Robert Mills Lusher, Louisiana Educator.

Howard Turner

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation


https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/7890
MANUSCRIPT THESES

Unpublished theses submitted for the master's and doctor's degrees and deposited in the Louisiana State University Library are available for inspection. Use of any thesis is limited by the rights of the author. Bibliographical references may be noted, but passages may not be copied unless the author has given permission. Credit must be given in subsequent written or published work.

A library which borrows this thesis for use by its clientele is expected to make sure that the borrower is aware of the above restrictions.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ROBERT MILLS LUSHER, LOUISIANA EDUCATOR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Education

by

Howard Turner
B.A., Louisiana College, 1925
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1938
September, 1944
Robert Mills Lushar, 1823 - 1890

Reproduced from a photograph of about 1885
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express his appreciation of and his gratitude for helpful suggestions and criticisms which were kindly offered during the preparation of this work by Professors Irving P. Foote, S. A. Caldwell, and J. O. Petties. He is indebted to Professor Walter Prichard who assisted in the location of pertinent sources of data and to Dean E. B. Robert who gave encouragement and who lent rare books from his private collection.

Others who were most helpful and to whom an obligation is acknowledged are: Mr. James A. McMillen, Librarian, and members of the staff of the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University; the late Mr. Robert J. Usher, Librarian, and members of the staff of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University; members of the staff of the New Orleans Public Library; Mrs. E. D. Friedrichs, Custodian, City Hall Archives, New Orleans; Mrs. Frances H. Harvey and her co-workers in the Department of Archives, Louisiana State University; Mr. Norman Edwards, Louisiana State Department of Education; and Mrs. Frances P. Mims, Secretary of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University.

To Lusher's daughter, Mrs. J. W. A. Richardson of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who gave freely of her time for interviews, who allowed the writer to examine records in her possession, and who furnished a picture of her father, a debt of gratitude is acknowledged.

Deep appreciation is due the writer's wife, Mrs. Estelle S. Turner, without whose patient encouragement he would not have undertaken this work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The period before 1812</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The period from 1812 to 1847</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The parish schools</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subsidized academies</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The public schools in New Orleans</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The period from 1847 to 1861</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Lusher's EARLY LIFE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancestry, early life, and education</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early years</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years in Washington</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early educational work in Louisiana</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work in private schools</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection with the public schools</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with the Library and Lyceum Committee</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection with the State Normal School in New Orleans</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's return to New Orleans and election</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as State Superintendent of Public Education</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to New Orleans</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election in 1865</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational developments, 1865 to 1868</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's official activities</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of educational opportunities to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Negroes</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's position with regard to education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the Negroes</td>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's refusal to be a candidate for re-election</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. **Lusher during Reconstruction, 1868 to 1876** 147

| Introduction | 147 |
| The election of 1868 | 147 |
| Republican administration of the schools | 148 |
| Thomas W. Conway as State Superintendent, 1868 to 1872 | 148 |
| William G. Brown as State Superintendent, 1872 to 1876 | 154 |
| Disposition made of the free school fund | 156 |
| The question of "mixed schools" | 159 |
| CHAPTER |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| **Summary**                      | 163 |
| Lusher's administration of the Peabody Education |
| **Fund in Louisiana**            | 163 |
| Origin and purpose of the Peabody Education |
| **Fund**                         | 165 |
| Aid given to free schools for white children | 167 |
| Objections offered by public school officials | 173 |
| Aid given for normal schools and departments | 176 |
| **Summary**                      | 182 |
| Lusher's private life, 1868 to 1876 | 183 |
| Family and personal affairs       | 183 |
| Daily life and teaching activities | 185 |
| Political activities              | 186 |
| Conclusion                        | 194 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI.</th>
<th>LUSHER AS STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EDUCATION, 1877 TO 1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities of Lusher as Superintendent, 1877 to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lusher's influence on legislation pertaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lusher's activities as a member of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lusher's tour of visitation to the parishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lusher's activities in the schools of New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orleans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's activities as administrator of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peabody Education Fund</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's activities as a member of the Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Supervisors of the Louisiana State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University and Agricultural and Mechanical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's influence in the Constitutional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention of 1879</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition of the schools, 1877 to 1880</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in New Orleans</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools in the rural parishes</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's defeat in 1879</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The prospect for public education in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana in 1879</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's campaign for re-nomination</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defeat of his candidacy</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of his official career</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's views on education</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The place of public education in life</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of the Negroes</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administration and finance</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of schools</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII. Lusher as Teacher and Champion of the Peabody

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal Seminary, 1880 to 1890</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational activities and interests</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academy</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Peabody Normal Seminary</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation to provide for normal schools</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher's disapproval of the establishment of the State Normal School</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other educational activities</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private life</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and family life</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous activities</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual interests</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VIII. Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the teacher</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the school director</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the State Superintendent of Public Education</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the Agent of the Peabody Education Fund</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the editor of the Journal</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusher, the man</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY                                                   | 277  |

APPENDIX A. Tables                                                     | 289  |

APPENDIX B. Photostatic Copies of Documents                            | 297  |
The educational career of Robert Mills Lusher and his influence upon education in Louisiana furnished the basis of this study. Lusher, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, and a graduate of Georgetown College, Washington, D.C., migrated to Louisiana in 1842 when he was nineteen years of age. As a young man he was an intimate associate of Alexander Dimitry who in 1847 became the first State Superintendent of Public Education in Louisiana. Lusher was a teacher in academies with Alexander Dimitry, 1843-46; a member of the Board of School Directors of the Second Municipality, New Orleans, 1854-62; the State Superintendent of Public Education in Louisiana, 1865-68 and 1877-80; the Agent of the Peabody Education Fund for Louisiana, 1868-82; the proprietor of a private academy for boys in New Orleans, 1865-77 and 1880-82, and of a similar institution for girls, 1882-87; the editor of the Louisiana Journal of Education, 1879-84; and the principal of the Peabody Normal Seminary, New Orleans, 1880-86. The task undertaken in this study was two-fold: the presentation of the essential facts concerning Lusher's life, with emphasis upon his educational activities; and the evaluation of his work as an educator.

Lusher's diary, of which volumes for twenty-two years have been preserved, and a collection of his manuscripts and miscellaneous papers, provided many of the data. Official reports of the State Superintendent
of Public Education to the Legislature of Louisiana, legislative enactments, the Louisiana Journal of Education, and the record of proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund were among the more important sources of information.

It was during Lusher's early years in Louisiana that a system of public schools was developed in New Orleans. As a member of the Board of School Directors of his municipality, Lusher aided in the development of the public school system in the city and in the demonstration to the people of the feasibility of the system. Lusher was State Superintendent of Public Education in two difficult periods, that immediately following the War between the States and that following the period of reconstruction. As Superintendent he adhered strictly to the laws of the State; in his administration of the public schools he insisted upon efficiency and economy.

Growth and development of Louisiana's public school system characterized both of Lusher's terms as Superintendent, although developments of a political nature hampered educational progress in 1867-68 and public sentiment in favor of retrenchment in public expenditures had a similar effect in 1879. Lusher provided constructive educational leadership, proposing numerous measures of which some were adopted concurrently and others with the passage of time. Subsequent educational developments in Louisiana in certification of teachers, in formulation of courses of study, in adoption of textbooks for State-wide use, in
taxation for support of schools, and in organization for the administration and supervision of schools, demonstrated the soundness of policies which Lusher either instituted or recommended.

Through Lusher's administration of the Peabody Education Fund in Louisiana during the period of reconstruction, educational opportunities were provided for thousands of children who might otherwise have not attended school. Probably of greater importance was the fact that through schools aided by the Peabody Education Fund, popular sentiment favorable to public education was fostered and sustained. With financial support from the Peabody Education Fund, Lusher maintained a normal school in New Orleans from 1866 through 1862. He operated this school as a private institution from 1883 until early in 1866 with the hope that the State Board of Education would make it a part of the State's system of public schools; he was disappointed by the Board's failure to do so.

In a period of economic bankruptcy, when conservatism toward public expenditures and antagonism engendered by the racial question added to already existing opposition to education at public expense, Lusher defended the cause of public education and facilitated the extension and development of a system of public schools in the years that followed.
The task undertaken here is to trace the career of Robert Mills Lusher, a native of South Carolina and a resident of Louisiana from 1842 until his death in 1890. Although Lusher attained prominence as a citizen and editor and discharged faithfully the duties connected with various positions of trust, he was interested chiefly in education and gave most freely of his talents and energy in that cause. From 1865 until 1880, fifteen turbulent years of the State's history, Lusher was the foremost champion in Louisiana of the cause of popular education. Since such social institutions as school systems are of slow growth, since those of any period are influenced greatly by those existing before, and since Lusher was the recognized educational leader of the State in the critical period of reconstruction and for some years thereafter, a knowledge of his career should contribute to a more complete understanding of the subsequent growth and development of education in Louisiana.

A knowledge of the state of educational affairs when Lusher arrived in Louisiana and of how the schools of that time had evolved from their crude beginnings, seems necessary for a proper appraisal of his work and of its influence in the decades that followed. Consequently, this introductory chapter is devoted to a review of the development of education in Louisiana before 1861.
I. THE PERIOD BEFORE 1812

Education figures less prominently in the colonial history of Louisiana than in that of the New England settlements, a fact that may be accounted for in several ways. According to Fay, the colonization of Louisiana was "the incursion of bands of adventurers, come to get gold and silver quickly and be off again," - a very different type of colonization from that of the Puritan settlements of New England. Harris attributed the lack of early efforts to establish public schools in colonial Louisiana to the nationality and particularly to the religion of the colonists. Most of the settlers were French in origin and of the Roman Catholic faith. They, therefore, looked to the Church to attend to the education of their children, a task which Harris reported was willingly undertaken and creditably performed. Which of these forces was the determining factor is not of great consequence; the fact remains that provision for popular education at public expense was given little consideration in this early period.

It should not be inferred, however, that education was wholly neglected. A company of Ursuline nuns arrived in New Orleans in 1727, just five years after the establishment of the seat of government there, to care for a hospital and to "educate young girls." A number of Jesuits arrived with the nuns. Although their order was traditionally identified

---


with teaching, they were concerned chiefly with missionary work among the Indians and they spent little time in New Orleans. There is evidence that Bienville, between 1700 and 1741, made several requests of the French Government to establish a college in Louisiana. In 1742 he renewed his request, pointing out the necessity of such a college, "at least for the study of the classics, of geometry, geography, pilotage, etc." He wished to have taught also "the knowledge of religion, which is the basis of morality." An argument advanced for the establishment of such a college is quoted below:

...It is but too evidently demonstrated to parents how worthless turn out to be those children who are raised in idleness and luxury, and how seriously expensive it is for those who send their children to France to be educated. It is even to be feared from this circumstance that the Creoles thus educated abroad will imbibe a dislike to their native country, and will come back to it only to receive and convert into cash what property may be left to them by their parents....

This argument indicates that by 1742, at least in the governor's thinking, the idea of getting rich quick and returning to the mother country did not loom large; Bienville considered it desirable that the children of the colony should plan to live and work in Louisiana.

Louisiana was ceded to the King of Spain in 1762 and the first Spanish governor arrived in 1765. It is needless here to treat at any length the unpopularity of the Spanish rule among the French colonists. That unpopularity was so great that the public school established under Spanish auspices was not well received by the people. In 1772 there

---


5Ibid., pp. 521-22.
arrived from Spain Don Andreas Lopez de Armesto to be the director of a school to be established at New Orleans. With him came a teacher of grammar, a teacher of the rudiments of the Latin language, and a teacher of reading and writing. It is reported that there was no student who presented himself for the Latin class and that a few pupils came to be taught reading and writing only. It is recorded that after the great fire of 1788, the school was housed temporarily in a room twelve feet by thirteen feet and that the removal of people from New Orleans after the fire reduced the enrollment of the school from twenty-three to twelve pupils. However, reports indicate that efforts directed toward education in the French language met with a greater measure of success in Louisiana during the latter years of the eighteenth century and there were private schools well attended, with instruction in the French language.

Louisiana was formally transferred from Spanish to French rule in November, 1803, and, before the end of that year, became a territory of the United States.

Governor William C. C. Claiborne, in his first message to the Territorial Legislature, March, 1805, advocated a system of public schools. He recommended a school in every neighborhood, to be supported by taxation. For an explanation of Claiborne's advanced views on the subject of public education, the following is quoted from Nobles:


7 Ibid., p. 378.

Tutored as Claiborne was in the political thought of Jefferson, Madison, and Jay, he conceived of the public school as the necessary instrument for preparing the heterogeneous population of the territory for democratic citizenship.  

As a result of the governor's recommendation, it seems, the Legislature passed an enabling act and, by 1809, the people of Pointe Coupée Parish had established two schools. Although several private schools were established in the parishes, no other parish had levied a tax to support schools. Noble reports that many private schools sprang up, especially in the city of New Orleans, during this period, the masters professing ability to teach a large variety of subjects. Tuition fees were charged, usually ranging from two dollars and a half to four dollars per month according to the school and the grade of instruction required. Board and living accommodations for pupils, at reasonable rates, were furnished in many of the schools.

Mention should be made here of the College of Orleans, for the reason that it represented the first attempt of the Territorial Legislature to establish an institution of higher learning. An act of 1805 authorized the raising of fifty thousand dollars, by a lottery, to establish and support the college. The lottery was slow in getting started and tickets did not find a ready sale; there is no record that the lottery first authorized ever raised any money for the school. A sum of twenty thousand dollars was appropriated in 1810 for the

---


establishment of the college, but the money so appropriated was not made available. It was not until 1811 that provision was made for establishment and maintenance of the institution. An act of April of that year appropriated fifteen thousand dollars for permanent equipment and three thousand dollars a year for maintenance of the college. In addition to those appropriations, private subscriptions were secured and, after 1813, the income of the college was augmented by the proceeds of other lotteries and by a tax on gambling houses.

In addition to the provision made for a college in New Orleans, the Territorial Legislature of 1811 appropriated two thousand dollars for each of the twelve parishes, a total of twenty-four thousand dollars, for the establishment of schools in the parishes. The money thus appropriated was used to establish academies which continued to receive appropriations after the admission of Louisiana into the Union in 1812.

II. THE PERIOD FROM 1812 TO 1847

The parish schools. There is no reason to believe that the parish schools of this period were free schools in the same sense in which the term is now understood. It seems to have been a deeply rooted conviction that families of means should assume the responsibility and cost of educating their children and that free schooling should be provided only for those too poor to pay tuition. During the period under consideration, the Legislature made appropriations for the parish schools as shown in Table I, but there is no record of any complete accounting for the manner

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 71-73.}
\footnote{Robert W. Lusher, \textit{op. cit.}, Introduction, p. 8.}
\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 4-5.}
\footnote{All tables appear in an appendix.}
in which the funds were expended. In many instances the money appropriated by the State was used to pay for the instruction of numbers of children of the parish in private schools. Those attending schools established at public expense were expected to pay fees. As a consequence, the attendance of those unable to pay but too proud to be classified as indigent was discouraged. In his message to the Legislature in 1829, Governor Peter Derbigny recommended that there be appointed an inspector to visit all the schools of the State once a year and to report on their condition. A bill was introduced in the Senate, providing for two inspectors, but it was laid on the table and so failed of passage. However, as is shown in Table I, the Legislature appropriated more than a hundred thousand dollars to the parishes for common schools during a period of only two years.

The question of administration of the school funds appropriated to the parishes was referred to again by Acting Governor Jacques Dupre in his message to the Legislature on January 5, 1831. A part of that message is quoted here as recorded by Lusher:

There is, perhaps, no state in the Union that has made such liberal and extensive appropriations, proportionate to her revenue, as the State of Louisiana has done, and it is truly painful to say that little or no good has been derived from that expenditure. A sum of nearly $50,000 is annually expended in support of the parochial school system, from which, unless I am very much deceived, very little good has been realized. In many of the parishes, I am informed, there is no public school at all, yet does everyone of them claim and receive, from the public treasury, the sums appropriated to them, except the parishes of Concordia and St. Landry. This is so great an abuse of the public

\[15\textit{ibid.}, \text{pp. } 41-42.\]
bounty, and so great a deviation from the intention of the Legislature, in the use and application of the funds thus appropriated, that no time ought to be lost in preventing a recurrence of it for the future. 16

Lusher, as an historian of half a century later, after his experience as the chief school administrator of the State, could not refrain from giving his opinion as to what should have been done to set the matter right. According to Lusher, there should have been legislation requiring the building of schoolhouses and specifying the minimum length of a school term. In addition, the School Treasurers' accounts should have been subjected annually to the inspection of a State official designated for that purpose.

The manner of using the school funds from the State must have been subject to criticism, for Governor A. B. Roman, in his first message to the Legislature, January 31, 1831, began his remarks on the subject of education with the statement, "We must think less of making large appropriations than of employing more usefully those which have already been made." The Governor proceeded to remind the legislators that, since 1818, the books of the State Treasurer showed that $354,012.57 had been paid out of the funds of the State for the use of the parish schools and he expressed his doubt that as many as 354 indigent children had received from the schools those advantages which the legislators wished to extend to that class throughout the State.

