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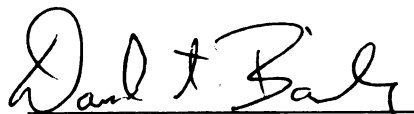
Learning and Working for Ourselves: Education and Economic
Development among the Georgia Freedmen, 1864-1920

presented by

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**LEARNING AND WORKING FOR OURSELVES: EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE GEORGIA FREEDMEN, 1864-1920**

By

Morey S. Lewis

A THESIS

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

LEARNING AND WORKING FOR OURSELVES: EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE GEORGIA FREEDMEN, 1864-1920

By

Morey S. Lewis

What means did ex-slaves employ to transform themselves into citizens who created a viable community following the demise of slavery in Georgia? This thesis contends that the establishment of public and private education for blacks along with their participation in the market economy via wage labor, property acquisition, and entrepreneurial ventures contributed to the transformation of ex-slaves into a community of wage laborers, shop owners, and farmers in Georgia. It tests this thesis from the liberation of slaves by General William Tecumseh Sherman in the Fall of 1864 to the conclusion of the Progressive Era in 1920.

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Dedicated to my parents, Mr. Square S. Lewis and Mrs. Georgia M. Lewis. Their love and support was instrumental in the completion of my thesis. Without question, they are the most important people in my life.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

The winter of 1864 marked an important turning point in the lives of blacks in Georgia. The arrival of Union troops led by General William Tecumseh Sherman heralded the demise of slavery in Georgia. A young black girl in Savannah cried out with glee, "All de rebel gone to hell, Now par Sherman come."¹ The comment expressed by this young girl encapsulated the feelings of blacks in Savannah including those throughout Georgia. The system of slavery, which had exacted a heavy toll on blacks, had been shattered. No longer would blacks endure the physical and mental torture from their former masters. A new day was dawning. The day of freedom was at hand.

Though the shackles of slavery lay at their feet, the task of preparing the freedmen for their new lives as citizens became the challenge of the day. Access to education of any form had been forbidden during the reign of slavery. Throughout the South, legislators enacted punitive measures for those who attempted to teach slaves. In spite of the legal ramifications, brave individuals risked life and limb to provide lessons to slaves. Some slave owners allowed certain slaves access to books. In such instances, these slaves were the offspring of the slave owner and his black mistress. Regardless of the situation, those who were afforded access to education would be better prepared for life after slavery. Education would break the bonds on ignorance, which had held a vice-like grip on the minds of slaves.

¹William A. Byrne, "Uncle Billy" Sherman Comes To Town: The Free Winter of Black Savannah," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Spring 1995) : 92.

While thousands of freedmen² of all ages packed schoolrooms across Georgia, other freedmen sought to use their labor power as a means of improving their lot. While slavery denied them full control of their labor power, their new status as freedmen afforded them control of their own bodies. Freedmen turned their attention to land acquisition, entrepreneurial ventures, and wage labor. Throughout Georgia, freedmen purchased land, started small businesses, and cultivated cropland. However, they faced new challenges in their quest to become full-fledged participants in the new economy of the South. The crop-lien system resembled a repackaged form of slavery. Freedmen became entrapped within a web of debt and questionable business practices. Freedmen would engage in battles with their employers over fair compensation for their labor. Both men and women would threaten to leave their jobs if their wages were not increased. Some employers took advantage of this situation by offering higher wages to attract new workers, while others used physical intimidation and violence to control their employees. In spite of these tactics, blacks continued in their quest to find the best wages in return for their labor power. Although, thrust into a world of debt peonage, contracts, and labor disputes, blacks continued in the struggle to transform themselves into productive citizens.

For the Georgia freedmen, Republican rule lasted only five years. The gubernatorial inauguration of James Milton Smith, a Democrat and vocal critic of Radical Reconstruction, on January 12, 1872, marked the return of Democrats to power following

²The term “freedmen” was used to describe the status of blacks following the conclusion of the Civil War.

five years of Republican rule.² The Democratic Party flexed its political muscle with the re-election of Smith to a full four-year term in October 1872 at the expense of Dawson A. Walker, a Republican, who was soundly trounced at the polls 104, 256 votes to 45, 812.³ Two years earlier a harbinger of the impending demise of Republican rule manifested itself in the inability of Bullock to prolong military rule. Moreover, Bullock was unable to quell the attacks against freedmen during his administration. Bullock's term of office began on July 21, 1868 and ended with his resignation on October 23, 1871.⁴ Exactly 260 cases of attacks against freedmen were reported, averaging 17 per month during military rule and 46 after the restoration of civilian authority.⁵ To make matter worse, 25,000 native Georgia Republicans were firmly opposed to any further reconstruction by Congress.⁶

In such a hostile environment of former supporters opposed to additional reconstruction, the departure of ex Governor Brown from the party and his inability to prolong military rule, he faced the looming specter of popular elections in 1870, which spelled doom for his administration.

On the local level, Democrats gained control of county seats. In Chatham, Richmond, and Burke, three Democratic members took place in the House of the three Radicals in each county elected in 1868. Democrats captured counties with two seats in

²Raimo, John and Robert Sobel, Eds, *Biographical Dictionary of the Governors of the United States: 1879-1978 Vol. 1* (Connecticut: Meckler Books, 1978), 302.

³ Ibid, 302.

⁴ Ibid, 301.

⁵Mildred C. Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia: economic, social, political, 1865-1872* (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1915), 257

⁶ Ibid, 259.

the lower house as well as those with one seat in the lower house. Of the 86 members elected to the house, 71 were Democrats. In the Senate, Democrats held 19 out of 22 seats.⁷

Despite this situation, Bullock was able to win a brief respite from the Democratic onslaught. Acting under the bill for the reorganization of Georgia, Bullock called a meeting of the legislature on January 10, 1870, to all members declared elected in 1868, including blacks that had been expelled. Governor Bullock and General Terry decided the question of eligibility under the Reorganization Act.⁸ Borrowing a tactic employed by their conservative counterparts, Republicans seated the candidates who held the next highest vote in the 1868 elections. Through this act of parliamentary manipulation, one Republican replaced a Conservative in the Senate, and twenty-one new Republicans took their places in the House. Furthermore, blacks that were expelled in 1868 were restored to their seats. This act, also known as Terry's Purge, gave Bullock strong Republican majorities in both houses, and it appeared that his administration could proceed without Democratic cumbrance.⁹

Bullock's legislative tinkering and political maneuvering resulted produced results. In February, the purged legislature ratified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. However, Bullock's brief victory was short lived. As mentioned earlier, Bullock's scheme to prolong Radical rule failed and he faced popular elections in 1870.

⁷ Ibid, 270.

⁸ Ibid, 262.

⁹Ibid, 265.

Democratic dominance continued well beyond the Reconstruction due to the actions of Thomas Edward Watson. The native of Columbia County, Georgia was born on September 5, 1856. A layer and ardent supporter of the agrarian community, Watson launched his first offensive against the Democratic machine, which was controlled by a cadre of industrials and capitalists. During his only tern as a member of the state assembly in 1882, he waged an insurgent campaign against the industrialist-capitalist wing, which control the Democratic party of Georgia.¹⁰ He returned to politics in 1904 as a Populist candidate for President. His politics had changed with his character. He shifted supporters among the factions within the Democratic party of Georgia to his advantage. As dejected supporters withdrew their support they were immediately replaced with recruits who were attracted to his campaigns against Catholics, Socialists, and blacks.¹¹

Within this inhospitable political climate, blacks would come to rely upon philanthropy, support from their fellow brethren and individual efforts to secure support and funding for freedmen's education in Georgia.

This study contends that freedmen in Georgia were able to transform themselves into a community of self-sufficient, productive citizens through education along with their participation in the market economy via wage labor, property acquisition, and entrepreneurial ventures.

The first section of this study will explore the role of education in the transformation of the Georgia freedmen. The following questions will be addressed in the

¹⁰Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography Supplement to Vol. 10* (New York: Charles Scribner & sons, 1936), 549.

¹¹ Ibid, 550.

first section. Did schools for blacks exist in the antebellum Georgia? What was the role of the freedmen's bureau in the education of blacks? What was the role of Northern teachers in the education of the freedmen? Did freedmen attempt to create and control their own schools? What factors led to the creation of black colleges and universities in Georgia? What role did education serve in the preparation of blacks to become involved in the market economy of Georgia? The second section of this study concentrates on the involvement of blacks within the market economy of Georgia. The following questions will be addressed in the second section: What were the early occupations held by blacks in antebellum Georgia? Was there evidence of property ownership and entrepreneurial ventures among blacks in Georgia? What obstacles did blacks face within the market economy? Why was property ownership important to blacks?

The Georgia freedmen faced a difficult journey. With their newly won freedom, they set out to establish viable communities. While the arrival of Sherman heralded their freedom, their participation in the schoolrooms and marketplace heralded their arrival as citizens in the daily life of Georgia.

Broken Bonds and Barren Land

In the spring of 1864, Ulysees S. Grant instructed General Sherman to neutralize any remaining Confederate units and gain control of war resources throughout Georgia.³ The capture of the cities of Atlanta and Savannah would deal a crushing blow to the Confederate forces. Georgia served as the breadbasket and munitions supplier for the

³ Harold H. Martin, *Georgia: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 105.

Confederate Army. Once Sherman had placed the city of Atlanta under Union control, he could effectively terminate the flow of munitions and foodstuffs to rebel forces under the command of Robert E. Lee in Virginia.⁴ With orders in hand, General Sherman set out to complete his objective, the capture of Atlanta.

During the entire month of August, General Sherman unleashed an unrelenting barrage of artillery fire upon the city of Atlanta. The city endured an entire month of shelling by Union artillery batteries. On the second day of September 1864, Mayor John Calhoun surrendered the city of Atlanta to General Sherman. Looters broke into abandoned stores and warehouses in search of goods. While freedmen wandered the streets, attempting to come to grips with their newfound freedom, others took part in the pillage.⁵ Once all citizens had been evacuated from the captured city, Sherman ordered his men to destroy all stores, factories and public buildings in Atlanta.⁶ As the victorious Union army departed for Savannah, light from the fires danced across the night sky of Atlanta. Having met his first objective, Sherman's forces fanned out across the heart of Georgia leaving a wide path of destruction across the countryside. According to a soldier who took part in the march to the city of Savannah the mission was

a glorious tramp right through the heart of
the state, [we] rioted and feasted on the country,
destroyed the railroads, in short found a rich and
over-flowing country filled with cattle, hogs, sheep,
and fowls, corn, meat,

⁴ Tera W. Hunter, "Household workers in the Making": Afro-American Women in Atlanta and the New South, 1861 to 1920" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University 1990) , 25.

⁵ Harold H. Martin, *Georgia: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977) , 106.

⁶E. Merton Coulter, *Georgia: A Short History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974) , 343.

potatoes, and syrup, but left a barren waste for miles on either side of the road, burnt millions of dollars worth of property, wasted and destroyed all of the eatables we couldn't carry off and brought the war to the doors of the Georgians so effectively. I guess they will long remember the Yankees.⁷

On December 13th, Savannah had fallen into Union hands. The Union Navy aided in the capture of the port city of Savannah. The successful operation had netted 150 heavy artillery pieces, munitions, railway cars, steamboats, and 25,000 bales of cotton. Sherman's pillage of Georgia exacted a heavy toll on its system of railroads with approximately 200 miles of rails that had been torn from their crossties. Thousands of cattle, sheep and hogs were consumed or destroyed by Union soldiers.⁸ Private property, including homes and crops, were confiscated. Atlanta had been burned to the ground. A soldier who belonged to the Second Engineering Battalion from Michigan best summed up the aftermath of Sherman's pillage of Georgia with the following words: "It is a dark time for Georgia and long will she remember the time when Sherman's Eighty Thousand men marched through 300 miles of the finest portion of the South, but they have sowed on the wind and now they reap of the whirlwind."⁹ The Union forces under the command of General Sherman left Georgia in ruins. Citizens walked past piles of debris, crumbled chimneys, charred frame dwellings, and twisted rails, which filled the streets.¹⁰ Though

⁷Harold H. Martin, *Georgia: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 107.

⁸*Ibid.*, 109.

⁹Allen Campbell to John Campbell, 18 December 1864, Special Collections, Michigan State University Archives and Special Collections, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

¹⁰Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives And Labors After The Civil War*. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

bearing the scars and wounds of a defeated foe, Georgia and its cities would be rebuilt. Visitors to the city noted the spirit of resiliency, which was present in the citizens. As noted the large number of masons, carpenters, and contractors who went about the business of rebuilding the once proud city.¹¹

While citizens tended to the daily business of hauling brick and mixing mortar, another building project was taking place. Books and primers replaced hammers and shovels as teachers provided instruction to freedmen. Lessons in grammar, history, and arithmetic were provided on a daily basis. In 1865, teachers sent by the American Missionary Association stumbled upon a small school led by two former slaves within the basement of an old church.¹² Clearly, blacks understood the importance of education. They took the initiative to prepare themselves for their new lives as freedmen. Education would provide the basic skills needed not only to survive but also to thrive. The steps taken by these former slaves illustrate the importance of education and their attempt to prepare their fellow comrades for their life as citizens.

The Georgia Freedmen faced a difficult journey. With their newly won freedom in hand, they began the task of creating a viable, self-sustaining community. However, the classroom and the marketplace would be molded and forged into productive, self-sufficient citizens. Faced with great opportunity and uncertainty, the Georgia freedmen began their quest to create a community of wage laborers, shopkeepers, and landowners.

¹¹Tera W. Hunter, "Household Workers in the Making: Afro-American Women in Atlanta and the New South, 1861-1920." (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1990) 29.

¹²Howard N. Rabinowitz , "Half a Loaf: The Shift from White to Black Teachers in the Negro Schools of the Urban South, 1865-1890," *Journal of Southern History* 40 (November 1974) : 567.

Through their efforts, future generations would enjoy the fruits of their labor. While the arrival of General Sherman and the Union army heralded their freedom, their arrival in the schoolrooms and participation in the marketplace signaled their introduction into the daily life of Georgia.

Early Origins of Freedmen's Education in Georgia

Prior to the arrival of General Sherman's invasion force in 1864, members of the free black community operated secret schools throughout the city. They went to great lengths to shield their schools from the general public. In 1829, the Georgia legislature prohibited any individual from teaching reading or writing skills to blacks.¹⁴ Those who continued to provide instruction to blacks did so under penalty of law. Members of the free black community established schools in Savannah. One such individual who provided instruction hailed from the Caribbean. "Jules Fromontin, a native of Santo Domingo, established a school in 1818. Although the state banned the practice of providing instruction to blacks in 1829, he continued to hold classes in secret locations throughout the Seaport City of Savannah.¹⁵ Moreover, the work of Fromontin did not go unnoticed. Historian W.E.B. Dubois has credited Fromontin with laying the foundation for public education in Georgia.¹⁶ During his twenty-six years of teaching, Fromontin provided basic lessons in reading and writing to countless blacks in Savannah. Surely, if officials would have found Mr. Fromontin, he may have been punished to the fullest extent allowed by law. His service to the black community of Savannah was invaluable. He was planting seeds in fertile minds that would later develop into a community of citizens who were able to fend for themselves.

While Mr. Fromontin taught pupils basic lessons in reading and writing, another black man opened a school for music and the performing arts in Savannah. In 1854, James Porter migrated from nearby Charleston, South Carolina. "Upon his arrival in

¹⁴ Whittington B. Johnson, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah: An Economic Profile," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (1980) : 425.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Savannah, he openly offered lessons in voice, piano, and violin. Though in direct violation of the state law, officials refrained from punishing Mr. Porter.”¹⁷ Perhaps, the work of Mr. Porter was not considered as a threat to the officials who governed the port city.

Black women within the community also provided instruction to their fellow comrades within Savannah. “During the 1850’s Mrs. Mary Woodhouse, a free woman, provided basic lessons to twenty five students which was comprised of free blacks and slaves with the assistance of her daughter, Mary Jane Woodhouse. After two years, her students would then transfer to another school where they would receive an upper level elementary education.”¹⁸ From the evidence presented, one could infer that the work done by Mrs. Woodhouse resembled an early form of kindergarten. Also, it is important to note that her pupils were the offspring of both free blacks and slaves. It is truly remarkable that Mrs. Woodhouse was able to provide basic instruction to such young pupils under such adverse conditions; for she too may have been punished for violating the state law which prohibited individuals from providing blacks with basic lessons in reading and writing.

Mrs. Catherine Deveaux is another excellent example of a free black woman who was able to operate her school in total secrecy. “During the 1840’s, Mrs. Deveaux held classes for young black females in Savannah. She then passed control of the school to her daughter, Jane Deveaux who provided instruction to her female pupils for almost

¹⁶ William Edward Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) , 644.

¹⁷Whittington B. Johnson, “Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah: An Economic Profile,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (1980) : 425

¹⁸ Whittington B. Johnson, “ Free African-American Women in Savannah, 1800-1860: Affluence and Autonomy Amid Adversity,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 96 (1992) : 278.

thirty years until 1864 when Union soldiers stumbled upon her school during the invasion of Savannah.”¹⁹ Mrs. Deveaux was not only able to operate the school in total secrecy but was fortunate that her daughter sought to continue her mother’s work as a teacher.

In response to the occupation of Savannah by Union forces during the winter of 1864, leaders within the black community moved swiftly to establish organizations designed to meet the educational needs of their former enslaved brethren. Although free blacks had established secret schools forty six years before the arrival of General Sherman, they now faced the task of erecting an educational system capable of meeting the needs of hundreds of newly freed slaves and pre-existing free blacks who actively sought instruction.

The days following Sherman’s invasion and occupation of Savannah were marked by great celebration. Blacks offered their thanks to the General and his soldiers who had liberated them from the bonds of slavery. In December of 1864, an important meeting was held in the sanctuary of the First African Baptist Church a few days after the invasion. At the conclusion of the meeting, the religious leaders had agreed to form the Savannah Education Association (SEA), complete with funding provided by free blacks to start a school for black children.²⁰ The SEA consisted of pastors and a committee of nine executives oversaw executive boards from churches within Savannah and its operations.²¹ Blacks in Savannah established the SEA without assistance from the local government. They were correct in taking the initiative to establish the SEA because the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰William A. Byrne, “Uncle Billy Sherman Comes To Town: The Free Winter of Black Savannah,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Spring 1995) : 99.

