

Freedpeople's Education and its Role in the Establishment of the Modern Public Educational System in the U.S. South during the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Penn School and Robert Smalls in Beaufort County, South Carolina¹

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*Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend nectar
Requires sorest need.*²

1. Introduction

In the history of the United States, perhaps no group of people valued the opportunity for schooling as highly as slaves. As numerous accounts of slavery and emancipation have shown, slaves knew that education was key to their social, economic, and spiritual advancement.³ According to the Census record, by 1860, a year before the Civil War broke out, the slave population was 3,953,760 and the free colored population was 487,970.⁴ Hence when they acquired freedom, hundreds of thousands of newly freed ex-slaves [hereafter, freedpeople] rushed to the local, rural schools being provided for them by Northerners who came South for this purpose. It is no wonder, then, that freedpeople's education received considerable attention

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² Emily Dickinson, 67, *Six American Poets: an Anthology*, ed., Joel Conarroe (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 77.

³ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Chapter 1 "Ex-slaves and the Rise of Universal Education in the South 1860-1880" (4-32) is most useful in understanding former slaves' role in the establishment of public education in post-emancipation South. The following primary source also tells freedpeople's strong passion for education: "Third Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen, January 1, 1867, by J.W. Alvord, Inspector of Schools and Finances," in *Semi-annual Report on Schools for Freedmen* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868).

⁴ The Secretary of the Interior, Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), ix.

from people throughout the country at the time, and that this movement fundamentally challenged existing ideas about how and who should be educated, especially in the South. As is well known from previous studies, the system of public school education originally emerged in New York and New England in the antebellum era.⁵ After the Civil War, free education was, in the words of black scholar and activist, W.E.B. DuBois, “the crusade” of Yankee schoolma’ams’ “gift of New England to the freed Negro”⁶ and it was this alliance of whites and freedpeople, who disseminated the gospel of free schooling for all — regardless of one’s skin color and sex — in the latter half of the nineteenth century in the U.S. South.

As part of the discussion to clarify the role of freedpeople’s education in the establishment of the public educational system in the South, this article focuses on the Penn Freedmen’s School, a major freedpeople’s school founded in South Carolina in 1862, along with a notable black political leader Robert Smalls, who promoted the cause of public education in South Carolina. This article consists of three parts: part one provides historiographical and general background; part two offers an analysis of the Penn School and part three discusses the role of Robert Smalls.

1-1. Historiographical Background

Efforts to bring about and justly evaluate the education of black people have involved extensive academic and political struggles in the past. Beginning in the early twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson, who were prominent African American educators, sociologists and historians born during the Reconstruction period, refuted the work of established white scholars in an effort to alter the political climate that nourished Jim Crow and had resulted in inferior educational institutions and opportunities for blacks. At the same time, native Southern historians William Archibald Dunning and his student Walter L. Fleming led an attempt to recover white Southerners’ perspectives on the Civil War.⁷ Works by the Dunning school depicted freed blacks as inferior children, and portrayed Northerners as troublemakers (“carpetbaggers” in the lingo of the day) who gave blacks too many rights and opportunities, which they were deemed unable to handle.⁸ In his lengthy volumes, *Documentary History of*

⁵ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 148-157.

⁶ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed., Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 18-19.

⁷ An example of school textbooks on history written from a white Southerner’s perspective is John J. Dargan, *School History of South Carolina* (Columbia: the State Company, 1906). In this textbook, the Reconstruction period is referred to “the Dark Days,” (151) and in the section of KKK the author “hope[s] to awaken curiosity [of readers] to fund out more about the order,” (159) and appraisingly concludes; “[i]t is certain that in South Carolina, as in Georgia, Tennessee, and other Southern states, many of the very best people were connected with the order, and for the very highest motives of patriotism” (163).

⁸ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), xviii-xix.

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Reconstruction, Fleming introduced white Southerners' viewpoints about the causes and experiences of the war, as well as their assessments of the consequence of Northerners' efforts to reconstruct South.⁹ Fleming condemned Northern carpetbaggers and blacks, arguing that they caused "a disturbed popular temper" in Southern white societies, and explaining that the outcome of Reconstruction had been fatal because social, industrial, and economic conditions had worsened.¹⁰ According to Fleming, educational opportunities for blacks had caused both class division and moral decline among blacks, and the espousal of "equal rights" had encouraged inter-racial marriage between whites and blacks, which had resulted in increasingly hostile racial tensions between two groups.¹¹

DuBois and Woodson contested this narrative by reminding Americans of the emancipationist strand as a primary cause of the war and focused on the course of its aftermath. In their appeals to white academic or intellectual audiences, DuBois and Woodson stressed the enduring efforts made by Northern white schoolteachers and black people.¹² In particular, Northern white women's dedication to black schooling came to symbolize the emancipationist cause of the war and the radical aspect of Reconstruction. Assessing the progress made in 1865, DuBois acknowledged that "the crusade of the New England schoolma'am" was most momentous, and he referred to this missionary work as the "Ninth Crusade," the history of which has "yet to be written." Women who "waved the calico dresses" led "the rhythm of the alphabet" at the already ruined battlefields of the Civil War.¹³ He further noted; "This was the gift of New England to the freed Negro... that finest thing in American History... [*In educational power it was supreme*, for it was the contact of living souls."¹⁴ A similar idea has been expressed in the classic work on history of American education by Lawrence A. Cremin; "There was a concerted effort to build public school systems along New England lines throughout the South, which waxed for a time amid heated debates over the question of racially mixed schools and then receded in the face of scarce resources and white resistance."¹⁵

The significance of freedpeople's education toward the extension of public school systems was one of the major arguments in both DuBois's and Woodson's studies. In a sense, DuBois's and Woodson's emphasis on the contribution of freed-people's education to the

⁹ Walter L. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction: Political, Military, Social, Religious, Educational and Industrial 1865 to the Present Time*, Vol. I, II (Cleveland: the Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906, 1907).

¹⁰ Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, vol., II, 265.

¹¹ Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, vol., II, 265-267.

¹² DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter 2 "Of the Dawn of Freedom," 10-29, and Chapter 6 "Of the Training of Black Men," 62-76; *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*, 1st edition, 1935 (New York: Atheneum, 1992); C. G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1915), 17.

¹³ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 18-19.

¹⁴ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 18-19.

¹⁵ Cremin, *American Education*, 518.

expansion of American public education was a compelling political strategy that aimed at uplifting the status of blacks in that historical moment. Freedpeople's education represented both the white and black neo-abolitionist's positive assets to the American "progress." By emphasizing the point that freed-people's education had a large impact on public education as a whole, they successfully challenged the Dunning School's interpretation of Northern Reconstruction of the South.¹⁶ Recently, Heather A. Williams has also analyzed African Americans' contribution to the establishment of public education in the South as significant for the history of American education overall.¹⁷ Conversely, scholars of freedpeople's education have criticized this form of education, arguing that it meant that ex-slaves ended up with a kind of education that kept them confined to a lower laboring class.¹⁸ However, as this article demonstrates in the following pages, the story of Penn School does not end with Reconstruction politics. Although it was established as one of the earliest freedpeople's schools, even before the end of the Civil War, and continued to operate throughout Reconstruction, helping to foster the public school movement throughout South Carolina, it became a "laboratory" for Progressive education during the early 20th century. Finally, in the mid-20th century, the Penn School was transformed into a community center, providing education for the wider public. Thus, the school has had a significant role in public education for more than 150 years, extending from its birth and continuing even today.

¹⁶ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; C. G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968).