As a possible remedy for the situation, Governor Roman suggested

16 Ibid., p. 51.
17 Ibid., p. 52.
18 Ibid., pp. 59-60.
the establishment of boarding schools, at convenient places throughout the State, where indigent children might be kept and educated entirely at the State's expense. He recommended that such children be "restrained to the common necessities of life and to a wholesome and frugal diet" while in attendance; and he suggested that the adoption of the Lancastrian or monitorial system of instruction would reduce the outlay necessary for payment of teachers, since the older children could teach the younger. The Governor concluded that part of his message dealing with education by expressing the opinion that it would be best to suspend the payment of all appropriations for the parish schools until the Legislature should decide upon a different course.

The Committee on Public Education of the House of Representatives submitted a report, March 22, 1831, on the schools in the country parishes. All the data the Committee had been able to assemble are shown in Table II. Evidently the Committee on Public Education had been unable to secure information from most of the parishes, for only six parishes are named in their report. As for the schools maintained for the poorer classes of society in New Orleans at that time, the report of the Board of Regents in February, 1832, showed a total of 255 pupils of whom thirty-five were in the central school, 114 in the primary school of the lower part of the city, and 106 in that of the upper section.

For the purpose of bringing about better administration of the common schools, the Legislature passed an act on April 1, 1833, making

---


the Secretary of State the State Superintendent of Public Education and requiring him to prepare and submit an annual report to the Legislature. The report was to present the condition of the parish schools, pertinent data concerning the colleges or academies "patronized" by the State, accounts of expenditures of public money appropriated for education, and plans for improvement and better organization of the parish schools.

Needless to say, the arrangement by which the Secretary of State was **ex officio** Superintendent of Public Education did not prove satisfactory. There remained difficulty in having an accounting made of the money appropriated for the support of parish schools and in securing reports on the condition of such schools. There was retrenchment in school appropriations in 1842 and, in 1847, a new school law was passed which is usually referred to as the first free-school act adopted in Louisiana.

**Colleges.** The General Assembly of Louisiana was generous in establishing colleges at a time when, apparently, there were very few young people prepared to take advantage of such facilities. It is not intended here to present the data at hand pertaining to the colleges in as great detail as was done for the parish schools.

The College of Louisiana, in Jackson, East Feliciana Parish, was established in 1825 when the State appropriation to the College of Orleans was discontinued. Beginning with five thousand dollars a year from 1825 to 1831, the Legislature increased the amount to $85,062.50 for the four-year period from 1835 to 1838, inclusive. The...
State contributed a total of $266,687.40 to the College of Louisiana by the close of 1844 when the appropriation was discontinued.

The College of Jefferson at Convent, St. James Parish, received appropriations amounting to $248,407.75 in the fifteen years after its establishment in 1831. The report rendered by a special committee of the Board of Directors, dated January 14, 1842, furnishes some significant information about the college at that time. As for buildings, the college had one three hundred feet broad by forty-four feet "deep"; one forty-two feet broad by one hundred feet "deep"; shades on each side 120 feet long, supported on iron columns, to protect the students in bad weather; two porter's lodges; and five dwellings of two stories, for the professors' residences. All buildings were of brick, with shingled roofs. Expenditures for buildings had amounted to $124,586.97 and for land, ten thousand dollars. The founders had given $50,332 in cash, toward the establishment of the college, the balance having been paid by the State. The library had cost $8,710.15 and it contained about seven thousand volumes. Among the other items of equipment were a "large Cabinet de Physique" and a "complete laboratory of chemistry." Over a period of five years, 1837 to 1841, inclusive, the staff had averaged twenty-four in number and had been paid salaries averaging $28,120.00

---

\(^{22}\) Edwin Whitfield Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 64.


\(^{24}\) An explanation of the term "deep" should be given here. It is customary along the Mississippi River to speak of distance along the river as breadth and of the distance to which a thing extends in a direction perpendicular to the river as depth.
per year. There were 165 students at the time of the report, although the average number was 170 for the five-year period. It was reported that during that time an average of twelve indigent scholars had been boarded and educated by the college.

In the fourteen years from 1831 through 1844, appropriations amounting altogether to $66,851.76 were made to Franklin College at Opelousas, St. Landry Parish. Smaller amounts were appropriated for Rapides College at Alexandria and for the College of Baton Rouge, neither of which experienced great growth.

Subsidized academies. Between 1835 and 1844, the Legislature passed a large number of acts to subsidize private academies in every part of the State. Each school so aided was incorporated and was given an annual appropriation, usually with certain conditions to be met. For example, the Greensburg Female Academy was incorporated in 1838 and was given an appropriation of a thousand dollars per year for five years, on the condition that ten poor children should be boarded and educated during that period. Fay's recapitulation of actual appropriations to academies, made up from data compiled by Lusher and verified by examination of the books of the Auditors' and Treasurers' offices, shows that twenty such institutions received appropriations amounting to $127,285.61 in a period of ten years.

Whether the Legislature acted wisely in subsidizing private schools is a question that can hardly be decided at this time. Some may

27Ibid., pp. 54-66.
assume that greater good might have been accomplished and more educational progress made if all efforts had been directed toward the establishment of public schools. The fact remains that gifts of State aid to private schools were common in the period of transition before provision was made, in 1847, for a State-wide system of free public schools under the administration of a full-time State Superintendent. Harris gave this endorsement:

No doubt this was the wisest use that could have been made of such funds: There was no machinery for an efficient public school organization and teaching staff, and under the conditions none was possible; the funds were too small to admit of the financing of good schools; the result, therefore, of an effort to use the school funds to maintain schools wholly public would have been a waste of such money as was appropriated for educational purposes. The authorities probably acted with wisdom in cooperating with the more or less efficient private schools already in existence.28

The public schools in New Orleans. Upon the withdrawal of State support from the College of Orleans in 1826, three schools were established in New Orleans, a central school and two primary schools. In addition to the appropriations from the State, the New Orleans schools continued to receive the proceeds of the tax on gambling houses, to which were added three thousand dollars a year from licenses on theaters in the city. The central school was to offer instruction in French, English, Latin, mathematics and literature. This was probably the same type of instruction as had been given in the college. Each of the primary schools was to give instruction free of charge to fifty indigent children.

28T. H. Harris, op. cit., p. 7.

a provision which indicates that others were to pay something for
instruction. By about 1832, in the popular mind, the schools were
considered as schools for the poor, and that attitude must have been a
factor in keeping their enrollment at a low point.

By Act No. 20, approved February 16, 1841, the Legislature
authorized the municipalities of the city of New Orleans to establish
public schools. Section one authorized and required the councils of
the municipalities to establish and maintain one or more public schools
within the limits of each, "for the gratuitous education of the children
residing therein; to which public schools all resident white children
shall be admitted for the purpose of education." It should be noted
that there was no mention of poor or indigent children but provision was
made for all white children. Most of the Negroes of the State were
slaves and their instruction was forbidden by law.

An annual payment, by the State, of two and five-eighths dollars
for each taxable inhabitant, toward the support of the schools, was
authorized by the second section of the same act, with the provision that
the total should not exceed ten thousand dollars. The third and last
section made the requirement that the usual reports on the condition of
the public schools be made to the Secretary of State. The municipalities
immediately began levying taxes and raising funds in other ways to con­
tribute to the support of the schools. With the stigma of pauperism

30 Edwin Whitfield Fay, op. cit., p. 43.
31 Ibid., p. 44.
32 Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifteenth Legislature
of the State of Louisiana, January 4, 1841 (New Orleans: A. C. Bullitt,
removed, attendance increased rapidly, from 950 pupils to 6,285 pupils in a period of eight years.

A brief study of the population of New Orleans gives some help in explaining how this old French and Spanish city became the pioneer among the cities of the South in establishing a system of free public schools. There had been an influx of "Americans" from the northern and eastern states, and the population had been increased greatly by immigrants, chiefly of Irish and German origin. The First Municipality, embracing the old French quarter, was not changed very greatly by the newcomers. A great majority of the emigrants from New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and other states settled on the other side of Canal Street, many of them establishing themselves in business in the Second Municipality. Many immigrants of German and Irish origin settled beyond the outskirts of the old city, in the section between Esplanade Avenue and Lake Borgne, in the Third Municipality.

The Board of School Directors for the Second Municipality, the Anglo-American part of the city, in 1841, employed John A. Shaw of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, as Superintendent of Schools in the Municipality. Shaw had been associated with Horace Mann in the establishment of the system of public schools in Massachusetts and, no doubt, introduced

---


34 Ibid., pp. 391-92.
some of the most advanced ideas of the time on the subject of public school administration.

Shaw continued as Superintendent of Schools in the Second Municipality for nine years. He was highly regarded by members of the school boards of the city.

The system of public schools must have proved satisfactory, as is indicated by the following quotation:

It must be gratifying to the friends of letters to mark the progress which education is making in the great emporium of the South and West. A right spirit seems to be now in operation, and results the most happy are witnessed.... The subject of public instruction forced itself upon the convention of Louisians, lately in session, and appears conspicuous among the provisions of the constitution, to which it gave birth. New Orleans has already attained a proud pre-eminence in this respect, among southern cities. She has discarded mere charity schools forever, and adopted the true system of common schools....

The public schools of New Orleans have been treated at length for two reasons. First, it is likely that the success of the experiment there accounts for the fact that constitutional provision was made in 1845 for a State-wide system of public schools and for the passage of a real public school law by the Legislature in 1847. Second, of particular significance in this study are the facts that Robert Mills Iusher had no


first-hand experience with public education before his arrival in New Orleans in 1846 and that within a very short time he became a powerful advocate and worker on behalf of free public schools.

III. THE PERIOD FROM 1847 TO 1861

The State Constitution adopted in 1845 called for the appointment of a Superintendent of Public Education, for the establishment of schools, and for the accumulation of a free school fund which it was hoped would grow to such proportions that its interest would defray a large part of the cost of public education. Articles making these provisions are reproduced:

Title VII

Public Education

Art. 133. There shall be appointed a Superintendent of Public Education, who shall hold his office for two years. His duties shall be prescribed by law. He shall receive such compensation as the Legislature may direct.

Art. 134. The Legislature shall establish free Public Schools throughout the State, and shall provide means of their support by taxation on property or otherwise.

Art. 135. The proceeds of all lands heretofore granted by the United States to this State for the use or support of Schools, and of all lands which may hereafter be granted or bequeathed to the State, and not expressly granted or bequeathed for any other purpose, which hereafter may be disposed of by the State, and the proceeds of the estates of deceased persons to which the State may become entitled by law, shall be held by the state as a loan, and shall be and remain a perpetual fund on which the State shall pay an annual interest of six per cent; which interest, together with all rents of the unsold lands, shall be appropriated to the support of such schools, and this appropriation shall remain inviolable.

Other articles provided for a special fund for the benefit of a seminary of learning and authorized the founding of the University of
Louisiana in New Orleans.

So far as the public schools were concerned these constitutional provisions were of no effect until legislative action was taken to provide the means of putting them in operation. Such action was taken with the passage of Act No. 225 in 1847, "to establish free public schools in the State of Louisiana."

The act provided, among other things, for the education of children six to sixteen years of age, for a State-wide tax of one mill for education, for the disposition of school lands, for the establishment of the free school fund, for a State Superintendent of Public Education and for parish superintendents. The manner of apportioning the school money and of accounting for it and the kind of records to be kept and of reports to be made were prescribed. The duties of the various school officials as the superintendents and directors, were specified. For example, the parish superintendent, with a salary of three hundred dollars a year, was made responsible for keeping a record of the school funds of the parish, for examining and issuing certificates to candidates for teachershps, and for visiting every school in his parish at least once every three months. The manner of selecting school directors for the districts was prescribed as was the manner of having the parishes subdivided into districts.

The man chosen to be the first State Superintendent of Public Education was Alexander Dimitry, one of the foremost scholars of the time and a teacher of high standing. Before making his first report to

---

the Legislature, Dimitry made a tour lasting five months, and including, by his own account, about half of the State and some of the least populated parts. He secured the most accurate data available with regard to the school funds and the number of children to be accommodated in the schools and he made his first report to the General Assembly, apparently before any schools were opened under the provisions of the new law. The enumeration of children in the parishes from which information could be secured, showed 29,660 children, but Dimitry estimated that there were 41,500 in the State. He estimated that the net amount of money available for operating the schools would be about $237,724.00 for the first year. The matter of dividing the parishes into school districts gave Dimitry much concern. He recognized the fact that sparseness of the population would impede the development of schools in many places. He desired that every district contain a sufficient number of children to justify the maintenance of a school and he thought there should be consolidation of small districts. However, he was convinced that this matter should be left to the people concerned, that adaptation of the system to local needs would have to be made by the people themselves, and that schools in small districts and with small attendance would be preferable to no schools.

40 Ibid., pp. 5, 13.
41 Ibid., p. 6.
42 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
The report of 1850, as summarized by Lusher, indicated that the schools were meeting popular approval. There were 649 schoolhouses, most of them of frame or log construction. In the districts from which complete reports were secured, there were 43,189 children of school age, of which number 22,927 were enrolled in the schools. Lusher called attention to the fact that in spite of the greater distance from school, the attendance of the country children was better, on the average, than that of the children in New Orleans. It was also reported that, "of the qualifications of the teachers, the standard was fair and creditable."

According to a report cited by Fay, the schools were prospering in 1860-61. The percentage of the educable children enrolled in school had been reduced to 39 per cent, but "all the higher English branches" were reported as being taught in the public schools. A high school was in operation in Baton Rouge where there were seventy-one students and two teachers. Although their administration had been hampered by the legislative act of 1852 which abolished the office of Parish Superintendent of Public Schools, the schools were generally considered to be in a prosperous condition when war diverted attention from the matter of education and to problems that seemed more pressing.

IV. SUMMARY

Briefly, it might be said that education in Louisiana was a matter

44 Edwin Whitfield Fay, op. cit., p. 70.
left to private initiative and enterprise during the colonial period. Until about 1841, the educational efforts of the State consisted chiefly in making appropriations to defray the expense of educating poor students in schools that were essentially private in nature. The feasibility of free public schools, demonstrated in New Orleans in the years immediately following 1841, was recognized by constitutional provision in 1845 and, two years later, by legislative provision for a State-wide system of such schools and for more effective administration of school affairs. The schools met popular approval and, in general, were making some progress toward meeting the educational needs of the State at the beginning of the war.
CHAPTER II

LUSHER'S EARLY LIFE

Robert Mills Lusher as an educator is the primary concern of this study but the whole of his life before he became State Superintendent of Public Education in Louisiana in 1865 might be considered a time of growth, development, and preparation for the task he was to undertake. Still, as will become evident, Lusher manifested an interest in so many and such diverse fields of human activity that it is difficult to mark off his life into periods or to say that at one time and place he was the student learning his profession and at another he was wholly engaged in the practice of it. For example, he was actually doing important work of a technical nature when but a boy sixteen years of age; yet when he was a mature man he returned to the classroom as a student, was graduated in law, and was admitted to practice. Also, when he was a man of large affairs, engaged in administrative duties that would have absorbed the whole attention of many men, he found no greater delight than in going into one of the schools and giving instruction in French literature or in the Latin classics to some of the more advanced students.

The first section of this chapter is devoted to Lusher's ancestry and family, to his childhood and early education, and to his further training at Georgetown College and in his uncle's office. The second section is devoted to his educational activities after his removal to Louisiana in 1842 with his kindred, the Alexander Dimitry family. It
deals briefly with his years of teaching in private schools with
Dimitry and, at greater length, with his efforts on behalf of the public
schools of New Orleans. The third section is devoted to a treatment of
his other work of a public nature, as editor of one of the journals of
the time and as an official in the United States District Court in New
Orleans. The concluding section of the chapter presents facts about
Lusher's private life as an able and active young man, living in New
Orleans. It is here that an attempt is made to summarize and synthesize
the materials of the chapter to the end that the reader may look beyond
the teacher, the editor, the commissioner, or the school director and
see Lusher, the man, as he was.

I. ANCESTRY, EARLY LIFE, AND EDUCATION

Ancestry. Robert Mills Lusher was born in Charleston, South
Carolina, May 17, 1823. His father, George Lusher, was a native of
Bermuda, West Indies, and a captain in the American Merchant Marine.
The father's influence seems to have been a minor factor in shaping the
life of young Robert, probably for the reason that his work required his
absence from the home for a great part of his time. Lusher's mother,
Sarah Mills, a woman of great piety, was a sister of Robert Mills, one
of the prominent architects and civil engineers of his time. The Mills

1Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, Vol. I
The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, November 23, 1890.

2Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, Vol. I,
op. cit., p. 551.
Robert M. Lusher, Diary, October 12, 1862.
In the entry cited here, Lusher referred to his mother as an
"only daughter." However, a family record, now in the possession of
Lusher's daughter, Mrs. J. W. A. Richardson of Baton Rouge, Louisiana,
indicates that two other sisters of Robert Mills died in their infancy.
family was of lineal descent from Thomas Smith who had been Governor of South Carolina under the Lords-Proprietors of that colony. Giving his full name as George I. Robert Mills Lusher, the man about whom this study centers referred to his birth and earliest years in these words:

Born at Charleston, So. Ca.; named George Lusher, after his father; Robert Mills, after his uncle; I, the initial of a name from the Holy Scriptures, as a memento of his good mother's piety. Reared in affluence, and with delicate care and devoted attention by the same excellent mother, a native of South Carolina.

