# HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

*Bicentennial Intern Project*
*Conducted by*
*the Alabama State Department of Education*
*in Cooperation with*
*the Southern Regional Education Board*

BULLETIN 1975, No. 7

SG013200

# HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

*Bicentennial Intern Project*
*Conducted by*
*the Alabama State Department of Education*
*in Cooperation with*
*the Southern Regional Education Board*

BULLETIN 1975, No. 7

Coordinated by Division of Instruction
J.C. Blair, Director
William Arthur Heustess, Project Chairman



This report was produced through the Alabama pilot project of the Bicentennial Intern Program in Education. The project was administered by the Alabama Department of Education in cooperation with the Southern Regional Education Board. Funds were provided by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Alabama Department of Education, and the Alabama American Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

The work presented or reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract from the U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The opinions expressed herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be implied.

# THE BICENTENNIAL INTERN PROGRAM IN EDUCATION

The Bicentennial Intern Program in Education is designed to contribute to public awareness and professional understanding of the issues and opportunities associated with education today. Highly qualified graduate students serve with state education agencies to conduct broad studies of the roles education has played in states' development, to assess states' educational progress and circumstances, and to identify alternative methods of dealing with issues and problems in the future.

Under the sponsorship of the Educational Division of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, pilot projects were conducted during 1974 in four states — Alabama, Colorado, Indiana, and Rhode Island.

In Alabama Miss Adelaide Kilgrow and Mr. Eugene M. Thomas were selected for the nine-month internships with the Alabama Department of Education. Miss Kilgrow is a doctoral student in educational administration at The University of Alabama, and Mr. Thomas is a doctoral student in history at Auburn University. The interns documented Alabama's educational progress during the past two centuries, and their study is the basis for statewide Bicentennial plans for 1975 and 1976. A movie highlighting the study is being prepared by the Alabama Department of Education and the Alabama American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, with assistance from the interns. A text supplement for secondary teachers in social studies will facilitate discussion of the importance of education. A Bicentennial newspaper with many ideas for student Bicentennial projects will be sent to all Alabama schools in 1975.

The Alabama education project serves as a demonstration Bicentennial project for other Alabama public agencies, for agencies in other states, and for DHEW's Education Division. It is a model for Bicentennial activities that are professionally productive, educational for the participants, and interesting to the public. With the other three pilot projects, it helps show the variety of ways in which an institution can identify its contributions to life in the United States.

Harlan T. Cooper
Southern Regional Education Board



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to all who contributed to this work. Many people assisted the authors, and thanks are due to the following persons, especially: M.C. McMillan, Andrew M. Weaver, Truman M. Pierce of Auburn University; Paul Orr, John F. Ramsey, Martha W. Tack, and Patricia W. Seymour of The University of Alabama; William F. Barnard of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education; C.B. Smith, formerly of Troy State University; and J.C. Blair and W.A. Heustess of the Alabama State Department of Education.

Thanks are also due for the cooperation extended by the State Department of Education; the Southern Regional Education Board; the State Department of Archives and History; the Alabama Council on the Arts and Humanities; the Southern Regional Council; the U.S. Office of Health, Education and Welfare; the Catholic Schools, Diocese of North Alabama; the Andalusia City School System; the Monroe County School System; the Lamar County School System; the Henry County School System; the Florence City School System; the Madison County School System; and the Decatur City School System.

Many friends, both specialists and secretaries in the Basic Sciences Section, Division of Instruction, State Department of Education, have assisted through discussion of ideas, encouraging words, and constructive criticism. Finally, thanks go to our families, who have sustained our efforts through a period of concentrated work.

Adelaide Kilgrow
The University of Alabama

Eugene Marvin Thomas, III
Auburn University

# FOREWORD

History is a fascinating subject which gives an account of the accomplishments made by the human family during the past. It gives a foundation for understanding the present and guidance for us as we make decisions which have an impact on the future. This history of education in Alabama is, I believe, a significant contribution to the record of accomplishments in public education in the State of Alabama. There was indeed a need for this history to be written. It can be used by all citizens of the state and particularly by the school boys and girls in the early years of their education. It can also be used as a source of information and inspiration for education students at all levels. It can be used for the general citizenry to gain a better insight into the progress of education in Alabama and the direction in which it should go in the future.

The authors of this history are to be commended for their diligence and for their dedication in seeking authentic information to present in this document. I also commend the Bicentennial Commission, the Southern Regional Education Board, the State Department of Education officials, and all interested persons who made a contribution to the success of this publication. It has been a source of satisfaction and pleasure to work with those who have successfully written this volume, and the people of Alabama are indebted to those who contributed to this effort.

