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Education

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nue. Leading men of the race participated in this meeting and among them were Professor Williams of Howard University and Mr. Day of New York. The principal address was delivered by Rev. J. M. Loguen of New York, familiarly known as the "King of the Underground Railroad."⁴⁸ Fitting resolutions were adopted extending thanks to the friends who gave themselves unreservedly to the great issue of human rights.

Not only did the District rejoice in this triumph of right against wrong but distant places felt the wholesome influence and joined in extending felicitations to the citizens of the District of Columbia. Mr. Beamen introduced into Congress a resolution from the State Legislature of Michigan, approving the action of Congress in passing the bill over the President's veto. This resolution was ordered by Congress to be printed.⁴⁹

With the passage of this important piece of legislation, the colored people of the District of Columbia made another distinct advance toward true citizenship.

II

EDUCATION

The earliest educational advantages offered to Negroes in the District of Columbia grew out of enterprises fostered wholly by their own group. The first school building was erected in 1807 by George Bell, Nicholas Franklin and Moses Liverpool. Franklin and Liverpool were slaves who came from Virginia and were caulkers by trade. It is alleged that Franklin secured his freedom through religious confession. Bell was from Maryland and served as a slave in the home of Anthony Addison who lived a few rods beyond Eastern Branch, D. C. His wife, Sophia Browning, who was in the service of the Bell family, saved from the sale of truck the sum of \$400, with which she purchased her husband's freedom. These three men became the leading spirits in this great educational movement, despite the fact that none of them could read or write.⁵⁰

The structure was a one story frame building erected opposite and west of Providence Hospital. There were at that time 1,498 colored inhabitants residing in the District of Columbia, and of this number 1,004 were slaves and 490 constituted the free population. The second school was started by an organization known as the Resolute Beneficial

⁴⁸ The Daily Morning Chronicle, January 16, 1867.

⁴⁹ Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 2nd Session. Vol. 77, p. 990.

⁵⁰ The U. S. Commissioner of Education for the D. C., 1868, p. 196.

Society which held its meetings in Bell's old school house. This school was opened in 1808 with Mr. Pierpont of Massachusetts as instructor. It had an enrollment of 60 or more students. Mr. Pierpont was succeeded by John Adams, the first Negro teacher in the District of Columbia. These educational attempts were very fruitful among these early inhabitants who were eager to qualify themselves for better citizenship. This school was followed by the establishment of a third one for the District devoted entirely to the education of the Negroes. One Henry Patter, an Englishman, was the prime factor in the erection of this and in 1809 it successfully opened in a brick building on the southeast corner of F and 7th Streets.

The first school established in Georgetown, D. C., was in the year 1810. It was located between Congress and High Streets and was the work of Miss Mary Billings who spared no pains in the execution of this needy cause. This school operated for 12 years becoming relinquished in 1822. It was followed in its labors by the Smothers School which was located at 14th and H Streets, near the Treasury Building. This is the same school that later assumed the name Columbia Institute under the direction of Mr. Prout, who brought the enrollment to 150 or more.

By this time the educational enterprise for Negroes in the District of Columbia was well under way. Numbered among those who gave themselves unreservedly to this pioneer work was Mrs. Anna Marie Hall from Prince George's County, Maryland. She spent 25 consecutive years in the District of Columbia, all of which she devoted exclusively to work among the Negroes. The school that was located on Capitol Hill stood as a memorial to her honor.⁵¹

During this early period of school activities the colored children who were deprived of the opportunity to attend the schools mentioned were obliged to attend the Sunday Schools which were provided for them in the white churches of the District. This advantage however was suddenly taken away from them in 1831, when Nat Turner's Insurrection excited the hostility of the whites who in turn closed the doors of their churches against them. That necessity is the mother of invention is well demonstrated in what followed, for the colored people were thrust out upon their own resources. This apparent defeat gave rise to self-reliance which was indispensable in moulding the character of leadership needed at this critical time, and from this period on the Negro became more and more prominent in this field.

Mr. Prout was succeeded in his work by John F. Cook who became

⁵¹ The U. S. Commissioner of Education for the D. C., 1868, p. 198.

a well known figure in the educational profession. The next school of note was established on Capitol Hill by Miss Louisa Porke Costin in the year 1833. For 10 years she supervised the work of this school and it grew to be one of the most important centers in the educational and industrial life of the Negroes.

