, 1869), pp. 38, 59, 69.

In addition to a shortage of teachers, other problems had to be resolved before the public school system could be adequately planted in North Carolina. Most of these matters were taken care of by Superintendent Ashley, who was able to push through the Reconstruction legislature of 1869-70 a series of laws for the establishment of public schools throughout the state. Specifically, the legislature of 1869 authorized the state superintendent and board of education to organize a system of schools, in keeping with the requirement of the 1868 constitution. It appropriated \$100,000 for the purpose and ordered the taking of a census of school-age children.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the strong purpose of the laws passed by the Republican legislature, Ashley was aware that many problems faced the infant public school system in the state, which could not always be solved by legislation. The problems needed direct and constant administrative attention. One such problem was the peculiar status of the freedmen under the new order. Because of the freedman's lack of education and his culturally depressed background in slavery, Ashley resolved to create a position to be filled by a special person who would administer to his specific needs. In 1869 he successfully petitioned the Republican legislature for such a position. He decided that no one could better fill the office than a member of the black race because blacks were in a better position to understand the deep concern for black education and the peculiar problems attached to the freedmen's status.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1869, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley," pp. 99-100.

As earlier indicated, the person Ashley selected was James W. Hood, a black minister originally from Connecticut, but a resident of Fayetteville since the end of the war. Hood had been influential in North Carolina Reconstruction since 1865 when he had helped draft a black petition to the state constitutional convention asking for equal educational benefits for the freedmen.<sup>14</sup> Immediately after Hood's appointment, conservatives questioned the legality of the office, but State Attorney General Lewis P. Olds, a "scalawag," ruled that a section of the 1869 board of education minutes relating to the "peculiar" educational needs of blacks provided a basis for Hood's appointment.<sup>15</sup>

Hood's work began in earnest soon after he assumed office in 1869. He launched a study of the status of black schools in the state that found that most schools attended by blacks still owed their existence to benevolent societies. In his report to Ashley in April of 1869 he showed that the AMA and the Freedmen's Union supported 19 schools with 68 teachers and 2,840 pupils; the Friends Society aided 29 schools with 40 teachers and 2,425 pupils; and the Episcopalian Commission assisted 6 schools with 11 teachers and 600 pupils. In addition, Hood indicated that the Presbyterians financed 16 schools with 21 teachers and 2,200 pupils, and other private institutions aided 82 schools with 84 teachers and 4,861 pupils.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina, p. 254.

<sup>15</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1869, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Hood's report is found in ibid., p. 18.

Hood's report further described schools by denominations and their work with blacks. He concluded that the Friends Society schools were especially doing a good job. These schools emphasized Bible readings without comment, and they also stressed instruction in moral character. Hood found discipline to be commendable in the Episcopalian schools, and he found this denomination was quite willing to give financial support to the cause of black education. He also reported that the northern Presbyterians were making an important effort to establish a system of parochial schools for blacks in North Carolina. They had at this time already established a college at Charlotte, which included a normal department. The Presbyterians were also willing to give other financial assistance to the cause of black education, and they had established black schools in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Rowan, Iredell, Davie, and Davidson counties.<sup>17</sup>

The report not only indicated the strength of black denominational schools but also reported on the presence of other private schools for the former slaves. In fact, Hood found these schools scattered throughout the state with the most outstanding one being Tupper's school (Shaw University) in Raleigh. Many of these private schools were held in buildings which were but a small improvement on out-of-doors schools. He indicated that many blacks were so anxious to have schools that, where they could do no better, they would pile up rough logs and cover them with rived boards. Even though the buildings were of a rudimentary nature, the children still seemed astonished and

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

eager to learn. Despite their unpretentiousness, the school buildings were often subject to the enmity of whites and sometimes burned down.<sup>18</sup>

Included also in Hood's report was the fact that federal support for black education through the Freedmen's Bureau continued to exist as late as 1869. Earlier, during the height of its Reconstruction effort, the Freedmen's Bureau spent \$1,700 monthly for the support of black schools, aside from large amounts for buildings and repairs. This federal assistance, along with support from charitable organizations, by 1869 gave North Carolina blacks more than 150 schools, with 224 teachers, and an enrollment of 11,826. In fact, there were few counties east of the Blue Ridge that did not have at least one school in which blacks were receiving instruction.<sup>19</sup>

Even though by 1869 black education had made great progress, much white opposition still existed, and many teachers during the Republican period of Reconstruction faced the hostilities that earlier northern teachers had encountered. Alonzo B. Corliss, who taught at a Quaker-supported school in Burlington, described the harsh treatment of teachers in the South before a United States Senate investigating committee. He testified that he was dragged away from his home in the middle of the night and beaten by men (Klansmen) dressed like clowns. When he questioned them as to their

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<sup>18</sup>Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 27; Edgar W. Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1916), p. 244.

reason for beating him, they replied, "for teaching niggers and making them like white men."<sup>20</sup>

The practice of ostracizing teachers also continued to exist. Although not subject to violence, black missionary teachers in Wilmington complained that the old citizens did not encourage the schools and that as teachers they were denied social contact with whites. In Raleigh, northern missionary teachers complained of being charged higher rates for rooms than local whites.<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of the problems teachers in North Carolina faced, none were greater than the almost constant trauma encountered by Samuel S. Ashley, the state's "Radical" superintendent of education. He faced a continuing battle with the Republican legislature for funding, and he witnessed slow tax collections on those funds appropriated, stymieing the effort to organize local public schools. Teachers were also in short supply and were incompetent; the school law was defective; school officials were careless and negligent; and textbooks were scarce.<sup>22</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that Ashley's effort, in addition to the racial implications of it, was made difficult because of the abnormal times in which he worked. North Carolina was no different from other southern states; it faced poverty and hard times throughout

<sup>20</sup>Allen W. Trelease, White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 202.

