



## EDUCATION IN LOUISIANA



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On the cover: (Clockwise from top left) Bossier City High School, Bossier City, Bossier Parish; St. Matthew High School, Melrose vicinity, Natchitoches Parish; Moreauville High School, Moreauville, Avoyelles Parish; Ursuline Convent, New Orleans, Orleans Parish; Brister School House, Sikes vicinity, Winn Parish; St. Paul Baptist Church/ Morehead School, Kinder vicinity, Allen Parish; Goudeau School, Goudeau, Avoyelles Parish; Longstreet Rosenwald School, Longstreet, DeSoto Parish; Goudeau School, Goudeau, Avoyelles Parish. (In the center) McNutt School, Boyce vicinity, Rapides Parish. All photographs by Laura Ewen Blokker.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/ STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

The purpose of this historic context is to provide a basis for evaluating the historical significance and National Register eligibility of resources throughout the state of Louisiana related to primary and secondary education. The temporal scope of this context is 1699-1965. This time span begins with the settlement of Louisiana by French colonists and ends in the midst of Louisiana's ten year process of school desegregation. This termination date was selected to ensure that this context will include all resources reaching at least fifty years of age for the next few years. Because the lines between secondary and higher education were often blurred during the past three centuries and secondary schools sometimes evolved into institutes of higher learning, higher learning is mentioned where it is necessary to adequately explain the events of primary and secondary education. The geographic limitations of the context are the boundaries of the state of Louisiana.

Histories of education in Louisiana often characterize the citizenry as disinterested in providing for a public education system from the very beginning of colonization. There is a certain truth to this that very much effected the development of schools in Louisiana, but it should not be imagined that the people of Louisiana did not educate their children. Merely, it should be understood that over the past three hundred years, education took a different course in Louisiana than in other states of the nation. Sometimes this path was well in advance of its peers, and sometimes it fell behind.

A quick recap of almost three hundred years of education in a state that has been so maligned for ignorance and poor schools holds some surprising highlights. Girls have been receiving a quality education in Louisiana for 285 years. Among the first people to receive a formal education in Colonial Louisiana were Native Americans and enslaved African American women. In 1805, Louisiana enacted a school system plan that was only the third of its kind in the nation, and alone in providing for the education of girls. By 1845, the public school system of New Orleans' Second Municipality was a national model, with innovations unknown even in Boston's celebrated education scheme. In 1871, New Orleans schools became the first in the South and among just a handful in the nation to racially integrate. Of course, where there are highs, there are inevitably corresponding lows, and the era of Jim Crow was surely the deepest of nadirs for Louisiana's schools. In 1960, the hatred that had so severely hindered education in the state was displayed on national television as New Orleans schools integrated for the second time in their history.

Many aspects of life in Louisiana have been shaped by the state's origins in French and Spanish colonization and education is no exception. As one scholar of American education explains, national differences in colonial policies resulted in "sharp variations in educational practices among the different regions of North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and, in the nineteenth century, differences among the states."<sup>1</sup> It is also useful to study education as a cultural tradition, not just a public policy. When Europeans first started settling in North America, their concepts of education were inseparably paired with religion. Whether they were Catholic or Protestant, for seventeenth and early eighteenth-century colonists, school and religious instruction went hand in hand. As Catholics, colonists of Louisiana embraced Catholic instruction. The entrance of Acadians into Louisiana reinforced the importance placed on the

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Spring, *The American School 1642-1900*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 1990), 13.

role of the Church in education. Thus, the present strength of Catholic education in Louisiana is a legacy of the state's historic cultural patterns.

Many chroniclers of education in Louisiana have given short shrift to the great opportunities that Catholic religious groups provided to Louisianans. Presuming an unquestionable merit of public education, many scholars have highlighted Louisianans' support of private and Catholic schools only to identify it as a reason a free public school system failed to thrive prior to the Civil War, without bothering to discuss the fact that the so called "public schools" would have been more aptly named "schools for white boys of all classes". One author of a very good 1974 text on education in Louisiana admitted within his own volume of his writing that "non-public elements of education . . ." and ". . . the history of negro education in the State has been treated only incidentally. In both cases, expanded historical attention is merited . . ."<sup>2</sup> This document attempts to offer as much context as possible by filling in some of the voids left when it is assumed that education was only for white males. African American education is a very important and contentious part of the history of education in Louisiana, so it is discussed in more detail than some of the more typical developments of education in an American state.<sup>3</sup> If it seems that there is a heavy emphasis on New Orleans, it is because it was the location of some very significant developments in education in the state which serve to illustrate particular points. It is in no way meant to detract from the significance of educational developments throughout the state.

A Historic Context is not an exhaustive, complete history, but rather an overview which creates a setting for understanding our tangible heritage. Therefore, this document will necessarily exclude many details of this topic and readers are encouraged to refer to sources cited in the footnotes and the bibliography for further reading on Education in Louisiana. While it is hoped that the "Background History and Development" offered here enables an understanding of historic forces which shaped education in Louisiana, in depth research of topics as they pertain to individual properties and local history is encouraged and necessary.

The "Background History and Development" narrative is followed by a "Property Types" section that explores the various built resources that demonstrate potential significance to the theme of "Education in Louisiana." Buildings and landscapes connect us to our past, allowing us to inhabit, if only briefly, the spaces of history. They also offer many ways of gaining new information about our past. This section organizes properties into different types in order to facilitate the identification of their place within the context established by the "Background History and Development" narrative. Suggested National Register of Historic Places registration requirements are provided for each type. The last three sections of the document identify the geographic parameters of the context, the identification and evaluation methods of properties, and major bibliographical references.

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<sup>2</sup> Rodney Cline, *Education in Louisiana – History and Development* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1974), 161.

<sup>3</sup> For more extensive general coverage of education in Louisiana and the United States, the reader may refer to sources cited in the bibliography by Cline, Fay, Riley, Robertson, Suarez, Spring, and Wade.

## BACKGROUND HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

### Education in the French and Spanish Colonial Periods, 1699-1802

Efforts to provide for the education of Louisiana's residents began early in the colonial period. Although French settlement in Louisiana was started by Iberville and Bienville in 1699, it was not until some years later when a number of families were established in the colony that a need for education developed. New Orleans was founded in 1718 and by 1725 there was a small school in operation in the city.<sup>4</sup> This school was established by the Capuchin superior, Father Raphael and began the strong tradition of Catholic education in Louisiana. It was open to all male children of the colony including Native Americans. In fact, Father Raphael reported in 1725 that there were already some Natchez students in attendance who had come to the school of their own accord.<sup>5</sup> The total number of students at the school in its first years is unclear, but by 1726, Father Raphael noted that five or six were doing very well.<sup>6</sup> It seems that there were two teachers so there were at least enough students to demand more than one instructor. It should be noted that this school is sometimes referred to as a college, but that term should not be understood to apply with its present meaning. The main thrust of the curriculum at this school was reading and writing, while some of the more advanced pupils studied Latin.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately the little institution experienced difficulties in attaining books and financing for its building early on. The Company of the Indies, which according to its contract was to provide for all things pertaining to religion, including schools, refused to make its payment on the house that had been purchased for the school. After a prolonged dispute, the building was apparently left to ruin for some years before a new plan was developed for a school on the property.<sup>8</sup> It was described by one source as "the venerable hovel."<sup>9</sup>

In 1740, Father Raphael's successor, Father Peter, proposed the construction of a new building on the lot where the ruined house of the former "school for the poor" stood.<sup>10</sup> The plan for the new building was quite detailed, specifying that it should be entirely of brick with the walls sixteen inches above the foundation to the point where the timber is set. It's clear that the construction methods necessary to create a durable structure in Louisiana were understood at this point. The plan also indicates great thought was given to the learning environment as it suggests that the windows should be placed at a height such that the students would not be able to see into the street.<sup>11</sup> For reasons unknown, this plan was never executed. Tensions between Jesuits and Capuchins in the colony may have prevented progress with the Capuchin school. By the time of

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther Riley, *The Development of Education in Louisiana Prior to Statehood*. Reprinted from the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (July 1936), 6; Adam Otis Hebert, Jr., "History of Education in Colonial Louisiana," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 11, first appeared as chapter 3 in Adam Otis Hebert, Jr., "History of Education in Colonial Louisiana" (MA Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1958), 61-86.

<sup>5</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 13-15.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Teresa Austin Carroll, *Essays Educational and Historic* (New York: 1899) quoted in Betty Porter, "The History of Negro Education in Louisiana" (master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1938), 729.

<sup>10</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Louisiana's transfer to Spain in the 1760s, no government -supported school for boys had been reestablished.<sup>12</sup>

The Jesuits did not have a school of their own, but they were instrumental in bringing the Ursuline nuns to Louisiana and thereby made a tremendous contribution to the development of education. Because girls and boys were not educated together in Catholic schools, it was necessary that a separate school for girls be established in the colony. It was for this purpose that the Ursulines came to Louisiana. They arrived in 1727 and were settled in the house of Bienville while a convent for their use was constructed. This house was described by Sister Marie Madelaine Hachard as being built all of wood with two stories and a mansard roof. She noted that "there are all around large windows, however there is no glass, the windows are stretched with fine and clear cloth, which gives as much daylight as glass."<sup>13</sup>

The building that was intended to be the Ursulines' permanent convent was constructed of bricks between posts, three stories high with a tile roof, and glass in the windows. Accounts of its design do not indicate much attention was paid to the particular needs of educational space and when the Ursulines moved into the building in 1734, one nun wrote that there was "no place at all to hold" classes for the day students.<sup>14</sup> During the seven-year construction period the structure's timber frame stood so long unroofed that by 1745, it was considered ready to collapse.<sup>15</sup> Its replacement, completed c. 1753, shares many similarities with its predecessor and continues to stand today. Having survived fires that destroyed other colonial buildings, its structure is now the oldest in New Orleans' French Quarter.

The great enthusiasm of parents of girls that the Ursulines described upon their arrival demonstrates that Louisianans were by no means indifferent to education.<sup>16</sup> When they reached Louisiana the nuns received communications from thirty parents wanting their daughters to attend the schools as boarding students.<sup>17</sup> By May of 1728, there were twenty-three boarding students and twenty-five day students attending the Ursulines' school.<sup>18</sup> The day schools and boarding schools were operated separately with the day school serving poor students.<sup>19</sup> Like the Capuchins, the Ursulines welcomed Native American children as well as French and Creole children. It is well-documented that the school served girls of all colors, free and enslaved. Seven of the boarding students in 1728 were enslaved girls. Native American and African American girls were instructed for two hours every day except Sunday in reading, writing, sewing, fabric making, silkworm care, and religion, while French and white Creole girls received four hours of teaching a day.<sup>20</sup> Some basic mathematics was also a part of the curriculum.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>13</sup> Jean M. Farnsworth and Ann M. Masson, eds., *The Architecture of Colonial Louisiana: Collected Essays of Samuel Wilson, Jr. FAIA* (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1987), 165.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>16</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Clark Robestine, "French Colonial Policy and the Education of Women and Minorities: Louisiana in the Early Eighteenth Century," *History of Education Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 198.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>19</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 24-25.

<sup>20</sup> Robenstine, 199..

<sup>21</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 24.

While the Capuchin school ultimately dissolved, the Ursulines prevailed through the financial difficulties, sickness and death that befell them in the first years with such success that they remain as educators of Louisiana today.<sup>22</sup>

It may seem surprising that a school for girls thrived in Colonial Louisiana while one for boys was allowed to languish, but there are some logical reasons for this. First, it should not be imagined that these two schools were the only means by which children of the colony were educated. The wealthy employed private tutors and sent their children to private schools. There is evidence that there were tutors and private schools in Louisiana as early as the 1730s. A receipt filed in the Superior Council records of 1740 shows a payment for the attendance of two boys at a private school.<sup>23</sup> The wealthiest of Louisianans sent their offspring to France to receive an education. In a 1733 request for government support of a school, the *Ordonnateur*, Edme Gatien Salmon, supposed there wasn't one colonist who could afford to send his child to France for an education, but in a similar petition of 1742, Bienville stated that colonists were sending their boys to France for schooling at great cost.<sup>24</sup> For those who could not afford such a luxury, apprenticeships were a common way of gaining a basic education.

The system of apprenticeships was probably in place very early in the colonization of Louisiana, but the earliest known record of an apprenticeship in the colony is from 1727.<sup>25</sup> Apprenticeships could be had in a wide variety of occupations and the apprenticeship agreement often required instruction of the apprentice in reading and writing, and sometimes arithmetic. It is notable that apprenticeships were not limited to free persons, but could also be engaged in by slaves. In an example of 1740, a Madame Hoffman apprenticed a slave to a Sieur Dupare with the stipulation that he teach the boy reading and writing in addition to his trade.<sup>26</sup> Enslaved parents were even able to make apprenticeship arrangements for their children as evidenced by the 1770 apprenticeship of a free mulatto, Bautesta, to a shoemaker by his enslaved mother.<sup>27</sup> The later apprenticeship would have been bound by the laws of the Spanish period that required all apprentices to be taught to read and write and likewise all servants under the age of twenty-one in a place where a school existed.<sup>28</sup>

Young women, however, did not have the same opportunities to be educated through apprenticeships. Therefore, while boys could achieve a practical education through apprenticeships, the Ursulines' school was the only way in which girls who were not of a wealthy family could receive an education. While it is easy to imagine that no one would have thought much of leaving girls in ignorance during the infancy of the colony, the education of women was actually considered vital to the colony's survival.<sup>29</sup> In order to transform Louisiana from a wild outpost to a productive place with French values and customs, there needed to be women who were literate, religious, and proficient in practical arts. For this reason, the services of the Ursulines were seen as essential for producing women who could sustain their families and thus the colony in a moral and capable fashion.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>26</sup> Riley, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>28</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Robenstine, 193-211

Although the Capuchin and Ursuline schools were both obviously Catholic, because they were open to all children, indiscriminate of race, wealth, or status of servitude, they should really be viewed as the colony's first public schools as well. The connection between religion and education is not surprising when the close tie between the Catholic Church and government at this point in France's history is taken into consideration.<sup>30</sup> Even in the English colonies of America, the focus of education in the early colonial period was the affirmation of religious beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

With the transfer of Louisiana to Spain in 1762, the colony gained a government with a different approach to education. Spain took its time in imposing any changes in French Louisiana, and this included the education system. Spain did not take firm control of its new possession until 1769 and it was then only a couple of years before it called for the establishment of schools. It has been estimated that only half of the population of Louisiana was literate at this time and the percentage of people who were able to sign their names versus making a mark in swearing allegiance to Spain seems to support this.<sup>32</sup> In 1771, a detailed document articulating the terms for establishing schools was sent to Louisiana. A school director and three teachers were also sent to the colony. Although the school established by Spain endured to the end of the Spanish period as evidenced by the payroll of teachers, it did not contribute much to the education of Louisiana's people because of their refusal to attend.<sup>33</sup>

The Francophone colonists were loath to participate in institutions of Spain, let alone to be instructed in Spanish. Following the Great Fire of 1788 in New Orleans, attendance at the school was reported to have dropped from a mere twenty-three students to just twelve.<sup>34</sup> This was an incredibly meager attendance when it is considered that this is less than half the students attending the Ursulines' school in its first few years and that there were estimated to be some 560 children in Louisiana half a century before this.<sup>35</sup> Language and culture had proved to be a huge impediment to what could have been a great step forward in the education of Louisiana's citizenry and it would not be the last time this was the case. Outside of New Orleans, there were small endeavors at community education through Catholic nuns and priests and private academies, but most who received any education outside the city were tutored or apprenticed. One other institution for learning that existed in Spanish Louisiana was the cadet school created for members of the military. This school was established in New Orleans to occupy the military men during peacetime and make them well-trained.<sup>36</sup>

### **The American Push for Public Education, 1803-1832**

Although records demonstrate that French and Spanish officials in Louisiana had made good efforts to establish government funded schools for the betterment of Louisiana's people, various factors had prevented this effort from being effective. The French attempts were mainly

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<sup>30</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Spring, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 33.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

defeated by the disinterest of the government in France of investing in Louisiana in this manner. Conversely, Spain immediately invested in Louisiana's education, but cultural and linguistic barriers prevented the growth of its government-supported school. So, when the Americans came to assume control of Louisiana following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the state of education of the people was little changed from when the Spanish had received the colony forty years prior. A report to Congress noted that there was one public school taught in Spanish, no college, and a few private schools in the whole colony.<sup>37</sup> The burden of governing a half illiterate people and believing strongly in the necessity of a public education system that wasn't would fall on William C. C. Claiborne. Claiborne came to Louisiana in 1803 as the appointed governor of the Territory of Orleans and was elected governor of the newly formed state of Louisiana in 1812. He served a four year term as governor, then was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1817 and died later that year, decades before his vision of a public school system in Louisiana was realized.

Claiborne was born, raised, and educated in Virginia and subsequently lived in New York, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. He was very much American and his views on education were shaped by his experience in other states in the country. His Americaness also rendered him completely foreign to the Francophone Creoles of Louisiana, even more so than his predecessors, the Spanish. Nevertheless, Claiborne wasted no time in setting to the work of governor and one of his immediate goals was the establishment of a public education system. In March of 1804, Claiborne contacted commandants at each of the territory's districts to inquire about the status of schools in their areas and their thoughts on establishing or improving them.<sup>38</sup> Just a few months later he wrote to the President requesting to use public lands and buildings that were not otherwise in use for school purposes.<sup>39</sup> In December, he made his case for a establishing a system of schools before the Legislative Council. Claiborne's appeal met with approval and the Legislature passed "An Act to Institute an [*sic*] University in the territory of Orleans" in 1805. In this context the term "university" referred to a system of schools that would include the College of New Orleans teaching Latin, Greek, English, French, and Spanish, sciences, philosophy and literature and academies for boys in each district. Academies for girls were deemed necessary and libraries were also to be established as part of this system.<sup>40</sup> The academies for boys were to teach French, English, reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic and geography while those for girls would offer instruction in French, English, "the polite branches of literature," and appropriate liberal arts.<sup>41</sup> The whole system was to be financially supported by two lotteries authorized to raise up to \$50,000 a year.<sup>42</sup>

While Louisiana is often thought of as having a perpetually unenlightened approach to education, the act instituting the university system of schools was very progressive for its day. Such a design for a secular school system is thought to have originated in France in 1763 – ironically a year after Louisiana was signed over to Spain. It was first put into practical use in

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<sup>37</sup> Riley, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Stuart Grayson Noble, "Governor Claiborne and the Public School System of the Territorial Government of Louisiana," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 52, first published in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 11 (1928): 535-52.