²¹ Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) , 120.

local Chatham County Board of Education did not move to establish schools for blacks until 1872.²²

During its first year of operation, the SEA sprang into action by hiring local teachers, supplying them with housing, and securing buildings for classroom instruction. While members of the SEA attended to the daily business of providing education to black pupils, the American Missionary Association²³ sent a representative to Georgia in the hopes of assisting the SEA in its mission. Upon his arrival in 1865, Reverend W.T. Richardson discovered that the black community of Savannah had founded the SEA, amassed \$730 and hired several local teachers. The SEA then moved to forge a working partnership with the AMA.²⁴ The SEA was then able to tap into the resources possessed by the AMA. The SEA would provide schoolhouses and lodging for teachers. Also, the AMA provided funding and teachers upon request. The relationship between the SEA and the AMA illustrates the commitment of blacks to education. Instead of waiting for help to arrive, the black community of Savannah created the SEA and then entered into partnerships with established religious organizations such as the AMA. The primary objective of the SEA was to provide the black community access to education.

Two years following the birth of the SEA, a new black-led organization emerged. Founded in January 1866, the Georgia Educational Association (GEA) set out to encourage blacks to establish and support schools in their respective counties. The

²² John Blassingame, "Before The Ghetto: The Making Of The Black Community In Savannah, Georgia, 1865-1880," *Journal of Social History* 471.

²³ The American Missionary Association (AMA) was founded in 1846 as an abolition organization. The group consisted of black and white clergymen from Congregational and Presbyterian churches. From its headquarters in New York, the AMA provided teachers and funding to freedmen schools throughout the South following the Civil War. The following books provide extensive information on the work of the AMA in the South: Clara Merritt Deboer's His Truth Is Marching On and Joe M. Richardson's Christian Reconstruction.

following year, the GEA filed a report on the status of education among blacks in Georgia. According to the report, 191 schools and 45 night schools were in operation. Out of the 236 schools in operation, 96 received financial support from the surrounding black community. Amazingly, blacks owned 57 percent of the schools.²⁵ The efforts of the GEA proved fruitful following its first year. They funded schools out of their own pockets and purchased buildings, which were converted into schools. Blacks prized education and used their resources at hand to insure that they would have access to instruction in their respective communities.

The efforts of the state to establish a permanent public school system was hampered by the lack of a consistent flow of funding, periods of legislative inactivity, and the unwillingness to permit blacks and whites to receive instruction together. Such acts would have violated the time-honored practice of racial separation. Moreover, whites depended on the practice of racial separation to reinforce their ironclad belief in white supremacy.

In 1866 the Georgia legislature moved to establish a permanent system of public education. The public school bill, which was passed by the legislature, directed the state to establish a fully operational school system, complete with a state superintendent, to provide instruction to all white children. Before the act took effect in 1868, Congressional Reconstruction neutralized any and all legislation enacted by the state legislature.²⁶ The action taken by the state legislature illustrated their deeply held belief in racial separation. They were ready to use the power of the state to reinforce the social practice of racial

²⁴Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association And Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 237.

²⁵ William Burghardt DuBois, *Black Reconstruction In America* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) , 645.

separation. Southerners sought to protect their time-honored practice of racial separation by any means at their disposal.

During this period of inactivity, the citizens began to petition Governor Rufus Bullock to establish public schools across the state. Bullock, the Reconstruction governor and businessman, originally hailed from Bethlehem, New York. His desire was to create a stable political climate conducive to the attraction of Northern investors combined with a strong base of support from newly enfranchised black voters and working class whites that shouldered the burden of post-war debt. This enabled Bullock to capture the governor's seat on the 22 of July 1868. His administration was marked with charges of corruption and political instability. Although the expulsion of black members from the Georgia Assembly combined with the refusal by white legislators to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment enabled him to briefly extend his position as governor. The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment and the reinstatement of black legislators to their seats in the General Assembly in early 1870, no longer justified continued federal military intervention, which Bullock relied upon to fortify his position as governor. In 1871, fearing impeachment due to charges of selling pardons to convicted felons and profiting from the sale of state bonds, Bullock resigned his post as governor.²⁷ However, Governor Bullock could only urge members of the legislature to pass the school bill. His rock solid belief in education as a means of improving the quality of life of blacks led the Governor to offer free rail passes to any individual who established schools or provided daily instruction to freedmen within the state.²⁸

²⁶Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) , 153.

²⁷ Ibid., 908.

²⁸Russell Duncan, *Entrepreneur for Equality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) , 61.

In 1866, the Georgia legislature took up the issue of public education under the supervision of the federal government. Legislators moved to enact a new school bill, which was to become a permanent fixture in the Georgia Constitution. The Reconstructed Constitution of 1868 required the state to provide “a thorough system of education to be forever free to all children of the state, the details were to be worked out by the Legislature.”²⁹ Republican legislators moved to construct a means of funding for public education. Funding for education would be derived from a \$1.00 poll tax paid by citizens and a statewide tax on property.³⁰ Revenues collected from both of these sources were to be used to fund the daily operation of the public school system in Georgia.

Once again, additional time would pass until legislators chose to take up the issue of establishing a permanent public school system. In 1870, State Senator Campbell presented a bill to establish a statewide public school system complete with an extensive description of funding formulas designed to provide revenue for daily operations.³¹ In October of 1870, the public school bill became law.³² The Georgia Teachers’ Association (GTA) proved the impetus for the enactment of the public school bill into law. The GTA was comprised of white and black teachers who convened meetings in Atlanta. Their objective was to construct a system of public education, which could be readily adopted by the state.³³ Through the efforts of the GTA and State Senator Campbell, all children were given access to education statewide.

²⁹William Burghardt DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) , 651.

³⁰ Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) , 153.

³¹William Burghardt DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) , 651.

³²Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) , 55.

³³William Burghardt DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) ,

The first major problem faced by the public school system was the lack of state funding. During its first year of operation, the school system had incurred a debt of \$300,000 under the leadership of state superintendent J.R. Lewis. As mentioned earlier, school funding was to be derived from poll tax revenue. However, the state failed to collect poll taxes from 1868 to 1870³⁴. Governor Bullock suspended collection of the poll tax during 1868 and 1870 as a means of encouraging poor whites and free blacks to vote.³⁵ In his attempt to retain control of the executive branch, the Governor eliminated a source of funding for public education. The lack of state funding for education left the issue in the hands of local authorities. In 1869, local authorities in Jones County refused to enact a tax in which the revenue would be used for education. However in 1867, local officials in Early County and Columbia County funded their schools from a 15 percent tax, which was levied on their respective communities.³⁶ In the absence of leadership from the state, each locality dealt with the issue of providing funding for local schools.

Following the loss of poll tax revenue, another potential source of funding was eliminated as a result of the Civil War. From the outset, the state-owned Western and Atlantic Railroad would contribute \$100,000 for school operations. However, costly repairs of the roadbed and rolling stock absorbed all income earned by the railroad in 1865.³⁷

651.

³⁴Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) , 55.

³⁵Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) , 154.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 193

³⁷*Ibid.*, 154

In the summer of 1871, public schools opened their doors for the first time in Georgia. The following year, \$500,000 in state funds was transferred from the school budget for other purposes. Due to lack of funding, school operations were suspended.³⁸ The lack of a constant source of revenue combined with the diversion of existing funds, dealt a serious blow to public education in Georgia. Though the situation appeared grim, a new school commissioner would resurrect the public school system of Georgia.

In 1872, Gustavus J. Orr replaced J.R. Lewis as school commissioner. Upon his recommendation, the Georgia legislature moved to enact the public school bill of 1872 into law. The following year, he secured funding from the legislature. At the conclusion of the year, Commissioner Orr had 1,379 schools for white children and 356 for black children.³⁹ Legislators who sought to preserve the lines of racial division in Georgia did so through the addition of a clause within the public school law of 1872. The clause required the creation of separate and equal facilities for white and black pupils.⁴⁰ The insertion of the clause illustrates the firm commitment of white Georgians to racial separation. Nevertheless, the state of Georgia had finally created a permanent public school system. Although black and white students were legally prohibited from receiving instruction within the same classroom, they had finally secured access to education.

³⁸ William Burghardt DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 651.

³⁹ Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in The South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 55-56.

⁴⁰ William Burghardt Dubois *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 651.

Freedmen's Bureau provides support to Schools in Georgia

While groups such as the AMA and the SEA tended to the daily business of providing education to the freedmen, the general public largely ignored their work. Once the North achieved victory of the rebellious South, citizens turned their attention to the political and economic reintegration of the South into the Union. However, members of prominent relief aid organizations centered in Boston advocated the creation of a federal bureau to attend to the needs of freedmen not only in Georgia, but also throughout the South. They had taken the heavy burden of freedmen's relief on their shoulders. The burden proved to be a financially taxing endeavor. Groups such as the AMA (American Missionary Association) and the AFUC (American Freedmen's Union Commission) had relied upon the contributions of its members and pledges from wealthy individuals to support their work throughout the South. Facing such a Herculean task, prominent members of private relief aid organizations located in Boston sought to enlist the aid of the federal government in their task of providing daily instruction to freedmen. Their chief objective was to secure the establishment of a Federal Bureau of Emancipation.³⁸ With firm resolve, they sought out individuals who would champion their cause within the walls of congress.

They found two individuals from their home state of Massachusetts who would take up their cause within the House of Representatives and the Senate. On January 12, 1863, Senator Henry Wilson presented a petition on behalf of the relief aid organizations, which requested the formation of a bureau of emancipation. The following week,

³⁸ Paul Skeels Pierce, *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter In The History Of Reconstruction* (New York: Haskell House, 1971), 34.

representative T.D. Eliot presented a bill to establish a Bureau of Emancipation.³⁹ During the next two years, the Bureau of Emancipation bill would be shuffled between senate committees and serve as the flashpoint for numerous debates between supporters and opponents of the Bureau of Emancipation bill.

On March 3, 1865, President Andrew Johnson signed the Bureau of Emancipation bill into law. Housed within the War Department, the bureau was staffed by army officers. The President appointed the head commissioner of the bureau. An assistant commander would be placed in each of the ten states that participated in the rebellion. In exchange for his services, the bureau commissioner received a salary of \$3,000 and \$50,000 in government bonds. His assistant commanders received a salary of \$2,500 and \$20,000 in government bonds.⁴⁰ With mandate in hand, the bureau set out to manage the abandoned confederate lands and tend to the needs of the freedmen throughout the South.

Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, selected General Oliver Otis Howard to serve as the only commissioner of the freedmen's bureau. General Oliver, a native of Maine and former commander of the Army of Tennessee, became the head of a federal agency charged with the job of creating a new way of life for freedmen, most of whom lived in the South as slaves.⁴¹ General Howard, born in Leeds, Maine, was the son of immigrants from Massachusetts who were attracted to the farmland, which lay to the west of the Androscoggin River. His great grandfather, Captain Seth Howard, held the dual distinction as founder of Leeds and as a soldier in the Revolutionary War.⁴² Following in

³⁹Ibid., 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁴¹William S. McFeeley, *Yankee Stepfather: General O.O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968) , 20

⁴²Ibid., 26

the footsteps of his great grandfather, General Howard was well accustomed to the harsh brutalities and carnage of war as evidenced by his letters which detail the Union campaign as it stretched through Georgia.⁴³ On orders from William Tecumseh Sherman, General Howard led the Army of Tennessee in the march to the sea. The capture of Fort McAllister on the coastal waters below Savannah by troops under Howard's command heralded the demise of the Confederacy in Georgia.⁴⁴ The former breadbasket and munitions dump of the Confederacy was placed under Union control. Once the harsh business of war had been completed, Howard redirected his energies to answer the question—"What shall we do with the Negro?"⁴⁵

In response to the question, Howard permitted his assistant commanders and agents to experiment with an assortment of varied assistance programs designed to solve the larger question of how to integrate freedmen into postwar society. Evidence of paternalism and his interpretation of his duty as a moral obligation were present in his rhetoric. Through his efforts, "America would be transformed into a nation which cares for its children." His task would also enable him to reconcile his desire to become a preacher with his military service. He took great pride in the title "Christian Soldier" which was recognized throughout the nation. The title enabled Howard to appeal to religious and private aid societies for assistance, serve as a spokesman on the behalf of the plight of freedmen and to establish his work as moral necessity for the destitute of every hue and shade.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., 40.

Ibid., 43

⁴⁵ Ibid., 84

⁴⁶ Ibid., 85.

General Howard chose Brigadier Rufus Saxton to serve as assistant commander of Georgia. The native of Massachusetts was charged with the responsibility of supervising the work of the bureau in Georgia.⁴¹ With orders in hand, assistant commander opened the main bureau office in Augusta, Georgia (see figure1) Saxton took up the task of providing sustenance, clothing, and medical care to the freedmen. In addition, the bureau aided in the process of family reunification, assisted them in their quest for education, and transported them to areas where farmers would pay their wages in return for their labor power. In effect, the bureau aided blacks in their transition from slavery to freedom.⁴²

Agents and bureau officials turned their attention to collect information regarding the population and condition of Georgia. Before their arrival, northern relief agencies such as the AMA and AFUC opened schools, provided teaching materials, and instructors throughout the South. Their desire to provide instruction stemmed from their firm belief in education. The origins of the public schools can be traced back to the traditional New England school system. From Massachusetts to Maine, single-room schoolhouses dotted the landscape. Within these walls, mostly young female teachers provided basic lessons in arithmetic, reading, and civics. Some schools were able to offer advanced subjects.

Northerners prized education along with free labor and the ballot. These three elements represented the guardians of their liberty. Education served as the foundation of

⁴¹ Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997) , 2.

⁴² Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath Of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1979) , 382.

a virtuous citizenry, the bedrock of republicanism.⁴³ Army officers who supported freedmen's education became ideal candidates to fill vacancies within the State Bureau offices. Commissioner Howard selected Colonel John Randolph Lewis to oversee educational unit of the Georgia Bureau as the assistant inspector general for the Georgia Bureau. In January 1867, Colonel John Randolph Lewis became assistant inspector general for the Georgia Bureau. Two years earlier, Lewis had served in the same capacity in Tennessee. He had become disenchanted over whites refusal to honor labor contracts with blacks. Unlike his superiors, who firmly believed in the contract system of labor, Lewis became convinced that the freedmen must possess intelligence and education so that they may be able to defend their rights.⁴⁴

Once the war had ended, both Northerners and Southerners agreed that the resurrection of the South's agrarian based economy was crucial to the overall economic health of the United States. The Northern factories and markets hungered for the cotton, tobacco, and foodstuffs produced by the rich Southern soil. Planters in need of field hands entered into labor contract with free blacks. However, this new pool of free labor was subject to planters who refused to honor contracts and local officials who refused to defend their rights. Though the system of slavery lay in ruin, individuals remained firm in their belief of white supremacy. The contract had replaced the whip as the new means of control over free blacks. In response to this situation, Lewis worked to provide blacks access to education. A literate workforce would be able to defend itself against the horde of racist planters and indifferent local officials. They could avoid entering into contracts with planters who refuse to provide financial compensation equal to their labor in the

⁴³Paul A. Cimbala, *Under The Guardianship Of A Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997) , 14.

fields. Education and control of their labor power formed the bedrock on which blacks would construct a viable community in Georgia.

During the first year of operation, the bureau was financially unable to meet the educational needs of the freedmen. The initial legislation, which called for creation of the freemen's bureau, failed to provide funds for education related expenses. In addition, the initial legislation made no provision for the education of freedmen. Commissioner Howard responded by diverting the rent collected from confiscated and abandoned property towards schoolhouse construction, books, and school furniture.⁴⁵ Though legislators may have failed to address the educational needs of the freedmen, Commissioner Howard, by his own initiative, secured the necessary funding for freedmen's education during the first year of bureau operations.

During the summer of 1866, Congress took up the issue of the bureau's inability to meet the educational needs of the freedmen. Congressmen received petitions from bureau officials and educational agencies that faced the daily challenges and financial demands of freedmen's education. On July 16, 1866, the educational powers of the bureau were expanded. Under conditions of the act, the bureau was permitted to work closely with private aid agencies. Additional language within the acts, granted the commissioner the power to lease buildings to private aid agencies, which were to be used as schools for freedmen. In response to the pleas for funding, congress appropriated \$521,000 for school related expenses. In addition, revenue collected from the sale and lease of confiscated confederate property was diverted towards freedmen's education. Ten months later, Congress moved to provide additional funding for bureau schools. On May 2, 1867,

⁴⁴Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵Paul Skeels Pierce, *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter In The History Of Reconstruction*

the department of education was established. Within the body of department of education bill, an additional \$500,000 was earmarked for the operation, purchase and maintenance of bureau schools.⁴⁶

Through the efforts of bureau officers and private aid groups, the freedmen's bureau was transformed from an overwhelmed agency into a department capable of meeting the demands of the day. Successive acts of congress increased the bureau's budget and charged its officers with the duty of funding freedmen's education. A new partnership was forged between the federal government and private aid organizations. Groups such as the AMA and AFUC would petition the bureau for funds to purchase buildings or to cover the daily operating expenses of existing schools. Within the local bureau offices, funding requests were processed. Bureau officials relied upon first hand accounts of bureau field agents and the work of existing relief agencies. Funding could not be wasted on persons or groups of questionable stature.

Although General Rufus Saxton served as supervisor of the Georgia Bureau, Brigadier Davis Tillson is recognized as the officer responsible for establishing the Bureau's presence throughout Georgia. The native of Rockland, Maine, Tillson was a graduate of West Point, which was regarded as the preeminent military academy in the United States. After his service as an artillery officer, Brigadier Tillson established the first heavy artillery regiment composed entirely of black soldiers. Upon conclusion of his military career, he took command of the Georgia Bureau on September 22, 1865.⁴⁷ Tillson appointed the following individuals to serve as the first state superintendents: G.L

(New York: Haskell House, 1971), 75.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 76.

⁴⁷ Paul Cimbala, *Under The Guardianship Of A Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction Of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 5.

Eberhart, 1865-67; Edmund A. Ware, 1867-68 and John R. Lewis 1868-1870. All of the aforementioned individuals served brief terms and were charged with the task of overseeing the daily operation of freedmen's schools throughout the state.⁴⁸

Within the offices of the Georgia Bureau located in Augusta, assistant commander Tillson received requests from individuals on behalf of private aid groups in search of funding to cover expenses related to freedmen's education. One particular request regarding the repair of a school reached his desk. In October 1866, Reverend E.P. Smith requested on behalf of the AMA, the sum of seven thousand four hundred dollars for the repair of schools houses in Atlanta. Tillson responded by informing Reverend Smith that the request could be approved as long as the AMA promised to provide education to all, regardless of race.⁴⁹ Tillson strove to insure that federal funds would not be used to maintain the wall of separation between whites and blacks. Schools who sought to educate all of Georgia's youth would be entitled to funding provided by the bureau.