<sup>21</sup>Henry L. Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941), p. 96.

<sup>22</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 245.

the Reconstruction period and especially at the time when the public schools were being established. At the conclusion of Ashley's first full year in 1869, he had hopes for the success of the system and looked optimistically toward the challenge of the next year; however, he realized without adequate financial support from the legislature, his hopes could not be realized.<sup>23</sup>

In 1870 a positive step occurred when the legislature authorized a state property tax for the use of the public schools. This came about because Ashley had refused to let the legislature forget its promises of adequate financial support for the new system. He had continuously warned them of the obvious outcome of failing properly to support education in the state.<sup>24</sup>

Even with additional funding, education in North Carolina still had many hurdles to overcome. There was absolutely no uniformity in the textbooks. It seemed that almost as many kinds of books existed as there were pupils to be taught. The work of establishing schools for black children continued to be badly handicapped by the lack of competent teachers. Money problems also still existed, as well as a lack of schoolhouses in every section of the state. The white system had many of the old buildings of the common school days that had survived five years of neglect and nonuse and the ravages of war. But blacks had only the fairly primitive schools which had been recently built by the Freedmen's Bureau, northern benevolence,

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<sup>23</sup>O'Quinn, "Carpetbagger Samuel S. Ashley," p. 111.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

or their own personal contributions of labor, materials, and money. The problem was especially acute in the eastern part of the state where large numbers of black children were anxious to go to school. In the western section where there were few black children to be educated the problem was different. The provisions for separate schools to serve a sparsely populated area in the West was almost as difficult a problem as providing for the great numbers in eastern counties.<sup>25</sup>

Although blacks were not evenly distributed throughout the state, Ashley's report for the year ending September 30, 1870, indicated that the state at that time had a total of 1,071,361 inhabitants, of whom 391,650 were black. The number of public schools maintained in the state was 1,398. The school population was about 229,000 white and 113,000 black. The black schools reported by Assistant Superintendent Hood numbered 347, with 372 teachers and 23,419 pupils.<sup>26</sup> However, Hood's report indicated that most black schools were still operated by the American Missionary Association, the Friends Society, and other northern organizations. Hood made little mention of public schools for black children, but he did point out that blacks were becoming aware of public education mainly because they realized that northern support would soon be withdrawn. Most of his report was devoted to schools in towns, and little was said about rural black education.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>M. C. S. Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), pp. 324-325.

<sup>26</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 245.

<sup>27</sup>Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 326.

By 1870 the schools of North Carolina had undergone many changes and had made progress. Some of this progress, however, was dimmed by the elections of a Conservative legislature that met in the late fall of 1870. The future seemed bleak for Negroes because the friends of public education for blacks no longer controlled the state legislature. The Senate contained thirty-six Conservatives and fourteen Republicans. The House contained seventy-five Conservatives and forty-two Republicans. Among the Republicans were three blacks and two carpetbaggers in the Senate and nineteen blacks and two carpetbaggers in the House. Thomas J. Jarvis of Tyrrell County, who had been a prominent Conservative in the preceding legislature, was chosen Speaker of the House and Edward J. Warren, a Conservative member from Beaufort County, was selected President of the Senate. With the exception of two acts, one reducing the salaries of state officers and the other looking to "the better protection of the literary fund," no measures of educational importance were passed during the first session of this legislature. The members concerned themselves almost entirely with the impeachment of Governor Holden. The salary of the superintendent of public instruction was reduced from \$2,400 to \$1,500, the clerical force of his office was dismissed, and no money was allowed him for traveling expenses. Even though these cuts were drastic, all other state offices faced similar reductions.<sup>28</sup>

The fact that other offices had been cut was not enough to sustain Ashley and permit him to continue his work in North Carolina.

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<sup>28</sup> Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 249.

In September 1871, he resigned his position as superintendent of schools and accepted a position in a school for blacks in New Orleans. To fill the vacancy Governor Tod R. Caldwell appointed Alexander McIver, a native North Carolinian and a professor in the state university.<sup>29</sup>

With McIver's appointment the years of carpetbag and direct northern influence in the development of education in North Carolina came to a close. Ashley and his Republican associates, however, had laid the foundation for the full development of North Carolina's public school program, and they had been able to make significant strides in educational reform during the postwar period of economic uncertainty. They also had overcome some of the pressures of social and political adjustments after the war that faced both the black and white citizens of the state.

Just as the public schools were facing financial hard times, so were the black private schools. Many of the schools suffered

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<sup>29</sup>North Carolina, *Public Laws (1870-71)*, Chapter 235, Section 5, pp. 337-386.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 251.