<sup>39</sup> Riley, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Raleigh A. Suarez, "Chronicle of a Failure: Public Education in Antebellum Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 12, no. 2 (Spring, 1971): 109-110; Noble, in Wade, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Suarez, 110; Noble, in Wade, 55.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

America, however, with the 1784 plan for the University of the State of New York. Georgia developed a similar system in 1785. When the Territory of Orleans approved the establishment of its university system in 1805, it was just the third government in the United States to follow this model.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, Thomas Jefferson had failed in 1779 and 1796 to get his state of Virginia to adopt plans he designed for a school system.<sup>44</sup> It should be noted also, that Louisiana was perhaps even more progressive than New York in its inclusion of academies for girls, something New York had omitted. Louisiana was in fact at the forefront of advocating secondary education for girls among all of the states.<sup>45</sup> It is uncertain from where the impetus for female education came, but perhaps it was the great success of the Ursulines that provided a positive example. It is said to have been Judge James Workman who actually wrote the “Act to Institute an [sic] University in the territory of Orleans,” but Governor Claiborne unquestionably deserves credit for the act as well for being the driving force behind it.<sup>46</sup>

Though the plan for a comprehensive education system in Louisiana had been successfully laid out on paper, its implementation would prove a challenge. The lottery as a means of funding turned out to be rather a failure the first year and little progress was made in the creation of the schools. In March of 1806, Claiborne expanded upon his argument for education, imploring the legislature to establish primary schools in addition to the secondary academies. Claiborne undoubtedly understood, as *Ordonnateur* Salmon had some sixty years before, that it would be helpful for the masses of uneducated children to learn how to read and other basics before entering the secondary academies.<sup>47</sup> The legislature concurred with the merit of establishing primary schools and passed “An Act to provide for the establishment of public free schools in the several counties of the Territory.” This legislation called for parishes to elect commissioners whose responsibility it would be to draw up plans for establishing free schools in their parish as they felt appropriate, with the parish’s resources. A major flaw of this act was its failure to *require* the establishment of free schools in every parish. Its loose wording left the creation of schools totally up to the residents of each area. In effect, it was more of a suggestion than a law. That coupled with the implication that the parishes themselves would have to fund the schools resulted in a lack of action of the part of the parishes.

By 1808, Claiborne was frustrated. The governor, who had previously refrained from telling the legislature how to implement his suggestions for schools, now directly indicated that a tax would be the appropriate way to finance the establishment of schools in every parish. The legislature once again promptly wrote a new act for the creation of schools, but this one was hardly any different from its 1806 predecessor except that it mentioned tuitions fees.<sup>48</sup> This implies that the legislature did not feel that free schools could be established by imposing a tax on residents. Their reluctance to impose a tax on residents for schools is confirmed by the fact that in 1809 they enacted legislation that made the school tax voluntary. By the start of that year, Pointe Coupée Parish had established a couple of public schools, but the governor lamented that no other parish had followed this example. Claiborne was clearly disheartened and made no mention of the topic of education during 1810.

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<sup>43</sup> Noble, in Wade, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>47</sup> Hebert, in Wade, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Noble in Wade, 58.

In the final year of the Territorial Period, however, he made some last pleas for schools. While the sentiment of the legislature seemed to favor education, it was clear that without an adequate source a financing exclusive of a tax, the establishment of schools would not progress. Looking to the federal government for assistance, Claiborne wrote directly to the Secretary of the Treasury regarding the possibility of securing an allocation for education from Congress. In his letter he elucidated his view of the situation in Louisiana by mentioning specifically the potential of schools to unify the territory's diverse population.<sup>49</sup> Although the federal government did not favor Claiborne's request with any funding, financing for schools was finally attained when a surplus in the territory's treasury was discovered. With great diplomacy, Claiborne once more presented his case before the legislature, and this time, his cause was rewarded handsomely. In 1811, \$39,000 was approved for establishing the College of New Orleans and twelve academies in the parishes.<sup>50</sup> Though the progress was short of what he hoped for in the course of eight years, Claiborne must have felt some sense of accomplishment when he began his term as governor of the new state with a school system underway.

By the act of 1811, the College of New Orleans was required to accept fifty indigent students.<sup>51</sup> This indicates that the first state supported schools of Louisiana operated not as we know public schools today which are free to all, but in a manner common at the time. Students who could afford to paid tuition while the state funding supported free attendance by poor students. This seems also to have been the mode of operation of the Capuchin and Ursuline schools. Some critics have stated that these state supported schools were not public schools at all, but private schools because they accepted tuition from some; however it is not always useful to apply modern definitions to the circumstances of the past.<sup>52</sup> The fact remains, that Louisiana had an interconnected system of schools that was public in the sense that it operated with government established oversight and funding and provided education to those who could not afford to pay as well as those who could. This approach was not out of line with that of other states at the time.

Organization of schools was somewhat deferred by the state's involvement in the War of 1812, but by 1819 several parish schools were operating. In addition to the College of New Orleans and the schools already in Pointe Coupée, schools in Ouachita, Rapides, East Baton Rouge, and Natchitoches seem to have been the first established.<sup>53</sup> In 1819, management of the parish schools became the responsibility of the parish police juries and in 1821, they were given the legal ability to tax land and slaves for the financing of schools.<sup>54</sup> This was a major milestone in the monetary support of public education in Louisiana. This same legislation also required parishes to admit at least eight indigent students to their schools.<sup>55</sup> In a further restructuring of the school system, the College of New Orleans was closed in 1826 and divided into a central school and two primary schools. This served to offer separate primary schools to the clashing

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>51</sup> Suarez, 112.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> James William Mobley, "The Academy Movement in Louisiana," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 80, first published in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 30 (1947): 2-21.

<sup>54</sup> Suarez, 112-113.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Creoles and Americans in their respective neighborhoods.<sup>56</sup> Primary schools were probably also more practical for achieving education, than the college alone had been. In the coming years, finances again became the downfall of the state-supported school system. This time, it was not a lack of funding, but a misallocation of funds that caused problems: the state expenditure for education in 1825 was approximately \$150,000.<sup>57</sup> Both the president of Rapides College at Alexandria and Governor André Bienvenu Roman, supporters of education, called into question the use of the state's disbursements for schools.<sup>58</sup> They pointed out that all parishes were receiving ample allotments from the state for education, but that few schools had materialized out of this funding.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Catholic religious organizations continued to contribute to the development of education in Louisiana. In 1821, the Sisters of the Order of the Sacred Heart opened a school for girls at Grand Coteau. This was the first significant institution established for girls in Louisiana since the Ursulines had arrived nearly one hundred years before. An enduring, but secular private school for women, the Clinton Female Academy, was incorporated almost a decade later, in 1830.<sup>59</sup> Like the Ursulines, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart attended to the education of Native American and African American girls as well as white girls. Four years later, they began the Convent of St. Michael's in St. James Parish.<sup>60</sup> Another Catholic school was opened in New Orleans in 1823 by Sister Marthe Fortière of the Dames Hospitalier. This school was supported by New Orleans' Free People of Color and provided for the education of African American girls. In 1824 following conflicts with city officials, the Ursuline nuns moved their still active school out of their eighteenth century convent to an elaborate new convent down river of the city.<sup>61</sup> In 1831, the Dames Hospitalier school fell under the management of the Ursuline nuns, and was subsequently directed and moved to the Faubourg Tremé by Marie Jeanne Aliquot. There it was attended by the Sisters of Mt. Carmel and became associated with St. Augustine's Catholic Church.<sup>62</sup>

The 1830s was a time of great flux for education in Louisiana. In 1830 the state of Louisiana criminalized the act of teaching slaves to read or write and the printing, publishing, or distribution of "any thing having a tendency to produce discontent among the free coloured population of the state. . . ."<sup>63</sup> This legislation represents a significant shift in the attitude toward the education of slaves in particular, and the African American population in general, from the previous century when the Ursulines began their classes. The 1830s also marks the time when Catholic schools became segregated.<sup>64</sup> It was in this atmosphere in 1832 that a Free Woman of Color named Marie Couvent conceived the idea of establishing a school for indigent African

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<sup>56</sup> Donald E. Devore and Joseph Logsdon, *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans, 1841-1991* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991), 9.

<sup>57</sup> Noble, in Wade, 60.

<sup>58</sup> Mobley, in Wade, 81.

<sup>59</sup> Edwin Whitfield Fay, *The History of Education in Louisiana* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 56.

<sup>60</sup> Fay, 136-137.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Clark Neidenbach, "Marie Bernard Couvent, The Couvent School and African American Education in New Orleans" (master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 2003), 27.

American children. Although a few of the schools mentioned above had provided instruction to poor African American girls, it is unclear under what terms they were teaching African Americans by this year. It seems that all teaching of African American girls was consolidated in the Carmelite School in the Tremé at this point and there is no indication that any kind of free formal education was ever available to African American boys.

At least as early as 1813, there had been a private school for free children of color. At the beginning of that year a G. Dorfeuille placed a newspaper advertisement in New Orleans announcing the opening of his school for African American children and noting that such a school was “entirely lacking” and that “eighteen to twenty pupils” had been “already promised.”<sup>65</sup> Most schools at this time in Louisiana taught either girls or boys, and those that didn’t specify were intended for boys, so this is likely the case for Dorfeuille’s, but there is a possibility it was coeducational. In any case, wealthier boys of color had some opportunities to attend private schools and some even received secondary education abroad. Those less privileged would have gained a minimal degree of education through an apprenticeship like their white counterparts. In 1832, educational opportunities for all of Louisiana’s children were still slight, but New Orleans had two state-supported primary schools and one secondary school which were for white boys. It is in this context that Marie Couvent, herself illiterate, saw a need for a similar institution for African American children.

Marie Justine Cirnaire Couvent is a complicated figure wholly representative of her era. She was African born and brought to Saint Domingue as a slave. At some point, she gained her freedom, accumulated wealth, and became a slave holder herself.<sup>66</sup> She was the widow of carpenter and Free Man of Color, Bernard Couvent and was residing in the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood of New Orleans when she envisioned creating an educational institution for free children of color. As the owner of multiple properties, land became her legacy to the education of New Orleans African American children. In her will, she left a piece of her real estate for use in perpetuity for a free school for African American children. Marie Couvent would not die until 1837, and it would be even longer before her vision of a school was made into a reality.

### **Private and Public Ventures, 1833-1861**

In 1833, as part of the attempt to revamp funding and spending in the state school system, the lottery that was still in place to raise funds for schools was abolished. At the same time, the idea of supporting private institutions, not just the parish schools, with state funds was conceived. Under this plan, private institutions would receive subsidies as long as they accepted a quota of indigent children, as in the parish schools. This has been termed the “Academy Period” and it lasted only until 1842, when the state decided that the practice was not productive.<sup>67</sup> At least twenty new private academies were formed during the decade of state subsidies to private enterprises. These included the College of Baton Rouge, the Covington Female Seminary, and the academies of Montpelier, Claiborne, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Spring

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<sup>65</sup> Roulhac Toledano and Mary Louise Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture, Volume VI: Faubourg Tremé and the Bayou Road* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2003), 99.

<sup>66</sup> Neidenbach.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 82. This author asserts that Edwin Fay called this the “Beneficiary Period”, but in fact Fay used that term for the entire period spanning 1803-1845. See Fay, 23.

Creek, Caddo, Poydras, Franklinton, Minden, West Baton Rouge, Johnson Female, Pine Grove, Greensburg, Plaquemine, Union, and Vermillionville.<sup>68</sup> The unfortunate result of state accommodation of free attendance by only some students at both the parish and the private schools was that the poor students were stigmatized.<sup>69</sup> In New Orleans, many private schools without support of the church or the state thrived. The 1840 census indicated that there were ten private academies in the city.<sup>70</sup>

The attempt to establish some peace between Creoles and Americans by the 1826 dissolution of the College of New Orleans and establishment of two separate primary schools did not succeed. In 1836, city leaders decided to take the separation of city affairs a step further by creating distinct municipalities that were empowered to manage their business very independently. Though not a directly educational piece of legislation, this would have a revolutionary impact upon education in New Orleans that would radiate across the state. In 1841, the state legislature, at the prompting of a representative from the Second Municipality, enabled each municipality to establish their own public school systems, with their own board of directors. The municipalities were further empowered to collect taxes to support their school systems.<sup>71</sup> The American Second Municipality of the city, under the direction of many transplanted New Englanders, was quick to begin designs for its own school system.<sup>72</sup> The leaders adopted a plan based on a Massachusetts model, secured a Massachusetts educator as the director of their new system, and embraced the textbooks, furniture, equipment, and teachers that he imported from that state. According to the leading authorities on the history of New Orleans public schools, “New Orleans’ first [public] schools literally came from Boston, lock, stock, and barrel.”<sup>73</sup> These schools are distinguished from the earlier state-supported schools by the fact that they were free to all residents, not just those who did not have the ability to pay.

Although the initial attendees of each of the Second Municipality’s first two primary schools, which opened in 1842, numbered just twenty-six, the system’s student body swelled to over a thousand before a year had passed.<sup>74</sup> With a lack of facilities for this burgeoning attendance, the director, John Angier Shaw, a former minister, convinced Protestant churches to lease space for the schools during the weekdays.<sup>75</sup> The practice of using church buildings for secular schools would be found in the state’s rural parishes for a century to come. The success of the schools produced reports of what is surely an early example of an increase in real estate prices based on a school district. Second Municipality school board members asserted that property values were being enhanced because families were moving to the area to assure a good education for their children.<sup>76</sup> The first high school of the system opened in 1843 and, in 1845, one for girls followed. These schools were of such high regard that even the wealthiest families began to flock to the system. Under Shaw’s leadership, the school system of the Second Municipality placed Louisiana once again into the vanguard of education in the United States,

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<sup>68</sup> Mobley, in Wade, 83.

<sup>69</sup> Fay, 35; Saurez, 116.

<sup>70</sup> Mobley, in Wade, 85.

<sup>71</sup> Riley, 115.

<sup>72</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 10-11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

ahead of even Massachusetts in certain respects. His advancements included free textbooks, evening schools for working students, and a public library for the school system.<sup>77</sup>

New Orleans' Third Municipality copied the school system of the Second and the First Municipality attempted to, but their efforts were frustrated by conflicts between that area's Creole and American residents. A fresh dedication to public education influenced by Shaw's success was reflected in the new Louisiana constitution of 1845. The delegates called for "free public schools throughout the state" and extended the provisions that had enabled New Orleans' municipalities to establish independent school districts to the other parishes of the state.<sup>78</sup> In 1847, a public school law was passed that set up administrative oversight through a state superintendent and parish superintendents. It should be understood that these schools were only "public" to the extent that they served the white public. While many scholars have quibbled over the publicness of Louisiana's earlier schools based on the fact they charged fees to some students, there has been little recognition of the fact that only part of the actual public of Louisiana was included in this so called "public" system of the 1840s.

This fact, however, was surely not lost on the state's large, talented, and prosperous population of Free People of Color. Marie Couvent, who had left a bequest of land in New Orleans for an African American school, died in 1837, but it took ten years for the details of her will to be worked out and the school established. During this time, the Americans of the Second Municipality were busy launching their renowned public schools and the white Creoles and Americans of the First Municipality were bickering over details of their schools. Couvent's property lay in the Third Municipality, where Superintendent Alexandre Dimitry established public schools based on the Second Municipality's. Couvent's legacy, *L'Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* finally opened in 1848; the year after the public school law was enacted and Dimitry was promoted to the position of State Superintendent of Schools.

After several years in temporary quarters, the school moved into its own new building on the Couvent site in 1852. All indications are that this was the first building in Louisiana constructed exclusively for the education of African Americans. At this time, both private and public schools were still operating in rented residential and religious facilities, so this purpose-built school was a significant accomplishment. It has been described as two stories high with the sexes separated by floor.<sup>79</sup> In the 1847 prospectus, it was recommended that instructors pay attention to the temperature of the classes and to the cleanliness and comfort of the students, which indicates that the learning environment was considered an important aspect of this school.<sup>80</sup>

The *Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* became the intellectual center of the Afro-Creole community and is a rare example of a school controlled completely from its funding, to its building, to its teaching, by African Americans. Despite its appellation, which served to make the school sound more charity and church based – and therefore less threatening to those who opposed the education of African Americans – the school was neither solely for orphans nor run by the Catholic Church. It was taught by intellectual African American lay

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 20-23.

<sup>78</sup> Suarez, 117.

<sup>79</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 42.

<sup>80</sup> *Prospectus de L'Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* (New Orleans: Maitre Desarzent, 1847), 6.

people and though it did provide education to indigent children, it also accepted tuition from those able to pay like the earlier Catholic and state-supported schools. That *L'Institution Catholique* was considered by African Americans to be their sole counterpart to the many "public" schools in the city is evidenced by the following statement from a student exercise book of 1858: "the prejudice against the colored population is very strong in this part of the country . . . the white people have an Institution in every district and they are all well protected, but we who have but a single one, cannot be protected at all."<sup>81</sup> Until that year, the state too must have considered it to be nearly a public school, for even though it had discontinued subsidies to private enterprises in 1842, the Couvent school periodically received disbursements from the state up to 1858. At least for a time, state officials had acknowledged the validity of arguments made by the school's directors that Free People of Color deserved some amount of the school tax which was levied against their property and otherwise spent on white schools.<sup>82</sup>

There was not a great deal of activity in public education during the 1850s. The great growth of schools which may have been expected to result from the school act of 1847 did not materialize. Understandably, the creation of school systems in many of Louisiana's rural school districts was not something that could be accomplished overnight. As Superintendent Dimitry noted in 1850, the state had "a vast extent of uninhabitable acres, immense plantations, and sparse populations," which hindered the establishment of schools.<sup>83</sup> Or, as the *Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet* put it in 1860, "where the private fence is far, the public school cannot be near."<sup>84</sup> Still, some progress was made during the first few years following the passing of the public school legislation. In 1850, the governor reported that there were 618 schools distributed across 692 school districts with a total of 22,000 children in attendance.<sup>85</sup> Dimitry's report of that year included slightly higher numbers, stating that there were 22,927 children in 704 districts. He also described that 649 school houses, mostly log or frame, had been built, bought, or rented.<sup>86</sup> By 1852, the parishes of Assumption, Claiborne, Desoto, Iberville, Morehouse, Orleans, St. Landry, and West Baton Rouge had high schools in addition to primary schools. In 1834, it had been estimated that just 1,500 of some 12,000 white boys between the ages of five and fifteen years were being educated in the state-subsidized parish schools. Of these 1,175 were said to be indigent.<sup>87</sup> These figures certainly indicate that public schools in the parishes were enjoying greater success after 1847 than they had under the previous system.

This tenuous progress was quickly compromised by new legislation of 1852 which eliminated the parish superintendents and cut the salary of the state superintendent in half. The state superintendent was also no longer required to visit the parish schools.<sup>88</sup> While in 1852 over fifty percent of Louisiana's educable white children were in school, just thirty-nine percent were in 1861.<sup>89</sup> Some parishes fared worse than others after the changes. In one where there had been

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<sup>81</sup> A. F. Frilot to L. Armstrong, Esq., Attakapas, La., May 27, 1858, Copybook I, AANO quoted in Mary Niall Mitchell, "'A Good and Delicious Country': Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana," *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 137.

<sup>82</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 42.

<sup>83</sup> Fay, 108.

<sup>84</sup> Suarez, 121.

<sup>85</sup> Fay, 70.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>88</sup> Suarez, 118.

<sup>89</sup> Fay, 70.

thirteen public schools in 1852, only three remained in 1860.<sup>90</sup> During that decade preceding the Civil War, Louisiana's school officials allowed sectionalism to limit their educational vision. They retreated inward and became suspicious of the kind of outside, especially northern, influences that had made the state's first free public school system such a success. In 1855, New Orleans established a normal school to train local teachers, so that non-native teachers who might harbor abolitionist thoughts would not have to be invited to the city.<sup>91</sup> A few years later they obtained state funding to construct a new building for the institution which would provide teachers for the whole state. In was in that same year of 1858 that the state appropriation for the Couvent school was revoked.