The first Seminary for girls was established in Georgetown, D. C., by Father Vanlomen, in 1827. He was a Catholic Priest and spent much of his time studying the social conditions among the colored people in the District of Columbia. This school was placed under the efficient supervision of Miss Marie Becraft, a remarkable personage and possessed of a rare spirit for humane service. In 1828 Miss Nancy Garnet established another school for girls in Georgetown which was first located on Dunbarton Street, but later moved to Montgomery Street. St. Francis Academy for girls was established in 1829. This school accomplished a great work and from it many girls went out equipped for the higher walks of life. In 1830 Mary Woomly's School was opened to girls. The moral tone of all these schools ranked high and their enviable records place them in the category with the accredited Seminaries of today.

The above mentioned schools were followed by those equipped to do co-educational work. Among this group the John T. Fleet's School occupied a strategic position. It was founded in 1836 on New York Avenue. The John T. Johnson School was also founded about this time and continued until 1849. These two Institutions registered about 150 or 170 students each, annually. The mixed schools did not supplant, however, the schools for girls but offered additional facilities and opportunities that their limited means could not supply. While the schools for girls greatly diminished in number they increased in size. The Miner School established in 1851 by Miss Miner of New York is a representative type of these latter schools for girls. This brought the schools to the point where the better thinking class of white people began to consider seriously that a free public school system should augment the effort put forth by these early schools which had existed for nearly half a century upon purely benevolent basis. So in 1856 an attempt was made to establish a system of free schools in the District of Columbia. To test the spirit of the public toward this forward program it was agreed upon that a ballot be provided for the campaign and all persons favoring the movement were advised to mark on the ballot, "Schools," and those opposing the movement would mark, "No Schools." On August 11, 1856, a vote was taken and the measure was overwhelmingly defeated. It was stated that the principal ob-

jection came from the white women who were bitterly opposed to so elaborate a program for the education of Negroes.⁵²

In 1862 just 6 years later slavery in the District of Columbia was abolished and the effort which had proved futile was again revived. Prior to the Act of Congress providing for the establishing and maintaining schools for the colored people in the District, the American Tract Society established a school for the Contrabands, the first of its kind to be operated within the District. This school was established March 16, 1862.⁵³ The city authorities, having maintained a public school system for the whites since 1804, began to feel more keenly than ever the disgrace for passive attitude they assumed toward the education of their colored constituency. As a result they were moved to get through Congress some legislation favoring a standardized system of schools for Negroes. On May 21, 1862 Congress passed an Act providing that ten per centum of the taxes collected from the colored in Washington and Georgetown stand appropriated for the purpose of establishing a system of Primary Schools for the colored children in the District of Columbia.⁵⁴

This provision was very inadequate to the demands made upon the colored schools for support. From May 1, 1862 to June 30, 1862 only \$346.50 was collected from this source.⁵⁵ The scarcity of funds, however, did not result from the lack of property owned by the colored people in the District but rather from the maladministrations of the funds accruing from said property. The reluctance on the part of the school authorities to make the appropriations provoked quite a controversy between the Trustees of the colored schools and the Board of Education. As a result further means had to be devised to assure the colored schools their pro-rata share. The newspaper carried articles and editorials exposing the manner in which the colored schools were dealt with and the embarrassing situation in which they were placed before the public.⁵⁶

The Act also provided that the Trustees of the colored schools should have full control of all donations and bequests made to colored schools besides the monies coming through the regular channels. These funds were also diverted from the purpose for which they were given, and the condition grew rapidly from bad to worse. The three colored Trustees soon began to realize that some further steps had to be taken to procure the funds justly due.

⁵² The U. S. Commissioner of Education for D. C., p. 264. 1868.

⁵³ *Ibid.* Pp. 225, 228.

⁵⁴ Educational Documents, p. 53. Documents Relating to Freedmen, p. 6.

⁵⁵ National Intelligencer, March 14, 1865. Educational Documents, p. 54.

⁵⁶ The National Republican, July 31, 1865.