Family. There is record of three brothers and one sister, none of whom figures very prominently in this account. The eldest brother, William Douglas Lusher, died and was buried in Hernando, Mississippi, at some time prior to the summer of 1846. It is recorded of him that, in Charleston, he had advised his youngest brother, Robert, never to use tobacco; no other reference to him has been found. Another brother, Joseph O. Lusher, was living in Hernando, Mississippi, from 1846, or earlier, until as late as 1878 when a reference was made to him. He was the father of two sons. Henry Lusher, the third brother, was living.


4Robert M. Lusher, (unpublished manuscript, September 6, 1889, in the archives of the Louisiana State University), p. 1. This work will be referred to hereafter as Lusher's manuscript of September 6, 1889.

5Ibid., p. 3.

6Robert M. Lusher, Diary, special memorandum, January 1, 1857; March 18, 1878.
in Memphis, Tennessee, and was the father of three sons when Lusher made a special memorandum listing his close relatives, then living, on the first day of the year 1857. The sister, Eliza, the wife of J. F. Webb, lived with her husband in Washington, D. C., and was frequently mentioned by Lusher in his diary. Webb visited Lusher for a week in June, 1857, and Lusher was entertained in the Webb home when he visited the capital in 1876.

Lusher had at least thirteen cousins in Louisiana between 1856 and 1882, of whom some were mentioned by him in his diary but once. One cousin, W. G. Mills, died on February 2, 1856, at Vermilionville (Lafayette), Louisiana, the fact being made known to Lusher by his cousin, Mrs. E. J. Kennon. William G. Mills and John Chapman Mills were living at Vermilionville and Robert Mills at Perry's Bridge when the year 1857 began. While in Shreveport in 1864, Lusher wrote to a cousin, Rosa E. Miller, "care of Rev. John Miller of or near Homer, Claiborne," and to Jane C. Mills at Vermilionville. In February, 1878, Lusher made several references in his diary to four sacks of white corn that he bought for his cousin, John G. Mills, at Perry's Bridge. The

7Ibid., special memorandum, January 1, 1857.

8Robert M. Lusher, Notes as to Tour to New York, &c. to see my son & sister in Washington C., July-August, 1876, July 29-August 23, 1876.

9Robert M. Lusher, Diary, special memorandum, February 5, 1856.

10Robert M. Lusher, Diary, special memorandum, January 1, 1857.

11Ibid., June 21-22, 1864.
corn, evidently to be used as seed, was sent by steamer and was de-
delivered at its destination; its receipt was acknowledged by letter.

At about the same time, Lusher had a request from another cousin,
Joseph B. Mills, also at Perry's Bridge, who requested "a loan of $500
on mortgage on his land." Two other cousins, Rachel B. Mills and
William Mills lived at or near Breaux's Bridge. Lusher first learned
of their residence there on August 1, 1875 and, before the end of that
month, he went to visit them. Also, a cousin, Richard H. Mills of
Abbeville, stayed with Lusher for several months in the fall of 1882
while he was attending "medical lectures." Finally, Lusher's cousin,
Mary, the wife of Alexander Dimitry, arrived in Louisiana when young
Lusher did. Lusher was very fond of her, as even a casual reading of
his diary will indicate, and he took every opportunity to do some deed
of kindness for her and the Dimitry family.

These relatives have been mentioned, not because they had any-
thing to do directly with Lusher as an educator, but to show that he
came of a large family and to illustrate the fact that about the middle
of the nineteenth century many people of early American stock, people
like Lusher and his kindred, were moving to Louisiana and other sparsely
settled parts of the Southwest. Reports of the Federal census indicate
that the white population of Louisiana increased from 158,457 in 1840 to

12Ibid., correspondence record, February 27, 1878.
13Ibid., special memorandum, January 22, 1878.
14Robert M. Lusher, (paper entitled "News of Kindred Living
Near Breaux's Bridge, August, 1875," in the archives of the Louisiana
State University),
15Robert M. Lusher, Diary, August 24-25, 1875.
15 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 30, 1882; also special
entry on back cover of volume for 1882.
255,491 in 1850, an increase of more than 61 per cent in a single decade.

**Early years.** Lusher recorded, concerning his childhood, that he was "reared with care and tenderness, by an affectionate, a kind, considerate, and genial Mother, of blessed memory, in comfortable circumstances." That the family was very well cared for is further evidenced by the fact that when the family home was sold by the heirs, in 1856, the price received was eight thousand dollars.

According to Lusher's own account, he was taught pensmanship and "all the English branches" when he was five to seven years of age, by "two excellent teachers." He mentioned elsewhere that they were "Northern Teachers." Rev. George Brist, the pastor of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Charleston, taught him "the elements of the Classics, of Mathematics, and of Natural Science." At the age of eleven he became sick and had to suspend his studies. Upon his recovery, he became a clerk in the bookstore of William E. Babcock on Meeting Street. He did not give satisfaction as a salesman for, in his own words about his experience in selling, "Appreciating the smiles of ladies..."

---


18. Robert M. Lusher, (unpublished manuscript, January, 1889, in the archives of the Louisiana State University), p. 1. This work will be referred to hereafter as Lusher's manuscript of January, 1889.


visiting the store, he would sell them the desired books, at a
discount, from the marked price." As a consequence, the proprietor
transferred him to the stock room. However, Babcock offered the young
clerk a share in the business if he would but remain there until he
should be twenty-one years old, an offer that was declined.

Years in Washington. During the latter years of Andrew Jackson’s
presidency, he appointed Robert Mills, a brother of Lusher’s mother, as
United States Government Architect. Mills had been State Engineer of
South Carolina before accepting the appointment. In July, 1837, Mills
took his nephew and namesake, then fourteen years old, to Baltimore and,
within a short time, to Washington to study the profession of architecture
in his office and under his tutelage.

The original Treasury Building had been burned by the British in
1814 and another, built to replace it, had been destroyed by fire of
mysterious origin in 1833. One of the first tasks assigned to Mills
was to design a new Treasury Building on which construction was begun
near the end of Jackson’s administration.

20^loc. cit.

21^loc. cit.


It is told that the officials were unable to decide upon
a site for the new building and that Jackson, becoming impatient,
rushed out of the White House, plunged his cane into the ground where
the northeast corner of the Treasury now stands, and said, "Put the
cornerstone here, put it right here." Thus the original plan of
Robert Mills to have the building in spacious grounds was ignored and
the building was so located that, with additions that have since been
made, it obstructs the Pennsylvania Avenue vista from the Capitol to
the White House. The building, as completed according to the original
plan, constitutes the middle portion of the East wing and the central
corridor of the present Treasury Building.
While studying and practicing in his uncle's office between 1837 and 1840, Lusher drew "working plans for the guidance of Master mechanics directing the work on the Treasury building." He did similar work on the plans for the great building on F Street, between Seventh and Ninth Streets, which housed the United States Patent Office until 1932. Lusher also assisted by drawing some of the working plans for the Washington Monument which was designed by his uncle.

While the construction on the buildings was in progress, Lusher wrote later that he, "on behalf of the workmen of the public buildings, wrote an appeal to President Van Buren, which caused His Excellency to accord a reduction of sixty minutes in the hours of daily labor on the public buildings."

Education. At Georgetown College (now Georgetown University), Lusher made such progress that he was graduated in 1841 after being in attendance less than two years. While a student he was given the special privileges of visiting his kindred in Washington on Saturdays and of going to hear the debates in the National Congress. Among his relations

23 Ibid., pp. 949-50.
24 Ibid., Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 2.
who were visited were his sister, Mrs. Webb, and the Robert Mills
family among whom was his cousin, Mary, the wife of Alexander Dimitry.
As a student Lusher must have enjoyed greatly the privilege of hearing
the debates in Congress, for many years later he wrote of the eloquence
of Calhoun, Clay, Webster, and other "Giants in debate," in the Senate,
and of Hugh Swinton Legare of his native Charleston, of John Quincy Adams
of Massachusetts, and of "other eloquent gentlemen, whose names have been
forgotten," in the House.

Lusher's mother attended the graduation exercises "in the large
Assembly Room" of Georgetown College where, Lusher recalled, she was
rejoiced when she beheld her son declaiming, in French, from La Chute
d' un Ange by the poet Lamartine. This poem, published just four
years earlier, in 1837, was the second work by the French poet and
diplomat, Alphonse-Marie-Louis de Prat de Lamartine, in a series intended
to treat of all ages and conditions of humanity. The fact that an
English-speaking student, upon graduation from college, might be called
upon to declaim from such a selection gives some indication as to the
nature of the college curriculum of that time.

27 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 2.
28 La Grande Encyclopedie, Vol. 21 (Paris: Societe Anonyme
During a period of nine months after his graduation, Lusher again worked in his uncle's office. No data are at hand to indicate with whom he lived during that period; yet it is reasonable to assume that he lived with Robert Mills as he had done before entering Georgetown College. As for the work performed during that time, no specific data are at hand. However, the work on the public buildings, to which reference has already been made, had not then been completed. Also, there is reference to a suspension bridge across the Schuylkill River, near Philadelphia, designed by and constructed under the superintendence of his uncle, which construction could have been in progress then.

Since Dimitry had returned to his native Louisiana, his wife left Washington in July, 1842, to rejoin her husband. Lusher accompanied Mrs. Dimitry and her four children on that journey. Thus it was, in the summer of 1842, that Lusher, nineteen years of age, with training and practical experience in the profession of architecture, with training in modern and classical languages and other subjects commonly taught in the colleges of the time, made his appearance in Louisiana.

II. EARLY EDUCATIONAL WORK IN LOUISIANA

Work in private schools. Dimitry had made plans to establish a private academy in St. Charles Parish, a short distance above New Orleans

31 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 3.
on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Of the arrival in St.
Charles Parish, Lusher afterwards wrote:

...Messrs. Edmond Fortier and Jean F. Piseros, planters, welcomed the strangers, entertained them royally, and soon after, provided every needed facility for the success of Prof. Alex. Dimitry's proposed enterprise - an Academy for the youth of the Parish. 32

Data concerning the school that Dimitry kept are confined to what Lusher recalled and wrote more than forty years later. Lusher wrote that, "for a year or so," Professor Dimitry — he was invariably given that title — was aided in his teaching by his brother, Deacon Dimitry. Other items recorded by Lusher seem to indicate that he had no connection with the Academy at first. For example, he mentioned "aiding cousin Mary in keeping house and in checking the extravagance of colored servants...." and elsewhere, opposite the marginal notation, "1842-43," he wrote of the two Professors Dimitry as teaching, "while R. N. L. was aiding his favorite cousin in the economy of Housekeeping." Also, in writing of this period, Lusher made several references to visiting in the homes of Edmond Fortier, Jean F. Piseros, Alcee Labranche, and others, or to conversing in French with Madame Edmond Fortier. It was then that he developed such facility in the use of the French language that he could act as interpreter for the United States District Court after 1848 when he was 33 employed there.

With the departure of Deacon Dimitry, in 1843, Lusher became the assistant in Dimitry's academy. He then spent the greater part of his

32 loc. cit.
33 loc. cit.
time, as he recorded, in "assisting the most profound scholar and
eloquent orator in Louisiana, in instructing, in all the branches of
knowledge, and in the French and Latin languages, nearly all the white
boys of the Parish." He remained with Dimitry until early in May,
1846, or for nearly four years during about three of which he was a
teacher in the academy.

While young Lusher was in St. Charles Parish, his mother, at
some time before the spring of 1846, left the old home in Charleston
and went to live with her son, Joseph O. Lusher, in Hernando, Mississippi.
Accordingly, her youngest son accompanied by the two eldest Dimitry boys,
John and Charles, visited in Hernando, where he remained through May,
June, and July. During that summer, Lusher amused himself by riding with
the Dimitry boys and it was recorded that, with his niece, Sally, then
six years old, he made a journey by stage to Memphis, Tennessee. It was
during that same summer that he waited on his mother in her last sick-
ness and witnessed her death and burial.

In September, 1846, Lusher was again with Dimitry, in New Orleans.
Apparently the academy in St. Charles Parish had been abandoned. Lusher's
more complete account of the academy they conducted in New Orleans and
of his own part in the undertaking follows:

In New Orleans, domiciled in Prof. Dimitry's residence
in a building of the "Architect's Row," on Moreau St., Near
Port, in the Third Municipality. There, in a school, assisting
Professor Dimitry in teaching a considerable number of bright
boys....

35 Ibid., p. 3.
36 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1889, p. 3.
The academy taught by Dimitry and Lusher in the Third Municipality was soon abandoned. Dimitry became the superintendent of the public schools of that municipality late in 1846 and, at least so far as the record shows, Lusher was then without employment. It was at this time that Lusher's first work in connection with the public school system is recorded. Lusher described the circumstances in one sentence: "Soon, however, Professor Dimitry became Superintendent of the Public Schools of the Third Municipality, and R. M. L. was called on to organize the school to be taught by Dr. & Mrs. Hire, then recently from England."

By Lusher's own account of the matter, he called on Governor Isaac Johnson and had a part in persuading him to tender the office of State Superintendent of Public Education to Dimitry. To have done so would have been entirely in keeping with Lusher's nature, for he did not hesitate to approach persons of high authority to urge any course of action that he was convinced should be followed.

His admiration and respect for Dimitry were marked. A description, written by Lusher many years later, is typical of the language he commonly used when writing of Dimitry:

--- A native son of Louisiana of classic mould;
--- A ripe scholar of national reputation;
--- A man of vast and varied erudition;
--- A linguist of remarkable skill and attainments;
--- A teacher of enlarged experience and familiar with the best methods of instruction, observed in the United States and in Europe.

37 loc. cit.

38 Robert W. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 3.

When Dimitry became identified with the public schools, first in the Third Municipality of New Orleans and, in 1847, as State Superintendent, Lusher directed his own efforts toward more remunerative pursuits, about which more is given elsewhere.

The Superintendent of Schools in the Second Municipality, John A. Shaw, resigned the superintendency in 1851. He had been active in the public school system of New Orleans for nine years and had won the esteem of the school officials of the city. No doubt the Board of School Directors were anxious to secure the services of someone competent to carry on his work. Lusher noted that the position was offered to him in 1853 but that he declined it.

It was in 1854 that Lusher first became officially identified with the public schools. He had edited the Louisiana Courier in 1847 and 1848 and had given up that activity to become deputy clerk of the United States District Court and United States Commissioner. He had completed a course in law in the University of Louisiana, then maintained in New Orleans. In 1854, at the age of thirty-one, he became a member of the Board of School Directors of the Second Municipality. The events of those intervening years are treated in greater length elsewhere.

Lusher continued as a director of the schools in the Second Municipality until the spring of 1862 when he, along with Governor Thomas O. Moore and other officials, had to flee the city to escape capture by the Federal forces. He wrote, in the third person, an account

---

40 John A. Shaw, An Address to the Teachers of Public Schools in Municipality Number Two, City of New Orleans, May 31, 1851 (New Orleans: Printed at the Crescent Office, 93 St. Charles Street), 15 pp.
New Orleans Daily Delta, February 11, 1846.
Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 4.
of his activities as a member of the Board of School Directors which is reproduced below. The account furnishes an outline which, with slight modifications, might well be followed in a more exhaustive treatment of the various activities. It serves to acquaint the reader with a style of writing that Lusher frequently employed. It is as follows:

An active and a zealous Director of the Public Schools of the Second Municipality; Vice President of the School Board, and writer of Regulations for its guidance; and also, writer of Rules for the government of the Public Schools; Chairman of the Committee on Teachers, and, by close observation and careful examination of candidates for Teacherships, the first citizen of Louisiana to discover the importance and to discern the necessity in this city of a Normal School, which, in 1860, was designated by the General Assembly as the first State Normal School in Louisiana....

Chairman of the Committee on the High School for Boys—teaching the classes, when the Principal was absent, and encouraging Professor Marc Roux's efforts to improve the Student's knowledge of the French language. Vice Chairman of the Committee on the High School for Girls—aiding in the Examination of the classes, and Encouraging Miss Louberet in her Strenuous labors as Teacher of the French language.

Chairman, also, of other important Committees, and constantly aiding his friend, N. R. Jennings, Esq. Chairman of the Lyceum and Library Committee, in securing excellent books for the Library (now the City Library in the City Hall), and in engaging learned and Eloquent Lecturers in Lyceum Hall, on descriptive Astronomy, Oriental History, Egyptian Archaeology, Mathematical Astronomy, and the theory of Probabilities, for the Edification of the Teachers and the advanced pupils of the Schools, and of a select circle of well cultured citizens of New Orleans. 41)

As a director of the schools, Lusher not only took a lively interest in educational affairs but also gave freely of his time, assuming responsibility for the performance of much work that seemed necessary to insure the success of the public schools. He went into the schools,

41 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 4.
giving principals and teachers advice and assistance and, apparently, striving to exert some influence among the students. For example, when an undesirable situation seemed to be developing with regard to discipline in the boys' high school, he "lectured and warned them."