The one bright spot of the late 1850s was the bequest of John McDonogh for the education of New Orleans' children. A slaveholder known as somewhat of an eccentric recluse and miser, McDonogh left half of his estate for the "establishment and support of Free Schools" for New Orleans' poor children "of both sexes and all classes and castes of color."<sup>92</sup> He left another half of his estate to his native Baltimore for the same purposes. McDonogh's will was immediately contested by his heirs following his death in 1850, and it took until 1858 for the funds he bequeathed to be received by the City of New Orleans. Another few years passed before the school board designated some of the funding for the construction of a new school in each of the city's four school districts. Three of these schools were constructed prior to the Civil War and it seems all operated contrary to the wishes of McDonogh's will by admitting only white children.<sup>93</sup>

While public education was still struggling in its infancy when the middle of the nineteenth century arrived, special education in Louisiana had yet to be born. Nationwide, special schools for the deaf and blind were a relatively new development. Formerly considered a family matter, social concern for the care and education of disabled people grew with the wave of religious enthusiasm at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first permanent institution for a disabled group in America was the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons which opened in 1817. This institution, headed by the pioneering American educator of the deaf, Thomas Gallaudet, later became the American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons. Blind people were first offered a formal education in the United States by Samuel Gridley Howe in Massachusetts in 1832. Other institutions for the blind were also opened in New York and Pennsylvania in 1832 and 1833. Four special schools for people with mental retardation were established between 1848 and 1851.<sup>94</sup> The Louisiana Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind opened in 1852. Previously, Louisiana's deaf children were either educated by tutors if their parents could afford it or sent to a school out of state. In 1838, the Louisiana legislature had passed an act to provide state funding for the education of deaf children. This enabled eleven students from Louisiana to attend the Kentucky School for the Deaf. The first home of the Louisiana Institute for the Deaf

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<sup>90</sup> Suarez, 118.

<sup>91</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 33.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>93</sup> John C. Ferguson notes in Devore and Logsdon, 310 that the nineteenth century minute's of the McDonogh Fund commissioners meetings do not exist, so it is uncertain what discussion there may have been about this subject. What is certain is that the terms of McDonogh's will suffered years of litigation, and by 1858, the mood of the city was less conducive than ever to the concept of integrated schools and even separate African American education.

<sup>94</sup> Margret A. Winzer, *From Integration to Inclusion: A History of Special Education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2009), 6, 7, 271.

Dumb and Blind (today Louisiana School for the Deaf) was the former building of Baton Rouge College.<sup>95</sup> In 1858, an impressive new administration building was completed that the *Daily Gazette and Comet* described as, “. . . a proud monument to the Christian philanthropy of the Sugar Bowl State. There is no institute of a similar character in the Union of more beautiful proportions or greater extent. It stands out on the landscape, and is one of the first objects to strike the eye, either ascending or descending the river.”<sup>96</sup> By 1862, the school had 72 students.<sup>97</sup>

### **War, Reconstruction, and Regression, 1862-1897**

Education was one of the areas of life subject to immediate changes when Union forces came to Louisiana in 1862. The gleaming building of the Louisiana Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind is said to have taken canon fire from the river before being converted into a hospital by federal troops. In occupied New Orleans, existing public and private schools became subject to Union scrutiny while new schools were quickly established for freed people. The first official order to affect the teachers of New Orleans required that all municipal employees swear allegiance to the United States or suffer the loss of their jobs. This must have left some teachers with a very difficult choice between compromising their convictions and loyalties or losing their employment. Beginning in September of 1862, operation of the city’s school system was altered under the direction of Union officials. The municipal districts were unified and ordered to follow a single plan of instruction with English as the only language and new textbooks from the North for reading.<sup>98</sup> To further ensure that the public schools were not nurturing seditious thinking, boards of visitors were developed that made rounds through the schools seeking out anti-Union behavior. Acts such as singing Confederate songs and drawing Confederate flags were sure signs of rebellion that Union agents sought to root out. In early 1863, Union efforts in public schools progressed from mere discouragement of Confederate sympathizing to requiring demonstrations of Union support. During this time of intense supervision many students dropped out of school or transferred to the city’s private schools. Later that year, private schools became subject to raids by “special police” who relished in discovering infractions and summoning school directors to the Provost Court, where they were usually found guilty and fined.<sup>99</sup>

While Union officials were focusing on quelling political opposition in the existing schools in 1862 and early 1863, they did not undertake the task of providing new schools for the masses of uneducated freed people who could now legally seek learning until August of 1863. Ahead of them was an abolitionist couple who had attempted to run a school before the war and

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<sup>95</sup> “Louisiana School for the Deaf,” Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana\\_School\\_for\\_the\\_Deaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_School_for_the_Deaf) (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> *Daily Gazette and Comet*, July 21, 1857 in Louisiana School for the Deaf, “History,” Louisiana School for the Deaf, <http://lalsd.org/content.cfm?id=51> (accessed March 27, 2012).

<sup>97</sup> “Louisiana School for the Deaf,” Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana\\_School\\_for\\_the\\_Deaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_School_for_the_Deaf) (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Elisabeth Joan Doyle, “Nurseries of Treason: Schools in Occupied New Orleans,” in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 162-63, first published in the *Journal of Southern History* 26 (1960): 161-79.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-67.

quickly took up the cause in 1862.<sup>100</sup> Assistance in this sizable challenge soon came from the American Missionary Association (AMA). The abolitionist association was founded in 1846 and began addressing the educational needs of the formerly enslaved as early as 1861 in Virginia.<sup>101</sup> In December of 1863, they appointed a representative to organize schools in Louisiana and the first was opened in January 1864.

By this time, the number of freed people in New Orleans was great and growing. A couple of months after the Union invasion of New Orleans, 450 slaves had made it to Camp Parapet outside the city and by the end of the summer there were more than one thousand.<sup>102</sup> In September of 1862, the Union's General Butler complained that "they were coming in by hundreds nay thousands almost daily," and in December of 1862, almost two hundred escaped slaves entered the Union lines daily.<sup>103</sup> These newly freed people were not ignorant of the fact that if they were to be free, they should enjoy all the rights of citizens of a democracy. While one of the most desirable rights of citizenship was suffrage, freed people appreciated the value that education would have for their full participation in society and access to a better life. In 1850, then Superintendent of Education, Alexander Dimitry had noted, "Many a day will the friends of education have to struggle before they can get the people to realize the idea that the first of rights is right to mind, and that all others are derivatives of this."<sup>104</sup> Educators did not have to struggle at all to get the formerly enslaved to understand this. Many teachers and observers of the day joyfully declared that freed people embraced learning with unparalleled enthusiasm.

An even better indication of African Americans' attitudes towards education in these years comes from the few documents that captured some of their words. In February of 1864, the Superintendent of Negro Labor in New Orleans testified before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission that in demanding his children be delivered to him from their former owner, an African American soldier had stated, ". . . I want to send them to school. . . . I am in your service; I wear military clothes; I have been in three battles; I was in the assault at Port Hudson; I *want those children*; they are my flesh and blood."<sup>105</sup> This soldier's words reflect a definite equation between military service, citizenship, rights, and education. In May of 1864, Margaret Adams of Rampart Street in New Orleans sent a letter to the AMA about the removal of a favorite teacher from one of their schools. Nothing is known about Margaret Adams or whether she may have had assistance in writing this letter, but the document clearly demonstrates that freed people were willing and able to participate in their children's education and even wished for more control in the matter. In the letter, Adams expresses that ". . .we all of us Colored Citizens and Pupils. . ." have great pride and delight in the quality of the school,

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<sup>100</sup> Joe M. Richardson, "The American Missionary Association and Black Education in Louisiana, 1862-1878," in *Louisiana's Black Heritage*. ed. Robert R. MacDonald et al (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1979), 147.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>102</sup> William F. Messner, "The Vicksburg Campaign of 1862: A Case Study in the Federal Utilization of Black Labor," in *The African American Experience in Louisiana: Part B*, ed. Charles Vincent (Lafayette: University of Southwestern, LA, 2000), 40, first published in *Louisiana History*, 16 (1975): 371-81..

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 46; Charles Vincent, "Black Louisianians During the Civil War and Reconstruction: Aspects of Their Struggles and Achievements," in *Louisiana's Black Heritage*, ed. Robert R. MacDonald et al (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1979), 86.

<sup>104</sup> Fay, 108.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, 70.

. . .but are very much grieved to think that our Teacher will be taken from us and we hope it will not be long before we are enabled to take care of ourselves without being a heavy burden to the government so much for assistance we are really ashamed but we cannot do any better at present for we have been held down so much by our enemies . . . and all we ask of them now is to give us our rights.<sup>106</sup>

In Adams eloquent two page appeal, the words “citizens” and “rights” seem purposely used to articulate her understanding of their connection to education.

Based on the fact that Adams mentioned the school already had upwards of six hundred students, and they hoped might have eight or nine hundred by the following week, it is likely she was speaking of the AMA’s showpiece school. Known as the Abraham Lincoln School for Freedmen or the School of Liberty, it was established in the 1843 Greek Revival Medical College building of the University of Louisiana in New Orleans. Within a year of its opening, the school had some five hundred students with three departments for boys and five for girls.<sup>107</sup> In 1866, it was reported by *Harper’s Weekly* to be the largest freedmen’s school in the country with 800 students.<sup>108</sup> Most AMA schools were nowhere near close to this scale. Most also didn’t occupy buildings anywhere near as fine.

The AMA had small schools elsewhere in New Orleans and at Goodrich Landing, Baton Rouge, and Port Hudson. Baton Rouge was second behind New Orleans in its number of AMA teachers and also had some large schools. One at a Baptist church had over two hundred students as did another at the former McGruder College.<sup>109</sup> The AMA also supported schools at more isolated plantation locations where they felt they could best reach the children in need. Everywhere they went AMA teachers suffered some animosity, but particularly at the more remote locations, they were subject to many insults and assaults. The buildings that the schools occupied were also often of a pitiful description. One teacher reported her school had no floor “and the rain sweeps clean across it, through the places where the windows should be. I have to huddle the children first in one corner and then in another to keep them from drowning or swamping.”<sup>110</sup> Such conditions should not be understood as being limited to the accommodations provided to the AMA or to freed people’s schools. A very similar description was provided by one parish official before the war. He stated, “The schools are generally taught in dingy, rickety, half roofless sheds or shanties, that a planter of ordinary capacity would not allow his negroes to inhabit.”<sup>111</sup> Thus the quality of buildings in which African Americans in rural Louisiana were being taught does not seem to be far from those in the public system enjoyed by rural whites in the antebellum period.

The Bureau of Education created by General Banks for the education of freed people sought to have school buildings constructed in every district in the state, which it intended to

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 84-85.

<sup>107</sup> Richardson, in MacDonald, 149.

<sup>108</sup> Gary A. Van Zante, *New Orleans 1867: Photographs by Theodore Lilienthal* (New York: Merrel, 2008), 178-179.

<sup>109</sup> Richardson, in MacDonald, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>111</sup> Suarez

support with a property tax.<sup>112</sup> In March of 1864, a Board of Education was created and it started outfitting suitable existing buildings. Shortly thereafter, there were reported to be nine freedmen's schools in New Orleans teaching a total of 2,400 children. In 1865, that number had increased to approximately 11,000. Contrary to the popular image of northern "carpetbaggers" instructing freed people, 130 of the 162 teachers employed in the freedmen's schools were southern.<sup>113</sup> A few planters were even surprisingly willing to open schools on their premises and house teachers. At the plantation today known as Melrose in Natchitoches Parish, Henry Hertzog set up a school for three plantations in his quarters and was willing to have the teacher stay at his house.<sup>114</sup> The Board of Education turned direction of its schools over to the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, once that agency was fully operational. At that time, it was said to have 126 schools throughout the state with some 19,000 pupils attending, including adults, and soldiers, as well as children.<sup>115</sup> Despite the appearance of initial success, the financial foundation of the freedmen's schools was vulnerable.

The matter of taxes nearly caused the collapse of the Freedmen's Bureau school system in 1866. Residents' and lawmakers' aversion to the tax levied by General Banks in 1864 for the bureau's work garnered suspension of the assessment at the end of 1865 and schools were forced to close in February of 1866.<sup>116</sup> Alternative funds had to be found to run the schools and the proposition of taxing African Americans directly gained some support, but the *Tribune* pointed out that such a plan was taxation without representation. In addition, this would essentially have taxed African Americans who had been free before the war for both white public schools and freedmen's schools while still leaving them having to seek private education. A program of partial taxation of African Americans and tuition for the schools was adopted with terrible results. Even though many freed people who were barely eking out a living showed a surprising willingness to put money towards their children's education, the income wasn't enough to provide for classrooms and teachers. The number of Freedmen's Bureau schools, teachers, and pupils plummeted by more than fifty percent in just six months. In July, less than 4,000 students remained of the 19,000 that had started the year in the bureau schools.<sup>117</sup> At the same time, private schools with low tuitions multiplied, but the level of education they provided was questionable.<sup>118</sup>

Elimination of supporting taxes and resulting lack of funding left only twenty-one Freedmen's Bureaus schools serving 908 students open in New Orleans by the fall of 1867.<sup>119</sup> Just ahead of the fall constitutional convention and a new edict on integrated public education, the Freedman's Bureau, which was uninterested in getting mixed up in the politics of integration, transferred their remaining New Orleans schools to the city's public system. The city school

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<sup>112</sup> John Cornelius Engelsman, "The Freedmen's Bureau and Education," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 219, first published in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 30 (1947): 2-21.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Susan E. Dollar, *The Freedmen's Schools of Natchitoches Parish*. (Natchitoches: Northwestern State University Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>115</sup> Engelsman, in Wade, 220.

<sup>116</sup> White, in Vincent, Part B, 296-97.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 66; Howard A. White, *The Freedmen's Bureau in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 17-22, 166-200.

board also opened ten black schools as part of its effort to keep schools segregated, but all were in “substandard facilities” and black leaders were unimpressed.<sup>120</sup> The *Republican* estimated that the projected number of students to be served by the public schools was some 15,000 short of the true need.<sup>121</sup> The *Tribune* declared “Separation is not equality. The very assignment of certain schools to certain children on the ground of color, is a distinction violative of the first principles of equality.”<sup>122</sup>

While the New Orleans public school system was hovering on the precipice of integration, other entities in the city and around the state were busy filling the great need for more schools for African Americans. The Catholic Church remained a leader in education in the state, but it was not as quick as the American Missionary Association and other faith based organizations, like the Methodist Freedmen’s Aid Society and the Free Mission Baptists, to realize the need for African American education in Louisiana. Those groups established many schools with small contributions from the Freedmen’s Bureau.<sup>123</sup> By 1866, though, Catholics began actively opening schools and providing high quality education for African American children. Like the public schools of New Orleans, these were strictly separated by sex. In Natchitoches Parish in 1866, the Ladies of the Sacred Heart opened a day school for African American girls “Catholic or not” in a frame building on their convent grounds.<sup>124</sup> St. Joseph’s school for colored boys was founded in 1867 in Convent, Louisiana. St. Mary’s School for girls in New Orleans also opened its doors in 1867. This school had antebellum origins with the founding of the religious order Sister’s of the Holy Family by Free Women of Color at St. Augustine’s Catholic Church. St. Mary’s School started in a building on Chartres Street in the French Quarter.

In 1868, the Freedmen’s Bureau began motions to transfer all of its schools in Louisiana to private organizations, but Northern aid societies showed little interest in assuming the responsibility.<sup>125</sup> As a result, bureau schools closed in every parish and by 1869, the year after ratification of the new constitution that required public education for all, there were public schools for only five thousand of ninety thousand African-American school-age children, and only twelve schools outside of New Orleans for ninety-four thousand white school-age children.<sup>126</sup> These numbers suggest the magnitude of effort and resources that would have been required to meet the constitution’s decree. Meanwhile, the endeavor to integrate the public schools that did exist was underway in New Orleans.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 68. citing school board minutes of 1867, printed in New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, September 15, 1867 and responded to in New Orleans *Republican*, September 21, 1867.

<sup>121</sup> Howard Ashley White, “Redeeming of the People From Ignorance,” in *The African American Experience in Louisiana: Part B*, ed. Charles Vincent (Lafayette: University of Southwestern, LA, 2000), 299, first published as chapter 8 in Howard Ashley White, *The Freedmen’s Bureau in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 166-200.

<sup>122</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior. “Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States” Theme Study (August 2000), 15

<sup>123</sup> White, in Vincent, Part B, 304.

<sup>124</sup> Susan E. Dollar, *The Freedmen’s Bureau Schools of Natchitoches Parish Louisiana 1865-1868* (Natchitoches, LA: Northwestern State University Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>125</sup> White, in Vincent, Part B, 303.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

The state's Superintendent, Thomas W. Conway, was determined to make a success of desegregation in New Orleans, but city school officials felt differently and promptly sought out any and every legal means possible to avoid integration. They succeeded in causing a considerable delay in the process. It was not until December 1870, after a "bewildering succession of suits and injunctions" finally made their way through the courts, that desegregation was ordered.<sup>127</sup> Desegregation began within a month and was accomplished simply by allowing African-American students into any school to which they applied. Although there was some inevitable resistance, all indications are that it proceeded rather peaceably. There was no attempt to create a balanced mix in every school, but eventually at least twenty-one, or one-third, of the city's schools were desegregated.<sup>128</sup> There were only three high schools in the city and significantly, two of these were desegregated, demonstrating that African-American students pursued and received secondary public education at this time. It is uncertain how many private academies for African American children remained in operation during Reconstruction. School faculties also became desegregated and from 1872-1876, an African-American man named William Brown served in Louisiana's highest post in education as State Superintendent.

While there were only isolated incidents of violence in relation to school integration, there were definitely many white dissenters from the system who removed their children to private schools. The war had left few private schools in operation. Most of the private enterprises in the state that had been established during the public subsidies of the 1830s were dissolved by the end of the war and by 1868 there were just ten private schools in New Orleans directory, eight of which were Catholic.<sup>129</sup> This situation was soon changed as entrepreneurs endeavored to take advantage of white prejudice and multitudes of private schools were established. Secular academies were not alone in the receipt of white students from the public school. The Catholic Church which began expanding the numbers of its schools, both black and white, following the Civil War experienced a surge in its number of white students. Several Protestant schools were also opened in New Orleans in 1870. In 1871, New Orleans' ten private schools had become ninety-one.<sup>130</sup> This unprecedented growth of private schools left an irreversible stamp on the course of education in the state.

For the most part, integrated schools were confined to New Orleans. It seems that all parties involved, even the enthusiastic integrationist, Superintendent Thomas Conway, conceded that forcing racial mixing in rural schools would only result in a lack of schools. With segregated schools tacitly accepted, there was a substantial improvement in public education during Reconstruction as more schools were opened to more children.<sup>131</sup> The progress in the establishment of public schools throughout Louisiana's parishes that had languished with the school act revisions of 1852 now slowly resumed. In 1871, Jefferson Parish reported four public schools for African Americans and one public school for whites operating on one bank of the Mississippi, while Iberville Parish reported eight public schools for African Americans and five

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<sup>127</sup> Louis R. Harlan, "Desegregation in New Orleans Public Schools During Reconstruction," in *The African American Experience in Louisiana: Part B*, ed. Charles Vincent (Lafayette: University of Southwestern, LA, 2000), 317, first published in *American Historical Review* 67 (1962): 663-75.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Mobley, in Wade, 83; Fischer, in Wade, 189.

