From James D. Anderson, the Education Of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1988). I

EX-SLAVES AND THE RISE OF UNIVERSAL EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH, 1860–1880

FORMER SLAVES were the first among native southerners to depart from the planters' ideology of education and society and to campaign for universal, state-supported public education. In their movement for universal schooling the ex-slaves welcomed and actively pursued the aid of Republican politicians, the Freedmen's Bureau, northern missionary societies, and the Union army. This uprising among former slaves was the central threat to planter rule and planters' conceptions of the proper roles of state, church, and family in matters of education. The South's landed upper class tolerated the idea of pauper education as a charity to some poor white children, but state-enforced public education was another matter. The planters believed that state government had no right to intervene in the education of children and, by extension, the larger social arrangement. Active intervention in the social hierarchy through public education violated the natural evolution of society, threatened familial authority over children, upset the reciprocal relations and duties of owners to laborers, and usurped the functions of the church. During the period 1860 to 1880, other classes of native white southerners, including small farmers, industrialists, and laborers, showed little inclination to challenge the planters on these questions. Indeed, specific economic, political, social, and psychological relationships bound southern whites in general to the ideological position of the planter regime. The result was a postwar South that was extremely hostile to the idea of universal public education. The ex-slaves broke sharply with this position. With the aid of Republican politicians, they seized significant influence in state governments and laid the first foundation for universal public education in the South. This chapter tells the story of the ex-slaves' struggle for universal schooling, why they pursued it, how they organized to defend their common interests, how they coped with the resistance of opposing social

classes, and finally, how they gained the cooperation of sympathetic social groups.

Blacks emerged from slavery with a strong belief in the desirability of learning to read and write. This belief was expressed in the pride with which they talked of other ex-slaves who learned to read or write in slavery and in the esteem in which they held literate blacks. It was expressed in the intensity and the frequency of their anger at slavery for keeping them illiterate. "There is one sin that slavery committed against me," professed one ex-slave, "which I will never forgive. It robbed me of my education." The former slaves' fundamental belief in the value of literate culture was expressed most clearly in their efforts to secure schooling for themselves and their children. Virtually every account by historians or contemporary observers stresses the ex-slaves' demand for universal schooling. In 1879 Harriet Beecher Stowe said of the freedmen's campaign for education: "They rushed not to the grog-shop but to the schoolroom—they cried for the spelling-book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life." Journalist Charles Nordhoff reported that New Orleans's ex-slaves were "almost universally . . . anxious to send their children to school." Booker T. Washington, a part of this movement himself, described most vividly his people's struggle for education: "Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for education. It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn." When supervising the first contrabands at Fortress Monroe in 1861, Edward L. Pierce "observed among them a widespread desire to learn to read."[1]

The foundation of the freedmen's educational movement was their self-reliance and deep-seated desire to control and sustain schools for themselves and their children. William Channing Gannett, a white American Missionary Association teacher from New England, reported that "they have a natural praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands. There is jealousy of the superintendence of the white man in this matter. What they desire is assistance without control." The values of self-help and self-determination underlay the ex-slaves' educational movement. To be sure, they accepted support from northern missionary societies, the Freedmen's Bureau, and some southern whites, but their own action—class self-activity informed by an ethic of mutuality—was the primary force that brought schools to the children of freed men and women. This underlying force represented the culmination of a process of social class formation and development that started decades before the Civil War. "Emancipation," as Herbert Gutman showed, "transformed an established and developed subordinate class, allowing ex-slave men and women to act on a variety of class

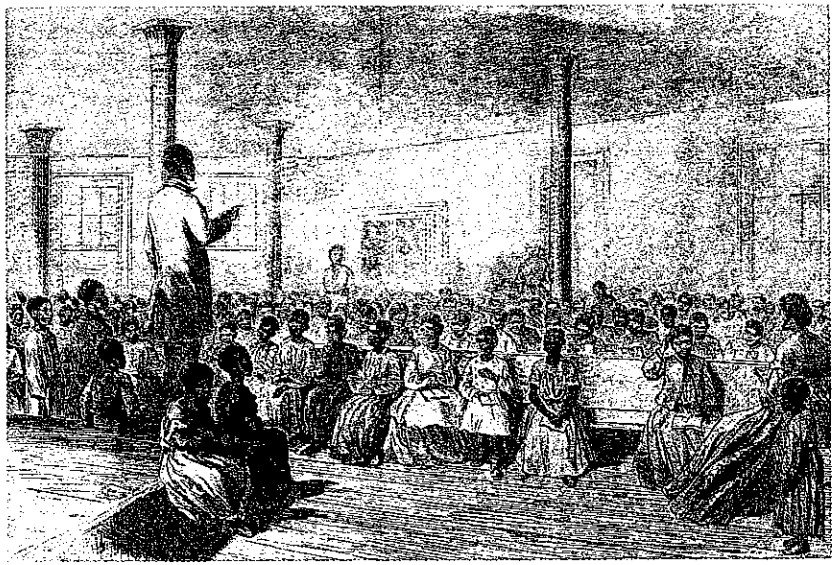
beliefs that had developed but been constrained during several generations of enslavement." Hence the South's postbellum movement for universal education is best understood as an expression of the ex-slaves' beliefs and behavior. External assistance notwithstanding, the postwar campaign for free schooling was rooted firmly in the beliefs and behavior of former slaves. W. E. B. DuBois was on the mark when he said: "Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea." Such a view of postbellum southern education acknowledges the important contributions of northerners but recognizes the ex-slaves as the principal challenge to the region's long-standing resistance to free schooling.[2]

Most northern missionaries went south with the preconceived idea that the slave regime was so brutal and dehumanizing that blacks were little more than uncivilized victims who needed to be taught the values and rules of civil society. They were bent on treating the freedmen almost wholly as objects. Many missionaries were astonished, and later chagrined, however, to discover that many ex-slaves had established their own educational collectives and associations, staffed schools entirely with black teachers, and were unwilling to allow their educational movement to be controlled by the "civilized" Yankees. In vital respects, missionary propaganda continued in spite of the social reality that contradicted it, but some of the more insightful Yankees began to appreciate ex-slaves as creative participants in the postbellum social process. John W. Alvord, the national superintendent of schools for the Freedmen's Bureau, was one of those perceptive Yankees. His growing awareness of a distinctly black perspective on educational and social matters was probably a result of his work, which compelled him to travel across the South and thereby afforded him a view of the depth and breadth of ex-slaves' values and behavior.

In September 1865, Alvord was appointed inspector of schools for the bureau. The title was later changed to general superintendent of schools. In July 1865 Alvord appointed a superintendent of schools for each southern state to help compile records on the bureau's educational activities. Alvord had traveled through nearly all the Confederate states by December 1865 and filed his first general report on the Freedmen's Bureau schools in January 1866. In this document he gave special attention to the practice of "self-teaching" and "native schools" among the freed men and women. "Throughout the entire South," Alvord reported, "an effort is being made by the colored people to educate themselves." "In the absence of other teaching they are determined to be self-taught; and everywhere some elementary text-book, or the fragment of one, may be seen in the hands of negroes." Not only were individuals found teaching themselves to read and write, but Alvord also discovered a system of what he chose to call "native schools," one of which he found at Goldsboro, North Carolina: "Two colored young men, who but a little time before commenced to learn themselves, had gathered 150 pupils, all quite orderly and hard at study." Further, Alvord discovered that "no white man, before me, had ever come near them." Hence native schools were common schools founded and maintained exclusively by ex-slaves. Two of Alvord's findings must be heavily emphasized. First, he found "native schools," in his own words, "throughout the entire South." Second, he discovered many of them in places that had not been visited by the Freedmen's Bureau or northern benevolent societies. Alvord, realizing that his findings did not square with existing perceptions of "the character of the Negro," took "special pains" to ascertain the facts on native schools. Such schools were found in "all the large places I visited," and they were "making their appearance through the *interior* of the entire South." After receiving much testimony from his field agents, "both oral and written," Alvord estimated in 1866 that there were "at least 500 schools of this description . . . already in operation throughout the South." This estimate, he warned his readers, was not an "overstatement." Alvord had little doubt about the significance of his findings: "This educational movement among the freedmen has in it a self-sustaining element." This "self-sustaining" activity was rooted firmly in the slave experience and began to surface before the war's end.[3]

Before northern benevolent societies entered the South in 1862, before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and before Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of their illiterates. Early black schools were established and supported largely through the Afro-Americans' own efforts. The first of these schools, according to current historiography, opened at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, in September 1861, under the leadership of Mary Peake, a black teacher. Primary historical sources, however, demonstrate that slaves and free persons of color started schools even before the Fortress Monroe venture. In July 1864, for instance, the black *New Orleans Union* commemorated the founding of the Pioneer School of Freedom, established in New Orleans in 1860, "in the midst of danger and darkness." Some schools predated the Civil War period and simply increased their activities after the war started. A black school in Savannah, Georgia, had existed unknown to the slave regime from 1833 to 1865. Its teacher, a black woman by the name of Deveaux, quickly expanded her literacy campaign during and following the war. It was this type of "self-sustaining" behavior that produced the native schools Alvord observed throughout the South in 1866.[4]

Herbert Gutman's pioneering work on this subject demonstrates fur-



Zion School in Charleston, South Carolina, established in December 1865, had an entirely black administration and teaching staff. By December 1866 it had 13 teachers, an enrollment of 850 students, and an average daily attendance of 720 pupils. Wood engraving in Harper's Weekly, *15 December 1866.*

ther that the native schools of Fortress Monroe, Savannah, and New Orleans were not isolated occurrences. Such schools were also begun among refugees in Alexandria, Virginia. A white teacher did not work with Afro-Americans in Alexandria until October 1862, by which time they had already established several schools. "In April 1863," wrote Gutman, "about four hundred children attended such schools." Likewise, he documented schools for rural ex-slaves in northeastern South Carolina. In 1867 Camden blacks, largely through their own individual and collective efforts, established twenty-two schools in which more than four thousand children were instructed. Schooling also made significant progress among blacks in Sumter, Marion, Darlington, Simmonsville, Florence, Kingstree, Chetau, Bennettsville, and Timonville, South Carolina. Ex-slaves contributed their money and labor to help make these schools possible, and they organized responsible committees to supervise the schools.[5]

What happened in Alexandria, Virginia, before 1865 and in northeastern South Carolina in 1866 and 1867 occurred elsewhere in the South. Afro-Americans over the entire region contributed significantly to the origin and development of universal schooling. Even where the Union

army and Freedmen's Bureau were heavily involved in the education of refugees and ex-slaves, the long-term success of schooling depended mainly on Afro-Americans. The activities of Louisiana refugees and ex-slaves illustrate the importance of such involvement. Blacks began establishing small private schools between 1860 and 1862. Though these first schools were inadequately financed and haphazardly run, attempts were made to organize them on a systematic basis. After Union forces occupied New Orleans in 1863, however, the federal Commission of Enrollment presided over blacks' educational activities. According to historian John W. Blassingame, Major General Nathaniel P. Banks "instituted the most thorough of all systems for educating the freedmen in his Department of Gulf (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas)." In October 1863, Banks authorized the Commission of Enrollment to take a census of Afro-Americans in the Gulf states and to establish schools for blacks in New Orleans. On 22 March 1864, he established a Board of Education to organize and govern the spread of black schools. In September 1864, the black *New Orleans Tribune* reported that Banks's effort had already resulted in 60 schools with "eight thousand scholars and more than one hundred teachers." By December 1864, the Board of Education was operating 95 schools with 9,571 children and 2,000 adults, instructed by 162 teachers. This system of schooling extended beyond the New Orleans area. The *Tribune* reported, in July 1864, that teachers were "sent to instruct black pupils in rural areas." In 1865 the Freedmen's Bureau took control of this school system, which then included 126 schools, 19,000 pupils, and 100 teachers.[6]

Such historical evidence has been wrongly used to attribute the freedmen's school movement to Yankee benevolence or federal largesse. The events that followed the Freedmen's Bureau takeover, however, underscore Gutman's observation that the ex-slaves' educational movement was rooted deeply within their own communal values. The Board of Education and later the Freedmen's Bureau maintained these schools through federal contributions and by levying a property tax. In 1866, allegedly to reduce the financial costs to the bureau, its officials temporarily closed all black schools under their authorization, and the general tax for freedmen's education was suspended by military order. The effect of this change was catastrophic. Alvord recorded the actions of Louisiana's ex-slaves: "The consternation of the colored population was intense. . . . They could not consent to have their children sent away from study, and at once expressed willingness to be assessed for the whole expense." Black leaders petitioned Yankee military officers to levy an added tax upon their community to replenish the bureau's school fund. Petitions demanding the continuation of universal schooling poured in from all over Louisiana. As Alvord recounted: "I saw one [petition],

from plantations across the river, at least 30 feet in length, representing 10,000 negroes. It was affecting to examine it and note the names and marks (x) of such a long list of parents, ignorant themselves, but begging that their children might be educated, promising that from beneath their present burdens, and out of their extreme poverty, they would pay for it." Such actions reveal the collective effort and shared values of the ex-slaves who built and sustained schools across the postwar South.[7]

Much more than federal largesse made free schooling a reality among Louisiana's ex-slaves. After the bureau withdrew its support, the freedmen took control of the educational system and transformed federal schools into local free schools. The *New Orleans Tribune* reported that as soon as the bureau's failures were recognized, educational associations "were organized in various parts of the state, at least in its principal cities, to promote the cause of education, and with the particular view of helping the children of parents in reduced circumstances to attend schools." One such association, the Louisiana Educational Relief Association, was organized in June 1866. Its primary aim was to "disseminate the principle of education, by assisting poor children whose friends are unable to do so." The board of trustees could "lease or buy such school property as may be deemed judicious, and examine and employ teachers." Louisiana's freedmen believed themselves primarily responsible for providing education for their children. "Each race of men, each class in society, have [*sic*] to shape their own destinies themselves," wrote J. Willis Menard, secretary of the Louisiana Educational Relief Association. Although acknowledging the support of the Freedmen's Bureau and northern benevolent societies, Menard maintained that the ex-slaves' survival and development rested largely on their own shoulders: "The colored people are called today to mark out on the map of life with their *own hands* their future course or locality in the great national body politic. Other hands cannot mark for them; other tongues cannot speak for them; other eyes cannot see for them; they must see and speak for themselves, and make their own characters on the map, however crooked or illegible." That Menard's feelings were not unusual is revealed through the behavior of Louisiana's freedmen from 1866 to 1868. During this period they developed a parallel system of free schools. Even when the bureau reopened its schools, private schools for black pupils continued to spring up outside its control. Enrollment in such schools grew rapidly and actually exceeded the number registered in the bureau's system. In January 1867 there were sixty-five private schools in New Orleans enrolling 2,967 pupils; the bureau maintained fifty-six schools with 2,527 pupils enrolled. Free schooling was sustained in Louisiana largely as a result of the ex-slaves' collective efforts.[8]

The relationship between black self-activity and educational changes

in the postwar South is further illustrated by the behavior of Georgia's ex-slaves. In December 1864 a committee of Afro-American leaders in Savannah met with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and General William T. Sherman to request support for the education of Georgia's liberated blacks. Out of this conference evolved a plan for establishing an organized system of free schools. In 1865 Afro-American leaders formed the Georgia Educational Association to supervise schools in districts throughout the state, to establish school policies, and to raise funds to help finance the cost of education. Freedmen's Bureau officials described the aims and structure of this association:

> To associate the efforts of the people, the prominent educators in the State, the agents of northern societies, and such officers of the government as are authorized to aid the work, and to unite in such a manner as shall exclude any subject at all likely to divide their efforts or direct them from their one great and desirable object. To secure this end, subordinate associations are established as far as practicable. By this means a thorough union is formed and a prompt and constant communication with the parent society is had. Connected with the State association is a State board of education, which . . . is a general executive committee.