Some time later, when the principal was absent from school, Lusher raised the question about whether he had good cause for not attending to his duties. Lusher kept himself informed concerning the course of affairs at the high school and he decided a new principal was needed. Accordingly, he advised the principal to resign. Within the next few days he held several conferences, at some of which there was excited conversation, about the principal and conditions at the high school. The outcome was that the principal consented to resign.

On the evening of the day on which the principal's resignation was agreed upon, Lusher met for three and a half hours with the superintendent and the Committee on Teachers, for the purpose of examining a candidate for a teaching position, after which he remained to talk with the superintendent until after midnight. At his office, when the prospective teacher called on him, Lusher suggested that his "rustiness in Latin would impede his efficiency as a teacher." That same day, Lusher was in conversation with the principal whose resignation had been agreed upon, at which time Lusher recorded that he was "counseling him,"


\[43\]Ibid., January 23, 1856.

\[44\]Ibid., March 23, 26, 1856.

\[45\]Ibid., March 26-27, 1856.
but the nature of the counsel given is not indicated. Not long thereafter, Lusher was at the superintendent's office with the Committee on Teachers, examining still another teacher in Latin, after which he recorded that it was an "amusing recitation."

Lusher's interests and activities as a school director extended to the entire school system. He often made note of visits to the various schools and of what he observed. It was his frequent practice to visit one of the high schools before going to his office in the morning, on which occasions Lusher would conduct a class in French, Latin, or mathematics. Occasionally he would inspect all the departments of one of the lower schools.

Lusher's solicitude that the schools should make a creditable and favorable showing caused him to give much time and attention to occasions when programs could be presented and the public invited to the schools. For example, for some time before February 22, 1856, he visited one or more of the schools nearly every day, giving suggestions about the programs to be presented and seeing that rehearsals received the attention he thought they deserved. He arranged a schedule of the programs so that anyone interested might witness the program in one school and then in another. When the holiday arrived, Lusher presided over the program in one of the schools, as is indicated by the following entry in his diary:

"...presiding over Pupils' celebration of 22d. Excellent attendance and

---

46 Ibid., March 27, 1856.
47 Ibid., April 7, 1856.
48 Ibid., February 13, March 6, June 13, 1856.
49 Ibid., February 15–22, 1856.
order - good declaiming and singing and admirable address by M. A. Foute." A somewhat similar procedure was followed with respect to the graduation exercises in the schools. This concern over programs, over the celebration of holidays and of special occasions, indicates that Lusher was fully conscious of the importance of public relations. He evidently believed that to get the people interested in school affairs and to make them cognizant of the attainments of the children, would foster popular support without which the schools could not expect to continue in a prosperous condition.

In the spring of 1856 Lusher was asked to assist in the selection of a cadet for the United States Military Academy at West Point. He attended to the matter with his usual thoroughness, making the announcement in the boys' high school, conferring with boys and their parents on the matter, examining boys who were prospective candidates, and recommending the most successful one for appointment.

There were differences of opinion touching matters of policy, even in those early days of the public schools, and Lusher was called upon for consultation about questions that have not yet been finally settled. For example, one day he noted in his diary that Mr. Roux, a teacher in the girls' high school, had come to him with a complaint. The extra duties given to the girls by the School Board's committee on that high school were interfering with their regular classroom work. That decision was

50 Ibid., February 22, 1856.
51 Ibid., June, 1856.
52 Ibid., March 6, 10, 11, 1856.
reached or what advice was given to the conscientious teacher is not recorded, but the fact that such a question came up for consideration is significant.

Lusher's activities in what would now be considered the field of school administration are worthy of note. For example, early in the year he compiled "statistics on schools" and a record of the school finances for the preceding year. These data were submitted by the superintendent to the City Council. Some time later he noted that he had worked with the Superintendent until midnight on the pay roll, on school statistics, and on other matters. Then, near the close of the school term, he spent several hours compiling a record of the attendance of pupils in the various schools during the session. When the school session was over, he spent some time every day for nearly a week writing a report for the session just ended on each of the schools in the municipality. About the same time he prepared "a tableau of school houses" for a report to the City Council. In fact, an examination of Lusher's diary, kept faithfully by him in 1856-57, causes one to wonder what was left by Lusher for the superintendent or the other directors to do.

While a director of the public schools, Lusher again had occasion to use his early training in architecture. He designed the building for the Madison School on the corner of Palmyra and Prieur Streets. When he left the city in 1862, Lusher left in his office in the Custom House designs and plans for other schools. Those drawings were lost during the

---

53 Ibid., March 27, 1856.
54 Ibid., January 27, April 20, June 18, June 28 to July 3, July 6, 1856.
Federal occupation of the city and they were never recovered.

The affairs of the Board of School Directors were sometimes conducted with difficulty. For example, on one occasion Lusher noted that one of the directors, Mr. (-----), was at the meeting, drunk. On another occasion Lusher went to the appointed place for a meeting of the board and waited for an hour, but there was no quorum and no meeting was held.

The political issues of 1856 forced themselves into the schools' affairs. In a municipal election of June 2, the Know-Nothing Party showed considerable strength and it was not long before there were rumors of plans to remove some Democrats from the Board of School Directors. The move appears to have centered around opposition to the superintendent who was an outspoken Democrat. His opponents must have raised an issue or started a rumor about administration of school finances, for, referring to the opposition being voiced against the superintendent, Lusher noted: "Motive of money equally ridiculous and contemptible." Lusher was a Democrat and a supporter of the superintendent, although he noted at about that time that he had no disposition to identify himself "with any political position whatever." This indicates a very fine perception,

56 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, March 7, July 3, 1856.
57 Ibid., June 2-3; special memorandum, June 22-23, 1856.
58 Ibid., special memorandum, June 22-23, 1856.
59 Ibid., special memorandum, June 7, 1856.
on Lusher's part, of the proper relation between political affairs and one's duties in a position of public trust. He would defend one's privilege of expressing his views openly on the questions of the day and he resented the implication that one's political sentiments should have a bearing on his eligibility to serve on such a body as the Board of School Directors. When Lusher's name came before the City Council for re-election in August, 1856, there were eleven votes for Lusher and six for his opponent. According to his diary, Lusher was in doubt as to whether he should accept the place again; his friend, N. R. Jennings, thought it an indignity that there should have been any opposition to him.

Work with the Library and Lyceum Committee. Another agency for promoting the cause of education generally in New Orleans, in which Lusher took an active part, was the Library and Lyceum Committee. That organization raised money by popular subscription to aid the City Council in maintaining a public library and to bring lecturers of repute to the city. Such a program now might be called a project in adult education; the indications are that it was in successful operation in New Orleans, that the lectures were instructive in nature, and that they were well attended. The nature of the population of the Second Municipality at that time warrants the surmise that many were there who in their youth had enjoyed the best educational advantages in the North and East. In New Orleans, they may have felt that they were to some extent isolated from that culture of which they had formerly been a part. The Library

---

60Ibid., special memorandum, August 12, 1856.
and Lyceum Committee was intended to satisfy the cultural needs of such a group. That its work was of considerable proportions is evidenced by the amount of money held by the City Council for the library when the City Treasurer absconded with the funds. Lusher, as a member of the Committee, drafted a memorial to the City Council, "setting forth facts, law, & equity justifying restoration to Liby. fund of balance of $5,685 supposed to be abstracted by ex-Treasr. (-----)." The memorial that Lusher drew up was approved by the Committee and was sent to the City Council.

Lecturers were secured from various parts of the country, to speak on a variety of subjects. Lusher took an active part, both in arranging for the lectures and in promoting the distribution of tickets. He attended the lectures regularly. To give some indication of the nature and scope of the lectures presented, these titles are taken at random from those mentioned by Lusher as presented in the spring series of 1856: "Theory of Probabilities," by Dr. B. A. Gould; "France's and England's Civilization," by Bishop Shalding; "History of Astronomy," by Dr. B. A. Gould; "Mormon's Love," by Mr. Henry Hughes; "The Lucifer Match," by Dr. Crawcom; and "Turkey and Greece," by Dr. Baird.

Connection with the State Normal School in New Orleans. This account of Lusher, the school director, should not be closed without at least a brief mention of the first State Normal School. Lusher wrote afterward that he was the first to discover the need for a normal school in New Orleans and that the discovery was made by his examination of

61Ibid., March 2, 3, 11, 1856.

62Ibid., February 14, 24, 26; April 8, 20, 21, 1856.
candidates for teachships. No valid grounds for doubting that claim have been found. There is abundant evidence that he took an active part in the affairs of the first normal school in New Orleans and that, throughout his life, he was interested in the professional training of teachers. Early in 1857 Lusher noted in his diary that he had "carried through a resolution" providing for a committee to confer with the boards of directors in the other municipalities on the establishment of a free academy for boys and of normal schools or departments. The plans for the latter were realized for, on March 15, 1858, Act No. 84, "To establish a Normal School Department in the Public High Schools in the city of New Orleans," was approved. The first section of the act provided for a normal class or department in one or more of the high schools of New Orleans, with as many as four but not more than twenty students. Each student was required to sign a pledge to teach in the schools of Louisiana for a period of two years after graduation. Another section of the act appropriated to the school fifty dollars per year for each student receiving instruction, provided that the total appropriation should not exceed three thousand dollars per year. The next year Act No. 153 was passed, amending the original act by increasing to five thousand dollars the total amount that might be appropriated for the

63 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 4.
64 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, February 5, 1857.
65 Acts Passed by the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, at its First Session, Baton Rouge, January 18, 1858 (Baton Rouge: J. M. Taylor, State Printer, 1858, p. 56.
66 Loc. cit.
A convincing bit of evidence of the worth of the State Normal School is furnished by a report of the Committee on Teachers of the Board of School Directors of the First District (Second Municipality), of which Lusher was the chairman. The text of the report, dated July 1, 1861, addressed to the Board of School Directors over Lusher's signature, is reproduced below:

Yr. Comm. on Teachers have the honor to report that the following young teachers heretofore employed on probation, have proven their fitness to the satisfaction of the Superintendent, and they are accordingly recommended for election:

- Miss Elisa Todd, as 3d. Asst. "Franklin."
- Miss C. M. Lott, as 3d. Asst. "Jefferson."
- Miss Ida Patton, as 3d. Asst. "Madison."

The two first are graduates, of the recent Senior Class, of the State Normal School; the last a worthy member of the same institution.

The Comm. cannot refrain from expressing their high appreciation of the Normal School in its relations to our District Schools. Its alumnae display assiduity, method, & teaching energy, & are gradually reforming the course of instruction in our Primary Schools.

The most vivid and complete account of the normal school available is that given, a sentence or a phrase at a time, by Miss Clara Solomon, a student in the school. Miss Solomon was a voluminous writer and left an unquestionably authentic and instructive account of life in New Orleans in 1861 and 1862; it was a fortunate coincidence that she attended the State Normal School and made daily entries in her diary.

---


68 Minute Book, Committee on Teachers, Board of Directors of the Public Schools, First District, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 7, 1858 to July 1, 1861 (original in the archives of the Louisiana State University), pages not numbered.
Her first reference to the normal school indicates that she did not want to go to school and that, instead of giving Lusher credit for the establishment of the school, she held him responsible for it. She wrote:

Well, my friend, "the dreaded time is fast approaching." I am going to school this afternoon, and nothing trivial can now be offered as an excuse. I have on repeated occasions expressed my antipathy to the "arrangement," and my wishes that "Mr. Lusher had never been born," etc., etc., but "must" is an uncommon word to none. So to school I must go. 69

Some time later a new arrangement was being made because some of the classes were too large; the older and the more advanced girls in Miss Solomon's junior class were being promoted, apparently to the senior classes in the normal departments held in conjunction with other public schools. Lusher was directing the changes and he indicated "the schools to which the girls were supernumeraries." Miss Solomon felt that some partiality was shown and she was offended at Lusher because she was not one of the "selected few" who were promoted. Another division of the junior class became necessary, probably to comply with the legislative provision that the classes should not number more than twenty. Miss Solomon wrote, "The arithmetic was not recited, as the time specified for it was monopolized by Mr. L. He had made a division of the Junior Class into the Junior and Sophomore, and read the list of names which constituted them. Mine, of course, was in the Junior." 70

69Clara Solomon, Diary of a New Orleans Girl, (manuscript in the archives of the Louisiana State University; typewritten copy in the Louisiana Room of the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University), September 16, 1861.

70Ibid., October 1, 7, 1861.

71Acts Passed by the Fourth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, January 18, 1858, op. cit., p. 56.

72Clara Solomon, op. cit., October 7, 1861.
A few days later Miss Solomon wrote, "As I was reading Mr. Lusher
thrust his restless head through the door." Later, in writing about
the lessons in elocution and music, Miss Solomon referred to what Lusher
had told them about singing, indicating that he was encouraging the girls
to develop and improve their voices. Her conclusion was that she did
not like him. Further light on the curriculum in the normal depart-
ment is given by this extract from the diary:

At 12 I began to study, had become familiar with
the maps of Mexico and Central America, with the English
discoveries in America, with the nature and properties
of verbs, and was on the eve of acquainting myself with
the "Elements of Beauty" when from the bell overhead
there sounded a deafening, startling peal.

References made to the school in the ensuing weeks indicate that
Miss Solomon was preparing her lessons and was reciting well; then this
brief reference was made: "I like the S.N.S. very much." In her
writings about the school, Miss Solomon wrote about Lusher rather fre-
quently; she did not like him. As the end of the school term drew
near, the diarist began to worry about the examinations and promotion.
Lusher was no longer in the city and there was some thought of postponing
the examinations until his return. Miss Solomon wrote in her diary,
"I am quite afraid, for Mr. L. requires deportment perfect, for promotion
& I wonder what he would call the incessant chatting which M. & I carry
on."

73 Ibid., October 10, 1861.
74 Ibid., October 18, 1861.
75 Ibid., October 24, 1861.
76 Ibid., November 21, 1861.
77 Ibid., April 1, 10; May 8, 27, 1862.
78 Ibid., May 27, 29, 1862.
The purpose in presenting data from Miss Solomon's diary has been to show that the State Normal School was established and kept in operation, with classes or departments in the schools of the city. It was for a long time a source of pride to Lusher that he was called the "Parent" of the first normal school in Louisiana.

Summary. It should not be inferred that a complete account of Lusher's educational activities up to this time, has been given. Rather, certain events have been related that are illustrative of the nature and extent of his interest in the educational advancement of the city, both through the public schools and through the Library and Lyceum Committee. Entries in Lusher's diary indicate that he continued his active interest in the schools, teaching at times in the absence of a principal, drawing up rules for the government of the public schools, drawing up a list of prerequisites for admission to the high schools, visiting and supervising the teachers, keeping records and making reports on attendance, conferring with teachers and the superintendent, and on special occasions, taking part in programs presented by the schools.

III. WORK IN FIE LDS OTHER THAN EDUCATION

At this point it is appropriate to give some consideration to Lusher's work in fields other than education. During the period between 1847 and the outbreak of the war in 1861, the work for which Lusher prepared and by which he earned his living was in no way connected with the public schools. However, it was in the performance of that work and in the discharge of the duties that were assigned to him during the war that

79 Robert H. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 4.
he secured the special training that fitted him in a peculiar manner to cope with the many and difficult problems that confronted the State Superintendent of Public Education in the troubled time that followed. Also, it may reasonably be inferred that the positions he held between 1847 and 1865 helped him to enlarge his circle of friends and acquaintances, without whose support he could not have been elected State Superintendent of Public Education in 1865.

*Experience as an editor.* It will be recalled that Lusher was teaching in an academy or private school with Dimitry in New Orleans, late in 1846, when the latter was called to the superintendency of the public schools of the Third Municipality, a place that he held for a brief period before his appointment as State Superintendent of Public Education. Lusher was living in the Dimitry home then, as he continued to do for some years. Early in 1847, at the request of Jerome Bayon, publisher of *Le Courier de la Louisiane*, Lusher began editing the English portion of that journal, commonly referred to as the *Louisiana Courier*. The paper appeared daily with news and editorial comment in both the French and English languages. The practice of publishing a paper in two languages has been rather common in Louisiana and was designed to meet the needs of a heterogeneous population where some read only English, some only French, and some either language. An examination of the files reveals that in the case of the *Courier*, at least, one portion was not a mere translation into another language of the matter appearing in the other portion. Lusher, on the "English side," and the publisher's brother, 80 Cohen's *New Orleans and Lafayette Directory*, for 1849 (New Orleans: Printed by D. Daviss and Son, 60 Magazine Street, 1849), p. 112.
editor of the "French side," presented and interpreted the news, each in his own way. An examination of the Courier will cause one to appreciate the variety of topics with which the editor found it necessary to familiarize himself. A typical issue contained about a column of editorial opinion on topics of interest and about an equal amount of space assigned to news dispatches on national and state affairs. There was correspondence on current topics, along with the usual news of murders, fires, runaway slaves, and slaves apprehended or detained. The Courier carried a complete report on the New Orleans market, covering such commodities as cotton, sugar, molasses, flour, corn, pork, lard, and whiskey. Marine news, with a listing of all arrivals at and clearings from the port, made up a prominent part of the paper. There were the usual notices of public auctions, the court records, and announcements of public entertainments or meetings.