In 1864 Congress passed another Act on June 25, so construing the Act previously passed that no vague clauses therein could possibly cause the colored schools to be deprived of the funds that they were entitled to. It also provided that if the said funds were not duly paid over to the proper authorities at the time designated interest at the rate of ten per cent per annum on the amount unpaid could be exacted by the colored Trustees. And further that they, at their own discretion, might maintain an action of debt in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia against said Boards for non-payment of funds collected. Thus it can be readily seen that the handicap under which the colored schools had to operate greatly impeded their progress.⁵⁷

The Freedmen Relief Association was successfully operating schools in the District of Columbia prior to this time, through the efforts of one Mr. George T. Needham who has been hailed as founder of free schools in the District for colored children. It was through this agency and not Congress or the Council for Education that the free school system was established in the District.

The National Intelligencer commenting upon the work of the various benevolent societies and personal donations from the friends of the freedmen had the following to say. "On the 23, November 1863, however, through the exertions of Mr. George T. Needham a free day school was open under the auspices of the Freedmen Relief Association and subsequently four others of the same class. On the 25, November Mr. Needham opened the first free evening school for colored children and in May of the same year twelve of these schools were in successful operation."⁵⁸ The majority of the teachers who were employed in these schools were volunteer workers and the few that were compensated received their funds from friends and charitable societies.

Wayland Theological Seminary was established in the First Colored Baptist Church, 19th and I Streets, in September 1864. This school was the work of the New England Freedmen Aid Commission, a society that later immortalized its name among the colored people of the District. It was the first school to train the colored preachers for the arduous tasks of the Christian ministry. Although the recipients had no strong literary foundation for a theological course, yet they were greatly benefited for the instructors accommodated them by adjusting the course of study so as to meet the needs of a limited preparation. Reading the Bible aloud and explaining the passages read quite frequently constituted a recitation.⁵⁹ The reports given of the commencement exercises and

⁵⁷ The Daily Morning Chronicle, July 19, 1866.

⁵⁸ The National Intelligencer, January 22, 1865.

⁵⁹ The U. S. Commissioner for D. C., p. 253. 1868.

the favorable comments made by the white friends give evidence of the creditable work accomplished. As early as May, 1864, these benevolent organizations, principally from the northern and New England States, were functioning in the District of Columbia. The following is a list of the schools, teachers and pupils under the supervision of these societies in 1864:⁶⁰

“SCHOOLS OF THE RELIEF SOCIETIES”

	Schools	Teachers	Scholars
National Freedmen Relief Association, D. C.....	5	11	500
American Tract Society, N. Y.....	1	2	100
African Cononization Society.....	1	2	100
Reformed Presbyterian Mission.....	2	4	200
Pennsylvania Freedmen Relief Association.....	1	2	150
Philadelphia Freedmen's F. R. Association.....	1	2	150
Dr. L. D. Johnson (one night school).....	2	2	100
Trustees of Colored Public Schools.....	1	2	100
Volunteer Teachers Association (one night school).	12	34	1,250
Total.....	26	61	2,650

The funds to maintain these schools were procured through the generous white friends of the North. They took pride in helping this worthy project and set the pace for the District of Columbia which was so reluctant in meeting the challenge offered by the ability of the Negroes to master books. The following is a list of contributions made within four years, by the benevolent societies:

Pennsylvania Freedmen Relief Association.....	\$32,500
New York Freedmen Relief Association.....	24,000
New England F. A. Society.....	6,000
American Missionary Society.....	14,000
Philadelphia Friends.....	13,500
New England Friends.....	7,000
Reformed Presbyterian Mission.....	11,500
O. S. Presbyterian Mission.....	6,500
American Baptist Home Mission & New England F. A.....	8,000
American Colonization Society.....	3,000
African Free Baptist Mission.....	1,000
National Freedmen Relief Association.....	5,500
American Tract Society.....	1,000
Miscellaneous Contributions.....	500
Total.....	\$135,000 ⁶¹

⁶⁰ The U. S. Commissioner for D. C., p. 229. 1868.

⁶¹ The U. S. Commissioner of Education for D. C., p. 232. 1868.