Through this association Georgia's Afro-Americans sustained in full or part the operation of more than two-thirds of their schools. In the fall of 1866, they financed entirely or in part 96 of the 123 day and evening schools. They also owned 57 of the school buildings. Such accomplishments fulfilled the primary purpose of the Georgia Educational Association, "that the freedmen shall establish schools in their own counties and neighborhoods, to be supported entirely by the colored people." In Savannah, for instance, there were 28 schools in 1866, and 16 of them, reported the black *Loyal Georgian*, were "under the control of an Educational Board of Colored Men, taught by colored teachers, and sustained by the freed people." These beliefs and behavior were consistent with the activities of ex-slaves in Virginia, South Carolina, and Louisiana.[9]

Significantly, Georgia's black educational leaders were critical of popular misconceptions, which attributed the schooling of ex-slaves to Yankee benevolence. The *Loyal Georgian*, official newspaper of the Georgia Educational Association, rejected explicitly the argument that Yankee teachers brought schooling to the freedmen. In February 1866, though defending Yankee teachers against southern white criticism, the *Loyal Georgian* also expressed its hope that missionary teachers were not in the South "in any vain reliance on their superior gifts, either of intelligence or benevolence; or in any foolish self-confidence that they have a

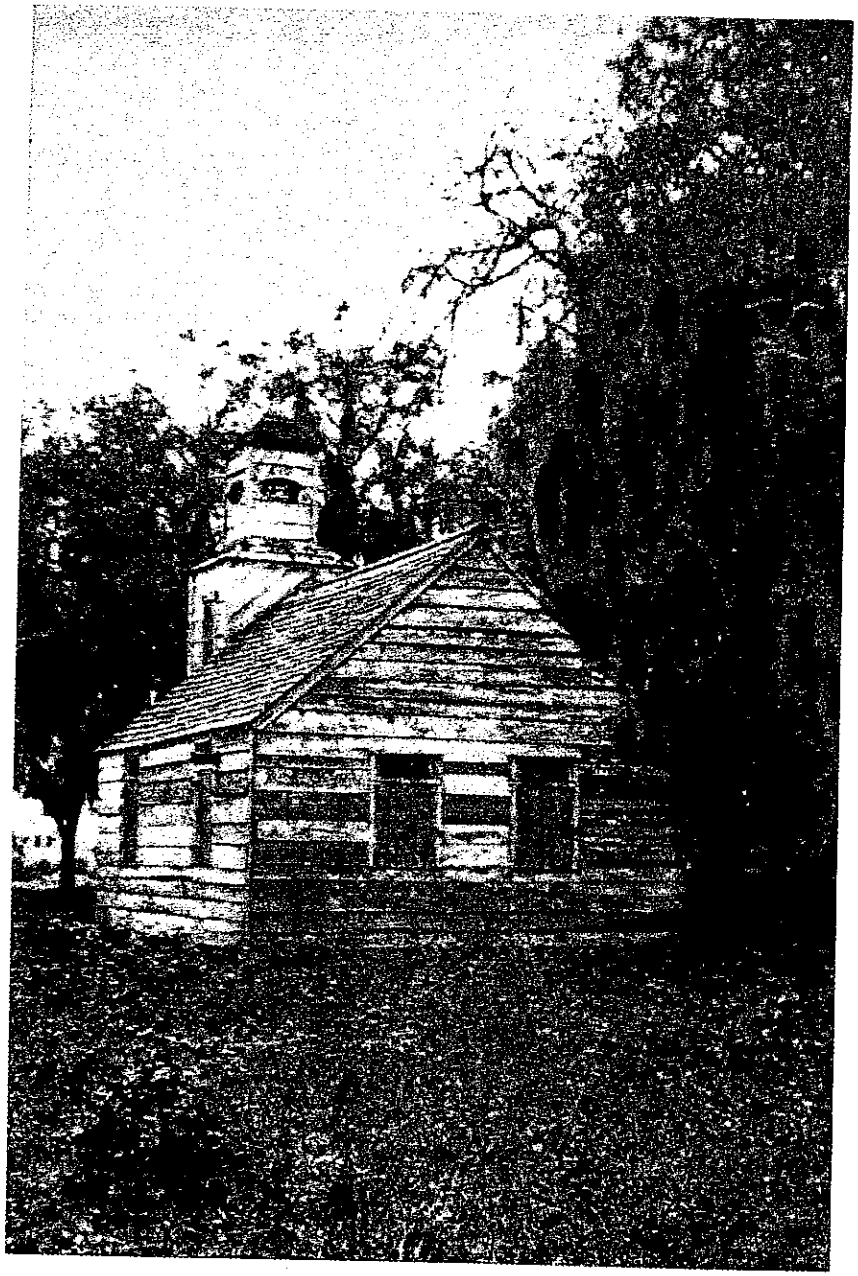
special call to this office, or special endowments to meet its demands." Historian Jacqueline Jones has demonstrated that northern teachers in Georgia were "taken aback to discover that some blacks preferred to teach in and operate their own schools without the benefit of northern largesse." Similarly, Ronald E. Butchart has shown that ex-slaves, in general, initiated and supported education for themselves and their children and also resisted external control of their educational institutions. In 1867, for instance, the *Freedmen's Record* complained about the tendency of ex-slaves to prefer sending their children to black-controlled private schools rather than supporting the less expensive northern white-dominated "free" schools. A white observer noted that "in all respects apart from his or her competency to teach—they will keep their children out of school, and go to work, organize and [*sic*] independent school and send their children to it." It is no wonder, then, that some missionaries complained of the ex-slaves' lack of gratitude "for the charity which northern friends are so graciously bestowing." The ex-slaves' educational movement became a test of their capacity to restructure their lives, to establish their freedom. Although they appreciated northern support, they resisted infringements that threatened to undermine their own initiative and self-reliance.[10]

In other important ways ex-slaves initiated and sustained schools whether or not northern aid was available. The "Sabbath" school system, about which little is known, provides a particularly clear study of educational activities operated largely on the strength of the ex-slave community. Frequently, Sabbath schools were established before "free" or "public" schools. These church-sponsored schools, operated mainly in evenings and on weekends, provided basic literacy instruction. "They reached thousands not able to attend weekday schools," writes historian Samuel L. Horst. In January 1866, in his first report to the Freedmen's Bureau, Alvord commented:

> Sabbath schools among freedmen have opened throughout the entire South; all of them giving elementary instruction, and reaching thousands who cannot attend the week-day teaching. These are not usually included in the regular returns, but are often spoken of with special interest by the superintendents. Indeed, one of the most thrilling spectacles which he who visits the southern country now witnesses in cities, and often upon the plantations, is the large schools gathered upon the Sabbath day, sometimes of many hundreds, dressed in clean Sunday garments, with eyes sparkling, intent upon elementary and Christian instruction. The management of some of these is admirable, after the fashion of the best Sunday schools of white children, with faithful teachers, the majority of whom it will be noticed are colored.

Some of Alvord's findings are especially worthy of emphasis. Sabbath schools were common in ex-slave communities across the South immediately following the war's end. In 1868 Alvord described the scope of Sabbath schools in North Carolina: "In all the cities of the State, in most of the smaller towns, and in many of the rural districts, Sabbath schools are established and well conducted." Although white religious societies sponsored some Sabbath schools for ex-slaves, the system was largely black-dominated, relied on local black communities for support, and generally had all-black teaching staffs. The importance of the Sabbath schools varied across states and localities. In some areas they constituted the only viable system of free instruction. T. K. Noble, Freedmen's Bureau superintendent of education in Kentucky, said in 1867: "The places of worship owned by the colored people are almost the only available school houses in the State."[11]

It is important, therefore, to emphasize another of Alvord's observations, that the Sabbath schools, often spoken of with special interest by the state superintendents, were not usually included in the regular bureau reports. C. E. Compton, the bureau's superintendent of education in Tennessee, reported in 1870 that "many children attend Sabbath schools at colored churches of which no report is received." The Freedmen's Bureau kept statistics from 1866 to 1870. These records include almost exclusively schools under the auspices of northern societies. Hence, ex-slaves laid a significantly larger foundation for universal education than is accounted for in official reports and in the histories of southern education. James M. McPherson writes, "At no time were more than 10 percent of the freedmen of school age attending the [missionary] societies' schools." Meyer Weinberg concludes that, in 1870, "nine out of ten black children still remained outside any school." These estimates, however accurate for schools reporting to the bureau, do not include data on the black church-operated schools. In 1869 Alvord asked his field agents to estimate numbers of teachers and enrollments in Sabbath schools. These reports, admittedly conservative in their estimates, enumerated 1,512 Sabbath schools with 6,146 teachers and 107,109 pupils. Sabbath schools continued to grow in the black community long after Reconstruction. In 1868 the African Methodist Episcopal church (AME), for example, enrolled 40,000 pupils in its Sabbath schools. By 1885, the AME church reported having "200,000 children in Sunday schools" for "intellectual and moral" instruction. These Sunday schools were not devoted entirely to Bible study. As Booker T. Washington recalled from



This school on St. Helena Island in South Carolina was typical of the Sabbath and free schools attended by ex-slaves in the period immediately following the Civil War. Courtesy of the National Archives.

his own experience, "the principal book studied in the Sunday school was the spelling book." The Sabbath schools represent yet another remarkable example of ex-slaves seeking, establishing, and supporting their own schools.[12]

It was such local activities by ex-slaves that spurred the establishment of widespread elementary and literacy education and provided the grassroots foundation for the educational activities of northern missionary societies and the Freedmen's Bureau. To be sure, ex-slaves benefited greatly from the support of northern whites; but they were determined to achieve educational self-sufficiency in the long run with or without the aid of northerners. Their self-determination has escaped the attention of all but a few historians. The larger significance of their behavior, however, did not go unnoticed by Freedmen's Bureau superintendent John Alvord, one of the most perceptive Yankee observers of postwar southern educational changes. As early as January 1866, Alvord noted the "self-sustaining element" in the ex-slaves' educational movement. He quickly recognized the organization and discipline that underlay the school campaign. In July 1866 he reported "that the surprising efforts of our colored population to obtain and [*sic*] education are not spasmodic." "They are growing to a habit," he continued, "crystalizing into a system, and each succeeding school-term shows their organization more and more complete and permanent." Initially, Alvord did not know what to make of these "surprising efforts." Foreshadowing the interpretations of some later historians, in January 1866 he attributed the ex-slaves' campaign for schooling to "the natural thirst for knowledge common to all men," a desire to imitate educated whites, an attraction to the mystery of literate culture, the practical needs of business life, and the stimulating effects of freedom. By July, however, Alvord pointed to a more fundamental motive for the freedmen's behavior: "They have within themselves . . . a vitality and hope, coupled with patience and willingness to struggle, which foreshadows with certainty their higher education as a people in the coming time." Universal education was certain to become a reality in black society, not because ex-slaves were motivated by childlike, irrational, and primitive drives, but because they were a responsible and politically self-conscious social class. Alvord, therefore, was confident that the ex-slaves' educational movement would not soon fall into decline: "Obstacles are yet to be encountered. Perhaps the most trying period in the freedmen's full emancipation has not yet come. But we can distinctly see that the incipient education universally diffused as it is, has given these whole four millions an impulse onward never to be lost. They are becoming conscious of what they can do, of what they ultimately *can* be. . . . Self-reliance is becoming their pride as it is their responsibility." The great efforts blacks made to establish schools for their own children

soon after the war and to establish state-supported systems of public education for all children reflected both their self-reliance and distinct educational and social philosophy. These ideals had been cultivated in large part during their long ordeal of slavery.[13]

Ultimately, the formation and development of the ex-slaves' beliefs and behavior regarding universal education in the postwar South will have to be understood as part of a process that started decades before the Civil War. For, as Herbert Gutman has demonstrated, the choices so many freed men and women made immediately upon their emancipation, before they had substantial rights by law, had their origins in the ways their ancestors had adapted to enslavement. Hence, before the reason why Afro-Americans emerged from slavery with a particular desire for literacy can be understood, slavery and especially slave literacy await refined and detailed study. That is beyond the primary scope of this chapter, but a few examples might illuminate the social context of slave literacy and, therefore, black consciousness of literate culture. The way slaves and other southern social classes thought about literacy and education developed along with the modes in which they actually learned or experienced it. That experience for slaves was vastly different in most important respects from the experiences of planters, white small farmers, industrialists, and poor whites. During the three decades before the Civil War slaves lived in a society in which for them literacy was forbidden by law and symbolized as a skill that contradicted the status of slaves. As former slave William Henry Heard recalled: "We did not learn to read nor write, as it was against the law for any person to teach any slave to read; and any slave caught writing suffered the penalty of having his forefinger cut from his right hand; yet there were some who could read and write." Despite the dangers and difficulties, thousands of slaves learned to read and write. By 1860 about 5 percent of the slaves had learned to read. Many paid a high price for their literacy. Thomas H. Jones, a slave in mid-nineteenth-century North Carolina, learned how to read while hiding in the back of his master's store. "It seemed to me that if I could learn to read and write," said Jones, "this learning might, nay, I really thought it would point out to me the way to freedom, influence and real secure happiness." As he became more engrossed in his pursuit of literate culture and careless about concealing it, Jones was surprised one morning by the sudden appearance of his master. Having only a second to react, Jones threw his book behind some barrels in the store, but not before his master had seen him throw something away. The slaveowner assumed that Jones had been stealing items from the stockroom and ordered him to retrieve whatever he had thrown away. "I knew if my book was discovered that all was lost, and I felt prepared for any hazard or suffering rather than give up my book and my hopes of

improvement," recalled Jones. He endured three brutal whippings to conceal his pursuit of literacy. In another instance a slave by the name of Scipio was put to death for teaching a slave child how to read and spell, and the child was severely beaten to make him "forget what he had learned." The former slave Ferebe Rogers was married by a slave, Enoch Golden, who persisted throughout his life in spreading literacy among his fellow slaves. "On his dyin' bed he said he been de death o' many a nigger 'cause he taught so many to read and write," said Rogers. Elizabeth Sparks was part of a group of rebel slaves who held secret literacy sessions in the slave quarters. The gatherings, known among slaves as "stealin' the meetin'," were attended by free blacks who attempted to teach slaves to read and write. Although slaves became literate in a variety of ways, including at the hands of slaveowners, probably the typical experience was characterized by former slave Louisa Gause: "No child, white people never teach colored people nothin, but to be good to dey massa en mittie, what learnin dey would get in dem days dey been get it at night; taught demselves." No other class of native southerners had experienced literacy in this context. Hence emancipation extruded an ex-slave class with a fundamentally different consciousness of literacy, a class that viewed reading and writing as a contradiction of oppression.[14]

In the history of black education the political significance of slave literacy reaches beyond the antebellum period. Many of the educators and leaders of the postbellum years were men and women who first became literate under slavery. Moreover, many prominent post–Civil War black educators who were not literate as slaves received their initial understanding of the meaning of literacy under slavery. Such black leaders as Frederick Douglass, Bishop Henry M. Turner, Bishop Isaac Lane, Bishop Lucius H. Holsey, and P. B. S. Pinchback and educators Isaac M. Bergman, Bishop John Wesley Gaines, W. S. Scarborough, and Lucy C. Laney are some of the prominent nineteenth-century figures who became literate in the antebellum South. Their ideas about the meaning and purpose of education were shaped partly by the social system of slavery under which they first encountered literacy. After slavery many of the leading black educators emerged from among the rebel literates, those slaves who had sustained their own learning process in defiance of the slaveowners' authority. They viewed literacy and formal education as means to liberation and freedom.

Postslavery experiences continued to reinforce and shape a distinctive Afro-American consciousness of literate culture. "Every little negro in the county is now going to school and the public pays for it," wrote one disgruntled planter. "This is a hell of [a] fix but we can't help it, and the best policy is to conform as far as possible to circumstances." Such re-

sponses emphasized the planters' persistent beliefs that literate culture contradicted the status of black southerners. Many postslavery developments provided ex-slaves with compelling reasons to become literate. The uses and abuses of written labor contracts made it worthwhile to be able to read, write, and cipher. Frequently, planters designed labor contracts in ways that would confuse and entrap the ex-slaves. As the Freedmen's Bureau superintendent observed, "I saw one [labor contract] in which it was stipulated that one-third of seven-twelfths of all corn, potatoes, fodder, etc., shall go to the laborers." Hence when a middle-aged black woman was asked why she was so determined to learn to read and write, she replied, "so that the Rebs can't cheat me." The enfranchisement of black males also gave ex-slaves an impulse to become literate. "At the place of voting they look at the ballot-box and then at the printed ticket in their hands, wishing they could read it," reported Alvord in 1867. Education for the freedmen could serve as a safeguard against fraud and manipulation.[15]

More fundamentally, the ex-slaves' struggle for education was an expression of freedom. It was, as Ronald Butchart maintains, an effort of an oppressed people "to put as great a distance between themselves and bondage as possible." The *New Orleans Black Republican* proclaimed in April 1865: "Freedom and school books and newspapers, go hand in hand. Let us secure the freedom we have received by the intelligence that can maintain it." This proclamation was signed by prominent black leaders of New Orleans, including Thomas S. Isabelle, C. C. Antoine, S. W. Rogers, Professor P. M. Williams, and A. E. Barber. Similarly, in 1867, the black Equal Rights Association of Macon, Georgia, resolved: "That a Free school system is a great need of our state, and that we will do all in our power by voice and by vote to secure adoption of a system." That same year black leaders Henry M. Turner, T. G. Campbell, John T. Costin, and Thomas P. Beard formed the Black Republican party of Georgia. The organization declared that "Free Schools and churches are the guardians of civil and religious liberty." Northern observers quickly noted that education stood as "the token and pledge" of blacks' emancipation. Even adult ex-slaves were, as the Freedmen's Bureau superintendent recorded, "earnestly seeking that instruction which will fit them for their new responsibilities." For the freedmen, universal schooling was a matter of personal liberation and a necessary function of a free society.[16]

Thus ex-slaves did much more than establish a tradition of educational self-help that supported most of their schools. They also were the first among native southerners to wage a campaign for universal public education. From its small beginnings in 1860 and with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau and northern benevolent societies, the school system was virtually complete in its institutional form by 1870. According to

historian Henry Allen Bullock, fourteen southern states had established 575 schools by 1865, and these schools were employing 1,171 teachers for the 71,779 Negro and white children in regular attendance. School attendance was not uniform across cities and towns, but it was visible in enough places to signal a fundamental shift in southern tradition. In 1866 Alvord reported his findings on the level of ex-slaves' school attendance: "The average attendance is nearly equal to that usually found at the North. For instance, in the District of Columbia, the daily attendance at the public school is but forty-one (41) percent; while at the colored schools of the District it is seventy-five (75) percent. In the State of New York, the daily attendance at the public school averages forty-three (43) percent. At the colored schools in the city of Memphis it is seventy-two (72) percent; and in Virginia eighty-two (82) percent." In Louisiana over 60 percent of all black children from five to twelve years of age were enrolled in school by 1865. The ex-slaves' school enrollment suffered a setback in 1868, rose again in 1869, and leveled off in 1870. In the entire South in 1870, about one-fourth of the school-age ex-slaves attended "public" schools. Reliable data are not available to determine Sabbath school attendance rates, but it seems probable from scattered evidence that Sabbath schools increased their enrollment throughout the 1870s and 1880s. The freedmen's initiative in starting schools and their remarkable attendance rates made it evident that "free" schooling was fast becoming a customary right in the postwar South.[17]