LeRoy Brown
State Superintendent of Education



AH State Department of Education March 15, 1976 c.1 of 4

# PREFACE

People in Alabama today say that education is important for themselves and the state; however when asked why, they don't know. It is anticipated that this summary of Alabama education will not only enhance the interest in and appreciation for the state's educational system; but, by emphasizing the effects education has had on the state and its people, the summary will also demonstrate to Alabamians the value of building and maintaining a strong educational system.

Indeed, education has always been an important aspect of Alabama's development. The Indians depended upon education to perpetuate their culture. The various European countries, being interested in economic profits, did little to establish any educational system in Alabama. Later, however, when Alabama entered the Union in 1819, the state strongly supported education for its citizens. In fact, the first state constitution and the first governor, William Wyatt Bibb, emphasized that schools and education would always be encouraged in the state.

The War Between the States in 1861 disrupted an adequate educational system that was making progress. During Reconstruction, the state government attempted to rebuild the school system and to extend education to those whites and blacks who were excluded in antebellum times.

After Reconstruction, education in Alabama did not keep pace with the rest of the nation for a variety of reasons — a poor economy, excessive numbers of children, a dual school system, and a general disinterest in education. Currently, federal funds and more state government emphases on education have greatly strengthened the state educational system.

The invigorated present-day educational system has directly improved the intellectual, spiritual, and physical well-being of many Alabama citizens; consequently, many aspects of state life are enriched. A progressive educational system is valuable to Alabama; it is essential in preparing the state's citizens to meet the strange and wonderful challenges that the future will bring.

# CONTENTS

*Acknowledgements* . . . . . v
*Foreword* . . . . . vi
*Preface* . . . . . vii

*Chapter I* . . . . . 1
*Chapter II* . . . . . 19
*Chapter III* . . . . . 25
*Chapter IV* . . . . . 40
*Chapter V* . . . . . 54
*Chapter VI* . . . . . 65

*Bibliography* . . . . . 121

## Early Years to 1865

Education began in Alabama with the Indians who inhabited the state. Through the centuries various Indian tribes settled in the vast wilderness of Alabama, left traces of their existence, then vanished into the mist of time. When European explorers arrived in Alabama and recorded what they had observed, they did find several tribes of Indians with impressive heritages. The aggressive Creeks resided on the banks of the Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers; the fierce Chickasaws and more pastoral Choctaws inhabited the northwestern and southwestern portions of the state respectively; and the proud Cherokees lived at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains in northeastern Alabama.

Other Indian tribes including the Coosas, Tensas, Chatots, Thomez, Tallasses, Alabamos, and Coosadas also lived in the state, but these groups were smaller and less significant; in fact, these smaller groups were often associated in one way or another with the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Creeks. Although the Alabama Indians could not read or write until long after the coming of the whites and until Sequoyah invented the Cherokee alphabet in 1821, they loved oratory and used this method to instruct their children in the history of the widespread migrations and heroic exploits of their tribes. Their ancient stories were also preserved in colorful wampum (beaded belts and necklaces) and were carved with crude bone and rock tools upon the smooth faces of towering stone clifts or on dusty cave walls.[1]

Each generation of Indians in Alabama also taught to each succeeding generation the various skills necessary for the survival of its primitive culture — farming, toolmaking, field clearing, house building, cooking, basketry, drawing and painting, hunting, fishing, fighting, and cloth making. From these early beginnings, Alabama education gradually evolved.[2]

Progress was slow even after the eventful arrival of Europeans in Alabama.

The French in 1702, under the capable command of General LeMoyne de Bienville, were the first Europeans to establish a lasting settlement in Alabama. In that year as a part of Louis XIV's grand strategy to beat the Spanish in settling along the Gulf Coast and to draw a ring around the thirteen English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard with the eventual hope of drawing the hated English into the seas, Bienville established the settlement of Mobile as the capital of Louisiana.[3]

The French did little to establish conventional education in Alabama. Surviving legal and church documents show that, at least among white males, illiteracy was high in French Mobile. Obviously, the small band of adventurous settlers in Mobile surrounded by restive Indians were not likely to give much thought to education. Most of the early inhabitants of that city hoped to win fortunes quickly and return to France. Few, if any of them, brought wives or families to an uncertain future in the wilds of Alabama.

The Catholic missionaries who usually spread education among the inhabitants of new colonial possessions were not particularly active in Mobile. Both French Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries were in the region from the beginning of the settlement, but their officials seemed more interested in establishing political influence with the Colonial Council that governed Mobile than in establishing institutions for educating the inhabitants. Even Bienville, as governor of Louisiana, could not persuade the uncooperative Jesuit leaders to establish a school in Mobile. The clergymen excused themselves from this responsibility by arguing that there were no books or buildings for a school, although this lack would seem to be an essential reason for a school in the first place.[4]

