

**The Summer School of the South: Cultural Foundations of the Southern Education
Movement in the Progressive Era, 1902-1912**

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ABSTRACT

This examination of The Summer School of the South explores how southern education reformers sought to ameliorate the South's social problems through a cultural model of public education aimed at inspiring democratically conscious citizenship. From 1902-1912, teachers from across the South attended the six-week residential liberal arts program which blended ideals from the mid-nineteenth century common school movement with breakthroughs in the social sciences. The result was a curiosity-driven model for education that elevated individuals and fostered democratically conscious citizens. The Summer School platformed a liberal humanist vision of progressive education that over time was obscured by managerial progressives' dual emphases on social efficiency and the modern research academy. This thesis traces how participating teachers and faculty used the Summer School of the South to claim cultural respectability, and professional status, aligning themselves with the emerging national middle class of progressives. In doing so, it situates the southern education movement within the broader trajectory of the Progressive Era.

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INTRODUCTION: SCHOOLING THE YOUNG SOUTH

Philander P. Claxton joyfully described the second annual Fourth of July celebration of The Summer School of the South as “that true seriousness which is essentially youthful and happy...it was the *young South*.”¹ Roughly 2,000 white educators paraded around the University of Tennessee’s Hill in 32 state delegations. The procession terminated in an open-air pavilion, where the educators came together in prayer before singing patriotic songs that celebrated each delegation’s respective state’s contributions to the Union. Delegations individually performed songs like “The Red Old Hills of Georgia,” and “The Old Kentucky Home.”² Dr. Thomas Walden Jordan, the former president of Emory & Henry College in Virginia, vividly recalled how Virginia “boldly withdrew from the Union which she aided so nobly to form... [before declaring] her unsullied devotion to the flag and the Constitution.”³ The Fourth of July Celebration allowed for southern educators to express a vision of national patriotism that celebrated their own cultural heritage and centered educational reform as the medium to restore southern society to a dignified position within the Union.⁴

¹ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*; for list of faculty at the second session of the Summer School of the South, see: Summer School of the South: Summer School of the South: University of Tennessee Record, summer 1903. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 6, number 4. April 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized.

⁴ For an examination of nationalist, reconciliatory rhetoric in Progressive Era educational politics, see: Cody D. Ewert, *Making Schools American: Nationalism and the Origin of Modern Educational Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022. For more on the reconciliationist memory of the Civil War during the Progressive Era, see: David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001; Nina Silber, “Reunion and Reconciliation, Reviewed and Reconsidered.” *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.) 103, no. 1 (2016): 59-83; Benjamin J. Wetzel, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Unionist Memory of the Civil War: Experience, History, and Politics, 1861-1918*. *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 22, no. 2 (2023): 184-203. To understand the extent to which the Lost Cause permeated southern culture, discourse, and education-reform politics, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. New York & London: Oxford

In the following stillness, a faculty member read the Summer School's chartered "Declaration of Principles," pronouncing the cause of public education as a central one to social, cultural and economic progress throughout the South.⁵ Despite the school's segregated status, the items advocated for "the education of two races," universal, "State supported, and State directed" public education, "the recognition of the bible in our public schools," educating the "trained brain" as well as the "trained hand," and reiterating their commitment to "make good by our works, to the lasting glory of the Republic."⁶ These Declarations motioned for both "the South and the Union...the equal rights of man and the divine rights of childhood."⁷ The expansion of industrial capitalism into the rural, urban, and mountain South had facilitated agrarian dispossession, labor exploitation, and exacerbated racial violence, all while revealing to educators the region's widespread poverty and cultural backwardness. Summer School educators believed that democratically self-conscious citizens would mend the region's fractures through informed political participation and increased productivity.⁸

University Press, 2018; Jane Elizabeth Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

⁵ Summer School of the South Charter, By-laws, and Calendar, 1902 July 4-1913 August 1, I, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ For the mechanisms of agrarian dispossession undergirding the early New South, see: Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*. On the Redeemers, and the conservative rejection of universal education after Reconstruction, see: Rebecca S. Montgomery, *Celeste Parrish and Educational Reform in the Progressive-Era South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 2017. Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*. 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, 1986. For reframing Progressive Era education reform as America's social policy choice in a global context of social reform, see: Tracy Steffes, *School, Society, and State: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890-1940*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Robert H. Wiebe's framework for understanding the Progressive Era through an emergent, cosmopolitan middle-class of urban professionals seeking to mitigate broad social unrest and political corruption is useful for understanding southern education reformers in the early-twentieth century: Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967. For the cooperative vision of education in southern society during the Progressive Era, see: Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. 88-94, 176. James Anderson, Angela Zimmerman, and Natalie J. Ring have portrayed southern educational reform as a form of labor

Moreover, southern educators involved in The Summer School of the South envisioned that public education could reform the South by cultivating each student to their highest individual potential.⁹ By advocating for “the equal rights of man and the divine rights of childhood,” the declaration articulated a vision of reform focused on the dignity and place for all people in a unified society.¹⁰ At the conclusion of reading the Declaration of Principles, Claxton reflected that the mass of educators “clapped...from our souls.”¹¹ The Summer School’s leadership aimed for nothing less than broad, social conversion to new attitudes about individuals’ equal rights to self-fulfillment.¹² They emphasized that using education to cultivate

control in a national political economy led by northern industrial elites. William A. Link, James L. Leloudis, and Robert Norrell disagree with this reductionist viewpoint. Few have emphasized the tension embedded into southern educators’ “silent partnership” with northern philanthropists. Southern education reformers did their best to court funding from wealthy philanthropists, even when they adhered to their own, distinct philosophies of education. As intermediaries, southern educators often pitched public education as a form of regional uplift that would prevent outside control over local resources during campaigns funded by northern philanthropists. See: James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1988; Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012; Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2010; William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. 125; James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996; Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009. Finally, Clinton B. Allison identified the frustration between Charles Dabney, Philander P. Claxton and the General Education Board in Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. 83-95.

⁹ Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. 1-37.

¹⁰ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Importantly, southern education reformers did not believe in social equality and worked hard to formalize the gendered, racist, and classist hierarchies in state-directed education. Still, they were genuine in their expressions of the liberating potential of education for the region, and for the natural rights of all people to receive a suitable education. They envisioned that good moral character would allow an elite few to rise above their station. See Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. 94, 173-177; Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*. 124-141.

¹¹ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹² Summer School of the South Charter, By-laws, and Calendar, 1902 July 4-1913 August 1, I, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. For more on how southern education reformers looked toward the nineteenth-century method of the evangelical revival to inspire “social conversion” of individuals to the cause of public education across the South, see: Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. 100-117.

self-conscious individuals not only prepared them for democracy, but created an altogether more dynamic, and economically prosperous society without sacrificing individuals' dignity or status.

The Summer School of the South was an independent summer college for teachers founded in 1902 that was hosted annually on the University of Tennessee's campus in Knoxville until 1918.¹³ The Summer School's initial leaders—Philander P. Claxton and Charles W. Dabney—were both members of the Southern Education Board alongside other southern-born educators and a handful of key northern philanthropists—including Wanamaker department store executive Robert Curtis Ogden and railroad magnate George Foster Peabody—who were equally dedicated to education as the appropriate medium to facilitate regional progress. While this intersectional alliance of southern educators and northern philanthropists agreed on the means for reform, they envisioned very different outcomes that reflected distinct educational philosophies. The Summer School of the South was a nearly pure representation of southern education movements' aspirations for the South's emerging public education system, and the reform objectives that they envisioned.

This research examines The Summer School of the South because it richly illustrates the cultural foundations of the southern education movement during the Progressive Era. It argues that southern education reformers involved in the Summer School believed that a curiosity-driven model of public education could ameliorate the South's social problems by inspiring individuals to be politically conscious, intellectually engaged citizens, and passionate workers. This research also traces how that reform mission was undermined by alternative visions of

¹³ The Summer School of the South came under the University of Tennessee's leadership in 1912, which fundamentally changed its character to align with standardized objectives of the University, and state-defined professional development criteria. For more, see: James R. Montgomery, "The Summer School of the South." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1963): 361–81

education that centered on the cultivation of social efficiency, and the values of the modern research academy.

Whereas some historians have described the late-nineteenth century United States as a distended society of island communities, the Progressive Era push to expand state-funded, state-directed public schooling was one element in the larger movement to redefine American citizenship. In the South, educators identified the transformative potential of universal education to unify and elevate a deeply divided, impoverished, and widely illiterate society. They drew on a mid-nineteenth century transatlantic intellectual discourse about the potential of education to cultivate self-fulfilled, democratically conscious citizens, who understood the elevated importance of all labor for society's collective well-being. The Summer School of the South sought to elevate teachers' status to the standard of cultural respectability shared by the emerging national middle-class of professionals at the turn of the century.¹⁴ Its founders advocated for state-funded, universal education that promised to construct a more inclusive model for society in which people's status was derived from their shared claim to public institutions as citizens of the United States, and residents of their respective states.

Philander P. Claxton, the Summer School superintendent, later reflected on the criticism he faced for insisting on such a broad education for teachers.

To many thoughtful people, the 200 and more courses offered...by more than a hundred [elite] teachers...seemed extravagant and unnecessary. To these the answer was:
'Who offers much brings something unto many,
And each goes home content with the effect...
'Who some result intends
Must use the tools that best are fitting.'¹⁵

¹⁴ This thesis refers to the Summer School of the South's student body as "teachers" or "Summer School teachers" to emphasize their status and professional consciousness.

¹⁵ John R. Williams, *Goethe's Faust*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Claxton rejected the traditional assumption that teachers should only be instructed in narrow, pedagogical training and insisted on providing a broad education that aimed to inspire and transform individuals. Claxton's obscure reference to Van Goethe's *Faust*—the subject of his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Leipzig—reveals that his own philosophy of education was undergirded by his belief in the power of art and literature to inspire individuals. While many industrial education reformers were commercial businessmen focused on translating principles of organizational efficiency to society, Claxton aimed to set teachers' "minds and hearts...afame with a feeling of the importance of public education and a knowledge of its vital relations to life."¹⁶ Rather than focusing on social efficiency, The Summer School of the South offered an education that hoped to empower individuals who would be capable of shaping society rather than merely fitting into it.

While the institutional history of The Summer School of the South has been documented, this research endeavors to place it within the broader intellectual and cultural context of the southern education movement.¹⁷ It also seeks to analyze teachers' emerging professional consciousness through the ideas they engaged with. The Summer School's curriculum—which featured courses and lectures from leading educational thinkers across the nation including G. Stanley Hall, Edward Thorndike, Celeste Parrish, John Dewey, in addition to progressive-minded southern educators like Claxton, Dabney, and their contemporaries—featured far more dynamic learning opportunities than the narrow, vocational curriculum offered by the teacher

¹⁶ P. P. Claxton, "Summer School of the South."

¹⁷ Philander P. Claxton, "The Summer School of the South." *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949): 107–12. James R. Montgomery, "The Summer School of the South." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1963): 361–81; Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*.

institutes and normal schools made popular in the late-nineteenth century.¹⁸ The Summer School's organizers rendered the richest-known intellectual and cultural experiences accessible to teachers because they believed in the transformative potential of ideas to change individuals, and centered teachers as the primary agents of progress in the New South.

While national discourse surrounding education in the South since Reconstruction was concerned primarily with black education, The Summer School of the South served white teachers who educated the region's white people. As Walter Hines Page had indicated in his "Forgotten Man" speech at State Normal and Industrial School for women in Greensboro, NC in 1897, the New South's chief victim was the "forgotten and neglected [white] man" toiling in rural poverty.¹⁹ The "revolution" of educational progress was to educate "the forgotten [white] child; and in this...the foundation of a new social order." These forgotten men and women were "capable of development, capable of unlimited growth and elevation...[but] both the aristocratic and ecclesiastical systems of society [had] failed to develop them."²⁰ The challenge for Dabney and his contemporaries was to develop a universal, state-funded and state-directed system that elevated the region's uneducated white people without disrupting the South's racial hierarchy.

The teachers who attended The Summer School of the South were deeply intellectual and engaged with higher education to learn and implement new pedagogical techniques derived from

¹⁸ For more on state-funded higher education for women in the South during the Progressive Era, see: Christine A. Ogden, "'A Large Measure of Self-Control and Personal Power': Women Students at State Normal Schools During the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 3/4 (2000): 211–32; Amy Thompson McCandless, "Progressivism and the Higher Education of Southern Women." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 70, no. 3 (1993): 302–25; Rebecca S. Montgomery, *The Politics of Education in the New South: Women and Reform in Georgia, 1890-1930*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006; Michael Dennis, *Lessons in Progress: State Universities and Progressivism in the New South, 1880-1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

¹⁹ Walter Hines Page, *The Rebuilding of Old Commonwealths, Being Essays Toward the Training of the Forgotten Man in the Southern States*. New York: Doubleday, Page and Company. 1902. 1-47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the child study movement and contemporary breakthroughs in psychology. While these new sciences made universal assumptions about human biology and cognition, teachers were most concerned with using those tools to cultivate students' individual personalities, and to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in a modern democratic society on their own terms.²¹ They participated in a cooperative discourse about importance of universal education for the greater good of society through an individualist lens and sought to harness individuals' innate potentials for the greater good. In this way, education promised to transform primarily rural, uneducated and impoverished white southerners into modern, productive, and enlightened citizens.

To accomplish this, The Summer School of the South aimed to transform teachers' very personalities through exposure to a cosmopolitan, Victorian culture and pastimes.²² Summer School teachers spent much of their time studying English literature, orchestra music, and participated in field trips to travel-destinations including Washington D.C., Chattanooga's incline railway, and the Great Smokey Mountains. This range of experiences elevated the teaching profession to conform with Victorian notions of respectability and gave teachers—many of whom were women—an independent claim to the middle class.²³

The Summer School of the South did more than elevate and dignify the teaching profession—it sanctified teachers' labor. After attending the first session, Emily S. Harrison—

²¹ Leloudis connects this modern pedagogy to Francis Wayland Parker, whose *Talks on Teaching* (1883) and *Talks on Pedagogics* (1894) were influential to Progressive Era educators. Parker, however, derived his ideas from Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, and Johann Friedrich Herbart, all of whom were invoked by common school reformers during the common school movement. Johann Neem has written the best intellectual history of common school reformers' ideology, see: Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. 28-29. Johann Neem, *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017; Carl F. Kaestle, and Eric Foner, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.

²² McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*.

²³ Montgomery, *Celeste Parrish and Educational Reform in the Progressive-Era South*. 45-76.

who later became a prominent, leading education reformer and journalist in Atlanta—boiled down the school’s mission to promoting “the gospel of the new education.” The teachers who attended the Summer School of the South gained “an inspiration and an outlook that shall lift up their whole life’s work.” This included “a deeper realization of the dignity of the teacher’s calling...in this new time when education is no longer for knowledge but for life, when the aim is...to evoke power and the ultimate end of it is to bring every individual into the fullness of his capability for enjoyment and his capacity for service...This is the gospel of the new education.”²⁴

For Emily Harrison, the implication of bringing all people to their fullest capability had as exciting an implication for her own profession as it did for the students that she would teach. Her belief that teachers’ labor was especially significant because it unlocked others’ innate potential reflected common school reformers’ application of liberal Protestant beliefs about the sanctity of individuals. Rejecting the Calvinist doctrine that individuals were innately depraved and to be corrected, common school reformers in the antebellum north applied liberal protestants’ belief that all individuals were created in the image of God to challenge hierarchy in and outside of the classroom. Simultaneously, southern educators at the turn of the twentieth century were deeply inspired by late-nineteenth century social gospelers’ faith in progressive revelation; they believed that advances in science and technology could potentially advance salvation on Earth.²⁵ Emily Harrison’s “gospel of the new education” meant applying new

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin the Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism*. New York; Oxford University Press, 2012.

scientific ideas about learning and human development to cultivate self-conscious individuals who could contribute to the greater good of society.

This sanctified view of education and the teaching profession meant that educators never viewed schooling as a means of oppression or labor control, even when they made paternalistic assumptions about the type of education suitable for people based on race, gender, and class.²⁶ As Johann Neem has argued about the common school movement, education reformers responded to existing hierarchies with a curriculum meant to empower individuals.²⁷ State superintendent and Summer School faculty Seymour A. Mynders expressed that better teachers would prepare “boys and girls...for citizenship and the culture and refinement of their own souls, *both of which are certainly not less important than their ability to do their part in the industrial world.*”²⁸ Mynders acknowledged the broader discourse surrounding the potential of industrial education to increase labor efficiency, but rejected that social efficiency was more important than cultivating self-conscious democratic citizens.

Finally, this research emphasizes southern education reformers’ belief in investing in education’s human resources—teachers and students—rather than other aspects of education. In one of Claxton’s undated manuscripts promoting public high schools during Tennessee’s education campaign in 1907, he stressed the importance of teachers—rather than school buildings, curriculum, and standardized learning materials:

²⁶ For historians who have positioned progressive education reform within a materialist framework that reduces it to a means of labor control, see: Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 1988.

²⁷ Neem, *Democracy’s Schools*. 36-37.

²⁸ S.A. Mynders, “Progress for High Schools: Movement Has Been Growing in the State: Importance of Schools of this Class: Extracts from forthcoming Report of S.A. Mynders, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.”; Education Campaign in Tennessee, 1907, II, Box: 14, Folder: H. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Teachers make the schools, and they make them after their own image and likeness. In a very real sense, the teacher is the school, and the school can never be better than the teacher... What comes out of the situation depends solely on the teacher. If the teacher be incompetent... then the whole thing becomes more or less of a farce; legislation is in vain, time and money are frittered away, hopes of parents are blasted, and the State is cheated out of the resulted expected—good citizenship and intelligent men and women to develop its resources and create its material and spiritual wealth.²⁹

Between 1902 and 1912, the Summer School of the South changed tremendously. In its beginning, it sought to offer the best possible education to those with the least resources. Claxton and Dabney were issued generous grants from northern philanthropists to expose thousands of the region's educators to the best the modern academy had to offer. The Summer School of the South's model of evangelical, social conversion reflected the nineteenth-century liberal protestant faith in individuals' unlimited potential for progress, even when tempered by Social Darwinism. Still, this proved too romantic for emerging scientific philanthropists turning towards rational, measurable, results-oriented reform possibilities. Looking toward modern corporations as models for efficiency, the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board sought to intervene directly in the southern economy. This change in philanthropy coincided with university administrators' growing prejudice against the Summer School's liberal climate, which conflicted with the University's shift towards formal academic research. By 1912, the Summer School of the South was tuition-funded, and more firmly situated in the pedagogical sciences. This coincided with narrower, more exact articulations of social change in contrast to the broader, imaginative ones at the turn of the century.

²⁹ Philander P. Claxton, "Public High Schools- I."; Education Campaign in Tennessee, 1907, II, Box: 14, Folder: H. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

CHAPTER ONE: “[TO] RISE ABOVE THEIR WORK:” CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Historians have often overlooked southern education reformers and northern philanthropists distinct reform objectives and have interpreted their cooperation as indicative of broader ideological alignment.³⁰ While both groups of education reformers were interested in southern reform, they prioritized distinct outcomes: the southern educators endeavored to educate white southerners into democratically self-conscious citizens, northern philanthropists endeavored to make the South’s economy more productive. By the time these two groups formed a partnership at the fourth Conference for Education in the South in 1901, they each had decades of experience operating within parallel institutional networks that aimed to shape southern education more broadly.

In 1901, these two parties entered a “silent” partnership when northern philanthropists agreed to let southern educators be the face of the southern education movement to circumvent white southern voters’ prejudice against black education.³¹ One outcome was that southern educators—including Claxton and Dabney—briefly had lots of influence over northern philanthropists’ investments in education. The General and Southern Education board’s lucrative grants to the Summer School of the South during its first four sessions were the result of that

³⁰ William A. Link, Natalie J. Ring, James Anderson, and James Leloudis have all done this. Interestingly, Clinton B. Allison distinguishes between their motivations. For more, see: James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988; William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986; Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012; James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. Clinton B. Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 93-94.

³¹ General Education Board secretary Wallace Buttrick described northern philanthropists’ role as “silent partners” to southern educators. Philanthropists understood that expanding black education would require southern educators’ direct appeal to southern whites for universal education in the South, see: William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. 129.

brief period of influence.³² Southern educators' relationship with philanthropists was inherently hierarchical, however, because southern educators could not fulfill their reform objectives without access to northern capital.³³ Over time, philanthropists' different priorities steered them towards alternative reform initiatives—including Seaman Knapp's farm demonstration work—that conformed to modern standards of organizational efficiency by making measurable, quantifiable changes in the southern economy.³⁴

“China is Nearer to Them Than North Carolina:” Southern Educators’ Silent Partners in the Gilded Age

White southern educators needed to collaborate with northern philanthropists in 1901 because they had accumulated decades of experience investing in black agricultural and industrial institutions since Reconstruction. Even in the first decade of the twentieth century, southern educators were aware of their ideological differences with northern philanthropists. In 1903, North Carolina journalist and education-reform advocate Walter Hines Page famously complained to a colleague that “the best educated” northerners were “densely ignorant about the South...They do not remotely guess at its thoughts, its aims, its purposes.” According to Page, “China [was] nearer to them than North Carolina.”³⁵

Many northern philanthropists were much more familiar with the South than Page gave them credit for, but this statement revealed southern progressives' perception of northern reformers distinct motivations. Robert C. Ogden, William H. Baldwin Jr., George Foster

³² Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; James R. Montgomery, “The Summer School of the South.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. 1963.

³³ Clinton B. Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 93-94.

³⁴ James R. Montgomery, “The Summer School of the South.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. 1963. 375-376.

³⁵ *The News & Observer*, (Raleigh, North Carolina) April 19, 1903.

Peabody—three of the four late-nineteenth century educational philanthropists who participated in the Conference for the Education in the South and issued grants to the Summer School of the South during its first four sessions—were all Board of Trustees members for either the Hampton or Tuskegee Institutes. Ogden was the president of Hampton’s Board of Trustees, which included Peabody, and Baldwin was the president of Tuskegee’s Board of Trustees. These three philanthropists invested in industrial education for black southerners because they believed it provided the most efficient solution for restoring the South’s social order by preparing emancipated slaves for citizenship as compensated agricultural laborers.

At the onset of Reconstruction, conservative educators representing the Federal government’s Freedman’s Bureau traveled south to facilitate the region’s transition from an antebellum social order predicated on racial slavery to one founded on free labor. Unlike the far-more liberal American Missionary Association—which was rooted in antebellum Abolitionist societies—the Freedman’s Bureau largely ignored emancipated black southerners’ established tradition of liberal education.³⁶ Instead, the Bureau imposed a new curriculum for black education that combined mid-nineteenth century vocational pedagogies with distilled academic subjects to efficiently prepare black southerners for agricultural labor, second-class citizenship, and gradual racial progress.³⁷

³⁶ Heather A. Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005; Jelani M. Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019; Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

³⁷ For two distinct viewpoints on the Freedman Bureau’s work, see: Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010; Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

This set of pedagogical ideas were most formatively shaped during Samuel C. Armstrong's presidency at Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute in Virginia. Armstrong was the son of a Presbyterian missionary in Hawaii and joined the Freedman's Bureau after commanding black regiments during the Civil War. Here, Armstrong adapted his father's manual education curriculum, which trained Hawaiian natives for American society by preparing them for disciplined, sustained labor in addition to teaching traditional academic subjects. Armstrong rejected abstract academic subjects, however, and replaced them with an applied social studies curriculum aimed at imparting basic literacy and civics knowledge. Armstrong invoked Pestalozzi, arguing that the Hampton Institute educated "the head, the heart and the hands" of its black students for their role as agricultural laborers in the New South.³⁸ This curriculum accepted social and racial hierarchies at face value, but created space for an exceptional minority to rise beyond their status through discipline, thrift, and good moral character.