The ex-slaves' most fundamental challenge to the planters' ideology and structure of schooling, however, went beyond the practice of universal schooling as a customary right. They played a central role in etching the idea of universal public education into southern state constitutional law. As DuBois demonstrated, "The first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the state, in the South, came from Negroes." Black politicians played a critical role in establishing universal education as a basic right in southern constitutional conventions during congressional Reconstruction. Under the Military Reconstruction Acts passed in 1867, Congress empowered the generals of the armies of occupation to call for new constitutional conventions in which blacks were to participate along with whites. Black politicians and leaders joined with Republicans in southern constitutional conventions to legalize public education in the constitutions of the former Confederate states. By 1870, every southern state had specific provisions in its constitution to assure a public school system financed by a state fund. And even when white southerners regained control of state governments, they kept the central features of educational governance and finance created by the ex-slave–Republican coalition. Ex-slaves used their resources first in a grass-roots movement to build, fund, and staff schools as a practical

right; then they joined with Republicans to incorporate the idea into southern state constitutional law. With these actions they revolutionized the South's position regarding the role of universal public education in society.[18]

The freedmen's educational revolution bred a counterrevolution. Postwar southern economic and social development, including educational reform, was heavily influenced by the persistent domination of the planter class. Traditional historiography has contended that the Civil War and emancipation brought about the downfall of the prewar planter class. The most recent historical scholarship, however, demonstrates convincingly the extent to which wealth and power in the postwar South continued to rest in the planters' hands. What actually occurred was not the downfall or destruction of the old planter class but rather its persistence and metamorphosis. Plantation land tended to remain in the hands of its prewar owners.[19]

The persistence and tenacity of the planter class throughout the war and Reconstruction, contends Jonathan Wiener, laid the basis for its continued domination of the southern political economy in the 1870s and 1880s. As a consequence, the South took the "Prussian road to industrial capitalism—a delayed industrialization under the auspices of a backward agrarian elite, the power of which was based on a repressive system of agricultural labor." In 1880, 75.4 percent of the South's labor force was in agriculture. Black agricultural laborers constituted more than 40 percent of the South's total agricultural labor force and formed a clear majority in several southern states. Agriculture accounted for only 23.3 percent of the work force in the Northeast and 54.5 percent in the North Central region. The planters' approach to labor control posed a formidable threat to the ex-slaves' educational movement. Elsewhere in the nation, particularly the industrial Northeast, dominant classes had already committed themselves to tax-supported public education, partly as a means to train and discipline an industrial work force. Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent Alvord, echoing the northern idea of universal schooling for the laboring classes, proclaimed to the South in 1866: "Popular education cannot well be opposed; free labor is found to be more contented with its privileges." But southern planters did not share northern ideas on free labor or popular education. Postwar planters complained that their "free" laborers were unreliable, failed to comply with the terms of their labor contracts, and would not obey orders. Most important, schooling most emphatically was not the answer to southern labor problems. "The South could not supply by schools," said one southern writer in 1868, "the restraining, correcting, elevating influences" cultivated and maintained by slavery. When Carl Schurz toured the South in late 1865, he found the planters believing that "learning will spoil the nigger for work." Faced with the possibilities of moving toward a northern-style system of free labor and mass literacy or remaining with their coercive mode of labor allocation and control, the planters chose the labor-repressive system, which rested at least partially on the absence of formal schooling among agricultural and domestic laborers.[20]

Hence at war's end the planters attempted to reestablish the plantation system with only minor modifications. With the overseer renamed "manager" or "agent," the planters tried to force ex-slaves to work the postwar plantation in antebellumlike work gangs. The planters needed above all a resumption of work on the part of black laborers in numbers and involving costs similar to those prevailing in the pre-war era. This desire was thwarted when ex-slaves withdrew a substantial portion of their labor power. By greatly reducing the number of days worked and the number of hours worked each day, they created a serious labor shortage. According to economic historians Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, upon emancipation the supply of black labor fell to two-thirds its prewar level. This reduced labor supply had a profound impact on the ability of the South to produce cotton. It represented a severe financial blow to the planter class. Therefore, ex-slaves gained some power in the labor market to insist upon educational and economic changes in the South's social hierarchy. Planters, however, generally favored a policy of strict labor control and discouraged the education of freedmen.[21]

In the immediate postwar years, ex-slaves, sometimes assisted by northern troops, were able to use their labor power to give weight to their educational demands. In January 1866 Alvord noted:

> If they are to be retained as laborers in the rural districts, [educational] opportunities must be furnished on the plantations. More than one instance could be already given where a school in the interior has been started from this motive. . . . The head of one of the largest of the timber and turpentine enterprises in South Carolina told me that he formerly had hired only men, but he had now learned that he must have their families too, and that this could only be done by allowing them patches of land, treating them properly, paying them well, and *giving them schools.*

In 1866 and 1867, Freedmen's Bureau officials observed the widespread emergence of the "educational clause" in labor contracts between planters and ex-slaves. In July 1867 Frank R. Chase, the bureau's superintendent of education for Louisiana, reported: "Many of the freedmen made it a special clause of their contract this year, that they should have the benefit of schools. But the planter was only willing to have colored teachers employed, thinking that such schools would amount to little or nothing. In this they are mistaken, as many of the most prosperous

schools in the State are taught by competent colored teachers." Such reports from bureau officials throughout the South convinced Alvord that "the educational clause in the contracts . . . is rapidly becoming universal." Hence, he continued, "Schools are everywhere springing up from the soil itself at the demand of those who till it—a state of things which localizes the benefits of education in a fixed, permanent society." Because ex-slaves understood that their labor power was essential for the restoration of southern agriculture to its prewar level of prosperity, they demanded not only fair wages for their work but educational opportunities as well. This practice, at least for a brief period in the postwar years, enabled some plantation ex-slaves to experience the benefits of schooling. Some planters, desiring to secure and stabilize a needed supply of laborers, even shielded freedmen's schools from harassment by white terrorists. Schools on the plantations were usually financed by the ex-slaves, but a few were paid for by planters.[22]

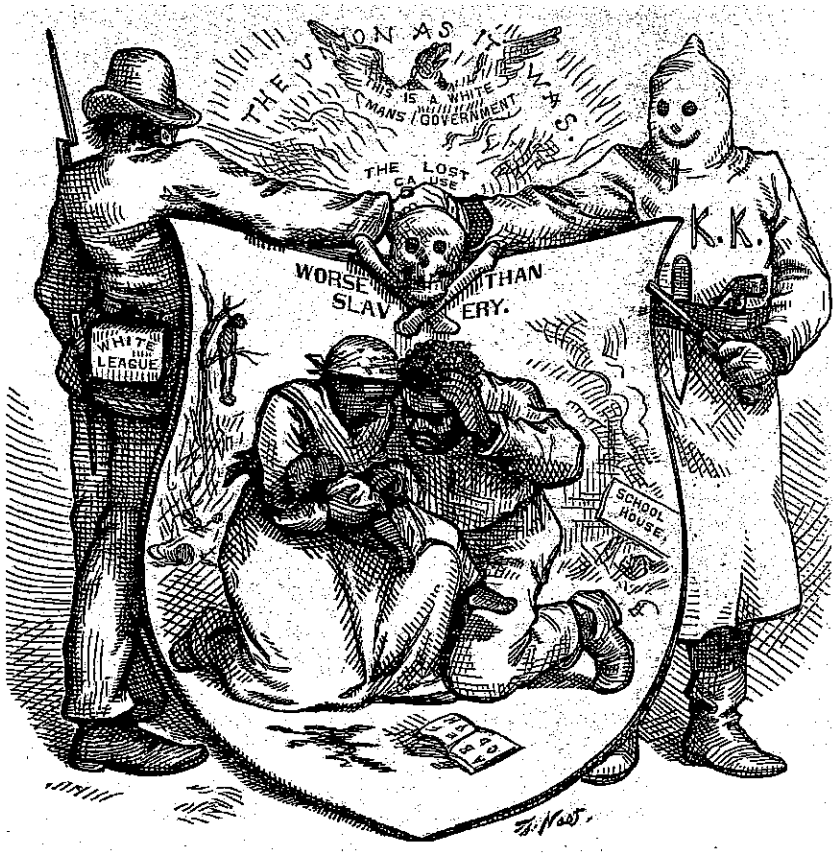
In general, the ex-slaves were unable to reconcile the planters to the idea of black education. It has been argued that the most intelligent and successful planters usually supported Negro education and that the most bitter opposition came from the white lower classes. To be sure, militant opposition did come from lower-class whites, but it came also from planters. A few planters did accept or tolerate the idea of universal education among the ex-slaves, and so did a few poor whites. As a class, however, the planters reacted decisively to the freedmen's educational movement; they were opposed to black education in particular and showed substantial resistance to the very idea of public schooling for the laboring classes. The planters' opposition to black education surfaced early. In 1864 the *New Orleans Tribune* reported that Louisiana planters were strongly opposed to the ex-slaves' educational movement. In the country parishes, white teachers were "condemned and scorned" and landlords "refused to rent buildings for school purposes, and to board the teachers." In 1867 Louisiana's superintendent of education complained that "a large majority of the planters are opposed to the education of the freedmen." An example from 1871 illustrates the point with much greater force. General John Eaton, commissioner of the new Federal Bureau of Education, sent out three thousand questionnaires to laborers and employers regarding the benefits of universal education in the South. Concerning the replies, he wrote: "A large number have been received, and the writers were unanimous in their testimony as to the value of education to every class of laborers, with one striking exception, namely, the southern planters; the majority of whom did not believe in giving the Negro any education." Planters resisted in various ways the ex-slaves' pursuit of universal schooling. Henry Allen Bullock found that Virginia planters in 1865 "were seeking to prevent Negro parents from

sending their children to school by threatening to put them out of their houses." Alabama whites who employed ex-slaves as domestics would terminate the employment of servants whose children attended school. Similarly, in 1869 the Freedmen's Bureau school superintendent for northwestern Louisiana and northern Texas discovered that "many of the planters will not allow colored children on their places to go to school at all, even when we have started those which are convenient." The planters, with few exceptions, viewed black education as a distinct threat to the racially qualified form of labor exploitation upon which their agrarian order depended.[23]

The planters' heavy use of child labor contributed significantly to their opposition to black education. During good crop years black school terms were so short and irregular that children hardly had time to learn to read and write. "Owing to unusual employment of children this season in gathering crops, especially cotton, which was very abundant, many schools did not open until December," reported John Alvord in 1870. Many parents fought this infringement upon their children's educational opportunities, but others conceded to the planters' interests.[24]

Despite the ex-slaves' early success in laying the foundation for universal education in the South, planters presented severe obstacles to those who endeavored to establish an elaborate bureaucratic system of free public schooling. Between 1869 and 1877, the planter-dominated white South regained control of the state governments. The moment of broad retrenchment came with the disputed presidential election of 1876 and the settlement that resulted in the Compromise of 1877. Southerners agreed to the election of Rutherford B. Hayes, and Republicans agreed to remove federal troops from the South. With both state authority and extralegal means of control firmly in their hands, the planters, though unable to eradicate earlier gains, kept universal schooling underdeveloped. They stressed low taxation, opposed compulsory school attendance laws, blocked the passage of new laws that would strengthen the constitutional basis of public education, and generally discouraged the expansion of public school opportunities. The planters' resistance virtually froze the ex-slaves' educational campaign in its mid-1870s position. "At the beginning of the twentieth century," wrote Horace Mann Bond, "the condition of the schools for Negro children in the South was but slightly improved over their condition in 1875." Indeed, between 1880 and 1900, the number of black children of school age increased 25 percent, but the proportion attending public school fell.[25]

The planters gained further control over black education as they increased their supervision and control over the ex-slave laboring class. The semiautonomous position and newly acquired economic power of freedmen in the labor market had buttressed their educational move-



This Thomas Nast cartoon that appeared in Harper's Weekly, *24 October 1874, depicts the southern white reaction to the ex-slave crusade for universal schooling. Note the fallen school book and the schoolhouse burning in the background while an ex-slave is being lynched. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

ment, but as landlords regained control over black labor, the force and autonomy of the campaign for universal schooling were severely weakened. The planters established a system of coercive labor designed to reduce wages, to restrict labor mobility, to protect individual planters from competition with other employers, and to force blacks to sign repressive labor contracts. Historians William Cohen, Pete Daniel, and Jonathan Wiener discovered a variety of state laws and local customs aimed at helping planters acquire, hold, and exploit black labor virtually

at will. Enticement laws passed by ten southern states from 1865 to 1867 were the most common measures aimed at controlling the black labor force. "Enticement statutes," writes Cohen, "established the proprietary claims of employers to 'their' Negroes by making it a crime to hire away a laborer under contract to another man." Many other laws facilitated the recruitment and retention of black labor. Vagrancy laws, passed by all the former Confederate states except Tennessee and Arkansas in 1865 and 1866, gave local authorities a "virtual mandate to arrest any poor man who did not have a labor contract." Such statutes enabled police to round up "idle" blacks in times of labor scarcity, and, except in North Carolina, they provided for the hiring out of convicted offenders. Those jailed on charges of vagrancy could sign a "voluntary" labor contract with their former employer or some other white man who agreed to post bond. Workers who had no surety often wound up on chain gangs and were forced to labor through the convict-lease system.[26]

The planters favored a labor-repressive system of agricultural production. They had little incentive to use education and technology to increase efficiency and productivity or to use schooling as a means to train and discipline a more efficient work force. The postwar planters held to the beliefs and behavior of over two centuries of slavery; they did not trust the system of "free labor." Force, rather than rational free choice, was the basis of the South's political economy. Hence the region's slow development in education was in substantial part the result of the planters' stubborn adherence to a set of values inconsistent with democracy, modernization, rapid industrialization, and free schooling. To be sure, other factors militated against rapid educational change. Fundamentally, however, the South's slow rate of educational development and the planters' particular opposition to black education sprang from their clear economic and ideological interests in preserving the racially qualified system of coercive agricultural labor. Both race and class conflict existed between white planters and their black agricultural laborers.

Even though the long-term gains in public education for ex-slaves proved to be small and slow, their organized efforts and ideological imperatives laid the foundation for universal education in the South. Between 1860 and 1880 no organized challenge to the planters' interests came from the region's white middle or lower classes. Both groups were not only economically dependent on the planters, as were the ex-slaves, but also subservient to the planters' interests. Freedmen's Bureau officials were particularly alarmed by lower-class whites' general apathy toward public education. Bureau officials recognized that some planters were hostile to the idea of public education for poor whites. Louisiana's superintendent in 1869 observed planters' opposition to "the education of freedmen and poor whites." "In the parish of Franklin," he reported,

"public sentiment, as to the education of freedmen and poor whites, is very decidedly against it." Unlike the ex-slaves, however, "the whites take little or no interest in educational matters, even for their own race." Throughout the bureau's history, its officials contrasted ex-slave and lower-class white attitudes toward public education. In 1866 Alvord noted: "We make no invidious comparisons of the ignorant freedman, and the ignorant Anglo-Saxon of the South. We only say the former has most creditably won his present position; and he has done it by good conduct, and rapid improvement under that instruction we are now reporting." In 1869 a bureau state school superintendent observed: "As a class they [ex-slaves] are eager to learn, while the poor whites are indifferent." Poor whites were not so much indifferent as they were bound to the planters' regime. Before the war poor children were unable to afford private schooling and only rarely had the opportunity to attend charity institutions. In the immediate postwar years the region's poor whites, in general, were still too closely tied to the planters' interests and ideology to pursue a different conception of education and society. White laborers and small farmers when organized in the Farmers' Alliance and Populist party challenged the planters' opposition to universal schooling only in the late 1880s. Ex-slaves, or black native southerners, had struggled for universal schooling over two decades before the Populist campaigns of the late 1880s and 1890s. The ex-slaves' campaign also predated the organized movement for free schooling by southern middle-class progressives. The South's white middle classes, unorganized and subservient to planter interests throughout the nineteenth century, did not begin their campaign for universal education until the dawn of the twentieth century. Hence, surrounded by planters who were hostile to public education, middle-class professionals who allied themselves with planter interests, and lower-class whites who were largely alienated from mass education, ex-slaves were the only native group to forge ahead to commit the South to a system of universal schooling in the immediate postwar years.[27]

Clearly, the freedmen's educational movement had an impact that reached far beyond their own communities. Their initiative forced whites of all classes to confront the question of universal schooling. From the Freedmen's Bureau superintendent came testimony that "the white population of the South feels the power of the [freedmen's] schools." "The poor whites are provoked by hearing Negroes read, while they are ignorant; and it is my belief that they will now receive schools, if furnished them, as never before," wrote Alvord in 1866. Further, "The educated class are not slow to perceive that their schools must be reopened, or fall behind humiliated, and that new schools must now be organized on a more popular plan than heretofore." Mass education was necessary for

white children, insisted Robert Mills Lusher, white school superintendent of Louisiana, so that they would be "properly prepared to maintain the supremacy of the white race." The ex-slaves' initiative in establishing and supporting a system of secular and Sabbath schools and in demanding universal public education for all children presented a new challenge to the dominant-class whites—the possibility of an emerging literate black working class in the midst of a largely illiterate poor white class. This constituted a frontal assault on the racist myth of black inferiority, which was critical to the maintenance of the South's racial caste system. The planters, unable to wipe out the educational gains made by ex-slaves between 1860 and 1870, had to take a more liberal posture regarding universal education among whites of all classes. Moreover, poor whites became less indifferent toward the idea of public education. Thus the Populist demands for free schooling in the late 1880s and 1890s, as well as the middle-class educational reforms of the early twentieth century, were indebted to the ex-slaves' educational movement of the 1860s and 1870s.[28]

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, one could already detect a slight shift in southern white attitudes regarding universal schooling in general and particularly for black children. Southern whites began realizing the improbability of reversing the gains made by freedmen during the Civil War and Reconstruction years. Hence a growing, although small, minority of prominent southern whites began speaking in favor of universal schooling for the region's laboring classes, including Afro-Americans. Foremost among these whites were those promoting limited or rapid southern industrialization. Although traditional planters continued to favor a repressive system of agricultural labor and to discourage working-class literacy, proponents of southern industrialization increasingly viewed mass schooling as a means to produce efficient and contented labor and as a socialization process to instill in black and white children an acceptance of the southern racial hierarchy. In 1877 Thomas Muldrop Logan, former Confederate general and industrialist in Richmond, Virginia, spoke before the American Social Science Association on the question of education in the southern states. Logan, who became one of the South's most prominent railroad magnates, articulated a rationale for supporting working-class and Afro-American schooling that came to characterize the thinking of many dominant-class whites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Wherever public schools have been established," argued Logan, "the industrial classes, becoming more intelligent, have proved more skillful and efficient; and all competing countries must likewise establish public schools, or be supplanted in the markets of the world." Logan was well aware of the planters' argument against black schooling, "that when the freedman regards himself quali-

fied to earn a support by mental work, he is unwilling to accept manual labor." Logan believed, however, that maintenance of caste distinctions and division of labor were possible if blacks were offered industrial education such as was practiced at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute of Virginia. By training blacks "to perform, efficiently, their part in the social economy, this caste allotment of social duties might prove advantageous to southern society, as a whole, on the principle of a division of labor applied to races." These views were echoed by famous and little-known southern industrialists as they testified before a subcommittee of the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor in 1883.[29]

But the prevailing philosophies of black education and the subjects taught in black schools were not geared to reproduce the caste distinctions or the racially segmented labor force desired by Logan and many other postbellum white industrialists. The black teachers, school officials, and secular and religious leaders who formed the vanguard of the postwar common school movement insisted that the ex-slaves must educate themselves, gather experience, and acquire a responsible awareness of the duties incumbent upon them as citizens and as male voters in the new social order. Their thinking on these questions indicated virtually no illusions about the power of schooling to ameliorate fundamental economic inequalities. Rather, it reflected their belief that education could help raise the freed people to an appreciation of their historic responsibility to develop a better society and that any significant reorganization of the southern political economy was indissolubly linked to their education in the principles, duties, and obligations appropriate to a democratic social order. Ex-slave communities pursued their educational objectives by developing various strata, but the one they stressed the most was leadership training. They believed that the masses could not achieve political and economic independence or self-determination without first becoming organized, and organization was impossible without well-trained intellectuals—teachers, ministers, politicians, managers, administrators, and businessmen.

