

[The Progress of Education in Alabama]

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THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Public Schools -

A chart line of Alabama's educational progress would be an irregular mark on the graph, but it would show a steady upward climb toward the top since the days of Bienville in Mobile. The soldiers of France brought education in the form [person?] of Father Anastase, who presided over the stockade and taught the children of [settlers?] and friendly Indians. Governor Bienville [?] attempted to establish a school, but outside of [teaching in?] the church, there is no record of any great success. Education was entirely in the hands of the priests and parents, with the exception of those few tutors employed by the wealthier families.

The Old Boat Yard [?] on the Tensas River marked the location of the first school in Alabama and was established in 1779 by John Pierce, of Connecticut. What prompted Mr. Pierce to come from Connecticut to Mobile to open the school is not known, but it was in the old Boat Yard that the descendants of the Taits, Durants, McGillivrays, and Weatherfords learned to read and write.

Before 1800, with the exception of Mobile, Alabama was a wilderness filled with settlers far too busy trying to [?] earn a living and protect themselves from hostile Indians to worry over the idea of general education, but in the minds of a few [?] fitted to cope with the situation, the [?] progress of education was [?] the first [concern?]

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The Mississippi Territory assembly in 1811 saw [introduced?] the first legislation introduced affecting education. A bill was passed appropriating \$1,000 for academies, and [told?] this St. Stephens Academy was soon chartered in Washington County, followed the next year by Green Academy in Madison County, the two sharing the \$1,000.

When Alabama became a state December 14, 1819, the Federal Government gave [?] the sixteenth section of each township for common schools; two townships for a “seminary of learning”, and having fallen heir to the territorial academies, plus ample natural resources, the state [?] was well prepared for an educational future when it entered [advance at the time of entrance in?] the Union.

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Immediately following her entrance into the Union, Alabama began to experience trouble because of the varying values of the school lands created educational difficulty . The Government had given the sections with the State as trustee and the land failed to produce an adequate revenue. Settlements having the richest soil received the largest endowment, where as , in order to keep educational facilities on an even basis over the State, the larger fund should have gone to the poorer sections. This was largely due to the [contra of ???? by] wealthy land owners[,?] who controlled the social and political force. Mismanagement in the purchasing purchase and selling sale of these school lands, sometimes resulting resulted in a complete loss, was another element. The legislature comes in for its share of the blame for its failure to enact constructive and protective laws regarding the school endowments. Despite the fact that the first constitution of Alabama, adopted in 1819, provided for the establishment and encouragement of public schools, education as a State duty had not been recognized, and about the only history to education to be found throughout the first half of the nineteenth century is the contained in the records of private schools

Tuition and subscription fees were introduced in 1823 by an act which organized the school system under district trustees, /and The revenue derived from the school land was

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[?] used for the tuition of the underprivileged children. What Recognition by education as a public duty was finally being excepted [?] evidenced by became established through the legislature creating, in 1826, a board of school commissioners, whose duty was to establish and regulate schools. This law was primarily for Mobile County schools, but it appeared applicable to the State and was hailed as a solution of all school troubles.

Briefly, the law stated that school revenues were to be realized from land grants, certain fines and penalties, small fees in court suits, 25% of ordinary county tax, and taxes on auction sales and theatres. It seemed logical that if sufficient finances could be had, constructive and protective 3 laws would come in due time. The school commissioners, however, proved to be merely agents who issued receipts and disbursed money to private institutions that should have been used in the organization of a state-wide public school system.

To effect this failure, a law was passed in 1839 whereby the State bank was to pay \$150,000 annually to the schools and in 1840 this was raised to \$200,000[?] and in 1843 the bank failed, throwing the schools entirely upon their own resources. [This [???] means crushed [?] those public minded citizens who had for so long championed public school education, and who so keenly felt the need of it, kept pounding With this latest [?] [?] to [financing?] seemed to the , the [?] public school system appeared to [?] hopelessly lost. Elementary schools were maintained in the communities by private subscription. The teachers fitted the schools. They weren't settled in their positions nor prepared to hold them. Those students advanced beyond the elementary grades and [?], attended academies, which sprang up over the State. Between 1819 and 1854, which finally saw , the establishment of a State public school system, there were 166 private academies. The [????? the system?] A climax was reached in 1852 when the Barton Academy in Mobile, the first [?] public school building in Alabama erected in 1835-36, was proposed for sale. This situation awakened the State State's failure?] leading citizens and so aroused

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the public to their the [taxes of the?] educational decline as to bring about /in 1852 the appointment, by the Governor, of a State superintendent of education.