Robert C. Ogden, president of Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute's Board of Trustees, labeled this curriculum "the Hampton Idea" and collaborated with other northern philanthropists to commodify and export it as the solution to rebuilding the South's agricultural economy.³⁹ "Our great problem...is to attach the Negro to the soil and prevent his exodus...The prosperity of the South depends upon the productive power of the black man."⁴⁰ Ogden and other northern philanthropists engaged in adjacent educational projects were convinced that maintaining an exploitable black labor force was the key to the South's future prosperity.

³⁸ David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2020.

³⁹ James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1988. 77, 295, 350; Ogden quoted from Enck, "The Burden Borne: Northern White Philanthropy and Southern Black Industrial Education, 1900-1915." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1970.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 89, 330; Ogden to Gilman, 12 May 1903, "Speech on Negro Education" (1900). Ogden Papers. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

The Hampton Idea also had potential outside of the South. Philanthropists imagined mass-producing the Hampton idea to integrate colonial subjects, Native Americans, nonwhite immigrants, and others marginalized within an expanded, racially diverse American society.⁴¹ “The main hope is in the Hampton ideas. Our first problem is to support the school; our second is to make the school national.”⁴² Ogden imagined perfecting the Hampton idea and exporting it on a mass-scale as an educational solution to the nation’s expanded, foreign-born, and nonwhite populations. Reflecting in 1903—two years after chartering the Southern Education Board at the Conference for Education in the South—Ogden stated the following:

I have many times thought that a school of domestic training for colored people in New York City would be of immense advantage...[Europeans] are holding places in domestic service in this city that would naturally belong to the colored people.⁴³

To Ogden, the Hampton idea could be produced at scale to integrate the country’s nonwhite citizens and subjects into society as efficient, disciplined laborers. He believed that it could facilitate gradual uplift by instilling the values of frugality, thrift, and hard work into the working class. In contrast to common school reformers’ more romantic ideas about education, Ogden viewed it as a tool to stabilize society, improve labor efficiency, and elevate exceptional individuals based on their demonstrated personal merit. This dismissed structural barriers, and rejected any notion that education was intrinsically valuable beyond its ability to instill discipline and useful skills.

⁴¹ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. 1st ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000.

⁴² James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1988. 77, 295, 350; Ogden quoted from Enck, “The Burden Borne: Northern White Philanthropy and Southern Black Industrial Education, 1900-1915.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1970.

⁴³ James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1988. 92, 296; Ogden to Gilman, 12 May 1903, Box 6, Ogden Papers. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Ogden's interest in educating for labor productivity stemmed from his genuine beliefs about the power of commercial prosperity to mend the immense fractures in Gilded Age American society. In the decades after the Civil War, the expansion of northern industrial capital coincided with mass-immigration, widespread labor unrest, and the acquisition of colonial subjects in the American west and across the globe.⁴⁴ As a commercial affiliate with John Wanamaker's department stores, Ogden sincerely believed in the relationship between material prosperity and cultural progress. In his 1903 address to the Conference for Education in the South, he freely admitted that "the blessings of commercialism...were the vanguard of civilization and the ally of education."⁴⁵ The expansion of consumer capitalism into new frontiers was not merely in Ogden's personal financial interest, but it coincided directly with his belief in the linear progression of modern civilization.

Ogden was primarily a businessman who viewed education as a tool for achieving greater economic prosperity. In this same address, he stated that "the great social duty of our age is the saving of society, and...that salvation begins with the child."⁴⁶ Ogden believed that educating children to be productive members of society would ameliorate the nation's social problems, and usher in a new era of prosperity. As early as 1899, he appealed to southern educators at the Capon Springs Conference for Education in the South as "a businessman" who rejected "learning for its own sake...[which] debases...[and] elevates the mind at the sacrifice of character."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Wiebe perhaps frames this best, see: Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967. For a more recent framework of social problems at the turn of the twentieth century, see: Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 33.

⁴⁶ Robert C. Ogden, "The Conference for Education in the South." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 22, no. 2 (1903): 32.

⁴⁷ Robert C. Ogden, "A Few Suggestions Upon the Objects of the Capon Springs Educational Conference, As Seen by a Northern Business Man." *Proceedings of the Conference for Education in the South*. Raleigh, 1899. 33-40.

Ogden believed that the South needed more “two-talent men” who held both vocational utility and intellectual refinement.⁴⁸ This type of universal education held “magic power” that “by the operation of an infallible economic law...evokes the forces that...radiates wealth, refinement, and intellectual power.”⁴⁹ Ogden and other northern philanthropists were most interested in supporting educational projects that inculcated measurable wealth, their ultimate metric of civilizational progress and prosperity.

“The Slaughter of the Innocents:” Southern Educators Respond to the Hampton Idea

Southern educators and northern philanthropists participated in distinct institutional networks of education reform in the decades leading to their convergence at the Conference for Education in the South. Claxton and Dabney came into positions of leadership in southern education alongside a larger cohort of professional educators born in the South during or immediately after the Civil War who pursued careers in education because they believed transforming individuals’ cultural attitude could mend the social fissures in southern society that they experienced from childhood. Over time, these educators distanced themselves from the National Education Association and other national professional organizations for educators to form their own institutions, including the Southern Educational Association, and various southern educational journals.⁵⁰ Collectively, they dedicated themselves to resolving the perceived challenge of translating the liberal ideals of universal education into a racial caste society.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Philander P. Claxton was the editor for the North Carolina Journal of Education from 1897-1901, see: *North Carolina Journal of Education*. Vol, no. 1 September, 1897.

The Summer School of the South was the outcome of late-nineteenth century education-centered reform visions for the American South. Summer School organizers Charles W. Dabney and Philander P. Claxton were multiple decades into their careers as educators at the turn of the twentieth century. Charles W. Dabney—the son of an elite Presbyterian minister and confederate chaplain from northern Virginia—had earned his doctorate in Chemistry in Germany in 1880 and taught at Emory and Henry College before directing the University of North Carolina’s agricultural experiment station. In 1887, he became the president of the University of Tennessee and successfully reorganized the University’s curriculum from its traditional emphasis on classical education for the state’s elite, to the University’s fledgling College of Agriculture.⁵¹ During his tenure at the University of Tennessee, Dabney was recognized as one of the South’s prominent progressives in higher education leadership and positioned the University at the center of the state’s economy.⁵²

⁵¹ The University of Tennessee, then East Tennessee University, was designated the state’s land grant recipient under the conditions of the Morrill Act in 1867. East Tennessee University received 300,000 acres in land scrip worth roughly \$273,000, or over \$6,000,000 in 2024. The University reinvested that money into state bonds bearing six-percent interest and starting in 1871, the University began drawing from this fund at a rate of \$26,000/yr (nearly \$700,000 in 2024). Ten percent, as required by the Morrill Act, was used for the purpose of acquiring experimental farms and agricultural land. In 1879, East Tennessee University was renamed the University of Tennessee to reflect its land grant status, and the mission and purpose of the Morrill Act. Charles Dabney did the most in University’s history to reorient it around agricultural and mechanical sciences, with an eye towards galvanizing the state’s economy. During his presidency, all students were required to take courses in agriculture and five-sevenths of the instruction for all students was either in agriculture or mechanical arts. For more, see: Horace C. Smith, *Honored Calling: A History of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources*. Knoxville: Institute of Agriculture at the University of Tennessee. 1999. For a more in-depth description of higher education in the antebellum South, see: James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

⁵² For more on the evolving role of the University in the New South during the Progressive Era, see: Michael Dennis, *Lessons in Progress: State Universities and Progressivism in the New South, 1880-1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001. Additionally, historians of the Populist movement have positioned state universities as central sites for mediating agrarian reform during the 1880s and 1890s, see: Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Sanders, M. Elizabeth. *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. For the emerging role of the southern university in mediating race relations, and social progress from the Progressive Era to the Civil Rights Movement, see: Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012; William A. Link, *Frank Porter Graham: Southern Liberal, Citizen of the World*. Place of publication not identified: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

While there was a national interest in imposing top-down, Federal reforms in higher education designed to modernize the southern economy, southern educators retained mid-nineteenth century educators' faith in the liberal arts to refine individuals' internal character and personality.⁵³ Dabney most clearly articulated the new vision of the university in his commencement address, "The Old College and the New," at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1896.⁵⁴ Speaking to an audience of graduating students in the agricultural and mechanical sciences, Dabney chose to emphasize the importance of the liberal arts. While the modern university was "a laboratory for research, [and] a real workshop for workers," this "adaptation of education to a scientific age" was not a "contest" between science education and the classical curriculum.⁵⁵ Instead, "both were indispensable to true national, if not individual, education."⁵⁶ Based on this understanding, the university's real challenge was to "undertake the duty of molding the minds of boys according to their mental varieties."⁵⁷ Dabney wanted public education to accommodate vocational training into the mid-nineteenth century model of education for democratic citizenship.

Rather than advocating for a strict education in the applied sciences, Dabney's Protestant inflected faith in the transformative power of education on individuals' character led him to insist

⁵³ Natalie J. Ring illustrates the national parameters of the "southern problem," see: Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012; James Anderson and Angela Zimmerman have probed the coercive dimension of the Hampton-Tuskegee idea as a medium of perpetuating exploitable, black agricultural labor, see: James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989; Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. Other historians have more seriously examined northern philanthropists' convictions and illustrated a more nuanced picture of northern educational philanthropists' objectives, see: Clinton B. Allison, "The Conference for Education in the South: An Exercise in 'Noblesse Oblige.'" *Journal of Thought* 16, no. 2 (1981): 39-55.

⁵⁴ Charles William Dabney, "The Old College and the New, an Address Delivered at the Commencement of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, June 24, 1896." Library of Congress.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

that “the total abandonment of the old classical course” would be “the slaughter of the innocents.”⁵⁸ These students would be denied the refinement of a liberal education, and “set afloat in life without ambition except to get money...without character.”⁵⁹ The perfect education, according to Dabney, consisted “of a complete, harmonious development of the whole man in his threefold nature—physical, intellectual and moral; hand, head, and heart.”⁶⁰ Anything else was “hurtful, for it distorts the man.”⁶¹ The threefold nature of the whole man directly invoked Swiss humanist and educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose emphasis of liberal education for the whole development of the child inspired both common school reformers in the mid-nineteenth century as well as progressive educators, most notably John Dewey, in the early twentieth century.⁶² From Dabney’s perspective, the progressive university did not forego its responsibility to cultivate students’ individual character, but it expanded from that responsibility to prepare its students to shape the South’s transforming political economy.

Dabney’s fear that too narrow an education would amount to “the slaughter of the innocents” aligned with a larger cadre of Protestant educators’ anxieties about the expansion of state-directed education in the South.⁶³ Denominational educators like Charles Elisha Taylor, the Southern Baptist minister and president of Wake Forest College, resisted the expansion of state-directed education out of fear that it could socially engineer a productive, but morally bankrupt society. Taylor published a series of essays in the state’s primary Baptist newspaper, *The Biblical*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner. *American Education: A History*. 5th ed. London: Routledge, 2013. 97-100, 168-170.

⁶³ James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 107-141.

Recorder, as part of a broader denominational campaign against state-directed public education during the state's Populist-Republican Fusion movement in 1894.

Taylor feared that “if it be right and expedient” for the state to educate all its citizens, then “it would seem unnecessary for any private or corporate institutions to exist.”⁶⁴ The resulting state monopoly in education would inevitably create “a fatal error...that will produce an incomplete and distorted being.” Drawing from Cambridge philosopher William Whewell, he stated that secular education would produce “a powerful intellectual machine.”⁶⁵ Extending Dabney's argument that overemphasizing social efficiency in a state-directed system of public education could amount to the “slaughter of the innocents,” Taylor imagined that expanded state control over education could socially engineer a dystopian modernity that embodied the industrial value of efficiency to a soulless end.⁶⁶

Claxton's professional experiences signify his own conviction that schools should educate the whole person, not just their ability to work efficiently. Starting as a graded-school teacher superintended by Edward Moses in Goldsboro, NC in 1882, Claxton rose quickly to the position of superintendent in school districts across the developing piedmont and mountain regions of North Carolina.⁶⁷ During this time, the University of Tennessee conferred him a master's degree in recognition of his accumulated graduate credits from Johns Hopkins

⁶⁴ C. E. Taylor, *Should A State Undertake to Educate?* Raleigh: Edward & Broughton, 1894. Also appearing in *the Biblical Recorder* in separate issues during the spring of 1894.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*; Mid-nineteenth century Protestant intellectuals were broadly concerned with the absence of a single, institutional Protestant influence capable of mediating critical social problems in American society. Charles Elisha Taylor and others envisioned that the church could expand its influence over society to meet social needs, see: Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006; James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*; Charles William Dabney, “The Old College and the New, an Address Delivered at the Commencement of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, June 24, 1896. Library of Congress.

⁶⁷ William A. Link illustrates that the mountain South was the first major arena of southern progressivism, see: William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 79-91.

University and the University of Leipzig, where he studied German literature and wrote a master's thesis examining the tension between spiritual morality and material prosperity in mid-nineteenth century Germany.⁶⁸ In 1893, he began teaching pedagogy at State Normal and Industrial School in Greensboro, North Carolina.⁶⁹ Claxton represented State Normal and Industrial while campaigning for state-directed public schools, leading teaching institutes across the state, and participating in professional organizations for educators. In all these roles, Claxton emphasized students' internal capacities rather than their productivity.

Claxton's address on "The Relation of the Kindergarten to the Public School System" at the National Educational Association's conference in 1894 speaks to the objectives of state-directed education.⁷⁰ Building on romantic conceptions of education's intrinsic value, Claxton envisioned in an expanded, state-directed public education system the capacity to transform society by the refinement of its individuals from early childhood into adulthood.

"[There is] in the child a germ of divinity," Claxton stated, "which is the business of educator to develop."⁷¹ Like Dabney, Claxton was engaging with Swiss ideas about education. In

⁶⁸ This early-nineteenth century German play—which tells the story of an accomplished scholar's arrival at agnosticism, and his subsequent pact with the devil to exchange his soul for the promise of Earthly transcendence—emerged in Germany in the early nineteenth century alongside other romantic literature that coincided with the formation of a modern German national identity in the years leading to the bourgeoisie revolutions of 1848, and German unification under Prussian Otto Von Bismark in 1871. Claxton's thesis closely examines the history of Faustian myth, its connections to Shakespeare, and the moral dilemmas presented to Heinrich Faust, and his love interest, Gretchen, throughout the first part of *Faust*, see: Articles on Robert E. Lee and Goethe's Faust by P. P. Claxton, undated, I, Box: 1, Folder: E. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

⁶⁹ State Normal and Industrial School was established after a broad coalition of educators and reformers interested in alleviating poverty, expanding professional opportunities for women, and investing in teacher education successfully lobbied for the passage of a bill through the General Assembly in 1889 promising annual appropriations of public funds for a normal school for women. For more, see: "First annual course catalogue of the State Normal and Industrial School, 1892-1893." Course Catalogues. Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC.

⁷⁰ Philander P. Claxton, "The Relation of the Kindergarten to the Public School System" in *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses: Session of the Year 1894 Held at Asbury Park, New Jersey*. St. Paul: National Education Association, 1895. 493-494.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

this case, Claxton was invoking Friedrich Froebel, who applied Pestalozzi's romantic conceptions of learning by emphasizing the importance of self-directed play in early childhood education.⁷² Importantly, self-directed learning assumed that children were inherently good, rather than depraved, and rejected the legitimacy of rote memorization and corporal punishment as pedagogical tools in the common school—both of which were commonplace across the late-nineteenth century South.⁷³

Claxton's vision of education reflected contemporary ideas about child development circulating from the late-nineteenth century academy.⁷⁴ "Each stage of education," Claxton continued, "must be allowed to develop, naturally and gradually, out of the preceding stage, and to draw from them its life and vigor."⁷⁵ By drawing from child development theory gleaned from contemporary educators like G. Stanley Hall, Claxton argued for an expanded, vertically integrated graded curriculum starting from early childhood, aimed at cultivating self-motivated, empowered individuals rather than coerced laborers.⁷⁶

⁷² In this case, his ideas resemble G. Stanley Hall's. Although his pinnacle work, *Adolescence*, was not published until 1904, Claxton had taken coursework with Hall at John Hopkins University in the 1884-1885 academic year where he reported that Hall was "most inspiring and informational." Hall was the first doctorate degree in Psychology in the United States in 1878 at Harvard, and studied in Leipzig less than a decade before Claxton, see: Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander Priestly Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 42-48; Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

⁷³ Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001. 4-5; Carl F. Kaestle and Eric Foner, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983; Johann Neem, *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.

⁷⁴ Thomas C. Leonard, "Religion and Evolution; "Progressive Era Political Economy: Adversaries or Allies?" 2011.

⁷⁵ Philander P. Claxton, "The Relation of the Kindergarten to the Public School System" in *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses: Session of the Year 1894 Held at Asbury Park, New Jersey*. St. Paul: National Education Association, 1895. 493-494.

⁷⁶ The attention to stages of education resonates Darwinisms' influence on pedagogy. In *Adolescence*, Hall argued that as humans develop, they experience each stage of the evolutionary process. For a deeper analysis of Hall's *Adolescence*; Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

This view of social efficiency was optimistic, and paternalistic. It often idealized the classroom rather than considering the possibility of frequent student disruption and resistance to even self-directed education. At the conclusion of his address, Claxton asked “how different...the life of the child” could be if they “might ever thus rise above their work, doing it for the very joy and love of doing, rather than from compulsion and fear.”⁷⁷ If education began with the freedom of self-directed play in Kindergarten, “Then might the joy of childhood pass into manhood, and....[students] might escape the slavery of enforced and joyless labor, carrying with them through life the kindergarten spirit of freedom.”⁷⁸ Claxton’s Kindergarten hypothesis—that instilling the joy of schooling in early childhood could cultivate joyful workers in adulthood—was deeply romantic, but contingent on the paternalistic assumption that individuals could participate joyfully in fixed places within a hierarchical social order. At the same time, Claxton recognized dignity in labor and hoped to instill a sense of pride in citizens based on their work. Claxton—and Dabney, to a similar extent—held onto these romantic inspired paternalistic assumptions about the potential for education to refine individuals into dignified, self-conscious participants in a democratic society.

Southern educators publicly engaged with the Lost Cause to inspire educational change and reform.⁷⁹ At the turn of the twentieth century, the South was dominated by native politicians

⁷⁷ Philander P. Claxton, “The Relation of the Kindergarten to the Public School System” in *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses: Session of the Year 1894 Held at Asbury Park, New Jersey*. St. Paul: National Education Association, 1895. 493-494.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ For the civic religion of the Lost Cause and its function, see: Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983. Joseph Wilbur Cash, *The Mind of the South*. New York: A. a. Knopf, 1941.

who invoked the Confederacy to mobilize southerners towards a resurgent future.⁸⁰ By contrasting the region's destitute poverty with the memory of a heroic past, politicians claimed messianic status by invoking Confederate leaders and claiming to lead the region towards self-determined prosperity.⁸¹ In 1898, Claxton published an educational program for Robert E. Lee Day in the *North Carolina Journal of Education* intended for broad implementation in common schools across the South. Claxton printed Lee's statement that "if the subject of education could be of more importance at one period of our history than at another, that period is the present...it is important that general co-operation should be enlisted in its support."⁸² For southern white professionals, Lee was a unifying figure whose image was powerful enough to inspire progressive change; his belief in general cooperation in support of education was a powerful tool to elicit reform.

The educational program included a biographical article of Lee that deployed familiar tropes of the Lost Cause—Lee's moral infallibility, his rejection of slavery, and loyalty to the South—to draw attention to the South's potential for progress through public education. Lee regarded slavery "a great evil, to be abolished in the best way possible...[but] he believed his first allegiance was to his state."⁸³ In this rendition of the Lost Cause, the antebellum South's dependency on slavery was a social sin.⁸⁴ From this vantage, emancipation was liberating and provided the opportunity for redemption through cooperative reform.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. New York & London: Oxford University Press, 2018; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

⁸¹ Joseph Wilbur Cash illustrates the function of the Lost Cause in promoting a "Proto-Dorian bond" white solidarity across social classes, see: Joseph Wilbur Cash, *The Mind of the South*. New York: A. a. Knopf, 1941. 171-179.

⁸² *North Carolina Journal of Education*. Vol, no. 6. January, 1898.1.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 28-29.

⁸⁴ For more on the liberal protestant conception of "social sin" in the nineteenth century, see: Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2011

Claxton also emphasized Lee's sense of obligation to rebuild southern society after the Civil War through education: he accepted the position of presidency of Washington College only to "help the young men of the South and to bring prosperity to the people."⁸⁵ Institutions of learning would pave the way for the redeemed South. Claxton described Lee as "a great warrior, a true philosopher, an upright citizen, a polished Christian gentleman...[and] a model for the young man of today."⁸⁶ Claxton's emphasis on Lee's character within this educational program affirmed southerner's innate morality, and their capacity for cultural progress.

Claxton's Robert E. Lee Day program's objective is partly revealed by the New Years resolutions that Claxton included in the same issue. In addition to advocating "the importance of the right education of all the people," he recognized that despite the South's "present poverty and backward condition," he believed "in the South and its people, with no sectional prejudice...but with a faith born of...the native ability of our people and of our unbounded natural resources."⁸⁷ The South could "assume its rightful place among the sections of the Union, and...among the peoples of the world" through the development of its human and natural resources.⁸⁸ The Lost Cause fostered sectional patriotism alongside national patriotism; it appealed to southerners' dual senses of regional pride and social obligation to restore the region to its imagined, grandiose position within the United States, and western civilization.

Claxton and Dabney were two of many leaders in southern education beginning to formulate a distinct set of principles regarding the potential of education to ameliorate the

⁸⁵ *North Carolina Journal of Education*. Vol, no. 6. January, 1898.29-29.

<https://archive.org/details/northcarolinajou1897gree>

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 2-3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

South's social problems in the late-nineteenth century. Claxton and Dabney drew not only from their own experiences as educators, but also from a new institutional network of white southern educators who believed that education could elevate the region from relative poverty, political corruption, and racial violence. In 1889, a coalition of southern politicians, professors, and school officials founded The Southern Educational Association "without any antagonism to [the National Education Association]"—to promote "the cause of education especially in the South."⁸⁹ Most executive members had been members of the National Education Association, but decided that education in the South was "subject to certain peculiar conditions...not met in the work of the National Association."⁹⁰ While those peculiar conditions are left unstated, southern educators expressed that their own distinct vision of state-funded education could ameliorate the South's social problems.

Undoubtedly, one reason southern educators formed the Southern Educational Association was to distance themselves from northern reformers who were stigmatized by southern home-rule Democrats. Educators worried that northern attempts to lead a national school reform project would stunt educational progress in the South: In 1901, United States Commissioner of Education William T. Harris warned Charles Dabney that such attempts would "furnish...poisoned arrow heads" for conservative resistance to expanding state-directed schooling.⁹¹ The Association's constitution acknowledged that they intended to create "new energy and enthusiasm [for] every teacher and a grander educational interest throughout our

⁸⁹ "Constitution." *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890. 2-3. <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsofann1890sout>

⁹⁰ "How the Association Was Organized." *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890. 5. <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsofann1890sout>

⁹¹ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986. 102, 245; William T. Harris to Charles W. Dabney, 29 Nov. 1901, Records of the United States Bureau of Education, outgoing correspondence, Record Group 12, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

beloved Southland.”⁹² At the turn of the twentieth century, the southern educators formed the Southern Educational Association to platform a politically palatable vision of southern educational reform focused on the potential of state-funded education for the region’s white people.