## CHAPTER V

## BLACK EDUCATION DURING THE REDEMPTION PERIOD

Because of railroad scandals and racial conflict, North Carolina Democrats (now called Conservatives) were able in 1870 to win control of the state legislature. This action changed the course of black education in North Carolina, since many of its strong supporters were defeated, and the conservative success caused Samuel Ashley to resign his position. The position of assistant superintendent was abolished, and as a result the particular educational needs of blacks were overlooked for nearly half a century, though some support for black schools would continue.<sup>1</sup>

Because of this neglect by the state, some of the educational needs of blacks had to come from outside agencies still at work in the state, such as the American Missionary Association. Actually, in some areas the American Missionary Association was the only hope for blacks. In 1872, one AMA teacher, while teaching in the upper part of North Carolina, indicated that she was in the most wicked place she had ever been. The blacks had no schoolhouses or churches, resulting in their being ignorant and poor.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the public schools were facing financial hard times, so were the black private schools. Many of the schools suffered

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<sup>1</sup>North Carolina, Public Laws (1870-71), Chapter 235, Section 5, pp. 387-388.

<sup>2</sup>Edna R. Forn to Reverend E. Cravath, October 8, 1872, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters.

from book shortages, especially in subjects such as Latin.<sup>3</sup> Teachers suffered from lack of pay or from extremely low pay. Many times teachers had to write to the home office of the AMA and ask for their salary or for additional money to meet school expenses.<sup>4</sup> At other times they had to hang on with reluctance and with a spirit of dedication. As one teacher wrote,

I am, I think, decided to remain here this school year, tho I labor under some disadvantages for I am not sure whether I shall have to leave before my school year is out or not. The people promise well, but it is as easy with them to not fulfill them as it is to make them. While they assured me of seventy-five pupils and not less than fifty-five dollars per month, they may not come up to half that number in either case.<sup>5</sup>

Even though the teachers were facing financial distress, the AMA by 1873 was not only still engaged in black education but also had turned some of its attention toward southern education in general. This expanded direction for the AMA is demonstrated in a North Carolina report to the home office outlining the importance placed on the establishment of a graded school for whites in Raleigh. However, this school was never established.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Rachel Thomas to Reverend E. Cravath, October 8, 1872, AMA Archives, North Carolina Letters.

<sup>4</sup>John Scott to Reverend E. M. Cravath, September 20, 1872; John Scott to Reverend E. M. Cravath, ibid.

<sup>5</sup>David T. Allen to Reverend E. M. Cravath, September 11, 1872, ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Frisk P. Brewer to Reverend E. M. Cravath, September 27, 1873, ibid.

Regardless of any new ventures of the AMA, as the redemption period progressed there was a steady decline in the number of people attending the society's schools. By late 1873 many of the reports to the home office had shifted from emphasizing the organization of schools to the establishment of churches.<sup>7</sup>

Although AMA schools continued to decline in students and teachers expressed discontent, private support was still a predominant factor in black education throughout the late Reconstruction period and after. New schoolhouses continued to be built and northern societies still supplied teachers in North Carolina as, paradoxically, the white opposition to black education decreased continually with the consolidation of conservative power in the state.<sup>8</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Conservative years began with the appointment of Alexander McIver. McIver was again considered for the position of superintendent in April 1872, as the Republican nominee in the state election, but he was defeated by James Reid, retired minister. Reid died before he was installed and before McIver left the office to which he had been appointed. Governor Tod R. Caldwell was then urged to appoint George T. Welker to the position, but he declined to do so, and instead appointed Kemp P. Battle, who accepted the appointment. McIver, however, refused to surrender the position and was sustained by the state supreme court in his contention that

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<sup>7</sup>Report of Williston School, October 1872; Report of Washington School, October 1872, ibid.

<sup>8</sup>John Nichols to Reverend E. M. Cravath, June 6, 1874; D. D. Dodge to E. M. Cravath, October 12, 1874, ibid.

there was no vacancy because no successor had legally qualified. As a result he held the position until the next election.<sup>9</sup>

Even though McIver retained his job, he was not the supporter of education that Ashley was, and his administration reflected the difference. In his first report of November 1, 1872, he made practically no recommendations for the improvement of the system of schools and contented himself with taking ground for education as the best, cheapest, and only means of "drying up the sources of pauperism and crime, banishing vice and immorality, beautifying the earth, making [the] home attractive, inducing immigration and increasing the capital and revenue of the state."

McIver did not mention black education directly, but he quickly demonstrated that he did not have the sensitivity of Ashley regarding schools for blacks. He declared: "While I think no system of instruction will ever lift the African to the high spheres of educated mind, yet let the role be played fairly: and if the results should not be commensurate with the demands of Christian civilization, the error will not be ours."<sup>10</sup>

While McIver was not as aggressive as Ashley concerning black education or education in general, the new Conservative legislature was even less supportive of education. In 1871 it passed a new school law, including Sections 23 and 25, that dealt with the administration

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<sup>9</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 251.