<sup>130</sup> Fischer, in Wade, 189-191.

<sup>131</sup> Roger Fischer, "Country Parish Schools, 1868-1877," in *The African American Experience in Louisiana: Part B*, ed. Charles Vincent (Lafayette: University of Southwestern, LA, 2000), 350, first published as Chapter 5 in Roger A. Fischer, *The Segregation Struggle in Louisiana, 1862-77* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

for whites. By this year, churches had emerged as the practical spaces for holding many of the new schools. St. John the Baptist Parish reported in that year that four of its five public schools were held in African American churches.<sup>132</sup> Rare examples of integrated schools in rural locations included one on the plantation of a Colonel Laforest in Lafourche Parish and one at Bayou Maringuoin in the Atchafalaya marsh that served fifteen African Americans and eleven whites.<sup>133</sup> These schools were most likely integrated as a result of convenience and special social circumstances rather than by state mandate.

Even with the opening of many new schools, by the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the estimated percent of educable children attending public school in Louisiana was a dismal twenty-percent.<sup>134</sup> This figure cannot be directly compared to the thirty-nine percent reported in 1861 because, at that time, educable children only included white children. In 1877, the total number of educable children was 266,033, more than double that of 1861, so there were 150 percent more children, attending more schools, but a smaller ratio of the total number of educable children. To evaluate the progress of public schools during the defamed period of Reconstruction, it is useful to compare the figures of 1877 with those 1871. According to Superintendent Conway's report of that year, out of 190,000 educable children, only 25,000, or thirteen percent were attending the public schools.<sup>135</sup> These numbers indicate that the percent of educable children in public schools increased seven percent during Reconstruction. This is small progress, certainly, but progress all the same. Regardless of progress made or not, education at the end of Reconstruction in Louisiana was in a terrible state. Even if somewhat more white children were attending private schools than they were public, as was the case in New Orleans, it is clear that at least half the state's educable children were not attending school at all.<sup>136</sup> In the rural areas, extreme poverty and the demands of crops made children's presence in the fields far more vital for their families than their attendance at school.

The integration of New Orleans public schools only lasted until 1877 when Congressional Reconstruction officially ended and federal troops were withdrawn from the state. Even before the state constitution was rewritten in 1879, a new New Orleans school board ended integration. Robert Lusher, who became the State Superintendent of Education in 1877, was a staunch segregationist. He was a former New Orleans First District board member who had briefly served as State Superintendent between the end of Union school direction in 1865 and the institution of Louisiana's Reconstruction constitution of 1868. During the years that the constitution required integration of schools, Lusher worked actively for the Peabody Fund, assuring that disbursements from the philanthropic organization went only to Louisiana's white schools. So enamored of separation by color was Lusher that he thought mixed-race African Americans who were arguing to maintain integration would be mollified by having a separate school of their own.<sup>137</sup> In 1877, he wrote, ". . . it would seem wise to establish a separate intermediate class of schools for their instruction. This the city has already done by the opening

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>134</sup> C. W. Hilton, Donald E. Shipp, and J. Berton Gremillion, "Historical Background of Public Education in Louisiana," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 146, originally published in C. W. Hilton, Donald E. Shipp, and J. Berton Gremillion, eds., *The Development of Education in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1965), 7-25.

<sup>135</sup> Fay, 109.

<sup>136</sup> Fischer, in Wade, 191.

<sup>137</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 87.

of an “Academy No. 4”.<sup>138</sup> Lusher was quite mistaken in his assessment of the thoughts of those who had been formerly known as Free People of Color. They fought vehemently against separation of any kind and filed court cases protesting the school board’s blatant violation of the state constitution. The cases were dismissed, however, and in 1879, the requirements for integrated schools and for public schools in every parish were removed from the state constitution.<sup>139</sup>

Another vehement segregationist, and former First District compatriot of Lusher’s, William Rogers used his position on the New Orleans school board to further divide the city’s schools. Although there had always been a strong tradition of separate teaching of boys and girls in New Orleans, Rogers could not tolerate any contact between the sexes in public schools. Driven by his belief that the intellect of women was inferior to that of men, he reversed the minimal coeducation that had been established in the city schools and ensured that separate facilities for girls and boys, as well as blacks and whites would be maintained. This was a severe financial burden to a strained system.

Drastic state cuts in taxes and expenditures for education in 1877, 1878, 1879 and later years limited what education officials could achieve even if there had been substantial public enthusiasm for schools, which there was not. In Acadiana, as in other parts of the state where residents had never had a great interest in public education, they were even more disinterested in this distraction during the daily struggle to survive and recover economically from the war and natural disasters that followed.<sup>140</sup> Throughout the state, the already bleak progress in education stagnated. Even Lusher and Roger, who had imagined their Democratic party would redeem education from what they saw as the reversals of Reconstruction, eventually called the 1879 constitution “a standing menace to public education in this state” in their *Louisiana Journal of Education*.<sup>141</sup> In 1883, New Orleans public schools were forced to close for several months and look for support from Northern charities. According to the preeminent scholars on New Orleans public schools, Donald Devore and Joseph Logsdon, this “was a humiliating and sad spectacle for an urban system once ranked among the nation’s best.”<sup>142</sup> At the close of the century, education in Louisiana had plummeted from its short peak of brilliance.

### **Separate and Unequal, 1898-1965**

The state of education in Louisiana at the turn of the twentieth century was so dim and uneventful that there has been little written about it. The one significant event for education that did occur at the cusp of the twentieth century was the writing of a new state constitution in 1898. Legislatively, it enacted changes in education both for the better and the worse. The provision which had the most significant positive effect on education in later years was the enabling of

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<sup>138</sup> Fay, 102.

<sup>139</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 89.

<sup>140</sup> Carl A. Brasseux, “Acadian Education: From Cultural Isolation to Mainstream America,” in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 238, first published in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *The Cajuns: Essays on Their History and Culture* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1978), 212-24.

<sup>141</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 94.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

local special tax elections for the support of public schools.<sup>143</sup> On the negative side, the constitution included a mandate for schools segregated by race. This affected no serious change in the wake of *Plessy v. Ferguson* to what was already the status quo, but symbolically it was the *coup de grâce* for decent public education of African Americans in Louisiana. The 1898-99 State Superintendent's report on rural schools was bleak and included this commentary on the school building: "There are a few structures in the woods, called school houses, so primitive in their architecture that the truants pride themselves on their escape from confinement in them, and the mules and cattle turn to them by instinct as their proper places of refuge."<sup>144</sup> C. A. Ives reported of a visit to the state superintendent of education's office in 1902, ". . . I saw very little evidence of activity. Cobwebs, dust, and litter prevailed. These facts reflect the state of education in Louisiana during that period."<sup>145</sup>

After the first few years of the twentieth century, there was a renewed interest and effort in education led by superintendents J. B. Aswell from 1904 to 1908 and T. H. Harris from 1908 to 1940. Aswell's superintendency has been called *The Awakening* of Louisiana to public education.<sup>146</sup> Harris' tenure as superintendant is highly regarded by many and has been referred to by Louisiana education scholar, Rodney Cline, as a time during which ". . . public education in Louisiana was enabled to grow and develop to respectable status."<sup>147</sup> The year 1904 ushered in a progression of improvements in Louisiana's public school system. One of the most significant was the establishment of a statewide system of four-year approved high schools. First, a uniform course of study for the public schools that included three grades of high school work was laid out. Then, in 1907, the office of "State High School Inspector" was created and, through the work of this new staff, resolutions governing the approval of high schools were passed in 1909. Because new standards for high schools required teachers with better qualification, the programs of educator training at the state's institutions of higher learning increased. State approved high schools quickly increased in number from sixty-seven in 1908-09 to eighty-seven in 1909-10.<sup>148</sup> From the 1910s to the 1930s, the improvements in high school curricula and teaching standards quickly became physically manifest in substantial new brick school buildings.

Following the restructuring of the high schools, attention was devoted to the state's rural schools and elementary schools. This contributed to the first organized attempts at consolidation. The idea of consolidation was not new, but the administrative support to accomplish it was previously lacking. As early as 1900, parish officials were aware of the short comings of small schools. In April of 1900, East Feliciana Parish Public Schools Superintendent, R. J. Pemble reported, "While we have too many schools, I think it will be impracticable to consolidate into schools too large as many could not and would not send [their children] . . . in some instances it would be best to consolidate."<sup>149</sup> Consolidation of rural one

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<sup>143</sup> Rodney Cline, *Education in Louisiana – History and Development* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's Publishing Division, 1974), 34.

<sup>144</sup> Minns Sledge Robertson, *Public Education in Louisiana After 1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1952), 25.

<sup>145</sup> C. A. Ives, "The State Department of Education," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 244, first published as chapter 13 in C. A. Ives, *As I Remember* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University College of Education, 1964), 173-88.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>148</sup> Robertson, 61-63.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

room schools was one of the first recommendations of the first inspector of rural schools, C. J. Brown, who was appointed in 1909. Problems he saw with rural schools included condition of the buildings and equipment, and the common situation of a teacher's attention divided between as many as six grades of children. He conceived a plan of combining at least three rural schools in any area so that the efforts of three or more teachers could be brought together in one facility. This contributed to the construction of multiple-room frame schools in rural areas. Superintendent Harris wholeheartedly endorsed consolidation and under his leadership, 629 schools were consolidated by 1910, while 1,533 one-room schools remained unconsolidated. From 1914-1918, a special appropriation to encourage consolidation enabled the State Board of Education to assist parishes with the consolidation of more than one hundred schools each year.<sup>150</sup>

Although Harris was a proponent of consolidation, he recognized its limitations, noting in his 1909-10 and 1910-11 Biennial Report, "The transportation of children over bad roads will not work; transfers cannot be operated even over good roads for distances greater than four and a half to five miles, and in all cases the system will break down unless a responsible man is placed in charge of the transfer."<sup>151</sup> As Harris' statement indicates, consolidation was largely dependent on the ability to transport students successfully. Thus developments in transportation are closely tied to consolidation. The first use of public funds for the transportation of school children can be traced back to 1902. In this year, the one-room Whittington School in Lafayette Parish was destroyed by a tornado. In order that the effected children would not be left without education during the time it would take to erect a new building, two school board members offered to personally pay for the students' transportation by wagonette to the next closest school. The endeavor was so successful that the Whittington School was never rebuilt and the parish school board began covering the cost of the wagonette. This model inspired other communities around Lafayette Parish to establish similar arrangements. Within a few years, other parishes around the state were also providing public financing to transport children and enable consolidation. In 1909-10, it was reported that there were 206 mule or horse-drawn vehicles transporting 4,045 school children.<sup>152</sup> The geography of some areas dictated that transportation be waterborne. As consolidation increased, larger "modern" brick schools were constructed in central locations and not only the one-room school houses, but also the multiple-room frame schools eventually became obsolete.

Advances in automobiles and the paving of roads gradually overcame the transportation obstacles to consolidation that Harris cited in 1910. Whereas, it could take an arduous, sometimes wet and cold hour for an average wagon to traverse three to four miles of rural road at that time, motor vehicles on roads could move children swiftly and relatively comfortably. With the rapid improvement of roads during the governorship of Huey P. Long from 1928 to 1932, school transportation improved rapidly. By 1947-48, there were 2,533 vehicles carrying 158,650 white children. The correlation between transportation and consolidation is clearly reflected in the number of one-room school houses remaining in the state that year and their distribution among white and black children. In 1947-48, there were just forty-nine one-room schools remaining out of a total of 825 white schools, while there were still 729 one-room schools out of a total of 1,535 black schools. For comparison, in 1898 there were 982 schools for African

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<sup>150</sup> Robertson, 161-162.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>152</sup> Cline, 108.

Americans and 2,221 white schools, most of which were in one-room facilities. The opposite trends represented by these numbers can in part be accounted for by the fact that the parish school boards did not start taking responsibility for the transportation of African American students until 1930. In 1949-50 there were still just 490 buses statewide transporting black children; less than one-fifth of the number of buses assigned to white children.<sup>153</sup> In future years, consolidation continued, until by 1971, a year after desegregation was completed, there were only two one-teacher public schools remaining in operation. These schools at Pilottown, Plaquemines Parish and Australia Island, Madison Parish were maintained only because the extremely isolated nature of these locations.<sup>154</sup>

While transportation and consolidation were making it possible for more children to attend better quality schools, the state attempted to actually require all educable children to attend school. Legislation of 1916 mandated that all children between the ages of seven and fourteen must attend either a public or a private school.<sup>155</sup> Whereas children's education had traditionally been the prerogative of their parents, this legislation marked a new era of state control of schooling. There was little to no actual enforcement of the compulsory attendance law until 1944 when it was replaced with a more stringent code, but attendance increased anyway as parents increasingly believed in the ability of education to improve their children's futures. This was a significant shift from the statewide apathy towards education at the beginning of the century. Catholic schools and other private schools benefited from increased attendance as well as the public schools. During this period, education in Louisiana became increasingly Anglo-American in its influence. Catholic schools, beginning in 1906, actually moved ahead of the public system in Americanizing their curricula and shifting to the English language. In 1913, a state edict suggested that all public schools be taught solely in English and in 1921, a new state constitution required exclusive use of English in public schools.<sup>156</sup> The combination of greater school attendance increasingly facilitated by transportation improvements, and the domination of English in school teaching had the most dramatic impact on Louisiana's Acadian population, many of whom had previously eschewed formal schooling for a more practical hands-on education on the land and in the home. As Acadiana joined in the state's new modern era of education and brick high schools multiplied across the landscape, the use of the traditional French language slowly faded. Perhaps the clearest evidence of the new positive feelings toward education in Acadiana and across the state was not just the increased attendance at elementary and high schools, but the substantial growth of enrollment in the state's institutions of higher learning.

Other changes in public education during the first several decades of the twentieth century were the equalization of facilities between poorer and wealthier parishes and within parishes, night literacy classes for adults and the institution of a free textbook program. The last two initiatives had actually first been introduced to Louisiana in the 1840s by John Angier Shaw in New Orleans, but the twentieth century programs were in no way credited to his work.. Equalization began in 1930 and primarily consisted of supplemental funding provided by the

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<sup>153</sup> Robertson, 165, 172-73.

<sup>154</sup> Cline, 106.

<sup>155</sup> Robertson, 178..

<sup>156</sup> Brasseaux, in Wade, 241; James G. Dauphine, *A Question of Inheritance: Religion, Education, and Louisiana's Cultural Boundary, 1880-1940* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1993), 89.

state to those parishes that by reason of sparse population or other economic disadvantage could not raise adequate funding for their schools. Free textbooks for children were among a number of seemingly impossible dreams that Governor Huey P. Long pledged to make a reality during his campaign and reality they became. Quite soon after Long assumed the office of Governor in 1928, he wrote a law establishing the provision of free textbooks to all school children of the state. Significantly, the law included the children of private schools as well as public schools in the provision of textbooks. Many worried that the state financing of supplies for the children of Catholic schools was in conflict with the constitutional separation of religion and state. Long, the self trained lawyer, stipulated that since he was providing books to the children and not to the church, there was no conflict and his opinion was upheld when the law was challenged in state courts.<sup>157</sup> Free textbooks made a tremendous difference in the ability of less economically fortunate children to achieve educational goals. Previously, many children went without textbooks because their parents could not afford them. Although there had been programs to provide books for students from low income families, not many had applied for the assistance.<sup>158</sup> Night literacy classes for adults were partly the product of another campaign promise of Huey P. Long. He asserted that he would eliminate adult illiteracy in the state and with education officials like Superintendent Harris also attempting to pull Louisiana out of its embarrassing first place spot among the nation's adult illiteracy rates, a drive was started in 1929 to 1930 to provide literacy classes to adults. The program was very successful and by the 1930 census Louisiana's illiteracy rate for people age ten and over was 13.5, an over seven percent reduction from the 1920 census.<sup>159</sup>

Libraries are another notable development in education in Louisiana during the twentieth century. Like the provision of free textbooks and night literacy classes, the notion of a public school library was also first introduced to Louisiana in nineteenth-century New Orleans. The library of the New Orleans Second Municipality school district that had been housed in Gallier Hall was long forgotten about by most when a new interest in libraries arose in the early twentieth century. It was in 1906 that the legislature passed an act guaranteeing matching funds from parish school boards for any ten dollars raised by a school for books. The school board was also made responsible for providing a bookshelf after said amount was raised under this law. This seemingly minor piece of legislation was an extremely successful impetus for the creation of libraries in schools throughout the state.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, it was a long time before all schools would have libraries and efforts to establish community public libraries were assisted by outside funding in the 1920s. Primary financial supporters of libraries in Louisiana were Andrew Carnegie and the Rosenwald Fund. Carnegie provided funding to over a thousand libraries in the United States between 1883 and 1919.<sup>161</sup> The foundation of the New Orleans Public Library, the Fisk Free and Public Library was established in 1896. Its expansion into multiple branches that could better serve geographically dispersed communities was made possible in 1903 by a grant from Andrew Carnegie. In 1908, a new main library and three branches opened in New

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<sup>157</sup> T. H. Harris, *The Memoirs of T. H. Harris* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1963), 159-161.

<sup>158</sup> Robertson, 198.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>161</sup> George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969); Theodore Jones, *Carnegie Libraries Across America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), in "Carnegie Library," Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnegie\\_library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnegie_library) (accessed May 10, 2012).

Orleans. These first Carnegie funded buildings all served a strictly white patronage, in 1915 another branch made possible by Carnegie contributions for was opened African Americans in New Orleans. Other Carnegie libraries were also built in Alexandria, Jennings, and Lake Charles.<sup>162</sup> Outside of these urban areas, however, Louisiana's parishes remained largely without public libraries. The first organized attempt to spread library service statewide was also achieved through a Carnegie grant via the League of Library Commissions in New York. The Louisiana Library Commission created the Louisiana Library Demonstration, a project to support the establishment of parish libraries with book loans and technical advice. Richland was the first parish to participate in the program in 1926 and is credited with having had the first parish library in the state.<sup>163</sup>

In 1929, another library experiment was initiated through the support of the Rosenwald Fund. This work focused on Webster Parish and established a library in a vacant brick store building in the parish seat of Minden. Webster Parish had a rural population that was 43 percent African American at this time. The library at Minden served as a base from which rural communities and schools, both black and white, were served by a book mobile driven by the African American librarian. There was a particular emphasis placed on providing material that would help the rural African American population read at an increased speed. One indication of the project's success is that it produced a per capita circulation rate in the parish that was commensurate with that of larger cities of the period. At the end of the seven-year term of Rosenwald Fund contributions to the parish library, there was enough public support to perpetuate the project. It was followed by a Tri-Parish Library Demonstration that included Webster Parish and neighboring areas. In this experiment, every school in the participating region was set up as a book loan center for adults as well as children. This proved very effective in the development of parish libraries and was used as a model to expand services of the State Library to every part of Louisiana.<sup>164</sup> Libraries also came to benefit from the free textbook act, when in 1936, the State Board of Education decided that library books could be purchased with free textbook funds.<sup>165</sup>

Both the adult literacy and the free textbook programs were often celebrated by Governor Long as major accomplishments for education. While they were, the overall condition of education in Louisiana during the 1930s continued to be poor, in large part due to the operation of separate schools for whites and blacks.<sup>166</sup> Any greater opportunity offered to white students did little but spell further doom of African American schools. Because funding was very tight and there was not enough money to fully provide for separate black and white education, resources spent for new improvements in white schools were lost to African American education. In 1941, one parish superintendent readily admitted that the money allocated for African American education was going to whites because "it's the only way we can have decent white

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Nonnie Roark Rhymes Library, Rayville, Louisiana, Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Historic Preservation, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1990.