These are the forces that worked to elevate the colored people in the District of Columbia during the Reconstruction Period. It was apparent from the beginning that the Negro was, in every respect, capable of taking on the white man's civilization and with the assistance of those who appreciated his worth, he rapidly came into his own. Notwithstanding the very active part played by the above named societies, it was not sufficient to inspire the District School Commission to carry out its obligation with the colored schools. The colored Trustees, in the persons of Daniel Breed, Zenas C. Robbins, and John Bowen, found that the problem of securing the funds became more and more acute. This was brought out in a report rendered by J. W. Alvord, Superintendent of Schools in the District of Columbia. The following is the statement: "In the District, if the Trustees of colored schools could get the amount now due the next scholastic year they would have about \$80,000 . . . but as the speedy receipt of these funds is a matter of much doubt there still remains a work for the benevolent to do."⁶²

Under the caption titled, "The colored schools versus the city of Washington," there is set forth in a school report a sharp controversy between the school authorities and the city. So grave was this issue that the Supreme Court had to act in the matter. It was a long drawn out decision, but when it was rendered a precedent was established in favor of the colored schools and all subsequent transactions harked back to a piece of Congressional legislation as the criterion. The amount that was due for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1867 was \$55,968.35. The Court ruled that the Mayor of the city be requested to pay the sum over to the Trustees of the colored schools without delay or further litigation.⁶³

This inadequate system of administering the school affairs reflected seriously upon the progress of the colored race. The publishing of these facts by the school Board and the frequent mentioning of them in newspapers served to goad on the white school officials to discharge their duty.⁶⁴

Despite the negligence on the part of those in charge to execute the mandates sent down by Congress and other legal bodies, those friends who advocated justice at the bar of public opinion as well as constituted authorities, never ceased their vigorous protest. This is verified by the bills and resolutions that flooded Congress in the interest

⁶² Documents Relating to Freedmen, p. 9.

⁶³ Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of Washington, p. 88.

⁶⁴ The Daily Morning Chronicle, December 7, 1867.

of Negro education. One of these resolutions was presented by Mr. Rollins. In addition to the provisions made for the establishment of a permanent fund through the ten per cent tax, Mr. Rollins introduced this one asking that a twenty per cent tax be levied upon all rental of buildings which exceeded \$600 in value annually, the same to be applied to the public school fund for colored children.⁶⁵

There were many who shared the opinion that the Freedmen's Bureau was the principal factor in the educational work in the District of Columbia for Negroes. Since Congress was making annual appropriations to this Bureau for Negro interests there were some grounds for such a conclusion. This, too, seemed to have caused a little hesitancy in making prompt response to the appeal of the colored schools. In order to clear up this doubt in the minds of the public the friends of the cause deemed it necessary to publish an account of this agency, setting forth the scope of work coming under its supervision. The article declared that there were upwards of sixty teachers of free colored schools in the cities of Washington and Georgetown whose salaries were paid by Northern organizations. It further stated that these schools had been under the foster care of these benevolent societies from their earliest establishment to the Fall of 1865.⁶⁶ The work covered by the Bureau was that of paying transportation expenses of the teachers to and from their fields of labor. To provide clothing and rations for those in need but not to pay salaries.

There were a few industrial schools established and maintained on the same basis as those previously mentioned. Among the most outstanding of these was the one established by Mrs. H. M. Barnard. This type of work was a great asset to the colored people of the District for it trained the hand along with the head, thus making the whole system of education practical. Being aware that the Freedmen's Bureau did not provide for salaries, this energetic woman frequently went North to procure salaries for her helpers. There she found, as usual, a hearty response among individual friends who kindly aided her not only by donations but by "personal interest and exertions." Among those who contributed were the following: Mr. Patter, President of Grover and Baker Sewing Machine Co., New York, one sewing machine; Messrs. Clafin, New York, \$150; Jesse Hoyt & Co., New York, \$50; Mr. Odell (Naval Officer), New York, \$25; Hon. A. Wakeman (surveyor), New York, \$30; Mr. Diggs, New York, \$50; New York Post Office (through H. G. Culver), \$45; New York Harbor Masters (through Capt. Goddard), \$50.

⁶⁵ Ibid., November 15, 1865.