Toward this end the black leaders and educators adopted the New England classical liberal curriculum, so the subjects taught in post–Civil War black elementary, normal, and collegiate schools did not differ appreciably from those taught in northern white schools. Students in elementary schools received instruction in reading, spelling, writing, grammar, diction, history, geography, arithmetic, and music. Normal school students took this standard English curriculum with additional courses in orthography, map drawing, physiology, algebra, and geometry, as well as the theory and practice of teaching. The college curriculum varied

slightly among institutions, but the classical course leading to the B.A. usually required Latin, Greek, mathematics, science, philosophy, and, in a few cases, one modern language. Black leaders did not view their adoption of the classical liberal curriculum or its philosophical foundations as mere imitation of white schooling. Indeed, they knew many whites who had no education at all. Rather, they saw this curriculum as providing access to the best intellectual traditions of their era and the best means to understanding their own historical development and sociological uniqueness. To be sure, a study of the classical liberal curriculum was not a study of the historical and cultural forces that enabled Afro-Americans to survive the most dehumanized aspects of enslavement. Yet that curriculum did not necessarily convince black students that they were inferior to white people.[30]

For example, Richard Wright, one of the brightest and most influential educators of the post-Reconstruction era, found in his study of the classics solid evidence to counter claims of black inferiority. Wright was a student in an American Missionary Association school in Atlanta in 1868 when a group of visitors from the North, including General Oliver O. Howard, asked the black pupils what they should tell their friends in New England about the Georgia freedmen. Replied the young Wright, "Tell them we are rising." Wright graduated from Atlanta University in 1876 and in 1880, at age twenty-seven, he was principal of the Augusta, Georgia, "Colored High School" (later named E. A. Ware High School), the only public high school for blacks in the state. In 1883 principal Wright was sworn and examined by the U.S. Senate Committee on Education and Labor regarding conditions for education and work among blacks in Georgia. Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire, the committee's chairman, queried Wright about the comparative inferiority and superiority of races. Drawing upon his understanding of the classics, Wright replied:

> It is generally admitted that religion has been a great means of human development and progress, and I think that about all the great religions which have blest this world have come from the colored races—all. . . . I believe too, that our methods of alphabetic writing all came from the colored race, and I think the majority of the sciences in their origin have come from the colored races. . . . Now I take the testimony of those people who know, and who, I feel are capable of instructing me on this point, and I find them saying that the Egyptians were actually woolly-haired negroes. In Humboldt's Cosmos (Vol. 2, p. 531) you will find that testimony, and Humboldt, I presume, is pretty good authority. The same thing is

stated in Herodotus, and in a number of other authors with whom you gentlemen are doubtless familiar. Now, if that is true, the idea that this negro race is inherently inferior, seems to me to be at least a little limping.

Wright's study of the classical liberal tradition led him to conclude that "these differences of race, so called, are a mere matter of color and not of brain." For such educators as Wright, the classical course was not so much the imposition of an alien white culture that would make blacks feel inferior as it was a means to understanding the development of the Western world and blacks' inherent rights to equality within that world. Thus, with few exceptions, both the schools founded and sustained by black churches and secular organizations as well as those founded by northern missionary societies taught a basic English education supplemented with the classical courses at the normal school and collegiate levels.[31]

During the immediate postwar years the more conservative missionary societies made some attempts to superimpose upon the common school curriculum a set of readers designed specifically and exclusively for ex-slave children. The American Tract Society of the American Missionary Association published the largest collection of these materials. Such readers as *The Freedmen's Primer*, *The Freedmen's Spelling Book*, *The Lincoln Primer*, and the *First*, *Second* and *Third Freedmen's Readers* contained social values designed to inculcate in the ex-slaves an acceptance of economic and racial subordination. These books portrayed blacks in subservient roles and frequently assumed that blacks were morally and mentally inferior. Their use of such books to propagate ideas of racial subordination betray the conservative missionaries' perception that the appropriate regressive social values were not already contained in the New England common school course. Whether these special books had any widespread and long-range impact is extremely doubtful. First, even in the most conservative missionary schools the basic pattern of freedmen's education followed that of northern public schools. Second, the missionary-sponsored common school structure was much too weak and fragmented to affect the instruction of large numbers of ex-slaves. In 1870 the American Missionary Association, for instance, sustained 157 common schools. That number had declined to 70 in 1871 and to 13 in 1874. By the mid-1870s, the northern societies had already reduced their involvement in black southern education, particularly in the area of common schools. After this period, they concentrated their efforts and financial aid primarily on normal and higher education. Their normal schools and colleges offered the traditional classical liberal curriculum. This emphasis was important in determining curricular trends in black common schools because missionary colleges trained the bulk of black teachers until well into the twentieth century.[32]

The short-range purpose of black schooling was to provide the masses of ex-slaves with basic literacy skills plus the rudiments of citizenship training for participation in a democratic society. The long-range purpose was the intellectual and moral development of a responsible leadership class that would organize the masses and lead them to freedom and equality. Being educated and literate had an important cultural significance to Afro-Americans, and they pursued these goals in opposition to the economic and ideological interest of the planter-dominated South. Despite what seemed like overwhelming opposition to their educational campaigns, the masses of Afro-Americans persisted in becoming literate. Their 95 percent illiteracy rate in 1860 had dropped to 70 percent in 1880 and would drop to 30 percent by 1910. The former slaves were becoming literate; the process could be slowed but it could not be stopped or reversed.[33]

By 1880, many white southerners saw that any attempt to reverse the thrust of the ex-slaves' school campaigns would invite greater black resistance and possibly northern intervention. They began to make an uneasy peace with the Reconstruction-era educational reforms. Most did not agree with the idea of universal education for both races any more than they agreed with the Fifteenth Amendment and universal franchise for all men. They could agree, however, that it was politically unwise to attempt to repeal the legal basis of either. A particular class of southern whites began thinking more about controlling and restricting the expansion of public schooling in the black South and the possibility of adapting it to the region's traditional social structure and racial mores. Their interest in the schooling of Afro-American children differed in social origin and purpose from the ex-slaves' educational movement and even from the interests of the most conservative missionary societies. They called for the special instruction of the former slaves in a manner that could not be adapted from the curriculum and teaching materials of the classical liberal tradition. A full curriculum of special instruction for black students was being developed at that time by Samuel Armstrong at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia. This new curriculum offered the possibility of adapting black education to the particular needs and interests of the South's dominant-class whites. Hence those southern and northern whites who thought it wiser to redirect the social purpose of freedmen's education rather than attempt to destroy it rallied to this new model of special instruction. This aspect of the ex-slaves' struggle for universal education—the development of a special

5

COMMON SCHOOLS FOR BLACK CHILDREN

THE SECOND CRUSADE, 1900–1935

PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS became available to the majority of southern black children during the first third of the twentieth century, long after common schools had become universal for other American schoolchildren. For the nation outside of the South, the common school crusade occurred between 1830 and 1860. Ex-slaves, as explained in Chapter 1, waged the first crusade for state systems of common schools in the American South following the Civil War. Although they succeeded in instituting a public school system in a region where universal public education had been unknown, it was only partially developed when the planters returned to power in 1876 and promptly contained the expansion of common schools in general and particularly for black children. The planters' great conquest required the political support of white small farmers, and a virulent racism formed the cornerstone of this interclass bargain. By the late nineteenth century white small farmers were demanding a public school system which they expected to educate their children. This demand brought them to a point at which their own educational interests were at variance with the planters' traditional preferences for private academies which called for very limited state support for public education. But the political interests of the planters shaped their behavior in this instance more than did their traditional opposition to state-regulated, tax-supported, universal public education. They accommodated the white small farmers' demand for public education, but there were two important consequences of this bargain. Public school funds for black children were diverted to white children, and there was increased opposition to black education by both planters and white small farmers. Hence the planters' return to power in alliance with white small farmers suppressed the ex-slaves' campaign for universal public schooling. Consequently, black rural southerners, unlike working classes elsewhere in America, could expect little support for common schools from state and local governments. Thus following the

planters' return to power in the late 1870s, black southerners began to turn inward and attempted to construct and maintain the semblance of a common school system from their own meager resources. Much was accomplished, but it was impossible for such an economically poor social class to finance a system of universal education. Black southerners therefore had to wage a second crusade to establish common schools for their children.[1]

The economic and social forces that were aligned against universal education for black children in the Reconstruction era still existed at the dawn of the twentieth century. For the profitable growing of cash crops, chiefly cotton and tobacco, planters considered a cheap labor supply as essential and regarded black agricultural laborers as the mainstay of their exploited work force. Many planters, believing that schooling actually spoiled a good field hand, preferred their laborers illiterate or at best semiliterate. Moreover, the labor needs for growing cash crops and the rhythms of economic life were inherently opposed to formal schooling. Nowhere was this clash between cotton production and formal schooling expressed more eloquently than in Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices*. Born and bred in Mississippi's cotton economy and speaking on behalf of the South's black agricultural laborers, Wright said:

> Sometimes there is a weather-worn, pine-built schoolhouse for our children, but even if the school were open for the full term our children would not have time to go. We cannot let them leave the fields when cotton is waiting to be picked. When time comes to break the sod, the sod must be broken; when the time comes to plant the seeds, the seeds must be planted, and when the time comes to loosen the red clay from about the bright green stalks of the cotton plants, that, too, must be done even if it is September and school is open. Hunger is the punishment if we violate the laws of Queen Cotton. The seasons of the year form the mold that shapes our lives, and who can change the seasons.[2]

In 1900 significant numbers of black children and their mothers were breaking sod, planting seeds, and harvesting crops. Of black children between the ages of ten and fifteen, inclusive, 49.3 percent of boys and 30.6 percent of girls were engaged in gainful occupations, and the overwhelming majority of them, 404,255 out of 516,276, were employed as unskilled agricultural laborers. The proportions of white boys and girls of the same ages engaged in gainful occupations were 22.5 and 7 percent respectively. Almost one-half, 46.6 percent, of black children aged ten to fifteen were gainfully employed in 1910. Black women also were a significant part of the South's agricultural labor force. Of the 665,791 females reported by the census of 1900 as engaged in agricultural labor,

509,687 or 76 percent were black. The number of black women working as farm laborers increased from 509,687 in 1900 to 970,060 in 1910; this increase of 460,337 was more than three times the corresponding increase for males. More than 40 percent of all black women in America over ten years of age were at work in 1900, as against 16 percent of all white women. Further, 26 percent of all the black married women were in the labor force, but only 3 percent of the white married women of the country were at work. The majority of black males gainfully employed were also engaged in agricultural labor. These estimates do not include unpaid family labor, which was high for blacks in the South.[3]

Despite the structure and work rhythms of the southern agricultural economy, black children did not voluntarily sacrifice formal schooling for gainful employment. Rather, there were no public or private schools available to the great majority of black children, and in the absence of school facilities employment seemed the next best opportunity. Both the heavy use of black children in the agricultural labor force and the limited availability of black public schools reflected the planters' domination of the rural South. Where public schools were available black parents in general accepted the loss of child labor and additional household income so that their children would attend school. The southern planters understood black attitudes toward formal schooling and thus regarded the establishment of black public schools as a powerful distraction for their school-age laborers. The planters, therefore, used what power and influence they had in local and state governments to restrict the availability of public schools to black children. The structure of the black public school system at the turn of the century, particularly in the rural South, seemed quite congruent with the planters' economic and political interest. As illustrated in Table 5.1, there were in the South in 1900 2,136,016 black children five to fourteen years of age. Yet only 36 percent of these children attended school. Of the 1,120,683 black children five to nine years of age, only 22 percent attended, and of the 1,015,333 black children ten to fourteen years of age, slightly over one-half attended school. Furthermore, a full 86 percent of all those children fortunate enough to go to school received less than six months of instruction per year. Even when schools were available, most of the children lived beyond a reasonable walking distance of one and a half miles from the schools in their area, and the region's rough topography made walking difficult. Unlike for white children, southern state and local governments refused to provide transportation for black children. This structure of schooling for black children had been solidified since 1875 and at the beginning of the twentieth century seemed fixed for a long time to come. Meanwhile, processes of migration and urbanization converged with school reform cam-

TABLE 5.1

Elementary School Attendance by Race and Age in Southern States, 1900

State	Number of children 5 to 9 years old, inclusive		Number attending school		Percent attending school		Number of children 10 to 14 years old, inclusive		Number attending school		Percent attending school	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Alabama	118,403	138,291	16,274	36,001	14	26	105,926	122,759	43,810	80,917	41	66
Arkansas	51,793	133,628	12,715	47,321	25	35	46,714	119,767	25,419	84,881	54	71
Delaware	3,548	15,891	1,153	7,775	32	49	3,401	15,345	2,121	12,646	62	82
Florida	30,401	40,048	8,854	15,361	29	38	26,361	34,604	16,439	26,943	62	78
Georgia	151,516	161,648	33,070	58,855	22	36	134,540	143,325	61,290	100,298	46	70
Kentucky	31,972	241,287	9,785	94,543	31	39	33,155	218,498	22,594	170,721	68	78
Louisiana	93,447	98,428	12,792	28,315	14	29	82,803	86,582	28,751	56,705	35	65
Maryland	27,586	105,159	8,820	51,077	32	49	26,539	99,678	16,857	79,817	64	80
Mississippi	134,292	87,836	36,770	37,835	27	43	118,560	79,505	62,279	59,441	53	75
Missouri	16,837	353,927	7,008	179,566	42	51	17,328	329,937	12,697	276,777	73	84
North Carolina	89,833	173,531	21,405	58,126	24	33	81,296	154,029	44,783	103,892	55	67
South Carolina	119,669	74,594	21,288	22,644	18	30	106,982	67,435	47,853	42,959	45	64
Tennessee	63,022	201,783	15,395	72,135	24	36	59,343	184,430	33,522	133,177	56	72
Texas	92,492	339,863	17,339	80,501	19	24	82,697	300,480	55,867	241,086	66	80
Virginia	91,469	149,159	21,900	57,639	24	39	85,609	135,228	48,938	102,251	57	76
West Virginia	4,403	116,566	1,645	49,159	37	42	4,079	106,658	2,758	88,199	68	83
Totals	1,120,683	2,433,639	246,273	896,853	22	37	1,015,333	2,198,440	525,978	1,660,708	52	76

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States: 1900, Population*, pt. 2, pp. 6, 12, 20, 24, 26, 42, 44, 48, 56, 58, 74, 88, 94, 100, 104, 353, 359.

paigns by black southerners and northern philanthropists to point to a new day for common schools for black children.[4]

One of the most significant factors contributing to the second crusade for black common schools was the rapid rate at which black children were withdrawn from the agricultural labor force after 1910. Although nearly one-half of all black children aged ten to fifteen were gainfully employed, primarily in agricultural pursuits, in 1910, by 1920 this percentage had dropped sharply to 21.8 and it decreased to 16.1 in 1930. The migration of black laborers from the rural farm areas to the city was central to this emancipation of black children from daily labor. The migration, which started in full force in 1914, was also a key factor in forcing the southern white agrarian classes to reconsider the idea of universal schooling for black children. When the United States Department of Labor made an investigation of the black migration in 1917, its researchers cited increased support for a viable system of black schools as a means to "keep the Negroes in the South and make them satisfied with their lot." As a means of checking the exodus of blacks to the city, an insightful editor in the Jackson, Mississippi, *Daily News* made the following observation:

> A Negro father, if he is honest, hard working, and industrious, has the same ambition for his children that a white man possesses. He wants to see his offspring receive an education in order that they may be properly equipped for the battle of life. But they are not getting this. Every person who is familiar with educational affairs in Mississippi knows this to be the case. And it forms one of the chief reasons why thrifty, industrious Negroes, who want to get ahead in the world, who have a desire to live decently, are following the lure of higher wages and better living conditions and moving to the northern states.