The central focus of the meeting was to articulate a southern philosophy of universal education that drew from the region’s intellectual heritage and demonstrated its utility. President J. H. Shinn from Arkansas’s paper, “Local Taxation for Schools” was the centerpiece of the Association’s first gathering.⁹³ Shinn challenged the “misconception” that universal education was “the [intellectual] property of Northern-born people,” and instead drew an intellectual lineage from classical antiquity to antebellum southern intellectuals like Thomas Jefferson, and “Swamp Fox” Francis Marion to illustrate that “Free-school ideas are the [common] heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁹⁴ The “prejudice” that universal, public education was distinctly northern was a harmful misconception that denied white southerners’ claim to democratic civilization, and obstructed their cultural progress by associating universal education with carpetbagger tampering.⁹⁵

The southern states were obliged to educate their students because they could not adequately perform their civic duties as citizens of a democratic republic without being able to interpret its laws for themselves. Only when southerners stripped “the law of its externality” would they be “governed by...the just from within.”⁹⁶ Shim argued from the Enlightenment-

⁹² “The Southern Educational Association.” *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890. 9. <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsofann1890sout>

⁹³ J. H. Shinn, “Local Taxation for Schools.” *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890. 27.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 30-31

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 35.

humanist standpoint that citizens could not enter a social contract with the state if they could not adequately conceptualize the law. On the contrary, if the state did not educate its citizens, then it could not justly demand obedience to its laws. “To demand obedience to a law, a knowledge of which could not have been known by him...[was] unmitigated tyranny.”⁹⁷ The South’s failure to educate its citizens interfered with its claim to democracy.

But even more so, he argued that educating for self-governance required the efficient transmission of human culture through teachers. To J. H. Shinn, “Human culture” was “the end of human existence.” Education developed humans’ ability to convey and improve culture for future generations. This “technique” was made “accessible to the individual only through...[the] teacher.” The “very existence of the republic” was contingent on a cultured citizenry capable of self-government:

Hence, if the very existence of the republic depends upon a majority of citizens being... self-governed, and the possibility of this depends upon culture, and culture depends upon education—the act of self-culture—then the very existence of the republic depends upon education: a conclusion fully understood and realized by the founders of the republic one hundred years ago.⁹⁸

Shinn’s logic also opened the door to questioning who should be delegated the responsibilities of democratic citizenship:

So long as the negro is here among us, clothed with all the powers of citizenship, so long will it be our duty to educate him morally and intellectually.⁹⁹

Southern educators viewed their responsibility to elevate southern society from its broad illiteracy and poverty by educating a cultured citizenry. By this argument, southerners could either educate black southerners, who were only “clothed” with the powers of citizenship, or

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 34.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 35-36.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 39.

consolidate white political authority and disfranchise black voters.¹⁰⁰ While Shinn doesn't explicitly state in this speech that black southerners should be disfranchised, it is from this line of argument that white southern educators supported black disfranchisement in tandem with black industrial education because they believed that black southerners would remain biologically incapable of self-government until they experienced generations of evolutionary progress expedited by industrial education.¹⁰¹ From this intellectual standpoint, liberally educated white teachers, along with black disfranchisement, were the mechanisms for facilitating the South's cultural progress into a society capable of self-governance.

Despite their different objectives, southern education reformers and northern philanthropists found it necessary to cooperate in intersectional organizations to overcome three interrelated obstacles: First, many white southerners at the turn of the twentieth century viewed universal education as disruptive and elitist. During one campaign to increase school taxes in 1897, Claxton illustrated the potential of better-funded public schools through a comparison to Massachusetts. Claxton later remembered one individual who interrupted his speech, stating: "I would rather have North Carolina with its simple faith...and its poverty than Massachusetts with its wealth and its isms."¹⁰² Whether or not Claxton's memory fairly represents "Mr. Penny" of

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ This view was consistent with early progressive historians in the academy, see: William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* / by William Archibald Dunning, 1907. This view is also described by William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986. 173-194. For a primary source example, see: "How Education Will Solve the So-Called Negro Problem. A Symposium for the Discussion by Eminent Men and Women on a Question Which Has Recently Been Brought Prominently Before the Public Through the Meeting of Booker T. Washington and President Roosevelt." *New York Journal*. November 5, 1901.

¹⁰² Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander Priestly Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 82.

Apex, North Carolina, it encapsulates many southerners' views that public education was accommodating the broader social transformations effecting the region.¹⁰³ White southern educators' campaigns for public education struggled to operate on a scale large enough to challenge popular attitudes against state-directed education.

Moreover, white southern educators struggled to distance themselves from decades of educational politics regarding northern investments in black education. To circumvent this, southern educators called attention to white southerners' widespread ignorance. In his commencement address at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1896, Dabney lamented figures illustrating white southerners' widespread illiteracy: "Notice that these are not negroes, but grown white men, the descendants of the original southern stock."¹⁰⁴ Southern education reformers prioritized the expansion of state-supported, state-directed universal education within the boundaries of a firmly white supremacist society.¹⁰⁵ Conversely, northern philanthropists noticed that southern education reformers were creating a politically viable platform for public education in the South that could help stimulate the region's stagnant economy.

By financially backing the southern education movement, northern philanthropists could provide the necessary capital for southern education reformers to sustain a broader reform

¹⁰³ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987; Max Fraser, *Hillbilly Highway: The Transappalachian Migration and the Making of a White Working Class*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023; Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. This is contrasted by the Farmer's Alliance push for state-funded agricultural universities, and other Populist stirrings that advocated for expanded common schooling. For more, see: Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

¹⁰⁴ Addresses at the University of Tennessee and Cincinnati, undated, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Charles William Dabney Collection, MS-0325. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁰⁵ For a discursive analysis of conservative political stances on southern education during the Progressive Era, see: Norrell, *Up from History*.

movement centered on establishing state-funded universal education aimed primarily at elevating white southerners. In previous decades, state-funded normal schools and teaching institutes had doubled as seminaries for “the gospel of new education.”¹⁰⁶ Professionally trained teachers advocated for further reform as they matriculated across the region and networked within school districts and teachers’ organizations. Despite making incremental gains towards expanding common schools, teacher institutes, and normal schools, teachers had little influence outside of their own educational networks. By partnering with northern philanthropists, southern educators could advance a broader movement for public education.

Southern education reformers and northern philanthropists formed their “silent” partnership through the Conference for Education in the South. Originally hosted in Capon Springs, West Virginia, the Conference was attended by a small faction of denominational southern educators concerned with expanding denominational schooling, industrial education for black southerners, and missionary education for mountain whites. Quickly, members of the conference appealed to Robert C. Ogden because of his influence at Hampton and began considering the potential a large, universal educational reform project across the southern states.

In 1900, by the direct appeal of former Confederate veteran and southern education reformer J. L. M. Curry, Ogden and his coalition of northern philanthropists signed a resolution concurring that southern progress was contingent on white education, which was the region’s “pressing and imperative need.”¹⁰⁷ Robert C. Ogden became the leader of the movement, but was

¹⁰⁶ For educators’ use of this phrase, see: James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001; Dabney-Claxton correspondence (from Dabney’s files), undated, II, Box: 14, Folder: N. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁰⁷ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986. 103.

acutely aware of southern attitudes about northern-led reform; he described his “relation to the entire movement” as “to inspire” southern educators, who exclusively could acquire local communities’ trust across the region.¹⁰⁸

In 1901, an intersectional coalition of southern education reformers and northern philanthropists at the Conference for Education in the South formed the Southern Education Board to organize a movement for universal education across the south. Additionally, this new coalition agreed to form a propaganda bureau to promote educational reform, and a regional summer school to serve the region’s teachers.¹⁰⁹ The following winter, Dabney hired Claxton to lead the Southern Education Board’s Bureau of Information and to begin planning a regional summer school for teachers in Knoxville, TN. Inspired by what he learned from attending the conference as Ogden’s personal guest, John Rockefeller Jr. returned from Winston-Salem to New York City to begin organizing the General Education Board with his father for the purpose of facilitating progress through education in the South.

For Dabney, Claxton, and other southern educators, securing a consistent line of funding from Ogden, Peabody, and other philanthropists enabled them to stage broader projects. The fragility of this arrangement became clear in later years as the Southern Education Board lost influence and the General Education Board became increasingly focused on scientific philanthropy that sought measurable, objective outcomes. From 1902 to 1912, however, the Summer School of the South conducted an all-out campaign against “the slaughter of the innocents.”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 102.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*; Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949)

CHAPTER TWO: “TO BREAK DOWN THE ARTIFICIAL BARRIER:” EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY AT THE SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE SOUTH

The Summer School of the South made the residential, liberal arts college experience—which had traditionally been reserved for aristocratic elites—an accessible experience for teachers, reflecting a Progressive Era movement to purify democracy. At the center of the Summer School of the South was the insistence of developing what Emily Harrison and others referred to as “the possession...of personality...[which] marks the teacher a success or failure.” Teachers immersed in the Summer School’s intellectual and cultural life underwent a personally transformative experience gleaned from experiencing a curiosity-driven model of learning for life. The Summer School inspired teachers to become lifelong learners who continuously sought to contribute to the common good. Collectively, these faculty instilled in Summer School teachers a sanctified sense of purpose that emphasized the potential of child-centered teaching to elevate southern society.

“An Inspiration and an Outlook:” Southern Teachers’ Crusade for Democracy

In the early months of 1902, Philander P. Claxton mailed promotional pamphlets across the region advertising “The Summer School of the South.” Its mission was “to help the teachers of the South to better scholarship and to greater power in teaching.”¹¹⁰ In January, Charles Dabney hired Claxton to move from Greensboro to Knoxville and take up the Southern Education Board’s propaganda wing—the Bureau of Investigation and Information—to promote expanding public education across the South. Additionally, Dabney asked Claxton “to plan and

¹¹⁰ In following years, Dabney expressed that the summer school’s additional goals were “to promote a crusade against ignorance, to build up the commonwealths of the south to the positions which...they once occupied...[and] to make missionaries of the teachers,” see: *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). June 23, 1903.

organize” a summer school for teachers on the University of Tennessee’s campus. Claxton aimed to combine the accessibility of North Carolina’s mobile institutes with the residential academic experience from Chapel Hill’s summer institutes. Even more so, Claxton worked to “offer...as good opportunities as can be found in any summer school in any part of the country.” It embodied the Chautauqua ideal that democratizing higher education could alleviate social problems in late-nineteenth century American society through the medium of an enlightened citizenry.¹¹¹ The Summer School operated from the assumption that the South’s rural teachers—most of whom Claxton acknowledged were women with “little school education...[or] professional preparation”—were dignified professionals worthy of engaging with cutting-edge intellectual ideas circulating in the nation’s most prestigious academies. The Summer School of the South offered teachers the opportunity to pursue an education that improved their status as credentialed professionals, and for a small fraction of their annual salary.¹¹²

Southern Education Board and University of Tennessee administrators failed to anticipate its mass appeal in the months preceding the first session. Claxton never seriously considered his initial budgeting constraints and leaned fully into Dabney’s assurance that he would personally assume any additional financial risk. While the University of Tennessee’s faculty, administrators, and members of the Southern Education Board predicted that the total enrollment would be between 150 and 300 teachers, which reflected the University’s standard size of 350 students

¹¹¹ John C. Scott, “The Chautauqua Movement: Revolution in Popular Higher Education.” *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)* 70, no. 4 (1999): 389–412.

¹¹² Teachers from across the country received promotional railroad rates to travel to Knoxville, where they could register for the entire six-week summer school for \$5.00. Room and board arrangements were made to cost between \$3.00-\$5.00/wk. The total cost of attendance was a considerable fraction of attending teachers’ annual salaries, but superintendents from urban districts like Knoxville, Atlanta, and Washington D.C. often paid their teachers’ expenses. In 1899, white teachers earned an average of \$88 per year in North Carolina.

during the academic year, Claxton insisted that Dabney needed to build a pavilion capable of seating 1,000 people. Dabney initially dismissed this “fanciful thinking,” but as he saw Claxton scaling up his promotional efforts, he quietly coordinated with faculty members to prepare accommodations for 300-400 out-of-town residents. By Spring, Claxton had mailed 80,000 promotional articles across the South and was conducting an energetic promotional campaign by rail across the South. By late spring, Dabney anxiously confided to Ogden that he anticipated needing to accommodate as many as 1,000 out-of-town residents. Dabney quickly arranged for the construction of Jefferson Hall, an open-sided pavilion on the top of the university’s hill. Even his own estimates were shy; by the end of the registration period on June 19, 1,600 teachers had enrolled for the Summer School on a campus accustomed to registering 350 students per semester.

The Summer School enrolled 1902 teachers by the end of the six-week session. Claxton later acknowledged that he “suspected...that the exact number was made to correspond with the year 1902, which could be done quite easily...[this was] good poetic fiction, as near factual as poetry and other imaginative literature ever is.”¹¹³ Claxton and Dabney took pride in its massive scale, however, and reported to the *Knoxville Sentinel* that, after taking into account the 1,328 day-tickets sold, at least 3,000 people attended the Summer School during its first session.¹¹⁴ The Summer School of the South primarily served southern teachers, but educators from across the nation attended.¹¹⁵ Still, Tennessee was the most heavily represented state with 902 teachers. In

¹¹³ Dabney, Charles W., Correspondence, 1920-1950, Box: 6, Folder: 8. University of Tennessee Presidents' Papers, AR-0001. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹¹⁴ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 31, 1902

¹¹⁵ Other heavily represented states were as following: Alabama—169, Georgia—255, Mississippi—105, North Carolina—164, South Carolina—55. Teachers from the ex-Confederate states totaled at 1860, and 9 of the remaining 42 were from southern border states: West Virginia, Missouri, Maryland, Kansas, Indiana, and Indian

subsequent years, Claxton noted that a disproportionate number of enrolled teachers from Tennessee were from Knoxville's city school district, which paid their tuition. While the Summer School claimed a cosmopolitan appeal, and indeed—would host singular teachers from Japan, India, Canada, and Puerto Rico in the following term—it fundamentally served the South.¹¹⁶

The sheer size of the Summer School brought it into the center of Knoxville's public life. Teachers found room and board in Knoxville and the Summer School teachers frequently made excursions into the city.¹¹⁷ The annual influx of Summer School teachers into Knoxville generated a flourishing seasonal tourist industry around the University's campus that housed, fed, and provided laundry services for Summer School teachers. The sharp influx of teachers to campus forced the University's post office to double in size—a substantial improvement that was still ill-equipped to handle a student population that was five times larger than its standard capacity during the academic year. When describing this bottleneck, Claxton complained that as visitors, Summer School teachers and faculty “send out and receive more mail...[and] professors, being very prominent...receive and answer great masses of mail daily.” To make matters worse, the surging demand caused stamp prices to “suddenly and enormously”

Territory (Oklahoma). The 33 remaining represented New York, New England, the Mid-Atlantic and the Midwest—less than 2% of the Summer School's total attendance.

¹¹⁶ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹¹⁷ The spectator reports student excursions to church at St. John's Episcopal, Church Street Methodist Episcopal, and First Presbyterian—all located in downtown. Students also frequently attended shows at Well's Bijou Theater on Gay Street, picnicked in Fountain City, and enjoyed social boat rides on the Tennessee River. The Summer School Spectator (photocopies), 1909 July 6-1910 July 29, I, Box: 1, Folder: 2. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

increase.¹¹⁸ The Summer School of the South stretched the University's capacity to accommodate its students and faculty.

Knoxville residents expressed considerable curiosity about Summer School activities. Knoxville's primary newspaper operated its own press bureau with a team of journalists dedicated to reporting events, lectures, and news from the Summer School "up to the hour of going to press each day."¹¹⁹ While the University could accommodate 400 teachers in its dormitories, other teachers were directed "[to] take lodgings in the city...in houses at a distance from the University...as will permit paying street car fare without going beyond...\$6.00 a week for living." Upon application, teachers were promised "competent assistance" in arranging their accommodation in hotels, boarding houses, and private families taking lodgers.¹²⁰ At the end of the first session, teachers reported that Knoxville's people were generous hosts, exerting themselves to make sure that they were "included in the social pleasures of the city."¹²¹ Prominent local minister John H. Frazee addressed the teachers on behalf of Knoxville: "Knoxville was glad to have them in her boundaries...and wished them Godspeed on their way."¹²² The Summer School was one of the University's many Progressive Era initiatives—including cooperative creameries and agricultural extension work—that broke down the barriers between the college and the community.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹¹⁹ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). June 23, 1903.

¹²⁰ Summer School of the South: University of Tennessee Record, summer 1903. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 6, number 4. April 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized.

¹²¹ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 31, 1902.

¹²² *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). August 5, 1904.

¹²³ Patrick Ramey, "The Historic UT Creamery: How the University of Tennessee Changed Knoxville's Relationship with Ice Cream." *Knoxville History Project*. August 28, 2024; Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012; Horace C. Smith,

Many teachers could have been attracted to the Summer School of the South because Claxton advertised Knoxville's natural beauty in vivid detail. In one promotional article, Claxton wrote that "The Summer School has been more than fortunate in its location. Knoxville lies in the valley of East Tennessee, a section noted for the beauty of its scenery and the healthfulness of its climate. Beautiful houses overhang the winding Tennessee River and crown the hills and ridges...there is scarcely a part of town from which the distant outlines of the beautiful blue and purple mountains cannot be seen."¹²⁴ An advertisement published in Raleigh's *Morning Post* on April 3rd, 1903 conjured the image of the University's "beautiful hill-top" where teachers could participate in an "intellectual feast" full of "creature comforts."¹²⁵ The *Lexington Herald* described its natural beauty, illustrating "the scores of springs and watering places" within a short radius of the city, which was situated "along the west bank of the Tennessee river...and over the sides and crests of some half dozen or more foothills of the mountains." Teachers could expect to find "grateful coolness and shade" under the "foliage of elms and maples" on the University hill.¹²⁶ A newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina assured its readers that Knoxville's summer climate would be "healthful and pleasant" with "attractive" surroundings and "ample" accommodations.¹²⁷ At the conclusion of the first term, J. P. Selman of Troy, Alabama, said that Knoxville was "the most beautiful place in the world, and...the most progressive city."

An Honored Calling: A History of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee, 1999.

¹²⁴ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹²⁵ *The Morning Post*, (Raleigh, North Carolina). April 21, 1903.

¹²⁶ *Lexington Herald*, (Lexington, Kentucky). May 29, 1904.

¹²⁷ *State*, (Columbia, South Carolina). February 20, 1902.

It is entirely possible that Knoxville's natural beauty impressed and allured thousands of teachers to the Summer School of the South over subsequent sessions, but such claims stand in sharp contrast to national journalist John Gunther's claim in 1947 that Knoxville was "the ugliest city...in America."¹²⁸ At that point, local journalists even confirmed that "the shame is that we have really not capitalized on our opportunities to make Knoxville one of the most beautiful (cities) in the nation."¹²⁹ Claxton's alluring portrayal of Knoxville's natural beauty occurred in tandem with the rise of modern tourism in the United States South, and other New South boosterism that sought to attract consumers and businesses to local communities.¹³⁰ Whether or not such idyllic descriptions of Knoxville corresponded with its reality, the Summer School of the South conjured images of scenic vistas to readers of newspapers across the country and gave it additional appeal as a travel destination.

Teachers were well-accommodated and enchanted by Knoxville's natural beauty, and they even seemed to align ideologically with the city's commitment to new industries. Selman continued, stating that "Knoxville was born lucky...she does not send all the raw material to New England...She has great factories of her own."¹³¹ One advertisement stated that the Summer School was established "in response to a demand from the progressive teachers of the South for a summer school of high grade located...at the exact geographical center of the territory South of the Ohio and Potomac and east of the Mississippi." Knoxville was not only geographically

¹²⁸ Jack Neely, "The Bottom: A Preliminary Historical Narrative of the Area Affected by the Proposed Stadium Project." *Knoxville History Project*. May 14, 2021.

¹²⁹ Matt Lakin, "'Ugliest city' insult prompts beautification efforts in Knoxville." *Knox News*. May 27, 2012.

¹³⁰ Julio Capó Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami before 1940*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

¹³¹ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). August 5, 1904.

central, but its centrality to the New South's emerging manufacturing industries meant that it had the potential to affect "in a healthful way all the educational interest of [all] these states."¹³²

The Summer School of the South made Knoxville a destination for other educators by platforming annual conferences around different reform efforts. In 1902 and 1903, the Summer School hosted the Education Campaigners' Convention, which allowed many of the Summer School's faculty to discuss ongoing education reform efforts with leaders in the movement. Faculty members were joined by Henry St. George Tucker of Virginia, Robert B. Fulton, Chancellor of the University of Mississippi, and others. Professor J.C. Herbert, President of the Mississippi State Teachers' Association, commuted directly from the Southern Educational Association's annual meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee.¹³³ In 1902, the campaigners convened to discuss "the development of rural school."¹³⁴ In subsequent years, the Summer School platformed conventions for "State and County Superintendents" and on "Public School Expansion and Improvement."¹³⁵ Teachers were not just immersed in a world of learning and progressive discourse, but they were central participants in the broader organizational effort to build and improve a system of universal education.

Knoxville's citizens experienced a sense of pride coupled with opportunity regarding the Summer School. One journalist illustrated Knoxville's support for the Summer School by reporting that townspeople had lowered "the rates for board and lodging so low that they barely cover the cost of food."¹³⁶ This was not a complaint; rather, this journalist was demonstrating

¹³² *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). February 22, 1902.

¹³³ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 5, 1902.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Summer School of the South: University of Tennessee Record, summer 1903. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 6, number 4. April 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized; also, see volume 7, no. 4 and volume 8, no. 1

¹³⁶ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). May 7, 1903

that the public “heartily supported” the Summer School which had benefitted “the educational interests of the entire South.”¹³⁷ One article, titled “Not Only South: But All Parts of the United States Interested” celebrated that “many inquiries” were from “residents of the north.”¹³⁸ The journalist attributed this to “the mild summer weather of the mountains of East Tennessee” as well as “the character of the faculty...[which] is such to command the admiration of every person who is at all acquainted with the merits of prominent educators in the south.”¹³⁹ Knoxville journalists took pride in being in the national spotlight as a scenic, forward-thinking and innovative place.

Knoxville’s wealthiest citizens financially supported the summer school through private subscriptions and grants issued by the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce. The Summer School not only reflected the city’s “liberal regard for general public interests,” but it was also a potential investment in the city’s development: President Lockett of Knoxville’s Chamber of Congress supported issuing annual grants to the Summer School because its “educational benefits” were “not more clear than the immediate good to this city, by reason of the large advertisement which the school affords it...and the actual money brought into the community.”¹⁴⁰ The Summer School not only brought thousands of consumers into the city during the summer months, but it also promoted the city of Knoxville as a progressive center of the New South.

Knoxville’s citizens expressed enough curiosity about the Summer School for the city’s largest newspaper—*The Knoxville Sentinel*—to open a bureau of information about the Summer

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee. April 22, 1903.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). May 27, 1903.

School at Allison's drug store, on the corner of Gay and Clinch streets in the city's downtown. Here, the public could talk to an appointed Summer School official who would provide useful materials—all announcements, catalogs, schedules, and guides—or furnish “any information desired.”¹⁴¹ In addition to attending the school's general lectures and major events, Knoxville citizens were interested in learning more about the hundreds of teachers in their community. The *Knoxville Sentinel* held “Summer School Popularity Contests” where readers clipped out coupons to write in their vote for “the Most popular Lady and Most Popular Gentleman” at the Summer School. The stakes were high; the “Popular Female Teacher” won a one-week trip to Atlantic City, with lodging included “at one of the best hotels at that great resort.”¹⁴² The *Sentinel* would also sponsor the winning male's trip to the 1904 St. Louis Exposition the following year. Evidently, many Summer School teachers made enough of an impression in Knoxville's social scene to merit such accolades.