More devoted parish priests, realizing the power of education as an instrument of civilization, wasted little time in their efforts to establish schools for Indians. Significantly, these early schools were established as agents for spreading Christianity as well as for the transmission of European culture and civilization. In addition to converting the Indians to Christianity, the Catholics, particularly the Jesuits, also exerted efforts to "Frenchify" them. Louis XVI, who gave the Jesuits considerable financial support, repeatedly gave them orders to educate the children of the natives in the French manner. Thus began the cruel policy of removing Indian children from their families and tribes in order to impress the French language and customs upon them as well as to emphasize the traditional academic subjects. The curriculum included reading, writing, singing, agriculture, carpentry, and handcrafts. Other priests may have offered formal educational instruction to white children, but they left no records of this. It is likely that the more prosperous families in Mobile sent their children to New Orleans boarding schools operated by Catholic clergymen and nuns.[5]

Part of the mercantilist theory adhered to by France throughout the eighteenth century stated that a colony existed only for the profit of the mother country; consequently, national political and economic concern overshadowed education, which was woven marginally around the government's objectives. Emphasis was thus placed on teaching young colonists in Mobile only the practical skills vital to the success of the budding settlement; for instance, in 1708 in



Mobile six cabin boys from French transport ships began learning Indian languages as well as masonry and carpentry. The French government also encouraged early settlers in Mobile to devote their energies entirely to commerce and agriculture. As for formal education, it was reasoned that if a colonist became more affluent and in a position to have his children educated, the colleges in France should benefit from this. Furthermore, the child would obviously benefit more from the better educational facilities available in France.[6]

As governor of Louisiana, Bienville made the only official attempt to institute formal education in Mobile while it was under French dominion. He petitioned the French government on March 26, 1742, to establish a college in that city. The petition was refused. Mobile, with a population of scarcely 300, was considered too small and unimportant for a college.[7]

The British took over Mobile and the surrounding Alabama area as a part of British West Florida on October 20, 1763. Britain ruled this area for twenty years until she lost her colonies at the end of the American Revolution in 1783. Protestant missionaries began a campaign to "civilize and Christianize" the Indians during British rule, but little information is available concerning formal white education in British Mobile. Included in annual grants of money that financed the government of West Florida, Parliament budgeted ∫ 25 for the support of a schoolmaster in Mobile. At the same time, Parliament set aside land for the support of Protestant schools. The educational intentions of the English government, theoretically at least, were good.[8]

A schoolmaster with an annual salary of ∫ 25, however, does not suggest extensive intellectual activity in the life of British Mobile. People of culture in the region, such as the planter and industrialist William Dunbar or the Anglican minister and first schoolmaster William Gordon (both of whom had substantial libraries), were unusual. Among the few books mentioned in British records in Mobile are Bibles, prayer books, and those volumes which were sent over by the home government to explain the Swedish process for manufacturing naval stores. It must be remembered, however, that Mobile was a frontier town where the struggle for existence left little time for cultural or educational pursuits.[9]

Mobile, as a part of West Florida, came under the control of Spain with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. The story of education in this period is also dismal and uninspiring. Spain, as France, took no meaningful steps to encourage learning among the white inhabitants; although Catholic clergymen, particularly Franciscan monks, provided religious instruction for the Indians. It was the policy of the Franciscans to gather Indians into native villages surrounding their missions, thus keeping families intact while instructing them in the various arts and crafts which they might use to improve their living conditions. The Spanish priests taught the Indians how to plow, harvest crops, and clear their land more efficiently. Spain was the only nation that seriously attempted the economic absorption of the Indians by training large numbers as laborers. Education necessarily played an important role in this undertaking as well as religious conversion which was a major aim. The church and the government sought a common goal and were united in a comprehensive Indian policy; consequently, instruction

also included carpentry, blacksmithing, masonry, spinning and weaving, and the making of clothing, soap, and candles. Academic subjects were deemed of lesser importance, and there was no conscious effort by the Franciscan friars to make "Europeans" of the Indians.[10]

In 1798 the crumbling Spanish Empire ceded all of what is now Alabama except the coastline to about thirty miles above Mobile to the infant United States. Alabama thus became a part of the hastily created United States Mississippi Territory. Some Americans were already in Alabama, but after 1798 adventurous settlers from all over the United States poured into Alabama.

They followed numerous river routes or came overland on well-worn Indian trails and crude military roads. So many Americans came into Alabama that the United States was able to seize the Mobile district in 1813 during the War of 1812. One of these settlers, John Pierce of Connecticut, started the first known nonsectarian school in Alabama. Pierce founded his school in 1799 at Boatyard settlement on Lake Tensaw just north of Mobile. The school was a primitive log cabin in which students sat on rough split-log benches to study their lessons. The pupils were French, Spanish, English, Indian, American, and a variety of national and racial mixtures. Pierce taught his students reading, writing, and arithmetic by the "blab" (word-of-mouth) method. He soon realized, however, that he could make his fortune elsewhere and left teaching to become a cotton dealer.[11]