To be sure, not every white southerner shared this perspective. But the *Daily News*'s conclusion, that black agricultural laborers should "continue to desert our farms, leaving thousands of fertile acres untilled," unless they received a "square deal" in the matter of education, appealed to the most stubborn planters.[5]

The migration opened the way for a second crusade for black common schools in the rural South. This crusade, known by contemporary observers and later historians as the Rosenwald school building program, was launched officially in 1914, the same year the migration started in full force. By the mid-1930s, black elementary schools, though still far from excellent, had been transformed into a viable system of universal education. This transformation was effected by ordinary black men and women, local white school officials, small numbers of southern white lay people, and northern philanthropic agencies. Among the philanthropic agencies most influential in advancing common schools for rural black children was the Negro Rural School Fund, also called the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation. Beginning in 1909, the Jeanes Fund cooperated with southern public school authorities in employing supervisors of industrial teachers. These supervisors were appointed by the county superintendent, worked under his direction, and were considered members of his regular corps of teachers. The Jeanes Fund paid 84 percent of their salaries in the early years. The Jeanes teachers' work included a wide range of activities, including teaching and supervising elementary industrial work and the promotion of school and community clubs. Perhaps the largest proportion of supervisors' time was consumed in raising money for new schoolhouses and school equipment and in efforts to extend the school term. From 1913 to 1928, these Jeanes teachers raised an aggregate of approximately $5 million. Yet despite the significant contributions of the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation, it was the Rosenwald schools, financed in part by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, that came to symbolize the crusade for black common schools in the rural South during the first third of the twentieth century. The Rosenwald building program is crucial because it illustrates most clearly the general character and scope of black southerners' second crusade for common schools. It was black southerners' enduring beliefs in universal schooling and their collective social actions to achieve it that made possible and sustained the Rosenwald school building program.[6]

In the spring of 1914, the Loachopoka School in Lee County, Alabama, was completed as the first Rosenwald school. It was a one-teacher frame building erected at the modest cost of $942. Of this amount the local black citizens raised $150 in cash and gave an estimated $132 in free labor. Local white citizens donated $360, and Julius Rosenwald, the Chicago philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, contributed $300. Lee County in 1910 was 60 percent black. This project launched one of the largest and most dramatic rural school construction programs of the era, resulting by 1932 in the building of 4,977 rural black schools with a pupil seating capacity of 663,615. The schoolhouses were located in 883 counties across fifteen southern states and together with teachers' homes and industrial shops cost in cash $28,408,520. Of this amount, as illustrated in Table 5.2, the Julius Rosenwald Fund gave 15.36 percent, rural black people contributed 16.64 percent, whites donated 4.27 percent, and 63.73 percent was appropriated from public tax funds, collected largely, if not wholly, from black taxpayers. These schools were called Rosenwald schools because of the contributions from the Rosenwald Fund, and that label led to the popular belief that they were paid for mainly by the fund. In actual

practice, the fund never gave even one-half the cost of a schoolhouse, and it generally contributed an average of about one-sixth of the total monetary cost of the building, grounds, and equipment. Most of the cash, either through private contributions or public tax funds, came from rural black citizens. Their additional contributions in the form of land, labor, and building materials were also substantial.[7]

This alternative to state-financed public education was necessary because in the early twentieth century whites all over the South seized the school funds belonging to the disfranchised black citizens, gerrymandered school districts so as to exclude blacks from certain local tax benefits, and expounded a racist ideology to provide a moral justification of unequal treatment. Although in a few southern urban settings the degree of discrimination was less profound in the period after 1900, severe racial discrimination was especially pronounced in the southern countryside. The disparity in per capita expenditures between blacks and whites in the public schools was greater in 1910 than in 1900 and greater in 1900 than earlier, in every southern state. In the rural schools of North Carolina, for instance, black teachers as a class were paid less in 1908 than in 1907. In Alabama, the average length of the public school term for blacks was cut from ninety-five days in 1908 to ninety in 1910, and the average salary paid black school teachers was also reduced. In one Alabama county, the number of black schools decreased from thirty to three. W. E. B. DuBois, in his study *The Common School and the Negro American*, said in 1911: "Not only has the general enrollment and attendance of Negro children in the rural schools of the lower South and to a large extent the city schools been at a standstill in the last ten years, and in many cases actually decreased, but many of the school authorities have shown by their acts and in a few cases expressed declaration that it was their policy to eliminate the Negro school as far as possible." Hence the percentage of black children five to eighteen years old enrolled in the public schools of the South decreased during the first decade of the twentieth century.[8]

State actions to reduce the number of schools available to rural blacks were supported by the popular myth that black public schools were financed largely by money collected from white taxpayers. In 1909, however, Charles L. Coon, an agent of the Southern Education Board, disproved the frequent southern white charge that black education was a burden on the white taxpayer. Coon had demonstrated in the North Carolina state school report for 1905–6 that, counting indirect taxes, more money was collected from blacks than was appropriated to their schools. In 1909 he elaborated this argument and presented it to the Twelfth Conference for Education in the South. Coon's study was then published and disseminated in pamphlet form by the Committee of

TABLE 5.2

Summary of Completed Buildings and of Amounts and Percentages of Cash Contributions by Blacks, Whites, Public Taxation, and Rosenwald Fund, 10 June 1914–1 July 1932

State	Number of buildings				Capacity		Total cost: Buildings, grounds, and equipment	Contributions*			
	Total	Schools	Homes	Shop	Teacher	Pupil		Blacks	Whites	Taxation	Rosenwald
Alabama	407	389	7	11	898	40,410	$ 1,285,060	$ 452,968	$ 137,746	$ 445,526	$ 248,820
Arkansas	389	338	19	32	1,044	46,980	1,952,441	172,134	53,714	1,420,852	305,741
Florida	125	120	1	4	501	22,545	1,432,706	54,758	67,021	1,186,602	124,325
Georgia	261	242	12	7	829	37,305	1,378,859	253,852	118,456	759,002	247,569
Kentucky	158	155	2	1	402	18,090	1,081,710	88,897	13,475	848,748	130,590
Louisiana	435	393	31	9	1,139	51,255	1,721,506	457,318	70,407	855,781	338,000
Maryland	153	149	2	2	343	15,435	899,658	84,973	5,224	699,761	109,700
Mississippi	633	557	58	18	1,730	77,850	2,851,421	859,688	323,143	1,128,673	539,917
Missouri	4	3	—	1	28	1,260	257,959	500	6,000	237,609	13,850
North Carolina	813	787	18	8	2,538	114,210	5,167,042	666,736	75,140	3,707,740	717,426
Oklahoma	198	176	16	6	435	19,575	1,127,449	28,865	5,475	948,054	145,055
South Carolina	500	481	8	11	1,646	74,070	2,892,360	507,994	224,525	1,706,241	453,600
Tennessee	373	354	9	10	988	44,460	1,969,822	296,388	28,027	1,354,157	291,250
Texas	527	464	31	32	1,274	57,330	2,496,521	392,851	60,494	1,623,800	419,376
Virginia	381	367	3	11	952	42,840	1,894,006	407,969	23,128	1,183,259	279,650
Totals	5,357	4,977	217	163	14,747	663,615	$28,408,520	$4,725,891	$1,211,975	$18,105,805	$4,364,869

Source: Statistical Reports on Rural School Construction Program, Box 331, JRFP-FU.

*Percentages donated: blacks 16.64 percent; whites 4.27 percent; public 63.73 percent; Rosenwald Fund 15.36 percent.

Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race. More recent studies demonstrate that during the period 1880 to 1900 the percentage of tax disbursements in North Carolina for black schools exceeded the proportion of direct taxes blacks paid. After 1900, however, the proportion of expenditures that went to black schools dropped sharply, and by 1910 the proportion of direct taxes blacks paid virtually equaled the percentage of school taxes they received. When the funding for the construction of school buildings is considered, the drop in per capita expenditure for blacks was even greater. During the period 1900 to 1920, every southern state sharply increased its tax appropriations for building schoolhouses, but virtually none of this money went for black schools. Booker T. Washington was on the mark when he said: "The money is actually being taken from the colored people and given to white schools." Rural blacks in particular were victims of taxation without representation, but none of this was new to them.[9]

Since the end of the Reconstruction era black southerners had adapted to a structure of oppressive education by practicing double taxation. They had no choice but to pay both direct and indirect taxes for public education. Southern public school authorities diverted school taxes largely to the development of white public education. Blacks then resorted to making private contributions to finance public schools. To have their privately financed schools recognized and even partially supported by state and local school authorities, black southerners had to deed to the state their contributions of money, land, and school equipment. In 1909 Monroe N. Work and Richard R. Wright, Jr., and then W. E. B. DuBois, in 1910, traced these traditions of "self-help" in black education. Wright documented the large amounts of property and labor contributed by southern blacks to the construction of schoolhouses. In a table illustrating the ownership of schoolhouses in 155 counties in thirteen southern states, Wright demonstrated that of 4,137 schoolhouses blacks owned 1,816 or 43.9 percent. Moreover, he discovered that many schoolhouses reported as public domain were paid for in large part by blacks through voluntary contributions. "The fact is," said Wright, "in most cases the Negroes, because of aid given them by the county fund, deeded them to the county." Significantly, this was the tradition out of which the second crusade for black common schools emerged and by which it was sustained. External support from philanthropic foundations was very helpful. But southern rural blacks absorbed the contributions of the Rosenwald and Jeanes funds into a long-standing tradition of "self-help" or double taxation that had developed among Afro-Americans decades before 1914.[10]

The events that led to the establishment of the Rosenwald rural schoolhouse construction program began in 1895, when Fisk University

graduate Clinton J. Calloway joined Tuskegee Institute's staff as a member of the school's Department of Extension. He began his extension work in Kowalgia, Alabama, a small farming community about thirty-five miles from Tuskegee, by helping the residents build a modern community school. The existing school was "an old shanty belonging to one of the planters which was used to house the school children and their one teacher." Calloway assisted in the establishment of a new three-building, eleven-teacher school, built mainly from money and labor donated by Kowalgia's black residents. "My experience here gave me a working knowledge of how to organize communities and build schoolhouses," he recalled in 1927. In 1901 Calloway returned to Tuskegee's campus as director of extension. He and an assistant cooperated with Macon County, Alabama, black farmers to raise money to build schoolhouses and to negotiate with the local board of education in efforts to lengthen the school term for black children. In 1906 Calloway founded a monthly magazine, the *Messenger*, published at Tuskegee, to combine the growing campaign for school improvement with information on better farming methods.[11]

Calloway's rural school construction campaign received an unexpected boost when Julius Rosenwald celebrated his fiftieth birthday on 12 August 1912. Rosenwald commemorated the event in part by donating $25,000 to Booker T. Washington to support "Offshoots of Tuskegee." These "offshoots" were various normal schools throughout the South that had adopted the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education as their basic curriculum for training teachers. Washington distributed all but $2,100 of Rosenwald's gift among such industrial normal schools as Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute ($4,000), Utica Normal and Industrial Institute ($4,000), Voorhees Industrial School ($3,000), Fort Valley High and Industrial School ($3,000), Robert Hungerford Industrial School ($1,000), and High Point Industrial School ($1,000). Calloway, realizing there was still money left, persuaded Washington to use some of the remaining $2,100 to aid rural schoolhouse construction programs in counties surrounding Tuskegee: "I suggested that Dr. Washington put my proposal through to Mr. Rosenwald. He did." Writing to Rosenwald in September 1912 about Calloway's idea, Washington said: "We are giving some careful, and I hope serious attention to the suggestion of making a plan for the helping of colored people in the direction of small country schoolhouses. In connection with this idea, I am wondering if you would permit us to make an experiment in the direction of building six schoolhouses at various points, preferably near here, so that we can watch the experiment closely, out of the special fund which you have set aside for small schools." Furthermore, Washington "found by investigation that many people who cannot give money, would give a

half day or a day's work and others would give material in the way of nails, brick, lime, etc." He had learned much about these activities from Calloway, who had begun reporting such self-help activities to Monroe N. Work, editor of Tuskegee's *Negro Year Book*.[12]

Rosenwald granted Washington's request, and, in 1913, financial assistance for schoolhouse construction was given to six Alabama black communities in Macon, Lee, and Montgomery counties. To match the funds donated by Rosenwald, Calloway reported in April 1913 that black residents in all six communities contributed money, land, and free labor to the construction of schoolhouses. In Montgomery County, for instance, blacks in one community raised $95 during the first fund-raising rally, planned to raise another $150 in two weeks' time, and had "already secured the land for the building."[13]

On 10 June 1914, after Washington had made his report on the construction of six experimental schools, Rosenwald expressed a willingness to enlarge the program, and in August 1914, he agreed to contribute $30,000 to aid in building one hundred small rural schoolhouses. The conditions were to be the same as those governing the building of the six experimental schools: black residents of the selected school district were required to raise enough money to match or exceed the amount requested from the Rosenwald Fund, which initially was a maximum of $350; the approval and cooperation of the state, county, or township school officers were required; all property, including the land, money, and other voluntary contributions by blacks, was to be deeded to the local public school authorities; the school building to be erected had to be approved by Tuskegee's Extension Department; and the efforts in each state were to be coordinated by the state agents of Negro education and the Jeanes Fund supervisors.[14]

By 22 February 1916, ninety-two schools had been completed; seventy-nine of them were built in Alabama, and the rest were constructed in other southern states, including four in Arkansas, three in Georgia, three in North Carolina, one in South Carolina, one in Mississippi, and one in Tennessee. The total amount contributed in cash by all parties was $103,783, of which public school authorities contributed $16,550, local white citizens $6,209, Julius Rosenwald $33,821, and rural black citizens $47,203. Of the total cash contributions, only 16 percent came from public tax funds, whereas rural blacks contributed 45.5 percent, whites 5.9 percent, and Rosenwald 32.6 percent. The average cost per school was $1,128, and the average contribution per school by rural blacks was $513 in cash, plus land, labor, and building materials that were not always counted as part of their total contributions. The monetary contributions of rural blacks were decisive in the formative years of the Rosenwald schoolhouse construction program. As shown when comparing Table 5.2 with Table 5.3, rural blacks accounted for 16.64 percent of the total cost of buildings, grounds, and equipment from 10 June 1914 to 1 July 1932, but 20.3 percent of the total cost up until 1 July 1927. Two factors account largely for the decline in cash contributions by blacks from 45.5 percent in 1916 to 33.9 percent in 1920, to 20.3 percent in 1927 and 16.64 percent in 1932. First, as the migration of blacks from the rural South to southern and northern cities accelerated, white landowners, fearful of losing a critical mass of cash tenants, sharecroppers, farm laborers, and domestic servants, returned larger shares of public tax funds to support the construction of rural schoolhouses for blacks, which whites felt would serve as an incentive to blacks to stay. This fear was well founded as almost half of Georgia's black males from fifteen to thirty-four years of age left the state during the 1920s. Second, as the rural schoolhouse construction campaign moved closer in time to the Great Depression, blacks gave proportionately less in cash and more in land, labor, and building materials. This was especially true after 1920, when the rules governing the distribution of Rosenwald aid specifically allowed that "labor, land and materials may be counted as cash at current market values."[15]

On 30 October 1917 Rosenwald incorporated the Julius Rosenwald Fund, "for the well-being of mankind." An important mission of the fund was to enlarge the southern rural schoolhouse construction program for black children. Between 1917 and 1920, several committees and individuals were assigned to evaluate the fund's impact on rural schoolhouse construction and to make recommendations for a more efficient and widespread program. In 1920 Rosenwald established a southern office in Nashville, Tennessee, and shifted the administration of the school construction program from Tuskegee Institute to the new headquarters. S. L. Smith, state agent of Negro education in Tennessee, was selected as director of the fund's southern branch, and Clinton J. Calloway was appointed assistant field agent. The regulations for distributing aid were updated, but two old rules remained. The regulations provided "that the sites and buildings of all schools aided by the Fund shall be the property of the public school authorities," and "that, in providing these buildings, it is a condition precedent to receiving the aid of the Fund that the people of the several communities shall secure, from other sources: to wit—from public school funds, private contributions, etc., an amount equal to or greater than that provided by the Fund." Both the Rosenwald agents and public school authorities knew that the new program, as did the old one, required rural blacks to deed their money, land, labor, and building materials to southern local school systems.[16]

Although the records of voluntary contributions in the forms of land, labor, and materials are too incomplete to determine their total worth in

TABLE 5.3

Summary of Completed Buildings and of Amounts and Percentages of Cash Contributions by Blacks, Whites, Public Taxation, and Rosenwald Fund, 10 June 1914–1 July 1927

State	Number of buildings		Capacity		Total cost: Buildings, grounds, and equipment	Contributions*			
	Schools	Homes	Teacher	Pupil		Blacks	Whites	Taxation	Rosenwald
Alabama	345	5	718	32,310	$ 905,545	$ 349,820	$ 68,391	$ 292,464	$ 194,870
Arkansas	238	9	665	29,925	1,202,415	107,771	35,834	862,399	196,411
Florida	38	1	158	7,110	394,136	28,143	32,565	293,878	39,550
Georgia	165	9	510	22,950	733,475	177,492	47,299	364,802	143,882
Kentucky	115	2	237	10,665	503,045	59,272	10,875	360,658	72,240
Louisiana	310	19	851	38,295	1,212,566	340,201	53,209	560,856	258,300
Maryland	107	0	223	10,035	512,485	58,834	4,174	376,577	72,900
Mississippi	432	41	1,289	58,005	2,026,044	657,989	208,691	746,464	412,900
North Carolina	636	16	1,829	82,305	3,394,049	569,261	68,615	2,226,737	529,436
Oklahoma	117	13	248	11,160	589,558	24,130	3,125	471,223	91,080
South Carolina	373	4	1,253	56,385	2,224,521	415,806	175,058	1,279,857	353,800
Tennessee	284	7	724	32,580	1,369,495	242,298	21,977	890,520	214,700
Texas	303	15	699	31,455	1,252,186	190,088	35,615	783,641	242,842
Virginia	306	2	727	32,715	1,322,144	329,658	19,433	766,453	209,600
Totals	3,769	143	10,131	455,895	$17,641,664	$3,550,763	$784,861	$10,276,529	$3,032,511