After the organization of the public school system and [us?] until the outbreak of the Civil War, Alabama had in operation one of the most effective school systems in the [?] South. In Superintendent G.B. Duval's report of 1858, the last before the war, the usual school term was [?] 6 1/2 months [? wither with several counties having [?] [?] term 9. School enrollment was 54.5% of the school population 4 and the average attendance was 23.4%. There were 2579 schools and the total expenditure was \$564,210.46, about \$292,831.49 being raised from tuition and other sources. In some counties the revenue from the sixteenth section lands was sufficient to support their respective schools. The State superintendent was instructed to equalize, as far as possible, the distribution of the revenue.

The war, despite its destructiveness destructive results , failed to break the foundation of the school system, and when the men of the former regime came into power after the Reconstruction, they [?] ignored the changes made by the government and began where they had left off.

The constitution [?] of 1875 provided a State appropriation of \$1000,000 and directed that more should be appropriated as the finances could permit additional funds being [appropriated?] as [condity? justly?] . A poll-tax, for the benefit of the public school in the counties where collected, was authorized. and [?] /[?] tax [?] this added revenue [?? into the school fund several changed were made for the for education a change resulted in improvement of school supervision, among them being was a requirement that the certification of teachers , which be certified. This automatically raised the educational standards.

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A branch experiment station was established in 1885, and the next in ten years saw one in each congressional district[, ?] and this period [?] also covered a gradual expansion of teacher training.

John W. Abercrombie was appointed superintendent of education in 1898 and it was on his recommendation that several progressive additions measures were adopted for in the constitution of 1901, the most important being a State uniformity of text books, authorization of State certification of teachers, and a five-months term of free school.

However, the people found disappointment in this constitution. It made no provisions for local self aid, the State remaining the chief source of support for the schools. A district tax was permitted in a few [?] cities, and a 5 local tax for general municipal purposes could still still could be levied. Provision was made for a ten-cent county tax and an obligatory State school tax of thirty cents on the hundred dollars. It was [?] the aggregate school funds which showed the greatest increase. City schools flourished with the [??] from [duets?] municipal revenue, but in the rural sections, which were supported only by State and county taxation, there was suffering from lack of funds. Nevertheless, the years between 1901 and 1910, with the act of 1907 which gave aid to rural school house building, showed a general residence in building and education. a [??] of building [??] [?] 1901 [?????] go [?] to [?] [??] on. [????] This period covered the development of the high school system; the grading of the elementary schools; improvement in the quality of teaching, and the systematic organization and articulation of all the schools.

This system stayed was under the direction of the superintendent of education until [in 1919?][,?] [?] a State board of education was formed established. This and a more [?] comprehensive school system [?] the won the attention and approval of national [??] educators.

A special act in 1927 equalized instruction opportunities by placing all county schools on a seven-months basis. \$900,000 was appropriated and in the next four years forty

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counties had received aid from it for one or more of the four years. Thirty-two of the forty counties had benefitted [?] benefited [.] each year. The average school term in these 32 counties previous to the equalization law, specifically the period 1925-26, had been 119 days. The next four years showed an average of 143 days, an increase of 24 days. One county increased its school term three months, and [?] three counties increased theirs by two months. The remaining thirty-five counties had an average increase of 8 days.

Among the school laws adopted in 1931 is an act permitting Commission courts, county commissioners, and like governing bodies to use convict labor and county equipment for the [?] building [????????] to build, improve, and beautify public schools. Another act of the same year authorized appropriations for support of the public schools out of county treasury funds. [????????] [Did????]

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The courts of county commissioners were authorized in 1932 to use 20% of the fund received from the excise tax on gasoline to overcome difficulties in paying teachers' salaries. This applied only to counties with population under 18,000, but it was not entirely successful and in 1933 warrants were issued for back salaries in counties of not more than 150,000 population and not less than 111,000.

The 2% sales tax was levied in 1937, and the close of that year mark ie the first full payment of appropriations to public education since 1932. The tax was instituted primarily to equalize educational opportunities and rural schools are its chief beneficiaries.

The State furnished 40% of revenue and local units 60% in 1929-30 as compared to [?] 53% for the State and 47% for local units in 1937-38. Constitutional taxes are limited to 4 mills in counties and 3 mills in districts. Attendance in public schools in 1937-38 increased 20% over the attendance in 1929-30 and statistics show also also show a continued improvement in the public school system since its creation in 1854. Numerous progressive

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laws have been made, and the laws which failed to strengthen the school system are usually swiftly repealed.

Problems confronting the school system today are being met by a cooperative public; by coordination between communities and schools. This condition was brought about by the Parent-Teachers Association, which functions throughout the State. Its membership has grown to 40,228 since its foundation in 1911. The organization meets at regular intervals, and from their discussions of school affairs emerge decisions vital in matters of procedures and method.