⁶⁶ The Daily Morning Chronicle, November 15, 1865.

The activities numerated above do not constitute the sum total of means and methods resorted to in order to foster this industrial enterprise. This is verified in her own words, "In addition to other duties connected with my school, in October last I was directed by the Committee to buy at Governmental auction sales, hospital goods, such articles as would prove beneficial to the colored people, and resell them to the freedmen at cost. Eight hundred and ninety-five dollars was appropriated for this purpose. The money received from the sales was expended in the purchase of goods to be made up in the school. Thus doing a double charity with the same money."⁶⁷

That the colored people appreciated these advantages is seen in the immense numbers that enrolled in these industrial schools, and that they were capable of attaining unto the highest educational standards is also seen in the rapid progress made in so short a time. Assistant Superintendent J. W. Alvord, in comparing the Negro students with the whites made the following significant statement: "That the colored children can at once compete with the white children who from the first have had high advantages, need not be said. The white population of the South feels the power of these schools, all sorts of evil is predicted as the consequences, and yet a portion of this element is excited by the rivalry which their own children must struggle with. The poor whites are provoked by hearing that Negroes read while they are ignorant."⁶⁸

The report of Superintendent Kimball and editorials by various newspapers show that the colored people kept apace with the opportunities offered them. Two years from the date on which the first public school was established there were in the city of Washington about 10,000 colored children between the ages of six and seventeen years. There were also 45 teachers regularly employed in the educational work for colored people. The report shows that these schools maintained an average of 150 pupils each.⁶⁹

Another report on the efficiency maintained among the colored children reads as follows: "The high character of the schools in the District of Columbia continues, only they are greatly increasing in number and efficiency. The public examination just closed has been thorough in all the branches taught. . . . It will be noticed that only 799 out of 6,552 are still in the alphabet."⁷⁰ The number of schools reported at this time was 14, number of teachers 132. The statistics above do

⁶⁷ The 4th Annual Report of the National Relief Association, pp. 3-7.

⁶⁸ Documents Relating to Freedmen, pp. 8-12.

⁶⁹ The National Intelligencer, January 22, 1865.

⁷⁰ Senate Documents, 39th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 1276, p. 38. The Washington Evening Star, September 24, 1866.

not include 8 or 10 private schools in the District of Columbia taught by colored teachers and reported in first class condition so far as means permitted.

All the schools referred to above were day schools but there were a large number of night schools and Sabbath schools in operation and doing the same class of work. According to the report there were 12 of these night schools and 22 Sabbath schools with 8 schools of industry having an aggregate of 3,741 pupils. Superintendent Kimball, in his monthly report for the city of Washington alone showed that there were 42 schools, 68 teachers and 3,611 scholars maintaining a daily average of 2,886, always present 646, always punctual 387.

In Georgetown there were 4 schools with 9 teachers and 399 scholars. Average attendance 321, always punctual 108, always present 131. Referring to the record of these schools the report stated that, "The teachers and parents of our white schools will not fail to take notice of the figures that show the average attendance, the number always present, and punctual. They deserve honor and we take pleasure in giving them, in our columns, their due meed of praise."⁷¹

The teachers vie with each other in reporting the successes of their schools and in all their reports there was a note of praise for excellency in scholarship which was the index to undisputed ability in intellectual achievements. One year from this date A. E. Newton, who was in charge of the District School work connected with the Freedmen's Bureau, reported the status of the schools in the District. His account was as follows: 1,043 students enrolled in day schools. Of this number 347 were present daily, and 201 always punctual. He told many thrilling stories which emphasized the eagerness of these children to learn books. No form of domestic work could interest these lads when they heard the peal of the school bell.⁷²

The Negroes disdained the idea of remaining objects of charity and seized every opportunity to become producers as well as consumers, contributors as well as receivers. In the educational work they soon became assets rather than liabilities. This was brought out in the report of J. W. Alvord who showed that in 1866 there were five schools in the District of Columbia wholly sustained by the industry and thrift of the colored people and eight sustained in part. They owned seventeen school buildings and furnished a teaching force of twelve.⁷³

All the schools that were placed under the supervision of colored teachers compared favorably with those taught by the white teachers,

⁷¹ The National Intelligencer. July 27, 1866.