Source: Statistical Reports on Rural School Construction Program, Box 331, JRFP-FU.
*Percentages donated: blacks 20.13 percent; whites 4.45 percent; public 58.25 percent; Rosenwald Fund 17.18 percent.

cash at 1914–32 market values, sufficient evidence exists to indicate that such contributions constituted significant shares of the total resources expended for Rosenwald schoolhouses. In 1921, for example, rural blacks in Coffee County, Alabama, donated ten acres of land for a school site, $700 in cash, and a pledge for an additional $1,500, and they also pledged to furnish most of the materials and all of the labor with which to construct the building. Few first-person sources, particularly sources estimating labor time and building materials, were left by the black builders of these rural schoolhouses. But the state agents of Negro education, Rosenwald agents, Jeanes Fund teachers, and local public school authorities were so impressed by the resourcefulness, tenacity, and sacrifices of rural black people that they left a vast and vivid record of many noncash contributions. Their accounts provide further evidence that rural black southerners, living in a cash-short economy and virtually disfranchised by public school authorities, paid from their limited resources a tremendous private cost for their "public" education.[17]

M. H. Griffin, the black Rosenwald building agent of Alabama, launched his career in the rural school construction program in 1921 in Autauga County. He met with blacks in the town of Autaugaville and shared in their ambitious and successful campaign to establish the Autauga County Training School. County training schools were combined elementary and normal schools with physical plants costing much more than those of one- and two-room schoolhouses. The blacks in Autauga, constituting more than 50 percent of the county's total population of twenty thousand, were mostly tenant farmers, which meant that they were "only eking out a living." The day of Griffin's first fund-raising rally "was hot, in the early part of August, when money was at a real premium with farmers." He recorded several "hair-raising scenes" which unfolded as these tenant farmers gathered to pay from their scanty earnings the costs of building a school. "I remember one old lady," wrote Griffin, "who wanted a hand in the 'Big School,' who said 'I have only one copper cent, and it goes for the children of Autaugaville.'" Her sacrifice moved the people to collect over $200, about all the money they had among them and more than their average annual income per capita. These sacrifices, however, did not yield nearly enough to pay for the cost of a new schoolhouse.[18]

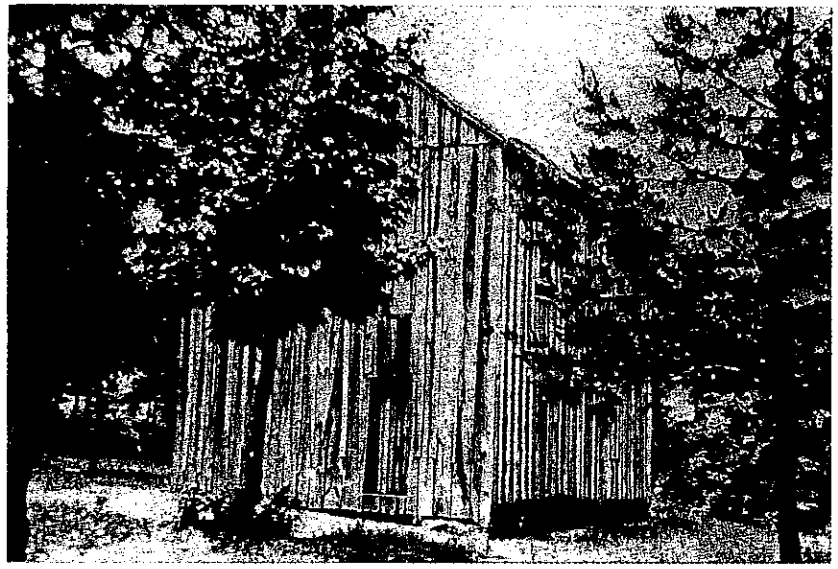
A month later, Griffin returned to Autaugaville for the second fund-raising rally. He discovered that fund-raising clubs had been formed in every black community in Autauga County. At the town meeting, following a number of rousing speeches regarding the importance of education and self-improvement, the second fund-raising campaign began in earnest. Griffin describes what happened:

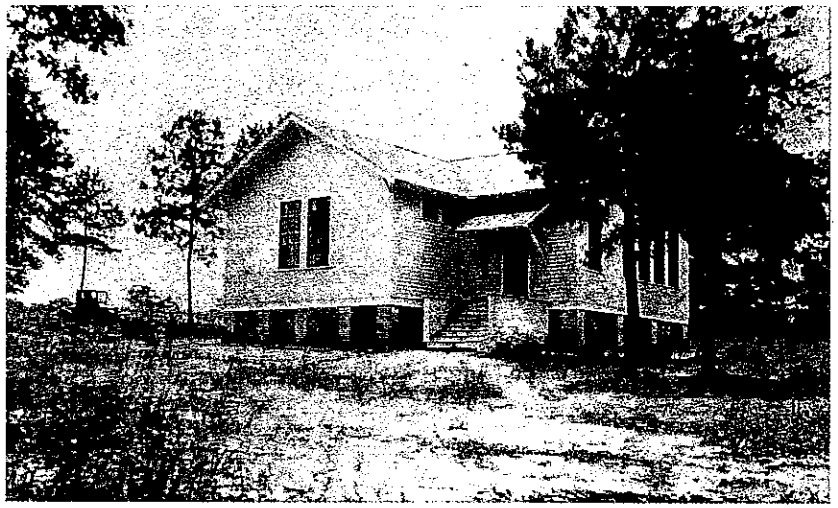
> I have never seen greater human sacrifices made for the cause of education. Children without shoes on their feet gave from fifty cents to one dollar and old men and old women, whose costumes represented several years of wear, gave from one to five dollars. The more progressive group gave from ten to twenty-five dollars. When the rally had closed we had the handsome sum of thirteen hundred dollars. Now we were at our rowes end, as we felt that the colored people had done all in the range of human limitation for the school, and yet we lacked more than a thousand dollars with which to qualify the project. Our next big question was "Where shall we get the rest of the money?" Colored men offered to pawn their cows and calves for the money and they did do just this thing. They made notes and gave for security pledges on their future crops, their cows and calves, and other belongings for the money. They raised in this way one thousand dollars, and we started out for a contractor.

The new Autauga County Training School was completed in the fall of 1921. It cost $12,000.[19]

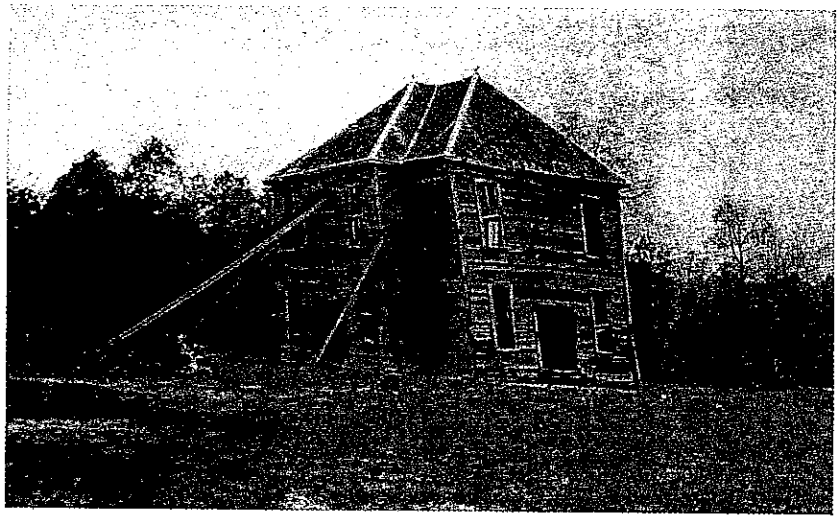
Griffin, energized from this first successful project, then turned his attention to Hobson City, an all-black town in Calhoun County, Alabama. There the principal of the old backwoods country school had organized approximately 150 children into a "Snuff Box Brigade." These children were provided snuff boxes to raise pennies, nickels, and dimes, and by the end of their first fund-raising rally had more than $200. This effort inspired the adults, who were already deeply committed to building a decent school for the children. In Griffin's words, "Men began to vie with each other in giving, and when the rally finally closed we had one thousand and fifty dollars on the table." With additional contributions of labor and land by black citizens, Hobson City was able to erect a modern schoolhouse. Although the popular belief was that Julius Rosenwald paid for such schools, Griffin knew the whole truth. "It should be borne in mind," he said about the Hobson City school, "that funds with which this project was completed came from people who represented a poor working class, men who worked at furnaces, women who washed and ironed for white people, and children who chopped cotton in the heat of the day for money to go in their snuff boxes."[20]

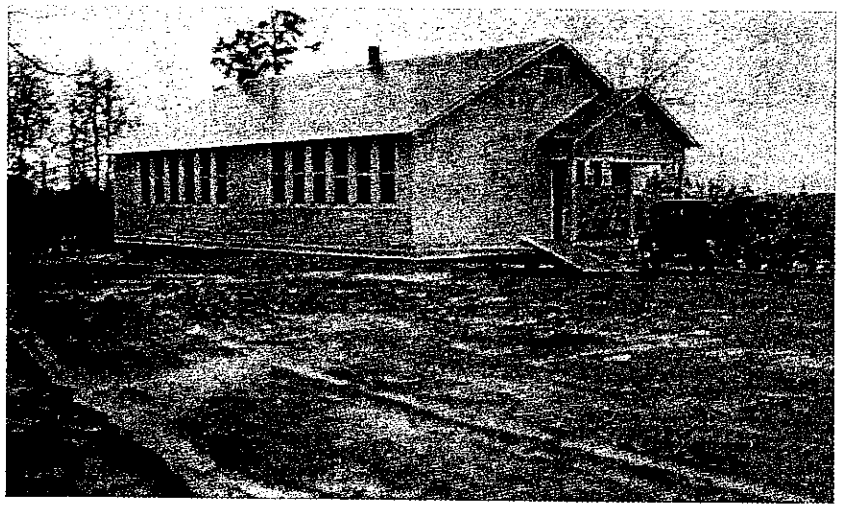
In December 1923 Griffin went on to Bexar, Marion County, Alabama, to tell the people of the conditions under which they could receive Rosenwald aid to help build a new schoolhouse. He met with the black residents "in a little old dingy schoolhouse lighted with a kerosene brass lamp, with smoke ascending to the top of the building." This community was poorer than most Alabama black rural communities. "They were at a loss when we told them they would have to raise seven hundred dol-





The old Hunter Hill School of Autauga County, Alabama (top)*, was an example of the typical common school available to southern black children prior to the Rosenwald school construction campaigns. The new Hunter Hill School* (bottom) *represented the three- and four-teacher wooden frame schools that replaced the old schools. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.*





The old Duncan School of Cass County, Texas (top)*, and the new Duncan School* (bottom) *built in the early 1920s. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.*

lars. That sounded like a million to them," recalled Griffin, for in Bexar, $700 equaled the combined annual incomes of about seven black male adults. Having virtually no cash, the residents donated labor and materials. Griffin said: "Men went to the woods, cut down trees, hauled them to the saw mill and had them cut into lumber. Others cleared away the grounds, and even women worked carrying water, and feeding the men while they labored until enough material was placed on the grounds for the two-teacher building." Consequently, in this very poor community, where "food and clothing represented the most crude kind," and "not a house had a screen or a glass window," and where many other living conditions were intolerable, the people built a two-teacher school. Further, they were able to attract a young married couple to come as teachers.[21]

Griffin worked in Alabama from 1921 to 1925. In January of his last year as a Rosenwald school agent in that state, he met with rural blacks of Boligee in Greene County. They gathered in "a little old rickety building without any heat" to plan the construction of a consolidated school in a remote rural community. The majority of black people were tenant farmers, and they were hard hit that year because the boll weevil had caused tremendous damage to cotton crops. When the fund-raising rally began and the master of ceremonies introduced the guests, among the many points he made was the following: " 'We have never had a school in this vicinity, most of our children have grown into manhood and womanhood without the semblance of an opportunity to get an insight into life, etc." "As he spoke," Griffin remembered, "tears began to trickle down his face." At that moment, "one old man, who had seen slavery days, with all of his life's earnings in an old greasy sack, slowly drew it from his pocket, and emptied it on the table." Griffin recalled that the ex-slave said: " 'I want to see the children of my grandchildren have a chance, and so I am giving my all.' " The ex-slave's commitment to education for the children and his willingness to sacrifice his life's earnings inspired the larger audience. Though Griffin thought initially that these boll weevil–stricken sharecroppers would raise only $10, the rally closed with $1,365 on the table. "They shouted and they cried and applauded when the amount was announced." Their additional donations in labor and materials enabled them to complete a five-room county training school at a cost of $6,450.[22]

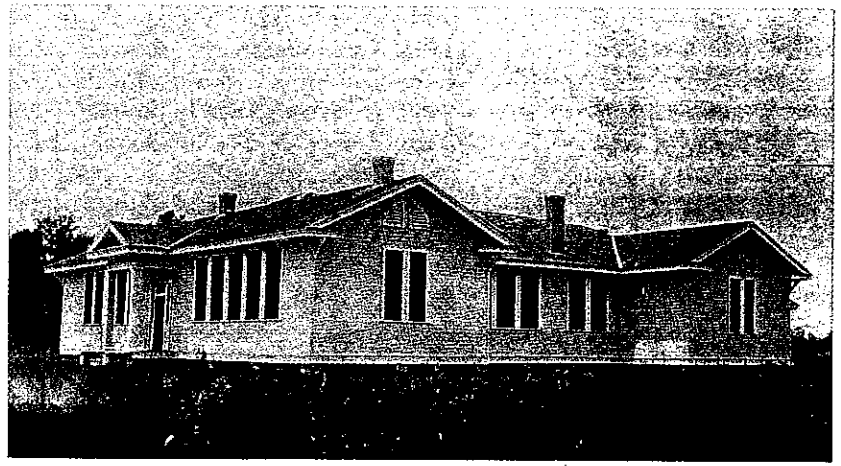
Dozens of such stories, said S. L. Smith, "might be told to show the fine spirit of cooperation and the willing sacrifices made to secure schools." Smith, first as state agent of Negro education in Tennessee from 1913 to 1920, and then as the Rosenwald Fund's director for southern schools from 1921 to 1937, was clearly in a position to observe such events. In the fall of 1914 he visited Tuskegee Institute and learned of the

availability of Rosenwald aid for rural schoolhouse construction. As a result of this visit he helped the black residents of Fayette County build Tennessee's first Rosenwald-supported school in 1915. This fund-raising campaign was organized by a black principal who was teaching in "an old lodge" and his wife, a Jeanes teacher. Fayette County had a total population of slightly over thirty thousand residents, and more than twenty-two thousand of them were black. But there were no public schools for the overwhelming majority of black children in the county in 1915. Smith recalled his first visit to a black fund-raising rally: "I was notified that 1200 lodge members over the county had voted to give a dollar each and I was asked to be present at a county-wide meeting. Although it was a rainy day the committees of the lodges brought in and laid on the table 936 one-dollar bills and promised that the other lodges would report soon. Their interest grew in the project, their total contributions being more than $2,000." The Fayette County school building cost $3,500 in cash. Black citizens contributed $2,200 of this amount, plus additional resources in labor and materials. The Rosenwald Fund donated $500, and the county public school authorities appropriated $800. Efforts did not cease after the first schoolhouse was completed, for between 1915 and 1920, the black principal and his wife succeeded in building twenty Rosenwald schools throughout Fayette County.[23]

Examples of other successful grass-roots campaigns occurred in Tennessee, Arkansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Texas, and Mississippi. In Hardeman County, Tennessee, Smith offered Rosenwald aid to "the first community completing a brick building on the G-A Community School Plan." Moreover, he stated that he would recommend the building as a county training school. Such schools were eligible for $500 a year from the Slater Fund for teachers' salaries and about $1,000 from the General Education Board for equipment. Two communities, Whitehead and Bolivar, became interested and began raising the necessary funds. Smith described what happened in this rivalry for the new schoolhouse:

> The Whitehead community after raising enough money to buy the brick began to negotiate with a Nashville firm, and the Bolivar community, not having the necessary money, bought a brick kiln and largely by free labor about 25,000 bricks were made, stacked in kiln form, and a house built over them. Just as they had started a fire for burning the brick there came a severe rain storm, blowing down the house and making of the brick kiln one large pile of mud. The other community kept at work and completed the brick building costing more than $14,000, of which $9,000 was paid in by the Negroes themselves. The Bolivar community was not discouraged by the loss of the brick but began immediately to raise funds, and

School construction fund-raising rally in rural Alabama in the 1920s. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.