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[??] HIGHER EDUCATION In early days The youth of Alabama, [??] seeking education beyond grade school and academy facilities [??] found it necessary to go east. [?] The arts and sciences were the usual curricula for the boys. The girls attended "finishing" schools and [?] [?] completed their [education?] training for the [??] responsibilities of maturity with a tour of Europe. [??] by this method was [? ?] costly and beyond the means of any [?] except the wealthy planter class.

The first attempt to bring higher education within the reach of the average student was made by the Jesuits, who opened Spring Hill College, near Mobile, in 1830. [??] Soon after this, the Methodist Episcopal Church South founded La Grange College. These two schools [?] in opposite ends of the State afforded a greater impetus to educational development than had been felt in the previous 125 years.

The Constitutional Convention, meeting at Huntsville, Alabama Territory, had previously adopted an article providing for State encouragement of schools and education, also that the General Assembly make plans for improvement of land given by the United States, [The?] money raised from such land by rent, lease, or sale to be used for the support of a State University. In 1819, the Congress of the U.S. donated 72 sections, and in 1820 the act was passed establishing the University. On the vote of both houses, Tuscaloosa

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was selected as the site, and in 1831 the year after Spring Hill College was established , the University of Alabama opened with 52 students matriculating the first day. The school progressed, despite injuries suffered by the Bank failure of 1843, and demolition of its property, with the exception of the [astronomical?] [buildings?] observatory, by Federal forces. [here?] Direction of new [?] buildings began in 1867 and [????] students resumed studies in 1869. Through the efforts of the Hon. John T Morgan, U.S. Senator from Alabama, Congress made a second donation of 72 sections of land in 1884. This land has proved rich in mineral wealth, and with the proceeds therefrom, the University of Alabama has [????] learning recognized over strengthened its facilities and won recognition through the nation and [?] in foreign lands. 8 [????]

Congress, in 1862, approved an act providing for Land Grant Colleges which were to embrace scientific s agricultural, and mechanical studies [??] with the regular classical studies and military tactics. Alabama accepted her donations and appointed a commission to sell land script received from the U.S. and to invest the proceeds. [The?] [????? three year ??? being? ??? . ? call? ?] three years passed before [?] completion of the sale. [?]. The proceeds were invested in Alabama State Bonds to the amount of \$250,00. This constituted the original endowment fund of the colleges. In 1872, the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South offered donations for the a college building and necessary apparatus and , [The?] State Legislature accepted and located / the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Auburn. The first ten years of [This?] college was an experiment . in [??] field. Its aims and purposes involved new methods. [The ??????????.] All types of apparatus [?] and appliances had to be provided out of the interest on the bonds. [????????????] The school was the object of such some prejudice and criticism, but it advanced steadily under the wise and conservative administration of its first president, Dr. I.T. Tichenor, and the next ten years were years of [??] development a nd better understanding by the public. The [?] States aid came in 1883 by an act appropriating \$30,000 for improvements and purchase of equipment. In the same year another act gave the school one-third of the net proceeds from the tax on fertilizer, to be

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used for an experiment station. The next year saw another appropriation of \$12,500 to the department of Mechanical Arts, which immediately developed into what is now Mechanical Engineering.

An appropriation of \$15,000 per annum by Congress in 1887 so greatly facilitated instruction and investigation in [?] agriculture that the college became distinctive as a school of applied sciences[.] or a polytechnic institute. The ten year period following was outstanding by its phenomenal development. mechanical [Art?] facilities increased by the construction of a separate building housing Forge and Foundry work. Nine new laboratories were established in addition to a department [?] [Biology?] [Biology?] department . Before the end of the period, [?] an act was passed by Congress [?] another \$15,000 per annum for [Land?] [Grant?] [Colleges?], 56% of which goes to the school in Auburn. The name was changed to Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1899. [????????]

Since its inception in 1872 as the Agricultural and Mechanical College to its present day status as the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, the school has known nothing but a steady growth.

The establishment of Female Seminary at Marion in 1836 marked the beginning of higher education for women. The school met with such immediate success that Judson College for girls was opened / at Marion two years later. These two schools enrolled over 400 students within the next five years. A steadily purchasing need for higher educational facilities for [?] led to the founding of Alabama College at [Monticalla?] in 1896

The Church has always been the State's staunchest support in the education of her youth, [though?] from the [?] days of the priests in Mobile through the present day. In addition to contributions, the churches are responsible for Spring Hill College, founded in 1830 by the Jesuits, Howard College by the Baptists, Birmingham Southern by the Methodists, and Huntingdon College, for girls, by the Methodists. [?] Alabama is not neglecting Vocational

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Education .[?] is [evidently?] Manual labor institutes have been established in Perry, Hale, Coosa, and Montgomery counties.