As editor, Lusher defended the right of the owners of fugitive slaves to pursue them and to reclaim them wherever found, a right that was being seriously questioned at that time. He supported the candidacy of Lewis Cass for President, opposing that of General Zachary Taylor. In fact, Lusher's zeal in supporting "Cass, the statesman," as opposed to "Taylor, the general," appears to have carried him into heated discussions about the question. For example, it is recorded that Lusher discussed the relative merits of the two candidates with Baylie Peyton, United States Attorney in New Orleans in a social gathering at

---

81 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1839, p. 3.

82 Editorial in the Louisiana Courier, New Orleans, February 29, 1848.

Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1839, pp. 4-5.
the home of a friend. In a speech the next evening, Peyton misquoted Lusher on the question, seeming to do so maliciously. Lusher exposed the misrepresentation by Peyton in such severe language that Lusher's friend, Superintendent Dimitry, deemed it necessary to sit at the door of the Courier office with a pistol to protect the editor from the supposedly offended attorney. However, Lusher recorded that such was not necessary and that Peyton recognized and admitted the justice and fairness of the editor in his presentation of the affair. Lusher edited the Courier as a consistently Democratic journal, although rich and influential people of Louisiana at that time were identified with the Whig Party. In taking the side of the Democrats, Lusher and the Courier were probably representative of the influence of the more progressive Anglo-American element in the population of the city. Many had rather recently come from the states of the Atlantic seaboard and they were establishing businesses in the Second Municipality. The Courier's consistent advocacy of the Democratic cause is illustrated by this quotation, taken from its editorial on the candidacy of M. M. Reynolds, Democratic nominee for Mayor: "We congratulate the party on the selection of so able and vigorous a standard-bearer. We are no prophet, but we dare predict that he will be elected."

When he was editing the Courier in 1847 and 1848 Lusher had not been connected with the public schools; yet he wrote rather frequently

83 Robert M. Lusher, manuscript, January, 1839, pp. 4-5.
85 Editorial in the Louisiana Courier, New Orleans, February 29, 1848.
on the topic of public education. The fact that he had been a teacher would account for an interest on his part in education; his intimate association with Superintendent Dimitry provides an explanation of his interest in the public school system. Lusher had seen the public schools of New Orleans in operation. The extent to which the educational philosophy of Horace Mann, as introduced and put into practice in the city of New Orleans by Superintendent Shaw, may have influenced Lusher's views on the subject is a matter of conjecture. Regardless of whether Lusher was so influenced and of the channels through which such influence might have reached him, the young Democratic editor of the Courier was a bold advocate of an effective system of public schools. He did not hesitate to comment editorially on questions touching education. For example, in an editorial concerned chiefly with questions pertaining to financial support of the schools and to the distribution of the proceeds from the lands dedicated to educational purposes, Lusher wrote as follows:

The people are naturally anxious to know what our legislators are going to do in furtherance of the cause of public education. It is not to be supposed that posterity will sanction any violation, on the part of the present generation, of the imperative mandate now happily existing in the organic law of the State. The Constitution, as expressly as wisely declares that "The Legislature shall establish free public schools throughout the State, and provide for their support, by taxation on property, or otherwise." The framers of the new Constitution have done their duty; the people, by their ratification of that instrument, have done theirs; and it now remains for their representatives to carry the law which they have devised, fully into effect.86

It is a significant fact, giving further evidence of Lusher's

86 Editorial in the Louisiana Courier, New Orleans, March 1, 1848.

All italics in direct quotations appear in the original sources.
interest in the progress of the schools and of his desire to inform
his readers on the status of public education in Louisiana, that he
published the whole of the first report made by the State Superintend-
ent of Public Education to the General Assembly.

Experience in the courtroom. Lusher gave up the editorship of
the Courier when, in April, 1848, he became the deputy clerk of the
United States District Court. By 1849 he was listed in the city
directory as "U. S. Commissioner, deputy clerk U. S. District Court."
This indicates that he then held another office in addition to the deputy
clerkship. Of his duties as deputy clerk or "minute clerk," continuing
until interrupted by the War between the States, Lusher wrote as follows:

From Apr. 4th by request of his exc't friend,
M. R. Jennings, Clerk, he became Minute Clerk of the
U. S. Dist. Court, sitting in New Orleans, U. S.
Commissioner, and Interpreter of both the Circuit &
District Courts of the United States. In the first
capacity, he recorded the proceedings of the Court;
by authority of Judge McCabe, wrote, in his own
language, the decretal orders and decrees in admiralty
cases, and in all Common law and Statute cases, also;
in the second capacity, he caused the arrest, by the
U. S. Marshal, of all officers of vessels charged with
cruelty to seamen, and of all seamen charged with in-
subordination on the High Seas, or on Steamboat's running
up or down the Mississippi River; examined the arrested
men, discharged them, if the evidence or testimony was
insufficient or unreliable, and committed them for trial
before the proper Court, if the evidence established

---

87 Report in the Louisiana Courier, New Orleans, January 26,
1848.
That report was printed at the Courier office for
distribution to members of the Legislature and others.

Diary, April 1, 1857.
There is a slight discrepancy in the data here, the diary
indicating that Lusher became deputy clerk on April 12 and the manuscript,
composed from memory in 1889, giving April 4 as the date.

89 Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette Directory, for 1849;
op. cit., p. 112.
what the lawyers termed sufficient or 'probable cause' for trial; caused the arrest, also, of persons charged with violating the Neutrality Laws of the United States, and, also, of a P. W. of New Orleans, W. G. Kendall, charged with abstracting Notes of the Northern Bank of Mississippi, at Holly Springs, from letters in his official custody, and with assuming the name, 'Marshall Hanson', in his correspondence with the Bank, and treated them just as he did other offenders of the Laws. Genl. Lopes, charged with an intention to invade Cuba, was committed for trial....In the third capacity, this citizen translated into English the oral testimony of such witnesses as could speak only French. As U. S. Commissioner, he had taken the testimony, in writing, of hundreds of witnesses, in a great many important cases, including that of Mrs. Nyra Clark Gaines, claiming property devised by her putative father Daniel Clark, who was supposed to have married her beautiful mother, Zulime Carriere, who afterwards married Dr. Gardette of New Orleans. As Minute Clerk, his signature appeared on a thousand or more Decrees of Naturalization. 90

While engaged in the duties of the deputy clerkship and as United States Commissioner, Lusher took up the study of law at the University of Louisiana, then flourishing in New Orleans and since incorporated into Tulane University. Lusher described his course in law with one sentence: 'He also studied Law in the Law Department of the University of Louisiana' (now 'Tulane University'); was examined by the eloquent and learned Professors; received his Diploma, was sworn by the Clerks of all the Courts in New Orleans, and admitted to the practice of Law therein. 91

Among Lusher's professors at the University of Louisiana were Judge Theodore H. McCaleb, of the court in which Lusher was engaged as deputy clerk, and Landell Hunt who was for many years one of the foremost lawyers of Louisiana. Lusher was graduated in the class of 1852-53. 92

90Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1889, pp. 5-6.
91Ibid., p. 6.
Among his classmates were John McEnery and Blanton H. Duncan, two men with whom he was to be intimately associated in later years. It must have been difficult for Lusher, while employed in a full-time position, to attend classes or lectures. However, the fact that Judge McCaleb was one of the professors seems to indicate that classes or lectures were scheduled when his presence was not demanded in the courtroom. It should have been as convenient for the deputy clerk to get away from the Court as for the judge.

Lusher's account of his work in the Court can be verified in every essential detail by reference to his diary, since there is preserved a day-by-day account of his activities during 1856 and 1857. Among the duties most often mentioned were taking testimony, writing minutes, balancing accounts, keeping account of costs in cases before the Court, keeping the fee book up to date, assessing damages, certifying transcripts for appeal, and taking depositions.

While much of Lusher's work in the District Court was routine, requiring only some facility in writing and some knowledge of legal procedure along with ordinary care in attention to details, he had a part in the trial of some cases that were of considerable importance. For example, during a period of a month and a half he was engaged daily in taking testimony, noting documentary evidence, and certifying evidence

93 Circular of the Law Department of the University of Louisiana, for the session of 1865-66 (New Orleans: Printed at the Office of the Picayune, 66 Camp Street, 1866), p. 11.

and documents in connection with the celebrated Gaines Case.

The case of Postmaster W. G. Kendall was another that lived long in Lusher’s memory. Kendall was acquitted, although Lusher believed him guilty as charged. Lusher wrote that it was "by a skillful examination of witnesses and an argument of consummate ability" that the attorney for the defendant caused the jury to disagree and secured a decision favorable to his client.

The conduct of the Court was not without its amusing incidents, of which several were recorded by Lusher. For example, he recalled that the eloquent attorney, Sargent S. Prentiss, had defended Major Earhart before a jury empaneled before the District Court and his client had been convicted. The next morning, when Judge McCaleb inquired of Prentiss whether he had anything to say in extenuation of Major Earhart’s offenses, the attorney gave this answer:


In this case Mrs. Myra Clark Gaines attempted to prove that her mother, Zulime Carriere, was legally married to Daniel Clark, a wealthy resident of New Orleans, that she herself was a legitimate offspring of that marriage, that Clark had made a will bequeathing his property to her, and that she was entitled to inherit, under the terms of that will, millions of dollars worth of property in and around New Orleans. The history of that case has been treated at length in The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, of January, 1944. The case was before the courts for a longer period of time than any other in American legal history. On the main issues involved and on appeals from judgments, it was before the Supreme Court of the United States seventeen times and before the Supreme Court of Louisiana five times.

May it please your Honor, I discovered an item in a N. O. Journal a day or two ago, in which it was stated that twelve Donkeys were landed on the levee of this City, and that they were to be transported to Mexico; but I am convinced, may it please your Honor, that by mistake, said Donkeys deposited themselves in the chairs of the Jury Box of this Honorable Court.

Lusher commented that he, the minute clerk, was indignant but that Judge McCaleb indulged in a hearty burst of laughter.

Another incident, in somewhat the same vein, gives insight into the nature of the task Lusher sometimes faced as interpreter for the Court. When a planter from Plaquemines Parish, summoned to appear before the Court as a witness, was asked to take the customary oath, he refused to do so. Lusher had to explain to him, in French, that Plaquemines Parish was part of Louisiana and that Louisiana was one of the United States before he would take the oath and testify that he knew nothing about the matter in question.

Enough has been given about Lusher, the court official, to show that he was thoroughly versed in legal provisions and processes and that he had the opportunity to become acquainted with many members of the legal fraternity.

IV. PRIVATE LIFE

As a youth Lusher was, according to the evidence at hand, a pleasant companion. The record given of his life in St. Charles Parish contains references to pleasant relations with the native people of that vicinity. Accounts of a visit with his relatives at Hernando,

97 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 5.
98 Loc. cit.
100 Ibid., p. 2.
Mississippi, in 1846, and of vacations spent at Pass Christian, Mississippi, in the summers of 1847 and several years following, indicate that he was an active participant in sports of the day. Mention was made of riding, boating, fishing, and swimming. By the same accounts, he seems to have enjoyed the companionship of John and Charles Dimitry and of his young niece in Hernando. However, after Lusher became engaged in more serious work, there are few references to sports or to recreational activities, probably for the reason that the duties of his position and of the various committees in which he was active allowed insufficient time.

Family life. No account of his first courtship has been found but notations in the diary of later years show that on September 8, 1851, at the age of twenty-eight, Lusher was married to Miss Augusta Salomon, then in the fourth month of her seventeenth year. Miss Salomon's father was the proprietor of a men's furnishings store on St. Charles Street and was a man of some means, as is indicated by the fact that some years later he could furnish security to the amount of twenty thousand dollars when his son-in-law had to post a bond as chief collector of the Confederate States War Tax in Louisiana. The Salomon family had relatives at Convent, St. James Parish, where Mrs. Lusher visited occasionally with the children. Lusher's first child, a daughter named Mary Alice, was born in August, 1852; another daughter, Cecilia Adaliza, was born in

---

101 Ibid., p. 3.
102 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, June 2, 1856; September 8, 1857.
104 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, June 25, 1863.
105 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, July 8, 1857.
106 Ibid., special memorandum, January 1, 1857; March 6, 1856; September 6, 1875.
March, 1856; and in September, 1860, a son, John Robert, was born.

Three other children died in infancy. Lusher was proud of his wife and occasionally made note that she was "looking admirable," that she was "neatly dressed & cheerful," or that she presided, evidently to his satisfaction, when there were guests for dinner. However, her lack of intellectual interests and attainments seems to have caused him some concern at times for he wrote of her on one occasion, "A. reading Shakespeare!" and, hopefully, it would seem, on another day, "Wife well—now showing int. in study of history." A brief description of his wife, written when she was twenty-one years old, provides the essential facts about the first Mrs. Lusher:

_Fife well—but not vigorous (21 last 2d. June)
improved in person; active, admirable house keeper;
good musician; no fondness of books. Affectionate
mother (impulsive) & attentive to family._

Financial affairs. From the time of his marriage or soon after until his departure from New Orleans early in 1862, Lusher enjoyed an income sufficient to maintain his family comfortably. His cash account for 1856 shows that his salary, plus various fees to which he was entitled as commissioner and interpreter, amounted to more than three thousand dollars for ten months of that year. Income for the other two months was not added in this total because there were larger amounts, the sources of which were not made plain in the account.

106 Record in the Lusher Family Bible, in the possession of Mrs. J. H. A. Richardson, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
107 Ibid., July 6, 1856; May 3, 1857.
109 Ibid., special memorandum, January 1, 1857.
110 Ibid., cash account, 1856.
Lusher dressed well, was a good provider, kept a servant or two in his house to help with the housework, and, occasionally, went out with his wife to the theater or to the opera. When court was adjourned in the summer of 1856, he went with his friend, Jennings, on a visit to New York city. After many of Dimitry’s books had been sold at auction, Lusher and Jennings were able to pay seventeen hundred dollars for those remaining. For over a year, while Dimitry was in Washington in the Department of State, the Lushers kept his daughter, Elizabeth, then about fifteen years old, furnished all her needs, and provided for her education as if she had been their daughter.

In spite of the fact that Lusher had a substantial income over a rather long period of time, he seems not to have owned a home. The fact that he occupied a “hired house” is noted in his diary. Other data indicate that he frequently changed his place of residence throughout the period under consideration. For example, between 1856 and 1860, he lived on Apollo Street, near Terpsichore Street; on Baronne Street, near Euterpe Street; and at 597 St. Charles Street. The fact that Lusher did not invest in a home would seem to be significant, one of several indications

---

111 Ibid., January 14, April 15, August 15, 1856; special memoranda, January 1, 26, 1857.

Robert H. Lusher, Diary, special memorandum, January 1, 1857.
that he was negligent of his own personal finances. He was entrusted with large sums of public money throughout a great part of his life, and no record has been found to indicate that he misappropriated or misused any amount at any time. Yet he seemed to have little regard for money and to take little thought of providing a competency for the security of himself and his family. When he could afford to do so, he displayed a generosity toward friends and relatives that seems to have been greater than could reasonably have been expected of him.

Lusher was equally generous with his time and labor. For example, when a settlement was being made of the Dimitry estate in New Orleans, Alexander Dimitry, one of the heirs, was in Washington. He gave Lusher power of attorney to represent him in the settlement. Lusher spent much time reading the "Code and Code of Practice" on the administration of successions, taking notes with reference to the case of the Dimitry property. Some time later, he noted that "real estate in City & Parishes of Orleans & Jeffn., slaves of estate" were sold at auction, bringing about twenty-four thousand dollars. Lusher was looking after the interests of his friend at the auction, for he made this memorandum: "At auction - bid in (for A. D. subject to his confirmation) about 150 sq. arpens of old family plantn. on Wolf River at cost of about $490.00." He added the explanation that the plot so purchased included the burial place of one of Dimitry's sons. Finally, within a reasonable time, he sent "To Prof. Alex. Dimitry, Washington, on succn. matters: full synopsis of administrator's acct. &c. &c.," a report which must have required some

113 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, 1856-1880.
work in its preparation.

Intellectual interests. Lusher's interests, indicated by the record preserved in his diary, are worthy of mention. For example, on a holiday, Lusher recorded that he read "Precis in système de l'éducation de Pestalozzi, &c." The name of the author was not recorded. Some weeks later he wrote that he was taking notes on the New York schools.

While on board the steamer "L. N. Kennett," going up the Mississippi River on his trip to New York, he read "Astronomical Discourses."

His interest in astronomy was further evidenced by the attention he gave to a comet, visible in June, 1856. Each day he made note of the phenomenon, recording the time of its visibility, its size, its brightness, and its location with respect to other heavenly bodies.