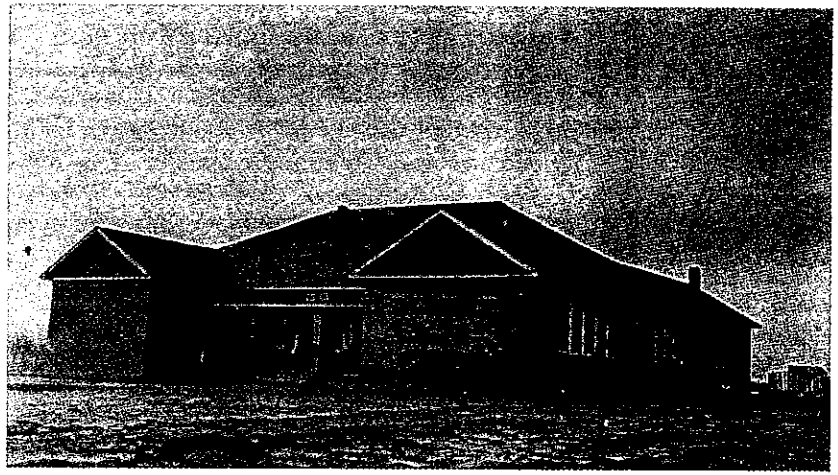
Greene County Training School of Boligee, Alabama, constructed in 1925. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.

shortly after I left the state, work on an excellent four-teacher building with an auditorium was completed.[24]

Describing a similar instance, Smith recalled that for two years the black citizens near Cedar Hill, Tennessee, "put forth heroic efforts in raising money to build a four-teacher Rosenwald school." They succeeded in raising $1,600 in cash, used $600 of it to buy a four-acre tract of land and deposited $1,000 in the bank to help pay for the cost of construction. Before the construction began, however, the bank failed and the people "lost every dollar of their money." Undaunted by this great loss, the people rallied a second time under the leadership of the local Jeanes teacher. Although they could not raise another $1,000 in cash, "they donated their time and enough rough lumber to satisfy the requirement of $1,000 by the Board of Education." In another West Tennessee county, Smith observed, "an elderly Negro woman [donated] 10 to 15 acres of land on which to build a school, and later on a Rosenwald county training school was built there."[25]

Smith was succeeded as state agent of Negro education by O. H. Bernard, formerly superintendent of schools in Robertson County, Tennessee. Bernard had helped build a Rosenwald school in Robertson in 1917. He recalled that the pivotal moment came when "an old colored woman agreed to deed to the county a desirable building site consisting of two acres of ground." With this land as a beginning, a small cash appropriation was secured from the county Board of Education, which, with free labor from blacks and money from the Rosenwald Fund, was sufficient to complete a one-room schoolhouse.[26]

The well-known southern educator Leo M. Favrot was then the state agent of Negro education in Arkansas when the first Rosenwald school was erected there in Hempstead County in 1915. It was called the Redland School and was located near McCaskill. Furnished but unpainted, it cost $2,300, of which $350 was contributed by the Rosenwald Fund, $150 by the public school authorities, and $1,800 by the black residents. Times were more difficult in Cleveland County, Arkansas, however, because blacks could contribute only a small sum in cash, "two or three hundred dollars at the most," recalled Favrot. Still, the black residents of Cleveland County were determined to build a decent schoolhouse for their children. They were fortunate in having one resident who knew the logging business and could run a sawmill. In 1920, as the Cleveland County superintendent of public schools told Favrot, this black man, having obtained a Rosenwald school blueprint, spearheaded a successful school construction campaign. "He called together the men and boys of the district and they went out into their own pine-timbered lands and cut and sawed the logs as needed." Further, "They stacked, dried and dressed



The six-teacher Hardeman County, Tennessee, Training School was one of the more expensive and better constructed Rosenwald schools. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.

Biedenhard School of Warren County, Mississippi, and the workers who donated their labor to build it. This three-teacher frame building was a typical Rosenwald school. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.

their lumber" and hauled the finished material two and one-half miles to the construction site. The black people donated the lumber, all of the labor, and the land, and built a two-room schoolhouse that cost the community less than $400 in cash.[27]

Near Marche, Arkansas, was the Round Hill School. For fifty-nine years, school was taught "in a crude building, poorly lighted, without desks," except for homemade wooden benches. In 1921, recorded the Arkansas Rosenwald school agent, T. L. Dorman, only two meetings were required for black residents to change this condition. "Some pledged labor, others donated trees to be cut and sawed into lumber. The women and children picked berries and muscadines; these were sold and the proceeds given to the building committee." Eighty-year-old Mr. Tetline, whose health prohibited his contribution in labor, "gave his wagon and team to be used in hauling material." When the new building was dedicated in 1921 with a barbecue dinner, Mr. Tetline donated the beef for this extraordinary occasion.[28]

"In a great many communities," said J. B. Fulton, state agent of Negro education in South Carolina, "men who have accumulated some money have been willing to give mortgages on their own property in order to secure the pledges of their neighbors who have been less fortunate." Regarding black monetary contributions to public schools in Virginia, Harris Hart, state superintendent of public schools, said: "In some instances, the county boards have been able to contribute but little money towards the erection of these schools, and yet in these cases the people have gone ahead and signed notes for enough money to put up their part and also to take care of that part which the boards would gladly have given, but were unable to do so because of an insufficiency of funds." Hart recalled three examples of this behavior. In one county, "About nine men of the community signed notes putting up their homes in order to secure enough money for a school." In another county, blacks built a six-teacher county training school which cost about $12,000; the school board gave "only $100." In a third county, "The people have a four-teacher building, which cost around $8,000, but were able to secure only about $500 from the school officials of the county because of the stringency." The pattern had been routinized; southern school authorities consistently cried financial insolvency when pressed to support the development of common schools for black children and offered blacks no alternative for establishing universal public education except through the practice of double taxation, hard work, and time.[29]

In Jones County, Texas, blacks had no public school before a Rosenwald building was erected in the early 1920s. G. T. Bludworth, assistant state agent for Negro education, reported that it had once been known "to whites and blacks alike, that the sun must not go down on a negro's head in Jones County." But the onetime cattle raisers became cotton growers and "discovered it was next to impossible to successfully raise and gather the fleecy staple without the aid of the negro." Soon there was a substantial black community in Jones County with a school-age population of about 140 children. The black community held a "mass meeting" to discuss probable ways and means by which a school building could be constructed. "They finally agreed to donate three hundred days work, either on the building itself during the time of its erection or to hire out wherever work could be found, the wages to be turned in to the Board to apply on the building." With minimal aid from the public school authorities, the black community of Jones County, according to Bludworth, succeeded in building a schoolhouse "valued at ten thousand dollars."[30]

The rural blacks of another Texas county wanted a new two-teacher schoolhouse. Their old school had been in use since the Civil War and was considerably dilapidated. Having very little cash, they resorted to means practiced by rural blacks throughout the American South. In the words of Bludworth:

> The Negroes held a conference among themselves and decided since they owned lands upon which the pine grew to donate the timber sufficient to purchase the lumber necessary. The proposition was accepted by the County superintendent. The negroes felled the trees and hauled the logs (after sawing them) to the sawmills nearby and exchanged the logs for seasoned lumber. With this lumber, labor donated and the money available, together with the aid of the Rosenwald Fund, they erected and equipped a new Rosenwald building and dedicated it with great elan.

Blacks in Wood County, Texas, turned to similar tactics when informed by the public school authorities that there was "no money for building purposes." "Not to be outdone," said Bludworth, "the negroes of the community met, elected one of their number as their leader and decided to plant a community crop of cotton, the proceeds to go into the building." The people cultivated and harvested enough cotton to purchase the land, lumber, and most of the equipment for the new schoolhouse. Wood County's black residents, with money from the Rosenwald Fund and their labor donated, constructed and equipped a "modern" school. Black Texans were not the only ones who grew a crop to finance a school. From Mrs. J. E. Johnson, president of the Parent-Teachers Association of Prentiss, Mississippi, comes a similar story. In that community "the farmers pledged an acre or less of cotton to be called 'The Rosenwald Patch' and the proceeds were to be used for the building."[31]

Nearly all of the philanthropic and public school officials who worked

in the area of southern black education recognized that rural blacks paid a high price for "public" schooling that should have been financed by tax revenues. "The sacrifices made by the Negroes themselves," said D. L. Lewis, supervisor of rural schools in South Carolina, "bespeak for them the finest kind of interest in the education of their children." As he recalled: "In Jasper County, South Carolina, which is predominantly a Negro county, a young Negro man, who has been blind almost from birth and who has received some education, feeling the call of his people, gave ceaseless effort to the establishment of a Rosenwald school in his community. As a result of his self-sacrificing work a splendid four-room Rosenwald building was erected and equipped, and this blind Negro is now serving as one of the teachers." W. T. B. Williams, the black educator who in the 1920s was field director for the John F. Slater Fund and the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, seemed somewhat less surprised by the actions of rural blacks. "Usually it is not difficult to interest Negroes in the building of Rosenwald schools," he said. Nevertheless, even Williams noted some of their sacrifices: "I saw recently at the dedication of a fine Rosenwald school a colored man with no children who had mortgaged his farm to secure the money necessary to complete the building." "No sacrifice is too great for them to make," Williams concluded.[32]

Such testimony by Rosenwald school agents, Jeanes teachers, rural school supervisors, and state agents of Negro education across the South demonstrates convincingly that these school construction campaigns were not isolated incidents but examples of widespread grass-roots reforms that epitomized the educational beliefs and behavior of black southerners. J. B. Fulton, state agent for Negro schools in South Carolina, had witnessed the establishment of a Rosenwald school in every county in the state except three, "and one of these three has a building under construction." Fulton knew of "many human interest stories" in connection with the building of rural schools for black children. He seemed most impressed, however, with the selfless behavior of the more well-to-do black men: "In a great many communities men who have accumulated some money have been willing to give mortgages on their own property in order to secure the pledges of their neighbors who have been less fortunate." Similarly, Zela Fields, a Jeanes teacher in Colbert County, Alabama, recorded that the local blacksmith, Foster Nolen, deeded one acre of his land to the local school officials and gave the first timber toward the construction of a new school. Nolen, "a man about seventy-five or eighty years old," regretted deeply that he had no strength to help build the school with his own hands. Whether it was Colbert County, Alabama, or Jasper County, South Carolina, the beliefs and behavior of rural blacks in this crusade for common schools reflected and reinforced cumulative Afro-American traditions that had developed

over time and spread over space. The common patterns of behavior among black men and women of diverse social environments evidence the educational and communal values blacks transmitted from generation to generation. Thus the behavior of blacks in the second crusade for universal common schooling was strikingly similar to the behavior of former slaves in their campaign for universal public education during the Reconstruction era.[33]

In addition to the money, land, labor, and building materials that rural blacks gave to pay for the costs of schoolhouse construction, they also contributed significant amounts of money and labor to the maintenance and improvement of school buildings. In the late 1920s, each of fourteen southern states established "Rosenwald School Day," an annual event that punctuated the year-long campaigns to raise money and contribute labor for school improvement activities. The money raised on Rosenwald Day and during the school term for the academic year 1930–31 is summarized in Table 5.4. It is significant that even during a year of the Great Depression rural blacks raised $81,377.13 during the academic year and $9,471.12 on Rosenwald Day, a combined total of $90,848.25. This practice continued beyond the Rosenwald Fund's termination of its contributions in 1932 to the black rural school building campaign. In 1933, for instance, black people in Tennessee contributed $803.99 in cash on Rosenwald Day and collected $7,507.71 during the 1932–33 academic year. During the same academic year blacks in Virginia contributed $5,220, in Mississippi they collected $1,965, and in North Carolina they raised $14,000. These practices continued through the 1930s. In 1937 the enterprising black residents of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, showed a film of the Joe Louis–Max Schmeling boxing match as a means to raise funds for school improvement activities.[34]

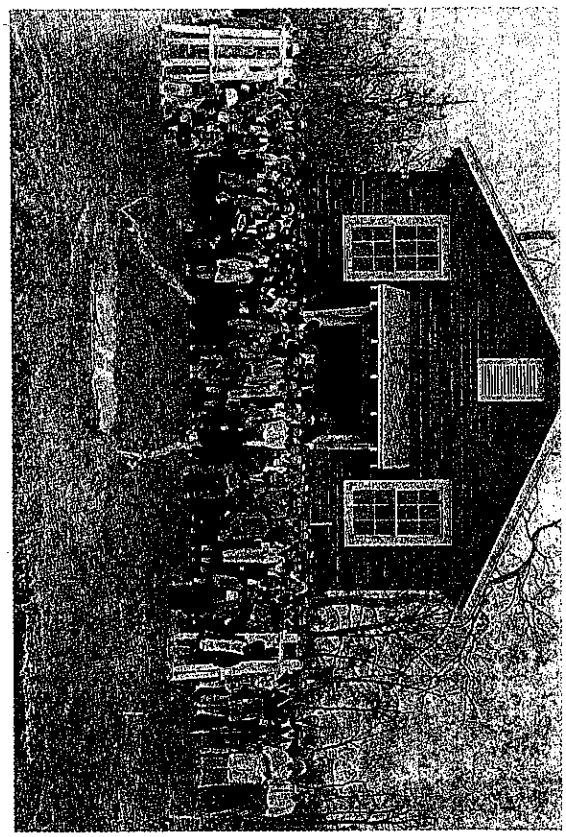
It was particularly painful for black southerners to make private contributions for the maintenance of public schools during the late 1920s and 1930s because their already low incomes dropped sharply during these hard economic times. Various studies at the time revealed the extremely low incomes of these rural black families. Studies of black farm families who were chiefly tenants and sharecroppers showed that few were able to earn beyond what was required for bare subsistence. The average annual income in 1934 of a selected group of more than two thousand of these families was $105.43. Distributed among a family of five persons, this represented a monthly income of about $1.75 per person. Farm owners earned more, but they made up scarcely more than 20 percent of rural black families. A study of six hundred black families in an Alabama rural area in 1932 documented average annual earnings of $90. Arthur Raper, who examined two counties in Georgia in 1927, and again in 1934, found that the black families averaged $302 in 1927 in

TABLE 5.4

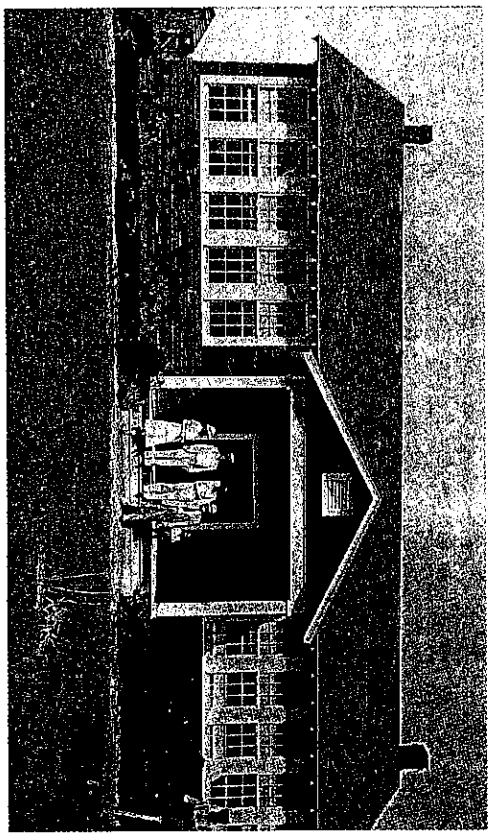
Summary of Rosenwald School Day Program by States for the Academic Year 1930–1931

State	Number reporting				Number attending Rosenwald School Day program	Money collected for school improvement	
	Counties	Schools	Teachers	Pupils enrolled		Rosenwald Day	During year
Alabama	39	113	375	15,653	13,584	$ 484.02	$ 6,739.80
Arkansas	25	79	*	*	3,215	2,415.00	*
Florida	25	86	276	11,996	2,184	411.68	2,433.10
Georgia	49	67	297	10,770	2,785	328.76	7,070.44
Kentucky	21	21	88	3,203	2,798	44.50	865.31
Louisiana	29	105	345	16,769	5,669	251.56	4,308.28
Mississippi	37	104	408	18,496	8,006	518.83	6,573.82
Missouri	7	38	64	3,105	473	546.32	836.22
North Carolina	81	565	1,851	75,631	22,268	1,052.33	19,114.02
Oklahoma	36	132	300	10,098	5,291	185.57	1,714.79
South Carolina	36	119	483	21,989	10,277	734.23	8,138.51
Tennessee	38	187	422	17,522	19,280	514.82	7,915.72
Texas	39	108	285	11,313	7,750	734.40	5,499.00
Virginia	51	244	415	16,243	8,972	1,249.10	10,168.12
Totals	513	1,968	5,609	232,788	112,552	$9,471.12	$81,377.13

Source: Statistical Reports on Rural School Construction Program, Box 331, JRFP-FU.
*Data not submitted.



Rosenwald School Day at Bethlehem School of Monroe County, Arkansas. The schoolchildren are displaying the cans they carried throughout the community to collect money for school maintenance and improvements. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.