Not long afterward the Mississippi Territorial Legislature in Natchez, Mississippi, chartered Washington Academy (later St. Stephens Academy) at St. Stephens in 1811 and Green Academy at Huntsville in 1812. This was the first educational legislation in Alabama. On December 13, 1816, the Mississippi Territorial Legislature appropriated the first public money for education in Alabama when it granted $500 to each academy. The Legislature exempted both from taxation and allowed the schools to raise additional funds by lottery.[12]

This curious funding policy continued even after Alabama became a separate territory in 1817; still, the use of lotteries to obtain school funds sometimes had unfortunate results. One gambler, Horatio Dade, won $5,000 in an 1819 lottery presumably sponsored by St. Stephens Academy. Dade never received his winnings although he sued the Academy. People in Alabama also used other methods to finance the two academies. The Alabama Territorial Legislature empowered the banks of St. Stephens and Huntsville to incorporate their capital stock by selling shares at auction. The profits to the extent of 10 percent were divided among stockholders, and any profit above the 10 percent was applied to the support of Green Academy and St. Stephens Academy. The schools, both public and private, depended largely on tuition for support; however, they also were chartered by the government and received $500 from the public treasury along with other funds from the public through the bank and lottery.[13]

Although not much is known about St. Stephens Academy after 1819, Green Academy thrived. The board of trustees of Green Academy located the school, conducted lotteries, raised other money as needed, and did whatever else was required to keep the school in operation. For many years it was the only institution



for advanced education in North Alabama; consequently, many of the area's prominent men were trained there. The school operated for fifty years until Federal troops burned the building during the War Between the States. It was never reopened.[14]

The success of Green and St. Stephens Academies sparked the development of additional schools in other Alabama counties during the territorial period. Although they received no territorial funds, male and female boarding schools usually located in the more populous North Alabama operated successfully. One such school, Fayetteville Academy, accommodated 80 to 100 male and female students in a two-story brick building. Here academic learning and "the morals of the youth" in the school were emphasized. Students attending the Academy could board with certain families in town for $2 per week, and the aspiring scholars usually paid a tuition of from $7.50 to $15.00 depending upon the number of subjects taken and the fluctuating length of the school term.[15]

During the territorial period of Alabama's development, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established mission schools in 1812 and 1819 among the Choctaws and Chickasaws. These mission schools indirectly influenced the whites in Alabama. Industrial in the modern sense, the schools taught young Indian braves farming and mechanics while the Indian girls learned weaving and housework. The Indians liked the schools, and the schools were generally successful everywhere they were established. By 1825 the Choctaws had ten schools with 39 teachers and 208 pupils. These schools cost $26,109 of which the federal government paid $2,350. The Chickasaws had two schools with 26 teachers and 75 pupils. The United States paid $900 out of the total school cost of $3,283. The Methodists were most active in educating the Creek Indians in the state. At Asbury Mission near Fort Mitchell various skills were taught to these Indians until President Andrew Jackson in 1832 removed the Indians from the territory.[16]

Alabama continued to build on its educational heritage when it became a state on December 14, 1819. In his initial message to the Legislature Governor William Wyatt Bibb stressed the need for education in Alabama. The framers of the 1819 state constitution set aside lands for the support of a state university and for the promotion of the arts, literature, and the sciences throughout the state. Upon admittance to the union, Alabama received from the federal government the sixteenth section in each township for schools. Additionally, two townships or 46,080 acres were reserved for a college. These federal land grants to the states for education were provided for in the 1787 Northwest Ordinance and were later applied to all lands in the Southwest of which Alabama was a part. The state thus appeared to have adequate support in land and a favorable attitude in government for educational development. It seemed as if Alabama were capable of establishing a statewide public-supported school system similar to those of other educationally progressive states. This did not happen because many factors entered into the delay.[17]

More often than not in Alabama the land reserved for education was sold to obtain funds to support schools. These funds derived from land sales were the

only source of revenue for public schools. The funds did not serve the purpose for which they were intended, because variations in the value of Alabama lands made them an inadequate school revenue. The funds were inadequate, too, because the federal land grant for education was not made to the state as a whole but to the several townships within the state. Townships with richer farm lands, such as the Black Belt communities, obviously derived more money for their schools from the sale of their more valuable land. Farmers and planters in those areas did not need public schools anyway for they could afford private school for their children. Townships with poor farm land, such as the hill counties of North Alabama, received very little money from local land sales for their school fund; and schools, if they were established at all, were not adequately funded. Farmers in these areas could not afford private schools. After 1837 the federal government attempted to rectify the situation by granting the lands directly to the states. Under this new policy Alabama could distribute the money from the sale of the lands evenly throughout the state. The wealthy areas in the state still had the advantage, for by 1837 their school land was already sold at a high price and the money already used locally. Little or no school money was available to distribute to poverty areas where schools were inadequate or nonexistent.[18]