Lusher's interest in politics was keen, although, as noted before, he did not at that time aspire to a political office. His concern with national affairs was such that he composed a letter to John Dimitry, the eldest son of Alexander Dimitry, on "points of agreement and disagreement with American party."

Concerning the legal profession and the practice of law, he was an idealist. He wrote later, of his views when a young attorney, that he hoped to demonstrate the truth of the statement, attributed to Burke, that "Justice is itself the great standing policy

---

114 Ibid., May 18, 1856; special memoranda, May 11, 1856, February 28, May 20, June 6, 1857.
115 Ibid., July 4, August 10, 1856.
116 Ibid., August 17, 1856.
117 Ibid., June 13-16, 1856.
118 Ibid., June 30, 1856.
of civil society; and any departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all."

When Lusher was a young man in New Orleans he was not so regular an attendant at church as he became in later years. However, his wife was an ardent Roman Catholic and he occasionally attended the services of her church. He rented a pew in the Jesuit Church on Baronne Street. However, his own preference seemed to be for the Presbyterian Church and the faith of his mother. His observation, recorded faithfully in the diary, on one Sunday morning's attendance at church is worthy of note. Lusher wrote that the minister was a "fully developed, thinking man," that the sermon was a "beautifully wrought discourse," and that there was an "artistic prayer." He wrote that he had compared that prayer "with the prayers of Homer's heroes, the Persians, &c."

Although Lusher was familiar with the Greek and Latin classics and had gained exceptional facility in the use of the French language in conversation and writing, he seldom mentioned any work with the Spanish language. A reference to that language indicates that, although he could translate from Spanish to English, it was not done with ease. It was noted once that he and his assistant, Ernest Lagarde, spent the greater part of the day translating Spanish documents and that he worked until midnight, writing a translation of the documents.

120 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, December 27, 1857.
121 Ibid., March 23, 1856.
122 Ibid., February 15, 1857.
Daily routine. This account of Lusher's private life should not be closed without reference to a custom that was common, it is said, in New Orleans at that time. Lusher worked in his office or in the courtroom without interruption, from about 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. It was his custom to dine at home in the afternoon and then to meet and chat with his friends or attend to various business matters. In the evening he usually attended a conference or a committee meeting or he went to his office where he worked for two or three hours. He often took work to his home to be done there. It will be noticed that, since the schools of the city were opened at about 9:00 a.m., it was convenient for him to visit one of them for half an hour or more before beginning his work for the day.

There are numerous notations in the diary to indicate that Lusher's health was not uniformly good at that time. Frequent reference was made to headaches, indigestion, and biliousness; medication was used rather frequently. However, he was able to continue with his work, practically never being so sick as to necessitate his absence from his place of duty. It would be surprising if he had enjoyed robust health, when consideration is given to the fact that he spent five or six hours engaged in exacting work at his desk during the day and that, with the duties of the evenings, the length of his typical working day often extended to ten hours. Lusher made this note of his physical condition, "Well, but jaded by constant sedentary labor."

123 Ibid., 1856-57.

124 Ibid., special memorandum, January 1, 1857.
V. SUMMARY

An attempt has been made to present the significant facts about Lusher's life before 1861 with the purpose, primarily, of showing that those years in New Orleans constituted an excellent period of preparation for the man who was to become State Superintendent of Public Education in 1865 and who, until about 1880, was to be a leading proponent, in Louisiana, of the cause of popular education. As has been shown, his early interest in education was fostered by years of close association with Dimitry, the first State Superintendent of Public Education in Louisiana. To the influence of his own early years as a teacher was added that which came as a result of his observation of the educational system of New Orleans, where the public schools were enjoying a greater measure of success than in most of the southern cities of that time. Also his participation in the administration of the schools, along with his reading and study in the field of educational methods and school administration, made him familiar with the schools as they were, with the discouraging obstacles in the way of their successful operation, and with the desirable results that might be attained through them.

His study of law, with nearly fourteen years of work in the courtroom, made Lusher conversant with constitutional and legal provisions and with legal procedures and provided a knowledge, the lack of which would have seriously handicapped the chief educational officer of the State during the years of his superintendency. Further, his experience there familiarized him with the methods of keeping accurate accounts and, no doubt, firmly established the habit of care in keeping public records,
all of which fitted him in a peculiar manner for the time when his influence in education would extend throughout the State.

In the account of Lusher's private life, brief though that account is, an attempt has been made to enable the reader to become acquainted with Lusher as he actually was. With a young family, receiving a substantial income from work that was pleasant, living in comfortable circumstances, and enjoying the friendship of congenial associates, he has been shown as one of the more prominent young men of New Orleans. Such was the man who, during the war, was to be brought to the attention of the people of Louisiana and who so impressed them that they elected him, in 1865, to be the State Superintendent of Public Education.
CHAPTER III
LUSHER'S WAR ACTIVITIES, 1861-1865

The period of the War between the States, especially after April, 1862, was an interlude in Lusher's career as an educator. The exigencies of the times were such that he could give little attention to educational affairs. He was, successively, Confederate States Commissioner in New Orleans, and Confederate States Marshal, with headquarters in Alexandria where a Confederate States Court was held. At the same time he was Chief Collector of the Confederate States War Tax in Louisiana, with his office successively at Opelousas, at Alexandria, and at Shreveport. The period under consideration was significant in Lusher's educational career chiefly because it furnished the opportunity for him to become acquainted with and known to people of means, ability, and influence in every part of the State. Without this enlarged circle of friends, men who came to recognise his ability and to respect him, it is unlikely that he could have been elected to the office of State Superintendent of Public Education in the post-war period. His travels in Louisiana and in neighboring states where his official duties carried him, must have added greatly to his experience with and understanding of the people, thereby better fitting him to become the State's chief educational officer after the war. For these reasons, chiefly, this chapter of Lusher's war activities is included in the present work.
During a part of the period under consideration, Lusher's private or family affairs were so inextricably interwoven with the conduct of his official duties that it seems appropriate to treat his life during that time chronologically. The first section of the chapter is concerned with the period before Lusher was sent by Governor Thomas C. Moore on a special mission to Richmond, the Confederate capital, and to Columbia, South Carolina, in September of the second year of the war. The second section of the chapter is devoted to the events of that journey. The third section treats the period from May, 1863, until Lusher's return to Shreveport in May of the following year, a period in which Lusher was out of the State most of the time, on official duties, but in which he was able to spend some time with his family. The fourth and last section treats briefly Lusher's work in Shreveport, from May, 1864, until the end of the war the next year and of his return to New Orleans soon thereafter. Data for the chapter were taken chiefly from his diary for the years 1862-64 and from the unpublished manuscripts, Lusher's autobiographies, to which reference has already been made. Since certain periods are not covered by the diary, information from the manuscripts was depended upon to fill out or complete the account.

I. THE PERIOD BEFORE SEPTEMBER, 1862

The State of Louisiana became an independent state when on January 26, 1861, the Ordinance of Secession was passed by a vote of 113 to seventeen. As the Republic of Louisiana, the State had complete

control of its affairs until March 21, when the State Convention ratified the Confederate Constitution and Louisiana became one of the Confederate States. With the suspension of the activities of the United States District Court in which he had been an official, Lusher became Confederate States Commissioner with the duty of taking the affidavits of persons from the North who desired to acknowledge and declare their allegiance to the Confederate States of America. It will be noted that the duties of this office were similar to those he had previously performed as United States Commissioner. Since it was more than a year before Louisiana became the site of active warfare, the life of the Lusher family was not greatly disturbed at first. Lusher continued living in New Orleans with his family until late April, 1862. Like many other men in like circumstances, he became a member of the "Louisiana Guard" and drilled every evening.

It was while he was living in New Orleans that, through the influence of Judah P. Benjamin, Attorney General, and C. G. Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury of the Confederate States, Lusher was made Chief Collector of the Confederate States War Tax in Louisiana. Accordingly, he left the "Louisiana Guard" to give more of his time to the duties of that office.

The work of the chief tax collector was interrupted when, on April 26, 1862, Admiral David G. Farragut with the Federal fleet arrived

\[ \text{Ibid.}, \ p. 135. \]
\[ \text{Robert W. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1889, p. 7.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid.}, \ p. 8. \]
\[ \text{Loc. cit.} \]
at New Orleans. With a force of forty-three vessels, Farragut had entered the mouth of the river a week earlier and, after a bombardment, had succeeded in passing Forts Jackson and St. Philip which were intended to serve as a protection to the city. Upon the arrival of the Federal troops under General Benjamin F. Butler who took possession of New Orleans on May 1, the governor and other officials who had been in the city, Lusher among them, went first to Baton Rouge, and then to Opelousas where the State Legislature was to convene. Lusher's family remained in New Orleans.

These data as given by Lusher are substantiated by other documentary evidence. In a report prepared by T. Allen, Chief Clerk of the War Tax, addressed to Hon. C. G. Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 6, 1863, the portion pertaining to Louisiana contains the following:

In this State the organization was pretty well completed and assessments were progressing satisfactorily, when the fall of New Orleans threw matters into confusion and rendered it necessary for the chief collector, who resided there, to remove with his records and papers to a safer locality, which occasioned considerable delay in the progress of the work. Nevertheless, with great energy and perseverance, Mr. Lusher, the chief collector, prosecuted his labors and finally succeeded in having all the districts assessed; but the interruptions and delays to which he has been subjected have prevented him from forwarding a complete collated list.

From Opelousas, Lusher went with Governor Moore and other State

---

6 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 136.

7 Ibid., pp. 138-39.


officials to Alexandria where some of the executive offices of the State were established.

It has been generally assumed that the capital of the State was moved to Opelousas, thence to Alexandria, and later to Shreveport. Officially, such was not the case. It was provided by Act No. 33 of January 3, 1863, that the "Seat of Government of the State of Louisiana" should be removed from Baton Rouge to Shreveport and should remain there so long as the war should continue. It is worthy of note that the Legislature passed this act while in session at Opelousas. Apparently the location of the seat of government was determined by convenience during the period after Baton Rouge became unsafe and until its establishment in Shreveport.

A Confederate States Court in Alexandria was presided over by Judge B. W. Moise, whom Lusher had known before and whose daughters were teachers in New Orleans. At the request of Judge Moise, Lusher became Confederate States Marshal, holding the position just long enough to effect an organization and write instructions for the deputy marshals.

As noted above in Allan's report on the state of affairs with regard to collection of taxes in Louisiana, the loss of New Orleans and the surrounding territory in 1862 caused some uncertainty as to the amount of money that should properly be expected from Louisiana for that year. Lusher's task in making an estimate was difficult, if not impossible,


for the reason that no taxes to support the Confederacy could be
collected from that portion of the State occupied by the Federal forces.
It could not be foreseen what part of the State's territory General
Butler might occupy. Butler, however, did little toward taking other
parts of the State. He confined himself largely to governing the City
of New Orleans.

In that time of uncertainty, the Legislature and Governor Moore,
probably acting upon the basis of estimates furnished them by Lusher, sent
$2,500,000 to the Confederate Treasury toward the payment of the State's
portion of the war tax for the year. A legislative act was passed,
providing in its first section, "that the sum of two million, five hundred
thousand dollars or so much thereof as may be necessary to carry out the
object of this act, be, and the same is hereby appropriated, out of any
money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, towards the payment of
the amount of the war tax assessed upon the people of this State...."
Other sections of the same act provided for the manner of making payment
and directed that the Governor inform the Secretary of the Treasury of the
Confederate States of America that the State of Louisiana had accepted
responsibility for the payment of its quota of the war tax imposed by act
of the Provisional Congress.

By September, Lusher had made sufficient progress in his assess-
ments to ascertain that the amount which had been paid would exceed the
State's quota by about seventy-four thousand dollars. Accordingly, he

12 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 133.

13 Acts Passed by the Sixth Legislature of the State of
 Louisiana, at its First Session, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, November 25,
was sent to Richmond as the "authorized agent of Thomas O. Moore, Governor of Louisiana," to recover the excess payment. He was also instructed to go to Columbia, South Carolina, where a large supply of State Treasury notes was being engraved for the State of Louisiana at the establishment of Blanton S. Duncan. Provision for that issue of notes had been made by Act No. 116 of January 23, 1862. The act authorized the issuance of State Treasury notes to the amount of two 14 million dollars. The condition of the State's finances was such that 15 the whole amount was issued. Lusher was to return to Louisiana with the money refunded from the Treasury and with the notes from Columbia.

II. THE TRIP TO RICHMOND AND COLUMBIA, SEPTEMBER THROUGH NOVEMBER, 1862

Lusher left Opelousas in a buggy in the afternoon of September 2, going to Washington, six miles to the north as he noted, where he engaged a two-horse buggy in which to continue the journey. The next day he left Washington in company with Sergeant A. J. Miller and Mr. Andrus of Washington, going "East by North," as Lusher wrote, and stopping to dine with Mr. Karnes who lived eighteen miles from Washington. After crossing Bayou Rouge by ferry, the party went on to the Atchafalaya River, thirty miles from Washington. Lusher wrote that two miles lower down, on the west bank of the Atchafalaya River, they were "kindly entertained

---

14 Ibid., p. 84.

at Mr. Nelson's (planter)." The next day, after going six miles down
the river and crossing it at Morgan's Ferry, they proceeded on the
"State Road" to Morganza, fourteen miles from Morgan's Ferry. From
Morganza, that same afternoon, the party went twenty-two miles down the
west bank of the Mississippi River to Waterloo where they were received
and entertained by Mr. Landry, a French planter and a bachelor, living
"back of the dykes across the mouths of Fausse Riviere, Pointe Coupee." 17

The next day, September 5, after parting with his friends who
were to return with the buggy to Washington, Lusher crossed the
Mississippi River in a skiff to Port Hudson where he exhibited his pass­
port to the Provost Marshal, met an old friend, Colonel G. A. Breaux, and
spent some time reading and looking around at the fortifications. That
same afternoon he left Port Hudson by rail, going eighteen miles, to
Clinton, where he stopped at "Mrs. Patrick's." Evidently Mrs. Patrick
kept a boarding house. Lusher noted that it was comfortable. That even­
ing he met John Holmes, the ex-Recorder of Mortgages in New Orleans, who
made him acquainted with Mr. McCoombs, Judge McVea, Mr. Haynes, and others.
Lusher noted in the diary that the judge had known of him from educational
reports, a fact that must have given him some satisfaction. 18

The next day Lusher went thirty-five miles, in a buggy, to
"Tanipaho" where he spent the night with Mr. Taylor. Early the next
morning, September 7, he went by rail to Oyka, Mississippi, where he
attended services at the Episcopal Church and met his friend W. O. Rogers,
ex-Superintendent of Schools in the Second Municipality of New Orleans.

17 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 2-4, 1862.
18 Ibid., September 5, 1862.
19 Ibid., September 6, 1862.
Roger had recently escaped from the city and was then seeking employment. Lusher found time that same morning to write letters to Deacons Dimitry and C. S. Kennedy before going to dine at the home of John Kerastendick, whom he had known in New Orleans. That same afternoon and evening Lusher was at Eureka, in St. Helena Parish, Louisiana, in a portion that later became part of Tangipahoa Parish, where he hoped to meet his friend, Jennings, formerly his associate in the courtroom in New Orleans. Jennings, however, was not there. Lusher wrote that he had an agreeable interview with Mrs. Jennings and the children and that he met W. C. Robinson and Captain Cenas of the Confederate States Navy.

After spending one day and part of the next in the vicinity of Osyka, engaged chiefly in writing letters, Lusher went by rail to Brookhaven, Mississippi, and from there to Jackson where he stopped at the Bowman House, noting that it was filthy and the fare indifferent. There he met Emile LaSere, Dr. Howard Smith, A. J. Guirot, Captain W. G. Mullen, R. R. Breeden, and J. A. Adams, all of New Orleans. He was made acquainted that evening with Treasurer Haynes of Mississippi and with F. Greene, the Confederate States Treasurer's chief clerk.

Of the remainder of the trip to Columbia, made chiefly by rail, it is sufficient to recount that there were frequent stops, that train connections were inconvenient, and that the living accommodations in many places were not comfortable. Lusher reached Columbia, September 16, and lodged in the "Southern States Hotel." The next day he called on

---

20Ibid., September 7, 1862.
21Ibid., September 8-10, 1862.
22Ibid., September 11-16, 1862.
Duncan and, as he reported, "Made arrangets. for lithographing State
Notes forthwith." He was a spectator at a meeting of the State Convention
(of South Carolina) and met Rev. Dr. B. M. Palmer, a Presbyterian min-
ister who was a former acquaintance.

Lusher remained for a week in Columbia, making occasional visits
to Duncan's shop to see how the work on the Treasury notes was progressing.
He wrote many letters and drafted a report to the Secretary of the
Treasury. Among the letters written was one to the secretary of the
State Normal School at Charleston, requesting a copy of the latest report
on that institution.