⁷² The American Freedmen, p. 206.

⁷³ Documents Relating to Freedmen, p. 7.

and the product of these schools took rank along side the product from the leading schools represented by the other race. One reporter asserted that he found the colored pupils very much like the white ones, "some stupid, others bright." In this same report the colored teachers were given credit for having under their immediate supervision more than 500 students who were making a praiseworthy record. These teachers, realizing the necessity of increasing their efficiency, organized an Improvement Association. This organization made rapid progress along all lines and the membership grew to more than 100 energetic teachers. In their meetings they discussed the best methods for class room work and took up the problems peculiar to the respective localities.

So impressed was a reporter with the work of this Association and the aggressiveness of the teachers that he was forced to the following conclusion, "The experiment of educating the freedmen proved to be successful and the ignorant whites may be greatly benefited."⁷⁴ The following is a table given in the report of Superintendent J. W. Kimball which is a semi-annual tabulation for the educational department of Washington ending June 30, 1867:⁷⁵

Day Schools.....	95	Pupils enrolled last report.....	4,676
Night Schools.....	27	Average attendance.....	4,959
	— 122	Pupils paying tuition.....	268
Schools sustained by freedmen....	4	White pupils.....	31
Schools sustained in part by freedmen	34	Always present.....	2,562
Teachers transported by Bureau last six months.....	64	Over sixteen years of age.....	1,089
School buildings owned by freedmen	15	In alphabet.....	530
School buildings furnished by Bureau	51	Spell and read easy lessons.....	3,365
Teachers, white	162	Advanced readers.....	1,874
Teachers, colored.....	121	Geography	2,780
	— 283	Arithmetic	3,372
Pupils in day and night schools ..	6,868	Higher branches.....	286
		Writing	3,494
		Needlework	864
		Free before the war.....	824
		Pupils in Sabbath schools.....	4,211

The table given by Superintendent Kimball for the District of Columbia is a concise report of the achievement by the colored people despite the problems that confronted them. For the benefit of those who grew skeptical as to the Negro's literary qualification in general. Mr. Kimball records the impression that was made upon the public in the following statement: "The past year's experience has fully settled

⁷⁴ Documents Relating to Freedmen, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

the question of the ability of the colored people to become educated and intelligent. Hundreds have visited the schools in this city (Washington) and have gone away with their doubts removed and their prejudices much abated.”⁷⁶

Among the schools established in the District toward the close of the Reconstruction period were the Howard Institute and Home, and Howard University. The Howard Institute and Home was incorporated by Congress January 15, 1866. This institution was maintained by voluntary contributions and bequests and remained a charitable institution to the close. The following persons constituted the board of managers: James M. Edmonds, Sayles J. Bowen, Cordial Stoops, Augustine Chester, John R. Elvans, Sayles Brown, Limus D. Bishop. These managers were required to keep a record of all donations, names and addresses of donors along with an account of annual disbursements. All these items had to be reported to the Secretary of the Interior. Besides the Academic work, the school cared for the aged and infirm who required personal attention. This institution also served as the center of industrial training.

Howard University was established by an Act of Congress and was to be opened to all without respect to creed or color. The Normal and Preparatory departments were opened on May 1, 1866, with Rev. E. F. Williams in charge. He was assisted by Miss Lord, an accomplished teacher in the city of Washington. These departments reported excellent results for the first year. At the close of the first month it had an enrollment of 31 which steadily increased with the sessions. The following is an account of its establishment in detail. “The Trustees of Howard University, an Institution incorporated by Congress, the object of which is the bestowment of collegiate education on colored men, having lately purchased from Mr. John A. Smith 150 acres of land and situated beyond the Park and including the hill on which was the site during the war of a Cavalry Camp known as Camp Relief, have divided the tract into building lots 50 x 150 feet each with streets 50 feet wide, reserving about 50 acres for a Park, in which are sites for the University buildings. On Saturday about 40 of these lots were disposed of, mostly to clerks in the Departments and Governmental Officials, at 9 and 10 cents per square foot, Mr. R. M. Hall being the broker. Most of the lots sold are on the 7th Street Road this side of the center for the University, and others on the street which will be an extension of 6th Street. General O. O. Howard has selected a lot on this tract for a residence, near the site for the buildings. This