¹⁷ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Both Ronald E. Butchart and Elizabeth Jacoway's works on freedpeople's education have been classic and exemplary for their sophistication in their handling of primary sources, various important aspects across disciplines (History and Pedagogy) and in-depth analysis. While carefully transcribing original passion and desire for schooling among white teachers and black students, both of their studies have pointed to the ironic end-result of the education. Contrary to the motivation of educators and the educated, their tool was used against students because of the following reasons; 1. educational power went in the hands of enemies, 2. authority of scientific racism seconded the inferiority of blacks, 3. discourse of education and civilization went hand in hand, 4. schools were designed to "mold obedient citizens" or to discipline black proletariat, 5. finally, Northern major philanthropic organizations were paternalistic as they assisted blacks so long as the students appreciated Northern white civilization as superior one. Their works are based on a view that education is a useful tool to socially control the others. This view has been of course developed out of self-reflective criticism of modern, national and capitalist educational system. Heavily influenced by grand theories by Pierre Bourdieu & Jean-Claude Passeron, Michel Foucault, and Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis, 1980s historians of more specific field of education argued that formal educational systems or modern schools that emerged during the nineteenth-century became effective tools of reproducing existing hierarchies through inculcating younger generations with normative and hegemonic values and behaviors. Therefore, for scholars of this perspective, the educational program was a racist, paternalist, elitist, capitalist and/or colonialist venture. Pedagogues, missionaries, social reformers and teachers also could not get away with such negative criticism since they were the "hands" of such assimilationist or accommodationist projects. Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980); Elizabeth Jacoway, *Yankee Missionaries in the South: the Penn School Experiment* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

1-2. Geographical Location, Population and Historical Background

The geographical location, population, and historical background of the Penn School facilitated its becoming a primary center of the experiment of freedpeople's education. The Penn School was located in Beaufort County, at the center of the St. Helena Island (part of the Sea Islands that extend off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina), in the lower coastal areas in eastern South Carolina. Beaufort County is home to Gullah culture, which is characterized by a rich and unique history that slaves carried from Africa and nurtured throughout slavery and after emancipation, due in part to heavily black-populated and the more isolated nature of the region. South Carolina was the first state to outlaw education for black people (as early as 1740). It has also been known as a predominantly black populated state since Europeans' arrival to the New World.¹⁹ In 1860, the U.S. Census showed that South Carolina had the largest proportion of blacks among all slave-holding states,²⁰ and that Beaufort County was the second largest slave-holding county in the state after Charleston County. With a total of 402,406 slaves throughout the state, Charleston County had the highest number with 37,290, Beaufort County was second with 32,530, followed by Colleton County (32,307) and Edgefield (24,060).²¹

In his report of 1862, Edward L. Pierce, a government agent wrote to Salmon P. Chase, who was the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, suggesting that the federal government should pay careful attention to Beaufort County, now that the Union had claimed jurisdiction over the area. He stated, "we must now have thrown upon our hands, for whose present and future we must provide, from 10,000 to 12,000 persons [i.e., freedpeople who had just been emancipated due to the Northern occupation] – probably nearer the latter than the former number. This number is rapidly increasing."²² He also recognized the heavily black-populated character of the region: "This County of Beaufort had a population of slaves in proportion of $82 \frac{8}{10}$ of the whole, -- a proportion only exceeded by seven other counties in the United States."²³ Pierce's report mostly talked about the present condition of the ex-slaves, especially their potential as useful labor for the Union government. Thus, it was mainly to assist them in becoming good laboring citizens that Pierce recommended that the federal government should hire teachers for these freedpeople. He stated:

¹⁹ Thus the region was called as "Black majority" area since the study of early colonial America. Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974).

²⁰ Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, xiii.

²¹ Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 451.

²² E. L. Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal. Report of E. L. Pierce, Government Agent, to the Hon. Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury," (Boston: R. F. Wallcut, 1862), 6.

²³ Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal," 6.

As a part of the plan proposed, missionaries will be needed to address the religious element of a race so emotional in their nature, exhorting to all practical virtues, and inspiring the laborers with a religious zeal for faithful labor, the good nurture of their children, and for clean and healthful habits. The benevolence of the Free States, now being directed hither, will gladly provide these. The Government should, however, provide some teachers specially devoted to teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, say some twenty-five, for the territory now occupied by our forces, and private benevolence might even be relied on for these.²⁴

Although Pierce and Chase may have been unaware of the fact, they were about to take the first steps toward introducing free public or common education into the South, with the federal government considering to pay for teachers at newly organized freedpeople's schools in these areas. In addition, it is a meaningful fact that an "Appeal of the Educational Commission" of Boston, submitted by the Committee on Teachers and on Finance, was attached and included in Pierce's report. This Commission mostly consisted of Quaker abolitionists fiercely engaged in aiding freedpeople on Southern plantations. This "Appeal" stated that the U.S. Government should support the work of aiding freedpeople, paying for Northern teachers' transportation, lodging and substance, while the Educational Commission of Boston offered to pay the teachers' salaries.²⁵ Thus the project, now well known as the Port Royal Experiment, was begun. It eventually became a major part of the "rehearsal" project of Northern Reconstruction,²⁶ taking place amid the political excitement of testing newly freed slaves' adaptation to freedom and their potential to become citizens in a Republic.²⁷

2. The Penn School

Having been established in 1862 as part of the Port Royal Experiment, the Penn School served the Northern neo-abolitionist purpose in educating newly freed blacks in the Union-occupied Sea Islands. Among thirty small cotton-mill and cabin schools for freedpeople built by June 1862, the one that survived long after Reconstruction, into the mid-twentieth century was

²⁴ Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal," 28.

²⁵ Under the Committee on Teachers signed by George B. Emerson, Le Baron Russell, Loring Lothrop, Charles F. Barnard, and H. F. Stevenson, and the Committee on Finance signed by Edward Atkinson, Martin Brimmer, William Endicott, Jr., James T. Fisher, and William I. Bowdich. [Boston] Educational Commission, "Appeal of the Educational Commission" March 14, 1862 in "The Negroes at Port Royal," 36.

²⁶ See Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: the Port Royal Experiment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964).

²⁷ See Rose, *Rehearsal* and Edwin D. Hoffman, "From Slavery to Self-Reliance: the Record of Achievement of the Freedmen of the Sea Island Region," *The Journal of Negro History* (January 1956).

named after a Quaker leader, William Penn. It was called the Penn School to acknowledge the financial support provided by the abolitionist organizations of both Boston and Philadelphia Friends (among them the most significant support came from the Anthony Benezet association within the Religious Society of Friends²⁸). As scholar Scott A. L. Beck has said, “A proponent of common schools would likely also be an abolitionist, suffragette, and/or socialist. The difference was often just a matter of priorities[.]” and “Quakers were amongst the most prominent of northern abolitionists.”²⁹ This insight is especially apt when the term “abolitionist” is understood along with terms such as freedpeople, blacks, colored people, and neo-abolitionists in the context right after the emancipation.³⁰ Another point made by Beck was that Quakers played a seminal role in the dissemination of the idea of public education. Like Horace Mann, the “father of common schools,” Quakers in the North supported the ideas of common schools in the South. Thus, “Quaker educators went south in part to spread the gospel of the common school and universal education.”³¹ Thus it is no wonder that the majority of Penn School teachers were either Quakers or related to Quakers. As Beck continues; “There were large numbers of competent and idealistic northern instructors who sought to follow the Union military conquest of the South with an ideological, political, and spiritual invasion of common schooling for the freedmen.”³²

The first lesson of the Penn School took place on June 18th, 1862, when Laura Towne and her friend and Quaker Ellen Murray started a class for illiterate adult freedpeople. Also, Charlotte Forten, a well-known elite black woman from Philadelphia, who was educated at a Quaker institution, joined as a teacher at the Penn School for a brief period later on. On the first day that the school opened, there were nine adults, and the number increased to forty-seven within several weeks. The school began providing literacy education for grown-ups at night, and gradually their children began attending a day school. With children’s regular and enthusiastic participation in classes, the school was formally organized with a general curriculum. Gradually, the School developed an infrastructure and facilities, including a school building, a liberty bell shipped from Philadelphia, a yard and a library.³³

²⁸ “Quakers” is a nickname of “the Religious Society of Friends” (official name) or “Friends.”