The State board of education under the Reconstruction government aware of the the [necessity?] need for trained teachers, passed an act in 1868 establishing eleven normal schools. Under the [???] supervision of competent instructors, teachers were permitted to do practice work providing they later taught two years for the Sate?) State when they completed [?] a training course. The Legislature founded the State Normal School at Florence in 1872 and schools at Jacksonville, Livingston, and Troy were established in the eighties. 10 NEGRO EDUCATION [There are?] no organized education was available for [?] Negroes before the Civil War, due to a law passed in 1832 which made any such attempt illegal, [?] and also because of widespread white [prejudice?] against education of the slave despite the abolitionist propaganda and fear of insurrection that [???] caused this law, their education was not entirely neglected. Favorites Favorite servants were sometimes taught to read and write. Anti-slavery enthusiasts gave instructions instruction in primary education, but [?] the Negro's education for the most part was [?? of] manual, [meluding?] such subjects as shoeing a horse, making clothes, [?] cloth, and building [?]. [and?] [bricks?] others became skilled in metal work and carpentry.

The Reconstruction brought Federal teachers and schools, but ignorance of the [educational needs of the Southern slave * persuaded these teachers away from the careful consideration and planning that should have been given the subject and caused them to devote their time and efforts toward equalizing the Negro with his former master by giving him a little Latin, Greek, and mathematics instead of training them toward industry and citizenship. made their efforts superficial and [sporadic?*.]

The white people [?] of the South were reluctant toward financing the negro's education [??:] [work?] [/The?] the Freedmen's Bureau, established to look after his the [Negroes'?] interest, interests, took the matter in hand and opened the first Negro schools. The Bureau was assisted by Northern and Western organizations, the American Missionary Society,

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and certain philanthropic individuals. [?] Talledega College was founded by the American Missionary Association in 1857, but did not open until 1890. Degrees were not granted until 1895.

Mobile was an exception. By 1868 four Negro schools were in operation with an aggregate attendance of 919. A fifth school was added the latter part of the year. A committee had been appointed in 1867 to study the advisability of educating teaching the Negro under the existing educational system. Working through the Freedman's Bureau, the committee [?] acquired an appropriation of \$12,000 for buildings to be used as churches and schools. With the aid of the American Missionary Society, a building known as Penny's College was purchased for Negro schools. Other committees were appointed to determine the amount of taxes to be used for Negro schools and to see that these schools were properly located. The committee also placed the school term at no less 11 than three months. There was no mention in the constitution of 1868 regarding separate schools for Negroes and no provision was made until the constitution of 1875, which [?] stated specifically that separate schools should be maintained for children of African descent.

The sixteenth section lands had all been sold or built upon, so the Negro schools had to depend drew their funds entirely upon from private donations donors and funds from [sympathetic?] organizations.

Secondary education was not neglected, but it was hampered [?] by its cost to a war-weakened State. However, the [degrees?] were [not?] additionally prepared [.] The [?] Burrell School [? ?] was founded at Selma in 1875 and was in operation until [?] destroyed by fire in 1900. The school was moved to Florence in 1907[,] and was valued at \$10,000 by the State in 1916.

The Alabama Colored People's University, located at Montgomery, was founded at Marion in 1883. It was called the Normal School and University. The act of 1887 which moved the

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school from Marion to Montgomery also appropriated \$10,000 for buildings and \$7,500 for support of the University.

These schools, due to lack of funds, attempted only the academic subjects, but vocational education was added with the growth of State appropriations and private donations.

The ten years following 1880 marked progressive advancement in [?] education of the Negro. The State had [?? to] begun liberal contributions and contribute liberally. Churches were generous. Illiteracy among those over ten years of age was reduced from 80.6% to 57.4%.

The South's foremost contribution to Negro education came with the opening of Tuskegee Institute in 1881. The buildings were erected by [??] donations from Northern friends and Tuskegee citizens. Contributions that year amounted to \$5,521.94. There is an [?] appropriation of [?]. Since its opening under the first president , Dr. Booker T. Washington, there has been a steady flow of the institution has had the [serica?] of many outstanding Negro leaders and teachers, among them the notable Dr. George Washington Carver, eminent scientist who /has achieved fame [?????] by extracting 12 [?] about 300 ingredients from the lowly peanut.

Alabama has not yet reached perfection in its solution of the educational problem, but the State can safely claim equality with practically every state in the Union is alive to its Educational needs and a steady improvement in standards of Education and [have?] pertaining to [Education?] have improved its position among the States. New eras bring new problems which can be met only as they arrive.

The day of awakening has passed. Alabama is now up and about.