<sup>164</sup> Robertson, 196-97.

<sup>165</sup> Cline, 127.

<sup>166</sup> Philip Johnson, "Toward a Civil Rights Agenda: Charles S. Johnson's Forgotten Study of Black Schools in Louisiana," in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 406, excerpt first appeared in Phillip Johnson, "Toward a Civil Rights Agenda: Charles S. Johnson's Forgotten Study of Black Schools in Louisiana" (M.A. thesis, University of New Orleans, 1993), 1-56.

schools here.”<sup>167</sup> The disparity this created between the two separate and supposedly equal school systems was blatant.

By 1910, the physical plant of white schools in Louisiana was valued at over six million dollars while that for black schools was just \$250,000. Most schools for African Americans were actually held in churches or lodges and not public school buildings, so it was further estimated the value of public school property for African Americans was half that of the private property used for schools.<sup>168</sup> In the second decade of the twentieth century, twenty-three of Louisiana’s parishes spent less than a dollar per child on African American education while expending between fourteen and twenty-nine dollars for every white child. Of the common condition of inequity between per capita spending on black and white students in the Southern states Booker T. Washington quipped, “Gentlemen, isn’t it paying too high a compliment to the Negro child to assume that he can get an education . . .” for a fraction of the expenditure required to educate the white child?<sup>169</sup>

High school education, which was being so improved for white students, remained non-existent for black students until the second decade of the century in Louisiana. In 1900, the New Orleans school board officially reduced education for African Americans to just five grades.<sup>170</sup> Throughout the state there had never been much opportunity for secondary education for African Americans and the sentiment against it was strong. A compromise between the demand of African Americans for secondary education and the reluctance of certain whites to provide it was found in the concept of “county training schools.” There was to be just one such school per parish and they would emphasize industrial and vocational instruction as well as teacher training. In this way, they were less threatening to opponents of secondary African American education than academic programs. In 1911, the Tangipahoa Parish Training School became the first such school in the south and one of the first rural secondary schools for African Americans in the country.

The Negro Division, which was started by the Board of Education in 1916, represented a definitive shift of approach to the education of African Americans by the State of Louisiana. It reflected an emphasis on vocational training in line with Booker T. Washington’s vision, and was influenced by major Northern industrialists who were supporting and transforming the education of Southern African Americans through various philanthropic agencies. These were the General Education Board, the John F. Slater Fund, the Anna T. Jeanes Fund and the Julius Rosenwald Fund. With a mission of improving education in the United States “without distinction of race, sex, or creed,” the General Education Fund provided financing for many areas of education in Louisiana. The Slater and Jeanes funds were more specifically directed toward support of African-American teacher training, while the Rosenwald Fund pursued

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<sup>167</sup> Jesse S. Burris, Concordia Parish School Superintendent, cited in Johnson, in Wade, 406.

<sup>168</sup> Patti Elizabeth Smith, “Rosenwald Schools in Louisiana: History and Administration,” in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 349, excerpts taken from “The Distribution of Rosenwald Schools in Louisiana and Their Suggested Impact on Black Education” (M. A. Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1992), 1, 2, 63-71, 93-98.

<sup>169</sup> Leo M. Favrot, “Conditions Governing the Attitude of White Men Toward Negro Education in Louisiana,” in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 292, first published as Leo M. Favrot, *Aims and Needs in Negro Public Education in Louisiana Bulletin No. 2* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Louisiana University Department of Education, 1918), 1-26.

<sup>170</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 118.

improvement of the physical school plant for African Americans. In 1917, Leo Favrot, head of the Negro Division, wrote a plea for quality African-American education in Louisiana that included both cold calculations of the potential economic productivity of better educated African Americans and a hint of actual humanitarianism. He concluded, “We cannot look upon a twentieth-century problem with nineteenth-century eyes. It is time to put aside old doubts and fears, and to espouse this thoroughly righteous cause.”<sup>171</sup>

One of the most urgent needs for African American education identified by the Negro Division was the construction of quality school houses. Baton Rouge seems to have been somewhat of an exception in the state in the progress it made in providing quality school buildings for African Americans. Far outpacing New Orleans, by the mid 1920s, it already had three modern brick schools for African Americans and in 1927, the modern brick McKinley High School for African Americans was constructed. In 1928, Baton Rouge was reported to have the best school buildings for African Americans of any city of like size in the nation.<sup>172</sup> In the rural areas, well-built school houses were primarily made possible by the Rosenwald Fund. Between 1916 and 1932, the Rosenwald Fund contributed to the construction of 392 school houses plus as many as forty-three teacher’s homes and shops.<sup>173</sup> The Rosenwald Fund contributions created an undeniable change in the built landscape of African American education, but their funding was only a fraction of every project, which was typically surpassed by the donations of the African American community with the balance paid by the state and/or parish. None of the Rosenwald schools would have been built without a tremendous amount of work on the part of African Americans themselves.

As the public school system was struggling with its segregated school system, the Catholic Church was expanding its own. In 1905, a new Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans determined that there should be a parochial school for every church. His domain included not just the city, but the surrounding rural areas and this new program of schools was a call for a tremendous number of new schools. A new college was even opened to train women to teach in these schools. Just as in the public school system, because of limited funding, increased opportunity for white children resulted in less for African American children. Integrated congregations were not inclined to have integrated schools, but unable to afford two schools, they either built one for whites or none at all. Black Catholics were quickly excluded from parochial education in the greater New Orleans area. Other smaller Catholic schools for African Americans closed until the Sisters of the Holy Family were the only group operating such schools and they were prohibited from teaching teenage boys by Church canon law. With the public school system offering a poor alternative and no secondary education, this was a terrible situation for black Catholics, particularly for boys. In 1907, St. Katherine Parish opened the first all-black parish school in New Orleans, but it was not until several years later that a real expansion of parochial schools for African Americans would occur.<sup>174</sup>

A turning point was created by the move of Southern University to Baton Rouge in 1913. Although established as an institution of higher learning, Southern, like its peers Straights,

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<sup>171</sup> Favrot, in Wade, 299.

<sup>172</sup> Smith, in Wade, 351.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>174</sup> John Bernard Alberts, “Black Catholic Schools,” in *Education in Louisiana*, ed. Michael G. Wade (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1999), 332, first published in the *U.S. Catholic Historian* (Winter 1994).

Leland, and New Orleans Universities, had been filling the void in secondary education left by the public schools. It was the only one of the four which was secular, not Protestant, and therefore had provided black Catholic boys with their sole viable place to pursue secondary classes.<sup>175</sup> Josephite priests with the help of Mother Katherine Drexel, a wealthy white Philadelphian and benefactress of many African American schools, worked to redress the loss. Drexel purchased the former Southern campus in New Orleans and in 1915 Xavier University was opened at that location. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament agreed to disregard the law against teaching pubescent males and, by admitting boys as well as girls, established a “full system of segregated black Catholic education unique in the world.”<sup>176</sup>

The same year a hurricane destroyed the Couvent school, creating another terrible void in African American education. Help again came from Katherine Drexel, but her aid had a cost. The school was to be renamed for Drexel’s sister and staffed by Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Though Couvent’s legacy of a school for African American children would be maintained, it would no longer be staffed and controlled by the African American community. Afterwards, from 1919 until 1929 a decent number of black Catholic schools were built that finally served the substantial need of the community.<sup>177</sup> By the Depression Catholic Church rhetoric was moving away from its support of segregation. In New Orleans, the appointment of Archbishop Joseph Rummel in 1936 further drew official Church sentiment toward integration, but thoughts did not result in change in the schools.

By the 1940s, the inequality of every aspect of public education provided to African Americans versus that for whites was undeniable. It was at this time that the NAACP began a campaign of equalization suits against school boards. Although the ultimate goal of the NAACP and civil rights activists was integration of schools, most acknowledged the reality that that would be a long time coming and efforts would best focused on requiring equality in black public education. It was also hoped when school boards were financially unable to provide for two equal systems, that integration would become the only alternative. In Louisiana, attorney A. P. Tureaud began filing suits for the equalization of teachers’ salaries in the 1940s. Tureaud worked on many aspects of civil rights from voter registration to investigation of a lynching, but it was education that would consume a great deal of his forty-five year career.

After winning a number of salary equalization suits, Tureaud began working on other aspects of education. In the 1940s, the physical plant of public education in New Orleans included many schools built before the Civil War and during Reconstruction. Overall, the classroom space was insufficient and African American schools were excessively overcrowded. By 1946, local NAACP leaders Tureaud and Daniel Byrd were petitioning the school board to bring facilities for African Americans up to an equal standard. The superintendent at the time well understood the critical need for a massive school construction program and an immediate increase in facilities for African Americans, but his plans were repeatedly obstructed. By the end of the 1940s, not only was there no support for constructing new schools for African Americans, but parents were pursuing legal avenues to block conversion of white schools to African American use; consequently, in 1948, the NAACP filed a suit for the equalization of Orleans Parish schools.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 337.

By 1951, the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) had still not accomplished equalization and Tureaud and other leaders shifted their demands and pushed for integration. The board refused, reasoning that such a move would be illegal and damaging to race relations in the city. In 1952, Tureaud filed *Earl Benjamin Bush et al. v. Orleans Parish School Board* for the integration of New Orleans schools. A suit was also filed for the integration of St. Helena Parish schools, but in the mean time, suits from other states were coming before the Supreme Court. Five became consolidated as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*. The pivotal decision handed down by the court declared *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the separate but equal doctrine unconstitutional and required the desegregation of schools. It was hoped that this decision would lead to a speedy resolution to the Orleans and St. Helena Parish cases and integration would proceed, but this was not to be.<sup>178</sup> Just as they had in 1869, Louisiana lawmakers dug in their heels and tried every possible legal tactic to forestall integration.<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile, residents resorted to protests and intimidation to try to prevent integration. In spite of repeated court orders to desegregate, the State of Louisiana and the Orleans Parish School Board managed to keep schools segregated until 1960. Finally, on November 14, 1960, four African American girls entered the previously all white William Frantz and McDonogh 19 schools in New Orleans and the integration of Louisiana's schools was under way. The event attracted national attention and the singular moment of Ruby Bridges walking bravely between federal marshals through an ugly crowd was immortalized in Norman Rockwell's painting *The Problem We All Live With*.

While all of the debate over integration was occurring through the course of the decade, new schools were being built throughout the state. Catholic education for African Americans in New Orleans achieved a milestone with the opening of St. Augustine in 1951, as the only all-black Catholic boys' high school in the United States. In New Orleans, "By 1950 the extensive black parochial school system had become a mark of pride."<sup>180</sup> Unlike the separate public schools, these parochial schools were actually equal, and sometimes even better than those for whites, except for boys' high schools. In 1944 through the commitment of the Josephite priests to staffing a black male high school of excellence, and funding collected through Archbishop Rummel's Youth Progress Program, the foundation for St. Augustine High School was established. The school met the hopes for quality that New Orleans African American community and the Josephite priests had pursued with determination; so much so that in 1965, *Time* magazine called it "separate and superior."<sup>181</sup>

The 1950s also ushered in a new era in public school construction for New Orleans. In a 1952 assessment of the school buildings, school board architect Charles Colbert concluded not only that the overall condition of the city's school buildings was deplorable, but that there was a great imbalance between those built for whites and those for blacks. This led to the construction of thirty new schools between 1952 and 1960. Design competitions produced modern designs for the schools that were radical departures from their predecessors.<sup>182</sup> Two months before the *Brown* decision was announced, the African American Thomy Lafon School was featured in *LIFE* magazine as one of the country's well-equipped elementary schools. The following year,

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<sup>178</sup> Fairclough, 167.

<sup>179</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 235-241.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

while New Orleans was embroiled in the struggle over integration, the design for Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School for African American students was completed in the historic Tremé neighborhood. One must wonder what was on the mind of school officials, students, and parents as these shining new buildings were erected. They were the most innovative modern designs leading architects had to offer and unlike anything that had ever been built for African American students, but they stood contrary to the dream and new reality of integration. Both were demolished in 2011, but schools of this period symbolize both the final coming of age of modern educational facilities for African Americans and the turbulent last days of segregation.

During the 1960s, integration of public schools throughout Louisiana continued at a slow and painful pace. As part of the process, some of the new modern facilities that had only been opened for African Americans in the previous decade were closed. The state's school system was not comprehensively desegregated until 1970. With schools integrated and hundreds of thousands of students across the state being bused to large brick consolidated schools, Louisiana entered the 1970s with a far different situation in education than it had begun the century; one that could hardly have been imagined nearly 250 years before when the Ursulines made their way through swampy terrain to establish the first permanent school in Louisiana.

## ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

This section includes descriptions and registration requirements for property types related to “Education in Louisiana”. It should be noted that this section speaks only of buildings because those were the properties of significance identified during this project, but structures, sites, districts and objects are also potentially eligible properties. This section is organized temporally and according to the sponsor and racial assignment of the school. This organization was derived from the background history. The goal of its design is to facilitate the connection between existing properties and their associated historical patterns within the context of Education in Louisiana. If this were a context about school building design and architecture, this section would be organized in a very different manner.

Each property type below is accompanied by a discussion of actual properties and registration requirements. The individual properties discussed are provided as representative examples of these types within the state; they do not constitute a comprehensive inventory of all such properties. Properties mentioned that are not already listed on the National Register were selected for their value as a basis for discussion. Inclusion in this document does not guarantee that a given property is eligible for the National Register. Such determinations can only be made through the nomination process. More information about any National Register listed property may be found in its nomination, accessible online in the Louisiana National Register Database at <http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/nhl/searchby.asp>.

In order to be potentially eligible for the National Register in association with this, a property must demonstrate significance in the development of education on the local, state, or national level. In general, a property must also have acquired its significance at least fifty years ago, unless the significance is extraordinary. When evaluating the potential eligibility of a property for the National Register, function should not be confused with area of significance. In other words, just because a building’s function was for education does not mean that it is significant for that role. It is possible for a school building to be significant for its architecture more so than its role in education. For further guidance on selecting areas of significance and other topics related to National Register nomination see the National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (accessible online at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>) and advice from the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office at <http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/nationalregister101.aspx>.

In addition to age and significance, a key element in the National Register eligibility of a property is its integrity. In regards to the National Register, integrity refers to the retention of aspects that enable the property to “convey its significance.” The National Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Because the below described properties are primarily significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the historical patterns of Education in Louisiana, documentation of their role in these events is of great importance. In terms of the areas of integrity identified by the National Register, the “association,” “feeling,” “setting” and “location” of Education related historic properties in Louisiana is most important, while that of their “design”, “materials”, and “workmanship” is usually less so. In general, a property will possess enough integrity in regards to this context if it can meet the basic litmus test of being easily recognizable to someone who was familiar with it during its historic period of

significance, and retains enough integrity of location and setting to convey its significance. Integrity is discussed specifically in the below examples, when the type requires specific considerations beyond the umbrella qualification of the previous two sentences. For more information regarding integrity and the National Register, see “Evaluating Integrity,” by Patricia L. Duncan, National Register Coordinator, Division of Historic Preservation, available online at [http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/nationalregister101/101\\_-\\_Evaluating\\_Integrity.pdf](http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/nationalregister101/101_-_Evaluating_Integrity.pdf).

## **A. Schools and Associated Buildings**

This property type is organized by time periods relevant to the background history described above. The examples are sorted by the time frame in which they originated or have significance as schools, which is not necessarily the same as the date of construction of the building. These sections are organized with subsections according to the ownership and management of the facilities: i.e. public, private, Catholic, Protestant, etc. The categories addressing schools after 1877 are further divided into African American and white subcategories because segregation prevailed during this era. Schools of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are organized with the greatest number of subcategories because they exist in the greatest numbers and display the greatest variety. In general, because they are relatively rare, schools and associated buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries need only to be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period and have a well documented educational use to be National Register eligible for association with this context. Schools of the twentieth century, which survive in much greater numbers, must have a specific notable significance to the history of education in Louisiana, such as being the first school of their kind in their local area and maintain an easily recognizable historic appearance, in order to be eligible for the National Register for their role in education.

The degree to which any school must retain its original appearance in order to be able to convey its significance will depend on the individual property. However, the following considerations should be kept in mind when assessing potential eligibility of school buildings. While design, materials, and workmanship are not in and of themselves the most essential aspects of integrity for school buildings, they are important for how they affect a property’s integrity of feeling and association. Most schools must not only be recognizable from the exterior, but must retain an interior division of space in which the original classroom parameters can be interpreted. The addition of a bathroom to the interior of a building that originally had no plumbing should be an acceptable change as long as the original classroom configuration can still be read. Likewise, the addition of countertops, cabinets and appliances to convert a classroom into a kitchen may be an acceptable alteration if the walls remain in their original positions. Extensive conversion of an interior for residential space by the alteration of plan, and floor, wall, and ceiling coverings is likely eliminate the ability to interpret the building as a school and render it ineligible for the National Register. Some school buildings may have possessed architectural features which were such an important part of their original educational significance, that their loss could jeopardize potential eligibility of the resource. An example of this might be the windows of a Rosenwald school. Ample natural lighting was one of the important features that the design of Rosenwald schools offered to the quality of education within their walls. Replacement of original windows in such a school might be an acceptable change, but complete alteration and obliteration of the

original fenestration pattern could so adversely impact the ability of the building to convey its significance that it would not be eligible for the National Register. Minor exterior changes to a building that may have occurred as a result of residential use, such as the addition of a carport might be acceptable if the building still otherwise readily conveys its historic appearance. An important qualification when evaluating the effect of changes on a resource's National Register eligibility is the year that they occurred. If changes occurred within the period of significance being claimed, then they should be acceptable, and possibly even contribute to the building's ability to convey its significance in the area of education. For example, if a c. 1900 school building was still serving its community in the 1950s and was retrofitted with some modern amenities while still an active school, those changes would demonstrate both the property's continued role in education and changing ideas of about physical needs and comforts in school buildings.

Changes in location and setting should also be evaluated in terms of the date when they occurred. If a relocation of a building occurred within the claimed period of significance, then it should not adversely affect the property's eligibility. Generally, school buildings should remain in their original locations and settings in order to be eligible for the National Register. A school's location within its community is a facet of its historic role and therefore an important aspect of integrity. In some extenuating circumstances, when the relocation of a school has been necessary for its preservation, it may be possible for it to retain National Register eligibility if other aspects of its integrity allow it to clearly demonstrate its significance. This may particularly be true if a building is a rare example of a particular part of the story of Education in Louisiana. It is always desirable if a building absolutely must be moved, that it be relocated to a site as close geographically to its original address as possible and with a like setting.