In 1836 the federal government also divided the surplus from the sale of national public lands among the states. Alabama's share amounted to $669,086.78, was placed in the State Bank, and was credited to the state public school fund. When the Bank failed in 1843 as a result of the 1837 economic crisis, the funds were lost. Many schools closed and others remained open through private subscriptions. In 1848 Alabama petitioned Congress for the right to sell all public lands within its boundaries to support public education. In addition, the state asked Congress to appropriate for Alabama schools 100,000 acres of land set aside in 1841 for internal improvement in Alabama. Congress granted both requests. Even funds derived from the sale of these lands failed to meet the operating expenses of public schools. As Gabriel B. Duval, superintendent of public schools, said in his report for 1858, "These funds have no existence, they are tangible neither to feeling nor to sight."[19]

Reasons other than monetary ones held back education in Alabama. Most Alabamians had little appreciation of the need for public education; people were generally more concerned with material progress. Many argued that education was a private matter and not the obligation of the state. Money was scarce in the antebellum period, and people were reluctant to pay taxes for education when they remembered the mismanagement and loss of the sixteenth section fund and other educational funds through the failure of the State Bank. Many Alabamians attached a social stigma to public education since people of means generally hired private tutors or organized small private schools.[20]

In 1852 the people of Mobile founded their own system of public education directed by a board of commissioners that could establish and regulate schools. The Mobile public school system began primarily because Willis G. Clark, a prominent Mobile lawyer and one of the editors of the *Mobile Commercial Register*, became chairman of the Mobile School Board of Commissioners in



1851. Clark developed an interest in education and traveled in various northern states to study outstanding school systems. Acting under Clark's advice, the Mobile schools began deriving operating funds from sources of revenue commonly used for education throughout the United States in the period, such as fines, land grants, liquor taxes, and a certain percentage of ordinary taxes. The Board of Commissioners also raised $50,000 by lottery for support of the county schools. The commissioners also expanded their powers and created the office of superintendent of public schools. The creation of the office served the two-fold purpose of providing some centralized control and designating a public official whose sole business was that of promoting public education.[21]

The first of the Mobile public schools was Barton Academy. It was built in 1835-36 with money raised from a public lottery. The building was named for Willoughby Barton, an extensive land owner in the area, and was initially used by parochial schools, such as the Methodist Parish School. Mobile took over the building in November, 1852. In that year the public school enrollment was only 400 children, but by February, 1853, the enrollment had reached 854. Although wealthy planters opposed the public school plan by arguing that education was a private affair, public education was in operation throughout Mobile County by 1854. In that year the Board of Mobile School Commissioners organized Barton Academy into six departments. The first department was the Primary, where the child began his studies, tuition free, and remained in the section until he mastered each subject to the satisfaction of the teacher. Upon completion of the primary grades a child presumably could read easy lessons in prose and verse, spell the words in the reading lessons and explain marks of punctuation, count to 100, and answer simple questions in arithmetic and geography. The Intermediate Department offered a slightly more sophisticated curriculum but was also tuition free. Students completing this school could read and spell the English language; articulate and speak well; write words, numbers, and sentences plainly on the slates and blackboards used in the school; recite ordinary addition, multiplication, and subtraction tables; and count in Roman and Arabic numerals to 1,000. The Mobile Board of Commissioners also encouraged Biblical studies and singing.[22]

The remaining departments charged a small tuition fee, more as an incentive to remove the pauper stigma from the schools than as a necessity. The Grammar Schools charged $1.50 per month and the high schools, $3.00 per month. These upper division schools separated the boys and girls by a large fence. Students in the Grammar School for Boys learned spelling, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, the English language, elocution, composition, elements of algebra, geometry, trigonometry, outline drawing, bookkeeping, and history of the United States. The program was usually completed in four to five years; but advanced students often received extra instruction in chemistry, physics, and national history. The Grammar School for Girls offered the same courses but substituted physiology and French for geometry, trigonometry, and bookkeeping. The Latin School's curriculum resembled that of the Grammar School. Additional courses, however, included Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and ancient history. The

female counterpart to the Latin School was the High School for Girls. This school offered literature, rhetoric, astronomy, chemistry, intellectual and moral science, logic, general history, and botany.[23]

Alabama's first public school operated efficiently and confidently. The superintendent supervised the public schools and made annual recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. The principal was a teacher and administrator. He kept financial records and tended the school grounds. The greatest burden in the school system fell upon the teachers who were instructors and disciplinarians. Students apparently learned good manners as well as some knowledge of academic subjects. Teachers were supposed to enrich each lesson with additional facts and illustrations from the "stores of their own minds." They were directed to teach pupils self-reliance, inquiry, and understanding. As if this role were not demanding enough, teachers were also expected to teach the students good social habits. It was reasoned that if teachers stressed the importance of purity, integrity, truthfulness, punctuality, order, industry, and neatness; then they would certainly exert "an elevating and refining influence over their pupils."[24]