Local bureau administrators drew upon funds from its operating budget to provide financial support for freedmen's education across the State of Georgia. According to local bureau records, the bureau provided the sum of two hundred thousand dollars in support of freedmen's education from 1865 to 1870. Over the course of five years of the bureau's operation in Georgia between 1865 and 1870, the Georgia bureau provided \$40,000 annually in support of freedmen's education. These funds were used to cover the following expenses incurred by freedmen's schools: construction, maintenance, and daily operations. Due to the financial expenditures made by the bureau, schools were opened

⁴⁸Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love, Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 91

⁴⁹Paul A. Cimbala, *Under The Guardianship Of A Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997) , 116.

and operated in sixty towns within the state of Georgia.⁵⁰ Clearly, the federal expenditures towards freedmen's education completely eclipsed the half-hearted and anemic attempts made by the state government; and rightly so, since state legislators who were firmly wedded to their belief in white supremacy viewed education of the freedmen as a threat to their superior status within Georgia. Free from interference by state legislators, bureau superintendent G. L. Eberhart and his agents tended to the daily business of processing funding requests and collecting reports regarding the status of schools attend by the freedmen of Georgia. This group of dedicated officers worked tirelessly in support of freedmen's education. Sadly, the massive expenditures by the Georgia bureau contributed to its demise. Over the course of its five years in operation, the financial demands exceeded the funds within the bureau's budget.

From 1867 to 1870, bureau officials began to reduce bureau involvement in freedmen's education. The financial commitment to freedmen's education played a major role in the reduction and eventual demise of the Georgia bureau. The first sign of financial insolvency appeared during the overlapping terms of superintendents Eberhart and Ware. In 1867, bureau funds earmarked for teacher's salaries were exhausted. Within the next two years, transportation and supply costs had exacted a heavy toll on the budget of the Georgia office. In response to this situation, superintendents Ware and Lewis applied the remaining funds towards schoolhouse repair. To cover further budget shortfalls, the superintendents would permit private aid groups to rent the schoolhouses for a nominal monthly fee.⁵¹

⁵⁰Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 91.

⁵¹Ibid. 92.

The men of the Georgia bureau bore a heavy burden on their shoulders. They were charged with the task of providing financial assistance in support of freedmen's education. They also provided the physical infrastructure in the form of confiscated property and newly constructed school buildings. Private aid organizations such as the AMA and the AFUC sent written requests for funding. Bureau officials would screen numerous requests. Those deemed worthy of funding would be approved. In one particular instance, the misuse of bureau funds led superintendent Lewis to unleash a verbal tirade upon an AMA official who had used bureau funds to build a mission home in place of a school.⁵²

During the Summer of 1870, bureau activities began to wind down. In mid-July, only a skeletal staff remained. Superintendent Lewis worked feverishly during the final days of bureau office operations. He succeeded in completing repairs on school buildings and transferred leases from the bureau to the AMA.⁵³ By working in close partnership with private aid organizations, the Georgia bureau helped establish the rudimentary foundation of the public school system. The partnership had resulted in the transfer of the classical New England education to the Georgia freedmen. Without question, the bureau played a major role in the transformation of the ex-slaves of Georgia into literate freedmen ready to pursue their hopes and dreams.

⁵²Ibid. 92.

⁵³Ibid. 108.

Black Support of Education and Schools in Georgia

While bureau agents and missionaries tended to the daily business of freedmen's education, free blacks contributed to their uplift via education. No longer barred by state law, both young and old filled the schoolrooms. Students received daily reading, writing, arithmetic, and history lessons. The rudimentary education received by blacks would enable them to pursue their own interests and increase their participation in the greater society.

As time passed, freedmen began to fashion their own ideas regarding education. Blacks viewed education as a means of protest against white authority as well as a passport to places beyond their immediate surroundings. In the eyes of the Georgia freedmen, education represented individual and collective defiance to white authority and as a means of venturing beyond the confines of the cotton plantation.⁵⁴ Blacks viewed the schoolhouse as a counterweight to the ideals of white supremacy, which remained alive in the minds of a considerable segment of the southern white population. Also, their exposure to education rekindled their need to explore the lands beyond the plantation grounds. No longer subject to the evils of slavery blacks turned to education as a means of self-improvement. The Georgia freedmen, armed with the hard won freedom filled schoolrooms across the state. Education would play a key role in the transformation of the freedmen into a community of literate citizens. Within the black community, the school represented the gateway to knowledge, independence, and a means to acquire the skills required to function within postbellum Georgia.

⁵⁴Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love, Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 49.

Observers of the situation noted how the Georgia freedmen craved for education. In the words of a native black teacher, they begged for learning “as a thirsty man would beg his neighbor for water.”⁵⁵ The school served as an oasis to quench the freedmen’s thirst for education. Some blacks went to great lengths to meet the educational needs of their children. In one instance, a young black woman traveled hundreds of miles so that her son may attend school. Harriet Lynch Wright walked approximately two hundred miles from Cuthbert, Georgia to Atlanta with her three children so that her son Richard could attend Storrs School.⁵⁶ The action taken by Ms. Wright illustrates her deep commitment to her son’s future. She embarked on a long trek to insure that her son would have the opportunity to receive an education.

While Ms. Wright trekked across Georgia, a father worked an additional job to fund his daughter’s education. In 1911, Albert Rivers, a self-employed farmer obtained a position as a lumberyard laborer. The additional income was needed so that his twelve-year-old daughter, Eunice, could leave their home in Jakin, Georgia to attend a school located fifteen miles away in Fort Gaines, Georgia. She then went on to Tuskegee Institute where she obtained a nursing degree in 1922.⁵⁷ Rivers played an active role in his daughter’s pursuit of a college degree. The investment made by Rivers was a wise decision.

Across the state, blacks provided their labor power and financial resources to establish schools in their communities. In the years following the Civil War, former field hands who maintained the rice fields of Savannah (see figure 2) offered their labor in

⁵⁵Ibid, 59.

⁵⁶Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 39.

return for the establishment of a school in their community. Their counterparts in nearby Brunswick were unanimous in their support of education (see figure 2). Meanwhile, their comrades in southwestern Georgia sought to establish schools in their communities as well. In the hopes of recruiting a teacher to provide instruction for their children, blacks in Calhoun County offered a home and a salaried position to prospective candidates.⁵⁸ Blacks in Thomas, Georgia held fund raising events to collect monies for school construction. During the early years of Reconstruction, the men and women of Thomas donated seventy dollars per month towards school operations. They also contributed three hundred and fifty dollars per year to fund school construction. The profits made from bazaars, fairs and bake sales were earmarked for school construction and daily operation. The financial support displayed by the blacks of Thomas, Georgia could be found in other black communities as well. The state superintendent recognized their financial support of education. Two years after the Civil War, records indicate that the Georgia freedmen had donated \$3,500 per month toward school construction, compared to the bureau's monthly appropriation of \$2,000⁵⁹ From the evidence presented, blacks valued education and used the financial resources within their communities to meet the costs of school construction.

In addition to funding the construction of new schools, blacks owned schools and helped pay expenses related to their daily operation. According to records kept by the Georgia branch of the Freedmen's Bureau, blacks owned a significant number of schools

⁵⁷Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought To Be and To Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) , 32.

⁵⁸Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher In The South, 1862-1870* (Tennessee: The Vanderbilt University Pres, 1941) , 71.

⁵⁹Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love, Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 62.

and were able to provide financial support to these schools. By the end of 1866, blacks owned 57 school buildings and provided funding for the operation of 96 of the 127 schools in the state. By May 1867, contributions made by the freedmen sustained 104 schools and teachers and 3,045 pupils.⁶⁰ The records also reveal that blacks had planned to build schools upon newly purchased parcels of land. In September 1867, the bureau superintendent reported that freedmen had purchased land and planned to build schools upon them.⁶¹ Blacks were firmly committed to the establishment of schools within their communities. Through the use of their labor power and community based fund raising events, blacks were able to build and support schools for their children.

However, the efforts by blacks to establish schools along with their desire to select black teachers drew the attention of AMA field officials in Georgia. The AMA had provided teachers, instructional materials and opened schools on the behalf of the freedmen. Some AMA agents and officials firmly believed that blacks were unable to provide instruction to their fellow brethren. Black teachers were often the targets of unjustified criticism and prejudice by some AMA officials. In a caustic letter to the State Superintendent, Edwin Cooley expressed his belief that a “Yankee girl could provide better instruction to one hundred pupils better than three black teachers.’ Additional letters revealed his prejudice against black teachers. While Cooley did begrudgingly offer words of praise to a few black teachers, he stood firm in his belief that black teachers were less competent than their white counterparts.⁶²

⁶⁰ Paul A. Cimbala, *Under The Guardianship Of A Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau And The Reconstruction Of Georgia, 1865-1877* (Athens: The University Of Georgia Press, 1997) , 110.

⁶¹George Bently, *A History Of The Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955) , 172.

⁶² Ibid, 123.

Cooley was not alone in his vitriolic attack against black teachers. In one instance an official conducting a review of black teachers in Georgia offered an unflattering report. While conducting an inspection of schools in 1869, Bureau inspector O.H Howard noted that black teachers patterned themselves entirely after their white counterparts and their students receive little if any instruction.⁶³ Black led educational groups also drew fire from officials within northern benevolent associations. Following the capture of Savannah by General Sherman in December 1864, the black clergymen of Savannah established the Savannah Educational Association. The SEA immediately established schools on the grounds of the former Bryan Slave Mart and the Oglethorpe Medical College. Their nine-member committee was guided by the principle of “assistance without control” and took pride in retaining absolute control of schools founded by the SEA.⁶⁴ While some members of benevolent associations respected the SEA’s firm commitment to self-reliance and management of its own internal affairs, others held a less favorable opinion of the black led association. AMA agent S.W. Magill believed that the SEA would prove to be a great failure since its members did not enlist the aid of white AMA agents and chose to manage the association by themselves. In his opinion, the AMA should not become involved with the SEA as long as it maintained a posture of “racial exclusiveness”.⁶⁵ The SEA in no way posed a threat to the dominance of the AMA in Georgia. However, the collective efforts displayed by blacks threatened to break the bonds of paternalism between blacks and benevolent associations. Bureau agents, administrators, and missionaries believed that they were best suited to the task of meeting the educational needs of the freedmen. They believed that slavery had rendered freedmen

⁶³Ibid, 89.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 120.

unable to transform themselves into literate citizens. Therefore, it became necessary that benevolent associations should intervene on behalf of the freedmen.

Although they were motivated by the best of intentions, they failed to recognize that blacks had sought ways to improve their community through collective support. During slavery, blacks established networks of support to aid their fellow brethren. After the demise of slavery in Georgia, freedmen formed churches, schools, and mutual aid societies.⁶⁶ No longer subject to the evils of slavery, blacks set out immediately to establish institutions within their respective communities across the state. Blacks aspired to create self-sustaining communities and were committed to administering their own affairs. The schools provided an environment in which blacks could exert control and shape young minds for their future roles within the community. Moreover, the schools would come to represent an institution that would forever play an essential role in the preparation of future black leadership. Fifteen years after blacks in Savannah had opened the first schools, 96 percent of the black leaders attributed education as the key reason for their elevation to leadership positions within the community.⁶⁷

Blacks welcomed the arrival of northern teachers, yet they envisioned a future in which blacks would attend schools operated by black administrators and receive instruction from black teachers. For example, some blacks had petitioned AMA agents to provide black teachers for their schools.⁶⁸ In 1865, a significant number of blacks taught

⁶⁵ Ibid, 121.

⁶⁶ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love, Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 61.

⁶⁷ Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was In The South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1993) 223.

⁶⁸ Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) 246.

their fellow comrades. According to records kept by John W. Alvord, bureau inspector of schools and finances, forty-three of the sixty-nine teachers in Georgia were black.⁶⁹

The desire for black teachers would become the flashpoint of conflict between blacks and benevolent associations.

AMA personnel firmly believed that they could provide the best teachers for freedmen. Their opposition to black teachers was based in their belief that blacks failed to possess the skills required to provide instruction. Some AMA teachers were angered that blacks would elect to bypass their offer of free schooling and pay a dollar per month for the services of a black teacher for their children.⁷⁰ AMA officers failed to realize that blacks sought to gain as much control over their lives and institutions as possible.

The ability to make decisions regarding the hiring of personnel represented another milestone in their transformation from slaves to citizens. Prior to their emancipation, they were barred from making their own decisions. No longer subject to the demands of their masters, blacks sought to gain control over their own lives. The conflict between blacks and benevolent associations can be best described as an attempt by blacks to make their own decisions regarding the future of their community. Through control of personnel and administrative matters, blacks would increase their ability to exert control over their own lives. In turn, they would enjoy the same powers held by their white counterparts. In spite of the situation, blacks would continue in the struggle to gain greater control over their lives through the administration of school operations.

⁶⁹Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 43.

⁷⁰Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 246.

In one particular case, blacks attempted to obtain control of a school from the AMA. In 1875, the black community of Macon, Georgia, voiced the displeasure over the small number of black teachers employed at Lewis High. To rectify the situation, blacks offered to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the school and collect money to help pay teachers salaries. In return, the AMA would appoint a black principal and half of the teachers.⁷¹ No evidence is presented regarding the response of the AMA to the offer made by the black community in Macon. Nevertheless, their willingness to accept the additional financial burden of school operation illustrates their commitment to obtaining greater control of an institution that would play an essential role in the overall improvement of the community. Control of the school translated into greater control over their own lives.

In a bold move by the AMA, its officials selected a black candidate to fill the vacancy created by the departure of a principal from an AMA school in Randolph County (see figure 1). Perhaps this was an attempt by AMA to avoid conflict with the black community of Randolph. AMA missionaries following the close of the Civil War established the Howard Normal School for freedmen. Under the leadership of Fletcher Hamilton Henderson, the school would be transformed into a college preparatory institution and provide training in the industrial arts. Henderson was born a slave near Newberry, South Carolina in 1857. As a teenager, he obtained a diploma from the high school department of the University of South Carolina. Motivated by his desire to assist in the uplift of freedmen through education, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Atlanta University.⁷²

⁷¹Ibid, 247.

⁷²Margery P. Dews, "F. H. Henderson and Howard Normal School" *Georgia Historical Quarterly*

During the mid-1880's, Henderson initiated an aggressive program to expand the curriculum of Howard to include industrial education for boys and girls. Boys enrolled in courses pertaining to shop work and proper farming techniques. As for their female counterparts, they were offered courses in sewing, cooking, and care of the infirm.⁷³ The courses offered reflected the dominant view regarding the importance of industrial education as a means of instilling the value of self-sufficiency among blacks. Booker T. Washington was an ardent supporter of industrial education. His rock solid belief in the industrial arts led many within the field of freedmen's education to insist upon the inclusion of industrial education within the curriculum. However, the rapid industrialization, which occurred prior to the Civil War, would render industrial education useless. The large iron furnaces and spinning wheels driven by steam engines replaced the small forgery of the town ironsmith and the foot powered spinning wheel.

In response to this unfortunate situation, Henderson placed great emphasis on traditional studies. Students were required to take courses in algebra, geography, anatomy, English grammar, history, chemistry, and natural philosophy.⁷⁴ By the early 1890's, the improvement plan initiated by Henderson led to an increase in student enrollment. This increase in enrollment added to the financial burden of Howard. To rectify this situation, He was able to secure contributions from the Slater Fund, the AMA and the black members of the board of trustees for the school.⁷⁵ In the absence of state support, Henderson turned to benevolent associations, philanthropic organizations, and members of the black community to provide financial aid for Howard.

63 (1979) : 253.

⁷³Ibid, 254 .

⁷⁴ Ibid, 256.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 255.

During the early 1900's, Howard Normal School was acknowledged for its service within the community. In 1916, a rural school agent gave a glowing report, which cited the well-organized facilities, instructional materials, and its capable administrator. Henderson had transformed Howard into a prestigious institution in southwest Georgia. Students received rigorous instruction in the industrial arts and classical education. At the conclusion of their studies, they would reap the fruits of their labor. Howard alumni were often accepted into the college of their choice.⁷⁶ Howard had successfully produced students of high caliber and intelligence. Henderson had proved himself as a capable administrator during his tenure as principal of Howard. He was dedicated to the overall improvement of Howard and was able to draw upon the financial resources of benevolent associations and members of the black community to aid him in his goal to transform the school into a reputable institution. Most of all, his tenure weakened the preconceived notion that blacks were unfit to serve in administrative positions.

Prominent members within the black community used all means at their disposal to insure that blacks would remain committed to strengthening the existing school system. In 1919, local officials were considering the use of public funds for the maintenance and repair of schools. Sol C. Johnson, editor of the Savannah Tribune encouraged blacks to vote in support of the school bond referendum.⁷⁷ Johnson used his position as an editor to encourage blacks to show their support of education at the voting booth. Two years later, he called upon blacks to cast their votes for a similar measure. Johnson used newsprint to inform the black community regarding educational issues.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 259.

⁷⁷ John M. Matthews, "Black Newspapermen and the Black Community in Georgia, 1890-1930. *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68 (1984) : 372.

Approximately fifty years earlier, a former black council member and a religious leader used their influence and powers of persuasion to secure schools and teachers for the black community of Atlanta. After engaging in a pitched battle with the Board of City School Commissioners, former councilman William Finch secured schools for blacks in 1872. Six years later, during a meeting with the Atlanta Board of Education, Reverend Frank Quarles petitioned the board to appoint competent black teachers to all black schools within the city.⁷⁸ While no evidence is presented regarding the outcome of the petition made by Reverend Quarles, his attempt to secure teachers illustrates his commitment to the improving the quality of instructors in the classroom. Students stood to benefit the most from competent instructors.

The Georgia freedmen placed great importance on education. From the wiregrass region to the rural southwest counties, blacks engaged in a host of activities to provide financial support for schools and staff. Families sacrificed their earnings so that their children may receive an education. In one case, a parent uprooted her family and traveled hundreds of miles so that her son may attend a prestigious institution. Prominent members of the black community used the means at their disposal to secure schools and competent teachers. Blacks challenged the paternalism of the AMA. When given the opportunity to provide leadership, blacks performed beyond expectations. Their accomplishments were a testament to their dedication to the uplift of their fellow brethren through education. Future generations would owe a debt of gratitude to the early freedmen who had contributed to the foundation of schools in Georgia

⁷⁸Howard Rabinowitz, "Half A Loaf: The Shift from White to Black Teachers in the Negro Schools of the Urban South, 1865-1890." *Journal of Southern History* 40 (1974) : 575.

Benevolent Associations Provide Support to Schools in Georgia

Benevolent associations were key in the establishment of freedmen's schools throughout the South. Groups such as the New York based American Freeman's Union Commission (AFUC) and the Boston based American Missionary Association (AMA) provided teachers and funding for freedmen's education. Their membership consisted of men and women whose adherence to their Christian beliefs led them to become active participants in the uplift of freedmen. Some organizations were the result of the unification of many different groups into one body. For example, relief organizations from New England and the Midwest came together to form the American Freedmen's Aid Commission. On September 3 1846, the Union Missionary Society, the Committee for West Indian Missions and the Western Evangelical Missionary Association united to form the American Missionary Association as a means to voice their ardent opposition to slavery.⁷⁹ As time passed, these groups devoted their human and financial resources towards the uplift of Southern blacks through education.