While teachers found the setting enticing, they attended the summer school to learn from its renowned faculty members. Prospective students were promised that the summer school's esteemed faculty would teach “the most progressive methods.”¹⁴³ One faculty member celebrated that the Summer School of the South afforded teachers the opportunity to become “personally acquainted with the most progressive men of...the entire south and whole country.”¹⁴⁴ Claxton and Dabney energetically recruited educators whose “voice carried across the continent...by weight and worth.”¹⁴⁵ G. Stanley Hall, Edward Thorndike, Walter Hines Page, and U.S.

¹⁴¹ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁴² *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 13, 1903.

¹⁴³ *Dallas Morning News*, (Dallas, Texas). June 14, 1903.

¹⁴⁴ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 25, 1903.

¹⁴⁵ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949).

commissioner of education William T. Harris were all initial faculty members. In subsequent years, John Dewey, Richard T. Ely, William Jennings Bryan, Jane Addams, and Seaman Knapp all made appearances.¹⁴⁶

Summer School teachers celebrated the opportunity to learn from prominent faculty members because they believed that sustained interaction with them would transform their *personality*. Representing the student body, J.P. Selman expressed their gratitude for the opportunity “to come into contact with...the strongest faculty on the American continent.”¹⁴⁷ Emily S. Harrison reflected that “the greatest good that the teachers gained from the summer school was through “coming in touch with the great leaders of educational thought.” This was not simply gratitude at being in their presence, but these teachers took seriously the possibility that their “contact with the strong personality” would import “the desire to achieve personality.”

Teachers understood that their efficacy as teachers was contingent on their “possession...[of] personality,” which could be exclusively obtained through social experiences with the school’s faculty.¹⁴⁸ While this concept of personality is unclear, it was central to the Summer School’s instructional paradigm to inspire educators to consciously adopt the sanctified purpose of fostering others’ innate potential for the collective good of society. Claxton facilitated this learning outcome by hiring a celebrity cast of intellectuals capable of providing southern

¹⁴⁶ Renown educators including Eben Alexander—University of North Carolina Professor and former U.S. Minister to Greece, Romania, and Serbia—C. Hart Merriam, famous naturalist and chief of the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey, Celeste Parrish—George State Normal School instructor and feminist—Nicholas M. Butler—president of Columbia University—Charles D. McIver—president of North Carolina Normal and Industrial—and Henry Louis Smith—Washington and Lee University President—were also on faculty.

¹⁴⁷ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). August 5, 1904.

¹⁴⁸ Emily S. Harrison, “The Summer School From the viewpoint of the student.” *Atlanta Journal*. August 2, 1902; Summer School of the South Newspaper Clipping and Correspondence, 1902 August 12-1953 August 4, I, Box: 1, Folder: 5. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

teachers with the nation's advanced thought on education. His objective was to inspire teachers to see themselves as part of the broader Progressive Era push to purify American society through education.

In one article advocating for increased state appropriations to teacher education, Claxton articulated that although schools were composed of “courses of study, persons to be taught, and of teachers... [the] most important of all are the teachers.”¹⁴⁹ Without good teachers, “the money of the people...might be wasted, the time of children frittered away, and the state cheated out of what it expected and hoped from the schools.”¹⁵⁰ To avoid this, Claxton sought to assemble “men and women whose minds and hearts were aflame with a feeling of the importance of public education and a knowledge of its vital relations to life.”¹⁵¹ The nation's most renowned intellectuals conducted most of their teaching work in cheaply constructed bare-wooded sheds around the University. The Summer School invested in its quality of education—and the quality of education in schools across the entire South—by prioritizing its human resources over its buildings.

The Summer School operated on an elective system that divided a broad variety of coursework into specific schools. The courses were initially divided into four schools: common school subjects and methods; psychology and pedagogy; high school and college subjects; general lectures.¹⁵² The curriculum's objective was to uphold “a high grade of scholarship” that was still practical enough to “help teachers in their daily work.”¹⁵³ In many subjects, this

¹⁴⁹ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949). 111.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Summer School of the South: University of Tennessee Record, summer 1903. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 6, number 4. April 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized.

¹⁵³ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949). 109.

functioned to eliminate traditional barriers to entry—including literacy in foreign languages—and allowed teachers to experience English translations of world literature “for the purpose of giving teachers opportunity to become acquainted with a few masterpieces of each language.” Additionally, reading masterpieces such as “Homer’s Iliad” and “Goethe’s Faust” in English translation was intended to “[inspire] some to gain such knowledge of the languages as would enable them to read their literatures in the original.”¹⁵⁴ Teachers at the Summer School eagerly signed up for literature classes, taking advantage of the late-nineteenth century proliferation of paperback collections of good books in translation.

Popular lectures were one of the core features of the Summer School, and exposed teachers to a broad range of subject knowledge that was “demanded by the most progressive schools of the South.”¹⁵⁵ To facilitate a broad education, teachers congregated together for popular lectures in a variety of subjects—including science, art, the philosophy of education, history, and “present condition and needs of schools in the South.”¹⁵⁶ G. Stanley Hall gave a series of lectures later expanded in *Adolescence* (1904); John Dewey lectured from *The School and Society* (1900).¹⁵⁷ Both intellectuals were part of the first generation of social scientists to be awarded doctoral degrees from American institutions and articulated the transformative potential of state-guided universal education in American society from their respective disciplines.¹⁵⁸ All

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *The Starkville news*. (Starkville, Miss.), 12 June 1903.

¹⁵⁶ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949). 109.

¹⁵⁷ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904; John Dewey, *The School and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900. Philip Van Nes Myres, William Jennings Bryan, Richard Ely, and Jane Addams were among other prominent lecturers.

¹⁵⁸ For more on Dewey and Hall’s intellectual influences and their own intellectual influence on education during the Progressive Era, see: Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972; Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

lectures were intended to provide both “cultural” and “practical” value for teachers, aimed at promoting “the welfare of the South.”¹⁵⁹

Summer School teachers were exposed to the largest ideas about American society’s fundamental problems at the turn of the century. In 1904, Economist Richard T. Ely lectured at the Summer School on “Political Science and Economics.”¹⁶⁰ In a nation undergoing the stresses of rapid industrialization, Ely argued that labor organizations “should be guided and governed.”¹⁶¹ John Dewey’s lecture illustrated the classical curriculum’s function in antiquity: “The idea of education for a gentleman originated with Aristotle...It was suited to the conditions of a country where there were slaves to do the labor and carry on in industries.”¹⁶² In contrast to this earlier relationship between school and society, current reform efforts were aiming “to instill freedom in education and to break down the artificial barrier between the school and society.”¹⁶³ According to Dewey, education should evolve to meet society’s changing needs. It existed to prepare students to shape and improve society, rather than to fit into fixed positions within it.

The Summer School of the South embodied Dewey’s idea of an education that broke down “the artificial barrier between the school and society.”¹⁶⁴ The Summer School of the South was as much about cultural and political immersion as it was about anything else; it was intended to inspire teachers and fill them with the necessary energy to be expended outward into their students, rather than to impart basic content knowledge and pedagogical skills. It is difficult to assess inspiration, and impossible to immediately identify the long-term impacts of a model of

¹⁵⁹ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949). 109..

¹⁶⁰ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). June 29, 1904.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

education intended to cultivate within students a sophisticated, self-determined sense of place in society. Moreover, it is difficult to measure the instilled sense of civic responsibility that comes from students internalizing that as citizens they are stakeholders in a democracy. In coming years, the Summer School's unique mission would be challenged by those who demanded more tangible and measurable results.

Summer School teachers must have been intrigued when Booker T. Washington appeared in Knoxville in July of 1902. In their declaration of principles, they clearly expressed their belief in the importance of universal public education "for two races" for the greater good of society, even if they left ambiguous what kind of education that entailed.¹⁶⁵ Washington sought to disrupt the South's racial hierarchy by scaffolding black economic progress through a network of black industrial colleges supported by white policymakers and philanthropists.¹⁶⁶ He was a political pragmatist who cooperated with white elites who had control over levers of power that could help facilitate black economic progress, and autonomy. After discussing the institutional history of Tuskegee, Washington claimed that "The future for [black southerners] is bright...There is no difference [between races] when it comes to the American dollar...when the colored man can

¹⁶⁵ Summer School of the South Charter, By-laws, and Calendar, 1902 July 4-1913 August 1, I, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁶⁶ This is contrary James Anderson, who argues that Tuskegee aimed to educate black southerners for "the new slavery." Angela Zimmerman is more sympathetic about Washington's motivations during the late nineteenth century but argues that he spent the decade and a half of the twentieth century before his death pursuing international, Pan-African vision of industrial education for global racial progress led by black Americans who functioned as intermediaries between western imperial powers and colonized populations abroad. This research employs Robert J. Norrell's interpretation, framing Washington's words and actions within the context of the considerable constraints that he sought to dismantle. For more, see: James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1988; Angela Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2010; Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009

produce as well as the white man, he can find a market for everything that he has.”¹⁶⁷

Washington argued that the South could achieve racial equality, in time, through universal allegiance to the American dollar, and the commercial progress it symbolized.

While Summer School teachers agreed on the importance of black industrial education for the South’s overall prosperity, Washington’s idea that black southerners could achieve equality in the tangible future challenged white educators’ understanding of evolutionary racial progress. The Summer School teachers were training to uplift the South’s white population to the cultural standards necessary for self-governance. From their perspective, self-governance was their imagined, Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage. It was the linear outcome of thousands of years of evolutionary racial progress.

By modeling Victorian attributes of cultural respectability associated with whiteness, and touting the potential of commercial progress to facilitate racial equality, Washington directly challenged Summer School teachers’ conception of racial hierarchy. When forming the Southern Educational Association in 1889, J. H. Shinn had insisted that black southerners were only “clothed” with the powers of citizenship—which insinuated that they were the illegitimate recipients of those powers. The subsequent proliferation of disfranchisement clauses in the state constitutions adopted across the South between 1890 and 1908 indicates that the southern education movement occurred alongside a broader movement to purify democracy in the southern states.¹⁶⁸ Importantly, Summer School student Emily Harrison saw no contradiction in

¹⁶⁷ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 22, 1902.

¹⁶⁸ Jackson Lears expresses this succinctly: “Jim Crow was a way to sanitize and rationalize the dream of racial renewal through violence... [some expressed that] the only way to make white supremacy legitimate was to make it legal,” see: Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins. 2010. Pp.129-131. To see the effect of this on black institutions, see: Shennette Garrett-Scott, *Banking on Freedom: Black Women in U.S. Finance Before the New Deal*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. For white teachers’ role in sustaining Jim Crow ideology through public education, see: Elizabeth Gillespie

her claim that “the democratic civilization of the future” would give “every child...the right sort of an education...that shall fit the individual for his work in the world.” The Summer School aligned with the core, paternalist assumptions made by reformers about universal education in the South—elite educators could help discern the right sort of an education for individuals based on their assumptions about race, gender, and class.

The Summer School of the South did not outright reject industrial education for whites but viewed it as a necessary course of instruction in tandem with other intellectual pursuits. One visiting professor wrote in the *Louisville Evening Post* about his observations of the Summer School in June of 1902. Gaines was particularly interested in the Summer School of the South’s innovative vision of education for the twentieth century:

When I saw [students] disperse...to their selected tasks, I began to understand better the spirit of the school. I looked into a large room and saw...women and a few men making baskets...I looked upon a class at work in drawing; at another performing experiments in physics. I saw an entranced audience listening to a talk on the work of the winds, illustrated by lantern pictures taken on the seacoast of Albemarle Sound. The class in agriculture was a large one, principally of young men. The sparse attendance at the Latin and Greek and classical courses generally, and the eager crowds that flocked to the geography and nature study and manual training classes, show that the ideals of education have changed entirely. And this is as it should be, [in the South] at least.¹⁶⁹

Gaines was impressed by the Summer School teachers’ interest in subjects that held perceptible, pragmatic utility. Aside from the variety of useful subjects, however, Gaines was particularly inspired by the women at the summer school: “when she goes to lessons it is not to gossip and chitter, but to profit by the work at hand. I enjoy seeing the southern school marm and hope that her tribe may increase.”¹⁷⁰ Far removed from the antebellum-southern pedagogical

McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ July 4, 1902 (Page 1 of 8)." *Knoxville Sentinel (1892-1926)*, Jul 04, 1902.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

emphasis on classics and the arts for cultivating genteel men and women of the planter class, the Summer School promoted courses with perceived economic utility—including the natural and social sciences, vocational and industrial courses, and modern languages—in addition to humanities courses. The Summer School offered a modern liberal arts curriculum in which teachers determined their own course based on personal interests and professional obligation.

For the many southern women entering the teaching profession at the turn of the twentieth century, The Summer School was one of the few accessible institutions of higher learning that offered a self-directed, elective-base curriculum and professional credentialing equal to that of their male colleagues. One journalist from Southern Pines, North Carolina noted that “Miss Sarah Johnson, upon returning from the Summer School of the South in August said that the session was ‘a very important and successful one.’ She returned to Southern Pines with a certificate in chemistry and was already planning her return for the next summer’s session.”¹⁷¹ It is possible that Sarah Johnson returned to Southern Pines, North Carolina—a small railroad town of less than 1,000 people in the North Carolina piedmont—was one of the only teaching professionals with an academic credential in chemistry. Like Emily Harrison, who gained “an inspiration and an outlook,” Sarah Johnson was empowered by the Summer School’s coeducational elective curriculum to direct her own training as a professional.

The Summer School offered a broad assortment of courses, but literature and education courses’ immense popularity is telling. Sarah Johnson’s certificate in chemistry was important outlier—only 47 teachers enrolled in chemistry courses in 1902—rather than broadly

¹⁷¹ The Free Press (Southern Pines, NC.) Aug 8. 1902. 4.

representative of teachers' experiences.¹⁷² Based on enrollment figures, it is likely that Johnson also took literature and education courses. Course popularity can reflect teachers' obligations to their school district as well as their personal interests and aspirations. Teachers generally registered for a high volume of coursework, which illustrated their strong curiosity even as it often suggested to some critical administrators that they were spread too thin to do meaningful work.¹⁷³ Teachers disproportionately enrolled in education and literature courses because they offered the most exciting possibilities for improving their professional and cultural status. They valued literature, language, and expression as central mediums for their profession, as well as their personal aspirations of commanding Victorian notions of respectability centered on letters.¹⁷⁴

Professor Gaine's observation that teachers were busily working at basketry is supported by enrollment figures indicating that they demonstrated considerable demand for manual training

¹⁷² In 1903, The natural sciences, including Chemistry, Physics, Geology had a small total enrollment of 150. Mathematics courses enrolled 233 students. Neurology, Psychology and Physiology together enrolled 185 students. Modern languages, classical languages, and history fared poorly. Modern languages including French, German, and Spanish included 149 students vs. 117 students in Greek and Latin. History course had a total enrollment of 136 students. For more, see: Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁷³ James R. Montgomery, "Summer School of the South." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. 1963

¹⁷⁴ The most popular subjects, when looking at compiled enrollment across different courses, were education and English. The enrollment for education courses (Education—1254, Primary Methods—874, and Kindergarten—170) totaled 2,298, but many other popular subjects—including Drawing and Art (407)—were pedagogical in focus. The most popular pedagogical-focused courses were Story Telling—325, Practical Teaching—242, Dickens as an Educator—225. English literature, language, and expression enrolled 1,332. Of these courses, the most popular was Browning—308, Expression—194 and Southern Literature at 172. The top eight courses were Story Telling, Browning, Practical Teaching, Dickens as an Educator, Lectures in Nature Study, Agriculture and Horticulture—225, Expression—194, School Problems, and Southern Literature—172. Considering that Dickens and Story Telling were listed as education courses rather than English courses gives the two subjects—education and English—more of an equal weighting at 1,748 and 1,882, respectively. For more, see: Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

and agricultural courses.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, domestic science—which included nutrition, cooking, sanitation, and home economics—was among the most unpopular subjects even though the Summer School enrolled twice as many women as men.¹⁷⁶ Summer School women overwhelmingly chose coursework that was most useful to advancing their professional status and social respectability, perhaps overwhelmingly distancing themselves from the gendered constraints of domestic science.

Even for the minority of teachers not enrolled in literature, arts and humanities courses, the Summer School platformed school-wide events around the performing arts. The Summer School Quartette, trained by Professor Eugene Parsons, regularly aided in devotional exercises, morning convocations, and evening lectures. Despite showing “evidence of careful training,” most of their numbers were “of a popular character.”¹⁷⁷ Summer School teachers’ rich applause for their peers in the quartette “conclusively [showed] their popularity.”¹⁷⁸ The teachers organized other in-house productions as routine nighttime entertainment. After another evening lecture, teachers performed a comedy entitled “Mr. Bob.”¹⁷⁹ Despite the inclement weather, a large crowd stayed in Jefferson pavilion to watch. They left “well entertained and pleased.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Manual training, agriculture, and domestic science courses enrollment totaled to 914: Manual Training—488 (221 of which were Paperfolding and Basketry); Agriculture—382 (225 of which were enrolled in Dr. Bailey’s Lectures in Nature Study, Agriculture, and Horticulture); domestic sciences—44. For more, see: Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁷⁶ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁷⁷ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Summer School teachers experienced no barrier between low-brow and high-brow culture and happily participated in both. The Summer School of the South opened Jefferson Hall up to the public for tickets to see violinist Maude Powell—about whom one journalist claimed that “no musician who has visited Knoxville has ever received greater applause.” Many said that “they did not know what charms the violin possessed until they had listened to her playing.”¹⁸¹ Summer School teachers witnessed world-class concert singers such as Daniel Beddow—a Welsh tenor—and soprano Elizabeth Dodges, “who studied for six years with the best masters in Paris.”¹⁸² In July, 1908, after watching the Coburn Players perform at the up-and-coming Cherokee Country Club west of Knoxville, Claxton successfully persuaded the professional theater troupe to return the following week to perform Shakespeare’s “Twelfth Night” at the Summer School. The show was open to the public, and tickets sold for twenty-five cents—roughly one eighth of their standard ticket price.¹⁸³ Decades later, teachers and Knoxville residents who watched Charles Coburn could claim that they remembered seeing him perform in person before he moved to Hollywood and starred in movies such as *Boss Tweed* (1933), *The Devil and Miss Jones* (1941), and *The Green Years* (1946).

For many teachers, the University offered an opportunity to engage in a collegial social atmosphere of like-minded, curious individuals. Outside of their academic opportunities and formal excursions, teachers enjoyed leisurely conversations around the University hill. “The coolest place on the Hill” one note stated “is in the Restaurant, east side of South College. Those who come once daily repeat their visits...[for] Creams, Sherberts, and Fountain Drinks...[with] a

¹⁸¹ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 18, 1908.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Knoxville Sentinel*, (Knoxville, Tennessee). July 11, 1908.

large crowd at the out-door tables.” Summer School teachers could escape the summer heat in the afternoon with modern refreshments including “iced cream” and fountain drinks.¹⁸⁴

Reportedly, the East College’s “Rest Room” was “one of the prettiest and most comfortable places on the University hill.” Here, female Summer School teachers enjoyed the “nicely carpeted” space, furnished with “couches, cosy-chairs...and bench-tables...There is no place on the Hill more frequented.”¹⁸⁵ In between classes, Summer School teachers enjoyed rich and leisurely conversations in social spaces around the University hill.

Teachers and faculty members maintained positive, good-spirited banter between each other. One teacher, exercising his sense of humor, privately exclaimed that “There are white caps at the Summer School of the South! That is, every officer, clerk, usher, and agent connected with the institution is required to wear a white cap to distinguish him *from ordinary mortals*. By this means it is hoped that the information seekers will be aided in discharging his multitudes of questions...and also that persons having authority...will not be interfered with.”¹⁸⁶ Another announcement, titled “An Injured Professor,” stated the unfortunate news that “Dr. Saunders, who is here from the University of Mississippi to conduct the department of Greek...is trying to master the art of walking on crutches. He states emphatically that he broke his leg while playing tennis, but the student-body has a well-defined idea that it was broken in a battle with certain

¹⁸⁴ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. For more on ice cream and modernity, see: Patrick Ramey, “The Historic UT Creamery: How the University of Tennessee Changed Knoxville’s Relationship with Ice Cream.” *Knoxville History Project*. August 28, 2024; Anne Cooper Funderburg, *Chocolate, Strawberry, and Vanilla: A History of American Ice Cream*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press. 1995.

¹⁸⁵ Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Greek verbs.” In addition to suffering teachers’ friendly banter, Dr. Saunders also fell victim to more cosmic misfortune: “By irony of fate, Dr. Saunders has been given a classroom on the top floor of South College, and the greater part of his energy is necessarily expended in going to and coming from his lofty quarters.” In contrast to the rigid professionalism of the research academy, teachers and faculty at the Summer School maintained a jovial rapport.¹⁸⁷

Administrators considered the Summer School’s opening session a huge success and reiterated the Summer School’s centrality to their vision of regional progress through universal education. One outcome was that the University of Tennessee established a new department of education that opened in January of 1903, headed by Claxton.¹⁸⁸ The department was “largely modeled on the Teachers’ College of Columbia University” and aimed to meet the “growing demand in the South for an advanced...school for the professional training of teachers.”¹⁸⁹

Claxton hired Wycliffe Rose from Peabody Normal College and Burns Breese, who earned his doctorate in educational psychology from Columbia as additional faculty members for the new department; both professors were instructors during the Summer School’s first session.¹⁹⁰ Still, bringing teacher education under the umbrella of the expanding university also began a process of marginalizing education as an academic discipline, within an increasingly rigid, masculine, and research-driven institutional climate.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Knoxville Sentinel (1892-1926)*, Oct 01, 1902.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ The New Department of Education in the University of Tennessee. *University of Tennessee President’s Papers, 1867-1954*. 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized.

¹⁹¹ For more on the increasing marginalization of teacher education within the academy throughout the twentieth century, see: Labaree, David F, D. John McIntyre, Kelly E Demers, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, and Sharon Feiman-Nemser. “An Uneasy Relationship: The History of Teacher Education in the University.” In *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, 3rd ed., 290–306. Routledge, 2008.

Teacher education may have been only one of many objectives for the University, but it remained the central mission of the Summer School of the South. At the conclusion of the first session, Dr. Dabney articulated this in what he called the “new creed” of education:

The education of the old south was characterized by devotion to classical ideals and methods...[and] the universities were places for the training of a few leaders of the people...This summer school has made a new creed...The new creed believes that every human being must be educated. Every child is a plan of God...There should be an elementary education at least for every child—white and black—in the Commonwealth...The lesson of the summer school ought to be the training up of all men to do all the work for which God made them. The churches cannot do it; the State and the municipality cannot do it; but the school can do it.¹⁹²

Summer School teachers and faculty believed that establishing a state-funded, universal system of public education, structured to serve students based on assumptions about race, gender, and class, could support a stable social order in the South. Considering the violent turmoil of mob lynchings, populist unrest, and organized labor that characterized the South at the turn of the century, southern education reformers were part of a national movement of middle-class progressive activists who saw themselves as mediators. State-funded universal education could provide the institutional infrastructure necessary to redefine individuals’ relationship with society as citizens of the state and federal government, rather than based on their connection to local elites. Moreover, public schools could instill in individuals an independent sense of self and vocational purpose in relation to their place within society.