²⁹ The author of this article agrees with terms “suffragette” and/or “socialist” in the quote here as well but it goes beyond the scope of this monograph.

³⁰ Scott A. L. Beck, “Freedmen, Friends, Common Schools and Reconstruction,” *The Southern Friends: Journal of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society*, Volume XVII, Spring 1995 Number 1, 9-10.

³¹ Beck, “Freedmen, Friends, Common Schools,” 15.

³² Beck, “Freedmen, Friends, Common Schools,” 15. Other quotes related to this articles are; “As the missionary schools effort evolved, growing numbers of black teachers completed their schooling and went on to educate their own people” (20), “A system of universal education was soon self-sustaining as a majority of the community’s children went off to college and many of them came back to teach the next generation” (22).

³³ Edith M. Dabbs, “Walkin’ Tall,” April 16, 1963, Dabbs Papers, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), Wilson Library (WL), University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (UNCCH); Laura M. Towne, “Pioneer Work on the Sea Islands,” *The Southern Workman* (Hampton: Hampton Institute Press, July 1901).

Eventually the Penn School's curricula included American History, Physiology, Mathematics, Geology, Literature, Music, Play, World History, Writing, Politics and Economics. Compared with the fact that many other freedpeople's schools only taught the English alphabet and simple arithmetic, with occasional instruction in the Bible and American History, the Penn School offered a much wider range of courses.³⁴ Notably, the Penn School's emphasis on art programs has attracted attention from educators, journalists and scholars from the very beginning of its history. Teachers of the Penn School incorporated music, dance and play—subjects which freed children enjoyed and participated willingly—into classroom activities. Throughout such endeavors, Penn School teachers also became students of black culture—the rich arts of black people that was crafted through their unique and “peculiar” life experiences of slavery. In this regard, freed students brought excellent teaching and learning materials into the classroom at Penn.³⁵



Picture1. Penn School Library, Frogmore, St. Helena Island, S.C. (taken by the author in 2003)

2-1. Reports of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission

The following sections examine the contribution that the Penn School made to the establishment of a public school system in South Carolina to make four main points: (1) as of

³⁴ As an example, text books used at freedmen's school can be a useful reference. Most of these were designed to instruct religious belief and morals among freed-people. Text books for teachers display actual lecture series which enforce moral and life lessons. Robert Morris, ed., *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 6 vols.

³⁵ Wakako Araki, “Beikoku saikenki niokeru kaihomin kyōuiku saikou: William Penn Gakko kyōuishi niyoru kokuzin community rikai wo chushinni” (Freedmen's Education during the U.S. Reconstruction Period Revisited: an Understanding of Black Community by a Teacher of the William Penn School), <*Kyōuiku to Syakai*> *Kenkyū* (Studies on Education and Society) vol.13 (2003), 40-48.

result of the Freedmen's Bureau's support for freedpeople's education, which made it possible for the South to offer its first public and universal school system, the Penn School became one of the most influential freedmen's schools in the region; (2) teachers of Penn helped develop a public school system in the county; (3) graduates of Penn became teachers at public schools throughout South Carolina; and (4) though Penn was a private school, it had a public function all throughout its history.

This section looks at two Reports of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, which were instrumental in the founding of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands [the Freedmen's Bureau]. The Preliminary Report was submitted on June 30th, 1863, while the Final Report of the Commission was done on May 15th, 1864. Both of these reports were compiled by commissioners, Robert Dale Owen, James McKate, and Samuel G. Howe, and were submitted to Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, the person in charge of the Commission. Following the recommendations of these reports, the Freedmen's Bureau was established on March 4, 1865.

In March 1863, representatives of Stanton's Freedmen's Inquiry Commission came to Beaufort, interviewed freedpeople's school teachers about black people's capacity as students, laborers and soldiers. Later in the same year, the commission published a report, and it recommended that a Bureau which deals with freedpeople's affairs should be established. In July, when the Union attacked the Confederacy's fortress on Morris Island, black soldiers fought valiantly. Out of 600 combatants, 270 died and those injured were taken to hospitals in Beaufort. Penn School teachers such as Towne and Forten nursed them at hospitals. Towne must have been especially effective in actual treatments of injuries because she had a medical training during her college years, whereas Forten must have morally uplifted these soldiers since she was very popular especially among white abolitionist Union soldiers. After the contribution and sacrifices made by black soldiers, both Northern newspapers and the government acknowledged the black soldiers' capability as Union soldiers which resulted in the establishment of about 60 black regiments in the Union army by the end of the same year.

In the Preliminary Report, the commissioners suggested that the government should assist freedpeople in their ongoing efforts to educate themselves and highly evaluated ex-slaves' potential to become American citizens:

Sufficient evidence is before the Commission that colored refugees in general place a high value both on education for their children and religious instruction for themselves... [I]t came to the knowledge of the Commission that one of the first acts of the negroes, when they found themselves free, was to establish schools at their own expense; and in every instance where schools and churches have been provided for them, they have

shown lively gratitude and the greatest eagerness to avail themselves of such opportunities of improvement.³⁶ [emphasis added]

[T]he Commission state, with satisfaction, that, in the course of their inquiries, they have found unmistakable indications that the negro slave of the South, ...in many cases, seeking and needing, for a season, encouragement and direction, is by no means devoid of practical sagacity in the common affairs of life, and usually learns, readily and quickly, to shift for himself. This, the Commission think, it is just and desirable that he should be led to do at as early a period as is practicable, without further reliance, for aid or guidance, on the government.³⁷ [emphasis added]

From these statements (especially the underlined parts), it is likely that the authors of the report did not have the idea of providing free education at this point. The passage also makes clear that it was these ex-slaves, with their strong will and desire for knowledge and skills, who initiated the movement that later bore fruit for the establishment of a public school system. As James Anderson, a historian of black education professed, “former slaves were the first among native southerners to depart from the planters’ ideology of education and society and to campaign for universal, state-supported public education.”³⁸

Many historical accounts of Civil War and Reconstruction have shown that ex-slaves had a strong passion for formal education. This is partly because slaves were prohibited, under Southern states’ laws, from acquiring even very basic knowledge, such as learning their ABCs or simple arithmetic. Many reasons were offered to justify this prohibition, including the belief that educating slaves would “spoil” them as obedient laborers, and the observation that educational activities were often linked with abolitionism. Southern states enacted laws to punish whites who taught slaves, as well as the slaves themselves. (See Table 1).³⁹

³⁶ The Secretary of War, *Preliminary Report: Touching the Condition and Management of Emancipated Refugees; Made to the Secretary of War, by the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission, June 30, 1863* (New York: John F. Trow, Priner, 1863), 7. Underlined by the author of this article.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23. Underlined by the author of this article.

³⁸ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 4.