Following the end of the Civil War, a host of benevolent associations initiated operations in Georgia. They concentrated their efforts in the urban centers of Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah. In January 1866, the New England Freeman's Aid Society opened free schools for blacks in the city of Columbus (see figure 1). Teachers provided instruction for 115 students and held night classes for adults. Teachers provided lessons in mathematic, reading, writing, and geography. To help defray the costs of school operations pupils offered a group contribution of \$60. Although classes were held in a windowless room within a black Methodist church, teachers gained

great satisfaction from the progress made by their students. Sarah Chase, a young teacher from Worcester, Massachusetts noted that her students strove to improve in every direction and displayed an unquenchable eagerness to acquire knowledge.⁸⁰

Benevolent associations employed men and women as teachers. However, the majority of teachers were young, college educated women. Many of these women received teaching degrees from prestigious institutions in New England and the Midwest. For example, graduates of Oberlin College could be found in schools throughout the South. Both teachers and officers employed by private aid organizations were ardent supporters of freedmen's education. Their objective was to establish the northern common school system throughout the South. They believed that all black people should possess the basic skills needed to become active participants within a democratic society. Furthermore, their efforts would foster the intellectual and moral growth of responsible citizens, who recognized their duty to God, country, family and self.⁸¹

Benevolent associations sought to transform the uneducated freedmen into literate, upright citizens. Teachers intertwined lessons of morality and thrift within the curriculum. During the fall of 1877, a teacher in Macon, Georgia provided lessons in good morals and gentle manners along with elementary algebra and English composition. In another instance, a teacher went throughout the black community of Savannah extolling the benefits of industry and tidiness. At the conclusion of the school day, Ms. Cornelia A. Drake gave lectures in the homes of Savannah freedmen regarding industry

⁷⁹ Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Society And Southern Blacks 1865-1890*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , vii.

⁸⁰ Alan Conway, *The Reconstruction Of Georgia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966) , 88.

⁸¹ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 109.

and cleanliness.⁸² The values of thrift, morality and industry formed the bedrock of Northern society. From New York to New England, citizens implemented these values into their daily lives. Both teachers and agents of private aid groups sought to inculcate these very same values into the minds of the Georgia freedmen.

In addition, bureau agents and northern teachers entered into an alliance to disseminate a moral education and the protestant work ethic among the free blacks of Georgia. During the first days following the end of the Civil War, a black man in Augusta, recalled a speech given by northerners who had just arrived in town. They encouraged freedmen to refrain from thievery, earn their own wages, and provide support to their families.⁸³

The political education of the freedmen was just as important as their daily lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Northern teachers used songs and student led discussions to reinforce student's knowledge of key political figures and events. During recess, students recited songs regarding Sherman's march through Georgia and the exploits of the zealous abolitionist John Brown who was killed at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. In 1869, students at a freedmen's school in Andersonville, Georgia conducted a debate on the expulsion of black representatives from the state legislature.⁸⁴ In one particular case, a Freedmen's Bureau agent stationed in Albany, Georgia, expressed his opinion that the political education of the freedmen should be the top priority of teachers.

⁸² Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks 1865-1890*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 44.

⁸³ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 28.

⁸⁴ Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher In The South, 1862-1870* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941) , 82

According to the Bureau agent, informing the freedmen of their rights and privileges as citizens is the most important duty of the school system.⁸⁵

In 1865, private aid organizations set out to establish schools statewide to meet the needs of one-half million black adults and children in Georgia.⁸⁶ As mentioned earlier, freedmen had taken the initiative to open and operate schools prior to the arrival of private aid organizations. Upon their arrival in Georgia, missionaries and teachers came across schools that were established by blacks. In the summer of 1865, AMA teachers discovered a school established by Grandison Daniels and James Tate. Both men were responsible for the opening of the first school for black children in Atlanta. The school was later turned over to AMA control.⁸⁷

Rivalries among benevolent associations posed a serious obstruction to the establishment of a permanent school system in Georgia. The AMA, the AFUC and the MFAS (Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society) worked to avoid conflict with their rivals.⁸⁸ To resolve this situation, each organization sought to establish a base of operations within the seven major cities. The AMA used this tactic to secure exclusive control of Savannah, Macon, and Atlanta, and agreed to share Augusta with the Baptists. The AFUC and MFAS did not fare as well as their AMA counterparts. The city of Columbus was the sole stronghold of the AFUC. Meanwhile, members of MFAS focused their attention upon the medium sized towns of LaGrange and Waynesboro.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Ibid, 88

⁸⁶ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 86.

⁸⁷ John C. Inscoe, ed., *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865-1950* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) , 92.

⁸⁸ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 88.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 90.

Once an association had firmly established itself within one or more cities, its members could effectively establish schools and manage personnel. The need for economy and the foundation of a school hierarchy were the two principal forces that led the associations to establish themselves within the cities of Georgia. A smaller number of teachers could provide instruction to a greater number of students. In some instances, teachers stationed in rural areas provided instruction for classes of fewer than thirty pupils. The concentration of teachers in the urban centers enabled the AMA and AFUC bureaucrats to redirect funds towards school construction and to improve the overall efficiency of school operations. In addition, by localizing their efforts within the urban centers, they could establish a system of schools from elementary grades through college.⁹⁰ Though each relief agency aligned itself with a specific denomination, they all sought to leave in place a permanent system of education to provide instruction and uplift within the black community of Georgia.

The AMA, AFUC, and other northern benevolent associations provided considerable funding towards the uplift of Southern blacks. From 1861 to 1889, Northern relief groups provided approximately \$21,000,000 to freedmen's aid in the South.⁹¹ Northern groups bore the heavy burden of teacher's salaries in Georgia. Approximately \$20,000 was paid out between the fall of 1865 and July 1866. From October 1866 to July 1867, the AMA and the AFUC supported eighty teachers at a cost of \$42,000. Of these eighty teachers, the AMA sponsored sixty-five teachers while the AFUC was only able to sponsor eight teachers. As the number of teachers increased the costs of their support borne by the benevolent associations increased. From October 1867

⁹⁰ Ibid, 89.

to July 1868, the AMA, AFUC and MFAS at a cost of \$50,000 supported one hundred twenty three teachers. Of these one hundred twenty three teachers, the AMA sponsored one hundred four, seven were sponsored by the AFUC, and twelve were sponsored by MFAS.⁹² From the evidence presented, it appears that the AMA was financially able to provide additional teachers and bear the costs associated with their increase in number when compared to the AFUC and MFAS.

To secure additional funding for freedmen's education, benevolent associations fostered good working relationships with officers of the Freedmen's Bureau. This partnership between the public and private sphere proved beneficial to private relief groups. Records indicate that 50% of the \$12,000,000 appropriated to the Bureau was transferred to benevolent groups to be expended in support of freedmen's schools.⁹³ The public sphere represented by the Freedmen's Bureau, provided transportation, confiscated property, and funding for benevolent associations. The private sphere, represented by the various benevolent associations, provided the teachers and instructional materials to educate the freedmen. Both groups worked in concert to provide schools for blacks and to leave in place a permanent statewide education system.

Although the benevolent associations were able to reap the financial benefits of their partnership with the Freedmen's Bureau, they still relied heavily upon the donations of their members. The contributions would be placed into the operations budget, which would be used to cover the costs of teacher's salaries, building construction, building

⁹¹ Richard B. Drake, "Freedmen's Aid Societies and Sectional Compromise." *The Journal of Southern History* 29 (1963) : 179.

⁹² Alan Conway, *The Reconstruction of Georgia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966) , 90.

⁹³ Richard B Drake, ""Freedmen's Aid Societies and Sectional Compromise," *Journal of Southern History* 29 (1963) : 177.

repair, and instructional materials. Also the attitude of the nation towards blacks, the political climate, and the economy could have a serious impact on the work of missionaries and teachers in the South.⁹⁴ AMA officials had to take notice of the change in attitudes among their Northern brethren. After conclusion of the Civil War, many Northerners turned their attention to the political and economic reintegration of the South into the Union. Leaders of benevolent organizations had to find a vehicle to communicate to the importance of their work and the need for citizens to contribute to the uplift of blacks through education.

In response to this situation, AMA officials created the *American Missionary*. Founded in 1861, the newsletter proved to be a major source of income for the AMA. According to AMA records, 50% of the association's yearly income was derived from sales of the *American Missionary*.⁹⁵ The newsletter documented the successes and struggles of AMA sponsored teachers and their students. In order to encourage readers to donate funds to the AMA, administrators encouraged teachers to submit articles that would stir the reader's emotions. In one instance, an AMA administrator encouraged a field worker to submit such a letter. George Whipple requested that a missionary submit stories detailing the student progress, conversions to Christ, or acts of violence committed against blacks by white Southerners.⁹⁶

However, a considerable number of white Georgians resented the actions of the benevolent associations. In their opinion, the Yankee ideal of social equality posed a serious threat to the time honored practice of blacks deferring to whites. In one instance,

⁹⁴ Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1865-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 92.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 94.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 94.

a member of the religious community voiced his opposition to further involvement by Northern teachers. In 1868, a Methodist minister agreed that blacks should be taught; but he did not want blacks to receive instruction from a “Yankee or radical”.⁹⁷ In the opinion of white Georgians, the involvement of Northern teachers fostered the freedmen’s belief in social equality, which posed a direct threat to white supremacy. To combat the influence of Northern teachers, white Georgians believed that native whites were best suited to teach blacks and to inform of their place within the racial caste system.

Opponents of freedmen’s education employed a host of methods to block the development of freedmen’s schools in Georgia. Members of the Georgia branch of the Klu Klux Klan targeted teachers and students. Throughout the hinterlands, Klansmen attacked teachers without provocation. Teachers were shot, beaten, and threatened in the counties of Warrenton, Andersonville, Macon, and Walton. In Walton County, Klansmen burned the books of a black teacher and threatened to whip any black that sent a child to school.⁹⁸ Their goal was to neutralize the efforts by blacks to improve their condition through education and to return the state to Democratic control.

In place of physical violence, some Georgians socially ostracized their northern counterparts. Teachers in Bainbridge, Georgia, attended a white church, but no member of the congregation ever spoke to them or acknowledged their presence.⁹⁹ In spite of the actions of opponents to the work of the AMA and related organizations, teachers continued to provide instruction to the Georgia freedmen. In one instance, a

⁹⁷ Alan Conway, *The Reconstruction of Georgia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966) , 86.

⁹⁸ Donald L. Grant *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1993) , 222.

⁹⁹ Joe M Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1865-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 218.

Georgia school commissioner recognized the change in whites attitude towards their work. In 1877, Gustavus Orr noted that southern whites who had taught blacks gained satisfaction for their work. They firmly believed that their work would result in the transformation of the freedmen into virtuous and peaceable citizens.¹⁰⁰

Philanthropic organizations contributed to the establishment of schools and colleges for blacks in Georgia. Affluent individuals who were active in a host of social causes funded these organizations. One such individual used a portion of his own wealth to establish his own organization. On the 18th of February, George Peabody was born in the south parish of Danvers, Massachusetts. His parents were of English extraction.¹⁰¹ Orphaned at the age of sixteen, he and his uncle left New Hampshire by boat in May of 1812. Their destination was the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. At the age of nineteen, Peabody was offered a partnership with a firm, which furnished capital for businesses. The firm's owner, Mr. Elisha Riggs entrusted Peabody with the daily operation of the firm due to his practical and astute management of affairs. He then entered venture into the package delivery business. His offer to ship parcels to Baltimore was well received by merchants and shippers thus resulting in his first successful venture in parcel delivery.¹⁰² Aside from his business prowess, Peabody expressed his opinion that the future growth of the country relied upon the establishment of the New England common school system among the immigrants who settled within the Mississippi valley.¹⁰³ Peabody's vision would come to fruition through the creation of the Peabody Fund. The scope of the fund would be increased to address the dearth of funding for

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 221.

¹⁰¹ Curry, J.L.M, *A Brief Sketch of George Peabody* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) , 1.

¹⁰² Ibid., 2

freedmen's education. George Peabody, a philanthropist and resident of Georgia established the Peabody Fund. The goal of the fund was to facilitate the establishment of public schools within every southern state. Reverend Barnas Sears, the former secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education served as the fund's chief administrator.¹⁰¹

During his term of service, Reverend Sears fused the economic and social control arguments of Jacksonian period to further the goals of the Peabody Fund. Through his use of analogies, Sears asserted that the education of the freedmen would result in improved economic and social conditions among blacks in the South. He argued that educated workers were more productive; that schools, like railroads, increased property values; that education eradicated poverty and crime; that funding of public schools was far more effective than the same funding appropriated for prisons and private schools.¹⁰²

Many schools struggled to cover the daily operation costs during their first year. Maintenance, teacher's salaries, and instructional materials devoured significant portions of a school's budget. Failure to secure funding, may have led to their closing or a shortened school semester. In response to this situation, the Peabody Fund intervened on behalf of the fledgling schools. In 1867, the fund provided \$4,000 for freedmen's schools in Georgia, which had experienced financial hardships within their initial year of operation.¹⁰³ These schools would have closed prematurely if not for the financial support provided by the Peabody Fund.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰¹ Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South: Public Policy in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) , 156.

¹⁰² ⁸⁸ Ibid, 156.

¹⁰³ Henry Allan Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) , 128.

Once Sears had provided assistance to the endangered schools, he then launched a campaign to provide funding for black schools statewide. In October 1868, 18 black schools each received a grant package of \$170. Two years later, the schools received considerably larger grant packages. The Peabody Fund supplied \$7,000 to the schools.¹⁰⁴ The grant packages were used to provide instruction to 782 students and to cover operation costs incurred by the schools. The financial support provided by the Peabody Fund was instrumental in the establishment of schools for blacks in Georgia. Dr. Barnas Sears worked tirelessly to achieve George Peabody's goal of establishing public schools in Georgia.

While the Peabody Fund sought to provide education to the Georgia freedmen, female teachers began to voice their concerns regarding gender based salary inequities and the refusal by men to appoint women to supervisory positions within benevolent associations. In one instance, an AMA sponsored teacher opted to leave her position in protest over the gender based salary gap. In December 1869, Anna Snowden, a native of Connecticut resigned from her teaching position in Georgia. She cited the AMA's policy of paying women lower salaries than their male counterparts as the reason for her resignation.¹⁰⁵ In 1872, another teacher sent a letter to the New York office of the AMA informing them of the massive salary gap and the unbearable workload shouldered by her fellow sisters in the field. Amy Williams contended that the \$800 annual salary received by men far outpaced their annual salary of \$135. She argued that women bore a disproportionate amount of the workload when compared to the duties of their male

¹⁰⁴ Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South: Public Policy in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press) , 157.

¹⁰⁵ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Southern Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980) , 105.

counterparts and superintendents. For Amy Williams, the “equal pay for equal work” argument was supplanted by the fact that women performed more duties than their male superiors.¹⁰⁶

While Amy Williams railed against the salary inequity between men and women, a colleague attacked the AMA policy that prevented women from serving as superintendents. Julia Shearman worked for three years as a teacher in Georgia. During her term of service, she became incensed over the inability of male superintendents to perform their daily duties. She openly advocated the dismissal of ineffective superintendents. Moreover, she declared that women should be allowed to serve as superintendents.¹⁰⁷ Julia Sherman offered a direct challenge to the male dominated hierarchy. In response to her calls for reform, AMA officials responded by offering her informal authority over its Augusta branch. She declined the offer and resigned from her teaching position.¹⁰⁸ Propelled by her strong sense of professionalism and a great dislike of ineffective leadership, she sought to break down the gender barrier, which only served to reinforce the position of men as being superior to women within the bureaucracy of the AMA.

The contribution of the hundreds of “Yankee schoolmarms”, agents, and missionaries helped transform the freedmen into a community of citizens who went on to establish a viable community in Georgia. Motivated by their religious convictions along with their firm belief in education as a means of improving the condition of individuals, missionaries and teachers set out to establish schools throughout Georgia. Schools established by benevolent associations would eventually be turned over to local control.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 105.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 105.

These schools formed the foundation of the southern public school system. Despite the conflict between the male dominated hierarchy and the female rank and file, both worked to provide moral, practical, and political education for blacks.

Though paternalism often tainted their best of intentions, their dedication to the uplift of the Georgia freedmen through education will be forever noted within the annals of American history. Future generations of blacks would owe a debt of gratitude to the missionaries, agents, and teachers who laid the foundation for public education and private black colleges in Georgia.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 105.

The Rise of Black Colleges in Georgia

Following the end of the Civil War, benevolent associations not only set out to lay the foundation for the public school system but also sought to establish colleges for blacks in Georgia. Missionaries, teachers, and philanthropic organizations contributed large quantities of human and financial resources in the hopes of securing permanent institutions of higher learning for blacks. A mass migration of blacks from the rural regions to the urban centers occurred at the conclusion of the Civil War. For example, thousands of blacks were drawn to the city of Atlanta. The boom in construction and the massive influx of new arrivals created an environment conducive to the growth of the entrepreneurial class.¹⁰² Among the throngs of workmen, new arrivals, and businessmen, missionaries sought to establish institutions of higher learning. Future generations including members of the black professional class would owe a great debt to the founders of higher education in Georgia.

Past, present and future generations of graduates from Spelman College owe a great debt of gratitude to Sophia B. Packard and Harriet G. Giles, who founded the institution in Atlanta. Established in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church, the school first opened its doors for 11 students on Monday, April 11, 1881.¹⁰³ Its founders were fueled by a deep desire to start a school exclusively for women and young girls. Their desire to establish an institution of higher learning for women can be attributed to their journey through the south where they observed students who attended colleges and schools in Tennessee and Louisiana. The natives of New Salem, Massachusetts, visited Fisk University, several colored elementary schools, and New Orleans University, a

¹⁰²John C. Inscoe, ed., *Georgia In Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) , 92.

Methodist institution. At the conclusion of their trip, both women agreed to engage in a joint effort to establish a school in the south for young women in the South.¹⁰⁴

On April 1, 1881, Ms. Packard and Ms. Giles arrived in Atlanta. They met with an individual who would prove to be a staunch ally in their quest to start a school for young women and girls in the South. Reverend Frank Quarles, pastor of the Friendship Baptist Church was regarded as the most influential black clergyman in the state. Pastor Quarles earned his reputation as a leader in the civil, religious, and educational life of his fellow black Georgians from his service as a leader in the relocation of the Augusta Institute to Atlanta in 1879.¹⁰⁵ During a meeting with Miss Packard and Miss Giles, Pastor Quarles, who was deeply troubled by the state's disregard of education for black women, pledged his support to their cause. Using the power of the pulpit, Pastor Quarles enlisted the financial support of his congregation. He also circulated pamphlets among fellow clergy who attended the state Baptist convention. These pamphlets described the purpose, course of study and opening date of the fledgling institution.¹⁰⁶

Sadly, the founders of Spelman were dealt a devastating blow when their most ardent supporter succumbed to pneumonia. While in Boston during the month of November, he spearheaded a campaign to secure funds for the construction of school buildings for the fledgling institution. It is during this time when he became ill. Pastor Quarles died in New York at the home of his son on December 3, 1881.¹⁰⁷ This was not the first hardship faced by Miss Packard and Miss Giles. They were targets of criticism by members of the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS).