The Summer School of the South reflected potentially liberating new ideas about citizenship in a democracy. While maintaining assumptions of biological differences, Dabney articulated a vision of education that redefined individuals’ status based on their inclusion in

¹⁹² *The Baltimore Sun* (1837-), August 4, 1902.

society, defined by their relationship to the state. Moreover, it elevated the position of labor within that society by emphasizing its equal importance to society's collective well-being.¹⁹³ Rather than proscribing a divide between urban professionals and manual laborers, it suggested that all citizens were members of the same society, and their labor contributed to their collective prosperity.

Summer School teachers returned to their local school districts to spread this “gospel of the new education.”¹⁹⁴ After returning to Atlanta, Emily Harrison published an article titled “The Summer School From the View Point of the Student” in the *Atlanta Journal*.¹⁹⁵ She articulated that the school's primary benefit for teachers was that they “gained an inspiration and an outlook that shall lift up their whole life's work.” In contrast to degrading nineteenth-century attitudes about the teaching profession, Harrison reconceptualized teachers' collective role as “Captains Courageous in the warfare against ignorance...[who] girded on their armor and joined the great crusade and vowed never to desist within all this southland there shall not be one neglected child.”¹⁹⁶ Harrison was one of many educators who likened themselves to knighted crusaders in a war against ignorance. During the Fourth of July Celebration in 1903, Florida teachers sang the following:

Come along and get you ready for there's going to be a fight, / Drive away the clouds of darkness from our State so fair and bright / All Floridians now are rushing to the front to

¹⁹³ For the origins of this shift from people seeing themselves in terms of their local associations and relationships to seeing themselves as independent citizens with rights protected by the government, see: Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2008. For other work that has argued that throughout most of the rural South, this shift did not occur until the New Deal, see: Alison Collis Greene, *No Depression in Heaven: The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Transformation of Religion in the Delta*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016.

¹⁹⁴ Summer School of the South Newspaper Clipping and Correspondence, 1902 August 12-1953 August 4, I, Box: 1, Folder: 5. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

join the fray, / Hand-in-hand to rout the enemy forever and a day.... / We have joined the mighty conflict, that will only end with life. / Let us drive away the sadness, let us drive away the sin. / Let us fill the world with gladness, and the vict'ry we shall win.¹⁹⁷

Summer School teachers envisioned themselves as crusaders against ignorance in a campaign to redeem their respective states through educational progress. Their aspirations for educational reform were deeply ideological, and filtered through symbolic dichotomies of ignorance and knowledge, darkness and light, joy and sadness that corresponded to tangible reform objectives. Harrison wrote that every child, “without regard to sex, color, or condition, should have...the right sort of an education...that shall fit the individual for his work in the world.”¹⁹⁸ Looking to Walter Hines Page’s address on the “Coming Utopia,” Emily Harrison envisioned that this was the education that would give rise to “the truly democratic civilization of the future, a civilization based on the equality of opportunity where every man is doing the work he is best fitted to do and doing it joyfully because he has been trained to do it efficiently.”

Harrison articulated a vision of education for democracy that attempted to reconcile the South’s hierarchical social order with liberal ideas about education from the common school movement, and the emerging discourses about social efficiency. In hindsight, this amalgamation of contradictory ideas seems utterly irreconcilable, but progressive educators like Harrison wholeheartedly believed that fixed social hierarchies could coexist within a culture that celebrated liberal individualism.¹⁹⁹ It is possible that navigating these embedded contradictions

¹⁹⁷Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁹⁸ Summer School of the South Newspaper Clipping and Correspondence, 1902 August 12-1953 August 4, I, Box: 1, Folder: 5. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹⁹⁹ Walter Hines Page’s idea of “A Utopia Which is Coming True...where everyone had found his element” was deeply apocalyptic and rooted in a postmillennial theological perspective that aimed to perfect society on Earth. This stood in contrast to mid-nineteenth century common school educators, who aimed to cultivate individuals’ ability to

created the intellectual space for subsequent generations of southern liberals who believed in the transformative power of education to dismantle Jim Crow by gradually changing individuals' hearts, minds, and attitudes.²⁰⁰

Summer School teachers and faculty's abstract principles corresponded with concrete demands. After parading through a crowd of Knoxville residents and visitors around the University hill during the Summer School's Fourth of July program, the teachers and faculty assembled into Jefferson Hall to read aloud their Declaration of Principles.²⁰¹ The teachers declared themselves "in favor of a public school system...in which every child may have the open door of opportunity." Believing that achieving civilization was contingent on Christian principles, they called for "the recognition of the bible in public schools." To fund public schools, they favored "an agitation" on behalf of school taxes in every community. The public school system needed to be "intelligently directed," and needed to equip students with "the trained brain and the trained hand." They supported constructing "central schools...with due regard to sanitation, ventilation and beauty." Finally, they endeavored to professionalize teaching

fully imagine God so that they could better embody Christian virtues. Walter Hines Page defined salvation in a collectivist terms, while Horace Mann did in individualist ones. *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), Jul 17, 1902. For more on postmillennial Protestantism, see: Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin the Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism*. New York; Oxford University Press, 2012; Thomas C. Leonard, "Religion and Evolution; "Progressive Era Political Economy: Adversaries or Allies?" *History of Political Economy* 43, no. 3 (2011); Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America*. New York: Basic Books, 2019. For more on the theological underpinnings of the common school movement, see: Johann Neem, *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017; Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001. 4-5; Carl F. Kaestle and Eric Foner, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983

²⁰⁰ For a thorough exploration of mid-twentieth century southern liberalism, and gradualism, see: William A. Link, *Frank Porter Graham: Southern Liberal, Citizen of the World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

²⁰¹ Summer School of the South Charter, By-laws, and Calendar, 1902 July 4-1913 August 1, I, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

by redefining their credibility in terms of their certified merit. They asked for all of this “with gratitude” for “the heritage of a noble past” and a desire “to make good by [their] works, to the lasting glory of their republic.”²⁰² A copy of this manuscript is included in **Figure 1**. The principles they defined were the key political objectives of the southern education movement, and steps away towards order, cooperation and democracy.

Teachers attending the Summer School of the South were immersed in the cultural experiences of middle-class professionals at the turn of the century. It made the residential, liberal arts college experience—which had traditionally been reserved for an aristocratic elite—an accessible experience for teachers and centered their labor in the broader movement to construct a democratic civilization of the future. At the center of the Summer School of the South was the insistence of developing what Emily Harrison and others referred to as “the possession...of personality...[which] marks the teacher a success or failure” because “The strength of the great soul is [contagious]” and under its influence, “narrowness slink away and we grow bigger and better than our old selves.” Teachers immersed in the Summer School’s intellectual and cultural life underwent a personally transformative experience gleaned from experiencing a curiosity-driven model of learning for life and were inspired to replicate that process for their students with the aim of educating engaged democratic citizens.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Adopted at Knoxville, July 4, 1902

We, the 1,700 teachers attending the Summer School of the South, representing every Southern State, do, on this the day of our national independence, unanimously adopt the following declaration of educational policy:

1. We bear grateful testimony to the great sacrifices made in behalf of education by the people of the South, who in their desolation and poverty have taxed themselves hundreds of millions of dollars to educate two races.

2. Notwithstanding these efforts, we are confronted with the appalling fact that the large majority of the 3,500,000 white children and 2,500,000 black children of the South are not provided with good schools. In 1900 ten Southern States having twenty-five per cent of the school population of this country owned only four per cent of the public school property and expended only six and a half per cent of the public school moneys. We must recognize these conditions and frankly face them. We therefore declare ourselves in favor of a public school system, State supported and State directed, in which every child may have the open door of opportunity.

3. Conscious of our dependence upon the God of our fathers, and believing that the highest and truest civilization can be attained only by following the precepts of the great teacher, Jesus Christ, we favor the recognition of the Bible in our public schools.

4. We regard local taxation as the foundation upon which a public school system should be built, and therefore favor an agitation in behalf of such taxation in every community.

5. If an increased expenditure of money is to be of lasting value, a more intelligent public interest must be brought to bear upon our schools. But even greater than the need of money and interest is the need of intelligent direction.

6. A mere extension of the present school term with the present course of study will not meet the needs of the children. The lines of development in the South must be both agricultural and mechanical. Our people must bring a trained brain and a trained hand to the daily labor. Education should be a means not of escaping labor, but of making it more effective.

The school should be the social center of the community, and should actively and sympathetically touch all the social and economic interests of the people. In addition to the usual academic studies, therefore, our courses should include manual training, nature study and agriculture.

7. To secure more efficient supervision, to encourage grading and to broaden the social life of the children, we favor the consolidation of weak schools into strong central schools. It is better in every way to carry the child to the school than to carry the school to the child. We indorse the movements recently made by the women of the South for model schools, built with due regard to sanitation, ventilation and beauty.

8. Teaching should be a profession, and not a stepping-stone to something else. We therefore stand for the highest training of teachers and urge the school authorities of every State to encourage those who wish to make the educating of children a life profession. We call upon the people to banish forever politics and nepotism from the public schools, and to establish a system in which, from the humblest teacher to the office of state superintendent, merit shall be the touchstone.

9. We express our hearty appreciation of the noble work of the Southern and General Education Boards, which by their earnest sympathy and generous means have made possible this great Summer School of the South and in numerous other ways are strengthening the patriotic efforts of the Southern people to improve their educational conditions.

10. With gratitude to our fathers for the heritage of a noble past, with thankfulness to God for the many blessings bestowed upon our people, with due recognition of our present problems and their deep importance, we face the future with a faith which we shall endeavor to make good by our works, to the lasting glory of our Republic.

(Signed) Alabama, Edgar Gardner Murphy; Arkansas, A. H. Abbott; Florida, Arthur Williams; Georgia, Joseph D. Smith; Kentucky, J. T. Gaines; Louisiana, Edwin A. Alderman; Mississippi, D. H. Hill; North Carolina, Collier Cobb; South Carolina, Ernest Wiggins; Tennessee, Wicliffe Rose; Texas, A. L. Malone; Virginia, B. R. Smith.

CHARLES D. McIVER, Secretary

CHARLES W. DABNEY, Chairman

Figure 1. Scanned copy of the Declaration of Principles read aloud at The Summer School of the South's Fourth of July Parade in 1902.²⁰³

²⁰³ Summer School of the South Charter, By-laws, and Calendar, 1902 July 4-1913 August 1, I, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

“Setting Teachers’ Minds and Hearts Aflame:” Lessons for Teachers at The Summer School of the South

The Summer School of the South enabled teachers from across the United States to access advanced intellectual ideas from the academy. Summer School teachers were not just eager to grapple with large ideas, but they believed that sustained contact with elite intellectuals would transform their individual personalities.²⁰⁴ The Summer School modeled to teachers a curiosity-driven model of learning and education that deconstructed the barrier between education and society by inspiring lifelong learners and engaged citizens. As teachers, they were sanctified professionals charged with purifying democracy by spreading this inspiration. This inspiration began with the ideas that they encountered about education in the Summer School classroom.

Claxton intentionally hired national leaders of educational thought as faculty because he believed that they could uniquely inspire Summer School teachers by illustrating to them the importance of their work. In his personal papers, Claxton preserved lecture manuscripts from several popular courses from the Summer School’s 1903 term. It is unclear exactly why he preserved some course materials and not others, but this research operates from the assumption that the sample he collected represented what he considered to be the best that the Summer School had to offer.²⁰⁵ Importantly, each scholar sought to integrate liberal ideas about child

²⁰⁴ Emily S. Harrison, “The Summer School From the viewpoint of the student.” *Atlanta Journal*. August 2, 1902; Summer School of the South Newspaper Clipping and Correspondence, 1902 August 12-1953 August 4, I, Box: 1, Folder: 5. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁰⁵ The heavy emphasis on history and literature may have reflected his personal intellectual interests as a scholar of German literature.

development with the cultural context of the New South; this required making sense of the region's painful and recent past in the context of national and global developments.

In addition to saving manuscript materials from prominent scholars like Edward Lee Thorndike—Professor of Genetic Psychology at Columbia University's Teacher College on "Psychology and Child Study;" he preserved materials from prominent educators including Dr. Richard Thomas Wyche—Chautauqua "Story Specialist" who studied at the University of North Carolina and the University of Chicago; Dr. James L. Hughes—Toronto School Inspector and literary specialist on Charles Dickens; Henry Snyder—Professor of Literature at Wofford College on "Southern Literature;"; Celeste Parrish—Instructor of Pedagogy at Georgia State Normal College who lectured on "The Woman of the Twentieth Century" and "Socializing the Child."²⁰⁶ The following section will reconstruct the intellectual world of the Summer School of the South by analyzing the ideas contained in preserved lecture material. Collectively, these faculty ascribed profound meaning onto teachers' labor, casting them as central agents in an education-centered vision of social purification, and national reconciliation.

Summer School teachers enthusiastically signed up for literature classes because stories contained valuable lessons about humanity which could be applied to their practice as teachers, and social reformers. James Laughlin Hughes' class on "Dickens as an educator" analyzed

²⁰⁶ Other materials are from Ulrich B. Phillips—Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin on "Southern History;" Pierce Butler—Tulane Professor of History on "Shakespeare and Pre-Shakespearean Drama;" C. Alphonso Smith—Professor of English at the University of North Carolina on "the Poetry of Elizabeth Browning;" B.C. Gregory—Superintendent of public schools in Chelsea, Massachusetts on "The Philosophy of Froebel;" Philander P. Claxton—Summer School Superintendent and Head of the Department of Education at the University of Tennessee on "City Supervision;" Charles Dabney—University of Tennessee President and Southern Education Board member on "The Teachings of Jesus with Regard to Social Science;" Edgar Gardner Murphy—Executive Secretary of the Southern Education Board on "Culture and Democracy." Course enrollment figures are as follows: Snyder (172), Wyche (325), Hughes (225), Parrish (105), Phillips (45), Thorndike (52), Claxton guest lectured for Supt. Greenwood (125)

Charles Dickens' stories from a pedagogical perspective.²⁰⁷ The course was structured as a series of lectures that used Charles Dickens' stories to construct an educational philosophy.²⁰⁸

According to Hughes, Dickens was “the great apostle of the ‘new education,’” the “leading champion” of childhood and advocate for “a just...recognition of its rights.”²⁰⁹ In addition to writing frequently about childhood and educational outcomes in adulthood, Hughes saw Dickens' philosophy of childhood as akin to early-nineteenth century German educator Friedrich Froebel's; while “Froebel revealed the true philosophy, Dickens gave it wings.”²¹⁰ Hughes exemplified the intellectual continuity between the progressive educators of the turn of the twentieth century and mid-nineteenth century common school reformers who drew from the same well of European ideas.

Federal Commissioner of Education William T. Harris endorsed Hughes' lofty praise of Dickens, calling him the “greatest educator of the English race.”²¹¹ Hughes illustrated Dickens' firm convictions about the divine rights of childhood, universal public schools, normal schools, and teaching of the deaf and blind. Dickens himself was one of many mid-nineteenth century writers in the north Atlantic world concerned with the relationship between education and the nation state. After meeting Massachusetts born educator and abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe—he returned to England and wrote “The Cricket on the Hearth” about Cable Plummer and

²⁰⁷ “Dickens as an Educator.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁰⁸ Summer School of the South: University of Tennessee Record, summer 1903. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 6, number 4. April 1903. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized;

²⁰⁹ James Laughlin Hughes, *Dickens as an Educator*. New York: D. Appleton. 1900. 1-3.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ “Dr. Hughes's First Lecture on Dickens as an Educator.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

his blind daughter to raise awareness about the potential to educate people with disabilities.²¹² Liberal Protestant intellectuals like Dickens saw great freedom and possibility in the mid-nineteenth century's market revolution because it dismantled traditional, paternalist patterns of social relations and fostered a culture around individual participation, but they were critical of the new social order's failure to support traditional dependents who were increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by the free market.²¹³ Hughes applied the social criticism embedded into the fabric of Dickens' stories to the New South, which attuned teachers to their role in inspiring students towards making their mark in an increasingly individualistic society.

Hughes invoked Dickens's criticism of traditional pedagogies rooted in obedience and conformity, which he saw as potentially detrimental to their imagination and feeling of self-efficacy, both of which were essential to success in a society governed by individual merit rather than by patronage. Dickens created characters that were criminals because as children they "never attained self-reliance...[and were] kept under constant restraint." Their imaginations were "strangled in childhood."²¹⁴ By coercing them to uphold the principles of "an austere religion" they were "robbed...of everything that is brightest and sweetest in spiritual life."²¹⁵ Dickens illustrates this educational outcome in *Little Dorrit*, when the character Clenman confessed that he "had no will" because he was "trained by main force; broken, not bent; heavily ironed with an object on which [he] was never consulted, and which was never his."²¹⁶ He could not possess

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Johann Neem, *Democracy's Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017; Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001.

²¹⁴ "Dr. Hughes's First Lecture on Dickens as an Educator." Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

will, purpose, or hope because “those lights were extinguished before [he] could sound the words.”²¹⁷ Dickens offered an early-Victorian critique of repressive cultural virtues of mind-numbing repression, religious piety, and over-zealous work-ethic.²¹⁸

Hughes used characters from Dickens’ stories to rebuke teachers who prioritized physical punishment and obedience rather than curiosity and free will. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, fictional headmaster Wackford Squeers represented “the coarsest kind of physical coercion. He robbed boys of...the opportunity for growth, for his own selfish pleasure...The boys were starved and abused, kept ignorant, and worked hard, then outrageously flogged to ‘make them cheerful and contented.’”²¹⁹ Other teachers, like Creokles—flogged the boys as a matter of religious duty and moral training—exemplified coercive pedagogies centered on the “supreme idea...to tell the boy to do something and then make him do it.”²²⁰ In contrast to the disciplinarian educators illustrated by Dickens, Hughes expected Summer School teachers to “let the boy lead, and do not interfere.” This student-centered, inquiry-based approach was “the divine way;” it focused on cultivating individual students’ into distinct individuals who could shape society rather than to conform to fixed places within it.²²¹

²¹⁷ *Ibid*; Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*. London: Bradbury & Evans, 1857.

²¹⁸ Michael McGerr associates the decline of Victorian cultural virtue of self-restraint with the birth of modernism in the early twentieth century, see: Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*. New York: Free Press, 2003. For how other scholars have linked the decline of that virtue to the birth of consumerism, and cultural modernism, see: Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age Culture & Society under the American Big Top*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; Ernest Freeberg, *The Age of Edison: Electric Light and the Invention of Modern America*. New York: Penguin Press, 2013; William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

²¹⁹ “Dr. Hughes’s First Lecture on Dickens as an Educator.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²²⁰ *Ibid*.

²²¹ Johann Neem, *Democracy’s Schools: The Rise of Public Education in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017; James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Teachers enrolled in Henry Nelson Snyder's course on southern literature and culture. In addition to reading the political writing of Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, teachers examined the work of Edward Allan Poe, and Confederate-nationalist poets like Paul Hamilton Hayne and Sidney Lanier. Snyder focused on the distinctly local tone of southern humor in the New South. In contrast to the "[tragic] pathos of the word 'South'" which embodied "the tragedy of that fearful fracture when we had to change our whole mode of life," the literary tradition of southern humor illustrated that southerners "were a happy people who cared more for laughter than for tears" through "the matching of jokes and anecdotes."²²² Snyder urged his students to reject the feeling that tragedy was the defining characteristic of southern culture and argued that the region's literary humor was an invaluable contribution to the larger literary canon of western culture.

Snyder situated white southerner's literary history within the longer arc of English literature. This reduced the Civil War from a central position in southern history to a small blemish. Snyder believed that literature was the collective "effort to express" the "highest life of a people."²²³ This "soul life" embodied "the spiritual struggle of the race."²²⁴ Snyder argued that the "real literary men" of the antebellum north wrote authentic literature inspired by the "eternal truth...[of their] faith in God, faith in man, and faith in work." In contrast, Snyder explained, antebellum southerners born into the "the comfortable, isolated, lazy planter life" could only

²²² "Dr. Snyder's Seventh Lecture." Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²²³ "Dr. Snyder's Thirteenth Lecture." Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

produce literature marked by “imitation, and...artificiality.”²²⁵ From this standpoint, Snyder argued that the antebellum South was ahistorical because it stifled the liberal humanist spirit that drove historical progress. In the twentieth century, the South’s industrial progress would transform southerners’ “social life...[and] political thinking” and promised the “remarkable reconstruction” of southern literature.²²⁶ The Civil War liberated planters from spiritual stagnation in addition to giving them a powerful set of historical experiences that could inspire southern writers to create a distinct, reflective, and self-critical literary tradition.

The Summer School’s most popular course studied the potential of storytelling as a medium for inspiring students. Summer School teachers enthusiastically enrolled in Dr. Richard Thomas Wyche’s course on storytelling, where they learned how to engage students’ imaginations and provoke their sense of wonder. The course sought to instruct teachers on telling “Stories for Kindergarten, primary and grammar grades.”²²⁷ The stories included “folk and fairy tales; history stories; stories from the Bible; stories from Homer, Beowulf, Siegfried, King Arthur,” with a special emphasis on “southern folklore,” including “the famous Uncle Remus stories.” Its purpose was “to aid teachers in selecting original material for stories and to cultivate an individual and artistic style of storytelling.”²²⁸ These stories were suitable for both “the school room and home.”²²⁹ Additionally, this curriculum placed southern folklore within the broader canon of western literature. Teachers not only were expected to “reproduce” some of these stories to gain “the culture content of the classic tales,” but they were expected “also to present

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ “A Course in Storytelling.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 18. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

new [stories] with which the instructor is not acquainted.”²³⁰ Story telling not only exposed teachers to a broad array of imaginative tales, but it empowered them to tell their own stories that collectively derived lessons from the region’s past deemed valuable for its future.

Storytelling encouraged Summer School teachers to participate in the preservation and further development of the South’s cultural heritage through folklore. While it resembled the established ritualistic patterns of the Lost Cause that pervaded white southern institutional life, there was more room within folk stories for subtle historical criticism.²³¹ Many scholars have reduced Joel Chandler Harris’s Uncle Remus stories to a single archetype—the emancipated black fieldhand pined nostalgically for the simplicity of slavery.²³² A closer literary analysis of Joel Chandler Harris’s bestselling collection *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880) illustrates a much more subversive theme. Uncle Remus narrated stories to the white planter’s son about Brer Rabbit—a cunning rabbit who consistently outwitted his predatory enemies against the backdrop of a southern plantation landscape. Removed from his stories about Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus’s outward docility could function to obscure the violence that sustained slavery, as well as bondspeople’s persistent resistance to planter domination.²³³ In the late nineteenth-century context of race riots, lynch mobs, and widespread violence over “The Negro Problem,” Uncle Remus was an innocuous fictional character capable of educating the New

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983.

²³² C. Vann Woodward and David Blight are among many who discussed this public perception of Uncle Remus by Joel Chandler Harris’s broad national leadership, see: C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951. 166-168; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

²³³ Robert Cochran, “Black Father: The Subversive Achievement of Joel Chandler Harris.” *African American Review* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 21–34.