On his arrival in Richmond on September 26, Lusher went at once to
call on Secretary Jessup and to present Governor Moore's letter asking
for a refund of seventy-four thousand dollars. The matter was referred to
T. Allan, Clerk of the War Tax, so Lusher went at once to call on him and
to explain the situation. The next day Lusher again called on the
Secretary of the Treasury, reiterated Governor Moore's desire to recover
seventy-four thousand dollars, and "intimated that $70,000 at least should
be refunded with reason." Lusher then presented additional data on the
matter to Allan. Later that same day, he again went to Allan's office
where he learned that the data which he had furnished the Secretary of the
Treasury were sufficient. On September 29, Lusher wrote, "Looked in
Confed. Senate & advised Hon. T. J. Semmes of Gov's desire to secure

excess of war tax." Semmes represented Louisiana in the Confederate States Senate. A few days later Lusher took up the same matter with Duncan F. Kenner, a representative of Louisiana in the Confederate Congress and he learned, through Kenner the next day, that the bill for returning the surplus of the Louisiana War Tax had been reported favorably. This matter has been treated a length, primarily for the purpose of showing with what persistence and tenacity Lusher could work on the task assigned to him.

At the same time Lusher was concerned with the question of compensation for deputy collectors of the war tax. He presented his views and his proposals on the matter to the Secretary of the Treasury and to other officials. The diary indicates that, at the prevailing rate of compensation, it must have been difficult to secure the services of competent sub-collectors.

Lusher frequently visited the Dimitry family, then living in Richmond. Since Dimitry was experiencing financial difficulties, Lusher exerted his influence toward securing employment as a signer of Treasury notes for Elizabeth who wished to aid in the support of the family.

It will be recalled that five years before, Elizabeth Dimitry had been a member of Lusher's own household in New Orleans.

In Columbia again on October 10, at Duncan's place of business, Lusher learned that fifteen thousand sheets of twelve notes each had been lithographed. He decided to visit Charleston while waiting for the

---

26 Ibid., September 27, 29; October 3, 4, 1862.
27 Loc. cit.
28 Ibid., October 1-2, 1862.
printing of the remainder.

In Charleston on October 13, Lusher visited the normal and high schools. He recorded that the pupils were neat and orderly, that the buildings were of brick and were very commodious, that every comfort and convenience was to be found, and that the schools were equipped with the "best model improved school furniture." Lusher must have addressed the students for he recorded in his diary, "...few encouraging remarks to them."

In Columbia three days later, Lusher wrote, "Printing of notes (green backs) progressing rapidly." While he was waiting for the work to be completed he wrote letters to the sub-collectors of the war tax in Louisiana, giving an estimate of the compensation each would receive according to the provisions of an act that was reported passed.

In Richmond again on October 31, Lusher went to a hospital to see Alex. B. Chachere who had been slightly wounded. He left with Cachere an address at which he could be found in Jackson, Mississippi, at an appointed time, and offered aid in traveling from there to Chachere's home in Opelousas.

On November 1, after securing from the Postmaster-General a written permit for the use of the mail cars for his valuable effects and for his own presence when it would not hinder the carrying of mail, Lusher went to the Treasury where he received seventy thousand dollars. The fact

---

29 Ibid., October 10, 1862.
30 Ibid., October 13, 1862.
31 Ibid., October 16, 1862.
32 Ibid., October 31, 1862.
that such a sum was refunded to the State of Louisiana at that time is substantiated by an official report referred to elsewhere.

Lusher left Richmond with the money in a valise on November 3, spending that night at Petersburg, Virginia. The next night, after traveling all day, Lusher recorded that ladies were ministering to the wounded in the cars, that he had "awkward & imperfect rest," and that the train was detained at three o'clock in the morning by the breaking of an axle of the tender.

On November 7, Lusher was in Columbia where he paid Duncan seven thousand dollars on account for the State of Louisiana, and took his receipted bill. That same day he noted the numbers of the Confederate States notes, probably as an aid in tracing any that might be lost or stolen from him. Also, he received from the engraver two boxes of engraved blanks for State Treasury notes. These blanks needed only a serial number and the proper signature to make them legal tender. Lusher left Columbia with the valise and the two boxes on November 8 and, after the usual hardships, arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, six days later.

At Jackson, Lusher met his father-in-law and spent most of the day in conversation with him, learning that Mrs. Lusher was planning to leave New Orleans with the children. Lusher took nearly a page in his diary to list the letters of an official nature that were delivered to him in Jackson on his arrival there. Within the next few days, Lusher met and

33 Ibid., November 1, 1862.
34 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, November 3-5, 1862.
35 Ibid., November 7, 8, 14, 1862.
talked with Rogers and Jennings, attended the funeral of the latter's son, wrote a number of letters, and prepared data pertaining to assessments for the Confederate States Treasurer. After a delay of several days, he received two boxes of printed matter from the Flash and Hartwell Company of Mobile, Alabama. It is worthy of note that the State was having its engraving and printing done elsewhere because New Orleans, where there were establishments equipped to do such work, was under Federal control.

On November 25, Lusher went to Vicksburg where he boarded the steamer "Vigo," bound for Alexandria. However, the boat and its passengers were detained at Vicksburg that night and throughout the next day. Lusher spent the day writing letters which were mailed at Vicksburg.

The trip by steamer from Vicksburg to Alexandria was uneventful except for delays for putting off freight and difficulty in crossing the bar at the mouth of Old River. Lusher recorded that the boat scraped and that the water there was only three and a half feet deep. Reaching Alexandria in the afternoon of November 29, Lusher went immediately to dispose of the notes and printed matter entrusted to him and to pay the seventy thousand dollars to Governor Moore's private secretary. There are no data at hand to indicate what Lusher did between his return to Alexandria at the end of November, 1862, and May of the following year when he was in Cayuga, Mississippi, where he had then been living for some time with his family. The account is taken up at that point in the next section.

36 Ibid., November 14-17, 23, 1862.
37 Ibid., November 25, 26, 1862.
38 Ibid., November 27-29, 1862.
Summary. In this section Lusher has been presented as a trusted agent, executing the commission given him by the Governor of the State. At the same time, working under difficulties incidental to traveling from place to place, having his mail accumulate at some place to which he had requested that it be forwarded, working at odd times and in unusual places to keep abreast of his necessary work, he has been shown as the public official attending with diligence to the duties of his office.

Instances have been given of Lusher visiting in the homes of strangers, meeting people he had not known before, and making friends of them. Also, instances have been given that show Lusher's willingness to use his influence on behalf of a friend less fortunate than himself and his willingness even to cause himself inconvenience in order to be of service to a friend. When consideration is given to the difficulties under which he worked, to the inconveniences to which he was subjected, to the amount of official business that claimed his attention, and to the amount of time he could devote to his friends and others, one cannot but be impressed with the work he accomplished.

III. ACTIVITIES AS CHIEF COLLECTOR AND SPECIAL AGENT, MAY, 1863 TO MAY, 1864

When Lusher met his father-in-law in Jackson, Mississippi, in November, 1862, he learned that his wife who had remained in New Orleans, was planning to leave the city. At some time thereafter she went with the three children to Eureka, St. Helena Parish, where they remained for a while, evidently as guests in the Jennings home. Then she and the children boarded for a time in Osyka, Mississippi, not far from Eureka.
Lusher went to meet his family there; they secured a house and were living there early in 1863 when the two girls, Mary Alice and Cecilia Adelisa, aged ten and seven years, respectively, became sick.

General N. P. Banks took command of the Department of the Gulf, December 14, 1862, succeeding General Butler. Banks was a more active and more aggressive commander than Butler had been. He drove the Confederate forces defending Louisiana, under the command of General Richard Taylor, up the Red River, advancing as far as Alexandria by May 1, 1863. Banks evidently had a part of the forces under his command in Southeast Louisiana also, for Lusher recorded, "Pretty soon, however, the Federals began to raid towards Osyka, and the children and Mrs. L. were taken ... to Holmesville, Mi...." Both of Lusher's daughters died there, the younger on May 20, 1863, and the elder five days later. After the burial of the two daughters in Eureka, Lusher went with his wife and son, then not quite three years old, to Columbia, South Carolina.

Either Lusher's diary was not being kept at this time or the volume covering the early months of 1863 has been lost. The manuscript to which reference is made was written without reference to the diary and, while not found in error touching any essential facts, the manuscript does confuse the chronology of events to some extent. Also, exact dates for only a few events are recorded in the manuscript, a fact that explains the lack of exact information for such periods as are not covered by the volumes of the diary at hand and concerning such events as did not become matters of public record.

41Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 139.
43Loc. cit.
On August 15, Lusher went to Duncan's place of business in Columbia, where he "exam'd. face of note for $50." His opinion was that the photograph from which the engraving was done was too small. Other references were made to that matter of engraving for the fifty-dollar notes on the days that followed. In fact, much of Lusher's time during the next several months was devoted to the matter of having State Treasury notes engraved. On January 3, 1863, the Legislature had approved Act No. 32 which authorized the issuance of State Treasury notes to an amount not exceeding twenty million dollars. The form of the notes and their denominations were to be determined by the governor, with the condition that the denominations should not be less than five nor more than one hundred dollars. The notes were to be lithographed, engraved, or stamped under the direction of the governor, after which they were to be signed and numbered by the auditor and treasurer or by persons employed by them for that purpose. The law provided that the notes were to be accepted in payment of State, Parish, or Municipal taxes, or in payment of any public debts. They were to be redeemable twelve months after the signing of a definite treaty of peace between the Confederate States and the United States.

The significant point is that the notes were to be engraved under the direction of the governor. Obviously Governor Moore could not leave the State and spend his time making arrangements for the work, examining

---

44 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, June 15, 17, 23, 1863.

proofs, accepting delivery of the sheets when finished, and arranging for their transportation to Louisiana. The evidence furnished in Lusher's diary shows that those duties were entrusted to him by Governor Moore and that he attended to them with the care that such important duties deserved. For example, on June 18, Lusher made note of the fact that he was sending a sub-agent with ten boxes of five-dollar notes and that the twenties and hundreds and the plates for engraving the fifties should be completed within twenty days.

During that same time Lusher was preparing a synopsis of the duties of sub-collectors of the war tax, as prescribed by a new act of the Confederate Congress. Subsequent entries in the diary show that after two weeks Lusher was preparing another circular letter, a copy of which was sent to each of the sub-collectors in Louisiana.

It was in June, 1863 that Lusher was again required to furnish bond to the amount of fifty thousand dollars in order to continue as Chief Collector of the War Tax in Louisiana. To meet that requirement must have been difficult for a man of limited means, and especially so under the unsettled conditions which then prevailed. However, Lusher's father-in-law signed for twenty thousand dollars; Joseph H. Marks of New Orleans signed for ten thousand; and, on June 25, Blanton H. Duncan of Columbia signed for the remaining twenty thousand.

After remaining for a while with Lusher in Columbia, Mrs. Lusher went with John Robert to Charleston to live there with her mother. In

---

\[46\] Robert M. Lusher, Diary, June 18, 1863.

\[47\] Ibid., June 15, 29, 1863.

\[48\] Ibid., June 25, 1863.
July Lusher visited his family in Charleston for two days.

While Lusher was in South Carolina, events of far-reaching importance were taking place along the Mississippi River. The fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, was followed by the surrender of Port Hudson to General Banks five days later. With the loss of these two strongholds, the Confederacy lost control of the river and further movement between the East and West became hazardous. That Lusher was contemplating a return to Louisiana is evidenced by his writing, on July 19, to W. J. McCulloh at Mobile, Alabama, asking if he might send several boxes of State Treasury notes to him, to be held until the balance could be taken there by Lusher himself. In the same letter Lusher inquired about the best route from Mobile to Louisiana. Ten days later a reply was received from McCulloh, to the effect that the only apparent route was by way of Havana and Matamoras. While waiting for an answer from Mobile, Lusher wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury on the difficulties of reaching Louisiana. The route suggested by McCulloh, to Havana, to Matamoras, to Shreveport, would have consumed much time but it would have been relatively safe. A considerable trade was being developed between Shreveport as a center and West Texas and Mexico; the overland route from Matamoras to Shreveport was well established.

While Lusher waited in Columbia for the completion of the work on the Treasury notes and considered plans for returning to Louisiana,

---

49 Ibid., July 21-23, 1863.
50 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 139.
51 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, July 19, 24, 29, 1863.
52 Henry E. Chambers, op. cit., p. 645.
Major H. R. Jennings arrived in Columbia. Jennings had fallen sick while on active duty. Lusher wrote of him that he was "...feeble and careworn, haggard in appearance." Lusher made arrangements for the transportation of the sick Major to Mobile and he wrote to Mrs. Jennings at Eureka, St. Helena Parish, describing her husband's condition.

A small incident occurring at that time is of interest and further illustrates Lusher's care and attention to details. After some correspondence on the matter with the Commissioner of Taxes and his clerk, T. Sparnick, Lusher, as special agent, received from the Commissioner of Taxes a draft for $5,625.61, the balance of the surplus war tax. Lusher's estimate when he went to Richmond the year before was that the State had over-paid its quota by seventy-four thousand dollars. Seventy thousand had been refunded then; this additional refund concluded the matter. Lusher endorsed the draft to "Henry W. Gray of B. Duncan & Co.," as a payment on the State's account there and he wrote letters to the Commissioner and to his clerk acknowledging receipt of the draft.

Soon Lusher was making preparations to go to Mobile. He paid his personal accounts in Columbia and wrote to various people, asking that mail for him be sent to the Flash & Hartwell Company at Mobile. He wrote to that company, asking that his mail be held there for him. He informed the Commissioner of Taxes of his plans, and he made provision

---

53 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, August 7, 1863.
54 Ibid., August 9, 1863.
55 Ibid., August 15, 1863.

for his salary to be paid to his wife. Then he took leave of
Mrs. Lusher, not to see her again until his return to New Orleans
more than two years later.

In Mobile, August 31 and September 1, Lusher made inquiry as to
where he could secure a covered conveyance for two people and for several
hundred pounds of baggage. Plans for traveling to Louisiana progressed
slowly while Major Jennings made some improvement under the care of
Mrs. Jennings. On November 6, everything was in readiness to leave Mobile.
A carriage and two mules had been secured; corn and other provisions had
been purchased. While in Mobile, Lusher had conducted the affairs of his
office by mail, as is shown by the record he made of letters received and
written during the period.

Lusher left Mobile with Major Jennings on November 6, 1863,
although he had written of him five days before, "very apprehensive that
he cannot survive a journey westw'd." On that journey, Lusher noted the
condition of the roads, the time of arrival at and departure from each
stopping place, and such trifles as the breaking of the carriage pole when
the carriage became aired. Pearl River was crossed on November 12 and the
party was housed that night at "Mr. Liberty barron's, 6 miles from river."
Lusher wrote of the barron home, "Homestead of unusual energy & comfort:
sugar cotton & molasses raised by Propr. for 15 yrs. - all else excellent;
fine beautiful homespun made & quilting; food well cooked; fare inviting;
his own tobacco raised." The next day after "comfortable night's rest in
good bed & good breakfast," Lusher wrote of a "Pleasent chat with

56. Robert M. Lusher, Diary, August 26, 1863.
57. Ibid., August 31 - November 6, 1863.
Mr. Liberty Warren, farmer: ingenious, inventive & kind hearted man of 61."

The next night Lusher and his party were housed by Mr. Bullock, the location of whose house was noted with care. Of that house, Lusher wrote, "Supper good; lady affable & kind. Housed for night. Comfortable."

In the next entry in the diary, Lusher wrote, "From Evening of 14th to morning of 18th - at Franklinton, entertained at Mr. David Magee's dwelling (most comfortably and agreeably) Very busy in exercise of off. functions & (with) C. W. Bickham, Dist. Collr." Lusher's list of the names of citizens of Franklinton whom he met contains names that are common in that section of Louisiana. The list follows:

Capt. Hardy Richardson
John Wadsworth
Stephen Ellis
Lt. Wm. Magee
Nehemiah Magee
Eobt. Babington
B. W. Brumfield
Kenneth McLain

Upon leaving Franklinton, Lusher went to Osyka, and thence to Eureka where Jennings died and was buried in the same burial plot where Lusher had buried his daughters in May.

---

58 Ibid., November 1-13, 1863.
59 Ibid., November 13, 1863.
60 Ibid., November 14-18, 1863.
61 Ibid., November 20, 21, 1863.


It is interesting to note that in the manuscript cited here, Lusher wrote of the burial of his daughters, "...and there, near the grave of Major R. Jennings, consigned them to Mother Earth...." According to the diary which is undoubtedly the more reliable source of data, the daughters were buried before Major Jennings.
Lusher remained in St. Helena and East Feliciana Parishes until February of the following year. Of that period of more than two months it might be said that he maintained his office there as Chief Collector of the Confederate States War Tax for Louisiana. Much of his time was taken up with official correspondence and accounts or with sending out blank forms and circulars to the deputy collectors. However, he was among friends and some time could be found for pleasant conversation and for visits in the vicinity. In addition to the Jennings family at Eureka, Lusher had other friends with whom he was on intimate terms, such as the Karstendick family living nearby at Osyka, Mississippi. A young man of that family was married to Mrs. Lusher's sister.