¹⁰³Florence Matilda Read, *The Story of Spelman College* (Atlanta, Georgia, 1961) , 50.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 45.

Subjected to delayed votes, concerns about their age, lack of funding, and the opinion that the task itself proved to be too great for women to bear, the future founders of Spelman continued to make their case to the WABHMS.¹⁰⁸ On March 10, 1881, after a series of votes and procedural motions, Miss Packard and Miss Giles were to establish a school in Atlanta.¹⁰⁹ Among the male dominated world of private relief organizations, the Freedmen's Bureau, and fellow members of the WABHMS who were critical of their venture, Miss Packard and Miss Giles endured the criticisms, delays and hardships. Their dream of establishing a school for young women had become a reality.

When compared to the established institutions in the Northeast and Midwest, the early black universities were far outmatched in terms of curriculum, enrollment, and endowment from private organizations and individuals. The early schools were designed to address the immediate educational needs of the Georgia freedmen. In time, these schools would be transformed into colleges and universities, which would resemble those found in the Northeast and Midwest.

The AMA dominated missionary fieldwork in Georgia. The association established schools in Savannah, Macon, and Atlanta. This association provided two individuals who would establish a major institution of higher learning for blacks in Atlanta. Through the efforts of Frederick Ayer and Edmund Asa Ware, they would transform a small school founded by freedmen into Atlanta University. The origins of Atlanta University can be traced back to a small school located on Jenkins street.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 47.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 39.

James Tate and Grandison Daniels started the school and provided instruction for the neighborhood youth during the Civil War.¹⁰³

In the Fall of 1865, Reverend Frederick Ayer and his wife Elizabeth arrived in Atlanta. These natives of Bell Prairie, Minnesota became heavily involved in providing instruction for the Atlanta freedmen. In 1866, they had successfully managed three primary schools for seven hundred students.¹⁰³ After his initial stint as a teacher and administrator, Reverend Ayer placed the Jenkins Street School under AMA control. Additional classroom space was required due to the increase in student enrollment. To rectify this situation, the AMA provided \$310 for the purchase of an abandoned railroad boxcar on Ellis Street. Additional purchases of buildings would soon follow. While Ayers supervised the purchase of additional structures, Edmund Asa Ware secured legal recognition of the fledgling institution. On December 22, 1837, Ware was born in North Wrentham, Massachusetts. Ware was the descendant of Robert Ware who came to the colony at Massachusetts Bay from England as early as 1642. In 1866, Ware arrived in Georgia under the auspices of the American Missionary Association as superintendent of schools for the Atlanta district.¹⁰⁴ Fueled by his rock solid faith in the mental and spiritual capacities of black students, Ware, the licensed preacher and superintendent of education for Georgia sought to secure legal recognition of the institution from the state.¹⁰⁵ In 1867, Ware, a Yale alumnus obtained a charter from the Supreme Court of Georgia.¹⁰⁴ Within two years of their arrival in Georgia, Ayer and Ware increased the size of the

¹⁰³Ibid., 92.

¹⁰³Russell Duncan, *Entrepreneur For Equality: Governor Rufus Bullock, Commerce, and Race in Post Civil War Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994) , 61.

¹⁰⁴Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography Vol. 10* (New York: Charles Scribner & sons, 1964) , 446.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 447

¹⁰⁴Henry Allan Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South From 1619 to the Present*

Atlanta University and succeeded in obtaining recognition by the state of its existence as an institution of higher learning.

During the early years, Atlanta University functioned as a college preparatory program. In 1869, students enrolled in the academic courses offered by Atlanta University. By 1872, the institution produced fifteen graduates and was scheduled to initiate their college coursework. Although their instructors were concerned that their students had not read an adequate amount of Greek and Latin to gain admission to the prestigious New England schools, they had read more than what would be required in southern and western schools.¹⁰⁵ Despite the concerns of their instructors, they had prepared the first class of graduates. Although they had achieved the modern day equivalent of a high school diploma, these students were trailblazers. They represented the first of many waves of future alumni who would benefit from the education they received from Atlanta University.

While missionaries and teachers continued their work, the legislature appropriated a substantial amount of funding for the fledgling university. In 1870, the Georgia General Assembly allocated \$8,000 for a school for blacks. The assembly provided the exact amount of funding for Franklin University. Located in Athens, Franklin was reserved for whites and would eventually become the University of Georgia. However, William McKinley, a white Democratic state senator viewed the policy as a means to appease the blacks and radicals in order for Franklin to remain an all white institution.¹⁰⁶

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) , 32.

¹⁰⁵ Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1986) , 134.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South: Public policy in 19th Century Georgia*

Senator McKinley was correct in his assessment of the policy enacted by the Georgia General Assembly. Henry McNeal Turner, a black Republican state representative confirmed that the policy was the result of an agreement between black Republicans and white Democrats that blacks would not demand access to Franklin as long as the State provides \$8,000 annually to Atlanta University.¹⁰⁷ Whites could no longer bar blacks from obtaining an education. However, they could erect separate institutions to retain separation between blacks and whites. Black legislators were well aware that the policy was firmly rooted in racial separation. Nevertheless, black legislators seized the opportunity to secure funding for a fledgling institution that would benefit their constituents. In effect, funding for Atlanta University would take precedence over social equality and integration.

In 1872, the recapture of the Georgia General Assembly by Democrats dealt a serious blow to Atlanta University. Democrats had wrestled control of the governorship from the Republican General Rufus Saxton, gained control of the General Assembly, and dominated the Congressional delegation. Failing to see the need to address the concerns of black voters, the Democrats, also known as “Redeemers” discontinued the practice of appropriating funds for Atlanta University.¹⁰⁸ The recapture of the state capital by the Democrats heralded the end of progressive policies enacted by Republicans. In spite of this situation, a new battle would be waged over a source of funding provided by the federal government. Advocates of freedmen’s education sought to obtain a share of the federal funding provided by the Morrill Act of 1862. However, they would have to contend with the trustees of the University of Georgia.

(Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) , 163.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 164.

Under the provisions of the Morrill Act, the Congress would convert 270,000 acres of western land into a fund for the establishment of an agricultural college. To insure that blacks would benefit from the act, a provision was added which required states to use a portion of the funds for freedmen education.¹⁰⁹ However, Governor Smith wanted to turn over the entire fund to the University of Georgia. Edmund Asa Ware informed the board of trustees and the Governor that unless they were prepared to admit blacks into the agricultural wing of the University of Georgia, their attempt to turn over the entire grant to the university would violate the provision, which guaranteed a portion of the funds for freedmen's education.¹¹⁰ After taking the political ramifications into consideration, an agreement was reached among the interested parties. In 1874, the state legislature agreed to hand over complete control of the Morrill Act to the University of Georgia. In return the state legislature would resume the practice of contributing \$8,000 per year to Atlanta University.¹¹¹ In addition, Atlanta University would receive half of the interest accrued under the Morrill Act.¹¹² The agreement enabled the University of Georgia to obtain complete control of the grant; meanwhile, the legislature shielded itself from federal inquiries regarding the dispensation of funds for freedmen's education; and avoid the wrath of black legislators and their constituents.

Without the involvement of Reverend Ware and former state representative Turner, Atlanta University could have been placed in serious financial straits through the loss of funding. While Reverend Ware spoke to the consciences of elected officials,

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 163.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 161.

¹¹⁰Ibid, 164.

¹¹¹Ibid, 164.

¹¹²Harold E. Davis, *Henry Grady's New South: Atlanta, A Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1990), 140.

representative Turner engaged in the daily business of state politics to achieve the maximum benefit for his constituents. Both individuals were firmly committed to retaining financial support for Atlanta University.

While the state institutions held firm to the practice of segregation, blacks and whites engaged in daily social interaction within the confines of Atlanta University. In fact, the sons and daughters of white professors attended the private institution. In 1887, Governor Gordon notified the legislature that whites were receiving instruction alongside blacks, in response to this situation; a state representative immediately proposed legislation barring the dispensation of funding to Atlanta University. State representative W.C Glenn of Dalton presented a bill to eliminate all state funding and to punish the teachers.¹¹³ The passage of the bill would deal a serious blow to Atlanta University.

The institution received funding from a host of sources. According to financial records, \$16,000 came from tuition and fees, \$8,000 from the state, and \$8,000 from northern benefactors.¹¹⁴ The loss of state funding would seriously hamper the ability of the university to provide instruction. Without question, the Governor and representative sought to end the enrollment of whites at Atlanta University. The bill offered by representative Glenn illustrated the desire to maintain the wall of separation between whites and blacks.

In response to the situation, blacks lashed out against the pending legislation offered by Glenn. Blacks voiced their opposition to the Glenn bill through religious and secular publications. In one church bulletin blacks were angered that their tax dollars

¹¹³ Ibid, 140.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 140.

were used to fund the Georgia Institute of Technology, yet their children were barred from entering the school. Meanwhile, John H. Deveaux, editor of the *Savannah Tribune* called the Glenn bill an unconstitutional monstrosity.¹¹⁵ Blacks were fervent in their opposition to the attempt by state officials to eliminate funding for Atlanta University. In spite of the proposed legislation offered by state representative Glenn, Atlanta University continued to offer admission to whites. As a result, the state turned over the sum of \$8,000 to the Industrial College for Negroes in Savannah. The segregated school was created by the state to receive a portion of the funds provided under the Morrill Act.¹¹⁶ Upon learning of the action taken by the state, faculty members and administrative officials launched a fund raising campaign to replace the loss of funding provided by the Morrill Act. Horace Bumstead, a professor and financial officer traveled to the North in the hopes of making up the \$8,000 shortfall in their operating budget. In 1888, the chief administrative officer joined in the efforts to secure funding for the university.¹¹⁷

While state legislators could no longer deny funding for freedmen's education, they could rescind funding if a school permitted whites to receive instruction alongside their black counterparts. These legislators sought to retain barriers between blacks and whites. For example, the compromise between Democrats and Republicans illustrates the means to which white legislators would employ to maintain the wall of separation between the races. In a bold move, state legislators diverted the funds to a segregated institution established exclusively for blacks in Savannah. By doing so, they had met the key provision of the Morrill Act, which required the State to provide for freedmen's education. In effect, they continued to provide support for education, but the funds were

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 141.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 141.

reserved for institutions that adhered to the practice of racial separation. The practice of racial inclusion led to the loss of state support for Atlanta University.

During the 1880's, a great emphasis was placed on industrial education. Black colleges and universities established industrial departments alongside the traditional departments associated with the liberal arts and physical sciences. In 1879, Atlanta University required all girls in the higher normal department to receive instruction in sewing, cooking, and nursing.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, their male counterparts at nearby Clark University received training in the labor-intensive vocational arts. In 1885, the students had built five heavy wagons, two funeral wagons, and fired bricks in the kilns located in the industrial shops of Clark University.¹¹⁸

General Samuel Chapman Armstrong was an early advocate of industrial education. The son of protestant missionaries, Samuel Chapman Armstrong was born on the island of Maui, Hawaii on January 30, 1839. He firmly believed that manual training should be adopted into the curriculum to instill responsibility and to emphasize the dignity of human labor. General Howard of the Freedmen's Bureau sent Armstrong a graduate of Williams College and former brigadier general to Hampton, Virginia in March 1866 to supervise bands of freedmen who assembled near Fort Monroe.¹¹⁹ Armstrong envisioned a future in which blacks would take their rightful place among the industrial workforce and possess moral and Christian principles. In fact, an early black college was patterned after Armstrong's model. In 1867, the AMA established Hampton

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 141.

¹¹⁸ Willard Range, *The Rise And Progress Of Negro Colleges In Georgia, 1865-1949* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1951) , 70.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 71.

¹²⁰ Ainsworth R. Spofford, ed., *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* Vol. 1 (New York: James T. White & Company, 1898) , 436.

Institute. Located in Hampton, Virginia, the institution was based upon Armstrong's manual labor school model.¹²⁰

Armstrong had cultured good relations among those who shared his vision of the future. In fact, during a visit to New York in 1867, a prominent member of the business community became convinced that industrial education would play a crucial role in the success of his venture into Southern railroads. William Henry Baldwin, Jr., viewed black laborers as essential to the efficient operation of his railroad. Industrial education would provide blacks with the skills and trades required by employers. He was also convinced that the future prosperity of the South would hinge upon the productive ability and labor power possessed by the black community.¹²¹

In response to the situation, schools rushed to set up industrial departments. In some cases, the departments offered no more than courses in carpentry and sewing. Administrators used these departments as a means of securing additional cash contributions from charitable organizations.¹²² A rift began to form between the liberal arts schools and those who incorporated industrial education as a part of their curriculum. For example, schools, which taught students various trades, received a greater share of support from Northern interests than those who chose to adhere to the traditional liberal arts curriculum.¹²³

Spurred by their own interests in the spread of industrial education, individuals encouraged blacks to refrain from politics and focus on their chosen vocation.

¹²⁰Henry Allan Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South, From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 32.

¹²¹Ibid, 100.

¹²²Ibid, 102.

¹²³Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia, 1865-1949* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1951), 74.

In a message to the freedmen, Baldwin, a railroad financier, instructed blacks to avoid or leave politics alone; live moral lives; and be aware that it is a mistake to be educated beyond your environment.¹²⁴ At face value, the message encourages blacks to embrace the work ethic and morality. However, Baldwin supported education that would transform blacks into skilled tradesmen and literate laborers. He failed to see the need for blacks to receive education beyond the instruction provided by vocational schools.

Approximately thirty years later, a prominent black leader echoed the sentiments expressed by Baldwin. In 1895, directors invited Booker T. Washington to speak during the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta. Washington urged blacks to temporarily suspend their push for political power, civil rights, and higher education of black youth. He encouraged his fellow comrades to “make the best of their immediate situation, learn the dignity of labor, and the rest of man’s blessings shall follow.”¹²⁵ Washington’s message was well received by the majority of white Southerners. Many of who shared Washington’s position that blacks best hope for advancement would come through obtaining a trade, tilling the land, or working in a foundry. For Baldwin, Washington, and other like-minded individuals, they viewed industrial education as the primary means of uplift for blacks in the South. White southerners approved of industrial education because it reinforced their notions of blacks being best suited for labor-intensive tasks. As for northerners, they supported industrial education because it seemed practical and mirrored their commitment to the advancement of commerce and materialism.¹²⁶

Opponents launched a counteroffensive to blunt the advance led by supporters of the industrial school movement. This group consisted of New England schoolteachers,

¹²⁴ Ibid, 102.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 73.

missionary officials, college presidents, students and academicians. Unlike the advocates for industrial education, missionaries believed that literacy took precedence over industrial education. In fact, teachers used the classical academic tradition adopted from England as a template to establish the public school system and private colleges for blacks in the South.¹²⁷

In one instance, a prominent member of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS) voiced his support for education as a means of encouraging the development of black intellectual leadership. From 1893 to 1902, Henry L. Morehouse served as executive secretary of the ABHMS. Morehouse espoused the belief that the black race would achieve greater progress through the creation of a gifted intelligentsia, and he worked tirelessly to insure that blacks would enjoy access to higher education. He shared Dubois' vision of a black "talented tenth" that would provide leadership for their fellow brethren.¹²⁸ He was highly critical of the manual training model instituted at Hampton Institute. Morehouse argued that the Hampton model eroded the democratic rights of blacks by assuming that they were destined for a subordinate industrial role in the southern economy.¹²⁹ To Morehouse, industrial education was not the sole means to transform the freedmen into a viable community capable of governing its own affairs. The leadership could only be prepared through the rigorous coursework provided by the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Industrial education maximized the labor power of blacks, yet it failed to address the intellectual needs of blacks and blocked the

¹²⁶ Ibid, 70.

¹²⁷ Henry Alan Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South, From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) , 161.

¹²⁸ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) , 69.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 68.

development of a cadre of black leaders who would champion the rights and concerns of their fellow brethren in Georgia.

College presidents joined in the battle to preserve the classical New England style of education offered to southern blacks. George Sale, president of Morehouse College voiced his opposition to the exclusive practice of industrial education among blacks. During a meeting convened by the white led Georgia State Teacher's Association, he objected to the notion that the education of the black race should be exclusively or distinctly industrial. Also, he argued that blacks valued classical education as much as their white counterparts.¹³⁰

While the debate between the two factions continued, a federal official argued that blacks would benefit the most from an educational program that encompassed liberal arts and vocational training. In June 1892, Commissioner of Education, William T. Harris published an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which called for blacks to receive instruction in the industrial and liberal arts. He firmly believed that nothing less than a combined industrial and liberal education would elevate southern blacks. Moreover, he urged blacks to master laborsaving machinery and skills to free themselves from backbreaking tasks and to make full use of their brainpower.¹³¹ Clearly, Commissioner Harris had moved beyond the notion that only one form of education could meet the needs of blacks.

The idea expressed by Commissioner Harris was put into practice by an alumnus of Atlanta University. Richard R. Wright, Sr., a member of the first graduating class of Atlanta University served as president of Georgia State Industrial College (Savannah State). President Wright instituted a curriculum, which emphasized academics and

¹³⁰ Ibid, 69.

¹³¹ Harvey Wish, "Negro Education and the Progressive Movement" *Journal of Negro History*

training in specific skilled trades. Under his leadership, Wright advocated higher literacy training of black students and added courses in Greek and Latin to the Savannah State curriculum.¹³² Like other fledgling institutions, Savannah State relied upon the financial assistance provided by wealthy northerners and members of philanthropic organizations.

Such organizations would often send agents to review the curriculum of schools who requested financial assistance from affluent northerners. The outcome of the review would determine whether the school was deemed worthy of support. In 1900, William H. Baldwin Jr. visited Savannah State. He concluded that the institution had overemphasized academics and had neglected its industrial department. Three years later, Baldwin's cousin, George J. Baldwin (president of the Savannah Electric Company) petitioned the General Education Board on behalf of Savannah State. Baldwin, Jr., the former agent who had given an unfavorable report of Savannah State had become the president of the General Education Board. He then moved to reject the petition on the grounds that Savannah State was too heavily influenced by Atlanta University, which stressed higher education among the Negro race.¹³³

Although President Wright failed to meet Baldwin's demand for a greater emphasis on industrial education, Reverend George Sale attempted to achieve a balance between vocational and classical education at the Atlanta Baptist Seminary (Morehouse College). During the mid-1890's, Reverend Sale replaced Reverend Samuel Graves as President of Atlanta Baptist Seminary. In his acceptance speech, Reverend Sale informed the faculty and students that he aspired to improve the conditions of blacks through

49 (July 1964) : 184.