<sup>10</sup>Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year 1872 in Reports of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1870-1877 (n. p., n. d.), p. 73. Hereinafter cited as Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1872.

of the public school funds. Section 23 provided that if a schoolhouse was needed, the school fund should bear only one-half of the expense of either repairing an old house or building a new one, the other half to be met with private contributions by citizens of the community. Section 25 went even further by allowing only \$2 for each scholar from the public fund, based on average attendance for four months.<sup>11</sup>

McIver was in complete agreement with these laws which demonstrated a significant departure from Ashley's liberal school policies. In fact, McIver's idea of public education could remind one of the plan laid down in the state's first constitution in 1776. He basically believed that the schools should be free only for those who were too poor to pay any tuition. Despite its retrenchment character, the school law of 1872 did provide more organization and structure for education in the state. The law made the county board of commissioners a county board of education, with the register of deeds as the clerk of the board of education and the county treasurer the custodian of the county public school fund.<sup>12</sup>

McIver's administration also kept the school system afloat. His report for the year ending September 1872, in which only forty-six counties reported, showed that the total amount of state funds expended for school support in the state was \$155,393.96. The sum of \$35,675.52 was received from property taxes in seventy-six counties

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<sup>11</sup>North Carolina, Public Laws (1871-72), Chapter 189, Sections 23, 25, p. 314.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., Section 6, p. 309.

during the year, and about \$108,000 was derived from capitation taxes. Certain donations and a few items from other sources brought the total school fund up to about \$332,000. The total school population reported was 267,938, of which 182,698 were whites and 85,240 blacks. The actual enrollments in the public schools were 34,294 white and 16,387 black children. His report also showed that \$71,861 was paid for the education of white children and \$27,256 for the black children in the same counties. McIver's report of this year indicated that the number of black students attending school had decreased since the last year of Ashley's administration when there were 23,419 black pupils attending schools in the state.<sup>13</sup>

McIver's later report of June 30, 1873, in which sixty-three counties made official reports, did show increases in the enrollments of North Carolina schools greater than those of the Ashley years. At this time the school-age population of the state was 348,603, of which number 233,751 were white and 114,852 were black. The enrollment of white children was 106,039, with an estimated daily average attendance of 70,872. The number of black children enrolled was 40,428, with an estimated daily average attendance of 26,958. It was estimated that the number of public schools for white children was 2,565 and the number for black children 746. However, the average school term was only ten weeks. The entire public school fund derived from all sources for the year was \$408,830.67, and the total disbursements for black education were \$191,675.07. Of the

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<sup>13</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1872-73, p. 83.

disbursements the sum of \$112,175.36 was expended for the salaries of black teachers.<sup>14</sup>

McIver's report of 1873 also proposed to improve the academic qualities of teachers through state-established standards that would help exclude incompetent and unworthy applicants of both races. In addition to the existing standards of good moral character, adequate scholarship, and knowledge of teaching, additions were suggested, and they subsequently became law. According to McIver, an applicant for a third-grade certificate should stand an approved examination on the sounds of marked letters, spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic. In spelling, the applicants should be required to write twenty or thirty selected words, and those who failed to spell 25 percent of them, or who could not read fluently, write a good copy hand, or explain the principles of elementary arithmetic, including fractions, would be rejected. Every applicant for a first-grade certificate should in addition qualify in drawing, bookkeeping, the rudiments of natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, and astronomy. McIver's report also advocated the passage of a law which would permit communities to vote on a local tax for the lengthening of the school term.<sup>15</sup>

McIver was not only interested in improving the teaching profession, he also began to demonstrate a genuine interest in the betterment of the entire educational system. This change of attitude

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<sup>14</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1873-74, pp. 2-5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

spilled over to the Democratic legislature. The section of the 1871 school law which provided for the distribution of the school fund on the principle "aiding those who aid themselves" was abandoned, and the school fund was thereafter to be apportioned by the county commissioners to the townships according to the number of children in each. Township school committees were then to apportion the amount among the several schools in each township in like manner, and all children were to be admitted free of any charge of tuition.<sup>16</sup>

Even though McIver as well as the state legislature was improving the educational outlook in the state, during the middle and late 1870s black education still had many difficulties to overcome. In addition to the chronic financial ones and the continued coolness of many white officials to quality black schools, the major problems facing black education at this time were finding competent black teachers for black schools and the sparsity of the black population in the western counties. In Mitchell County the treasurer wrote: "There are not enough black children in any one district to make a school, so that they should have the privilege of using all the money for a school taught at the most central point." Stokes County reported that "some townships have no black schools for the lack of teachers; in others the black children are so scattered that a school cannot be made up." In the East, Robeson County reported that public schools for white children were being taught, but black schools

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<sup>16</sup>Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 366.

suffered from a lack of black teachers with certificates. As a result some whites were teaching in the black schools.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the problems that existed for black education at this time, all reports showed that a better feeling was gradually developing in favor of the public schools during the early 1870s. This feeling was strongest about 1874, the last year of the Republican administration of public schools in North Carolina, though the legislature had been Democratic for three years.<sup>18</sup> Reports for the year ending June 30, 1874, reflected this improvement. Public school funds for the year amounted to \$496,405, an increase of more than \$164,405 since 1872, and disbursements were as follows:

To teachers of white schools . . . . .	\$182,646.53
To teachers of black schools . . . . .	77,615.25
For schoolhouses . . . . .	22,676.46
For services of county examiners . . . . .	2,854.55
For commissions to county treasurers . . . . .	11,802.06

Of the total school population of 369,960, white children numbered 242,768 and blacks 127,192. There were 2,820 schools for white children and 1,200 for black children, with enrollments of 119,083 and 55,000, respectively. The report also gave McIver's recommendation that a county superintendent be appointed for each county, which would complete the school organizational structure.<sup>19</sup>

The moderate McIver had made many improvements in public education in North Carolina, but unfortunately he could not continue to

<sup>17</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1874-75, pp. 76, 81.