Students were financially liable for accidentally or maliciously damaging school property. They were subject to expulsion or corporal punishment for using or writing profanity or for drawing obscene pictures around the school. The school recommended expulsion or suspension for irregular attendance, indolence, or failure to obey the school rules.[25]

The success of the Mobile system was influential upon the state as a whole. Soon prominent Alabamians, including William L. Yancey, Governors Reuben Chapman and Henry W. Collier, and Mobile legislator A. B. Meek, began advocating a complete investigation and revision of the state public educational structure. Such a revision was needed, for methods of teaching were usually wasteful and ineffective. Classes were ungraded and taught by one teacher. The teacher usually taught at several public schools or had another more important occupation. Pupils often did not study the same lessons. The teachers might hear aloud the lessons of one group of students while another group was studying. This was confusing to both pupils and teacher. Since the teacher gave most of his time to hearing lessons, he gave little time to other types of instruction. Group discussions were rare. Discipline was harsh, and sometimes cruel, with strict rules and regulations marking the school routine. The curriculum was mainly composed of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, spelling, and penmanship. Teachers often emphasized arithmetic because of its practical use in everyday life. History and grammar were considered advanced subjects. Books on geography and history, when used at all, served as readers rather than as guides for historical and geographical study. Books used most frequently, such as *The New England Primer,* served the three-fold purpose of readers, moral instructors, and guides.[26]

To revise this educational structure, Meek introduced the Public Education Act of 1854. Opposing the Act, some Alabamians argued that the bill armed a state superintendent with arbitrary powers enabling him to dictate to "free people" how their children would be educated. This bill passed, however, and provided for some centralization of the state school system. The Act empowered the legislature to elect a state superintendent of education for a two-year term of office. The Act also appropriated $100,000 from the state treasury each year for public schools. Additional money for the public schools came from revenue derived from taxes on insurance companies and railroads and the sixteenth section lands that still belonged to the schools. The Act authorized each county to levy a 10 percent tax on real and personal property for the benefit of the schools. In 1855 when the first year schools were in operation under the new education act, the total state school fund amounted to more than $237,000. Several additional acts, passed in 1854 and 1856, increased state school funds, required judges of probate to enumerate children of school age, lowered tuition, raised qualifications for teachers, and created a county superintendent of education to take the place of the county school commissioners. Trustees, however, were still provided for the school districts.[27]

The earliest record of attempts to license teachers came about 1854 when the state's public school system was established. Under the existing law, three commissioners of free public schools were elected for each county every two years. These three along with the judge of probate constituted the commissioners who were charged with examining and licensing teachers.

Under William F. Perry, first elected state superintendent of schools by the Alabama Legislature, teachers held annual conventions in the counties. The Alabama Educational Association was organized in 1856. This organization, together with the *Alabama Educational Journal* first published in 1856 and the *Southern Teacher* first published in Montgomery in 1859, did much to arouse interest in education and encourage higher standards for teachers. Perry tried to standardize the course of study for Alabama schools. He introduced into the public schools courses such as United States history, general history, geography, natural philosophy, astronomy, physiology, and hygiene. By modern standards, teachers in the public schools were poorly trained and paid. School buildings were primitive—usually unplastered log cabins without chimneys, stoves, or unfinished ceilings. These uninviting buildings were schools only because they were fit for no other use. A water bucket and drinking cup or gourd stood on a crude table within the school building, and all children drank from the same cup. Sanitary facilities were non-existent. Desks made from undressed boards were arranged around the walls. Books, few in number, were poorly printed. The textbooks used most commonly included *Webster's Blue Back Spelling Book, Murray's Key,* and *McGuffey's Readers.* Recognizing all these problems and many more, Perry was still able to say optimistically after his first year of work, "I found the schools generally in operation and the people pleased and hopeful. . . . the public educational system of Alabama, though still crude and imperfect, has come to stay."[28]

While the public school system slowly gained favor among the poor and middle class families, the planters and wealthy merchants held it in ridicule and contempt. They established private schools with a more sophisticated curriculum for

their sons and daughters. Between 1820 and 1840 more than 200 of these academies were founded. The state legislature chartered academies for churches, fraternal organizations, groups of people, a community, or even an individual. Although lines were not clearly drawn between elementary schools and academies (and academies and colleges, for that matter), academies were generally expected to give advanced instruction. They could compare roughly to the secondary schools of a later date, but many of them also gave instruction to beginners. Academies were often, but not always, boarding schools. They were private schools, some being exempt from taxes; but none of them received other financial aid from the state. The academies which were run for profit had to pay their own way; consequently, the chief income of all academies was tuition paid by the students, often in advance. Tuition varied from $10 to $30 per course. Sometimes schools charged extra fees for items such as firewood or books. Teachers and administrators of the academies campaigned vigorously in the newspapers for pupils, promising to teach "English, Latin, and Greek languages grammatically." Reflecting the sectionalism in the United States in the early 1800's, many schools emphasized that students would be guided in their studies by native Southerners. Discipline was rigidly maintained, for students were to be taught the "habit of order and economy which may fit them for the situation they may hereafter hold in society."[29]