**a) *Colonial***

The first organized educational opportunity for women in Louisiana was provided by the Ursuline nuns in 1727. Although the first buildings in which the Ursulines taught did not survive the eighteenth century, their 1753 convent did and stands today as the oldest building in New Orleans' Vieux Carré, its peers having succumbed to fires (Figure 1). As such, it is of course quite significant and is listed on the National Register, but it is important to note its great significance as the second school in Louisiana, and the oldest surviving one. Although there have been changes to building, especially on the interior, but it would without a doubt be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period. It is very unlikely that there are any other surviving buildings associated with education in Colonial Louisiana, but if any were identified, they would be quite significant as well.



**Figure 1: Ursuline Convent, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

**b) *Antebellum***

Though less rare than Colonial buildings, extant antebellum schools are rare and therefore, in order to be eligible for the National Register, they must be recognizable to someone from the historic period, but alterations and losses of material integrity should not preclude eligibility unless they interfere severely with the historic appearance.

**1) Catholic**

As described above, the Catholic Church established the beginnings of education in Louisiana and would continue to play an important role in it through the history of the state. Antebellum examples of Catholic schools that survive are the Academy of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau and Ascension Catholic Primary. Both these schools served girls. As outlined in the background history boys had other options for education; therefore, there were more initiatives by Catholic religious groups to serve the unfilled educational need of girls. The Academy of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau was founded in 1821 and at such time became Louisiana's second major school for girls, following the establishment of the Ursulines' school almost a hundred years before. Both schools have taught nearly without interruption since their founding and the Academy of the Sacred Heart retains its 1830 building which was added onto in 1834 and again c. 1845. The ability of slaves who had been in the service of the nuns to sign their names at the end of the Civil War indicates that education had also been provided to them by the Religious of the Sacred Heart. The school is listed on the National Register for its significance in the areas of architecture, education, landscape architecture, and religion. The significance of the Academy the Sacred Heart to education in Louisiana is so indubitable that even if it were not to have significance in these other areas, it would have been eligible for education alone. While the Academy of the Sacred Heart is outstanding in its significance, any Catholic school of the antebellum period in Louisiana would be significant for contributing to the education of the state when the public school system was still struggling to gain a standing.

Ascension Catholic Primary, has existed under different names since its founding in 1845 and its 1850 building has served as a hospital and convent as well as a school (Figure 2). Its role in the education of Louisiana at a time when formal schools were sparse, especially outside of the larger cities, renders it potentially significant for its association with education. In 1859, the Marianite Sisters of the Holy Cross purchased a private home in Plaquemine to which they moved a girls' school they had founded six years prior (Figure 3). This school became known as the Academy of St. Basil's and the building is listed on the National Register for the local significance of its Greek Revival architecture, but it also retains significance as an



**Figure 2: Ascension Catholic Primary, Donaldsonville, Ascension Parish.**



**Figure 3: Academy of St. Basil's, Plaquemine, Iberville Parish.**

antebellum school.

The Badin-Roque House in Natchitoches Parish is listed on the National Register for its architectural significance as a very rare example of a *poteaux-en-terre* (posts-in-ground) house (Figure 4). Though built as a private residence, it became the school of St. Augustine Catholic Church in the late 1850s, serving free children of color. It later returned to being a private home again. Though it was used as a school for a relatively short period of time, this use of Badin-Roque House as a school by the Free People of Color of Isle Brevelle is a significant part of the story of the education of African Americans in the antebellum period.



**Figure 4: Badin-Roque House, Melrose, Natchitoches Parish.**

## 2) Private Academies

Although many private academies were in operation prior to the Civil War and many opened during the period of state subsidies to private schools in the 1830s, few remained in operation after the Civil War and buildings associated with antebellum private schools are very rare. One known example is the school originally known as the Silliman Female Collegiate Institute, in East Feliciana Parish, which is listed on the National Register for its



**Figure 5: Silliman Female Collegiate Institute, Clinton, East Feliciana Parish.**

architectural significance (Figure 5). The school was opened in 1852 and its oldest existing building was completed c. 1850. Other historic buildings on the campus were constructed c. 1860 and in 1894. Collectively they represent different periods in private education in Louisiana and a very rare example of a small town private academy that was able to survive past the Civil War and even expand. It should be noted that the terms “college” and “collegiate” often referred to secondary schools in this period, rather than institutions of higher learning, but there were also such institutions known as “college.” Because of this ambiguity, it is necessary to evaluate the role of a school in the history of education based on its original course of instruction and its evolution.

It is very possible that there are existing, as of yet unidentified, repurposed buildings in which private schools were taught, especially in the bigger cities. Although the rarity of antebellum private school buildings adds weight to the eligibility of a property associated with this important aspect of the history of education in Louisiana, buildings which were only briefly used as schools may have tenuous claim to National Register eligibility under this context. For example, a residential building, that was used for a school for five or so years, and then returned to residential use for the past one-hundred-fifty plus years is not likely to be eligible as an

educational resource unless the details of its use as school are significant and extremely well documented. In addition, it would be preferable to know exactly which rooms of the given building were used for instruction. The building, and ideally those rooms, would need to be recognizable to someone from the historic period to be potentially eligible for National Register listing.

c) ***Civil War and Reconstruction, 1862-1877***

As with the above two categories, school buildings from this brief period are rare, and they are significant for their association with a tumultuous period in education.

1) Catholic

While a number of Catholic schools opened during Reconstruction, particularly in New Orleans, the difficulties of the Civil War prevented much activity in Catholic education from 1862 to 1865. An extraordinary example of a school constructed during the war is the Holy Angels Academy (Figure 6). The cornerstone of the academy building was laid on May 3, 1862 and the school provided quality education to young women until the end of the twentieth century. The academy building, which has now been converted to apartments, and the other associated buildings of Holy Angels that housed the convent, normal school, concert hall, and cafeteria, are notable for their role in education of women in Louisiana beginning during the Civil War.



**Figure 6: Holy Angels Academy, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

2) Protestant Church Associated

Although Protestant churches are known to have been used for schools, both denominational and secular, from the antebellum period well into the twentieth century in Louisiana, no example with a well-documented use during this period was identified. In order to be eligible for its association with education the use of a church as a school during this period and its role in the community would need to be well documented and it would need to be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period.

3) Private

Many private schools were opened during integration, especially in New Orleans, however no private schools of that genre were identified during this project. The stipulations regarding the eligibility of buildings briefly repurposed as private schools, as discussed above under the antebellum section, applies to private school associated properties of this period as well.

#### 4) Public

Most of the public schools that opened following the Civil War occupied existing buildings. The Freedman's Bureau accepted space for schools most anywhere they could find it. Schools for African Americans operated in former white schools, churches, agricultural buildings and homes. Because buildings used by the Freedmen's Bureau often reverted to their former uses, it is difficult to identify such buildings except by oral tradition, which is not always dependable. A rare example of a building documented to have been used by the Freedmen's Bureau is located on Euterpe Street in New Orleans. The building was a cotton merchant's home seized by the Union Army. How exactly the Freedmen's Bureau used the building is uncertain, but it is possible that it administered some of its education program from here. The public school systems also continued the long standing practice of using residential and other buildings for schools. The two-story brick commissary building of Shady Grove Plantation is said to have served as the first school for African Americans in Iberville Parish. In New Orleans, the 1831 LaLaurie House, which is notorious as a site of the brutal torture of slaves, is less known for its significant use as the first integrated school in New Orleans in the 1870s. At this time it was rented by the New Orleans school board and housed the Lower Girls High School (Figure 7). Many buildings that served as African American schools in the late nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries have been demolished or reverted back to other uses that have obscured this aspect of their history. Therefore, examples of repurposed buildings known to have been used as African American schools are rare. In spite of their rareness, however, the eligibility of these resources must be carefully considered.



**Figure 7: LaLaurie House / Lower Girls' School, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

The eligibility of a repurposed building for its association with this context must depend on the duration of its use as a school, the significance of that use, and the quality of the documentation of the use. There are many residential buildings that are purported to have held classes for freed people. That mere fact, even if substantiated, is not enough to claim eligibility in this context. Further information about the role the school played in the community and how long it operated from the building in question must be attained. Furthermore, the integrity of such buildings can be difficult to assess because it may not be known what parts of them were used for classrooms and if they were altered before or after this use. This must be thoughtfully considered and an educated decision made regarding how recognizable the facility would be to a former student.

The first provision of funding for the public education of African American students in New Orleans was made by John McDonogh. The first school constructed for African Americans using this funding was McDonogh #6, designed by William Freret and completed in 1875 (Figures 8 and 9). (Note, this school should not be confused with a later McDonogh School No. 6 in a different location that is listed on the National Register.) It is a landmark in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century battle over the quality of school facilities for African

Americans in New Orleans not just because it is a well-designed brick school equal to contemporary schools provided to white students, but because the school board subsequently attempted to reassign it to white students in 1888. Immediate protest from the African American community halted that attempt, but the school board finally succeeded with a reassignment in 1926. Although the building has been remodeled, it is clearly recognizable and demonstrates obvious significance for its association with this context. In addition, it seems to be the only surviving McDonogh school built for African Americans in this period.<sup>183</sup> Subsequent buildings for African American students tended to be of poor frame construction and have not survived. Also, often formerly white school buildings in New Orleans were reassigned to black students when better facilities were constructed for white students.

The twin of McDonogh No. 6, McDonogh No. 7 completed in 1877 also still stands (Figure 10). It was the second New Orleans public school built to the design of William Freret and remains the least altered example of one of his buildings. This school served white children. Because many other schools of this period were of frame construction and later considered fire traps and demolished, public school buildings of the period are rare. McDonogh No. 7 is significant for its association with this period in education and as one of the first schools funded by the bequest of John McDonogh. It and No. 6 also represent an early shift away from frame schools to more substantial brick buildings.



**Figure 8: McDonogh School No. 6/ St. George's Episcopal School, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**



**Figure 9: McDonogh School No. 6 / St. George's Episcopal School, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**



**Figure 10: McDonogh School No.7, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

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<sup>183</sup> For further analysis of the survival of McDonogh schools in New Orleans see Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Historic Context Statement for the New Orleans' Public Schools* (2009).

d) *Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century, 1878-1965*

1) Catholic

a. African American

In the late nineteenth century, after requiring that separate facilities be established for black and white parishioners in 1884, the Catholic Church realized the necessity of providing for the education of African Americans. Many historic documents record the opening of Catholic schools specifically for African American boys or girls at this time, but again, few survive. Two of the rare extant Catholic schools for African Americans of the late nineteenth century are Rock Chapel of 1891 in Desoto Parish and St. Joseph's School of 1892 in Ascension Parish (Figures 11 and 12). The Rock Chapel was built by Carmelite friars for their ministry to the African American population and they used it as a school during the week. Its operation was short lived however, as the friars left in 1897 following white opposition to their education mission.<sup>184</sup> St. Joseph's School for boys was founded in 1867, but in 1890 a tree fell on the building. Its replacement, the present building was constructed with a grant from the philanthropist Katherine Drexel. It is an exceptionally well-built school of its period, a fact to which it no doubt owes its continued existence. Originally, it held two classrooms. Although it was previously listed on the National Register, it was delisted because it had become part of a fake setting that never existed historically as the owner moved numerous historic but unrelated buildings onto the site.

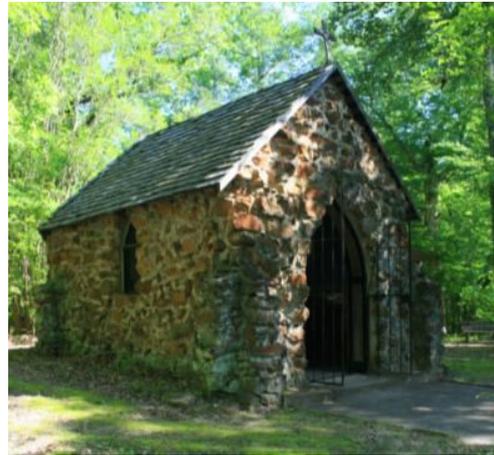


Figure 11: Rock Chapel, Carmel, DeSoto Parish.



Figure 12: St. Joseph's School, Burnside, Ascension Parish.

Examples of early twentieth century Catholic schools listed on the National Register are Holy Rosary Institute of 1913 and Our Lady of Assumption School of 1934, both in Lafayette Parish. The Holy Rosary institute was founded as a school for the vocational and technical training of black women in the tradition of Booker T. Washington and also served as a Normal school for training teachers, and a high school. From the beginning, it was staffed by Sisters of the Holy Family. It is presently in a condition that imperils its future existence. Our Lady of Assumption was another one of the many Louisiana schools for African Americans operated with funding assistance from Mother Katherine Drexel.

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<sup>184</sup> Kingsley, 366.

b. White

The New Orleans Female Dominican Academy building of 1882 is a distinctive example of a Catholic school building constructed for white girls in the late nineteenth century (Figure 13). The school was founded as the St. John the Baptist School for Girls on New Orleans Dryades Street, in 1860 for the purpose of instructing the daughters of Irish immigrants. In 1861, it was chartered under the Dominican name. In 1864, the Dominican sisters purchased a new property for the school in the then suburb of Greenville, which is now the University neighborhood. The cornerstone for the new school was laid in 1882. The school which eventually became St. Mary's Dominican High School operated in this building until 1963, when it moved to a new facility. The surviving three-story, frame Italianate building is listed on the National Register for its architectural as well as its educational significance.



**Figure 13: New Orleans Female Dominican Academy/ Greenville Hall, Loyola University, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

2) Protestant

a. African American

Although so many church-based schools were not religious, there were some non-secular Protestant schools for African Americans. Such schools tended to be better funded and offered a higher quality educational experience than their quasi-public secular counterparts. A National Register listed example of this type of school is St. Paul Lutheran of 1916 in Avoyelles Parish (Figure 14).



**Figure 14: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mansura, Avoyelles Parish.**

b. White

There were no Protestant schools for white students of this period identified during this project that were of any distinctive significance. Protestant schools of this era that served an otherwise unmet need for education in the community could potentially be eligible for their association with this context.

### 3) Private Non-Denominational

#### a. African American

There were no surviving non-denominational private schools for African Americans identified during this project. Any such property would likely be eligible for the National Register for its role in providing quality education, to African Americans, particularly non-Catholics, as an alternative to the poor public education during segregation.

#### b. White

The Southfield School became Shreveport's first non-parochial private school in 1934 (Figure 15). It was initially called the Shreveport School of Progressive Education and operated in the basement of a public elementary school, but was successful enough to justify its own campus in 1936. Its founding by a group of parents interested in more modern methods of education was a significant development in the history of education in Shreveport, which makes it potentially eligible for its association with this context. "Progressive Education" was a trend in the 1930s as educators sought ways to move outside the rigid boundaries of curricula that had been established in the 1920s.<sup>185</sup> Although the campus has expanded greatly, the Southfield School retains its historic buildings, which would be easily recognizable to its first students and their parents and teachers. Properties of this type must demonstrate association with a specific pattern in the development of education in Louisiana to be potentially eligible for association with this theme. Merely being a good private school from the historic period is not an argument for significance. The importance of location and setting for such properties must be evaluated on an individual basis.



Figure 15: Southfield School, Shreveport, Caddo Parish.

### 4) Public and Quasi Public

#### a. African American

African American schools also have significance in the area of Ethnic History: Black. See also the historic context "The African American Experience in Louisiana" for other discussion of this topic.

#### 1. Church Housed

The Louisiana public school system of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was woefully underfunded and with the additional strain of running separate systems for white

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<sup>185</sup> Robertson, 97-98.

and black students was not able to provide quality educational facilities for either. The two systems being anything but equal, African Americans of course received the lesser of the inadequate provisions. In the quasi-public system that developed, the meager school board support in the form of money, textbooks, or a teacher was supplemented by the community who provided the school facilities and any necessity not provided by the state. Particularly in rural areas, these facilities often ended up being the building that functioned as the heart of the community – the church. Students took their lessons on the same benches – typically made by community members – that served the church on Sundays. Whereas Catholic schools offered religious instruction, it was common for a Protestant church to house a completely secular quasi-public school. Examples of this phenomena listed on the National Register are Clear Creek AME Church of c. 1910 in East Feliciana Parish and St. Paul Baptist Church/ Moorhead School of 1910 in Allen Parish (Figures 16 and 17). Both of these churches retain very rural settings that contribute greatly to their historic feeling and overall integrity. Clear Creek AME Church is in a deteriorated condition. It appears to be suffering from a long term roof leak that has caused the loss of part of the floor and if not abated could do further damage. This highlights the tenuous existence of these types of properties, even when listed on the National Register.



**Figure 16: Clear Creek AME Church, Felixville, East Feliciana Parish.**



**Figure 17: St. Paul Baptist Church/ Morehead School, Kinder vicinity, Allen Parish.**

## 2. Rosenwald and Rosenwald Type

Aside from facilities built by religious organization, the best quality school buildings for African Americans in Louisiana, especially in rural areas, were built with the support of the Rosenwald Fund and/ or were based on the foundation's school plans. The foundation offered its own specific plans for schools which were designed to provide quality conditions of light



**Figure 18: Longstreet Rosenwald School, Longstreet, DeSoto Parish.**

and air, etc. for education. Although not all Rosenwald supported schools adhered to these plans in the early years, later schools are recognizable by their use of these designs. Of 393 Rosenwald schools built in Louisiana between 1914 and 1932, only three recognizable survivors have been identified. All three are listed on the National Register: Longstreet Rosenwald School of 1923 and Community Rosenwald School of 1928-29 in DeSoto Parish, and Plaisance School of 1920 in St. Landry Parish. Both the DeSoto Parish schools are based on a two-teacher plan while the Plaisance School is a four-teacher plan (Figures 18-20).

Another possible two-teacher Rosenwald School building, converted into a residence, was observed in Ouachita Parish during this project, but no further information is known about it at this time. Based on the survival rate of Rosenwald schools in other states, it is very likely that there are other survivors that have yet to be brought to the attention of the Division of Historic Preservation and be documented. There are two excellent online resources which can aid in the identification of any extant Rosenwald schools in the state. Rosenwald School plans can be found on the “History South” website (<http://historysouth.org/schoolplans.html>). Familiarity with these plans greatly facilitates the recognition of standing examples. Fisk University’s Rosenwald Fund Card File

Database

(<http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search>) is searchable by parish and includes photographs of many schools at the time of their construction and details such as numbers of teachers and total cost; though unfortunately not specific locations. This information can be a great help in confirming the identity of a suspected school building or gaining more information about a known property.

There were also instances where communities used their own resources to construct schools based on Rosenwald plans without receiving actual funding from the foundation. Such schools would not have been included among the 393 enumerated by the foundation.

Though not Rosenwald schools in this sense, they are being categorized as Rosenwald-type schools and are still significant for communities’ use of the foundation’s plans and ability to construct schools of this quality without the assistance Rosenwald funding.