<sup>18</sup>Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 368.

<sup>19</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1874-75, pp. 3-4.

serve as the state's superintendent's due to the political nature of his position and the consolidation of Conservative or Democratic control in the state. As a result of the final collapse of Republican control, education in North Carolina suffered. Stephen D. Pool was elected as superintendent, and he assumed the duties of his office on January 1, 1875. Pool, however, only served until July of the following year. At that time he was charged with irregularities in the handling of funds appropriated to the state by the Peabody Board while he served as its agent in the state. Prior to these charges, Pool had moved along the same austere lines of school policy as had his predecessor, Alexander McIver. He really had no other choice because, like McIver, he normally could not leave Raleigh and visit the schools and local officials because of a lack of funds for traveling expenses. Pool also had to do all the clerical work of his office. Because of these problems, on February 16, 1875, he wrote Dr. Barnas Sears, director of the Peabody Fund, that the executive committee of the State Educational Association had elected him state agent of that body and that as soon as the legislature should adjourn he would begin to canvass the state in behalf of education and at the same time examine those schools which were receiving aid from the Peabody Fund.<sup>20</sup>

After his tour of the state, Pool reported that the people were again becoming apathetic toward education and that public schools were languishing everywhere. He felt that the cause of education was still

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<sup>20</sup>Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 376.

suffering from the irritating presence of Ashley as state superintendent a few years earlier, a comment that perhaps was based more upon political differences than educational realities.<sup>21</sup>

Pool was not able to increase enthusiasm for education in the state, because prior to the conclusion of his term he was enmeshed in scandal. At first he made a mild denial, saying that he had not improperly used one cent of the state public school fund, and promised at the end of the school year to settle with Dr. Sears, the agent of the Peabody Fund. However, on June 10, 1876, in a letter to William R. Cox, chairman of the State Democratic Committee, he admitted his guilt and announced that on that day he had sent Governor Curtis Brogden his resignation, to take effect on June 30, 1876. The amount of money in question was small and reportedly had been used in paying for a house and lot in Raleigh. Pool's intention evidently was to replace every dollar, but, before he could do so, his action became known to the public.<sup>22</sup> The action of Pool was somewhat detrimental to black education in the state due to the fact that black schools depended heavily upon this fund as they did other charitable organizations.

Because of Pool's resignation, black education and education in general was also sidetracked in the state and received unfavorable publicity. A new superintendent was not appointed until twenty days later.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 365-377.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

The political scene was also changing in North Carolina at the time of Pool's resignation. The year 1876 is usually given as the date which marked the overthrow of Reconstruction and the end of so-called alien rule in the southern states. In North Carolina the concluding steps in Reconstruction had been taken by the Constitutional Convention of 1875, and the election that followed in 1876 ended the last vestiges of Republicanism in the state. The work of the convention was of great importance politically and socially. Numerous changes were made which promised stability in the state, although the black rights that had been gained during Reconstruction would suffer. In education, unlike the Constitution of 1868, that of 1876 specifically required separate schools for the children of the two races.<sup>24</sup>

The first legislature under the new constitution that went into effect on January 1, 1877, passed two acts of significance for public education. The first of these was a law establishing two normal schools, one for each race. The purpose of these institutions would be to train young men for teaching in the common schools of the state. The other act gave authority to townships of a certain population to levy taxes for the support of graded public schools.<sup>25</sup>

The school measures passed during the early years of Democratic rule reflected the attitudes of North Carolinians toward education. Most North Carolinians at that time supported public education, though

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<sup>24</sup> Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 261.

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina, Public Laws (1877), Chapter 234, Section 1, p. 437.

demanding that it be economically administered, and many felt that opposition would never have developed had it not been for "alien" intervention during Reconstruction by persons like Ashley who did not understand the South. The popular Democratic Governor Zebulon B. Vance felt this way, and he indicated in his message to the General Assembly in 1876 that the members should make no discrimination in the matter of public school education but should deal justly and equitably with all school children of the state.<sup>26</sup>

The school system during the so-called redemption era was in the hands of native whites, and black education, although still supported, suffered from neglect and the social and racial distinctions that were increasingly made in the administration of state and local systems. The future of public education for blacks would be determined by Conservative political leaders, with the exception of the private schools that still existed.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Frenise A. Logan, The Negro in North Carolina, 1876-1894 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 154.

<sup>27</sup>Report of State Superintendent of 1876-77, p. 59.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE AFTERMATH OF RECONSTRUCTION, 1877-1910

The "redemption" years in North Carolina saw the push for black education, while the effort for education in general continued, although in a different manner than that of the Reconstruction years. The redemption era placed North Carolina's schools back in the hands of natives of the state, who were determined to make sure that blacks received a southern-oriented education that did not teach equality and instead taught the black man his "proper place" in society.