Many communities had both male and female academies since few schools beyond the lowest grades were coeducational; however, there were exceptions. The Literary Institution in North Alabama taught males and females at the same school. Some towns had several institutions. Talladega, for example, had East Alabama Masonic Female Institute, Talladega Male High School, Southward Select School, and Presbyterian Collegiate Female Institute. Huntsville, Tuscaloosa, Selma, Montgomery, and Mobile were other places that sustained numerous schools.[30]

The first academy for girls, founded at Athens in 1822, flourished. The Tuscaloosa Female Association and the Selma Ladies' Education Society were other outstanding female schools. Courses in such institutions usually included grammar, history, arithmetic, geography, music, French, embroidery, and painting. Often the schools emphasized that they did not merely teach "a smattering of memorized trifles from a book" but taught "a knowledge of principles and polite manners." The Alabama Female Institute of Tuscaloosa expressed its purpose in the school motto, "Our girls may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace." The Centenary Institute at Summerfield claimed that "to educate woman is to refine the world."[31]

One of the best known and most successful male academies run by an individual was Professor Henry Tutwiler's Green Springs School. Tutwiler, the holder of two degrees from the University of Virginia, was on the faculties of both the University of Alabama and LaGrange College before deciding to establish his own academy in 1847. He chose Green Springs, a popular resort in present Hale (then Greene) County, which was not far from the village of Havana. The first buildings were the remodeled hotel buildings of the old resort.



The Academy was a success from the beginning. It gave training primarily in mathematics and the classics and also placed emphasis on science, which was unusual for the day. A chemistry laboratory, a telescope, and a library of some 1,500 volumes made this college preparatory school even more unusual. Because there was always a waiting list, Tutwiler could select his students carefully and replace any obstinate boy he had to send home. Green Springs continued without interruption until 1877 when Tutwiler, in bad health, took a year's rest. Operation of the school began again in the fall of 1879 and continued until Tutwiler's death in 1884.[32]

Other schools existed besides academies and public schools. Wealthy families could and did hire tutors. In other places groups of planters jointed informally to hire a teacher, construct a simple log building, and thus open a school. The course of study was similar to that of the academies, and the school term was usually about five months. Sometimes the schools were called "old field" schools because of their location in an abandoned clearing. Philip Henry Gosse, later a noted author and the founder of marine biology, had such a school at Pleasant Hill in Dallas County in 1838. Another, more advanced type of school, was the one established in Prattville by Daniel Pratt, the noted Alabama industrialist. Pratt incorporated in his school some of the then more progressive features of the schools of his native New England. These features included the Socratic method of teaching and desks arranged in parallel rows facing the teacher.[33]

The steady decline in the number of academies and other private educational facilities between 1840 and 1860 shows the gradual acceptance of public schools, even among planters. The War Between the States forced many private institutions to close. After Reconstruction, with cotton wealth swept away, many of these institutions were absorbed by colleges and the public high school system. Academies lingered longest in the Tennessee Valley and in the Black Belt, centers of planter population.[34]

The formal education of blacks, both slave and free, was practically nonexistent, for their education was determined solely by the white ruling class. Many slave plantations in Alabama, however, were practically industrial schools. Some slaves received training as farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, brickmasons, engineers, cooks, laundresses, seamstresses, and housekeepers. Initially, those slaves who showed special aptitude were taught writing, reading and simple arithmetic. Some even attained positions of stewardship and kept account books for their masters and managed the plantations in their absence. In 1830 as abolition sentiment gained headway in the North — with a resultant influx of northern literature into Alabama calling for emancipation of slaves — the meager and crude education advantages were taken away by law. Because many planters feared learning would cause insurrection, they often denied slaves all printed matter. The Alabama Act of 1832 declared that anyone teaching blacks, free or slave, to read or write would be fined from $250 to $300, and that, assemblies of Negroes were illegal unless "five respectable slave owners" were present. Still, some blacks acquired an education and learned the skilled trades. Some charitable slave owners secretly continued to teach their more intelligent

slaves reading and writing despite the laws. The establishment of the African Church in Alabama probably furthered education among blacks simply because blacks could gather and converse at least once a week during their Sunday worship. Among free blacks in Alabama in 1850 the illiteracy rate was only 20.7 percent as compared to an 18.9 percent illiteracy rate for whites. Probably the favorable showing of free blacks in the state was due to the high percentage living in Mobile where by 1860 over 100 free black children attended public school; still, this is an amazing fact given the restrictive society in which the free black was placed. By the clandestine efforts of anti-slavery workers, by the selfish motives of some masters realizing that literate slaves with the ability to transact business accrued more profits to the owner, and by the basic kindness of masters and mistresses, the black received some scanty educational instruction in the antebellum period.[35]