Dublin School of Coahoma County, Mississippi. In 1935 this school won the statewide prize in the Rosenwald Day "Improvement and Beautification" contest. Courtesy of Fisk University Library.

the first county and $380 in the second; but in 1934 their annual earnings were $190 and $299, respectively. Black farm laborers earned as little as $86 annually. Some of these families spent half of their incomes for food alone. Detailed studies of diet made at various points indicated serious deviations from the standard in calories. Meanwhile, rural blacks were forced to take from their meager annual incomes and contribute money to the construction and maintenance of public schools for black children because southern state and local governments refused to accept responsibility for black public education.[35]

Of the resources contributed to sustain and improve rural black schools, particularly during the economically lean years of the late 1920s and 1930s, the free labor for maintenance and repair work probably constituted an even larger share than cash donations. A Rosenwald school maintenance report from Louisiana indicates the value of labor contributed to school improvement for the 1932–33 academic year. The formula used for estimating the market value of labor contributions allowed two dollars per day for men, one dollar for women, and one-half dollar for children. Therefore, it was estimated that for school maintenance, rural blacks in Louisiana contributed labor valued at $2,947.33. This contribution was the larger share of resources donated in Louisiana for the 1932–33 academic year. The school improvement activities performed included the beautification of grounds, protecting the drinking water, providing fuel sheds, painting school buildings every three years, and serving hot lunches. Studies of southern school finances for the period demonstrate that school officials, though very reluctant to appropriate money for schoolhouses and teachers for black children, expended virtually no funds for school maintenance, repair, supplies, and transportation. Black teachers, parents, and citizens taxed themselves for public school improvement costs, and this practice became increasingly difficult as poor rural communities experienced the Great Depression.[36]

The educational activities of southern rural blacks during the second crusade for universal common schooling permit us to see whether whole ranges of their behavior between 1860 and 1935 were accurate indicators of enduring cultural beliefs in education that were transmitted from generation to generation. Studying the black experience at a particular moment in time in contradistinction to studying it at different moments in time can be very misleading. Horace Mann Bond, for instance, wrote his classic study of the history and sociology of black education during the Great Depression. Disappointed with the progress of black education at that time, Bond maintained that "the Negro parent needs to become conscious in a greater measure of the values of education." Bond then pointed out that "during the Reconstruction Period, education was a passion with Negroes." Moreover, he recognized that the Rosenwald

school campaigns had energized the collective will and educational ambitions of southern rural black communities. Yet, to Bond, these developments seemed fragmented and discontinuous, and he credited much of the black behavior to the external stimuli provided by northern philanthropic foundations. Bond failed to understand, however, that Afro-Americans did not have to be transformed into a new class of people who valued education, for they already did. It did not take the Civil War, emancipation, or northern philanthropic foundations to acculturate blacks because blacks carried within their culture enduring beliefs in the value of learning and self-improvement. The war and Reconstruction (1860–77) and the World War I migration and resulting common school crusade (1914–32) enlarged the arenas in which ordinary black men and women could make choices. During such periods they could do and say what often could not be done and said in more oppressive times. What southern rural blacks did during the second common school crusade only revealed what they had thought but could not act upon during the period following Reconstruction, when planters and white small farmers virtually excluded them from the benefits of public education.[37]

Moreover, what rural blacks did during the period 1914 to 1932 could not be done during the Great Depression. The cycles remind one of the words from the black spiritual, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen": "Sometimes I'm up; sometimes I'm down; sometimes I'm almost to the ground." By the mid-1930s rural black southerners were pressed to the ground. Their behavior of self-help and practice of double taxation, though not extinguished completely, became much less substantial than in the preceding decades. Many new schoolhouses had been built between 1914 and 1932, but the wooden frame one- and two-teacher buildings needed daily maintenance and repair work, and the schoolchildren needed transportation, equipment, books, and supplies. Traditionally, most of these "auxiliary" expenses had been borne by black teachers and parents. Yet examples from North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland indicate that during the worst years of the depression not even the most committed black parents and teachers could continue to bear "auxiliary" expenses. In 1934 Geneva Holmes, a black teacher in Maxton, North Carolina, requested aid from the Rosenwald Fund for basic school supplies and equipment. Apologizing for having to make the request, she explained: "The teachers in the school use every means to try to secure equipment as individuals but our salaries have been cut so low that we are not able to use very much personal money for school equipment." In Bowling Green, Virginia, a black teacher named Nannie L. Craighead requested financial assistance to transport her students to a health clinic in Richmond. She reported that seventy-three of her seventy-six pupils had either enlarged tonsils, defective teeth, or defective vision. Blacks in

St. Inigoes, Maryland, needed funds to overhaul their dilapidated school buildings, but the local white school officials refused to make the repairs. According to the black Reverend E. P. Moon, the white public schools of St. Inigoes were "modern and teachers well paid." Yet the black public schools there were neglected. "We weep! We cry! We appeal to the authorities, but no attention is paid us," wrote Moon to the Rosenwald Fund. In New Bern, North Carolina, the black residents needed money to purchase a school bus because their children had to leave home at 6 A.M. to get to school on time and in the winter months they suffered frequently from overexposure to cold weather. The local school board would not provide a bus for black children. Such problems varied from town to town. In 1935 the black Parent-Teacher Association in Kelford, North Carolina, needed help with its project to install lights in the public school for black children. The local power company had stopped the power line about one mile from the school and refused to furnish service except at unreasonable expense. The Parent-Teacher Association decided to install a farm light plant and requested the Rosenwald Fund to assist in this endeavor.[38]

Before the Great Depression rural black southerners generally absorbed these expenses and much more out of their own resources. Their financial resources, however, had been drained thoroughly by the practice of double taxation during their second crusade for universal common schools. Then the Depression came and the passageways of earlier decades were momentarily shut off. In Columbia, North Carolina, the black school population was increasing rapidly in 1934, and the community needed badly to add two more classrooms to accommodate the new pupils. Despite deeply held beliefs in education and self-improvement, the black community had no money to act on its educational values. "We can't get much money, seemingly the people just can't get any money," wrote F. L. Blount, a black teacher in the elementary school for black children. Such conditions forced men like Blount to beg for money from private philanthropic foundations or, as he put it, "allow so many boys and girls to stay out of school because of conditions of which they are not responsible." Blount wrote reluctantly to Edwin Embree of the Rosenwald Fund:

> Mr. Embree, I know already that you have almost exhausted your funds on Negro Education and other good causes but we have just got to ask you for a little. Please if you can give us just a little money on our project here in this very humble community of good people. If you can't give us but a little that little will go a long way on our project. Please let me hear from you. If you don't have much money to give us you do have great advice that will go a long way in pointing the way out for us. We do thank you for any thing that you have to give us whether it be money, advice or encouragement.

Blount's letter reflected the spirit of a people who had been pressed to the ground by the Great Depression. During the preceding two decades rural black southerners had stood proudly on their own feet and pursued universal schooling with a tenacity and determination unexcelled and seldom, if ever, approached by their contemporary social classes. But that was a different arena from the 1930s, and they could act on their beliefs during the rural school crusade in ways that were impossible during the succeeding decade. In maintaining their enduring beliefs in education and self-improvement, however, they were fundamentally the same people through both good and bad times.[39]

When the Rosenwald school building program ended in the early 1930s, rural black southerners had much to be proud of and much to regret. On one hand, the process of double taxation and collective social action enabled them to improve tremendously the material conditions of their educational system; on the other, this same process was unjust and oppressive, and their accommodation to double taxation helped extend over them the power of their oppressors. Yet on the positive side, the structure of black common schools was radically transformed by the second crusade. In 1932 more than one-fourth of all the black schoolchildren in the South were taught in Rosenwald schools. As early as the academic year 1925–26, 27.4 percent of southern rural black pupils and 29.7 percent of the rural black teachers were housed in Rosenwald schools (see Table 5.5). Although the 3,464 Rosenwald schools erected by 1926 constituted only 15.4 percent of the total 22,494 rural schools for southern black children, their seating capacity was generally double that of the average rural black school. Consequently, the average enrollment per rural black school in 1926 was 66 pupils; the average in Rosenwald schools was 120. In the fifteen southern states where the Rosenwald plan was in effect, Rosenwald schools were built in 880 or 66 percent of the 1,327 counties. Rosenwald schools were located in 95 percent of the counties in South Carolina, 90 percent of those in Alabama, 86 percent in Louisiana, Maryland, and North Carolina, and 75 percent in Virginia. These schools were spread throughout the South and particularly in counties with large black populations.[40]

The second crusade for common schools resulted in a much more developed elementary school system for black children. This significantly improved structure of opportunity at the elementary level enabled black southerners to alter radically their patterns of school enrollment and attendance. During earlier decades they valued schooling but could not act on their values because the opportunity to attend school was not

TABLE 5.5

Black Teachers and Student Enrollment in Southern States and Percentage of Rural Teachers and Students in Rosenwald Schools for the Academic Year 1925–1926

State	Teachers			Enrollment			Percentage of Rosenwald schools	
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Percentage of all rural black teachers	Percentage of all rural enrollment
Alabama	3,348	2,662	686	190,029	149,737	40,292	25.9	20.7
Arkansas	2,499	2,250	249	114,170	97,170	17,000	30.6	28.5
Florida	1,864	1,264	600	79,185	49,800	29,285	10.0	11.3
Georgia	4,444	3,312	1,132	257,674	167,488	90,186	13.4	12.0
Kentucky	1,337	789	548	45,854	26,531	19,323	28.7	38.5
Louisiana	2,500	1,600	900	137,000	100,000	37,000	48.7	35.1
Maryland	1,282	773	509	49,251	29,879	19,372	24.7	28.7
Mississippi	5,125	4,106	1,019	272,202	218,202	54,000	28.7	24.3
North Carolina	5,569	4,268	1,301	254,617	196,009	58,608	38.3	37.6
Oklahoma	1,213	705	508	43,761	26,610	17,151	30.9	36.8
South Carolina	4,228	2,967	1,261	234,707	162,844	71,863	38.3	31.4
Tennessee	2,556	1,708	848	116,535	75,335	41,200	40.2	41.0
Texas	4,436	3,388	1,048	198,763	99,069	99,694	18.9	29.2
Virginia	3,794	2,893	901	152,974	116,015	36,959	22.8	25.6
Totals	44,195	32,685	11,510	2,146,722	1,514,689	632,033	29.7	27.4

Source: Reports submitted by state supervisors of Negro education to S. L. Smith, director of the Rosenwald Fund's School Construction Program, Box 331, JRFP-FU.

available to the majority. By 1935, however, enough elementary schools had been built to accommodate the majority of black children. Indeed, there was a remarkable difference between black school enrollment patterns in 1900 and 1940. In 1900 the proportion of black children of elementary school age attending school was significantly lower than the corresponding proportion of whites. As illustrated in Table 5.1, in 1900 only 22 percent of blacks five to nine years of age and 52 percent of those ten to fourteen years of age were attending school. Of those black children aged five to fourteen, only 36 percent were in school. The proportion of white children aged five to fourteen attending school in the South in 1900 was markedly higher: 37 percent for whites aged five to nine, 76 percent for those aged ten to fourteen, and 55 percent for the entire age group. But the campaigns for black elementary schools in the rural South during the period 1900 to 1935 successfully transformed the structure of enrollment and attendance for younger black children. By 1940, as illustrated in Table 5.6, 66 percent of southern black children five to nine years of age were attending school compared to 65 percent of southern whites of the same age. Of blacks aged ten to fourteen, 90 percent were attending school in 1940, compared to 91 percent of the white children of the same ages. The school attendance rates of black children five to fourteen years of age increased from 36 percent in 1900 to 78 percent in 1940, and the corresponding rate for whites went from 55 percent in 1900 to 79 percent in 1940. Younger black children, whose rates of attendance were significantly lower than those of younger whites in 1900, had reached parity by 1940. This great transformation of the overall structure of black elementary schooling was in large part attributable to the school construction campaigns of the second crusade. To be sure, the overwhelming majority of younger black pupils attended wretched and inadequate one-teacher elementary schools. Their school terms were shorter than those for southern white pupils and their teachers were less well prepared and less well paid than white teachers. Still, there were school buildings, teachers, desks, and seats throughout the black South in 1940 that had not been available in 1900. This new access to common schooling allowed black southerners to act on enduring educational values in 1940 in ways that they could not in 1900. The remarkable transformation of black school attendance behavior reflected the intersection of enduring educational values with changing educational opportunities.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider the fundamental injustice and political costs of the system of double taxation that fueled the second crusade for black common schooling and enabled black southerners to have for the first time in their history at least the semblance of universal elementary education. First, the brunt of public taxation on real prop-

TABLE 5.6

Elementary School Attendance by Race and Age in Southern States, 1940

State	Number of children 5 to 9 years old, inclusive		Number attending school		Percent attending school		Number of children 10 to 14 years old, inclusive		Number attending school		Percent attending school	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Alabama	114,289	190,209	70,566	123,833	62	65	113,310	201,031	100,414	189,483	89	94
Arkansas	50,896	149,377	33,877	99,460	67	67	51,089	155,251	45,679	136,949	89	88
Delaware	3,004	16,678	2,169	12,524	72	75	2,726	18,626	2,627	18,067	96	97
Florida	45,560	107,408	31,541	75,927	69	70	48,495	122,588	43,277	115,531	89	94
Georgia	122,083	196,973	81,711	137,019	67	70	120,045	204,964	104,714	189,197	87	92
Kentucky	17,411	268,588	11,124	112,980	64	42	19,073	274,785	16,148	172,632	85	63
Louisiana	84,488	143,488	56,741	97,808	67	68	90,586	153,250	79,105	145,125	87	95
Maryland	28,092	112,738	20,567	83,387	73	74	29,325	127,027	27,737	122,455	95	96
Mississippi	124,319	110,899	74,276	78,679	60	71	123,597	118,416	102,855	110,974	83	94
Missouri	18,746	271,242	14,947	208,682	80	77	19,737	296,447	18,477	281,587	94	95
North Carolina	115,375	268,466	78,089	176,437	68	66	118,097	283,283	109,643	268,921	93	95
South Carolina	103,500	110,536	65,834	76,677	64	69	101,607	114,382	92,019	109,957	91	96
Tennessee	46,572	237,235	31,091	152,451	67	64	48,630	245,454	44,720	221,439	92	90
Texas	92,450	501,032	63,607	319,333	69	64	94,988	532,417	90,196	501,003	95	94
Virginia	69,444	183,024	43,907	114,998	63	63	73,993	196,294	67,865	185,725	92	95
West Virginia	10,806	181,181	8,077	121,980	75	67	12,171	193,621	11,745	187,788	97	97
Totals	1,047,035	3,049,074	688,133	1,992,155	66	65	1,067,129	3,237,836	957,221	2,956,833	90	91

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 217, 399, 907; pt. 2, pp. 25, 197; pt. 3, pp. 185, 343, 517; pt. 4, p. 213; pt. 5, p. 277; pt. 6, pp. 357, 571, 773; pt. 7, pp. 145, 453.

erty, land, and business fell heavily on the region's black laborers. A good share of the taxes levied on southern planters and industrialists was transformed into lower wages paid to common laborers. Second, although this particular form of so-called "self-help" reinforced and taught sacrifice, it was terribly unjust. Black southerners paid their taxes as citizens, and while white taxpayers got a system of free public education, black taxpayers got virtually nothing except when they taxed themselves again. The Rosenwald school building campaign was the most visible component of a deeper and wider process of double taxation. Even before the Rosenwald projects began, southern state school officials recognized that black citizens were willing to tax themselves voluntarily to obtain school buildings, equipment, and teachers, and officials encouraged this voluntary taxation. Moreover, examples from some states indicate that school authorities viewed double taxation as a necessary and just burden to be borne by black citizens. N. C. Newbold, an eminent white state school official in North Carolina, became the state's first agent of Negro rural schools in June 1913, at least three years before there were Rosenwald projects in North Carolina. In his first annual report on the conditions of black rural education, Newbold stated: "The average negro rural schoolhouse is really a disgrace to an independent, civilized people. To one who does not know our history, these schoolhouses, though mute, would tell in unmistaken terms a story of injustice, inhumanity and neglect on the part of our white people." He attributed the wretched state of rural black schooling to two causes. It had taken "all our time, thought and money these latter years to rebuild and equip in even a modest way the schoolhouses for our own children." More important, "In the main the best, most tolerant minded, far reaching among us have regarded the negro schools as a liability rather than an asset." "Many have gone on the theory," Newbold continued, "that the poorer the school supplied to the Negroes, the better it would be for society and the state." Yet he was optimistic regarding progress in black rural education because the attitude of whites toward black education appeared to be changing for the better, and black citizens showed a willingness to impose upon themselves a voluntary tax to finance the construction of schoolhouses for their children. Newbold viewed this practice of double taxation among blacks as "only fair to the white people of the state" because blacks in the past had "depended upon the meagre school tax to do all for them." In other words, Newbold expected black citizens to depend heavily on their private resources to build a system of "public" schools for black children, while the school tax, which was paid by all the citizens of the state—black and white—was used disproportionately to build schools for white children.[47]

For the academic year 1913 to 1914, Newbold reported that the

amount of money raised by rural blacks for new buildings was $9,396.37, and the value of labor given by them for new buildings was $6,384.89. Similarly, the first state supervisor of rural elementary schools in Virginia, Jackson Davis, began his new job in 1911 and quickly took note of and encouraged the practice of double taxation among Virginia's black citizens. He discovered the existence of black "school leagues" throughout Virginia, and accounts of their activities appeared regularly in his monthly reports. For the academic year 1914–15, at least two years before there were any Rosenwald projects in Virginia, Davis reported that "School Leagues were organized at 680 schools, and they contributed in cash for new schools, equipment, extensions of terms, and improvements $46,738.67." Clearly, Davis understood that those contributions represented a system of double taxation, but he thought it merited praise instead of condemnation. As he put it,

> It is sometimes said that negroes do not pay enough school taxes to run their own schools, but these facts indicate that they not only pay willingly according to the value of their property, but that many go beyond this with personal contributions to their schools, amounting in 35 counties to $46,738.67. This is, in reality, a voluntary school tax, and often means a sacrifice, but it speaks volumes of the desire of an increasing number of home-owning Negroes to give their children good schools at home, and to keep them in the country trained for useful citizenship.

Davis was succeeded as state supervisor of rural elementary schools by Arthur D. Wright, who reported that during the 1914–15 academic year Virginia's black school leagues raised "a total voluntary school tax of $33,689." As Richard R. Wright, Jr., demonstrated in *Self-Help in Negro Education*, such practices were common throughout the black South.[42]

Although we shall never know the precise amount in cash, land, and labor contributed by black southerners to public school authorities, a vast quantity of primary sources indicates that the double taxation of black southerners was a widespread and long-standing custom. We see a certain fineness or heroism in the sacrifices made by such poor and ordinary men and women. Indeed, as Davis said, their actions spoke volumes about their beliefs in learning and self-improvement. For black southerners, that particular way of living had been a common experience since slavery. Yet the traditions of double taxation and extraordinary sacrifice had distinct limits, beyond which they were both unjust and dangerous. One limit was the point at which "self-help" became unconscious submission to oppression. In vital respects, the regionwide process of double taxation was an accommodation to the oppressive nature of southern society. It made the regular process of excluding black children from the benefits of tax-supported public education easier and more bearable for both whites and blacks. It said much about blacks' desire for education and their willingness to sacrifice for it, but it also said much about their powerlessness, their taxation without representation, and their oppression. The process of double taxation also reflected the manner in which black southerners during the period 1900 to 1935 interpreted and dealt with their oppression. They submitted to the process because they felt that it was the only way they could secure an education for their children, a way to protect and develop their communities, a way to sustain passageways to better times.