Even though education for blacks did not continue at the pace of the early Reconstruction years, it by no means ceased to exist during the late nineteenth century. In fact, many historians claim that it progressed, since no longer was black education looked at negatively because of northern influence upon it. Much of the state's leadership continued to press for black education. When Governor Vance took office, one of his recommendations was to make provisions for the training of black teachers somewhere in the state. This was indeed a politically brave step, because white opposition to black education was greater in North Carolina at this time than previously. However, Vance's reasons for making such a recommendation were not solely due to a commitment to the principle of black education but also to a selfish motive. His primary goal was to develop in the black people a loyal devotion to their state and to whites. Vance believed that few things were more dangerous than to permit the education of an

entire class of citizens to remain in the hands of strangers, most of whom, he assumed, were not attached to the state's way of life. He believed that with black teachers trained by the state the masses of the race would no longer look abroad for aids to their progress and civilization.<sup>1</sup>

Others in the state, as Reconstruction was ending, maintained similar ideas. Appropriations were increased in education, and black education was funded, though not equally to that of whites. In 1877, John C. Scarborough was elected state superintendent, and he was instrumental in having taxes raised for the support of education. The public school law of 1877 placed a tax of 8 1/3¢ on property and 25¢ on polls, in addition to the state capitation or poll tax and levies on liquors for the schools. The law also directed that if funds were not sufficient for a four-month school term in any county the county commissioners could levy annually a special tax to insure the full term, provided the action was submitted to the voters of the county.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the School Law of 1877 increased the financial support for education, that in itself did not do a great deal for the growth of black instruction in the state. The major development in 1877 affecting blacks was the passage of a law establishing a black normal or teachers' school in Fayetteville, an action that Governor Vance had sought. At this school the students could board

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<sup>1</sup>Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes, p. 40.

for the sum of five to eight dollars a month, and students from out of town were given reduced railroad tickets. The basic function of the school was to prepare blacks to teach in black schools; and upon entering the school, students signed pledges to teach for three years after graduation. The school opened on September 3, 1877, with forty students, including women. The Fayetteville normal school grew steadily and served as a model for other teachers' institutions. Responding to the success of the school and the need for additional schools, the Conservative legislature in 1881 authorized the establishment of four new normal schools, and it allowed a fifth to open in 1891 at Elizabeth City. These additional black normal schools could do little for the training of the great number of teachers who were needed. The advanced classes at these schools did practically the same work that was being done in sixth-grade classes of the public schools of the towns where they were located. Their programs also ran longer than that of their white counterparts due to the fact that blacks needed more instruction in the academic areas rather than in methods of teaching.<sup>3</sup>

The establishment of the normal schools aided in the development of black education, but it by no means ended the problems of black schooling in the state. Black enrollment dropped in many areas, and this decline incredibly was blamed on the Republicans by leading Democratic politicians. Superintendent Scarborough, in his report of 1879, charged that enemies of the school had been actively at work

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<sup>3</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 300; Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, p. 426.

ever since the system's organization, poisoning the minds of black people in various parts of the state against education by asserting that the schools actually were Democratic institutions, established for the purpose of indoctrinating blacks and gaining their support for the party. Black students were supposedly trained and sent out as Democrat canvassers.<sup>4</sup>

Despite efforts to restrict black education during the redemption era, it continued to exist in the state and enthusiasm for it was not crushed. In 1882 the Warrenton Gazette reported that blacks were taking more interest in education and were surpassing whites in gaining the rudiments of learning. The article also pointed out that blacks went to school every chance they received and shelled out their money freely to pay teachers. In some areas of the state white parents were often negligent about the education of their children and did not take advantage of the opportunities that they had, while the reverse was true for blacks.<sup>5</sup>

Even though black enthusiasm for learning was great, educational progress remained unsatisfactory. For example, in 1881 in Warren County, where blacks constituted more than 70 percent of the population, ten school houses for whites and twenty-one for blacks existed. Most buildings for both races were nothing more than "miserable log

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<sup>4</sup>Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Fiscal Year Ending September 1st, 1880 (Raleigh: P. M. Hale and Edwards and Broughton & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1881), p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>A. Eric Anderson, Race and Politics in North Carolina 1872-1901: The Black Second (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), p. 326.

huts," generally not county owned and on the average valued at under fifty dollars each.<sup>6</sup>

Black enthusiasm for education was not enough to sustain it adequately in all areas of the state, even in some areas with a high concentration of blacks. Edgecombe County was such a place, where education retrogressed during the late nineteenth century. In 1876-77 Edgecombe County schools enrolled 55 percent of the school-age children; however, thirteen years later, in 1890, fewer than 40 percent of the potential students attended school. Black education suffered tremendously in this county, even though blacks received a greater portion of the available funds than whites. The deficiency in this county was of such a great nature because black students were twice as numerous as white students. Per-pupil expenditure on teacher pay in 1890 was \$4.67 for whites and only \$1.59 for blacks.<sup>7</sup>

Public support for black education in North Carolina during the late nineteenth century suffered also for other reasons. North Carolina blacks felt particularly threatened by a movement to separate taxes according to race, a practice that flourished in the 1880s and persisted into the twentieth century. In 1880 the General Assembly passed a bill allowing Goldsboro to establish two graded schools, one for each race and to be supported by the local taxes of each group. As supporters of the law saw it, the measure simply allowed the whites in Goldsboro to tax themselves above the normal

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 326-327.