An example of this is the Central Agricultural School of c. 1929, originally located in St. James Parish (Figure 21). Records indicate that the Rosenwald foundation did allocate funds for this school, but later required the school board to return them because they had not been distributed to the community. In this case it seems that the African American community, when denied the promised funds, prevailed in building a Rosenwald plan school with their own resources. While the Rosenwald school building program was extremely significant, this type of community effort must be seen as equally so. Both Rosenwald and Rosenwald type schools are extremely significant in the development of African American education for their role as purpose-built quality school houses and should be eligible



**Figure 19: Community Rosenwald School, Grand Cane vicinity, DeSoto Parish.**



**Figure 20: Plaisance Rosenwald School, Plaisance, St. Landry Parish.**



**Figure 21: Central Agricultural School, Donaldsonville, Ascension Parish.**

for the National Register as long as they would be recognizable to someone from the historic period.

In order to be eligible for the National Register either Rosenwald or Rosenwald-type schools need to retain enough integrity of design and materials to be easily recognizable to someone from their historic period. While setting and location contribute greatly to the eligibility of resources, because so few of these once numerous schools are known to survive, relocated buildings may still be eligible. Ideally any new location and setting will be similar to the original, but a different setting may be acceptable if other factors of integrity and the associated history provide a strong justification for significance.

### 3. One-room Schools

Although churches were often the one-room schools of African American communities, dedicated one-room school buildings did exist as well. These were typically roughly constructed in the first place and have not endured the passage of time. They are therefore rare buildings that should be considered eligible for their association with this context as long as they retain a minimal degree of integrity. Examples of one-room African American schools listed on the National Register are the McNutt School of c. 1910 in Rapides Parish and the Phillips School of 1918 in Winn Parish (Figures 22 and 23). It should be noted that both of these schools demonstrate the persistent significance of community churches in African American education because they share sites with churches. In this regard, their location is an important part of their history and context. However because one-room schools are rare, although integrity of location and setting is desirable, relocation should be acceptable as long as it does not adversely impact the resource and the new setting is similar to the original, or differences are outweighed by the significance and other positive integrity factors of the building.



Figure 22: McNutt School, McNutt, Rapides Parish.



Figure 23: Phillips School, Emry, Winn Parish.

### 4. Multiple-room Frame Schools

Two nineteenth-century African-American multiple-room frame schools were identified during this project. The Laurel Hill School in West Feliciana Parish was originally named after educator John S. Dawson and is estimated to have been constructed in 1895 (Figure 24). This two-story building is said to have also accommodated meetings of the local Masons until their own lodge was constructed in the 1950s. At present, the Laurel Hill School is in too deteriorated and vegetation-choked of a condition to fully evaluate its potential National Register eligibility, but it appears to retain a good deal of integrity and could possibly be eligible in a stabilized or

restored condition. The Dorseyville School was built in 1893 and remained in operation as the only school for African Americans in the area until 1952 when the parish school board had a modern school constructed (Figure 25). At one time the school is said to have served grades one through seven, but shortly before it closed, it is remembered as housing just grades one through four. The main floor of the building is one large room that was partitioned in two so that one teacher could instruct grades one and two on one side while another taught grades three and four on the other side.<sup>186</sup> Buildings of this type are very rare and just need to retain an easily recognizable historic appearance in addition to documentation of their historic role in relation to African American education in order to be eligible for the National Register. Integrity of location and setting are always important, but because of the rarity of these buildings they are not essential to their potential eligibility.



**Figure 24: Laurel Hill School, St. Francisville vicinity, West Feliciana Parish.**

In the twentieth century multiple-room frame schools for African Americans were often constructed with funding from the Rosenwald Foundation following that organization's plans, but this does not seem to have been a popular form for public schools or quasi-public schools built without Rosenwald support. This conclusion is based on the historic background research conducted for this project, review of the state's "Standing Structures Survey" files and fieldwork. Much further research is necessary to establish a comprehensive portrait of the architecture of African American schools throughout the state in the early twentieth century because each parish school board had a slightly different approach to the management of its physical plant. According to Fisk University's Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Avoyelles Parish was in the minority of Louisiana Parishes with no Rosenwald schools. This is not evidence that there were no decent schools for African Americans in the parish; on the contrary the only two non-Rosenwald multiple-room frame schools of the twentieth century identified during this project are in Avoyelles Parish. This fact indicates that the school board supported the construction of such schools without the help of the Rosenwald Fund.



**Figure 25: Dorseyville School, Dorseyville, Iberville Parish.**

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<sup>186</sup> "The Dorseyville School," anonymous manuscript, National Register file for St. John Baptist Church, Dorseyville, Division of Historic Preservation, Baton Rouge, LA; Carolyn Smith Wilson, interview by author, Dorseyville, LA, April 15, 2012.

The two identified schools are in Odenburg and Goudeau (Figures 26 and 27). Both are estimated to have been constructed in the 1930s. The Odenburg School was long ago converted for use as a private residence. This was a practical course of adaptive reuse for these types of buildings when they were decommissioned as schools. The exterior of the Odenburg School retains a fair degree of integrity and would certainly be recognizable to a former student, but its residential use has led to many alterations of its interior that render it quite different from the days of its school use. Even though these kinds of buildings are believed to be rare, the loss of interior integrity seriously inhibits its ability to convey its significant associations with this context. On the other hand, the school at Goudeau is in such an immaculate state of preservation – complete with the initials of students scrawled into its wooden weatherboards in the 1940s – it resonates with historical feeling. Like so many African American schools of the early twentieth century, the Goudeau School sits next to a church. It is very probable that the first classes for African American children in this area were held in the original Antioch Baptist Church building which was constructed in 1899 and that the 1930s school house built by the parish school board evolved out of this church-housed school. When the school house was decommissioned in the 1950s following the construction of George Washington Carver High School in Bunkie, it was purchased from the school board by Antioch’s Burial Association.<sup>187</sup> Thereby, this school that probably had its origins in the church has been preserved through its ongoing connection to it and the dedicated work of alumni. It is an excellent example of a potentially eligible property of this type. Lesser examples could also be potentially eligible, but would have to retain an easily recognizable historic appearance.

#### 5. Primary Schools of the 1910s-1940s

As the twentieth century progressed, some improvements in the quality of public school facilities provided to African Americans appeared sporadically throughout the state. An example of a National Register listed school that represents this significant trend is the Scott Street School in Baton Rouge (Figure 28). Built in



Figure 26: Odenburg School, Odenburg, Avoyelles Parish.



Figure 27: Goudeau School, Goudeau, Avoyelles Parish.



Figure 28: Scott Street School, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish.

<sup>187</sup> R. C. Bonton, interview by author, Goudeau, LA, April 4, 2012.

1922, the Scott Street School was the third modern brick school to be built for African Americans in Baton Rouge. The others, which were built in the 1910s, do not survive. Buildings of this genre need to be able to be discussed in terms of the advancement they offered in the quality of educations for African Americans. It is important to be able to describe the types of buildings that preceded them in their specific area. Location and setting are more important integrity factors for this subsection of schools than for the previous two because the significance for this type is in part established by the community history. Like all properties, these types of schools must at the minimum retain an easily recognizable historic appearance to be potentially eligible for the National Register.

## 6. Secondary Schools of the 1910s-1940s

Even as school officials finally conceded to improved school buildings for African Americans, provision of secondary education remained a point of contention. There are six buildings related to the secondary education of African Americans in Louisiana presently listed on the National Register.

A compromise between the demand of African Americans for secondary education and the reluctance of certain whites to provide it was found in the concept of “county training schools.” There was to be just one such school per parish and they would emphasis industrial and vocational instruction as well as teacher training. In this way, they were less threatening to opponents of secondary African-American education than academic programs. In 1911, the Tangipahoa Parish Training School became the first such school in the south and one of the first rural secondary schools for African Americans in the country. The school’s 1920 dormitory was listed on the National Register in 1979 as one of the two oldest surviving buildings of the school. Attempts to locate the building during this project failed and it is presently presumed to either demolished or substantially altered. The fate of the other building mentioned in the 1979 nomination is unknown. The National Register listed Beauregard Parish Training School became the first secondary school for African Americans in that Parish in 1929 (Figure 29).



Figure 29: Beauregard Parish Training School, DeRidder, Beauregard Parish.

Central High School in Shreveport, opened as that city’s first high school for African

Americans in 1917 and remained the only one until 1949 (Figure 30). It is listed on the National Register as is McKinley High, which became the first dedicated high school building for African Americans in Baton Rouge in 1927 (Figure 31). Previously high school instruction had been provided at a joint elementary and high school. For many years, McKinley remained the only secondary school for African Americans within a forty mile radius of Baton Rouge. Cohn High



Figure 30: Central High School, Shreveport, Caddo Parish.

School became the first place where African Americans in West Baton Rouge Parish could receive a secondary education in 1949 (Figure 32).

Booker T. Washington High School was the product of an epic struggle for a high school by African Americans in New Orleans (Figure 33). It was the first high school built specifically for Africans Americans in the city. After ardent demands, African Americans in New Orleans had received their first high school in 1917, housed in an old white school building.

In 1930, the Rosenwald Fund attempted to give money towards the construction of a long petitioned for vocational high school, but the Orleans Parish School board claimed it did not have the required matching funds and instead built a cheap wood frame elementary school on the site that had been set aside for the vocational school. It was finally Federal funding from the Public Works Administration that made the vocational high school named after Booker T. Washington a reality in 1942. The design and quality of the large three-story, art deco school rivaled that of contemporary white schools. In addition, its large auditorium provided a venue that had not previously existed for events in the African American community. Although the entire property was listed on the National Register in 2002, just the auditorium remains today, while the rest of the school was demolished as part of a broad revamping of New Orleans public school buildings. Such losses make the remaining buildings that symbolize African American's valiant fight for higher education even more important.

All six of the National Register listed properties described above were the first high schools in their communities, but properties in this category needn't be firsts to be significant. It is obviously easy to ascertain and explain the significance of a first of a kind, but properties in this category can easily have significance gained in other ways. Location and setting are important integrity aspects of this property type for their ability to convey the significance of the school in the community. Schools of this kind are more likely to be substantial masonry building and less likely to be moved anyway. As with other schools, an easily recognizable historic appearance is



**Figure 31: McKinley High School, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish.**



**Figure 32: Cohn High School, Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish.**



**Figure 33: Booker T. Washington High School, New Orleans, Orleans Parish. Auditorium in foreground with school to be demolished in background.**

an important prerequisite to eligibility for these buildings. Because they tend to be more monumental edifices that serve as community landmarks, the exterior integrity is more important than the interior integrity of schools of this type.

#### 7. Schools of the 1950s

In the 1950s, further strides were made in the construction of quality school buildings for African Americans. By this time, the wide disparity between the number and quality of public school buildings for African Americans versus those for whites was undeniable. The 1950s were ushered in by the filing of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* which called for the desegregation of the Topeka Kansas School District. As the case awaited review by the Supreme Court, some states, like South Carolina and Mississippi made a last ditch effort to protect segregation by implementing programs of school equalization.

Louisiana did not institute such a statewide program, but whether individual districts attempted to hold off integration by improving black schools is unclear. The examples of new modern facilities constructed for African Americans in the 1950s that were studied as part of this project appear to have derived from African American demands for equal facilities and from acknowledgement by school officials that new buildings were truly needed, even if white voters didn't always agree. It is possible that some school officials did also imagine that integration could be avoided by building new schools, but regardless of the motives behind it, the construction of new modern schools in the 1950s provided African Americans with quality learning environments and were a source of pride for communities.

National Register listed St. Matthew High School in Natchitoches Parish is an example of such a school (Figure 34). When it opened in 1952, it was the first public high school in the lower part of the parish and its longtime principal was recorded as saying that the erection of the school “meant everything” to the community. An ambitious public school building program in New Orleans included the construction of two cutting edge schools for African American students. The imminently modern designs of the Thomy Lafon School of 1954 and Phyllis Wheatley Elementary of 1955 received critical acclaim and coverage in national publications. Architects, Curtis and Davis received an AIA honor award for the Lafon design and it was featured in *Architectural Forum*, and in *LIFE* magazine as one of the country's well-equipped elementary schools, while Phyllis Wheatley appeared in *Progressive Architecture*. In response to advanced deterioration following Hurricane Katrina, as part of a revamping of New Orleans public schools, both were demolished in 2011.



Figure 34: St. Matthew High School, Bermuda vicinity, Natchitoches Parish.

For some African Americans, integration came with an ironic twist – the closure of these schools they had waited so long to have. John S. Dawson High School in West Feliciana Parish is an example of this phenomenon (Figure 35). Opened in 1951 and named for a local African American educator, the school was the first public high school for African American children in West Feliciana. In 1962 a thirty room elementary school was added to the site, but in 1969, both schools were closed following integration. Buildings of the second half of the twentieth century are among our least loved architectural resources. Their style, building materials, and the relatively brief passage of time since their construction seems to impair our ability to value them as historic resources, so it is imperative that we view the significance of African American schools of the 1950s within this context. In rural areas in particular, where schools have been greatly consolidated, many schools of this era dwell as hulking ghosts on the landscape, seemingly only waiting to be torn down. Yet if there is recognition of the importance these institutions held for their communities when they were built, they might yet be able to be restored and adaptively reused to once again serve their communities. In order to be potentially eligible for the National Register, the significant role in the local history of African American education played by the school must be established. Schools of this era must retain a historically recognizable form. It is unlikely that they will have been moved from their original sites, but location and setting do greatly contribute to the ability of such schools to convey their significance and any changes should be evaluated carefully.



**Figure 35: John S. Dawson High School, St. Francisville vicinity, West Feliciana Parish.**

b. White  
 1. One-room Schools

The Collinswood School in Tangipahoa Parish is a rare surviving example of a nineteenth century one-room rural school (Figure 36). Built for Herman Charles Collins and his wife Elizabeth Watson Collins, this school began as a private enterprise. Mrs. Collins was a teacher and wished to have a school in which to educate their son and other area children. Charles Graham Watson was born in 1878 and would have reached school age in approximately 1884, which may have been when the Collinswood School was constructed. In the 1890s, it became a public school and is estimated to have continued in operation as such until about 1908. Once its use as a school was discontinued, it became a private residence. In 1976, it was moved approximately two miles east to the



**Figure 36: Collinswood School, Ponchatoula, Tangipahoa Parish.**

town of Ponchatoula to be preserved as a museum, which it continues to be today.<sup>188</sup> Although it has been moved and slightly altered by the addition of a bathroom and another small room to its rear, it would certainly be recognizable to someone from the historic period. Because it is such a rare example of a rural one-room school of the late nineteenth century, it has potential eligibility for its significance in association with this context.

For a couple decades at the beginning of the twentieth century, one-room school houses were places where many Louisianans received their education. As the interest in education increased statewide in the early 1900s, these small schools were built in a great many communities. The limited means of transportation in this pre-automobile age demanded numbers of local schools. This need lasted for a relatively short period however. With the increasing availability of automobiles and the improved roads of Huey P. Long's governorship it became possible for students to attend more centralized schools within their parishes. School consolidation led to the closure of most one-room schools by the 1930s and 1940s. In 1909 there were 1,560 one-room schools and by 1964, there were just ten.<sup>189</sup> Since that time, the majority of these once ubiquitous buildings have either been converted into residences or other uses or have been demolished. It is rare to find them in a well-preserved and easily recognizable condition, therefore such examples are good candidates for National Register listing.

There are two one-room school houses built for white students presently listed on the National Register. The Bayou Bouef Elementary School, also known as the Little Red School House, of 1904 in Lafourche Parish and the Brister School House of c. 1915 in Winn Parish are two excellent representations of the type of small frame buildings that accommodated rural schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Bayou Bouef Elementary School is an example of a public school that was constructed by the school board (Figure 37). It is a typical school house of this period 25 X 40 feet in dimension with a gable front roof and small front porch. Apparently red was a standard paint color for school houses as this school, like many others of the period, was also known as the Little Red School House. A building of a very similar design in Iberville Parish, that has long been a private residence, is also said to have been called the Little Red School House (Figure 38). Bayou Bouef Elementary School was moved from its original location when a new elementary school was built and now stands on the campus of that later school. Although the facilities of that school definitely impose on the feeling of setting of the school, it retains National Register eligibility because of its significance as a rare surviving one room school house.



**Figure 37: Bayou Bouef Elementary School/ Little Red School House, Bayou Bouef, Lafourche Parish.**



**Figure 38: Little Red School House, Rosedale, Iberville Parish.**

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<sup>188</sup> James Perrin, telephone conversation with author, May 11, 2012.

<sup>189</sup> Hilton, Sharp and Gremillion, in Wade, 154.

Unlike the Bayou Bouef Elementary School, the Brister School House retains a very rural setting that transports the visitor back to its historic period (Figure 39). It is an example of a quasi-public school. The land on which it stands was donated by a local family for school use, and the present building seems to have been constructed before it became a public school. Estimated to have been constructed c. 1915, this craftsman building is rather stylish for a rural school house of this period. It is also very well preserved and retains its original interior beaded board walls and ceilings and wood floors.



**Figure 39: Brister School House, Sikes vicinity, Winn Parish.**

## 2. Multiple-room Frame Schools

A step up from one-room schools was the rural frame school with multiple rooms. Some simply had two classrooms while some might have had as many as four classrooms and an auditorium. The auditorium in particular was an asset not just for the school, but for the community which might not otherwise have a large gathering space. There are presently four schools listed on the National Register which fit into this category. The 1913 Lacombe School in St. Tammany Parish is an example of a simple school building much like a one-room school, but with two classrooms (Figure 40). The c. 1910 Hungarian Settlement School in Livingston Parish, the 1919 Shady Grove School in Beauregard Parish and the 1922 Tangipahoa School in Tangipahoa Parish are each examples of the larger type of frame school with multiple classrooms plus auditoriums (Figures 41-43). Like the one-room school houses, these schools provided the only education available in their communities.



**Figure 40: Lacombe School, Lacombe, St. Tammany Parish.**



**Figure 41: Hungarian Settlement School, Hungarian Settlement, Livingston Parish.**



**Figure 43: Tangipahoa School, Tangipahoa, Tangipahoa Parish.**



**Figure 42: Shady Grove School, Shady Grove, DeRidder vicinity, Beauregard Parish.**

They are also now equally rare. Another excellent example of this type, which is not listed on the National Register, is the Broadlands School in DeRidder Parish built in 1919 (Figure 44).



**Figure 44: Broadlands School, Broadlands, Beaufort Parish.**

### 3. Consolidated Frame Schools

Consolidated schools brought an end to the small community schools and were milestones in the development of education in their areas. Far bigger and more stylish than the simple frame schools described above are the 1903 Clinton High School in West Feliciana Parish and the 1912 Montegut School in Terrebonne Parish which represent the consolidated frame type (Figures 45 and 46). Both of these schools are listed on the National Register for their roles in the public education of their communities. Whereas education in the small community schools typically ended with the sixth or seventh grades, large consolidated schools usually offered secondary education which significantly expanded opportunities for students.



