

4/15/05 5/11/05
THE ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The public school system of Atlanta, Georgia, is in many respects admirable. The schools are well housed, have regularly trained teachers and enjoy good organization and supervision in the main. The president of the Board of Education in his report dated January 4, 1904 says, "Beyond question Atlanta public schools which in the beginning stood way beyond other public schools of this section were the best because of the "Atlanta Spirit" and the "Atlanta Spirit" made the Atlanta of today. Our schools have not retrograded since that time but for lack of money they have not relatively to other places maintained their leading position. They are no longer the best even in Georgia". Again he says, "It is physically impossible for any teacher to instruct properly more than forty pupils at a time and the best work is not possible if she is required to teach sixty as is at present the case in our schools, particularly in the lower grades. Nor will any degree of personal efficiency entirely take the place of comfortable surroundings or adequate equipment". This report says further that, "Other cities appropriate to schools from twenty to forty per cent of their entire revenue. Atlanta appropriates to the same purpose less than ten per cent

of her revenue". In addition to the regular literary work Atlanta schools have music, physical culture, and manual training for the whites. The report mentioned above says: "The institution of a department of manual training in our public schools two years ago marked the beginning of Atlanta's efforts to educate her sons and daughters for their places in the great industrial forces in the South". This work succeeded so well in the grammar schools that it was "deemed wise to readjust the curriculum of the high school in provision for it there". But the report goes on to say: "Our Negro schools are as yet without any help in this line of education.#### All around us we see efforts of private philanthropy yielding gratifying results but these cannot care for all. There is a part that only the public school can reach and educate. Until provision is made for them the city government is falling short of its duty to them and to southern industries. Manual training and the rudiments of domestic art properly taught in the Negro schools would be an invaluable investment for the city in the consequent saving in policemen and police courts". The report added, "In every Negro school many teachers teach two sets of pupils; each set for half of the school day". This in brief is the school situation in Atlanta today. It is not lack of money alone, however, that determines the status of Negro schools. There is not a meaner city to

Negroes in the South than Atlanta. Hatred toward Negroes here is flagrant, aggressive and cruel and flaunts itself everywhere. It is pleasing to find them as ample provisions for Negro Education as obtains whatever the motive may be. I saw three of the six public schools for colored children. In each case the buildings were good and equipment well up to the best city schools in the South. At the largest school the yard is too small and the water closets for boys and girls are so placed as to be positively indecent. In most cases the school rooms are of good size, are well lighted and clean. The seating of the pupils is also good. Little attention is given by teachers to decorations in their rooms. Plants and flowers were absent. This may have been due to the system of heating by stoves which would not keep fire all the time. The order about the buildings was excellent whether the principals were men or women. Two of the schools I saw have eight rooms and one has twelve rooms. All have double sessions from the first through the fourth grade and each room has usually over fifty pupils at all times. But even with the double sessions there are no seats for many children. The same teachers are required to be on duty from 8.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Those with the double sessions each handle a hundred or more pupils per day. The school census for 1903 shows 8118 colored children between six and eighteen years of age. For these there were five public schools with forty-nine teachers. For 14,465 white

pupils of the same age, or less than twice the number of colored children, there are more than four times as many teachers or 213. In fact, there are as many colored children out of the public schools as there are in them. Many of these go to Morris Brown College, Spelman Seminary, Atlanta Baptist College and Clark University. Each of these, save the Baptist college, has several hundred pupils of grammar school grade. The remaining children are in the streets. There is no public high school for colored pupils in Atlanta. The various Negro colleges there, however, serve as an attractive goal for many of the public school pupils who remain to complete the elementary schools so as to enter the college preparatory at least. Thus a large number of these children at least receive a good elementary education.

The teachers of the public schools are all practically from the colleges in the city. Atlanta University and Spelman Seminary furnish the bulk of them. Most of them then have very good training and some are excellent teachers. Some of them, however, are merely more or less efficient parts of a very well organized machine. The system in Atlanta is a pretty good one. Accordingly it is easy to do but little and yet not fall out of line entirely after one gets initiated. There is little save personal enthusiasm to

urge colored teachers to particularly good work. In the first place they are paid only about two thirds of what white teachers receive for doing the same work and even those teachers that have double sessions get no extra pay. Again they are not closely supervised and the teachers of special subjects have too much to do to give them much attention. The assistant superintendent is highly spoken of for his fairness and earnestness among colored teachers though he has but little time at his disposal. Neither he nor the superintendent does much to improve the methods of teaching. They sometimes preside at the bi-weekly normal class which all teachers are required to attend, but the teachers do all the work. The session I attended was as inane and purposeless as an undirected teachers' meeting could be. Principals are supposed to conduct these meetings but they have no authority and can get nothing worth while done.

The superintendent here has held his position for a long time and altogether has a good system. His attitude toward colored teachers however is reprehensible, if I am rightly informed, and I have many good reasons for thinking I am. His behaviour is common talk among the colored people. On entering a classroom he addresses a teacher by her first name for instance. And he is commonly charged with having made indecent proposals to young colored lady teachers. Though I was told of these things by persons with first hand information I could not

prove any of it, if I tried. This is said to have been attempted once but failed for fear of loss of position.

As a result of the efforts of the public and private schools Atlanta has ^{an} as intelligent and as capable a set of colored people as are to be found in any city in the South.

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