level in order to add to the basic system established by state funds. The general school funds, to which whites contributed far more than blacks, would continue to be distributed impartially to sustain the common school system. Blacks realized that they would be fatally handicapped if their hopes for graded schools rested on the narrow black tax base; therefore, they helped defeat the Goldsboro scheme in a local election in May of 1880.<sup>8</sup>

The defeat of this measure in Goldsboro did not end its application in the state. The legislature of 1883 approved a measure extending the principle of the Goldsboro law, making it possible for the citizens of any school district to vote to divide local school taxes by race. This law, sponsored by Goldsboro Democrat William T. Dortch, a former member of the Confederate Senate, led to the establishment of white graded schools in a number of towns. However, the Dortch Act was declared unconstitutional by the state supreme court in 1886. This did lead to some towns openly defying the supreme court ruling and others converting their public schools to private schools rather than support black education.<sup>9</sup>

Such measures as the Dortch Act put an end to the white fear of integrated education in the state. Whites sensitive to the dangers of "social equality" instinctively approved separate schools, whereas blacks were too busy resisting attempts to exclude them from public education altogether to be concerned with integration.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 329-330.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

Even though the 1880s saw many problems with education in the state, a slight reduction of illiteracy among blacks occurred. This modest success occurred despite the failure of state authorities to live up to the educational provisions of the 1868 constitution and subsequent laws. In the early 1880s the public school system was actually worse than it had been in 1860. It was one of the poorest in the United States. Yet only 19.5 percent of the white population and 47.6 percent of the black were illiterate.<sup>11</sup>

Even with the reduction of illiteracy, public school education in North Carolina had many problems to overcome. Public education in the state was still severely handicapped by poverty. Low income, scattered population, and bad roads characterized much of North Carolina during the late nineteenth century. Financial problems were made worse because of the necessity of maintaining a dual system of schools. Public schools in different areas of the state faced great inequalities, especially in the length of terms between rural and urban or town schools.<sup>12</sup>

The difficulties encountered by public education enabled private education to continue to be important in the state, especially private schools for blacks. In fact, the foremost leaders of the black race were educated in private institutions, namely Shaw University, Biddle (Johnson C. Smith University), Saint Augustine's College, and Livingston College.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

Although private education was significant during the late nineteenth century, the introduction of a new form of education in the state had a more lasting effect upon North Carolina's educational system. Sidney M. Finger, state superintendent from 1885 to 1893, was the first person to recognize the importance of agriculture and industrial trades as objectives in public school education. Following national trends, Finger believed that since three-fourths of the people were agriculturists, the county schools should include in their curriculum textbook instruction outlining the greatest elementary principles of agriculture.<sup>14</sup>

Finger's belief in agricultural education resulted in the formation of the A & M College (now North Carolina A & T University), which was originally set up as an annex to Shaw University at Raleigh with John O. Crosby as its first administrator. The school was moved to Greensboro in 1893 with James B. Dudley of Livingston College as its first president. The curriculum in the school consisted of four programs: agriculture, mechanical arts, English, and domestic science.<sup>15</sup>

The beginning of black industrial education in the state was not the only success of the Finger administration, although he had faced widespread opposition to taxation for schools and criticism for education reform in general. When he assumed office in 1885, 298,166 children out of 530,127 were in attendance in the state's

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<sup>14</sup>Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 1887-88 (n. p., n. d.), Introduction, p. xxix.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

schools, and when his administration ended in 1893, there were 356,958 children out of a total of 618,541 attending the public schools, partly due to white acceptance of industrial education for blacks.<sup>16</sup>

Even with the slow rise in the number of students attending school, other problems still faced state education during the 1890s. In 1893, education was threatened with serious unrest due to the financial crisis of that year. The Farmer's Alliance entered politics, resulting in three political parties of unequal strength competing for control in North Carolina. This meant that blacks held the balance of political power. The Populists and Republicans fused their interests and votes and after the election of 1894 were able to control the state legislature. Although the legislature resembled the Reconstruction legislatures in its sympathy for blacks, it did not greatly alter the course of education in North Carolina.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, the success of blacks in the election of 1894 hurt their gains in politics by raising the inflammatory race issue and causing dominant whites in the legislature to be wary of helping blacks. One casualty of this white reaction was the special educational needs of blacks, but not black education generally. The legislative action brought into prominence Charles B. Aycock, a brilliant young lawyer of Goldsboro. He advocated a constitutional amendment that would deprive blacks of suffrage until by education

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, p. 323.

and training they could be fitted for intelligent citizenship. Immediately the advocates of better educational facilities rallied to Aycock's support because he pleaded so earnestly for universal education for all classes and races. The amendment passed overwhelmingly in sixty-six of the ninety-seven counties, and blacks were eliminated from politics in the state. Aycock was later elected governor by the largest majority ever given a man for that office in North Carolina.<sup>18</sup>

The change in the political tone during the 1890s did not greatly affect general black education. In fact, black education suffered less than one would expect with such racial passions being raised, and it remained much the same as it had been since its beginning in the state. As far as equal education, racewise, very little had been said since the early years of Reconstruction, so long as there was no advocacy of mixed schools. The course of study in the schools during the 1890s, on the face of it, was the same for both races, but the discrepancies in the facilities for black schools were appalling. Teacher salaries for both races were low, but black teachers' salaries were even lower. Many people seemed to feel that because of a lower economic status the black teachers ought not have the same salaries as white teachers.<sup>19</sup>