³⁹ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Table 1. Southern States' Laws of Prohibition of Educating Black People

State	Year	Section	Punishment upon Conviction
Alabama	1831	10	"be fined in a sum not less than two hundred and fifty dollars nor more than five hundred dollars"
	1856	1	"be fined not less than one hundred dollars and be imprisoned in the county jail not less than three months, one or both, at the discretion of the jury trying the case"
Georgia	1829	11	[colored person] "be punished by fine and whipping, or fine or shipping a t the discretion of the court," [white person] "be punished with fine, not exceeding five hundred dollars, and imprisonment, in the common jail at the discretion of the court before whom said offender is tried"
	1833	18	"be punished by fine, or imprisonment in the common jail of the county or both, at the discretion of the court"
Louisiana	1830	3	"be imprisoned not less than one month nor more than twelve months"
Mississippi	1823	2	"not exceeding thirty-nine lashes"
Missouri	1847	1	"fine not exceeding five hundred dollars, or by imprisonment not exceeding six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment"
North Carolina	1831		[white person] "be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned"; [free person of color] "be fined, imprisoned, or whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty-nine lashes, nor less than twenty lashes"
South Carolina	1740		"forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money"
	1800		"not to exceed twenty lashes"
	1834	1	[free white person]"be fined not exceeding one hundred dollars, and imprisoned not more than six months; [free person of color] "be whipped not exceeding fifty lashes, and fined not exceeding fifty dollars, at the discretion of the court of magistrates..." [slave] "be whipped at the discretion of the court, not exceeding fifty lashes"
Virginia	1819		"inflict corporal punishment on the offender or offenders, at the discretion of any justice of the peace, not exceeding twenty lashes"
	1831	6	"be fined at the discretion of a jury, in a sum not less than ten, nor exceeding one hundred dollars"
	1849	40	"be punished by confinement in the jail not exceeding six months, and by fine not exceeding one hundred dollars"
Tennessee	1851	4	

This point was recognized in the classic work of American educational history, written by Cremin: "Beyond their determination to learn, blacks manifested widespread willingness to pay for their education, via taxes, tithes, and tuition—an attitude the more remarkable, since it was far from universally shared by southern whites."⁴⁰ Among freedpeople, old and young often learned together in the same classroom, and older people wished for and went to great effort to

⁴⁰ Cremin, *American Education*, 519.

facilitate their youngsters' learning. The testimony of a South Carolina freedman before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission is revealing:

"Q. Did your masters ever see you learning to read?"

"A. No, sir; you could not let your masters see you read; but now the colored people are fond of sending their children to school."

"Q. What is the reason of that?"

"A. Because the children in after years will be able to tell us ignorant ones how to do for ourselves."⁴¹

When, in 1866, the Freedmen's Bureau temporarily decided to close down freedpeople's schools for financial reasons, many freedpeople sent petitions to the government officials. Freedpeople more than anybody else at the time understood the importance and the value of schooling.⁴²

3. Education for Empowerment and Black Agency

As seen in the previous section, education was envisioned as a tool of empowerment for this socially marginalized group of people, as knowledge gave them power to emancipate themselves. On a similar note, historians such as Ira Berlin, Barbara Fields, Steven Hahn, and Heather A. Williams who could be called scholars of the "Black self-emancipation thesis" have portrayed African American's experience as a struggle to survive slavery and to gain freedom as they consciously created and intelligently expanded space for themselves to own.⁴³ This perception emerged out of the generations of scholars who experienced the Civil Rights revolution of the mid-twentieth century and who carried the legacy of the Civil Rights movement into their own work. This perspective was also made possible by the New Social history of the 1960s and 1970s (which was engaged in rewriting history from the bottom-up) and was influenced by the French Annales School.⁴⁴ In other words, this perspective has

⁴¹ Testimony of Harry McMillan (colored), "Testimony of a South Carolina Freedman before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, [Beaufort, S.C. June 1863]," Freedmen & Southern Society Project, <http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/mcmilln.htm>

⁴² Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 5-7.

⁴³ Wakako Araki, "Historical Agency and the Black Self-Emancipation Thesis: A Historiographical Approach to the Argument of 'Who Freed Slaves,'" *Journal of International Studies and Regional Development* No.2, (2011), 33-42.

⁴⁴ The influence of multi-culturalism in the U.S. during the early 1990 should also be considered. It views educational activities as a significant bottom-up process within social/political movements. For historically-marginalized groups in society, education could be a first step toward fulfilling "self-emancipation," or collectively, claiming their rights that would lead to such political battles as Affirmative Action or economic reparation of slavery. Historians who take this last position tend to emphasize the positive and political aspect of education for minority groups.

understood education as an effective arena for marginalized peoples to develop agency for their social and political movements. The scholar Williams has assembled many voices of African American teachers and students from a variety of historical records, finding evidence of African-American students' strong motivation to become educated and African American teachers' determination to teach them, even within texts written by white missionaries and white organizations. According to Williams, African Americans were primary actors in their own education-- they were truly "self-taught."⁴⁵

3-1. Robert Smalls

This section looks at one champion of self-emancipation, who was also a powerful advocate of public education in the South Carolina state government. Robert Smalls (1839-1915), nicknamed "the Gullah Statesman," was the self-emancipated hero among black people in the Sea Islands region⁴⁶ (See Illustration 2). Smalls was born a slave in Beaufort in 1839. His father was a Jewish sail-maker (and his master John and Henry McKee privileged him and his mother Lydia a house slave). Robert Smalls managed to escape to the Northern territorial side on a Confederate ship the *Planter* on May 13th, 1862 out of Charleston harbor during the earlier stage of the Civil War (See Illustration 1).⁴⁷ With his bravery and success along with his participation in seventeen battles which caused damage to the Confederate Army and advantage to the Union Army at the war front, later he was not only invited to the Whitehouse to meet with President Lincoln, but was declared as "the first hero of the Civil War." At the same time, he was rewarded with \$1,500 (one sixth of actual worth because the half of the money went to the government and the rest to the other members on the ship) by the U.S. Congress.⁴⁸ With his own earnings added to the reward money, he had purchased the mansion (\$6,000 worth of real estate according to the 1870 Census⁴⁹ and today worth \$1.29 million on the market⁵⁰) of his former owner in Beaufort where he had lived until his death in 1915. Picture 2 is the house Smalls

⁴⁵ Williams, *Self-taught*.

⁴⁶ Also Ochiai mentions him as "the political boss of Beaufort" or "King of Beaufort." Akiko Ochiai, *Harvesting Freedom: African American Agrarianism in Civil War Era South Carolina* (Praeger Publishers, 2004), 198.

⁴⁷ George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes 1877-1900* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 55. About the identification of Robert Smalls' father, authors disagree with each other. According to Billingsley, the author of Smalls' biographical study published most recently, there are at least four possibilities for his father; John McKee (the owner), Moses Goldsmith (a slave merchant), Robert Smalls (a slave), and Henry McKee (the owner, John's son). Andrew Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free: Robert Smalls of South Carolina and His Families* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 15-33.

⁴⁸ Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 1; The Penn Center & Tabernacle Baptist Church (hereafter, PC&TBC), "A Tribute to Robert Smalls," Tabernacle Baptist Church, Beaufort, S.C., February 16, 2007.

⁴⁹ PC&TBC, "A Tribute to Robert Smalls."

⁵⁰ Brandon Honig, "New Life Looms for Smalls House," *The Beaufort Gazette*, February 17th, 2007.

owned, and today it stands as a site of National Historic Landmark as it was designated so in 1975 by the U.S. Government.

His other nickname was “Mr. Republican” because he was a principal founder of the Party in the County, and he was one of three black politicians who were elected as U.S. House of Representatives from South Carolina — the highest political position blacks could inhabit, after 1876.⁵¹ Wining votes in the “Black majority” district of Low Country, he was elected to the Constitutional Convention of 1868, houses of the legislature, to Congress in 1874, 1876, 1880, 1884, and he was appointed by the Presidents Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley as Customs Collector of Port Beaufort until Smalls’ retirement in 1913 (except for four years when the Democrats were in power).⁵² In acknowledging his accomplishments, schools, streets, the day (Feb. 22 1976), lectures, the Foundation, Military vessel, and Camp (a training facility) of U.S. Navy were named after him.⁵³ (See Picture 3. and Picture 4. for present commemoration of him).