¹³²James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) , 122.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 123.

intellectual and spiritual development, but also through the inculcation of proper domestic habits.¹³⁴ Reverend Sale instituted a policy, which illustrated his support of industrial education and the dignity of manual labor. Due to financial constraints, Reverend Sale was unable to initiate the carpentry and shoemaking. In place of vocational courses, he mandated that all students perform manual labor. In 1886, students received eight cents per hour while they toiled in the laundry or printing shops of the seminary. Students would use a portion of their earned income to pay for their room and board.¹³⁵

The origins of Atlanta Baptist Seminary can be traced back to the birth of the Augusta Institute. Founded in 1867, the goal of the institute was to educate the new freedmen.¹³⁶ Due to the lack of available buildings, classes were held in the basement of Springfield Baptist Church. The inaugural class consisted of forty students. Recognizing the need for teachers and clergymen in the black community, Augusta Institute trained students for their future careers as teachers and preachers. The institute functioned under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (A.B.H.M.S).¹³⁷

Under the leadership of his predecessor, Samuel Graves, Augusta Institute relocated to Atlanta. To reflect its departure from Augusta, the school was renamed Atlanta Baptist Seminary. Land was purchased and the first building was constructed at the corner of Elliot and Hunter streets. The building would be known as Graves Hall. During the tenure of Reverend Sale, the school received a college charter from the

¹³⁴ Addie Louise Joyner Butler, *The Distinctive Black College: Talladega, Tuskegee and Morehouse* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1977) , 105.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 107.

¹³⁶ Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope, Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989) , 26.

¹³⁷ Addie Louise Joyner Butler, *The Distinctive Black College: Talladega, Tuskegee and Morehouse* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1977) , 102.

Superior Court of Fulton County in 1897. To reflect its new status as an institution of higher learning, the school was renamed Atlanta Baptist College, becoming a permanent fixture within the West Fair community. In 1913, the college took the name of its primary benefactor and valued trustee, Henry L. Morehouse.¹³⁸ Morehouse College would serve as a training ground for future black male instructors and clergymen.

Despite the actions taken by the General Education Board and the attempts by college presidents to strike a balance between industrial and classical education, industrial education would soon be supplanted by the classical liberal arts curriculum. Schools experienced difficulty bearing the costs associated with industrial education. College presidents were forced to suspend or curtail vocational courses. This can be attributed to the refusal by whites to increase funding so that colleges could purchase the tools and machinery required to operate a full fledged industrial educational program.¹³⁹ During the 1890's, President George Sale of Morehouse College suspended the addition of carpentry, gardening, and shoemaking courses due to the absence of funding from wealthy northern philanthropists. In 1894, Atlanta University was forced to suspend industrial education due to the lack of funds. Three years later, the school trustees voted to eliminate agricultural education and sell the stock and tools.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, graduates of the early industrial education programs were not adequately prepared for their chosen vocation. Those fortunate to find jobs in the nearby factories and mills were often terminated due to their lack of adequate training.¹⁴¹ The

¹³⁸ Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope, Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989) , 26.

¹³⁹ Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia, 1865-1949* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1951) , 74.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 75.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 75.

failure by industrial education departments to prepare students left many to question the effectiveness of industrial education. Many black students rose in opposition to industrial education. They cared little for the intense physical exertion and endless redundancy associated with manual training courses. In one case, college administrators at Clark University suspended the recruitment of blacks into industrial education programs due to the lack of interest by students. During the final years of the 1890's, Clark University failed to attract students to enroll into a mechanics course and promptly removed it from the catalogue.¹⁴²

While students voiced their opposition to industrial education, a prominent member of the Atlanta University faculty penned a series of criticisms of industrial education. Through *The Souls of Black Folk*, which he published in 1903, along with a series of social studies detailing the lives of African Americans, Dr. W.E.B Dubois attacked industrial education on the grounds that it threatened to make “money changers” out of men. Instead of focusing solely on commercial ventures, he believed that blacks should pursue careers in industry and higher education. According to Dubois, some men were fit to be blacksmiths and some were to be university men.¹⁴³ For Dubois, the advancement of the black community would require the contributions made by the skilled laborer and the academician.

Du Bois questioned the notion of industrial education as the sole vehicle by which freedmen could receive instruction. To the advocates of industrial education and their associates who considered freedmen as no more than material resources to be trained in

¹⁴² Ibid, 76.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 78.

the hopes of securing future dividends, Du Bois posed the following question: “Is not life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?”¹⁴⁴

As for the teacher training institutions of Fisk and Spelman, which were founded in 1871 and 1896 respectively, he noted that their functions went beyond the process of matriculating certified teachers. According to Du Bois, both institutions set out to provide teachers but also a caliber of broad minded, cultured men and women, whose task was to scatter civilization among a people whose ignorance was not simply of letters, but of life itself.¹⁴⁵ Du Bois envisioned the fledgling black colleges and universities and the incubators for the future cadre of professionals who would serve as the intellectual and professional class among their fellow freedmen.

In response to this situation, black colleges and universities proceeded to expand and improve their baccalaureate programs. Great strides were made in the improvement in the study of chemistry and physics. For example, Atlanta University initiated an aggressive program to initiate scientific research and expand its science curriculum. In 1889, Professor Edgar H. Webster from Oberlin College began the first laboratory work in chemistry and physics at Atlanta University. Due to the work initiated by Professor Webster, Atlanta University was recognized as the first southern black college to conduct laboratory research in the sciences.¹⁴⁴ Six years later, Atlanta University, offered students a plethora of courses in the physical and natural sciences.¹⁴⁵ Through the efforts of the administration and faculty of Atlanta University, black students were provided with new

¹⁴⁴William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich: Fawcett Press, 1961), 72.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹⁴⁴ Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges in Georgia: 1865-1849* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1951), 86.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 81.

avenues to pursue research and access to subjects that were once considered beyond their comprehension.

From the beginning, black colleges and universities established normal schools. The normal school served as a training ground for future elementary school teachers. Due to the increase in state requirements for teacher's certification and the failure of students to pass requirements mandated by the city of Atlanta, the normal school of Atlanta University was retooled to meet the new demands put forth by the state and local government. In 1878, after several students failed to pass the city examinations for teaching, the faculty immediately moved to improve the normal school department.¹⁴⁶

In 1896, the state of Georgia increased the requirements for an individual to receive a state teacher's certificate. Prospective candidates had to possess a high school diploma before they would be considered for certification. In turn, Atlanta University followed suit and required students to possess a diploma as a prerequisite to admission to the normal branch.¹⁴⁷ After meeting the new requirements imposed by the state department of education and the local school administration, the faculty of Atlanta University focused their energies and resources to prepare students for their future careers as teachers.

The immediate beneficiaries of the improvements to the normal school department were the urban and rural regions of Georgia. In 1910, three-quarters of all Atlanta's black teachers had obtained teaching certificates from prestigious Atlanta University. Black women who made up the majority of the teaching population, provided instruction to black children who attended neighborhood schools located within

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 79.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 79.

the city limits. Although the massive rebuilding projects and new opportunities had attracted large number of blacks to the cities, those who remained in the rural areas hungered for education. In one instance, an alumnus of Atlanta University opened a school in the town of Athens for black children. Anne Smith resigned her teaching position at the Knox Institute to open a school for children who had to perform seasonal labor (harvesting and seafood processing) as well as those who lived outside of the jurisdiction of the public school.¹⁴⁸

From their humble beginnings, black colleges and universities sought to provide uplift through education. Through the efforts of missionaries, benevolent associations, and community support, these schools became the training ground for future clergymen, teachers, and scientists. Despite the political maneuverings and attempts by private individuals to relegate blacks to the position of semiskilled laborers, administrators and faculty banded together to preserve the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Their efforts resulted in the transformation of these fledgling schools into fully operational institutions of higher learning. Present generations of graduates are forever bound to the sacrifice and commitment shown by the early founders and supporters of black colleges and universities in Georgia.

¹⁴⁸ Jacqueline Jones, *Between Plantation and Ghetto: Black Women, Work, and the Family in the Urban South: 1880-1919*, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, working paper no.79, (Massachusetts: Wellesley College, 1981)

Black Sharecroppers in Georgia

The crop-lien system was born out of the shambles of the Southern economy. In Georgia, as in the rest of the South, sharecropping was born as the result of peculiar economic conditions: concentration of landholding, insufficient capital; and a large pool of impoverished, uneducated laborers of both races.¹⁴⁸ These conditions provided the environment in which northern cotton manufacturers and southern planters worked to rebuild the agrarian base of the South. Textile mill owners in the North wanted the South to continue to furnish tons of raw cotton for processing. However, the debt incurred by planters posed a serious threat to the reawakening of the Southern agrarian based economy. In 1865, planters owed four hundred and eighty million dollars, including interest to their Northern creditors. This huge post-war debt incurred by planters severely restricted their ability to obtain credit.¹⁴⁹

Faced with the lack of available credit, planters were unable to purchase tools, stock, or seeds. As a result, planters were forced to sell their land at prices far below their original value or resort to the crop-lien system. The system required the planter to divide the land into smaller parcels, which were referred to as shares. He would then enter into contracts with freedmen who agreed to tend to the land in exchange for a percentage of the crop yield during the harvest period. A store was provided so that sharecroppers could purchase food, clothing, and miscellany. Each sharecropper could purchase goods on credit furnished by the storeowner. At the end of harvest season, the sharecropper

¹⁴⁸Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 226.

¹⁴⁹Richard W. Griffin, "Problems of the Southern Cotton Planters After the Civil War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (1955) : 106.

would settle his debt with the storeowner, which in some cases owned the land tilled by the sharecropper.

Over a three-year period from 1867 to 1870, the forces of nature and the market wreaked havoc on the crop-lien system in the South. The cotton crop failures of 1867, were attributed to the financial ruin of planters, sharecroppers, merchants and creditors. As a result, planters experienced greater difficulty in obtaining credit.

In the wake of the crop failure of 1867, many lending houses ceased operations and planters were forced to plant crops of grain in place of cotton.¹⁵⁰ Two years later, an enormous cotton crop enabled the planters to financially rebound from the massive crop failure of 1867. However, this boom was short lived. Within a year the fluctuation in the value of the dollar threw the price of cotton into a tailspin. In 1870, the massive fluctuation in the value of the dollar caused many Northern merchants and Southern planters to demand a return to payments in kind due to their desire to acquire a sound basis for their cotton transactions.¹⁵¹

While planters struggled with unfavorable weather market and weather conditions, new laws were being enacted to increase the ability of the merchant to extract a greater share of profit at the expense of the landowner and the sharecropper. The reconfiguration of the relationship among landowner, merchant, and sharecropper occurred over a period of ten years, beginning in 1870 and ending in 1880. Within the body of an article submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor, W.E.B. Dubois explains how the merchant was able to increase his share of the crop yield.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 109.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 111.

According to Dubois, Southern state legislatures enacted new laws, which permitted the merchant to gain a greater share of the crop yield due to the sharecropper as payment for his labor. Merchants were permitted by law to take out mortgages on the future crop yield planted by the sharecroppers. This represented the second lien held by the merchant. The goods credited to the sharecropper's account, which was held by the merchant, represented the first lien.¹⁵² In the event of a bountiful harvest, the sharecropper would be able to pay off his debt to the merchant and receive a healthy portion of the crop for personal consumption or resale.

Sharecroppers stood to lose a great deal of their share of the crop yield due to weather conditions and market forces. Sharecroppers worked under such conditions, which could result in their financial ruin. The crop-lien system was perfectly suited for the growth of cotton, yet the system prevented blacks from engaging in crop diversification and provided merchants with a constant supply of bonus income earned from the liens placed on the sharecropper's portion of the crop yield and the debt accrued as the result of making purchases from the local store who extended lines of credit to the sharecropper.¹⁵³ The crop-lien system required a great expenditure of labor power from the sharecropper and provided the merchant with a disproportioned amount of profit at the expense of the blacks that toiled in the cotton fields of Georgia. Blacks were subjected to the fluctuations in the market price of cotton and weather conditions. At times, blacks would reap the benefits of a bumper crop; yet, they could also find themselves deep in debt due to poor weather or fluctuations in the market.

¹⁵²U.S Department of Labor Bulletin, *The Negro Landowner of Georgia*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901) , 668.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 669.

Fraudulent business practices combined with questionable accounting methods used by the planter and merchant would siphon off profits rightly earned by blacks that planted, maintained, and harvested the labor-intensive crop.

The most debilitating effect of the crop-lien system is that it prevented blacks from engaging in crop diversification. Unlike soybeans or corn, cotton extracted a considerable amount of nutrients from the soil. Proper agricultural management dictated that a farmer should leave his field fallow for a season until the soil could naturally replenish itself after the cotton crop has been harvested. During this period of inactivity, blacks could have grown other crops for consumption or profit. However, due to the demands of Northern processors and markets for the cash crop, planters rushed headlong into cotton planting and harvesting. Planters and Northerners shared interest in the resurrection of the Southern agrarian based economy. The first step taken to restore the agrarian south was the institution of the crop lien system and the mass cultivation of cotton destined for Northern factories and consumers.

Planters experienced great difficulty in obtaining the services of blacks as field hands and sharecroppers. From 1865 to 1876, outside forces contributed to the reconfiguration of the relationship between the planters and freedmen. Immigration, the Freedmen's Bureau, low wages, and emancipation were the forces, which contributed to the replacement of the former master-slave relationship with the new planter-wage laborer relationship.

From the outset, the Freedmen's Bureau acted as both a hindrance and a coercive force in the quest of the planter to obtain the labor power of blacks. In the hopes of reducing vagrancy and idleness among the freedmen, General Tillson directed Georgia

bureau agents under his command to make contracts with planters for recalcitrant blacks who failed to enter into contracts for themselves.¹⁵⁴ While planters surely appreciated the attempts by Bureau agents to provide them with workers, reports of rumors allegedly spread by Bureau agents hampered planters efforts to secure additional manpower.

Upon their return to the South, planters noted that blacks had begun the practice of cultivating cropland for the production of cotton and corn. Reports began to surface that local Bureau agents had spread stories among the black populace that the returning planters planned to confiscate half of their crop yield for their own personal gain and consumption.¹⁵⁵ Blacks had begun to exercise their ability to act as individual participants in the market economy. No longer subject to the involuntary servitude, blacks began to test the limits of their newly won emancipation. Their initial venture into the cultivation of cropland illustrates their desire to obtain total control over their labor power and exercise their right to choice within the market. In effect, they worked to become active, semi-autonomous participants in the agrarian economy of the South.

While blacks cultivated their cropland, the Bureau took steps to counter the unfounded rumors of an impending takeover of blacks cropland by planters. If these rumors were allowed to persist, the planter would find it increasingly difficult to secure farm workers by contract. Bureau agents informed blacks that the rumors were false and encouraged blacks to return to their employers.¹⁵⁶ To combat idleness and foster self-sufficiency, bureau agents encouraged blacks to enter into contract with their former masters. In their view, the economic revival of the agrarian South relied upon the

¹⁵⁴ George R. Bently, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955) , 84.

¹⁵⁵ Richard W. Griffin, "Problems of the Southern Cotton Planters After the Civil War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (1955) : 113.

ability of the planter to secure enough farm workers under contract. Also, Northerners from processing plants and former union officers sought to revive cotton production in the south.¹⁵⁷ The steps taken by the Bureau illustrates their commitment to fostering the transformation of the freedmen into wage laborers while assisting the planter in their quest to secure farm laborers. Through the efforts of the Bureau agents, both planters and northern transplants would be able to secure blacks to contracts as field laborers.

In the interests of obtaining workers, planters had to compete with their fellow planters in the market. As mentioned earlier, some blacks were failed to receive proper compensation due to questionable business practices instituted by planters and merchants. To rectify this situation, General Tillson of the Georgia Bureau arbitrarily set wages for field hands. Planters of middle and upper Georgia were required to offer between 12 and 13 dollars per month; while their counterparts along the coast and southwest offered field hands 15 dollars per month. In one bold stroke, General Tillson had instituted a minimum wage scale for blacks.¹⁵⁸ Such action illustrated how the Bureau acted not only as a facilitator for freedmen's education but also as an advocate and active participant on the behalf of freedmen in regards to wages.

The establishment of a minimum wage for black laborers marked a watershed in reconstruction history. The act legitimized blacks as wage laborers. They shared this newfound status with their white northern counterparts. In effect, they had made the transition from involuntary laborers to wage laborers. However, the arbitrary act of General Tillson placed a new burden upon the backs of planters. Instead of permitting

¹⁵⁶Ibid, 114.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 106.

¹⁵⁸George R. Bently, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955) , 129.

market forces to dictate the price of labor and wages, the Bureau set the price of labor for the market. Planters were unable to shoulder the minimum wage scale established by the head of the Georgia Bureau. Already burdened by the debt accrued during the Civil War, planters were unable to honor Bureau approved contracts and wage rates. While planters struggled to meet the Bureau sanctioned wage scale, rumors of blacks losing their status as freedmen after signing contracts with planters began to surface.¹⁵⁹ The unilateral imposition of the wage scale combined with the constant flow of unfounded rumors made the task of securing laborers difficult for the planters. As for the freedmen, they were free to work for themselves or provide their services to the employer who offered the best contract. The reconfiguration of the planter-wage laborer relationship enabled blacks to gain control of their labor power combined with Tillson's introduction of the wage scale transformed the freedmen into wage laborers.

Within the pages of the *Atlanta Constitution*, the planter-wage laborer relationship was addressed. In January 1870, two stories were printed which provided some insight into the nature of the relationship between the planters and black farm workers. The first story details the relationship between planters and farm workers in Macon, Georgia. According to published reports, the Macon freedmen engaged in the process of contract negotiations with their employers from the following year. Blacks were noted for their disposition towards industrious ventures and negotiated contracts on their own terms. They paid off their debts and signed new contracts with planters. Also, observers noted their air of confidence and cheerful attitude as they prepared for the new planting

¹⁵⁹Richard W. Griffin, "Problems of the Southern Cotton Planters After the Civil War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 39 (1955) : 114.

season.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps the bumper crop of 1869 provided an economic windfall, which benefited planters and farm workers. The bumper crop may have provided the means to which blacks could negotiate contracts that were beneficial to their needs and concerns. Perhaps planters who reaped their initial financial benefits were receptive to black's demands and agreed to terms, which would benefit their workforce.