South's white readers—represented as the planter's son—in complex lessons about the black experience in slavery and freedom.²³⁴

Wyche engaged with Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories about Brer Rabbit, which enabled Summer School teachers to probe subversive themes about the antebellum past. Wyche instructed Summer School teachers on how to tell stories like "Brer Rabbit's visit to Brer Bear"—who generally represented the idle planter insulated from reality—so that they could give children some insight into "the early life of slaves in America" in a way that evoked "easy enjoyment."²³⁵ Reducing the experience of plantation slavery to children's stories obscured the ubiquity of violence and the depth of bondspeople's resistance to planter control, but it also illustrated the fallibility of antebellum planter regime. While the symbol of Uncle Remus was deployed to justify a paternalist model of race relations, Brer Rabbit instructed personality traits—ambition, resourcefulness, and charismatic wit—that were key to individuals' ability to succeed in the New South order of commercial progress.²³⁶

Wyche and his students responded to the course's immense popularity by establishing The National Story Tellers' League. Claxton described that a large and enthusiastic group of teachers and faculty gathered "in the twilight on the lawn" to sing and tell stories over firelight. Writing in 1909, Dr. Wyche elaborated on the League's mystical origins at the Summer School of the South, where "[in the darkness], the story-teller was all but invisible, [and] the effect was

²³⁴ For one primary source referring to "the Negro Problem," see: How Education Will Solve the So-Called Negro Problem. A Symposium for the Discussion by Eminent Men and Women on a Question Which Has Recently Been Brought Prominently Before the Public Through the Meeting of Booker T. Washington and President Roosevelt." *New York Journal*. November 5, 1901; Other material, circa 1890, I, Box: 1, Folder: C. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²³⁵ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), July 6, 1903; Robert Cochran, "Black Father: The Subversive Achievement of Joel Chandler Harris." *African American Review* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 21–34.

²³⁶ James L. Leloudis discusses this cultural shift of southern attitudes in James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

heightened.”²³⁷ Teachers and faculty formed the league and intended to discern not only what stories should be told, but “just the story the child needs at different periods of his growth” in alignment with “the study of child life and psychology.” By exploring the “fundamental psychological principles” of storytelling along with the academic principles of child development, the League aimed to construct a vertically integrated storytelling curriculum that could be adapted to meet the needs of different audiences.²³⁸

The National Story League took on a life of its own, quickly branching off into junior leagues conducted by children under the supervision of their teachers across the nation. Junior storytelling leagues met outdoors whenever possible, “giving their own program of stories, songs and games.”²³⁹ Students enjoyed forming their own storytelling organizations, and teachers understood that storytelling was a complex task that required students to exercise their “imagination...[through] meditation, visualizing, perspective, [and] plot creation.” Children could build their own “mental picture,” using “word, voice and gesture to create an ideal world, peopling it with life as he sees it.”²⁴⁰ The storytelling leagues dignified southern culture, and incorporated modern pedagogical principles that engaged students’ imaginations.

According to Wyche, storytelling was a form of ministry because it required “a larger and deeper preparation and a deeper spiritual life...to lead the children afar into that fairyland of great heroes and noble ideals.”²⁴¹ Practicing storytelling meant “ministering to the deepest spiritual needs of the child race.” When it was done well, it presented “the truth in a form which

²³⁷ Richard Thomas Wyche, “The National Story Tellers’ League.” *Pedagogical Seminary* 16, no. 4 (1909): 537–41.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

the child can assimilate.”²⁴² Storytelling required exercising tremendous empathy, and as a discipline it acknowledged children’s “inalienable rights” to “hear the stories from the great story books of the world.”²⁴³ Storytelling as a pedagogical medium challenged teachers to pique students’ innate sense of curiosity and to inspire learning by engaging the imagination rather than coercively instilling rote knowledge. It recognized and respected the autonomy of the child and undermined coercive discipline as an effective, or legitimate teaching tool.

Outside of their coursework, teachers attended general lectures given by the nation’s most prominent educators. Of these, G. Stanley Hall and John Dewey were two who researched the transformative potential of new pedagogical approaches for individuals and society. Hall combined nineteenth-century humanist theories of education with Darwinian theories of evolutionary biology. From this viewpoint, G. Stanley Hall believed that children relived “the history of the world,” and that “all powers evolved from feeling—from the soul.”²⁴⁴ Simultaneously, he believed in the potential of education to improve human genetics and rapidly advance generational racial progress. Because “feeling,” which was from the soul, was central to human development and racial progress, Hall believed that it “was bigger than intellect.”²⁴⁵ By this logic, the aim of education was biological, not intellectual, and its highest aim was to support human—and even racial—development.²⁴⁶

Where Hall’s theory of education was biological, John Dewey’s philosophy of progressive education was sociological. Dewey believed that schools should continuously evolve

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Knoxville Sentinel (1892-1926)*, Jul 11, 1905.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ For a deeper analysis of Hall’s ideas, see: Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

with society's changing needs of society. Like Claxton and Emily Harrison, who emphasized personality as the Summer School's capstone achievement, Dewey articulated that teachers "ought to be developing an attitude—the love of learning" in their students.²⁴⁷ According to Dewey, instructing academic subjects was essential to educating lifelong learners who could continuously flourish in and shape the rapidly changing world. Dewey held that the subjective learning outcomes of curiosity and inspiration could equip students with the intellectual framework to be life-long learners and engaged citizens.

While Hall and Dewey believed in the potential of a child-centered curriculum to inspire personal transformation, Edward Thorndike was skeptical. He shared his research challenging liberal educators' assumption that instruction in specific academic knowledge could increase students' general aptitude. Whereas many at the Summer School believed that their experience was innately transformative, Thorndike scientifically measured its limitations. Thorndike's lecture on "The Influence of Special Training on General Ability" measured the extent to which specialized training in a specific skill or fact of knowledge could influence a person's general ability.²⁴⁸ Thorndike researched the extent to which "the training of any mental function [can] improve other mental functions" with exact, scientific precision.²⁴⁹ Thorndike was the leader of a movement that aimed to demystify the psychological processes of learning, thereby equipping teachers with the knowledge to instruct their students more efficiently.

²⁴⁷ Richard A. Gibboney, "Intelligence by Design: Thorndike versus Dewey." *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, no. 2 (2006): 170–72.

"The Influence of Special Training on General Ability." Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*; Richard A. Gibboney, "Intelligence by Design: Thorndike versus Dewey." *Phi Delta Kappan* 88, no. 2 (2006): 170–72.

Thorndike's lectures were comparatively dry when contrasted with other lecturers' rich, ideological language, but his research ideas held groundbreaking implications. Thorndike was researching "to what extent and how does" the improvement of one function "alter others."²⁵⁰ Through a series of tedious experiments, Thorndike concluded that "the change in one function alters any other only so far as the two function have as factors identical elements."²⁵¹ These experiments were directly confrontational to other educators who insisted that "the influence of any special form of a discipline" could carry "much further" than scientifically proven.²⁵² Training in one skill or set of knowledge only transferred to another only so far as the subject could utilize the specific training of the former in the latter: "improvement in addition will alter one's ability in multiplication because addition is absolutely identical with a part of multiplication."²⁵³ Importantly, Thorndike's ideas fleshed out the psychological mechanics by which broad instruction could educate well-rounded individuals with more useful transferable skills—even if it identified abstract knowledge's limited innate utility.

While Dewey and Hall defined the purpose of education in terms that were limited by their culture's conceptions about gender and race, Thorndike's major contribution was his faith in the existence of universal cognitive processes. In his lecture about "Sex Differences in Mental Traits," Thorndike questioned the "general practice" of gendered instruction and even suggested that "the conscious effort to attain a theoretical basis for...[these] practices" was "guided more

²⁵⁰ "The Influence of Special Training on General Ability." Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

by hopes, fears and prejudices than by calm logic and pure scientific curiosity.”²⁵⁴ Thorndike noted that the existence of sex difference did not imply any advantage to gendered education, but that “even if the mental makeup of the sexes was identical it might still be wisest to educate them differently.”²⁵⁵ Without taking the outright controversial stance against gendered education, Thorndike openly considered the possibility that gendered education was merely a useful construct rather than a biological imperative. In the coeducational environment of the Summer School of the South where two-thirds of attending teachers were women, examining the scientific basis for gender differences was potentially liberating—particularly during a growing political debate over woman suffrage.

Thorndike’s assumptions about universal cognitive processes were particularly important for female educators, including faculty-member Celeste Parrish, who advocated for the potential social benefit of coeducational schooling. Removing gendered distinctions in curriculum could unlock women’s potential to make their own mark on society as independent agents, rather than as social dependents. Parrish was the daughter of slave-owning Virginia tobacco farmers who never recovered financially from the Civil War. She joined southern teachers in Virginia during the Readjuster Movement who sought access to higher education so that they could make a broader impact on society as independent professionals. Parrish pursued educational and professional opportunities at Virginia’s normal schools in the 1880s before continuing her education at Cornell and the University of Chicago to study new advances in educational psychology. In between 1893-1897, Parrish studied new methods in psychology under Edward

²⁵⁴ “Sex Differences in Mental Traits.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

B. Titchener at Cornell University and its applications to education under John Dewey at the University of Chicago. For Parrish, research about universal cognitive processes revealed that all students had equal innate potential, and were endowed with interests and abilities that could further improve society.²⁵⁶

In her lecture on “Socializing the Child,” Parrish made a two-pronged argument about the value of education by articulating its importance for the individual child, and society’s overall well-being.²⁵⁷ Students could only foster “self-realization” by working to improve society, and restructuring education around that imperative would improve society’s overall well-being.²⁵⁸ The major social problems of the day, including “the discontent...between capital and labor,” was the result of both sides’ “lack of understanding” about the other.²⁵⁹ Any elitist contempt for common laborers or any reduction of labor to “mere drudgery” was the result of ignorance. People’s highest aim in society was “good hard labor and plenty of it.”²⁶⁰ While the North had embraced the importance of educating Americans for Free Labor during the Common School Movement, the South’s progress was stunted by the enduring antebellum idea that “some people are born to work, and others are born to be...[a] leisure class.”²⁶¹ This leisure class was “a monstrosity” and had “no place in a well-organized society.”²⁶²

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ “Socializing the Child.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁵⁸ “The Woman of the Twentieth Century.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁵⁹ “Socializing the Child.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Ibid.*

If children could learn the intrinsic value of aiming to work well for the good of society, they would begin to discern their place in society. Collectively, they would form the “industry of a nation” which was both “its soul and an indication of its true development.”²⁶³ Education was not meant simply to prepare students to toil within society, but to inspire self-realization in respect to their opportunities to contribute to its overall improvement. At the same time, Parrish’s ideas illustrate how southern educators tried to reconcile liberal ideas about education’s potential to inspire self-fulfilled individuals in a New South context seeking to preserve a distinctly southern identity, a racial hierarchy, and a sense of progress.

This argument extended to her lecture on “The New Woman of the Twentieth Century,” which instructed women to pursue educational and professional opportunities so that they could fulfill their individual sense of purpose by improving society.²⁶⁴ In contrast to the “superficiality, frivolity, and purposelessness” of Victorian femininity, which was so limited that many women found “self-realization” impossible, Parrish explained that the “New Woman” would demonstrate her “ability to work...[with] great success.”²⁶⁵ She had already demonstrated that there was “no department of learning into which women...have not succeeded.” From these advances, the New Woman understood that her own “self-realization...to which as a human being she is entitled” was contingent on fulfilling her “[human] obligation to add to the world’s store.”²⁶⁶ Finally, women were obligated to pursue the highest level of education possible to become “the perfect human being which she can be.”²⁶⁷ Parrish participated in a turn-of-the-

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ “The Woman of the Twentieth Century.” Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 19. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278; Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

century discourse that articulated women's claim to equal opportunities through demonstrating their potential to contribute to society's overall advancement..²⁶⁸

The Summer School's curriculum aimed to inspire teachers to make tangible improvements to society by cultivating a democratically conscious, productive citizenry. Teachers could realize this potential through the Summer School's primary learning outcome: the acquisition of *personality*. This entailed internalizing a modern philosophy of education that reconciled liberal understandings of child development within the cultural context of the New South, which balanced whiggish notions of progress, painful memories of a shameful past, and the search for redeemable aspects of the region's cultural heritage. If Summer School faculty and teachers platformed a philosophy of education that centered sovereign individuals capable of some degree of self-determination within paternalist confines, then the Summer School itself was a macrocosm of that philosophy. Summer School's faculty and teachers participated in an ideological discussion of the South's cultural sovereignty, self-determination, and position within the Union. This discourse expanded over time with the broader Progressive Era movements to purify democracy and support democratic ideals in a global context.

²⁶⁸ For greater insight into the complexity of this discourse and competing interests within the Woman's Suffrage Movement, see: Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978; Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. For its complicated relationship to white supremacist discourses in the New South, see: Charles Postel, *Equality: An American Dilemma 1866-1896*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. New York & London: Oxford University Press, 2018; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Despite much literature showing how white women often articulated their right to citizenship by emphasizing their whiteness, Rebecca Montgomery shows how many progressive women saw tangible gains in their access to educational and professional opportunities in the South alongside black southerners. For this insight, see: Rebecca S. Montgomery, *Celeste Parrish and Educational Reform in the Progressive-Era South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 2017

CHAPTER THREE: “NOTHING LIKE IT SINCE THE DAYS OF HORACE MANN:” THE ARC OF A LIBERAL HUMANIST MODEL OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION.

From 1902-1911, the Summer School of the South modeled a vision of education based on inspiring students to become socially conscious democratic citizens. This curiosity-driven model for education reached its crescendo during the Summer School’s participation in the American Peace Movement between 1909-1912. Summer School teachers’ initial discourse about the transformative power of education on individuals expanded to include broader thinking about democratic citizenship, patriotism, and the government’s obligation to its citizens’ social welfare.

Still, the Summer School faced chronic institutional pressures from within the academy, and from its external donors. From 1905-1912, the Summer School adapted to these pressures, but at the cost of its most radical characteristics. The Summer School’s leadership continuously adapted to these new constraints and eventually integrated the program into the University of Tennessee. The Summer School continued to operate as a teacher-training and college preparatory institution until 1918, but this consolidation coincided with distinctly modern political objectives for progressive education reform across the country that were less influenced by nineteenth-century humanist perspectives on education than they were from new ideas about the value of scientific expertise and social efficiency.

“A Flag Means Nothing:” The Peace Movement and the Larger Patriotism at the Summer School of the South

Between 1909 and 1912, teachers and faculty at the Summer School of the South began reframing and expanding their commitment to universal education through the lens of the

American Peace Movement. While Summer School teachers had first expressed their commitment to universal education through a liberal humanist lens that emphasized the transformative power of education on individuals, Summer School teachers and faculty were beginning to consider the potential for universal education to transform the institution of government. Like other progressive educators, Summer School teachers saw the peace movement as a mechanism for redefining the government's core obligation around a broader commitment to the social welfare of its population.²⁶⁹ Still, the Summer School teachers and faculty encountered the American peace movement from a distinct perspective, inflected by their memory of the Civil War. Teachers who believed that universal education could remedy the region's cultural backwardness and widespread poverty—both of which they considered to be a consequence of an antebellum social order based on slavery—espoused the potential of universal peace to accelerate cultural progress.²⁷⁰

In the decade preceding First World War, progressive liberals across the United States responded to The Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 by promoting ideas about a new global diplomatic order founded on peace principles. In 1908, Fannie Ferns Andrews and Lucy Ames Mead founded the American School Peace League in Boston with the idea of producing an educational peace curriculum that would “produce a generation with peace, not war, in their hearts.”²⁷¹ Both women saw the expanding education system as the most promising medium for

²⁶⁹ Christy Jo Snider, “Peace and Politics: Fannie Ferns Andrews, Professional Politics and the American Peace Movement, 1900-1941.” *Mid-America (Chicago)* 79, no. 1 (1997): 71-95.

²⁷⁰ James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 37-73.

²⁷¹ Christy Jo Snider, “Peace and Politics: Fannie Ferns Andrews, Professional Politics and the American Peace Movement, 1900-1941.” *Mid-America (Chicago)* 79, no. 1 (1997): 71-95.

teaching principles of “New Internationalism,” which promised to create a peaceful global order built on national interdependence rather than military might.²⁷²

In 1908, Mead and established the American School Peace League at the National Education Association’s annual conference, with support from the American Peace Society. They believed that peace organizations could collaborate internationally to prevent war and repurpose federal military spending towards securing broader social reform programs. As the secretary of the American School Peace League, Andrews traveled broadly to create branch organizations of the League in women’s clubs, the League’s annual conference in conjunction with the National Education Association, and at Chautauqua meetings—including the Summer School of the South.²⁷³

The Summer School of the South played a vital role in the expansion of the American School Peace League and the promotion of its ideas across the South. At the same time, the Summer School’s influence on the peace movement increased the Summer School’s publicity, even attracting direct criticism from opponents of the movement. Still, Claxton’s participation in the American School Peace League contributed to his growing reputation as a national leader in the progressive education movement. In 1911, he was appointed the Federal Commissioner of Education during the final year of the Taft administration, and he served in that role until the end of the Wilson administration. From 1911-1918, Claxton worked closely with Andrews, whom he appointed to serve as a “Special Collaborator,” to connect the expanding institutional apparatus

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

of the American School Peace League to the Federal Government, and an international association for peace education.²⁷⁴

While this research terminates in 1912 at the end of Claxton's final year overseeing the Summer School of the South, and its first year under the University of Tennessee's management, it signals ahead to the controversies that Claxton and Andrews endured as peace advocates operating within the Federal Government during the First World War in order to position the Summer School within the broader arc of the Progressive Era. Claxton and Andrews worked hard from 1912-1914 to organize an International Conference for Education at the Hague, but the conference was postponed indefinitely after the German invasion of Belgium. During and immediately after the war, Claxton and Andrews came under considerable public scrutiny for their public advocacy for international peace, causing Andrews to change the American School Peace League's name to the American School Citizenship League. In 1919, Andrews and Claxton worked closely with Woodrow Wilson to establish an International Bureau of Education to operate in conjunction with the League of Nations. The failure of Congress to ratify the United States' entry into the League combined with the Harding administration's "Return to Normalcy" defeated their aspiration to organize an international conference for peace education.²⁷⁵

The Summer School of the South organized the first branch of the American School Peace League in the South on July 16, 1909. In prior weeks, The *Knoxville Sentinel* reported that though the Summer School had promoted "international peace...among teachers who instruct

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*; Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander Priestly Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 169-187.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*

children” for several years, it would be taking “important steps...in this direction.”²⁷⁶ Dr. Hamilton Holt, the editor of *The Independent* would be lecturing on “The Federation of the World” in connection with the Fourth of July Celebration. Additionally, Rev. Charles E. Beals—secretary for the American Peace Society—would give six general lectures, and Andrews—secretary of the American School Peace League— would explain the “purposes...of the School Peace League” and “take steps to organize leagues” in the South.²⁷⁷

The Summer School’s participation in the peace movement situated it within larger discourse about the potential of diplomacy to sustain international peace. Dr. Hamilton Holt’s general lecture, “the Federation of the World,” recalled “the rise...of the Hague conference” and argued that its organization and repeated sessions proved to him that “the ‘United Nations’ already exist.” From Holt’s perspective, “the time was not far distant when some governing party shall come which shall substitute law for war and the world shall unanimously cry ‘Peace on Earth, good will to men.’” Holt illustrated to Summer School teachers that peace was not an abstract ideal, but a plausible outcome of international diplomacy.

Holt’s lecture stoked the Summer School participants’ passion for the prospect of universal education to help create a diplomatic peace. During their Fourth of July program, teachers and faculty stated in their declaration of principles their belief in universal education to help achieve universal peace. They were careful to do so without compromising their integrity as patriotic Americans. The preface to their declaration stated that they were “not this day unmindful of the incalculable debt we owe to the military heroism that laid the foundation of our free government,” but that they believed that it was time for “the teachings of the Prince of Peace

²⁷⁶ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), June 19, 1909.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

[to] prevail throughout the world.”²⁷⁸ Moreover, they realized that it was “the schools” that were “most mighty agency in working out this glorious end.”²⁷⁹ Teachers in schools would go about creating “Universal intelligence and good” in order to bring “universal peace.”²⁸⁰ Finally, they pledged to instill those principles into “the hearts and minds” of their students.²⁸¹

The American School Peace League formed its first branch organization at the Summer School of the South on July 17. Claxton and other faculty members—including state superintendent S.A. Mynders, Education Professor Wycliffe Rose, Celeste Parrish, and others—composed the organization’s governing body.²⁸² The Summer School Peace League was open to “all members of the Summer School” and planned to meet annually at the Summer School of the South. Dr. Van Sickle, president of the American School Peace League, emphasized that “the object of the league was to substitute law and justice for war, and...the fact that teachers exert a wider influence than any other class of persons.”²⁸³ Additionally, they endorsed the American School Peace League’s efforts ‘to promote through the schools and the educational public of America, the interests of international justice and fraternity.’ Moreover, they believed that “the inculcation of [these] sentiments...will make for effective citizenship.” Summer School participants’ commitment to the ideas fostered a new vision of citizenship that was contingent not on dogmatic nationalism, but on self-conscious support of democratic principles that were universal.

²⁷⁸ *The Summer School Spectator*. July 9, 1909.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Knoxville Sentinel (1892-1926)*. July 17, 1909

²⁸³ *The Summer School Spectator*. July 20, 1909.

Summer School teachers expressed their newfound faith in the peace movement in many mediums across the Summer School. *Summer School Spectator* columnist Harley Fowler expressed his own conversion to the Peace League's sentiments, which were "not a mere dream, or a mere theory."²⁸⁴ The new era of peace was "drawing near when law shall rule instead of war...The taxpayers, too, are beginning to doubt the propriety of expending their hard-earned wages to equip the nation for war, when their children are craving for knowledge...So agreeing that war is a terrible evil, this league is co-operating with like organizations in other countries in endeavoring to rid the world of it." The international political discourse of demilitarization and peace ran concurrent with one centered on military preparedness. In this context, he encouraged more teachers "to attach" themselves to the organization.²⁸⁵

The following summer, teachers and faculty flew the peace flag to celebrate the first annual convention of the summer school branch of the American Schools Peace League. The *Summer School Spectator*'s editor, W. M. McClure, described the peace flag as "'Old glory' encased in a border of elegant silk with a fringe embroidered to the outside...Over it is a beautifully decorated strip of white silk with the words "Peace with all nations" magnificently wrought in gold." Teachers and faculty adapted their Declaration of Principles to renew their "endorsement of the conference for Education in the South, the Southern Education Board, the American School Peace League, and other bodies striving to bring about international arbitration and universal peace."²⁸⁶ Summer School participants envisioned themselves not only as American citizens, but as stakeholders in the transmissible principle of democracy.

²⁸⁴*The Summer School Spectator*. July 20, 1909; *The Summer School Spectator*. July 27, 1909.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *The Summer School Spectator*. July 5, 1910.

The Summer School Peace League invited Scottish Presbyterian minister Rev. Walter Walsh to give three lectures for its one-year anniversary. Walsh argued that diplomatic peace was merited not solely by moral principle, but also by self-interest. The misconception that national wealth depended on “conquest” was an “optical illusion,” because national prosperity was contingent on “foreign investment and foreign commerce.”²⁸⁷ It was not “the merchants” who should be feared, but “politicians and ignorant journalists.”²⁸⁸ Moreover, Walsh framed the peace movement as “a life and death struggle...between democracy and aristocracy.”²⁸⁹ From this view, war was exclusively in the interest of the wealthy. Militarization required that common people’s “food and clothing be taxed to build the dreadnaughts which the rich demand.”²⁹⁰ Moreover, the question of “conscription for the army” was one of “universal military slavery.”²⁹¹ Democratically conscious voters could prevent aristocratic warmongering by promoting the benefits of peace for the majority.