3-2. Link between the Penn School Community and Robert Smalls

Smalls was a hero among many blacks in the South, needless to mention his constituents in Beaufort County, but especially to the people of Penn community as they shared the same political background (Radical Republican and the Union) and foremost belief in education.⁵⁴ When Gen. Saxton visited the Penn School site in St. Helena Island to recruit freedmen to enlist the army in Nov. 27, 1862, he introduced the story of Robert Smalls because the Gen. Saxton knew Smalls was their hero and the story would appeal the audience. According to Charlotte Forten, Smalls’ conversation with Gen. Saxton that was introduced at the meeting made the freedmen realize the importance of ensuring their freedom by their own action, in this particular instance, through the enlistment.⁵⁵ Moreover, it was the people of Penn who encouraged blacks in the county to register for voting so that they could vote for Smalls. Majority of the community gathered when a local white mob attempted to attack Smalls on November 1878. Smalls’ supporters of the community protested the mob with a peaceful march under Smalls’

⁵¹ Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 54-56; PC&TBC, “A Tribute to Robert Smalls.”

⁵² Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 54-56.

⁵³ Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 1-3; PC&TBC, “A Tribute to Robert Smalls”; “Robert Smalls’ Legacy Foundation,” *Official Website and Information Center* (<http://www.robertsmalls.org/foundation.htm>), accessed February 13, 2007. Published by the Robert Smalls Foundation. In addition, a documentary film about him was produced as its title: “Robert Smalls: A Patriot’s Journey from Slavery to Capitol Hill,” in 2005 by DoubleBack Productions LLC.

⁵⁴ *New South*, the newspaper for Republican constituents published in Beaufort was edited by S. J. Bampfield, son-in law of Robert Smalls. Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 78.

⁵⁵ Charlotte L. Forten, *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimke*, ed., Brenda Stevenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 155.

direction of nonviolence.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Smalls was a member of the Brick Baptist Church which was located on Penn School’s campus on St. Helena Island.⁵⁷ In addition, he was always in close touch with Penn School teachers. His daughter Elizabeth began to enroll at Penn School at her age of six. At that moment, the Brick Church was a classroom, and Elizabeth’s teacher was Charlotte Forten. Even after Forten’s return to the North due to her illness on March 1864, Smalls and Forten families continued a good friendship, and Forten helped Elizabeth so that she could get a higher education in the North.⁵⁸ In 1879, when Scottish politician Sir George Campbell visited, Smalls took him around and introduced him to Penn School. Campbell was quite impressed with the educational work.⁵⁹ In his last several years, Smalls visited the School when he had a chance such as the fiftieth anniversary of the school in 1912.⁶⁰



Illustration 1. “The Gun-Boat “Planter,” Run out of Charleston, S.C., By Robert Smalls, May, 1862” June 14, 1862, *Harper’s Weekly*, 372



Illustration 2. “Robert Smalls, Captain of the Gun-Boat ‘Planter,’” June 14, 1862, *Harper’s Weekly*, 372



Picture 2. Ex-Slave Owner’s Mansion in Beaufort Purchased by Robert Smalls (taken by the author in 2007)

⁵⁶ Laura Towne to her family, Letter, Nov. 6, 1878, Penn School Papers (PSP), SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁵⁷ Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 104.

⁵⁸ Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, 109.

⁵⁹ Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 102.

⁶⁰ Lula Mitchell Holmes & Roberta Hughes Wright, *An Island’s Treasure: St. Helena Island, South Carolina Penn School & Penn Center* (St. Helena Island: Pen Center, Inc., 1977), 94-95.



Picture 3. Bust of Robert Smalls At Tabernacle Church, Beaufort, S.C.(taken by the author in 2007)



Picture 4. Tabernacle Baptist Church (taken by the author in 2007)

3-3. The Constitutional Convention of 1868 and the Foundation of Public Schooling in U.S.

U.S. Congressman James Clyburn stated that “‘free public school education for all’ as South Carolina’s most meaningful contribution to our nation’s development” when he mentioned the resolution of education passed at the Constitutional Convention of 1868.⁶¹ It was Robert Smalls who proposed the resolution which advocated for universal, mandatory, and public education supported by State government for all children ages 7-14 years for at least six months of the year regardless of their skin color.⁶² A year before this Convention, Smalls actually purchased a large building, and established “the Negro Children of Beaufort as a school.” (This school is today’s Robert Smalls High School, and they annually celebrate April 5th which is his birthday.) Okon Uya, who has written his dissertation on Smalls and himself was also a politician in Nigeria, also explicitly argues that Smalls’ largest contribution to the new constitution in 1868 was his resolution on education. According to Uya, on March 14, 1868 when the convention adjourned, there were three significant topics—no racial restriction on voting, the election of important state officers, and a call for the system of establishing free public education.⁶³ Though some objected to the resolution due to the “compulsory” nature of education (the term “compulsory” was actually used by Smalls) and the fear of racial mixing in public schooling from the floor, the resolution finally passed.⁶⁴

⁶¹ James E. Clyburn, “Foreward,” in Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, xv.

⁶² Clyburn, *Yearning to Breathe Free*, xiv-xv; Okon Uya, “From Servitude to Service: Robert Smalls, 1839-1915” Ph.D. diss. The University of Wisconsin, 1969), 77-82; PC&TBC, “A Tribute to Robert Smalls.” Southern States had to hold a constitutional convention voted by both white and black men in order to reenter the Union.

⁶³ Okon, “From Servitude,” 81-82.

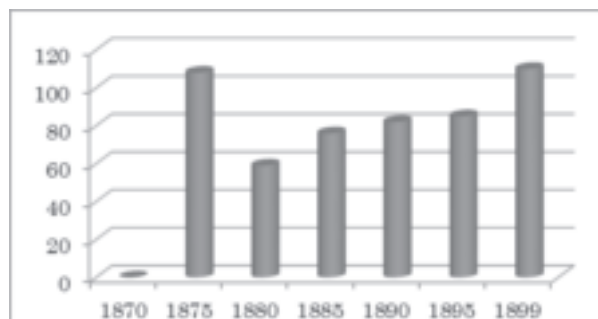
⁶⁴ Edgar W. Knight, “Reconstruction and Education in South Carolina,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 18 (October 1919), 350-364.

3-4. The Establishment of Public Schools after 1868 and the Penn School

Due to the Constitutional Convention of 1868, public schools have opened in many places in South Carolina (See Figure 1 below). Graduates and students of Penn School became teachers at local public schools. On November 27th 1870, the State requested several students at Penn School to become teachers at public schools. In the letter the State highly valued education of Penn School. Already the next day one student in a Normal class (a training course for future teachers) was sent as an assistant at a village school.⁶⁵ Compared with other freedpeople's schools, Penn's curriculum was more varied and offered classes (discussed in the section 2. The Penn School) that prepared students for taking the exam to be a public school teacher. According to the certificate document, skills of orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and English grammar on top of the examinees' "good moral character" were tested. A document of the Teacher's Certificate for public school that was actually issued in 1870 and 1871 states as follows:

The Certificate for a Teacher at Public School in the State in 1870 states "Teacher's Second Grade Certificate. This is to Certify that _____ having furnished satisfactory evidence of good Moral Character, and having passed an Examination in Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography and English Grammar, is hereby authorized to teach in the Common and Public Schools of _____ County. This Certificate to continue valid for the term of one year from the date thereof, unless sooner cancelled." Then three County board of examiners signed and sealed.⁶⁶

Figure 1. Number of Public Schools for Coastal Schools in Beaufort County⁶⁷



⁶⁵ Diary of Laura Towne, Nov. 27, 1870, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁶⁶ "State of South Carolina, Teacher's Second Grade Certificate," 1870, 1871, Christensen Family Papers, The South Caroliniana Library.

⁶⁷ Source: "Appendix C. Selected Statistics for Coastal Schools 1869-1899," Beaufort County, Elizabeth Hoit-Thetford, "An Educational History of the Gullahs of Coastal South Carolina From 1700 to 1900," (Ed. D.) Diss. (East Tennessee State University, 1986), 123.