A brief history of Macon during the antebellum period may provide some insight into the factors, which may have shaped the planter-laborer relationship. During the 1830's, Macon relied upon the labor of free and enslaved blacks to provide the necessary labor power to drive the town's agrarian based economy. Located in the heart of Georgia, the agrarian based economy of Macon relied upon the labor power provided by free and enslaved blacks. A private insurance company, which recognized the value of black laborers and cotton, initiated the practice of providing riverboat insurance policies. As early as 1831, the Macon Insurance Company provided insurance for riverboats manned by black crewmen who transported cotton downriver. City officials used public funds to hire black ironsmiths and laborers to repair bridges. Revenue for the city's coffers was collected by taxes levied upon free and enslaved blacks.¹⁶¹

This brief review of the early history of Macon provides evidence that black labor was highly valued and played a significant role in the public and private sector. Here exists a community of slave and wage laborers in the Antebellum South who actively participated in the agrarian based economy.

Perhaps this early involvement of blacks established them as a reliable source of labor power, which planters could draw upon following the Civil War. From the evidence

¹⁶⁰ *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta), 7 January 1870.

presented, it appears that the bumper crop of 1869 positively influenced relations between planters and black farm hands. The reader is cautioned that the report is given from the perspective of an observer and not a black worker. A true picture of relations between planters and black field workers can only be obtained through further examination of additional sources so that a clearer picture of the planter-field laborer relationship can be developed.

On the other hand, white farmers in Augusta were hard pressed to find black farm workers who were prepared to sign labor contracts. Tardiness and absenteeism were the most common complaints voiced by the planters. Observers of the situation noted that blacks were engaging in activities beyond the cotton fields and cropland. In a report published within the *Atlanta Constitution*, an observer noted that blacks participated in holiday celebrations and became involved in politics. Also, blacks purchased farm stock and tools to tend to their own parcels of land. Planters hoped that the situation would improve so that they could secure blacks to labor contracts.¹⁶² Blacks were exerting their ability to engage in entrepreneurial, recreational, and political activities. While no evidence is presented regarding the nature and scale of entrepreneurial ventures of blacks in Augusta, they acted as autonomous units outside of the control of the planters. Economic success was measured in terms of independence. What was sought was an economic existence that was free as possible from the control of the white planter.¹⁶³ Within the market economy and no longer bound to slavery, blacks were free to hire out their labor or work for themselves. While the planters measured success in terms of crop

¹⁶¹James H. Stone, "Economic Conditions in Macon, Georgia in the 1830's," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 54 (1970) : 211

¹⁶²*Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta) , 1 January 1870.

yield, blacks measured success in terms of their ability to maximize the productivity of their individual plots of land.

Aside from tending to their individual parcels of land, freedmen from across the state actively engaged in the process of negotiating with planters in the hopes of securing contractual terms that would provide the best returns. Freedmen from the urban and rural regions of Georgia learned to bargain over terms of employment and to play prospective employers off against each other. However, not all farmers embraced the process of negotiation with former slaves. In fact, one farmer voiced his displeasure over his inability to meet the wages demanded by free black laborers. In 1866, Howell Cobb Jr., informed his father of his frustration due to the freedmen's demands for high wages. According to Mr. Cobb, freedmen would not consider an offer less than one hundred and fifty dollars a year, in cash including housing, clothing and food.¹⁶⁴ In one particular instance, a freed black from Macon encouraged his fellow comrades in Monroe County to withhold their services in the hopes of driving up wages.¹⁶⁵ Such tactics employed by blacks further illustrate their awareness of the new market conditions and their willingness to secure the best contractual terms given the situation at hand. As for their prospective employers, they had to contend with a workforce free to choose the employer of their choice. Those unaccustomed to bargaining contractual terms with their former slaves experienced great difficulty in securing laborers.

However, for those freedmen who cherished their independence, they harbored deep reservations about a labor system largely based upon cash wages. They rejected the

¹⁶³ Thomas F. Armstrong, "From Task Labor to Free Labor: The Transition Along Georgia's Rice Coast, 1820-1880," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (1980) : 440.

¹⁶⁴ Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery To Agrarian Capitalism In The Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992) , 148.

notion of a wage laborer as a virtual automaton, devoid of his own free will and unquestioningly obedient to the employer. Freedmen sought alternative means of compensation to wage labor. The practice of share wages was very popular among the field hands of Monroe County, Georgia. Share wages permitted freedmen to enter into a contract with a planter in which the workers agree on a predetermined share of what they produced and then distributed the earned income among themselves. In 1866, the majority of field hands in Monroe County labored under this contractual agreement for 33 percent of the crop yield. Black farm workers also engaged in the practice of share tenancy. This alternative to share tenancy required the landowner to supply only the land, house, and in most cases the fuel. As for the tenant, it was his responsibility to acquire implements and provisions for his dependents. Rent was paid in the form of a rent equal to the value of one third of the corn and one third of the cotton harvested.¹⁶⁶

To take advantage of the situation, freedmen engaged in contract wage labor, share wages, and a combination of the two systems of compensation.¹⁶⁶

Freedmen also engaged in subsistence agriculture to provide nourishment for themselves and their families, as well as a means to enjoy recreational activities. Specifically, it enabled them to take days off they sought to fish or hunt when their pantries were stocked with food and, when the opportunity presented itself, they would opt for seasonal employment on nearby plantations.¹⁶⁷ The choices exercised by blacks in the labor market exemplify their desire to labor on the most agreeable of terms.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 148.

¹⁶⁶Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind Of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) , 90.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 148.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 150.

While they did engage in wage labor, they refused to rely upon wage labor as their sole means of income. For the freedmen, control of their labor power enabled them to work and engage in recreation when they so desired. In effect, freedmen refused to become wholly dependent upon a particular form of employment, namely wage labor; instead they engaged in wage labor, shared wage labor, subsistence agriculture, or a combination of all three forms of labor.

Although the contract stipulated enumerated the freedmen's rights, responsibilities, and compensation, many laborers remained firmly committed to their own ideas about how and when they should work. While the majority of freedmen were signed to contracts, which required them to work a six-day week, many of them refused to work for their employer on Saturdays and Sundays, in favor of tending to their own crops and performing household chores. In one particular case, a confrontation between a Georgia freedman and his employer arose due to the laborer's refusal to work on Sunday as was stipulated within the contract. The laborer asserted that he had to tend to his own business, thus reliving him of his duties to his employer on Sundays. However, a local Bureau agent and his employer informed the freedman of the terms of the contract, which required him to labor on Sundays and that he should immediately return to work. In response, the freedman, in a defiant tone informed his employer that he "would promise nothing and agree to nothing."¹⁶⁸ While no evidence is given regarding the freedmen's return to his employer, it is clear that the freedman held a different interpretation of the nature of his contractual obligations. The employer and Bureau

¹⁶⁸ Leon F. Litwack, *Been In the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 1979) , 417.

agent argued in favor of strict adherence to the contract, meanwhile the freedmen countered with the assertion that he required time to deal with his own matters. This battle was played out daily between employers and free laborers throughout Georgia. Freedmen would challenge their employer's ironclad notion of contract labor and seek to redefine the relationship between themselves and their employers as a means of acquiring time outside of work to tend to their own concerns.

Across the farmland of Georgia, farmers and laborers engaged in the daily process of negotiation and renegotiation of contract labor. While planters viewed the contract as a means of securing labor and reestablishing control of free black laborers, blacks openly contested the conditions of the contract and sought to secure concessions from their employer such as personal time to conduct business apart from their place of employment. Although blacks openly embraced their new status as free laborers, they were well aware that total dependence on wage labor would amount to "wage slavery". To avoid this unenviable situation, blacks engaged in a combination of wage labor, shared wages, and subsistence agriculture. This enabled blacks to act as active participants in the labor market while retaining a considerable degree of freedom. Their interpretation of the nature of contractual labor translated into their ability to set aside time for recreational exploits or personal matters. Under the watchful eye of Bureau agents, former masters and freedmen engaged in the daily practice of negotiation in the labor market. While planters struggle to come to terms with the ascendancy of free labor, freedmen sought to define free labor on their own terms in the hopes of retaining the ability to control their own bodies. The contract would serve, as the new battleground for control of labor became the new objective of planters and laborers in the South.

Black Entrepreneurs and Landowners in Georgia

At the conclusion of the Civil War, thousands of blacks throughout the rural regions of the South migrated to the fledgling urban centers in the South. No longer bound to the plantation by slavery, freedmen sought to locate lost family members or to secure employment in the rising cities within the South. This migration did not go unnoticed by whites. In 1866, a white physician noted the factors that attracted blacks to Atlanta, Georgia. According to the doctor, blacks were drawn to the city because of jobs and the vibrant nightlife where blacks could socially interact with their fellow comrades.¹⁶⁹ The unnamed physician was correct in his initial assessment regarding the attractive job market found in the Southern urban centers. The diverse urban economy of Atlanta provided the ideal environment in which blacks established their new households.¹⁷⁰ Du Bois made note of the industries and stores, which dotted the landscape of Atlanta. The hills were crowned with factories and her shops were filled with products crafted by those with great skill and ambition.¹⁷¹ Yet, Dubois noted that many had replaced the pursuit of higher aims with the pursuit of material wealth. In fact, Du bois warned that the dream of material wealth might become the touchstone of material wealth as the touchstone of all success.¹⁷²

Despite Du Bois' caveat, the postwar economic recovery and rebuilding of Atlanta attracted thousands of blacks from the rural areas of Georgia. Freedmen encountered an economy in the midst of a rapid recovery fueled by the great push

¹⁶⁹ Leon F. Litwack, *Been In The Storm So Long: The Aftermath Of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 1979) , 432.

¹⁷⁰ Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives And Labors After The Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) , 25.

¹⁷¹ William Edward Burghardt Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich, Fawcett Press, 1961), 60.

¹⁷² Ibid., 60.

towards modernization and jobs in the industrial sector. Blacks found employment in the numerous local industries, which produced a host of goods for local and national consumption. Consumer items such as clothing, cornmeal, furniture, and cabinets were manufactured in local shops by black workers and shipped by rail to Northern markets.¹⁷¹ The economic recovery of Atlanta was tied to the construction and railroad industry. Both sectors sought manual laborers, skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen for immediate employment. For example, the construction industry employed numerous blacks in Atlanta. For example, skilled freedmen and artisans benefited greatly from the massive rebuilding projects in Atlanta. During the postbellum era, blacks plied their skills in the construction trades as painters, carpenters, and brick masons.¹⁷²

In addition to their service as laborers and craftsmen in the rebuilding of Atlanta, blacks found employment within the railroad industry. Their daily activities included snow removal from the rails, track maintenance, and the routine yet hazardous task of coupling and uncoupling railcars in the railyards.¹⁷³ These men would find little trouble finding work in the railroad industry. The Union had inflicted heavy damage on the railroads of the former Confederacy. These railroads, which had transported a cotton, foodstuffs, and finished products to markets for consumption in Northern and European markets via steamship, were destroyed by members of Union engineering battalions and other associated units under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman. Georgia's railroads were not spared from the carnage inflicted by the Union Army during General Tecumseh's march through Georgia. In the closing months of 1864, The Georgia Railroad and Banking Company (GRBC) lost valuable capital assets in the form of

¹⁷¹Ibid., 25

¹⁷² Ibid., 25.

maintenance shops, depots, and railway bridges. Union soldiers under the command of General Sherman carved a path of destruction from Atlanta to the Oconee River. No GRBC property along the route from Atlanta to the Oconee River was left unscathed.¹⁷⁴ The war itself had exacted a heavy financial toll on the GRBC. Of the 2.8 million dollars in lost buildings and Confederate bonds, former slaves valued at 95,214.24 were factored in as lost property of the GRBC.¹⁷⁵ No longer considered company property, former slaves were free to find other employment or work for their former owners of the shattered GRBC. No longer bound to serve as laborers, freedmen could ply their skills and seek the best wages. Post-war Atlanta was in the midst of a massive rebuilding campaign. Opportunities abounded in the construction of buildings and railroad lines.

While their male comrades plied their skills and labor power towards the rebuilding of Atlanta, women applied their labor power to a myriad of jobs available after the Civil War. As for some black women who were unable to secure work as a maid or laundress, they sought employment in the seafood processing industry. Black women in Warsaw, Georgia preferred to shuck oysters because it offered them higher wages with shorter hours of service and greater personal freedom.¹⁷⁶ In the processing plants, women outnumbered men. Also, their ability to process large quantities of oysters translated into higher wages. In fact, women with more experience earned more than their male counterparts. Wages were determined by the workers' ability and the size of the oysters. Men earned a daily wage between forty cents to four dollars, while women

¹⁷³ Ibid., 25

¹⁷⁴ James F. Doster, "The Georgia Railroad & Banking Company In the Reconstruction Era," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 48 (1964): 1.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁶ Jacqueline Jones, *Between Plantation and Ghetto: Black Women Work, and the Family in the Urban South: 1880-1915* (Massachusetts: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1981), 30.

averaged five or six dollars per week. Black women preferred this labor to domestic service because they could set their own pace with a modicum of white supervision and earn a few dollars more than they could by meeting the endless demands of a white housewife.¹⁷⁷

No longer bound to slavery, black women when possible, avoided occupations which circumscribed their freedom and failed to provide ample wages in return for their labor power. Black women who resided in the seacoast towns of Georgia sought employment in oyster houses whenever possible. Such employment was the ideal alternative to domestic labor.

Meanwhile, black women employed in cotton mills and as washerwomen took action to improve their working conditions. Against the backdrop of strikes initiated by railroad workers in reaction to wage reductions by their employers, black women sought to turn back the similar tide, which had occurred within their respective occupations. Prior to the Great Strike of 1877¹⁷⁸ and the Atlanta Cotton Exposition, black washerwomen had begun to organize. Members of the rank and file accepted a uniform rate of pay and two years later instituted protective associations. In the summer of 1881, the efforts had culminated in their full-scale mobilization.¹⁷⁹ The local church served as the incubator for the washerwomen's movement in Atlanta. In fact, the Washerwomen's Association of Atlanta was organized through and enjoyed the support of the local black church community. Members of this organization struck for a wage of one dollar for

¹⁷⁷ Jones, *Between Plantation*, 49.

¹⁷⁸ See David O. Stowell, *Streets, Railroads and the Great Strike of 1877* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press, 1977)

¹⁷⁹ Tera W. Hunter, "Household workers in the Making: Afro-American Women in Atlanta and the New South, 1861-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1990), 171.

every pound of wash. Members also actively recruited others to augment their exiting ranks.¹⁸⁰

The action taken by the black laundresses of Atlanta indicates their willingness to challenge the status quo and withhold their labor power until they were justly compensated. Though many of their forbearers and distant relatives may have performed the same tasks for white mistresses during the antebellum period, these women of the late nineteenth century chose to engage in collective action and refuse to labor under conditions in which their employer fails to provide suitable compensation. Although the strike by washerwomen was brought to an end by requiring women to purchase licenses and the detainment of prominent strike leaders, the black laundresses sent a strong warning to white Atlanta that they would repel any attempt by their employers to treat them like chattel. Also, it impressed upon the black community the severity of its economic vulnerability and political impotence.¹⁸¹ Yet in still, the actions of the Atlanta washerwomen demonstrated their ability to construct a collective and coherent response in the hopes of securing better wages and working conditions.

Aside from the collective action of the Atlanta washerwomen, their male and female counterparts in the port city of Savannah were employed in all aspects of the transportation industry, peddled seafood, and operated their own storefronts. From its early origins, Savannah has functioned as a major seaport on the lower Atlantic coast. Ships destined for ports along the upper east coast, England, and the Caribbean would often arrive in Savannah for repairs, supplies, or to load or unload cargo. Following the Civil War, the port city regained prominence as the major center for maritime commerce

¹⁸⁰ Jones, *Between Plantation*, 60.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

on the lower Atlantic coast of Georgia. During the antebellum period blacks played an integral role in the economy of Savannah, which was fueled by the production of cotton transportation, and maritime related industries.¹⁸² They continued in the tradition established by their comrades in the antebellum period and offered their labor power in return for wages in postwar Savannah. Blacks entered all aspects of transportation in Savannah and fared well. Blacks monopolized the hauling of goods in Savannah. In 1900, 518 black draymen outnumbered their white counterparts. They also held a majority in the railroad industry. The number of blacks employed by the railroad was 909 as compared to 373 whites.¹⁸³

The location of Savannah on the Atlantic Coast provided an economically diverse environment in which blacks could choose from a host of occupations. Some ventured into sail making and peddled seafood on the crowded streets. By 1877, Frank Thompson, had become well known and patronized by fellow Savannahians because of his ability to craft sails. The streets were often clogged with blacks that sold oysters and fish. Taking advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by the vibrant economy, black women engaged in significant entrepreneurial ventures. By 1870, Lizette Scott, a seamstress had cultured a clientele of blacks and whites because of her high quality work. She amassed property valued at \$1,400. Meanwhile, Susan Sheftall, a washer women and maid amassed \$2,100 in property.¹⁸⁴ These women used their skills to produce products and provide services, which were in great demand. Their efforts had resulted in nurturing a strong clientele, which patronized their respective establishments. These self-employed

¹⁸²See Whittington B. Johnson, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah: An Economic Profile," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (1980): 419-429.

¹⁸³ Robert E. Perdue, *The Negro in Savannah: 1865-1900* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), 116.

women, through the application of their skills and labor power were able to carve out a profitable niche in the economically diverse port city. These women were continuing in the tradition of black women who had plied their skills as seamstresses, food peddlers, and shop owners in antebellum Savannah and amassed considerable wealth and property as indicated by local tax records.¹⁸⁵

The entrepreneurial spirit exhibited by blacks was not confined to Savannah. Throughout the state, blacks engaged in a host of entrepreneurial ventures. In Augusta, Georgia, blacks profited handsomely from the sale of tinware.¹⁸⁶ Thomas Goosby, born of slave parents was a carpenter and farmhand. The native of Oglethorpe County moved to Atlanta in 1866 and immediately secured employment as a carpenter. He received \$1.25 per day. He then was employed in the construction of the Kimball House. Twenty-two years after his initial arrival, Goosby had risen from a carpenter to the owner of a grocery store. In fact, he and his son opened and operated a grocery store. According to tax records, Goosby owned \$6000 worth of real estate.¹⁸⁷ Willis Smith also rose from similar origins. He was born in Walton County in 1835. The slave carpenter secured a Webster's spelling book and with the aid of an elderly man called Uncle George Peters learned how to spell. After serving as an attendant to his owner during the Civil War, Smith arrived in Atlanta in 1866. Four year later, Smith used his carpentry skills to build bridges and homes in his adopted hometown. The former slave carpenter used his earning to purchase a parcel of land. In 1881, he became a junior partner in a funeral parlor

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹⁸⁵ See, Loren Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women In The South," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (Winter 1980): 13-44. Whittington B. Johnson, "Free African-American Women in Savannah, 1800-1860: Affluence Amid Adversity," 76 (Summer 1992): 260-285.