Unlike Holt, Walsh’s conception of international cooperation was not simply predicated on mutual consensus, but also on shared racial heritage. Germany, Britain, and the United States represented “the three great branches of the Teutonic family.” If they cooperated “on behalf of worldwide peace,” the rest of the world would have to follow their lead. The result would lead “not to an armed Roman peace, but to what will be a Pax Humana.”²⁹² Walsh’s theory was undoubtedly shaped by racial supremacist thinking, and it curiously omits the place of coercive imperialism in establishing that global peace, but his aim was to reconfigure those three

²⁸⁷ *The Summer School Spectator*. June 28, 1910

²⁸⁸ *The Summer School Spectator*. June 28, 1910

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *The Summer School Spectator*. July 5, 1910.

countries' relationship to one another through an imagined, shared evolutionary heritage that superseded their geopolitical rivalry. Summer School teachers saw themselves as part of that shared heritage and worked to construct a new international diplomatic order that operated from the basis of the shared principles of western civilization.²⁹³

Summer School lecturers invoked the Lost Cause as a distinctly southern ideological foundation for the Progressive ideals of universal peace and education. Civil War lecturer George R. Wendling reinterpreted the cataclysm of the Civil War as part of God's plan to establish a unified society: "The Supreme Power committed no error...the North and the South were united by conflict according to God's plan."²⁹⁴ Wendling hypothesized that the Civil War and reconciliation were God's instruments for establishing a more unified American society committed to the ideals of peace and democracy.

Wendling's interpretation not only ordained reconciliation, but it gave it a certain purpose. In the context of the peace lecturers speaking at the Summer School, Wendling channeled the Lost Cause—the moral infallibility and messianic proportions of Robert E. Lee—to create a distinctly southern justification for peace, democracy, and universal education.²⁹⁵ From this perspective, Lee had voluntarily taken up the South's burden of social sin so that future generations could transcend it. After the war, he had made his mission in peace to educate southerners for reunion.²⁹⁶ The South's sin had been beaten out of it, and southerners had been atoning for it since Appomattox. They would devote themselves to the infallible Lee because he

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²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ For the ideological patterns of the Lost Cause, see: Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009; Joseph Wilbur Cash, *The Mind of the South*. New York: a. A. Knopf, 1941. 175-178.

had believed that they were innately good even if he had known that slavery was wrong.²⁹⁷ In Wendling's rendition of the Lost Cause, the "moral power" of Lee was the Social Gospel—he charged Summer School teachers to participate in an ongoing process of postmillennial atonement. The Summer School Peace League offered participants an avenue to transcend their identity as sinful, defeated southerners by devoting themselves to the ideals of peace and democracy.

Peace lecturers followed a similar pattern because they believed that establishing universal education to instill the values of peace across the world was a social gospel imperative. Lecturers explained that teachers carried the burden of raising "a Christian army of broad-minded, thoughtful and courageous Americans" who could "sweep all evil and ignorance from their country and eventually the world."²⁹⁸ Teachers were missionaries in the evangelical movement toward international peace and were responsible for instilling in individuals the democratic values necessary for them to participate responsibly in the new international order.

William Jennings Bryan was among the most notable peace lecturers at the Summer School of the South who directly appealed to his audience's sense of social obligation to impart Christian righteousness on the world.²⁹⁹ On June 24, 1911, *The Knoxville Sentinel* reported that "The Greater Commoner" was giving his famous lecture, "The Price of a Soul," in Jefferson Hall on the University of Tennessee's campus. Bryan lectured "for nearly one hour and a half" on "the common things of life... [and] the paths of righteousness."³⁰⁰ Bryan challenged his

²⁹⁷ Joseph Wilbur Cash, *The Mind of the South*. New York: A. a. Knopf, 1941.

²⁹⁸ *The Summer School Spectator*. June 28, 1910.

²⁹⁹ For a more in-depth look into Bryan's transformation into the "conscience" of the democratic party after his failed presidential campaign in 1908, see: Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 2006. 169-192.

³⁰⁰ *Knoxville Sentinel (1892-1926)*, June 24, 1911.

audience to “weigh the soul” and pondered “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”³⁰¹ He celebrated that Americans appreciated “the dignity of labor,” but insisted that “the blessings of American citizenship” came with special obligations to give back toward society.

Bryan compared Americans’ special obligation to “the doctrine...that we must enter into a mad rivalry with the Old World in the building of battleships.”³⁰² This doctrine was mere hubris and had resulted in the failure of many nations. Those failed nations had “boasted that people bowed before their flag.” Bryan appealed to the crowd to “not be content until our flag represents sentiments so high and holy that the oppressed of every land will turn their faces toward that flag and thank God that...one flag...stands for self-government and for the rights of man.” As the old-world aristocracies competed in an arms race to maintain geopolitical superiority over each other, Bryan challenged Americans to hold true to the democratic principles of self-governance. This inclusive conception of patriotism was constructed from shared principles rather than national origins and was foundational to ideas about international cooperation.

While perhaps stirred by a personal sense of social and spiritual obligation, Claxton promoted the tangible benefits of diplomatic peace. If applied to education, the United States’ defense budget could build “a great national university, with annual income of two and a half million dollars...a university in each state with an annual income each of twenty-five thousand dollars...twenty agricultural schools in each state with an annual income of thirty thousand

³⁰¹ William Jennings Bryan, “The Price of a Soul.” New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company. 1914.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/24406/pg24406-images.html>

³⁰² *Ibid.*

dollars each, five technological schools in each state with an annual income of one hundred thousand dollars each, five normal schools for the training of teachers in each state with an annual income of one hundred thousand dollars each and add a million dollars to the common school fund of each state.”³⁰³ This investment in education was the medium to build a global society in which people in every nation were “free to follow their every vocation.”³⁰⁴ According to Claxton, the benefits of peace could be calculated by its potential to support a great national education system capable of cultivating enlightened, productive and prosperous citizens.

In July of 1910, Claxton traveled to Boston to address the American School Peace League at the National Education Association’s annual meeting in Boston. His address, “The Larger Patriotism and what the schools may do to bring about it,” expanded from the material benefits of peace by formulating a new definition of patriotism predicated on individuals’ faith in principles, rather than dogmatic loyalty.³⁰⁵ This alternative way of thinking about patriotism made room for new possibilities such as global citizenship, and international cooperation based on shared principles. At the same time, it challenged exclusionary, nationalist conceptions of patriotism popularly expounded by conservatives. The following excerpt from “The Larger Patriotism” became the subject of national controversy and followed Claxton through his years as the Federal Commissioner of Education during the nativist climate of the First World War:

After all, the people of the world care very little what flag they live under. A flag means nothing; it is not reality. They can live under one combination of colors as well as another... We no longer think of our country as we used to. State boundaries have little meaning for us. We do not defend the strip of land where one chances to have been born through thick and thin. The Germans who come to our shores do not pine to live under the German colors; at least, I have not found it so.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), June 28, 1910

³⁰⁴ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), July 4, 1912.

³⁰⁵ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), July 13, 1910.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The *Army and Navy Journal* took specific alarm at Claxton's address; the editor condemned Claxton and the School Peace League for trying to propagate "socialistic" ideas in public schools.³⁰⁷ The editor claimed that the American School Peace League was "one of the most dangerous foes of patriotism now rampant in the United States" and charged "every lover of the American Spirit" to "do his utmost to discourage its propaganda."³⁰⁸ Finally, he called on the Governor of Tennessee to remove Claxton from his position at the University of Tennessee.

Claxton's allies in the Peace Movement and progressive journals from across the eastern seaboard rallied to his defense by emphasizing Claxton's patriotism, and distancing Claxton's intention from such accusations. The *Springfield Weekly Republican* defended Claxton, arguing that the accusations were "far-fetched," and did not represent "the views of Prof Claxton."³⁰⁹ Edwin Meade, the president of the American School Peace League, wrote a scathing response to the *Army and Navy Journal* in which he insisted that "Patriotism" was "Professor Claxton's very religion; it happens that he has ten times as much concern with it as with internationalism."³¹⁰ His work at the Summer School of the South showed this, because it did more "to make more Americans of the great mass of Southern teachers than any other institution known to me...[if] you go there on the 4th of July...you may see...[the] most impressive of all annual Independence Day celebrations in the United States."³¹¹ At this, *The Army and Navy Journal* backed away, temporarily, from the scandal.

³⁰⁷ *The Springfield Republican*, July 28 1910.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*; Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander P. Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 192-198.

³⁰⁹ *The Springfield Republican*, July 28 1910.

³¹⁰ Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander P. Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 192-198.

³¹¹ *Ibid*.

Claxton and his local supporters made similar efforts to dismiss *The Journal's* accusations by emphasizing his patriotism. Even the *Summer School Spectator* editor claimed that Claxton was misquoted and that *The Army and Navy Journal* had only trying to “fill up space and make a noise.”³¹² Moreover, only “thick-skulled” reporters who “wanted to be sensational” were reprinting the controversy.³¹³ Claxton himself clarified that he “had been misquoted” and “made no such attack on the American flag.” He clarified to the press that he had only meant to say that “it was not the mere colors...that should incite patriotism, but what the flag stood for.”³¹⁴ In other words, Claxton insisted that the flag’s significance was derived from the principles it symbolized, rather than an arbitrary commitment based on national chauvinism.

Claxton and his allies’ defense, however, obscured his point. If the American flag was only as good as the principles it stood for—which he later clarified, under pressure from Secretary of the Interior, as “individual liberty, democracy, equal opportunity, progress, freedom from unnecessary burdens of taxation, and from military domination”—then anybody who acknowledged those principles could be patriotic.³¹⁵ The tens of thousands of immigrants per year flowing into the country were doing so because of their faith in those principles, rather than the colors of the flag itself. Moreover, this new and “larger” patriotism was contingent on universal education because it required individuals to evaluate and internalize principles. As J. H. Shinn had suggested in his address to the Southern Educational Association’s inaugural meeting two decades earlier, democracy could only function properly if citizens were allotted the

³¹² *The Summer School Spectator*, July 26, 1910.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ Charles Lee Lewis, *Philander P. Claxton: Crusader for Public Education*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1948. 192-198.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

necessary education to “strip the law of its externality.”³¹⁶ Claxton’s address subverted exclusionary nationalism and raised new possibilities of global cooperation and citizenship.

Claxton and the Summer School’s reputation reached national heights because of this controversy, aiding his nomination to be appointed the Commissioner of Education. Still, Claxton’s public record in support of peace and internationalism made him an easy target after the outbreak of the First World War. From 1915 until the end of his appointment in 1921, Claxton faced a considerable number of controversies related to his support of foreign language education, his expertise in German literature, and his connection to peace organizations.

From 1902-1911, the Summer School of the South modeled a vision of education based on inspiring people for life. State-funded and state-directed public schools could construct a society that recognized individual citizens’ stake in democracy and recognized the contributions of their labor to society’s overall well-being. The Summer School’s participation in the peace movement signified radically inclusive potential to transcend the exclusionary notion that citizenship was about national loyalty and ethnic heritage in exchange for the liberating, inclusive idea that citizenship stemmed from individuals’ shared commitment to democratic principles. Still, this chapter’s next section will trace the chronic institutional pressures faced by the Summer School from within the academy, and from its external donors. Between 1905-1912, the Summer School adapted to these pressures, but at the cost of many of its most distinct characteristics.

³¹⁶ J. H. Shinn, “Local Taxation for Schools.” *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890. 27.

*“An Unorganized Mob:” Administrative Scrutiny, and the Rise of Managerial Progressivism in
Public Education*

The Summer School of the South’s leadership expected that its value would be made evident by the creation of future generations of democratically conscious, productive citizens. It was a non-profit enterprise and was intended to be financially accessible to as many teachers as possible. Consequently, the Summer School leaders spent immense energy securing donors’ trust. As the Southern and General Education Boards turned their attention towards more direct interventions in the southern economy, Summer School leaders worked tirelessly to put their institution on firmer footing. Simultaneously, hostile administrators at the University of Tennessee increasingly held the Summer School financially responsible for its burden on their campus and facilities. Moreover, Summer School teachers demanded transferable credits in recognition of their academic work. From 1902 to 1912, the Summer School’s leadership continuously adapted to these new constraints and eventually integrated the program into the University of Tennessee. The Summer School continued to operate as a teacher-training and college preparatory institution until 1918, but this consolidation coincided with a narrower purpose.

Claxton and Dabney could not achieve their objectives for southern education without appealing directly to philanthropists. In Claxton’s report following the Summer School’s fifth session in 1906, he wrote that despite the public’s “great interest” and “great need” for the school, it could not “run without some outside help.”³¹⁷ Even after leaving the University of

³¹⁷ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Tennessee to become president of the University of Cincinnati in 1904, Dabney maintained close correspondence with Claxton and traveled frequently to New York to advocate for the Summer School of the South to the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board. This concluded after an unsuccessful trip in January of 1906, after which Dabney wrote to Claxton to complain about “the passionate way in which they take up every new thing.”³¹⁸ He dejectedly concluded that the General Education Board would “absolutely not give you a cent.”³¹⁹ Dabney articulated with certainty that their largest donors had abandoned their institution for other interests.

The General Education Board’s support for the Summer School of the South waned because they sought to implement more efficient solutions to the South’s poverty. In May of 1905, months before Dabney’s trip to New York, agriculturalist Seaman A. Knapp had approached the General Education Board to ask them to fund a comprehensive campaign of cooperative agricultural experiments conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture that aimed to address southern poverty head on. Unlike Claxton and Dabney, Knapp believed that the South’s cultural backwardness was a symptom of the region’s monocultural cotton economy. During his subsequent campaigns, Knapp would argue that “the single-crop system...[inhibited] rural development and [promoted]...class distinctions against mass development.”³²⁰ Knapp articulated structural barriers to southern progress that could be dismantled through direct intervention in the economy, rather than by the gradual transformation of southerners’ attitudes.

³¹⁸ Clinton B. Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. 93.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. 106.

In the South, Knapp confronted an unregulated monocultural rural economy that oscillated at the whim of the global supply and demand for cotton. At the turn of the twentieth century, the South's cotton farmers were in dire straits. Cotton farmers overworked and depleted soil to settle their compounding debt but were routinely forced by lenders to sell their yield immediately after harvest, when it flooded into markets and dropped in value. Farmers routinely came up short and either borrowed additional high-interest loans against their next yield, foreclosed on their land, or risked criminal conviction and impressment into many southern states' convict-lease systems. This predatory "crop-lien" system was the primary mechanism facilitating systemic poverty and capital dispossession across the rural South.³²¹ Knapp wanted to break cotton's stranglehold on southern farmers and their depleted soil by teaching them diversified agricultural practices that could stimulate the South's "social and educational awakening" by raising "whole sections...from poverty to prosperity."³²²

General Education Board agents responded enthusiastically to this proposal that promised efficient, measurable progress in uplifting the South from poverty. General Education Board secretary Frederick T. Gates celebrated that Knapp's program promised to accomplish something "highly useful and important...for the South, along the lines of reclaiming their worn out soil and elevating their rural life."³²³ By April of 1906, months after Dabney's own plea for the Summer School fell on Buttrick's and Gates' deaf ears, the General Education Board signed a

³²¹ *Ibid.* 102-111. For additional considerations of the effect of cotton prices on the rural South in the early twentieth century, see: Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 93-94.

³²² *Ibid.* 106.

³²³ *Ibid.*

“memorandum of understanding” with the United States Department of Agriculture to sponsor Seaman Knapp’s program of agricultural reform.³²⁴

The General Education Board’s realignment toward direct interventions in southern agriculture frustrated Summer School leaders because they believed that educating democratically self-conscious, productive citizens would fix poverty by transforming individuals. Southern education reformers had protested any educational solution for rural whites that emphasized social efficiency without nurturing the cultural attitudes and values of its citizens. Dabney had insisted that this narrow emphasis would be “the slaughter of the innocents.”³²⁵ Anything short of educating “the whole man in his threefold nature—physical, intellectual and moral; hand, head, and heart” was “hurtful, for it distorts the man.”³²⁶ Shinn’s address at the Southern Education Association’s inaugural meeting had rejected the common assumption that liberal education was exclusively “the [intellectual] property of Northern-born people,” and instead argued that it was “the [common] heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race.”³²⁷ Dabney’s frustration boiled over because the General Education Board’s new agenda of social efficiency came at the expense of white southerners’ dignity as cultural equals to white northerners and Europeans.

Dabney acknowledged to Claxton that Knapp was “a good talker [and] a great promoter,” but quipped that “They have found a new fad and are booming it for all they are worth... It looks

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ Charles William Dabney, “The Old College and the New, an Address Delivered at the Commencement of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, June 24, 1896.” Library of Congress. The old college and the new, an address delivered at the commencement of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, June 24, 1896, : Dabney, Charles William, 1855-1945 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ J. H. Shinn, “Local Taxation for Schools.” *Proceedings of the Annual Session of the Southern Educational Association*. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1890.

as if one will have to catch each one of their fads or he will get nothing.”³²⁸ Ultimately, Claxton met the General Education Board on their terms by appealing for funds to open a model rural school to enhance the Summer School’s coursework in agricultural education.

Adapting to northern donors’ new interests, Claxton expanded the Summer School of the South’s agricultural offerings. In 1907, University of Tennessee professor of Agriculture Harcourt Morgan even made “special mention” of “the work in agriculture done by the Summer School in cooperation with the University of Tennessee.”³²⁹ The U.S. Department of Agriculture commissioned experts—including Dr. Seaman Knapp—to teach agricultural classes to Summer School teachers. Additionally, they sponsored two students of agriculture from each county in Tennessee to attend the Summer School. In exchange, these funded teachers were expected to teach agriculture in their respective counties.³³⁰ The USDA’s collaboration with the University and the Summer School blended reformers’ program of liberal education with the agricultural reformers’ plan to modernize the South through improved farming techniques.

Changes in the University of Tennessee’s administration created additional constraints on the Summer School. The Summer School lost a strong advocate when Charles W. Dabney left to become president of the University of Cincinnati in 1904. Dabney’s faith in the University to intervene directly in the state’s economy through both agricultural extension and teacher preparation contrasted with the vision of the University of Tennessee’s new president, Brown

³²⁸ Clinton B. Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. 93.

³²⁹ Morgan to Claxton, 11 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³³⁰ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ayres, who emphasized modern scientific research and preparation for more prestigious professions. As a prominent physicist, Ayres aimed to develop the University into a research-oriented institution at the apex of the state's education system. Claxton reflected that Ayres did not outright oppose "the continuation of the Summer School," but that he was "doubtful as to the advisability of continuing it after it became necessary to depend almost wholly on the uncertain income of the school for its support."³³¹ In retrospect, "Ayres was not enthusiastic...to assume doubtful obligations."³³² While Dabney valued the Summer School as an investment in the region's future, Ayres was less swayed by such romantic potential and assessed its value in terms of dollars and cents.

From the beginning, the Summer School's leadership fretted over what Ayres's position would be regarding the continuation of the Summer School. In September of 1904, Claxton wrote to Dabney in regard to the University's new leadership that he could "[say] more later about [the University's] situation," but that "at present it [was] quite indefinite."³³³ Claxton expressed that he was "hoping against the worst."³³⁴ Still, he optimistically hoped that Ayres would "fight against any extreme narrowness."³³⁵ Claxton's terse optimism reveals his considerable anxiety about Ayres's commitment to supporting the Summer School and its broader mission.

³³¹ Claxton, Philander P., 1932-1949, Box: 5, Folder: 1. University of Tennessee Presidents' Papers, AR-0001. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Claxton to Dabney, 20 September 1904. Dabney-Claxton correspondence (from Dabney's files), undated, II, Box: 14. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

Ayres openly harbored deeper ideological prejudices against the Summer School, however, which came to light in several discussions with the university's trustees about whether to continue leasing the University's property to the Summer School. In 1911, Ayres complained that the school served "elementary teachers, mostly women."³³⁶ Moreover, their coursework did not "[fall] within the scope of college or even secondary work." The annual influx of roughly 2,000 teachers and visitors to the University's campus during the Summer School of the South formed an "unorganized mob" which—along with the school's "Chautauqua features"—discouraged "serious" scholarship.³³⁷ Adding to his list of complaints, Ayres quipped that Jefferson Hall, the Summer School's central landmark, was an "exceedingly irritating feature."³³⁸ The Summer School of the South did not conform to Ayres's formal, gendered conception of the twentieth-century research university.

Moreover, Ayres scrutinized Claxton's role as a dual employee of the Southern Education Board and the University of Tennessee's Department of Education. Ayres cracked down on the financial arrangements between individual professors and external funding bodies which circumvented the University's administration. After taking office, Ayres wrote to the General Education Board's Wallace Buttrick complaining about the GEB's "[direct] arrangements with Prof. Claxton."³³⁹ To Ayres, these independent arrangements signaled Claxton's conflict of interest regarding the University's trajectory. While the philanthropy boards were still interested in reforming the south through accessible educational programming intended

³³⁶ James R. Montgomery, "The Summer School of the South." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. 1963. 378-379.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Clinton B. Allison, *Teachers for the South: Pedagogy and Educationists in the University of Tennessee, 1844-1995*. 93-94.

to directly impact the economy, Ayres wanted to strengthen the University's partnership with policymakers, and corporate elites.³⁴⁰

Still, Ayres built an independent relationship with the General Education Board to secure funding to be administered through the University to its new Department of Education. Claxton wrote to Dabney that it was "probable" that "Ayres may ask the General Education Board to continue the full appropriation of \$5000 to the Department of Education and to extend it...[which would] put the Department of Education on its feet."³⁴¹ Ayres sought to channel external funding away from professional development for teachers and towards research in education as an academic discipline. By redirecting funding away from the Summer School and into the Department of Education, Ayres effectively transformed the University's democratic commitment to education to an esoteric one.³⁴²

Dabney's new position in Cincinnati gradually drew him away from his administrative responsibilities at the Summer School. On May 15, 1907—weeks before the beginning of the Summer School's sixth year of operation—Dabney asked Claxton: "How about all of that Summer School property? I want to get rid of the responsibility of the business."³⁴³ It is unclear what business he is exactly referring to—it is possible that he was tied up with some of the

³⁴⁰ Ayre's vision resembled his contemporaries in Wisconsin, and Chapel Hill. For this, see: Michael Dennis, *Lessons in Progress: State Universities and Progressivism in the New South, 1880–1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001; Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University: Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012; William A. Link, *Frank Porter Graham: Southern Liberal, Citizen of the World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

³⁴¹ Claxton to Dabney, 20 September 1904. Dabney-Claxton correspondence (from Dabney's files), undated, II, Box: 14. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁴² For the long-term effects of this, see: David F. Labaree, D. John McIntyre, Kelly E Demers, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, and Sharon Feiman-Nemser. "An Uneasy Relationship: The History of Teacher Education in the University." In *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, 3rd ed., 290–306. Routledge, 2008.

³⁴³ Claxton to Dabney, 15 May 1907. Dabney-Claxton correspondence (from Dabney's files), undated, II, Box: 14. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

buildings constructed on the University's campus for the purpose of accommodating Summer School lectures—but the letter clearly indicates that Dabney no longer considered himself actively involved in administering and supporting the Summer School. In the following paragraph, Dabney wrote: "I wish you much success with your plans for the Summer School this year...I hope you will get the money to put it through."³⁴⁴ Without allies in the University and larger philanthropic organizations, Claxton relied heavily on smaller donors and increased registration fees for continued financial support.

Claxton leveraged his own professional networks to solicit support from other donors. He proved skillful at securing considerable annual contributions from Knox County and Knoxville's commercial elite, but the school barely survived the funding crisis brought on by the lack of financial support from larger philanthropic entities. Without that support, the school lost considerable autonomy from the University and was gradually forced to increase registration fees to offset its costs. In the spring of 1908—weeks before the Summer School opened for its seventh session—Claxton solicited letters from several of the Summer School's most esteemed faculty to vouch for the Summer School's utility in a grand effort to regain the General Education Board's interest. These letters not only emphasized the Summer School's distinct contributions but also attempted to refute the claims of its critics.