Not only graduates of Penn School contributed to public schools as instructors, but also teachers of Penn were involved in public schools as trustees. On July 5th 1875, in her letter to her family, the principal of the Penn School Laura Towne said that she was reappointed as Trustees of Public Schools “with many thanks for past services” along with co-trustees such as Dr. Oliver and the minister James S. Brown.⁶⁸ In another letter to one of the Penn School’s benefactors, she has written; “I have been appointed trustee of the Public Schools for two years more, and the work of settling accounts, balancing books, making reports, etc., all comes just before the last Saturday in June the Annual meeting day, so I was too much hurried at that time in attending [sic] both school and Trustee duties.”⁶⁹

3-5. Survival of Schools through Rough Times

In South Carolina violent attacks by the Ku Klux Klan (consisted of both elite white ex-planter class and other “allies against Republican Reconstruction”) were visible already in 1868, and where the federal government intervened in 1871, schools, churches and those leaders and political activists of Northern, Republican, friendly to Blacks, or Blacks themselves, easily became the target of the KKK attacks.⁷⁰ Under such conditions, with the period of Reconstruction about to end, many teachers from the North decided to go back home; many benevolent organizations or private philanthropists withdrew their support for schools, and thus many schools for freedpeople were forced to close. The Penn School suffered financial slough as well. On the day Towne was appointed as Trustees of Public School again for the next two years in 1875, in her letter to her family she has made her mind to continue the school as a volunteer teacher;

I have written to Mr. Cope to say that as the Fund is nearly at an end, and my brother has so liberally provided for me I will not take a salary any longer, but reserve it for the other teachers so that the school may go on as it is for one or two years longer. He answered saying he had no doubt I took great pleasure in this arrangement, as I enjoyed before being a volunteer teacher so much, and apparently he was very glad to have the fund spun out longer.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Laura Towne to T, Letter, July 5, 1875, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁶⁹ Laura Towne to F. R. Cope, Letter, July 9, 1875, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁷⁰ Stephen Kantrowitz, “One Man’s Mob is Another Man’s Militia: Violence, Manhood, and Authority in Reconstruction South Carolina,” *Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, eds., Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and Bryant Simon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 70.

⁷¹ Laura Towne to T, Letter, July 5, 1875, PSP.

Two years later in 1877, when one of the Penn School's financial supporters for eight years Mr. Gannet quit his funding, and almost all teachers at black schools funded by Northern organizations retired one after another, a public school in Frogmore was no exception and was shut down due to the financial shortage. On April 8th, 1877, Towne documented her Trusteeship of Public School:

If I am turned out of Trusteeship, as is very likely next June, there is no certainty of any school there at all, unless a teacher is maintained by private means, and of course the Trustees of the Township would not refuse any such benefaction, and, though the public funds might be misappropriated by them, this could not be if the teacher and supporter alone had the handling arrangement of the pay.⁷²

In less than three months, the Board of Trustees had an annual school district meeting and decided to remonstrate the new State law (which forbid levying school district tax) passed by the Democrats. It was Towne who wrote the resolution and it was adopted by the members at a large meeting which continued the next day where "the most influential men of the island of the blacks" and only two white people (Towne and Mr. Macdonald) attended. In her letter to her family she started with the words: "Our little island has been expressing itself," and described her reason of advocating the resolution:

They were to the effect that St. Helena might be expected from the operation of the new law which forbids district taxes, because the people here are the tax payers, there being on the island 5000 blacks and not 50 whites, 1280 black children of age to attend school, and only seven white children, and because the few white people here are as anxious for schools as the blacks, and as willing to pay the tax voted at these meetings. This is to be published in the newspapers and will show not only the injustice done in forbidding people's providing for the public schools adequately and as handsomely as they please, but also that the St. Helena folks are awake to their rights.⁷³

⁷² Diary of Laura Towne, April 8, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁷³ Laura Towne to family, Letter, July 15, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

Figure 2. Number of Black and White Pupils in Beaufort County⁷⁴

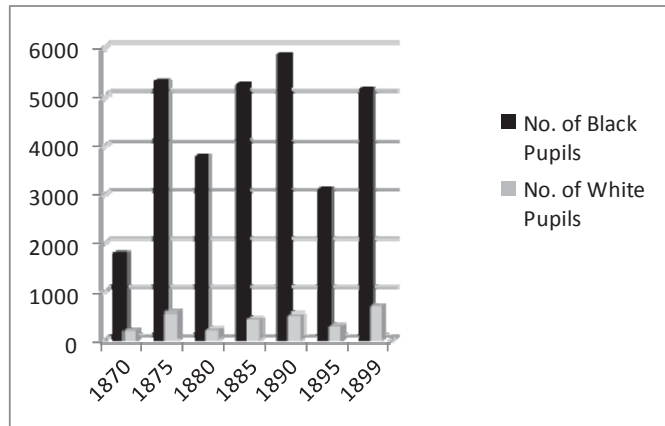
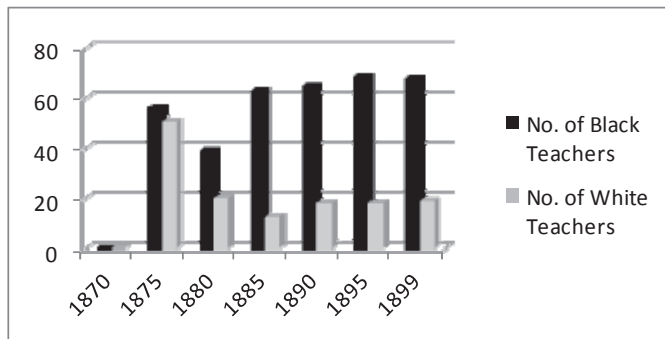


Figure 3. Number of Black and White Teachers in Beaufort County⁷⁵



4. “Bourbons”’ Influence on Black Education

As in the case of Beaufort, education, especially public education, was very much dependent upon political stability, and public schooling was very much a political matter. In the fall of 1877, South Carolina Democrats became powerful after gaining much political control and decided to imprison those Congressmen who undertook Reconstruction.⁷⁶ Robert Smalls was one of them and he was actually arrested in October. On November 12th 1877, Towne was worried about the state of black education and wrote: “I regret to say that matters look quite as dark as ever for the public schools and I fully believe the ‘Bourbons’ in the S. C. will rule, and

⁷⁴ Source: “Appendix C. Selected Statistics for Coastal Schools 1869-1899,” Beaufort County, Hoit-Thetford, “An Educational History of the Gullahs of Coastal South Carolina,” 123.