The main problem of public school education generally continued to be the lack of enough money to operate the schools. In the school

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>19</sup>Brown, Equality Education in North Carolina among Negroes, p. 62.

year of 1895-96 the total received for education was \$824,238, which paid for a fraction less than thirteen weeks or sixty-three days of school.<sup>20</sup>

Finance was still not the only problem facing the schools. Thousands of children of both races did not attend school. In 1896 the school census showed 420,800 white and 223,376 black children between the ages of six and twenty-one. The school enrollment for that year was 231,059 white and 117,551 black children, which indicated that almost one-half of the state's children were not attending school.<sup>21</sup>

Even with the poor attendance, North Carolina's literacy rate in the 1980s was greater than that of most southern states, with the exception of Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee. The 1980 census showed North Carolina with a 36 percent illiteracy rate compared to a 3 to 14 percent illiteracy rate in most northern and western states. However, the literacy rate of the white population was the highest in the South.<sup>22</sup>

The decade of the 1890s had witnessed a constant struggle in public education efforts in the state. Even with the administration of Charles Mebane, who advocated compulsory attendance, many of North Carolina's youth remained uneducated. School census, enrollment, and attendance figures for 1897 placed the number of white

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<sup>20</sup>Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for 1894-5 and 1895-6 (Winston: M. I. & J. C. Stewart Public Printers and Binders, 1897), p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>22</sup>Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years 1896-97 and 1897-98 (Raleigh: Guy V. Barnes, Printer to Council of State, 1898), pp. 170, 184, 278.

children (six to twenty-one) at 412,143 and black children at 211,519. However, the school enrollment for the year was only 222,252 white and 131,404 black. In 1898 the white enrollment was 216,223 (a decline from 1897) and the black enrollment was 138,152 (an increase from 1897).<sup>23</sup>

As earlier mentioned, the politics of the 1890s caused the blacks to lose their right to participate in politics. This loss, however, was not as damaging to their educational progress as expected. Due to the work of Governor Aycock and state superintendents Thomas F. Toon and James Joyner, black education was not neglected, although Aycock had been the one to advocate an end to the black man's participation in politics. Soon after taking the oath of office Aycock and Toon began a canvass of the entire state in behalf of its educational interest.<sup>24</sup>

The work of Aycock's administration had a major impact upon education in the state. The old Literary Fund was reorganized in 1903 when \$200,000 was set aside as a permanent fund to be used for building and improving schoolhouses. In 1907 the legislature authorized the establishment of rural high schools and appropriated \$45,000 annually for their maintenance. As far as black education was concerned, Aycock believed in educating everybody. Thus, he led

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<sup>23</sup>Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Years 1898-99 and 1899-1900 (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton and E. M. Uzzell, State Printers, 1900), pp. 170, 184, 278.

<sup>24</sup>Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina, pp. 330, 335.

the movement that finally defeated the attempt to amend the Reconstruction constitution in order to make provisions for distributing school taxes to each race in proportion to the amounts paid by each. He regarded such an amendment both unjust and dangerous and a gross violation of his solemn pledge that all people of both races should be given improved educational facilities. More attention was now given to black education, and the quality of their schooling began to improve.<sup>25</sup>

The special attention to the problems of black education was reviewed by James Joyner, who had been appointed superintendent in 1902 by Governor Aycock to replace Toon upon his death. Joyner thought that North Carolina had made mistakes in its methods and policies regarding the education of blacks. He believed that it was incumbent upon the state to demonstrate by a better and more effective type of education so that blacks could be advanced economically, and this education would be of "the right sort" in the view of whites. Joyner maintained that the best training for blacks was in agriculture, but he also affirmed that mastery of the essentials of knowledge was necessary for them.<sup>26</sup>

The policies of Aycock and Joyner helped black education in the state, even though their purposes had biased overtones. The reason why black education began to progress, relative to earlier periods, after Aycock and Joyner took charge, was due in part to the

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 340-342; Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902-1903 (n. p., n. d.), p. 72.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

agricultural and industrial type of education that they advocated for the race, one in which blacks would be economically useful to whites. This educational philosophy caused whites to accept more readily than before the idea of black education, and it also reduced their fears of "social equality." The Aycocock-Joyner policy received a further boost with the emergence of Booker T. Washington as the leading spokesman for blacks in America. Washington advocated a similar philosophy and had a great deal of control over private donations going to black education.<sup>27</sup>

Reconstruction and the period to about 1910 laid the foundation for black education in North Carolina. Blacks had to fight against great odds and overcome many differences before they were finally accepted as worthy of education by their white counterparts. The fear of mixed schools and "social equality" had been the greatest hindrance to black educational progress in the state. This fear led to the establishment of two racially segregated school systems for the state to support at a time when it could barely find the financial resources to support one. The fact that the state had not greatly stressed public education prior to the Civil War resulted in a small pool of qualified teachers when the postwar system was created. These teachers had to be split between two systems. The support that northern benevolent societies gave to blacks angered whites and caused many to resent black education, and some during Reconstruction resorted to violent tactics to discourage blacks from attending

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<sup>27</sup> John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 300.

school. It was not until after the fall of Reconstruction and after the administrations of several conservative superintendents and state governments that black education finally gained widespread white acceptance, although appropriations for the system would not approach that of whites until school integration became effective in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

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