Shortly after Alabama entered the Union in 1819, the State Legislature passed an act to incorporate a state university. The United States granted 46,080 acres of land for this purpose, and funds from the sale of the lands were placed in the state bank for a university. State officials chose Tuscaloosa as the site for the school and construction began in 1827. The University of Alabama opened in 1831 with Alva Woods as its first president. Funds realized from tuition were negligible, and the patrons soon became dissatisfied with Woods' management of the school. Among other things, Woods instituted a system of discipline that antagonized his students. He maintained an elaborate espionage network to report all infractions of school rules. Infuriated, the students rebelled repeatedly and on more than one occasion marched in protest from the school chapel. The rebellions finally caused the spying to be abandoned. Woods resigned in 1837 and was succeeded by the very able Basil Manly, who began his first term with only thirty-eight students.[36]

The University remained small throughout the antebellum period. It reached a peak enrollment with 158 students in 1836. The school had some noted faculty members in its early years. In 1831 the trustees employed James G. Birney, later a noted abolitionist, to find a faculty. Among those he hired were Henry Tutwiler of the University of Virginia, appointed professor of ancient languages and later a leading educator in the state; Henry W. Hilliard, a professor of English literature who became an outstanding Whig politician; F. A. P. Barnard, later a noteworthy faculty member who became president of the University of Mississippi and of Columbia University; Michael Tuomey, professor of geology who made the first geological survey of the state; and John Williams Mallet, professor of chemistry who was the first scientist in America to weigh the atom.[37]

The state bank failed in 1843 in the financial debacle that followed the Panic of 1837 and lost approximately $300,000 of the University of Alabama's funds as well as the public school fund. This severely crippled the school. It was kept open only by loans, donations, and strict economic measures. In 1848 a reluctant legislature fixed the state's debt to the University at $250,000, but not until 1860 was the matter taken up again when the legislature increased the amount to $300,000 with interest at 8 percent.[38]



Church colleges were more popular than the state-supported institution in antebellum Alabama and were quite numerous. LaGrange College, founded by the Methodists in 1830 in North Alabama, had an enrollment almost twice as large as the University of Alabama, and it was the first degree-granting institution in the state. The industrious Methodists founded or undertook the management of more than fifteen schools and colleges in Alabama. Some of the more successful Methodist institutions were the Athens Female College, founded in 1840; the Tuskegee Female College and Southern University, founded in 1856; and East Alabama Male Institute, founded in 1859. Athens College was in northern Alabama, but the others were in or close to the Black Belt. LaGrange College is no longer in existence, but Athens College is today a small liberal arts college in the same location. Tuskegee Female College became Huntingdon College in Montgomery in 1909. The Methodists gave the East Alabama Male College to the state in 1872 to be the site of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, today's Auburn University. The other Methodist college, Southern University, moved in 1918 to Birmingham where it combined with Birmingham College to become Birmingham-Southern College.[39]

In 1830 the Roman Catholic Church built Spring Hill College near Mobile. It came under the control in 1847 of the Jesuits, who still operate the school today. An early prejudice against formal education, especially the education of ministers, delayed the establishment of most Baptist colleges. This church, however, did found Judson Female College in 1839 and Howard College in 1841, both at Marion, Alabama, in the Black Belt. Judson College is still at Marion, but Howard College moved to Birmingham in 1887 and recently was renamed Samford University.[46]

The manual labor school, which incorporated academic study and physical work at some productive job, was popular in the United States around the 1830's; however, few existed in Alabama. The Presbyterians attempted to establish such a school at Marion on December 16, 1833. It was known as the Manual Labor Institute of South Alabama, Perry County. Similarly, the Baptists opened for a few years at Greensboro the Alabama Institute of Literature and Industry, popularly known as the Manual Labor School. It began in the fall of 1835 on a 335-acre farm with fifty students. During the first year the farm provided 700 bushels of corn and 150 bushels of sweet potatoes. The primary purpose of the school was to train ministers, but the Baptist school officials decided to admit other young men who wished to pursue literary studies. The school failed in 1837, partly because of the financial panic and partly from dissension within the faculty. It moved to Marion the next year, after which its fate is obscure.[41]

For a variety of reasons Alabama had a good record in collegiate education: the state recognized the need for trained leaders; it had ample educational funds available because of the booming cotton economy; and rivalry among religious groups produced a plethora of institutions of higher learning. Undoubtedly some of the institutions listed as colleges in the state were not much more than academies or "log-cabin colleges." Most of the colleges in Alabama, however, employed excellent faculties composed of graduates from eastern universities