⁷⁵ Source: Ibid.

that they mean to put an end to the education of the blacks.”⁷⁷

The reason behind these Bourbons’ negation toward public schooling is due to the fact that education was introduced with a force of the Union Army upon their occupation of the South.⁷⁸ It must have been a shock among Southern society. Before the public educational system was established in the antebellum South, only siblings of elite families got education privately such as tutelage and home schooling. Therefore, the Southern elite class did not have a problem without public education as they preferred having control with what they would teach to their children, also having only their white siblings educated. Therefore, as discussed in William Link’s work, education by Northern teachers during the Reconstruction was felt as a threat imposed on Southern society. According to Link, schools established in the South during Reconstruction were a “symbol of the tyranny” of the Northern invasion. Because traditional parental authority and control undoubtedly determined the way schools operated in rural communities as the “neighborhood affair,” the sense of being trespassed by the Northerners must have been felt especially keenly.⁷⁹ For rural Southerners, the school system introduced by Northerners was an imposition of authority shift from local leaders and parents to Northern school teachers, which of course was unbearable to Southern elites. The public school establishment also threatened Southern ways of educating children because in white Southerners’ minds secular schools “corrupted” moral sanction previously retained by Church and home.⁸⁰ Furthermore, it was even more outrageous for Southern white men in power since majority of those schoolteachers were white women, and most of the public schools were for blacks in the black majority area of South Carolina.⁸¹

Around the same time, Penn School was also facing severe financial restraints. In November 1877, the School had to reject over 200 applicants because school facilities were not

⁷⁶ In her letter, Towne talked about injustices done by Bourbons; “Our county is divided in two, thank goodness. It is now the old Beaufort Co., and the upper part is Palmetto Co. Though the election here went all one way, they say it will be disputed in Columbia and up at Sumter, where the majority of votes were republican; the ballot boxes were stolen, opened, stuffed and everything done to make a new election necessary, when intimidation could be brought to bear so as to get a different result. The News and Courier of Charleston, a Hampton paper, says it is disgusting to hear of republican victories in these two places, but that as they are undoubted victories, let the elected men take their seats—(and be d__d, apparently.) This last is my addition. The Bourbons will not say so and we may be obliged to have another election. I believe they will never recognize a republican victory under any circumstances, unless clamor at the North obliges them.” Laura Towne to L., Letter, Dec. 30, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁷⁷ Laura Towne to Cope Brothers, Letter, Nov. 12, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁷⁸ For fugitives who ran out of Southern plantations into Northern territorial side, education started when they enlisted in the Union Army as the Union provided the opportunity of education for blacks as well.

⁷⁹ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 30, 48.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Link, *A Hard Country*, 19; Wakako Araki, “Educating Racial Others, Performing Gender: Freedpeople’s Education in the Postbellum South,” in *Proceedings of the Kyoto American Studies Summer Seminar July 29-July 31, 2004*, Hiroshi Yoneyama ed. (Kyoto: Center for American Studies Ritsumeikan University, 2005).

ready to hold too many students.⁸² It was regrettable for the teacher's side as well since the motivation and quality of those prospective students were high. Towne wrote of the situation:

We never had a more earnest zeal for knowledge manifested for a more prompt, cheerful, glad obedience to all requirements than the pupils show now that they know that their outside resources and privileges are being cut off. How thankful we all are that, unless prevented by some treachery of defiance of law, or by some extreme legislation, our school will go quietly on, and give some few of these people a chance to be educated.⁸³

One of their excellent students, Andrew Reynolds went to study at the State Normal School, but had to return because "that school's being closed by the Hampton faction."⁸⁴ Hampton here refers to Wade Hampton who became the governor of the State from 1876. Reynolds had received a recommendation letter to enroll in classes at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, a pioneer black institution that offered an opportunity for higher education to blacks. But without ample money, he could only dream about it.

4-1. Industrial, Agricultural, and Normal Schools for Blacks

Though some public schools managed to be re-opened, many black schools had to shift their educational goals and styles in a way that was somewhat different from those of white schools. In December 1877 public schools were opened again, and in October of 1878 when Penn School also managed to re-open, Towne decided to instill sewing classes for female students at Penn.⁸⁵ Margaret E. Hegstrom wrote about the resuming of the Penn School; "funds had been raised to support the public school at Frogmore so that she [Laura Towne] could take pride that her civic projects were making an impact. Only politics depressed her as she wrote about the defeat of Robert Smalls and the Democrats' use of dirty trick [sic] and violence."⁸⁶ With the Bourbons in power, education for blacks had to be changed so as for schools to be able to receive funding and support continuously. Notable historian of South Carolina, George Tindall summarizes this point; "Partly as a result of the white supremacy campaign, interest in industrial and agricultural education for Negroes increased. ... The new dispensation

⁸² Laura Towne to family, Letter, Nov. 12, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁸³ Laura Towne to Cope Brothers, Letter, Nov. 12, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

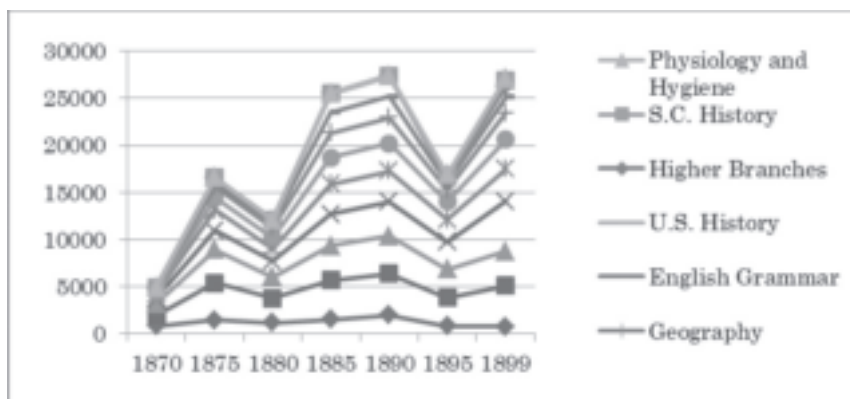
⁸⁵ Laura Towne to D., Letter, Dec. 3, 1877, PSP, SHC, WL, UNCCH.

⁸⁶ Margaret E. Hegstrom, *Penn — A History 1862-1982*, Project Funded through Title IV From the Department of Labor (Columbia: Office of the Governor CETA Division, 1982), 85.

emphasized the subordination of Negroes, but gradually recognized the value of vocational education to the Negro in his subordinate role.”⁸⁷ By the mid 1890’s, S.C. state has passed a law that provided three times more money to white schools than black ones. As Tindall notes; “increase in public school funds had been brought about largely by arguments for white supremacy, it brought some benefits to the Negro schools.”⁸⁸

By 1890, Penn School had six departments; normal, high, grammar, primary, infants, and industrial (sewing, carpentry, and picketing classes). At the same time, the name of Penn School was changed to Penn Normal and Industrial School—and its purpose as well—not just to provide education for free, but also to prepare graduates of district school for higher education and for the State exam to teach at the local public elementary schools. In 1897, the Penn School had an enrollment of 300 students.⁸⁹ In 1901, the name of the school officially changed again to Penn Normal, Industrial and Agricultural School.

Figure 4. Number of Students Studying in the Subject Areas, Beaufort County⁹⁰



4-2. 19th Century Penn’s Aftermath

Penn teachers in the early 20th century followed the footsteps of teachers in the previous century regarding the development of the public educational system. P.W. Dawkins and his family who came to Penn in 1901 took initiative in the agricultural component of Penn School through organizing a farmer’s conference, and participated greatly in the development of the public school system in the County. Dawkins not only became part of the St. Helena District of

⁸⁷ Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 223.

⁸⁸ Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 222.

⁸⁹ Hegstrom, *Penn—A History 1862-1982*, 91.

⁹⁰ “Appendix D. Number of Students Studying in the Subject Areas 1870-1899,” Beaufort County, Hoit-Thetford, “An Educational History of the Gullahs of Coastal South Carolina,” 130-131.

School Board, but he also became the president of the Teachers' Institute of Beaufort County. Furthermore, with Senator Niels Christensen, Jr., he worked for agricultural education in public schools in the County.⁹¹ Rosa Belle Cooley who became one of the principals of the school in the early 20th century, also imitated the work Towne did which was to invite local public school teachers to observe and take lessons at Penn School. Also Cooley expanded the program with instruction of hygiene, Bible history and school management to these teachers at Penn.⁹² According to Jacoway, a scholar of Penn School in the 20th century, "the better prepared and more ambitious" students of the public schools often came to the Penn School, and the Penn principals actually intended to spread the gospel of Penn's philosophy and method of education to small public schools in South Carolina.⁹³

Because to reach out to the community has been one of the major characteristics of Penn School since it was founded in 1862, Penn had the potential to provide public education from the beginning despite the fact that Penn School had always been a private institution. The school has always been characterized by this trait, especially during the turning of the 20th century when the Progressivism (which emphasizes links between living and studying, home and school, local and the central, experience and knowledge, etc ...) became popular in education. During the late 1930s, the State Department of Education and the General Education Board used Penn School to create a program for the State teacher training.⁹⁴ In the mid-20th century, the Penn trustees had decided to close the school because public schools then had already served the Penn's function. Today, it is named the Penn Center and it operates as historical and cultural center for African American people and those who appreciate the significant educational history as well as rich Gullah culture. Thus the Center serves public function of education that goes far beyond the schoolroom.