University administrators began criticizing the Summer School for resembling the increasingly perceived low-brow medium of Chautauqua. While the Chautauqua movement had originally been an altruistic enterprise, its rapid commercialization in the first decade of the

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

twentieth century transformed it into a medium for mass entertainment.³⁴⁵ G. Stanley Hall wrote that he was “very glad to put on record for the public or any other use...[his] emphatic endorsement of the high value of this work for the teachers of the South.”³⁴⁶ Notably, Hall stated that while he frequently went directly from Knoxville “to an engagement at Chautauqua...the work in Knoxville is entirely unique and differs in a somewhat radical and altogether wholesome way from that of any other institution of its kind that I know in the country...I certainly have found that those I lecture to can profit by the very best work I am able to do.”³⁴⁷ By associating his work at the Summer School with his experiences lecturing within the academy—and distancing it from his experiences lecturing at Chautauqua—Hall suggested that Summer School teachers engaged in meaningful scholarship capable of inspiring efficient change across the region.

Other prominent intellectuals in the academy made similar statements about the Summer School’s quality of scholarship. In a handwritten note, Edward Thorndike wrote from Columbia University’s Teachers College that “it has been not only a means of professional training of great value to the work and life of southern teachers, but also that it has afforded advanced training to many of the future leaders of southern education. There should be in the South a great summer university for the strong men and women who cannot afford a full year’s absence from work.

The Summer School of the South is the nearest thing to this.”³⁴⁸ Henry Synder, the president of

³⁴⁵ Ferki Ferati, “The Rise and Decline of the Chautauqua Movement and Its Lessons for 21st Century Civic Adult Education.” PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2017.

³⁴⁶Hall to Claxton, 12 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ Thorndike to Claxton, 10 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Wofford College and instructor of southern literature, wrote that he had “the distinct conviction that at none are the opportunities so great for the advancement of the general cause of education in this section through the right training of the teacher for more efficient service, and nowhere have I seen more serious work on the part of both instructors and students.”³⁴⁹ The Summer School’s teaching faculty testified to teachers’ quality of scholarship, and emphasized its unique service to the South.

Other Summer School faculty articulated the Summer School’s value in more romantic terms. B.C. Gregory, the superintendent of Chelsea, MA schools, wrote that it provided for “the evolution of the teacher beyond the method stage...[through] the influence of the higher life which [pulsated] around them.”³⁵⁰ Through teachers’ interactions with faculty “of the highest distinction,” the Summer School of the South inspired teachers to attain “this higher life.”³⁵¹ The mechanism that cultivated individual students’ sense of self “was the essence of the work of Horace Mann.”³⁵² Moreover, Gregory qualified that “those who know anything about the memory of Horace Mann in Massachusetts...must feel that nothing stronger could be said.”³⁵³ Gregory drew a direct intellectual connection between the antebellum common school movement and the Summer School of the South, both of which viewed education as a means of developing individuals’ innate sense of self—something more difficult to measure than the material value of their labor.

³⁴⁹ Snyder to Claxton, 11 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁵⁰ Gregory to Claxton, 13 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

Some faculty members addressed the General Education Board directly. Frederick Hicks wrote that it was “a pity that those in control of the needed resources cannot know from personal contact the immense service the School is rendering.”³⁵⁴ The public lectures and events of the Summer School “commended [themselves] not only as affording an uplift in the way of general culture, but also providing that relaxation which was indispensable in view of the intense character of the efforts put forth in regular class work.”³⁵⁵ The popular functions testified to the serious nature of Summer School teachers’ coursework and enhanced their learning.

Others were even more direct. Walter Miller—Professor of Greek from Tulane University—wrote directly to the General Education Board:

To the General Education Board,
Gentleman: -

I am glad to bear witness that the Summer School of the South...is the most helpful single agency for the betterment of teaching in the schools of the South...For

- 1) The 1800 teachers, representing every section of the Southland, come to Knoxville with definitely formulated wants which they desire to have filled.
- 2) The courses, given by specialists...are definitely planned to meet just such wants on the part of the teachers...
- 3)The Summer School...forms for these teachers a clearing-house for the exchange of ideas for the betterment of the schools represented by this cosmopolitan body of workers...
- 4)The Advanced courses and special lectures inspire them with higher ideals for their own study and awaken in them greater enthusiasm for their work.
- 5) The faculty...do not consent to anything but serious work.
- 6)The...students share in this seriousness and...receive a decided uplift in their own lives and an equally decided forward impulse for better service...

There is no work in which I have engaged in the South that I accounted as rich in results to education as the work...at the Summer School of the South.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ Hicks to Claxton, 12 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Miller to Claxton, 9 March 1908.

District school officials testified that the Summer School had directly improved their teachers' performance. Elizabeth V. Brown, the director of Primary Instruction of the Board of Education in Washington D.C., wrote that the teachers she directed to the Summer School had "shown marked improvement in their work."³⁵⁷ the Summer School of the South's value for elementary school teachers was unique, specifically because "the general lectures [were] broad in scope and...[contained] the best educational thought."³⁵⁸ As a result, "the serious-minded teacher who puts her time and money into a summer school course is turning from Chautauqua field to schools like yours—schools of earnest purpose in which she can do excellent training."³⁵⁹ Undoubtedly, the Summer School provided an invaluable service for female teachers who sought professional development, university credits, and the collegiate experience of residing on the University of Tennessee's campus during the summer.

The Summer School of the South received no additional funding from this petition, but Claxton's effort to collect them is telling of the extent of the Summer School's financial difficulties leading up to 1908. In September of 1907, Claxton reported the Summer School's first deficit to the Knoxville Board of Trade. Despite the students' "earnest and persistent work" and the "lectures and entertainments" that were "among the very best that have ever been given in Knoxville," the Summer School's expenses had exceeded its revenue by a considerable margin.³⁶⁰ This deficit distressed Claxton, who felt compelled to illustrate how "this session was

³⁵⁷ Brown to Claxton, 10 March 1908. Proceedings of the 2nd Session of the Summer School of the South, undated, II, Box: 20. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

more nearly self-supporting than any previous session.”³⁶¹ The Summer School had raised registration fees from \$6 to \$8 per student, but its expenses rose—in part because of the elaborate “music week” which featured seven musical performances by some of the best performers in the country. Claxton justified this expense by reflecting that teachers attending the Summer School had “a feeling if not understanding for the best” and that “this music was much better for forming tastes and ideals than music cheaper in cost and character.”³⁶² You get what you pay for, Claxton thought, and he wanted to cultivate good teachers.

Still, the Summer School needed to adapt if it was going to survive as a permanent institution. It had been “very successful” but the South’s “rapid development” coincided with progressive teachers’ “new needs and demands.”³⁶³ While preserving “its powers of inspiration and uplift,” Claxton wanted to reorganize the Summer School to give “more systematic and thorough instruction.”³⁶⁴ The school was divided into departments headed by deans that supervised expert instructors, and consecutive coursework so that teachers could make “definite progress” and receive “definite credits...which...may be recognized...by the Colleges and the Universities.”³⁶⁵ Claxton acknowledged that the immediate drawback was that “the cost will be somewhat greater.”³⁶⁶ In practice, reorganizing the Summer School curriculum narrowed teachers’ focus to subjects deemed credible by the University’s standards—even as it provided them with the opportunity to earn transferable credits.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal* 32, no. 3 (1949): 107–12.

³⁶³ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Summer School teachers' own concerns about their certificates and credits may have influenced Claxton's initiative to reorganize the Summer School. Hattie R. Kent wrote directly to Charles Dabney from Mosheim, Tennessee, in September, 1903, to inquire about credit for her coursework. Her letter exhibits a lot about the function of the Summer School.

When we left at the close of the summer school the faculty told us to expect our certificates within two weeks...I have received no certificate yet...I know it is not because I did not do enough work, for a friend that accompanied me has received her certificate and I am quite sure I did better work in my classes than she. It cannot be because of my absence for I was present every day. I think in some way my name has been overlooked. You will do me a great favor if you will see about it for me. I missed the state and County institute to attend the Summer School and so here I am without any certificate. I want something from the summer school to present to my county superintendent.³⁶⁷

The Summer School of the South may have provided an intrinsically valuable educational experience, but it also was a mechanism for teachers to increase their status and credibility.³⁶⁸ In a decentralized public education system, teachers held considerable negotiating power with their local superintendents regarding their annual salary and it was not unusual for teachers to leverage professional development for increased pay.³⁶⁹ Hattie Kent wanted her certificate not simply for personal satisfaction, but because it lent her more credibility and prestige than other accessible opportunities.

Annie Fain wrote directly to Claxton in December of 1911 with similar concerns about receiving credits for work at the Summer School. In this case, Annie presented an altogether

³⁶⁷ General Student Correspondence, 1902 May 5-1911 December 2, B., Box: 1, Folder: 24. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁶⁸ see: James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 77-78, 187-188

³⁶⁹ General Student Correspondence, 1902 May 5-1911 December 2, B., Box: 1, Folder: 24. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

separate logistical problem. She started coursework in literature in 1909 and finished it through correspondence with her professor over the subsequent two years but had not received a certificate for that work. Evidently, she had been informed that this was because she had not taken the Summer School's examination:

In 1910 I consulted you with regard to completing the course by correspondence and you encouraged me, saying you would abide by whatever was granted me by the Professor giving the course. You said nothing of examination on the subject being required at Knoxville...If you can also sign another for me on College Entrance Req. in Eng. And retain a good conscience...[then] I will have...gratitude.³⁷⁰

The Summer School's initial commitment to a decentralized elective system allowed for tremendous flexibility at the expense of transparency. While Annie Fain's circumstance was likely atypical, the fact that she continued her coursework through direct correspondence with her professor reveals a considerable amount of trust between the Summer School's administration and the faculty that they hired. As Claxton sought to increase the program's credibility, he encountered more pressure to issue formal assessments that could measure definite learning and progress. In this case, Claxton agreed to waive the exam and issue Annie Fain credit for her correspondence work. Her insistence on receiving formal recognition of her work, however, reveals that teachers gained considerable prestige and professional advancement from their academic accomplishments at the Summer School.

The Summer School of the South was controversial among the University's trustees. While they acknowledged their role at the head of the state's educational system to offer educational opportunities to the state's public-school teachers, the school's institutional

³⁷⁰ General Student Correspondence, 1902 May 5-1911 December 2, B., Box: 1, Folder: 24. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

autonomy provided its own set of headaches. In 1911, the board concluded that the Summer School needed to integrate with the University if it was to continue operating on their campus. In addition to being financially liable for “any loss sustained by it as a result of the Summer School session,” the Board wanted to remove Jefferson Hall and other structures built for the Summer School and more closely administer the Summer School’s academic requirements.³⁷¹ Whereas the University had initially absorbed costs related to the Summer School’s use of facilities, it was now assigning those costs to the Summer School. Finally, the Summer School needed to become “self-supporting,” which meant becoming fully tuition-dependent and less accessible for most working teachers.³⁷²

The Board’s decision to integrate The Summer School of the South into the University was shaped by two important external factors. First, Claxton was appointed by Howard Taft in 1911 to become the Federal Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Education; he resigned from his position at the University to accept the position. Dabney was highly influential in pushing Claxton for this position because Secretary of the Interior Walter W. Fisher’s father, Rev. Daniel W. Fisher, was “a dear old friend...[and] a Presbyterian minister of distinction.” At McCormick Theological Seminary’s previous board meeting, he had asked Dabney “to suggest the name of a good man for the United States Commissionership of Education.” Dabney confessed to Claxton that he had “taken the liberty” of putting his name forward for the position.

³⁷¹ Reports of the Superintendent (photocopy), 1902-1911, I, Box: 1, Folder: 6-7. Summer School of the South Collection, AR-0750. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

³⁷² *Ibid*; for more, see: James R. Montgomery, “The Summer School of the South.” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1963): 361–81.

While Claxton had recently turned down the opportunity to become Iowa State University's president because of his "interest in the educational work in the South," the commissioner job appealed to him because it offered "the opportunity to serve the whole country."³⁷³ Additionally, he believed that he could do the South "a special service without neglecting the interests of other sections."³⁷⁴ He admitted that if he was offered the position, he would "accept it and...appreciate anything that may be done in regard to it."³⁷⁵ In response, on June 15, 1911 Dabney wrote that he was "delighted" to hear this and agreed to "write the strongest letter I can to the President [Taft]."³⁷⁶ In another letter, he confessed that although Congress did not currently "allow sufficient appropriation," he had "always thought that it had great possibilities" and believed that Claxton "could make it go, if anybody could."³⁷⁷

On June 30, Dabney wrote to Claxton congratulating him on being appointed to the Commissionership by the President. He confessed that the Bureau of Education had "been little more than a bureau for gathering statistics...and supplying information" but that under Claxton it could "become a great national bureau indeed, the clearing house for our entire educational system."³⁷⁸ Evidently, Claxton concurred. Shortly after taking office, Claxton wrote to Dabney that he was "convinced that there is an opportunity to do something and a great need of some kind of reconstruction." In the same letter, in connection with Dabney's recent address at The Summer School of the South, Claxton wrote that "the renationalization of the South ought to mean the re-Americanizing of the Nation."³⁷⁹ While vague and unclear, this statement suggests

³⁷³ Claxton to Dabney 22 May 1911

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ Dabney to Claxton 15 June 1911

³⁷⁷ Dabney to Claxton 22 June 1911.

³⁷⁸ Dabney to Claxton 30 June 1911.

³⁷⁹ Claxton to Dabney 18 July 1911.

that Claxton intended to expand and leverage the administrative reach of the Bureau of Education to orient public schools towards educating a democratically conscious national citizenry.

Claxton's resignation from the University of Tennessee made it "imperative" for the University's leadership to bring The Summer School of the South under its control, even as the program gained national attention.³⁸⁰ The Summer School's autonomy had been contingent on its leadership's professional connections. Without Claxton or Dabney at the helm, the University offered it much stronger administrative support. Still, this consolidation undermined the Summer School's autonomy and relegated it to the margins of the University.³⁸¹

The second external development affecting the Summer School was the progress of the southern education movement in the state of Tennessee. When the Summer School opened in 1902, many of the state's teachers had very little access to education beyond the elementary and middle grades; the school had met teachers' substantial demand for affordable professional development. The General Education Bill passed by the state legislature in 1909 allocated 25% of the state's annual revenue to public education. Of this, approximately \$72,000 was designated toward public high schools and \$117,000 toward the establishment and maintenance of normal schools devoted to teacher training. As a result of this bill, the State began planning to build four normal schools.³⁸² With the expansion of public high schools and normal schools, The Summer

³⁸⁰ James R. Montgomery, "The Summer School of the South." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1963): 361–81.

³⁸¹ David F. Labaree, D. John McIntyre, Kelly E Demers, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, and Sharon Feiman-Nemser. "An Uneasy Relationship: The History of Teacher Education in the University." In *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, 3rd ed., 290–306. Routledge, 2008.

³⁸² Education Campaign in Tennessee, 1910-1911, II, Box: 14, Folder: K. Philander P. Claxton Papers, MS-0278. Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

School of the South was no longer perceived as occupying a critical gap in the state's educational landscape.

While the Summer School of the South still aimed to serve teachers by providing access to higher education, its consolidation with the University came with new constraints. Perhaps the most notable difference was its faculty. The Summer School's faculty and lecturers were primarily university faculty, or faculty from peer institutions—gone were those national luminaries such as Dewey, Thorndike and Hall “whose voices carried across the continent...by weight and worth.”³⁸³ Additionally, the University implemented new rules to limit teachers' courses to three per term to ensure a higher grade of scholarship. Finally, courses were divided into those designated for “definite credit toward college degrees” and those that satisfied teachers' professional development requirements to obtain “state certificates.”³⁸⁴

The Summer School's culture changed because of this shift. In 1903, the Summer School's teachers and faculty had articulated lofty claims about “the prime importance” of the “moral and spiritual side of education,” as the “chief elements of [civilization's] permanency,” and demanding that teachers “should not only know something thoroughly...but ought... to be something worthy,” and finally, that “all the questions which the south are dealing with...[regarding its] social and political order...cannot be solved until the darkness of ignorance and prejudice give way to the light of intelligence and wisdom.” Only a decade later, reduced funding, the South's changing educational landscape, and more pragmatic university leadership

³⁸³ Philander P. Claxton, “The Summer School of the South.” *The High School Journal*. 32, no. 3 (1949): 111.

³⁸⁴ University of Tennessee Record, summer 1912. *University of Tennessee Record*, volume 15, number 2. April 1912. University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Special Collections. Digitized.

combined to impose on the school a curriculum narrower in vision, but with more easily measurable outcomes.³⁸⁵

In 1912, Summer School teachers and faculty articulated the need for the “scientific management of schools...[to] be run on the business principles of economy and efficiency” and their trust in “the scientific method and attitude...[to] give...sound fundamental principles of education.”³⁸⁶ The Summer School of the South changed over time from an autonomous, radical locus for educational reform to a university-affiliated academic program. This institutional transformation coincided with an ideological shift from Summer School educators’ initial objective to transform society by inspiring democratically conscious individuals towards creating tangible, measurable outcomes. This new ideology corresponded with distinctly modern political objectives for progressive education reform across the country that were less influenced by nineteenth-century humanist perspectives on education than they were from new ideas about scientific expertise, and social efficiency.

³⁸⁵ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), July 4, 1903

³⁸⁶ *Knoxville Sentinel* (1892-1926), July 4, 1912

CONCLUSION: “THE PRICE OF A SOUL:” THE TRAJECTORY OF PROGRESSIVE ERA EDUCATION REFORM

William Jennings Bryan appeared at the Summer School of the South during a key turning point in the Progressive Era. After representing the Populist wing of the Democratic party through three consecutive and unsuccessful presidential elections, Bryan stepped away from electoral politics to bring the Democratic party fully into alignment with the Social Gospel roots of Progressivism. As the new “[moral] conscience of the Democratic Party,” Bryan began directly challenging key assumptions undergirding the managerial-progressive platform of regulatory capitalism shared by Roosevelt and Taft. Whereas the nation’s elites were eagerly collaborating in the first decade of the twentieth century to craft “the corporate ideal in the liberal state,” Bryan appealed to reformers’ broader adherence to Progressivism’s moral principles.

Bryan’s address—“The Price of a Soul”—perfectly encapsulated the central tension at the core of the Summer School’s evolution. Bryan’s long-winded oration challenged his audience to “weigh the soul” as a criterion for progress. “What shall it profit a man,” Bryan asked, “if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”³⁸⁷ Claxton had explored this same question in his graduate research on Goethe’s *Faust*, as had Dabney when he claimed that industrial education would amount to “the Slaughter of the Innocents.” Even Baptist educator Charles Elisha Taylor had feared that state-directed, secular public schooling would create “a fatal error...[and] produce an incomplete and distorted being.” Bryan’s questions called his audience’s attention back to these late-nineteenth century questions about the central purpose of public education.

³⁸⁷ William Jennings Bryan, “The Price of a Soul.” New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1914.

The Summer School of the South's curiosity-driven model of education for democratic citizenship was rooted in the Social Gospel and liberal Protestantism. While southern educators had expressed their objectives in terms of its humanitarian potential to elevate individuals and purify democracy, elite philanthropists and scientists endeavored to make society more efficient by defining progress in material rather than spiritual terms. By redefining value around objective rather than subjective outcomes, this coalition of elites exerted considerable influence over the trajectory of education reform in the Progressive Era. Notably, the two major Federal education bills passed during the Progressive Era appropriated federal funds toward agricultural and industrial programs in public schools.³⁸⁸

The Summer School of the South illustrates how progressive educators' efforts to harness the state to empower individuals to shape society as democratically conscious citizens was ultimately superseded by a managerial vision for public education that trained citizens to conform to specific roles within it. The Summer School platformed a vision of education that embodied Bryan's maxim that the country's "most fertile soil...[was] the minds and hearts of our people" and that education's central purpose was to cultivate democratic citizens who would sustain and purify society.³⁸⁹ Its change over time indicates that the twentieth-century origins of public education in the United States made up contested terrain in which some ideas—about the sanctity of the individual, the teaching profession, and democracy—were obscured by elites' increasingly scientific emphasis on leveraging schools to improve society's overall efficiency and material—rather than spiritual—prosperity.

³⁸⁸ For more on the Smith-Lever Act for agricultural education and the Smith-Hughes Act for Vocational Education, see: John D. Pulliam and James J. Van Patten, *History of Education in America*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Merrill, 2007. 214.

³⁸⁹ William Jennings Bryan, "The Price of a Soul." New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1914.

Examining the Summer School of the South also provides a lens into the minds of southern progressives in the first decade of the twentieth century, illustrating how they sought to purify southern society by identifying the positive aspects of its cultural heritage while separating those from the shameful characteristics of slavery, and aristocracy associated with the antebellum South. Moreover, they continuously sought to reconcile the fundamental contradictions of a liberal pedagogical discourse stemming from the mid-nineteenth century common school movement that cherished the sanctity of individuals and self-determined free labor with the South's traditional hierarchical social order of stratified labor. In practice, they reiterated many antebellum planters' illusory justifications for slavery by making paternalist assumptions about individuals' places within society based on race, gender, and class. At the same time, they stretched the legitimacy of the paternalist framework by trying to reconcile it with new ideas about universal processes of cognition, selfhood, and citizenship based on shared commitments to abstract principles rather than shared ethnicity, racial, gender, or national identities.³⁹⁰

Naturally, this attempt to probe, deconstruct, and identify the ideological motivations of the educators participating in the Summer School of the South renders a muddled image at best—something that reflects the reality that the individuals involved were likely as unclear about their motivations as I remain. Undoubtedly, they were reacting to the cultural despair of a society resigned to the nostalgic patterns of the Lost Cause and the endemic economic exploitation associated with the New South's rapidly industrializing political economy. In

³⁹⁰ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 66-69; Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made; Two Essays in Interpretation*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

response, they tried to leverage universal education as a public medium to create new pathways for personal and regional flourishing, and a more inclusive democracy that challenged the New South's aristocratic concentrations of power, at the significant cost of affirming traditional racial hierarchies.³⁹¹

Undoubtedly, this is also a story about the thousands of women in the South who made new claims to citizenship as independent, middle-class professionals who worked diligently to make a positive impact on society. Every scrap of evidence related to the Summer School of the South cannot escape the gendered reality that two-thirds of its students were women seeking to transcend structural barriers to their educational and professional opportunities. At the same time, influential female educators like Celeste S. Parrish, as Rebecca Montgomery has noted, participated in the growing movement for gender equality and women's suffrage by articulating their potential to make positive contributions to society as educated, independent professionals and voters.³⁹²

The Summer School of the South is helpful in uncovering the intellectual and cultural influences on the southern education movement and situates it within the broader arc of the Progressive Era. While Summer School teachers and faculty originally articulated the importance of universal education in terms that echoed the Social Gospel Movement through a medium that resembled the Chautauqua Movement, by the time it integrated with the University of Tennessee

³⁹¹ Jackson Lears expresses this succinctly: "Jim Crow was a way to sanitize and rationalize the dream of racial renewal through violence... [some expressed that] the only way to make white supremacy legitimate was to make it legal," see: Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins. 2010. Pp.129-131. C. Vann Woodward's argument that social tensions were at the heart of the South's racial conflict is helpful here, because education was fundamentally about alleviating social disruption, see: C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951

³⁹² Rebecca S. Montgomery, *Celeste Parrish and Educational Reform in the Progressive-Era South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.

the Summer School articulated the potential of universal education through quantifiable metrics and existed as the professional development wing of the University's research-oriented department of education. The shift from universal education stemming from a moral purity impulse to a managerial one dovetails nicely with the transformation of progressivism more broadly. This transformation obscured reformers' original intention to establish a system of universal education that inspired democratically self-conscious individuals and instead measured educational outcomes by objective metrics of social efficiency.

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