¹⁸⁶ Henderson H. Donald. *The Negro Freedmen* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952), 24.

¹⁸⁷ Mills Lane, ed., *Standing Upon The Mouth Of A Volcano: New South Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 196.

operated by Mr. Harrison Coles.¹⁸⁸ What is of particular interest is that both men went beyond their initial occupations and sought out new opportunities. While their skills were in demand due to the massive rebuilding project in postwar Atlanta, they took advantage of opportunities outside of their original vocations. Also, both individuals sought and acquired property.

At the conclusion of the war, blacks informed their emancipators that they sought to acquire land as soon as possible. Black religious leaders who met with General Sherman and Secretary of War Stanton, black religious leaders from the black community of Savannah stated that land was the key to freedom. On January 12, 1865 a spokesman for the religious delegation told Sherman and Staunton, that they wanted to be placed on land until they were able to buy it, and make it their own. Soon after the meeting, Sherman ordered his officer in charge to dispense possessory titles that acknowledged their right to work the land and enjoy the fruits of their labor, but fell short of conveying ownership.¹⁸⁹

Although Special Field Orders, No. 15, designed to set aside confiscated Confederate land along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia for freedmen had failed, their desire for land did not wane.¹⁹⁰ Access to land preferably with titled ownership offered subsistence, family security, control over both labor and its benefits, and economic and political independence.¹⁹¹ Blacks desired to acquire full legal claim to land, which was earlier denied to them by legal statutes enacted by Southern legislatures.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 197.

¹⁸⁹ Paul A. Cimbala, "The Freedmen's Bureau, the Freedmen, and Sherman's Grant in Reconstruction Georgia, 1865-1867," *The Journal of Southern History* 55 (November 1989): 599.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 597-632.

¹⁹¹ Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery To Agrarian Capitalism In The Cotton Plantation South, 1800-1880* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992) , 142.

No longer legally defined as property and barred by law, blacks sought to acquire parcels of land. In fact, a financial entity created by the federal government would play an instrumental role as blacks sought to acquire land in the postwar south.

On January 27, 1865 John V Alvord, a Congregationalist minister met with approximately twenty philanthropists and members of the business community who sought to establish a bank for the benefit of black soldiers. Their initial discussions culminated in the signing of a bill by President Lincoln on March 3, 1865, which authorized the establishment of a corporation to receive sums of money deposited by persons and their descendents who were held in slavery in the United States.¹⁹² The corporation became known as the Freedmen's Savings Bank. Branches were established throughout the south. Blacks who lived in Atlanta, Augusta, Macon and Savannah patronized these branches in their respective cities. In 1875, an observer noted that blacks in Augusta used their savings in the Freedmen's Bank to purchase farmland and homes.¹⁹³ Blacks embraced the notion of using the bank as a repository for their earnings, which they would use to purchase land. They were also afforded the opportunity to purchase federal treasure notes, stocks and bonds. Although the bank was closed on July 28, 1874 due to poor financial management, it played an essential role in fostering personal financial responsibility and as a repository for their earnings.

From 1873 to 1902, blacks increased their share of landownership in Georgia. The total acreage increased from 58,000 acres in 1873 to 336,000 acres in 1902. This amounted to a 600 percent increase in black landownership. The increase was achieved through the purchase of land from white farm owners and buying unimproved lands.

¹⁹² Arnett G. Lindsay, "The Negro In Banking," *Journal Of Negro History* 14 (1929): 163.

Blacks capitalized on the fact that whites could only increase their share of the land by purchasing new land. However, whites possessed the majority of land in cultivation. This is made evident by the increase in the increase in total acreage owned by whites from 6,700,000 to 7,100,000.¹⁹³ Although whites had owned more land in cultivation, they had little room to increase their holdings. As for blacks, they were able to rapidly increase their land holdings at a faster rate than their white counterparts.

Black landowners, who contributed to the rise in owned acreage, were initially concentrated in two centers. The first center was located within the coastal counties and extend eastward slightly into Wiregrass.¹⁹⁴ The following counties were located in the coastal county region in Georgia: Chatham, Bryan, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn and Camden.¹⁹⁵ The second center was located in the southwestern corner of the state, which bordered Alabama and Florida.¹⁹⁶ In the antebellum period, the coastal county region was home to the largest slaveholders, rice plantations, and the majority of its population was blacks. However, emancipation brought the greatest disorganization to the region. Amid the confusion and social upheaval, blacks exercised two methods to secure land. They moved westward to counties where land was plentiful, or remained to take advantage of the reduced value of the rice land and purchased parcels of the former plantations in Liberty and McIntosh.¹⁹⁷

At the end of the war, land sales were numerous in Georgia. Farmers and large landholders, who had been financially ruined, sought to reduce their holdings in order

¹⁹³ Hollis R. Lynch, *The Urban Black Condition: A Documentary History, 1866-1871* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), 6.

¹⁹³ Thomas Jackson Woofter, Jr., *Negro Migration: Changes in Rural Organization and Population of the Cotton Belt* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1920), 60.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁹⁵ See figure 2.

¹⁹⁶ Woofter, *Negro Migration*, 60.

that they may be cultivated more efficiently under the crop-lien system.¹⁹⁸ Yet, blacks still faced major challenges as they sought to acquire land. The right of black landownership was a very contentious issue in the post-bellum period. Laws were passed in many southern states limiting this right, or limiting the areas in which such purchases, or even rentals could be made. These laws were known as the Black Codes. Rather than expedite the slave's transition to freedom or help him to realize his aspirations, the Black Codes embodied in the law the widely held notion that he existed largely for the purpose of raising crops for a white employer. Specific codes were enacted to prohibit blacks from raising their own crops or purchasing land. Mississippi barred blacks from renting or leasing any land outside towns or cities, leaving to local authorities any restrictions they might wish to place on black ownership of real estate.¹⁹⁹

In addition to the use of state power to limit access to land acquisition, blacks were faced with limited avenues by which they could earn and save money to purchase land along with white landowners who were unwilling to sell their land to blacks.²⁰⁰ To discourage blacks from entering into occupations, which would afford them wages, they could apply towards the purchase of real estate, the Black Codes restricted blacks from becoming artisans, mechanics or shopkeepers. For example, the South Carolina code prohibited a black person from entering any employment except agricultural labor or domestic service unless he obtained a special license and a certification from a local judge of his "skill and fitness" and good moral character. Such laws not only limited

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹⁹ Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 368

²⁰⁰ Robert H. Kinzer and Edward Sagarin, *The Negro in American Business: The Conflict between Separatism and Integration* (New York: Greenberg Publisher, 1950), 81.

blacks employment opportunities, but also threatened to undermine the old free Negro class, which had once dominated the skilled trades in places like Charleston.²⁰¹

Despite these impediments, blacks were able to acquire property on which they built homes or cultivated crops. Some blacks entered into agreements in which they would make regular payments on a parcel of land. Upon receipt of the final payment, they would become permanent owners of the land. For those who sought to till and own their own land, they entered into such contractual agreements. As soon as they had amassed sufficient funds, they would begin payment on farmland.²⁰² Such purchases, both outright and financed, had repercussions beyond the economic realm. In fact, their purchase not only changed their economic relationship with whites; it affected the psychological relationship with whites. Blacks used land purchases to liberate themselves from economic dependence upon the whites, the earlier bonds between master and slave, which the moral order of the slave regime was established, contributed to the dissolution of such bonds.²⁰³

No longer wholly dependent on their owners for sustenance and housing, blacks sought to become masters of their own property and to become self-sufficient. As for whites, this sudden reordering of southern society, in which blacks could and often sought to purchase land, heralded the demise of the old order. Black aspirations for land ownership not only signaled their desire to become self-sufficient but also meant that whites would have to face the fact that their former chattel would no longer adhere to the master-slave relationship which had served as the foundation of the social order in the south.

²⁰¹ Litwack, *Been in The Storm*, 367.

²⁰² Kinzer, *The Negro*, 81.

After the campaign of terror launched by the Klu Klux Klan and the political troubles, which culminated in 1876 and halted any material advance, the agrarian-based economy of Georgia began to rise in 1880. The cotton market was getting settled, the labor market was adjusting itself to the new conditions, and thrifty blacks began to place their earnings in savings accounts. In 1891, blacks had acquired one million acres and held total property to the value of more than fourteen million dollars. According to tax records from fifty-six counties indicated that there were 8,065 black landowners in Georgia. Collected in 1890, these records indicate that the average black landowner possessed 70 areas of land.²⁰⁴

However, economic conditions, social unrest and disenfranchisement and a decline in cotton prices would have an adverse effect on black landowners in Georgia.²⁰⁵ Following the panic of 1892, followed by a rise in crime; then the movement toward the disenfranchisement of blacks and the proscriptive laws; finally the decline in the price of cotton all contributed to the fall in value of property owned from about fifteen million dollars to less than thirteen million dollars in 1895.²⁰⁶

The economic, social and political factors, which contributed to the decline in land values, did not diminish their deeds. In fact, the importance of the black landowner can be measured beyond their economic impact on their respective communities. In 1920, a study of black landowners in Greene and Macon counties revealed some very interesting conclusions. Black landowners were highly visible members of the community. They were able to secure credit and enjoyed the company of influential

²⁰³ Ibid., 81.

²⁰⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, *The Negro Landowner In Georgia*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 670

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 669.

members of the community. Seventy five percent of the landholders were males over the age of fifty. They were also permanent fixtures in the community. Located within the black belt region, these men often served as mediators between whites and blacks. He would speak upon the behalf of black defendants in court. They would also serve as church officers, lodge leaders, and chairmen of school board committees.²⁰⁷

Black landowners, both rural and urban, male and females with often no more than the clothes on their backs, few possessions, little financial resources, and skills obtained during their enslavement embarked on a lifelong quest to reconstruct their lives, establish free communities, and to become self-sufficient. Those who took advantage of the new opportunities afforded to them in postwar Georgia used their skills, thrift, and desire for property to work tirelessly in the hopes of securing the deeds and title to property. Despite the enactment of legal measures designed to restrict blacks from owning property along with reluctant white landowners who refused to part with their holdings, Georgia freedmen who desired to become landowners remained firmly affixed to their goal of become owners of real estate. Through entrepreneurial ventures, thrift, reliance on familial ties²⁰⁸, and took advantage of low land prices, amassed property during the postwar period. The sons and daughters of slaves who were once the property of white plantation owners now sought to become the owners of land. The purpose of obtaining property signified more than just the freedmen's transformation from property to the owner of property. The following statement of a sixty-year-old freedman illustrated the purpose of acquiring property to insure that one has a final resting place

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 669.

²⁰⁷ Wooster, 138.

²⁰⁸ Arthur F. Raper, *Preface To Peasantry: A Tale Of Two Black Belt Counties* (New York: Antheneum, 1968) , 111.

secured by their own hands: “What’s de use of being free if you don’t own land enough to be buried in? Might juss as well stay a slave all yo’ days.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) , 81.

CONCLUSION

After the defeat of confederate Georgia, the freedmen emerged from the rubble and began the process of transforming themselves into a body of literate, self-sufficient, and productive citizens in the postwar period. The establishment of the public school system and higher education for freedmen can be attributed to the joint efforts of missionaries and teachers sponsored by northern relief organizations, Freedmen Bureau officers and agents, northern philanthropists, and black educational associations. While the funding, personnel, and instructional materials provided by the Freedmen's Bureau and private relief organization such as the AMA and AFUC were crucial to the transformation of the ex-slaves into literate citizens through education; blacks themselves took a proactive approach in their quest to become independent and literate freemen.

In the early days of the postwar period, blacks established educational associations. Their members collected funds for the establishment and daily operation of schools. For example, the SEA was founded to furnish schools for freedmen in Savannah. Meanwhile, the GEA was formed to encourage blacks throughout the state to establish schools in their respective localities. Black also enlisted the support of whites in their quest to secure a permanent state education system. Black and white members of the GTA provided the impetus behind the passage of the Georgia school bill of 1870 into law. Also, local communities pooled their resources to fund schools in their respective localities. Some black wage earners used their own funds to send their children to private schools and fledgling colleges in Atlanta.

Blacks not only placed a high premium on education but also sought to use education as a countermeasure against notions of white supremacy, which remained alive

in a considerable segment in the southern white population. Also, whenever the opportunity presented itself, blacks sought to gain full operational control of schools. While blacks appreciated the assistance provided by northern relief associations, they were wary of individuals who sought to dictate to them and refrain from including them in the decision making process. Having been liberated from the paternalism exhibited by their masters, blacks scoffed at the prospect of being thrust into such a relationship with northern white missionary agents, teachers, and administrators. Whenever possible, blacks in the rural and urban areas, often requested black teachers, applied for administrative positions and offered to purchase schools from private aid organizations.

In response to those who advocated industrial education as the sole means by which blacks could improve their lot, they rejected this notion and worked to expand the curriculum of early black colleges and universities to resemble traditional liberal arts programs found in sister schools in the north. Blacks refused have their choices circumscribed by those who deemed them unfit for courses in history, philosophy, government, and the sciences. Although early black colleges and universities far from resembled those found in the north, black administrators worked tirelessly to add more intellectual challenging courses to the existing body of courses. Some tried to balance industrial education with the traditional liberal arts curriculum, while other sought to supplant the industrial education component with more intellectually stimulating courses. Such actions corresponded to the ideological shift away from Washington's promotion of industrial education to Dubois' advocacy for the development of a cadre of black leadership through rigorous study of the arts, literature, science, and philosophy.

Black administrators were aware that the changes, which took place in the economy, rendered industrial education obsolete. Therefore, they had to reconfigure their schools curriculums to reflect such change. Also, with the recapture of the state legislature by former supporters of the Confederacy, administrators faced the specter of reduced funding for black colleges established by the state. Black administrators reduced or eliminated industrial education, required student to work campus jobs to cover the costs of their education, and aggressively seek funding from northern philanthropists.

Irrespective of class position, blacks sought greater control and autonomy over education whenever possible. This is made evident by the fund raising activities of blacks in southwest Georgia, prominent black newspaper editors who encouraged the rank and file to support educational bond referendums in Savannah, black laborers who devoted portions of their wages to insure that their children receive instruction, and black administrators, who in the face of budget shortfalls, adopted measures to insure that their students would continue to receive quality instruction and reap the benefits of an intellectually challenging curriculum. From the urban centers to the remote rural regions, blacks sought to establish, support, and control education. Through their efforts, early black supporters of education provided the foundation for the training of black students who would be groomed to assume positions of leadership as members of the black professional class. Not only would the schoolhouse and the universities provide a cadre of black leadership but they would also facilitate transformation of illiterate ex-slaves into literate freedmen in Georgia.

Economic development would also play a major role in the uplift of the ex-slaves in Georgia. Prior to their emancipation, the majority of blacks harvested, tilled, and

maintained the cotton fields and rice plantations of Georgia. Slave hiring was common in the urban centers of Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah. Slave women frequently sold deserts, fruits, and seafood as vendors on the streets of Savannah. Also, a small yet significant number of free blacks in Savannah used their familial ties with whites and their entrepreneurial skills to establish profitable businesses and acquire considerable amounts of property. Some used portions of their earnings to purchase family members to reestablish kinship bonds. This group of free blacks served as a buffer between whites and the slave community.²⁰⁹

After the collapse of slavery, this community of free blacks lost their privileged position and was thrust in with their former enslaved brethren. During the postwar period, blacks engaged a host of exploits within the market economy of postwar Georgia. Those attracted to the postwar rebuilding efforts, which took place in Atlanta, served as draymen, brick masons, and railway maintenance workers. Meanwhile other freedmen entered less labor-intensive occupations. Both women and men entered into entrepreneurial ventures. For example, a few black men and in Savannah and Atlanta, who relied upon their skills as carpenters and seamstresses, became self employed, reaped the benefits of culturing an interracial clientele for their goods, and use the proceeds of their ventures to amass additional real estate and to extend themselves into additional entrepreneurial ventures.

For those unable to engage in such ventures, they used their labor power as a bargaining chip to extract the most favorable labor contracts and wages from their employers. Recalcitrant white landowners often engaged with free black laborers over stipulations within labor contracts. In response, to unrealistic demands made by white

²⁰⁹ See, Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*.

landowners, blacks often withheld their services, sought to renegotiate the terms of the contract, sought alternative means of compensation through share wages, demanded greater control over their labor time, and readily opted out of contract in search for better wages and working conditions. The labor contract and the market economy became the new battleground on which blacks and whites would engage in a daily struggle to define and redefine the relationship between the landowner and laborer.

Without question, the schoolhouse and the market economy played a crucial role in the transformation of ex-slaves into a viable literate, relatively self-sufficient community of freedmen. More Importantly, their desire for greater autonomy and eventually absolute control of their future, provided the impetus for their funding, maintenance, and operation of schools and universities. Also, their increased participation in the postwar market economy was crucial to its resurrection and enabled blacks to earn wages and venture into entrepreneurial ventures and amass real estate. In the face of black codes, reconstituted state legislatures unsympathetic to blacks concerns, and the withdrawal of federal supervision and northern philanthropy, blacks pooled their resources, increased their participation in the market economy and embarked on a long, arduous, yet fruitful journey from bondsmen to freedmen.

Appendix

Figure 1 on page 109 is a map of counties and major cities of Georgia in 1868.

Figure 2 on page 110 is a map of coastal Georgia.

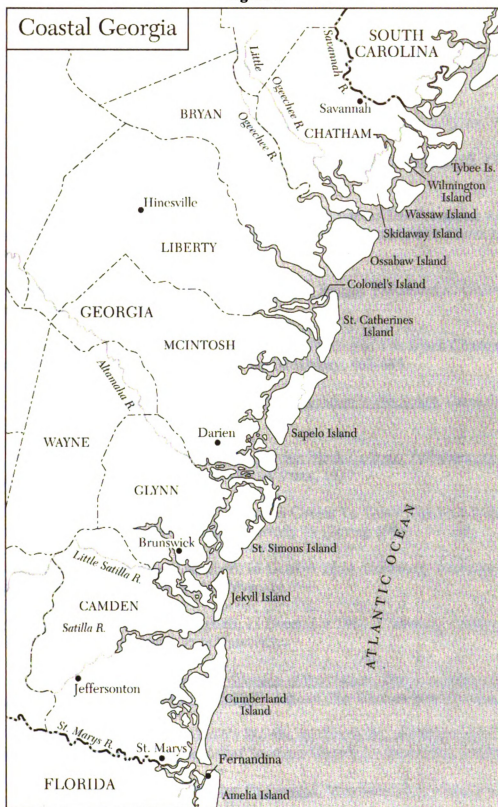
Figure 1



Counties and Major Cities of Georgia in 1868

Source of Map: Elizabeth Studley Nathans, *Losing the Peace: Georgia Republicans and Reconstruction, 1865-1871* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1968), 2.

Figure 2



Source of Map: Paul A. Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997)

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