⁷⁶ Documents Relating to Freedmen, p. 9.

house will be a very handsome one and will cost about \$14,000. It will be built of building blocks, made by a new process of lime and sand which are said to be very durable and can be made to resemble any description of stone. The Normal School of the University was opened May last, in a large frame building on the ground by Professor Williams, a graduate of Yale College, who for a number of years was one of the faculty of Lookout Mountain College, Ga. The school is furnished with the latest school furniture, maps, etc. There are now 35 colored men attending the school and they are making rapid progress. Five of them are studying Latin in which they make rapid progress. There are regularly licensed ministers. It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of students in a few months and the Trustees are confident that as soon as they are able to open the University proper that a full complement of students will present themselves. In connection with the University a large Sabbath school has been established and held in the P. M.”⁷⁷

There are many other interesting facts about the early history of Howard University. Among them may be mentioned the letting of the contract for the main buildings which was given to Messrs. Harvey & Rumsey. The price of the main building was fixed at \$68,000 and was to be 168 feet in length and 64 feet in width. Ample provisions were made for lecture rooms, class rooms, geological and philosophical cabinets, and library room. The present educational status in the District is the consummation of these early plans.⁷⁸

In summarizing the educational achievements of the colored people in the District of Columbia the Commissioner paid to them the following tribute: “When a school failed it was for want of money and not for want of appreciation for the benefits of education. The facts related in this narrative fully substantiate the following propositions: First, the impression which prevails very generally that the colored people of the District before the war had no schools is unfounded and unjust to them. Secondly, the attendance of colored children at school was as large before the war as it is now in proportion to the free colored population of the District at the respective periods. Third, the colored people of the District have showed themselves capable, to a wonderful degree, in supporting and educating themselves, while at the same time contributing taxes to the support of white schools, from which they were debarred, and that too, when in numerous cases they had previously bought themselves and families from slavery at very great expense. Their testing furnishes an example of courage and

⁷⁷ Washington Evening Star, June 24, 1867.

⁷⁸ Ibid. July 13, 1867.

success in trial and oppression scarcely equalled in the annals of mankind.”⁷⁹

III

ECONOMIC STATUS

In 1862 the Negroes in the District of Columbia were confronted with a serious economic problem brought on by overpopulation. Maryland and Virginia were the two States adjacent to the District and formed the main tributaries of its population. Slavery having been abolished within the District, even Negroes from the extreme Southern States were seeking refuge in her borders. There were about 30,000 inhabitants in 1866 making an increase of about 15,700 in six years. This large population settling in a non-manufacturing city made an economic crisis inevitable and a large per cent of these newcomers were unskilled laborers and adapted only to agricultural life.

Notwithstanding his limited ability, the Negro seized every opportunity through industry and thrift to better his condition. The first Negro bank established in the District of Columbia was the Freedmen Saving Bank. It was chartered by Congress in the Winter of 1864, and placed under the supervision of highly reputable white men who had proved their fidelity to the race. A branch of this bank was opened at 281 G Street and was highly recommended to all the colored citizens who desired to open an account. The following announcement was made by way of advertisement: “Deposits will be received from those who wish to save their money on interest every day from 5 to 7 o'clock P. M., and on Saturdays from 10 A. M. to 3 P. M. All our friends are invited to come and examine this institution.”⁸⁰

Even at this early stage, the Negroes were more than negative factors in the social life of the city, for they learned to economize and out of their meager earnings they had acquired considerable property. As far back as the authentic history of the Negro in the District of Columbia reaches, we find him to be an economic asset. This was true in the establishment of the first public schools in 1807, which account is given in a previous reference. One of the first provisions made to put the schools in the District on self supporting basis was to appropriate the income of a ten per cent tax levied on property owned by Negroes in the cities of Washington and Georgetown. This act was passed by Congress May 21, 1862.⁸¹

⁷⁹ U. S. Commissioner of Education for the D. C., 1868, p. 222.

⁸⁰ The National Republican, September 11, 1865.

⁸¹ Educational Documents, p. 53.