4-3. Establishing Racially Segregated Public Schools

Though the "Separate but Equal" principle was established at the end of the nineteenth century, racial segregation in public schools was the major issue from the beginning. When Robert Smalls advocated for establishing a system of public schools at the Constitutional Convention of 1868, the issue that was on the floor more than anything else was whether these public schools should be mixed (by white and black children) or not.⁹⁵ The term "compulsory"

⁹¹ Jacoway, *Yankee Missionaries in the South*, 49-52.

⁹² Jacoway, *Yankee Missionaries in the South*, 74.

⁹³ Jacoway, *Yankee Missionaries in the South*, 193.

⁹⁴ Holmes and Wright, *An Island's Treasure*, 113.

⁹⁵ Knight, "Reconstruction and Education in South Carolina," 350-364.

was used by Smalls and some delegates objected to it as already mentioned, but compared with the length of discussion that went on about the racially mixed public schools, it was relatively minor. The fact that the establishing of public school system and racial segregation went hand in hand was not the case of South Carolina only. In many State Constitutions, segregation was declared and ensured when they referred to state supported schools: such as North Carolina (1868), South Carolina (1868), Tennessee (1870), West Virginia (1872), Texas (1876), Georgia (1877), Florida (1885), Mississippi (1890), Kentucky (1891), Alabama (1901), Virginia (1902), Louisiana (1932), Maryland (1939), and Missouri (1945).⁹⁶ This phenomenon was due to the fact that the fear of miscegenation grew larger ever especially after the fifteenth amendment of U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1870.⁹⁷ Both George Tindall and James Anderson, renowned historians of the South, also note the link between public school establishment and segregated schooling.⁹⁸ According to them, it was the white supremacy campaign during the end of the nineteenth century that pushed Southern state governments to support public schooling so as for white children to get a better education than black children. For that purpose, Southern state governments offered more funding for white schools than black schools. In the case of South Carolina, white schools received three times more money than black schools by the 1890's. Though the inequalities in educational opportunities existed, at least black schools were out of the crisis of being shut down due to the successful spread of public school systems throughout the South. Tindall acknowledges the improvement in black literacy; “[t]he decrease of Negro illiteracy from 78.5 percent in 1880 to 52.8 percent in 1900 indicated that progress had been made despite the deficiencies, but that the road ahead was still long and difficult.”⁹⁹

5. Conclusion

This article has contended that freedpeople's education played a pivotal role in the creation of modern public education in the 19th U.S. Southern society by looking at case of the Penn School and Robert Smalls in South Carolina. The Penn School community and Robert Smalls were of course not alone in their strong belief in universal public education. For example, Horace Mann Bond described American people's long-held belief in education as “education as panacea of societal ills” when he introduced Horace Mann's ideas on education of the nineteenth century. Thus, according to both Bond and Mann, education should be universal

⁹⁶ *States' Laws on Race and Color*, ed., Pauli Murray (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

⁹⁷ Yoshiyuki Kido, *Amerika gasshukoku to chugokujin imin (Chinese Immigrants in the United States: the Making of a "Nation of Immigrants")*, (Nagoya: University of Nagoya Press: 2012), 170-178.

⁹⁸ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 5-7; Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 221-223.

⁹⁹ Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 222-223.

as it mends wrongs of society. Lawrence Cremin also notes that one of two points remarkable of educational efforts made in the mid-19th century is that “there was a drift in educational policy toward ever greater reliance on the schools and colleges as institutions of social reform and uplift.” Then he introduces words by William T. Harris, a philosopher of education; “Families, churches, and civic institutions train” while “the schools and colleges” “instruct” so as to make students to “develop self-activity, and, through self-activity, individuality.”¹⁰⁰ Hence, the creation of a modern public educational system in the United States was one of the notable products of the 19th century. Though some contemporary critics of education point out unfortunate outcomes of modern public educational systems (such as centralization, compulsion, capitalist nature, reproduction function of existing classes, soft or cultural imperialism and so on), it would be arrogance for the educated to deny the merits of the modern public education — the system that ensured free education provided to every child. In the case of U.S. society, though it is often ignored especially in educational history books, the education took place for ex-slaves in the South after the abolishing of slavery and the much undervalued statesman Robert Smalls played an essential role in the establishment of universal public educational system in the case of South Carolina. The existence of the Bureau and its emphasized success of educational works made many Southern people realize the necessity of public schooling for not only black people but rather for white children. Henceforth, in one aspect the public educational establishment and black people’s zeal toward education left negative footprints in public education in the South since the “Separate but Equal” principle was set as the symbolic enactment of Southern Jim Crow toward the end of the 19th century. In the other aspect, however, these self-emancipated heroes and heroines, such as people of the Penn School Community and Robert Smalls, surely created foundations for later generation to rise through their efforts to establish a public educational system.

¹⁰⁰ Cremin, *American Education*, 519-520.

19世紀アメリカ合衆国南部、近代公教育制度確立過程における解放民教育の役割に関する考察 — サウス・カロライナ州ビューフォート郡におけるペン解放民学校とロバート・スモールズの事例研究 —

荒木 和華子

本論文は、19世紀半ばのアメリカ合衆国南部において、奴隷解放をきっかけとして展開された解放民教育が、近代公教育制度確立過程において重要な役割を果たしたことについて、サウス・カロライナ州ビューフォート郡のペン解放民学校と黒人議員ロバート・スモールズを事例として考察したアメリカ・社会史研究である。ペン解放民学校は南北戦争中の1862年に設立され、南部における初期の黒人学校としてパイオニア的な役割を担ったが、サウス・カロライナ州の公教育制度確立過程においても大きな貢献をなした。またペン解放民学校の所在地であるビューフォート郡は、解放民のヒーローである黒人議員ロバート・スモールズが奴隷として生まれ、逃亡し、戻って元奴隷主の邸宅を購入して生涯所有し、亡くなり、埋葬された地でもあった。スモールズは1868年の憲法制定会議において、アメリカ合衆国南部における最初期の（人種・性別の如何にかかわらず全児童を対象とした）無償の公教育制度の義務化を主張して以来、生涯一貫して公教育の制度化を訴えた。本論文は、ペン学校とスモールズの接点とその意味についても考察している。再建の反動として、KKKや南部白人の旧奴隷主等が黒人の教育機会や政治的権利の剥奪を企図したことにより、サウス・カロライナ州における公立学校やペン学校も閉鎖の危機に直面し、またスモールズも活躍の場を制限された。しかしながら、カリキュラムなど形を変えつつペン学校は生き残り、ペン学校自体は私立学校でありながら州内の公教育の普及の際の核として20世紀半ばまで学校運営を続けた。20世紀半ばに、ペン学校は閉鎖されたが、コミュニティ・センターとして設立当初から現在まで、広義の公教育に貢献してきたといえる。このように、奴隷時代に教育を禁止された解放民が学校教育を熱望し、教育を支援する北部出身の白人女性教師等の助けを得て、解放民局など連邦政府から教育の資金を獲得し、教育の価値を理解していたスモールズのような黒人議員が地方政治の場においても公立学校制度の必要性を訴え、反動の煽りを受けながらも学校を支え続けたことが、19世紀アメリカ合衆国南部における公教育制度確立に大きく貢献したといえる。