**Figure 45: Clinton High School, Clinton, East Feliciana Parish.**



**Figure 46: Montegut School, Montegut, Terrebonne Parish.**

### 4. “Modern” Brick Schools of the 1900s-1930s

The real “coming of age” of education in Louisiana communities was often marked by the building of a “modern brick school.” These facilities offered substantially better learning environments than the small frame schools. Good lighting, heating, and separation of grades were among the many physical improvements in the brick schools. Often the quality and scale of their construction made them community landmarks. While wood-frame buildings were more subject to deterioration and fire, brick was associated with permanence. There are fourteen schools of this variety in Louisiana presently listed on the National Register for their educational significance. There are many others, like the Line Avenue School of 1905 in Caddo Parish that could be considered “modern brick schools” with educational importance that were listed for their architectural or social significance (Figure 47). The “modern brick schools” presently listed on the



**Figure 47: Line Avenue School, Shreveport, Caddo Parish.**

National Register under the theme of education are the following: Mooringsport School, 1911, Caddo Parish; Hammond High School, 1914, Tangipahoa Parish; St. Martinville Elementary, 1922, St. Martin Parish; Bossier High School, 1923, Bossier Parish; Poydras High School, 1924, Pointe Coupee Parish; Mer Rouge School, 1925, Morehouse Parish; Moreauville High School, 1926, Avoyelles Parish; Sunset High School, 1926, St. Landry Parish; Waterproof High School, 1926, Tensas Parish; Bastrop High School, 1927, Morehouse Parish; Fair Park High School, 1928, 1931, Caddo Parish; Walker High School, 1930, Livingston Parish; Golden Meadow Junior High School, 1931, Lafourche Parish; and Iowa High School, 1937, Calcasieu Parish (Figures 48-49). These schools display a wide range of architectural styles and configurations, but they all share the common attribute of symbolizing a major development in education for their communities.



**Figure 48: Poydras High School, New Roads, Pointe Coupee Parish.**



**Figure 49: Moreauville High School, Moreauville, Avoyelles Parish.**

#### 5. Innovation in Plan and Style, 1930s-1950s

After large brick buildings with multiple classrooms and rooms for other purposes were established as the standard for schools, educators and architects began to consider how new plans and modern designs might further improve the learning environment. Prime examples of this type of innovation are the designs of Samuel Wiener for Bossier City High School in Bossier Parish, Winnfield Elementary School, in Winn Parish, and Haughton High School in Bossier Parish; William B. Wiener's Woodlawn High School in Caddo Parish; and Dunn and Quinn's Lake Charles High School in Calcasieu Parish. The only one among these to be listed on the National Register is Bossier City High School, which was nominated for its architectural significance (Figure 50). For Bossier City High School built in 1938 - 1940, Sam Wiener created what he called a "five-building-in-one structure." By employing a nine-foot modular system, the plan establishes a relationship between the distinct masses of each purpose dedicated space for



**Figure 50: Bossier City High School, Bossier City, Bossier Parish.**

classrooms, gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, and manual training shop. The placement of the gym, auditorium, and classroom wing entrances were carefully organized to be accessible directly from the main entrance foyer. The linear classroom wing is oriented with its long sides to the north and south so that its bands of ribbon windows provide optimal light to the classrooms, while two foot overhangs above those on the south face created shading from the sun during the hottest hours of the day. Outside, a long canopy provides shelter for children arriving and departing on buses. Bossier City High School appeared in education and architecture journals of its day.<sup>190</sup>

Winnfield Elementary School also designed by Wiener and built in 1939 employs a similar International style design, materials, and features (Figure 51). Standing in juxtaposition with a Colonial Revival intermediate school directly across the street,

Winnfield Elementary depicts a chapter in the evolution of school design in Louisiana. One of the notable aspects of its original specifications was the selection of different paint colors for every room.<sup>191</sup> Such a treatment was specifically recommended in the 1950 State Department of Education of Louisiana bulletin, *The Planning and Construction of Louisiana School Buildings*, which states specifically “Different tints for all rooms tend to break classroom monotony for the child.”<sup>192</sup> Today, a pitched roof has been retrofitted over the original flat roof of the building so that it no longer retains its architectural integrity even though it is still recognizable. Like the Bossier and Winnfield schools, Wiener’s 1940 Haughton High School has a north-south orientation



Figure 51: Winnfield Elementary School, Winnfield, Winn Parish.



Figure 52: Haughton High School, “H” Building, Haughton, Bossier Parish.

and ribbon windows, shaded on the south side by overhangs (Figure 52). An innovative aspect of its design is a mullion-column framing system with movable partitions to allow for adjustments to room size.<sup>193</sup> It is notable that Samuel Wiener was an advisory architect for the School Building Division of the Federal Bureau of Education. The same Louisiana school building handbook that specified the use of different paint colors also stipulated the north-south orientation of classrooms that are found in Wiener’s buildings. The major concern for

<sup>190</sup> Karen Kingsley, *Buildings of Louisiana* (New York: Oxford University Press), 363.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>192</sup> C. E. Holly, *The Planning and Construction of Louisiana School Buildings* (Baton Rouge: State Department of Education, 1950). 74.

<sup>193</sup> Kingsley, 364.

maximized light and ventilation that recommended this orientation also gave rise to the finger plan in which classrooms were placed in long parallel wings with access to light and air on both sides of the classrooms. William B. Wiener's Woodlawn High School of 1959 is an example of this plan.

As described in the "African American: Schools of the 1950s" section, buildings of this era are some of our least valued and must be recognized for their contributions to the development of education so that they may be appreciated and preserved or they will soon be as rare as school of the nineteenth century. Some of the most innovative school buildings of the 1950s in New Orleans have already been demolished. However, since these resources are more numerous than earlier school buildings, they must retain a good degree of integrity to be eligible for the National Register. When their significance in the area of education is connected to their architecture, schools of the 1930s to 1950s must display good integrity of their significant design and materials.

## 6. Teacher's Housing

Specially designed teacher's housing conveys an important aspect of the development of education in the state. While today we expect teachers to be regular residents of the community, this was not always the case in the past. Because trained teachers existed in limited numbers, they typically had to be recruited from outside of smaller communities and were often offered accommodation in someone else's residence or in a separate teacher's house or teacherage. Some of these buildings were ordinary houses. Others, like the Homer Teacherage of c. 1920 in Claiborne Parish are distinctive because they provided multiple units for more than one teacher or a principal and teachers (Figure 53). There are probably many ordinary residences surviving throughout the state which once housed teachers. In order to be potentially eligible for the National Register in association with this context, teacher housing much have been purpose-built and had a prolonged and well-documented use for this purpose. The significance of a teacherage to local education must be able to be explained. Like other properties, teacherages must be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period to be potentially eligible for the National Register. Location and setting are extremely important aspects of integrity for teacher housing to retain in order to be eligible for the National Register. Buildings of this type might also be potentially eligible under Criterion B for association with a significant teacher or principal.



**Figure 53: Teacherage, Homer, Claiborne Parish.**

## 7. Student Housing

Also indicative of a different era in education is the existence of student housing for public or quasi-public schools. Such buildings reflect the difficulty of transportation and the scarcity of schools, particularly for higher learning. Like teacher housing, in order to be potentially eligible for the National Register in association with this context, student housing must have been purpose-built and had a prolonged and well-documented use for this purpose. The significance of a student housing to local education must be able to be explained. Also as with teacher

housing, location and setting are extremely important aspects of integrity for student housing to retain in order to be eligible for the National Register.

#### 8. Caretaker's Houses

For some years, it was a trend to have a caretaker who would look after the school property housed in building near the school. The c. 1890 shotgun house next to the 1903 Frank T. Howard School No. 2 in New Orleans is an example of this. Until 2011, when it was auctioned, it remained a property of the Orleans Parish School Board (Figure 54). In order to be potentially eligible for the National Register in association with this context, a caretaker's house must not only have had a prolonged and well-documented use for this purpose, but must have had a demonstrable relationship with the process and development of education. For example, if a caretaker was felt to be needed upon the construction of a "modern brick school" it could potentially be argued that that caretaker's residence is directly associated with the development of education in that area.



**Figure 54: The Frank T. Howard School No. 2 caretaker's house stands in juxtaposition to the school building, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

#### c. Landmarks of Integration

In the aftermath of the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, the state of Louisiana immediately did all it could legally to circumvent the federal ruling. The reaction of racist whites to the prospect of desegregation was virulent and on November 14, 1960, it was displayed on national television as New Orleans public schools – or, rather, to be literal, four young African Americans – took the first steps of integration. One of the two schools that was integrated that day was the formerly all white William Frantz Elementary School (Figure 55).

The march of little Ruby Bridges into Frantz, flanked by federal marshals, was later immortalized in Norman Rockwell's painting *The Problem We All Live With*. In 2005, less than fifty years after this event, William Frantz Elementary School was listed on the National Register for its exceptional significance. In 2011, it was nearly demolished as part of a citywide campaign of



**Figure 55: William Frantz Elementary School, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

school facility improvement, but preservation of the landmark prevailed. All around the state of Louisiana, desegregation played out in different ways. A great many schools were desegregated so the eligibility of an individual school for its association with integration must depend wholly upon the specific events, local context, and integrity of that school.

## 5) Special Education Schools

The historic development of special education in Louisiana has received almost no scholarly attention and only one historic building associated with it was identified during this project. The third building of the Louisiana School for the Deaf in Baton Rouge was constructed in 1928 and has great significance for its association with deaf education in Louisiana (Figure 56). The Louisiana Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind opened in 1852 with eleven students in a building formerly occupied by Baton Rouge College. It then moved into an impressive five story building with a view of the river, before relocating to the 1928 campus. It now occupies yet another campus, but the 1928 buildings are a significant part of this school's history. Historic special education school buildings are rare and need only to have a well-documented history as such and retain an easily recognizable historic appearance to be potentially eligible for the National Register. Location and setting are less important integrity issues for these properties, especially when they provided services to students from around the state as in the Louisiana School for the Deaf.



**Figure 56: Louisiana School for the Deaf, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish.**

### B. Homes of Educators

Typically school buildings best represent significant contributions to education, but in some cases it is the home of an educator that is most associated with a particular aspect of educational history. There are several such residences listed on the National Register relevant to this context.

The Jeanes program played a very important role in the education of African Americans. It provided for supervisors who taught and advised teachers at many schools within a jurisdiction and served various other supportive functions for schools. Because such supervisors, or teachers as they were also called, worked with many schools, they were not wholly connected with one. Therefore, the property most associated with Jeanes supervisor, Emma Grayson, is her parents' house which was her permanent address while she traveled for her career (Figure 57). The houses of James Dillard, director of the Jeanes and Slater funds; H. E. Townsend, a prominent educator of Ruston; Ethel Claiborne



**Figure 57: Emma Grayson House, Monroe, Ouachita Parish.**



**Figure 58: James Dillard House, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

Dameron, library supporter of West Baton Rouge Parish; and Ellis Hoffpauir, longtime parish school board member, president and vice-president are likewise listed on the National Register for their association with this context (Figures 58-60). An educator's house may only be potentially eligible for the National Register under the theme of education if there is not another resource that better represents the educational work and life of the significant individual.



**Figure 59: Ellis Hoffpauir House, Esterwood, Acadia Parish.**



**Figure 60: H. E. Townsend House, Ruston, Lincoln Parish.**

### C. Libraries

Long before schools had their own libraries, public libraries provided the only access that many residents had to books. For students to expand their knowledge beyond the basic textbooks they were issued, they would have needed to turn to the public library. There are two Louisiana libraries already listed on the National Register for their educational role and two others that deserve special note here. Before Louisiana had a well established statewide public school system, New Orleans' Second Municipality led the way in providing a model public school system. Among its many achievements was the establishment of a public school library. The philanthropist John McDonogh contributed one thousand dollars to it.<sup>194</sup> Gallier Hall, which is listed on the National Register for its significance in the themes of architecture and politics and government, served as the Second Municipality's city hall. It was here that the municipality's school board offices and public library were located, which adds the theme of education to its areas of significance.

After this first ground breaking library little happened in the way of public libraries in Louisiana. The New Orleans Public Library had its beginnings as the Fisk Free and Public Library in 1896, but it was not until the first years of the twentieth century that the library was able to expand into other branches with the support of a grant from Andrew Carnegie. This grant made possible the construction of a new main library and three branches. One of these branches was completed in 1908 on Napoleon Avenue at Magazine



**Figure 61: Napoleon Avenue Branch Library, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

<sup>194</sup> Devore and Logsdon, 22.

Street, and this building is now listed on the National Register for its role in education (Figure 61). Ironically the public school that stood next to this library and could potentially have benefitted the most from it was McDonough No. 6, an all black school, the students of which were barred from the segregated library. Other neighborhood schools noted the great aid the library provided to them, but this was of course not enjoyed by McDonough No. 6. Relief from the dearth of libraries available to African Americans in New Orleans came in 1915, with the opening of the Dryades Street Branch Library (now Dryades YMCA) which was also constructed with a grant from Andrew Carnegie (Figure 62). This library remained the only one open to African Americans until 1953.



**Figure 62: Dryades Street Branch Library, New Orleans, Orleans Parish.**

It was again the funding of Andrew Carnegie that made possible the establishment of parish libraries in Louisiana. Outside of the cities, public libraries remained nonexistent until 1926. Richland is credited with establishing the first parish library in Louisiana that year through the Carnegie grant secured by the Louisiana Library Association. The frame building first supplied by the school board, and the houses and country stores in which libraries in the parish subsequently existed do not survive or are not known. Therefore the 1928 Nonnie Roark Rhymes Library built in honor of one of the library board members to serve as a more permanent home of the institution is the best example of this milestone in Louisiana’s public library history (Figure 63). For this association, it is listed on the National Register. Libraries have a clear association with education, but to be eligible for the National Register under this theme, they need to have a well documented history of playing a significant role in the community’s education and access to books. In addition, they need to retain an easily recognizable historic appearance. Because a library’s significance is closely connected to its physical access to the community, setting and location, especially, are important integrity aspects for libraries.



**Figure 63: Nonnie Roark Rhymes Library, Rayville, Richland Parish.**

#### D. School Board Buildings

Louisiana’s statewide system of public education was only possible through the successful operation of parish school boards. School board offices therefore, played an essential part role Louisiana’s educational development (Figure 64). Not every school board, however, made notable achievements for the progress of education in their parish. A school board building may be potentially eligible for the National Register for education when it is associated with significant events in education. In order to have potential eligibility for the National Register, school board offices need to retain a good degree of integrity which maintains the historic feeling of their period of



**Figure 64: School Board Annex, Homer, Claiborne Parish.**

significance. Location and setting are very important integrity factors for school board buildings.

#### E. Other

In many areas of school reform in the early twentieth century in Louisiana, women led the way. The Shreveport Women's Department Club is an example of this fact. The club instigated studies of schools, held lectures on education, and gave scholarships. Efforts such as these created the grassroots support that propelled education in Louisiana forward. The 1924-25 Shreveport Women's Department Club building is listed on the National Register for its importance in this area. To be eligible for Register listing in association with this context, miscellaneous properties with a significance to education in the state must be able to demonstrate that significance convincingly and retain a recognizable historic form and feeling.



**Figure 65: The Women's Department Club, Shreveport, Caddo Parish.**

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

This context is limited to the geographic parameters of the state of Louisiana.

## SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

Identification of associated properties began with a review of the Louisiana National Register of Historic Places Database, which includes "Education" as a searchable theme. In order to establish a list of potential associated properties that could be easily sorted by dates, location, or property types, an Excel spreadsheet was created and the sixty-seven properties found in the database under "Education" provided the starting pool of properties. Eighteen of the National Register properties associated with education were subsequently eliminated from the list because they belonged to institutions of higher learning. The initial list was substantially augmented through an examination by Project Developer, Kristin Sanders, of files for some thirty parishes in the Louisiana Historic Standing Structures Survey collection. All of the files identified by Sanders as potentially related to this context were sent to the consultant in digital form. These files were all subsequently reviewed by the consultant and information for each property was added to the list. The consultant also reviewed some parish files in the Louisiana Historic Standing Structures Survey collection and identified additional properties. Another group of properties was identified through the study of *Buildings of Louisiana* by Karen Kingsley. Still additional properties were identified by research of Historic American Buildings Survey files, personal knowledge, and knowledgeable contacts. In addition, as research progressed, other associated properties were periodically identified. Eventually 232 resources representing forty-three of the state's sixty-four parishes were included on the spreadsheet of properties.

The windshield survey, a typical architectural survey method was not employed for this project for two reasons. The primary reason was that geographic area of the state of Louisiana was entirely too large to survey in this manner during the nineteen month duration of the project. Existing survey files were instead depended upon for the type of information this technique might produce. The second reason for not using a windshield survey as a means of identifying extant properties associated with this project was the fact that visual clues are often not an effective means of identifying a property's historic associations. While twentieth century schools can be easily identified, the associated history that would determine their potential significance requires additional oral interviews and archival research. Again, the geographic parameter and time frame of this project precluded research of every observed school building in the state in such a manner.

Although windshield survey was not utilized as an essential tool of this project, it was certainly used in a less systematic manner during travels to properties. One-room or small frame school house and Rosenwald schools were particularly sought along driving routes. However, only one property of interest was identified by this method. This building was an early nineteenth-century frame church very much like a National Register listed one in the area that had been used as a school. There is good potential that a rural frame church such as this too would have been used as a school. However, a letter left in the door and subsequent phone calls did not garner any more information about the property. A crosscheck of survey files for this area revealed that it had been surveyed previously and simply not noted for any possible education associations. This further confirmed the limitations of standard surveys in identifying properties for this project without a more intensive level of interdisciplinary research than could be completed for properties across the entire state within the time limits of this project.

Once the list of 232 properties was established, a review was conducted to identify those appearing to have true significance in association with this context. This selection process was heavily based on property type and dates, with consideration of background history when available. In other words, most nineteenth century properties were selected as being of potential interest, while twentieth century schools were examined more critically. On the other hand, usual examples of a type, such as a teacherage, were automatically marked for further investigation. Most properties already listed on the National Register were likewise automatically considered worthy of new photography. Initially, 105 properties were selected for site investigation and photographic documentation. This list ended up being revised considerably. As soon as field work began, it was discovered that many previously surveyed properties had been demolished while others were found to have been incorrectly identified or associated with inaccurate histories.

When it became clear that chasing after buildings surveyed decades ago could waste valuable project time, attention was refocused on outlining the background history and associated property types of the context. This allowed for a much more informed and selective evaluation of the individual and collective significance of the identified properties. While the rough inventory of properties associated with the context had helped to shape research of the context, the broad historic pattern of the context now sharpened the assessment of the properties. Ultimately, eighty-nine properties representing thirty-one of the state's sixty-four parishes were felt to be notable examples of the property types defined in relation to this context. The list had started with forty-nine National Register listed properties, but the final list actually included

fifty-six National Register listed properties. The reason this balance of seven National Register listed properties had not been identified as associated properties at the outset is that they had been nominated for their architectural significance or their association with other patterns of history. There are many other schools still, which are listed for their architectural significance alone, and most likely have educational significance as well, but were not specifically discussed in this document because it was felt that there were already enough representative examples of twentieth century schools that *had* been nominated for their significance in education. Finally, while the eighty-nine properties discussed above are believed to provide a strong selection of examples of this context's associated property types, this is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all such properties in Louisiana. It is hoped that this context will provide a foundation to build upon and inspire further research of this topic.

#### ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

All photographs by the author except figures 6, 33, 55, and 62 by Charles Leshner.

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