On February 4, 1864, Lusher arranged a light vehicle, such as was ordinarily drawn by one horse, with a pole so that his two mules could be hitched to it. A few days later he set out in it, driving to Mobile in six days. In Mobile Lusher supervised the printing of forms to be used in the assessment and collection of taxes. He had been there only two days when he noted, "Feds. threatening Mobile from Meridian-Enterprise & Grant's Pass."

During that time Mrs. Lusher evidently wished to meet her husband in Mobile and to return with him to the homes of their friends in Osyka and Eureka. However, Lusher repeatedly wrote to her, advising that she remain with her mother. Finally, fearing, it seems, that she would attempt the trip anyway, he informed her by telegram that he was leaving Mobile

---

62 Ibid., November, 1863 - February, 1864; January 14, 1856.
63 Ibid., February 8-13, 1864.
64 Ibid., February 16, 1864.
and that she should remain in South Carolina.

After the usual preparations such as overhauling the harness, securing a supply of corn (at seven dollars per bushel, although the price had advanced to $9.50 when he accepted delivery of it), and packing the printed matter to be transported, Lusher left Spring Hill, near Mobile, on March 3, 1864. He was accompanied by C. J. Rasoul of Independence, Louisiana. The trip to St. Helena Parish was accomplished in five days.

After remaining in Eureka throughout March, Lusher spent a few days each at Greensburg, Clinton, and Jackson before going to Tunica on April 16. While at Tunica he gave much attention to the duties of his office. On April 29 he wrote final instructions to all the collectors and assessors in East Louisiana and to Deacon Dimitry whom he had made Deputy Chief Collector for all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River.

On April 30, in the company of a Confederate scout and immediately after the passage of a Federal gunboat down the river, Lusher crossed the Mississippi with his mules and his vehicle loaded with State Treasury notes and the blank forms for use in collecting the war tax. In Pointe Coupee Parish he had to turn into the woods and remain out of sight to escape detection by a patrol of Federal cavalry. Of that afternoon and night, Lusher wrote in the diary: "Holden with me. Checked by passage of Fed: Cav'y up Old River Road, along which the Tel. wire put up. Sleeping in Jersey: restless Slight rain during night. Unhurt."

65Ibid., February 29, 1864.
66Ibid., March 3-8, 1864.
67Ibid., March, April, 1864.
68Robert M. Lusher, Diary, April 30, 1864.
________, Manuscript, January, 1889, p. 10.
Three days later Lusher reached the Atchafalaya River near Simsport which, he noted, had been burned. That evening he reached the home of Joseph Callehan, four miles from Moreauville, where he was housed for the night. The next day he traveled through Avoyelles Parish to Enterprise where he was entertained by Colonel Roger B. Marshall who agreed to help him secure an assessor for that parish, if possible.

The next day, May 5, Lusher continued his journey, reaching Cheneyville, where he met General Polignac to whom he had been referred for an escort. Lusher was detained at Cheneyville for five days. He went "with Ed. Holden and Capt. Posey" to the Red River to visit the wrecks of a gunboat and a transport, captured and destroyed the day before by Texas cavalry and artillery, and to inspect the Gunboat "Signal," captured and still afloat. He also made arrangements to meet the assessors and collectors for Rapides Parish and he attended to his correspondence to which he had given no attention since leaving Tunica in West Feliciana Parish.

Lusher left Cheneyville on May 11, and passed by LeCompte, traveling in a northwesterly direction. At Michel Paul's, thirty miles on the way, he stopped to camp for the night. The next morning he met "Theoph. Little," the collector for St. Landry Parish, on the road and, after talking with him, went on to the northwest. In the vicinity of Cloutierville Lusher found plantation homes, barns, and outhouses had

69 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, May 3, 4, 1864.
70 Ibid., May 5-10, 1864.
71 Ibid., May 11, 12, 1864.
been burned and fences had been torn down. After stopping several
times for pasturage and after crossing and re-crossing Cane River, he
reached Natchitoches on May 14. He left his boxes and packages at the
postoffice for safe-keeping, he arranged for the care of his mules at
the government stable, and he found lodging for himself with Mr. Phillips.

An amusing incident, recalled by Lusher many years later, is
recounted here to illustrate an interesting bit of the history of the
time. When Lusher entered Natchitoches with the military escort that
had been furnished him by Polignac, the people thought he was a Yankee
73)
trader who had been captured. There was a great demand for cotton in

the North then and the people of the interior of Louisiana had accumulated
cotton for several years while the progress of the war interfered with the
marketing of the crop. There were traders accompanying the Federal troops,
ready to purchase at once any cotton that might be captured and to arrange
for its transportation to New Orleans where it could be sold at a good
profit. The fact that the inhabitants of Natchitoches thought at first
sight that Lusher was such a trader shows that such persons had recently
been in that vicinity.

Lusher remained in Natchitoches from Sunday, May 15, until the
next Thursday morning when he set out for Shreveport. That first morning
in Natchitoches he attended services at the Catholic Church where he
heard a sermon in French. The time in Natchitoches was spent chiefly

72Ibid., May 13, 14, 1864.
74Henry E. Chambers, op. cit., p. 647.
in attending to official duties, among them the preparation of a circular letter to be printed and distributed, addressed to the taxpayers. Lusher also wrote letters to his wife and to friends in New Orleans, to be sent by the channels available for getting into enemy-held territory. Also, he called on H. M. Nyaas and Robert Mott.

Leaving Natchitoches on May 19, Lusher crossed the Red River at Grand Ecore which, he noted, had been burned. Later he passed "Campé," another town which had been burned. That evening he was at Springville, described as a neat village, where he was entertained in the home of A. M. Lisso. The next day was spent in Springville where Lusher wrote circulars of instructions to the collectors, necessitated by amendments recently made to the tax law. Lusher noted in his diary that Jules Lisso helped him with the circular.

Lusher crossed the Red River by ferry and proceeded up the west bank of the river. That night was spent at R. B. Hollingsworth's place where, as Lusher wrote, he was pleasantly entertained.

The next day, in DeSoto Parish, Lusher stopped and talked with James A. Lusk, Postmaster at Kingston, on the matter of tax collections in that parish. He passed by Colonel Henry Marshall's place which, he wrote,
was vacated, and he was lodged for the night in the home of Mr. Pugh. Lusher then proceeded on to Shreveport where he was to remain until after the end of the war.

In order fully to appreciate this last stage of Lusher's return, from Tunica in West Feliciana Parish to Shreveport, one must take into account other events occurring at the same time. Lusher made that part of the trip in May, 1864.

In the spring of that same year the Federal forces, under the command of General N. P. Banks, made their most determined effort to occupy the interior of Louisiana. A force of seventeen vessels and about ten thousand men led by General A. J. Smith advanced up Red River, supported by the advance northward of a still larger force that had been along the Teche Bayou in Southwest Louisiana. The Confederates, under General Richard Taylor, gave way before superior numbers until April 8 when they engaged the enemy in battle near Mansfield. Although greatly outnumbered, the Confederates won the day and pursued the Federal forces to Pleasant Hill where another engagement took place the next day. Beginning there, the Federal forces made a disorderly retreat down Red River, closely pursued by the Confederates who cut off and captured many of Banks' men. The Federals were driven back to the Mississippi River by May 20 when the pursuit was abandoned.

It will be seen from the foregoing that, for several days after Lusher entered Pointe Coupee Parish on the last day of April, he was in

---

78 Ibid., May 22, 23, 1864.


80 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 140.
enemy-held territory. In Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes he was very close to the theater of military operations. A military escort was not provided until he got to Cheneyville and such an escort was considered necessary until his arrival at Natchitoches. The chief collector with his boxes of State Treasury notes and the forms to be employed in collecting revenue for the Confederate Government would have been a rich prize. The loss of the papers he carried would have interfered seriously with the conduct of the financial affairs of the State and with the collection of taxes to support the Confederacy. A comparison of the distance he traveled with the distance of the safer route, with due consideration to the slowness of travel then, shows that Lusher actually saved months by using the more direct route. There was the further advantage that he was never kept from the exercise of his official duties for more than a few days at a time. His work, evidently, was not seriously interrupted.

Summary. Here, as in the preceding section, Lusher has been shown as the responsible official of the Confederate States Government and the trusted agent for the State of Louisiana, attending to his official duties under adverse circumstances. The details of travel within the State have been given at some length to show how extensive and how intimate his acquaintance with the State and its people became. Also, it is intended that the facts presented should help the reader better to understand the man himself and his ways.

IV. ACTIVITIES AS CHIEF COLLECTOR,
MAY, 1864 TO THE END OF THE WAR

Upon his return to Shreveport in May, 1864, Lusher secured the use of an office formerly occupied by the mayor, on Market Street, and engaged
board in the home of R. H. Cutfiffe. Major Robert J. Marye, described
as "a perfect Virginia gentleman," was his chief clerk and Philip Werlein,
"a very active and always obliging youth," was an assistant in the office.
The office had a rear room where materials were stored and which was so
equipped that Lusher and young Werlein could lodge there. It was there
that Lusher, in the summer of 1864, devoted all of his efforts to the
assessment and collection of the war tax.

The first task was to send out the necessary blanks and instructions
to assessors and collectors in the parishes. Then, as tables of assess-
ments came to the office from various parts of the State, Lusher and his
assistants examined them in detail and kept the necessary records and
accounts. There was the additional task of preparing reports to be
sent to Richmond and that of finding someone by whom reports could be
sent to a place from which they could safely be mailed. As might be
expected, there were inquiries and complaints addressed to the chief
collector, each requiring an answer. Of one week, Lusher wrote,
"Constantly occupied officially - from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. chiefly in writing
instructions and drafting tabular forms and corresponding."

The rate of taxation is of interest. For the year 1864, a tax
amounting to 5 per cent of the value was levied upon nearly all assets.

81 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1889, p. 11.
82 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, May 26, 27, 1864.
83 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, January, 1889, p. 11.
84 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, May 28, 1864.
85 Ibid., June 13-19, 1864.
86 Ibid., June 2-26, 1864.
The classification of assets upon which the tax was levied are listed as follows:

- Land and other Real Property, with Improvements
- Slaves
- Horses, Mules, Asses and Jennets
- Cattle (of bovine species)
- Sheep, Goats, and Swine, and other Stock
- Carriages, Carts, Wagons and other Vehicles
- Mechanics' Tools & Implements
- Cotton
- Wool
- Tobacco
- Corn
- Wheat
- Rye, Oats, Rice and other Grain
- Potatoes, Peas, etc., and other Products
- Flour, Sugar, Bacon and other Provisions
- Furniture and Musical Instruments, &c.
- Books, Maps, Pictures, &c.
- Goods, Wares and Merchandise
- Solvent Credits
- Bank Bills and other Currency
- Other Property & Effects, not in any other column
- Gold coin, Dust and Bullion
- Silver Coin and Bullion
- Moneys in Foreign Countries, or Bills of Exchange, &c.

The taxes on all coins, on gold dust, and on all bullion were to be paid in kind or at a rate by which adjustment was made for the prevailing rate of depreciation in the value of the currency. A tax of 10 per cent was levied on the value of gold and silverware and plate, jewelry, and watches. The rolls, when returned to the office of the chief collector, showed the name of each taxpayer, the value of his assets under each of the headings listed above, and the total tax paid by each. Examining and checking such sheets for errors, compiling reports

---

It is a fortunate coincidence that in June, 1890, Lusher used some of the blanks prepared to be used as assessment rolls for making copies of some of his correspondence, which copies form a part of a manuscript cited here. From that form one may ascertain the items on which the war tax was assessed and the rate of taxation.

88 Ibid., data taken from column headings, pp. 1-66.
from the sheets received, and remitting the amounts collected to the proper agent of the Confederate States Treasury, engaged Lusher's attention until the end of the war.

The ability of the people of rural Louisiana to pay their taxes during the closing year of the war may be explained by the economic history of the period. Governor Henry W. Allen who had taken office in January, 1864, instituted a plan by which cotton was purchased from the producers and sent to Mexico by wagon train. On the return trip, the wagons brought back goods that the people could use. The profits realised on the trade went into the State's treasury and were used to institute manufacturing of articles most needed by the people. Such things as pots and pans, rope, cloth, and medicines were manufactured in North Louisiana in 1864 and 1865. In spite of the war, the people in general were enjoying a prosperity sufficient to enable them to pay their taxes promptly and the State of Louisiana was contributing its full share to the support of the Confederacy. Lusher's own summary of his activities of this period is of interest:

...All the Tableaux of Assessment had been received and corrected in the close of 1864, and the entire War tax had been paid and the amount deposited with the Agent of the Confederate Treasury for the trans-Mississippi department, before the close of the first quarter of 1865.90

Upon advice of the governors of the Confederate States west of the Mississippi River, General Kirby Smith surrendered on May 26, 1865.

Lusher recorded that in May of that year, at a place ten miles from

---

89Henry E. Chambers, op. cit., pp. 655-56.

90Robert M. Lusher, (unpublished manuscript, May 31, 1889, in the archives of the Louisiana State University), p. 11. This work will be referred to hereafter as Lusher's manuscript of May 1, 1889.

91Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 145.
Shreveport, he destroyed by fire all the tables of assessment in his possession in order to prevent identification of the people's property by Federal agents. Throughout the month of June, 1865, Lusher stayed with Judge Ford, in the vicinity of Shreveport. While there he taught the Judge's son and daughter. On July 5, 1865, Lusher was again in New Orleans. The war was over and new tasks lay ahead.

---


93 Loc. cit.

94 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 5.
CHAPTER IV

Lusher as State Superintendent of Public Schools, 1865 to 1868

I. INTRODUCTION

While Lusher was identified with the affairs of the Confederate State of Louisiana, events of far-reaching import were taking place in New Orleans, the city of his adoption to which he returned after the war. A description of the beginnings of reconstruction in Louisiana may be found in the history of New Orleans and the nearby territory under Federal control in the last years of the war.

The course of political affairs. According to President Lincoln's policy, described as the "perduration of the States in the Union," there was to be a reorganization of the government of the State to the end that military rule was to give way to civil government as soon as a constitution should be adopted, an electorate should be registered, and civil officers should be elected and installed. Accordingly, the course pursued in the occupied portions of Louisiana was intended to restore normal conditions as rapidly as possible. The port of New Orleans was opened to commerce, representatives to Congress for the term expiring March 4, 1863, were elected and were sent to Washington, courts were established, and

---


successful candidate for the office of State Superintendent of Public Education. In his first message to the Legislature, Governor Hahn called attention to the duty of educating colored children. It should be recalled that the government described here, organized under Federal auspices in 1864, could exert its authority only throughout the territory held by the military forces under General Banks. Governor Henry W. Allen was chief executive of the Confederate State government in Shreveport, with control of most of the rural areas of Louisiana.

The election of delegates to a Constitutional Convention was held March 28, 1864, and the Convention met the next month. A constitution was drawn up which was adopted July 23, 1864. In justification of his action in ordering the election in which representatives from a small portion of the State were permitted to act as representatives of all the people, Banks is reported to have made the statement that has since become famous: "The city of New Orleans is really the State of Louisiana." When asked what portion of the State had voted for delegates to the Convention, Banks was said to have answered, "All as far up as Pointe Coupee and there were some from the Red River who voted at Vidalis."

The Constitution adopted in the Convention of 1864 abolished slavery but did not extend to the Negroes the privilege of voting. It did, however, empower the Legislature to extend that privilege. The provision of the

---

11Ibid., p. 51.
Constitution of primary concern here was that for public education.
The article providing for "the education of all children," in which no
reference was made to mingling of the races in the schools and in which
separate schools were neither required nor prohibited, was as follows:

Title XI. Article 141. The Legislature shall provide
for the education of all children of the State between the
ages of six and eighteen years, by maintenance of free
public schools by taxation or otherwise. 12

When the new State Constitution was submitted to the electorate,
there were 4,664 votes in favor of its ratification and 789 in opposition.
The number of votes in favor of the new fundamental law of the State was
less than ten per cent of the number of votes cast in the State in 1860,
the minimum number considered by Lincoln as needed for reorganization of
a State's government. The small vote is an indication that the first
13
attempt at reconstruction was unpopular.

Governor Hahn having been elected to represent Louisiana in the
United States Senate, Lieutenant Governor Wells succeeded to the office
of Governor, March 4, 1865. Hahn was not seated by the Senate and
Louisiana was not represented in Congress while the State government
organized in 1864 was in existence. 14

Education in occupied Louisiana. A report was submitted to the
Legislature on October 6, 1864, over the signature of John MacNair, State
Superintendent of Public Education. That report is an important source
of information concerning the schools in and around New Orleans at that

12Constitution of the State of Louisiana, adopted in Convention,
July 23, 1864, printed as a supplement to Debates in the Convention for
the Revision and Amendment of the Constitution of the State of Louisiana
(New Orleans: W. E. Fish, Printer to the Convention, 1864), p. 641.


14Henry E. Chambers, op. cit., p. 653.
time and also concerning those throughout the State when Lusher became
State Superintendent of Public Education in December of the next year.
The report was described in the introduction as containing the follow­
ing parts:

1. A general statement of the condition of the Free
Public Schools of the State, with some account of the
working of the system.

2. The Report of the Superintendent of the Public Schools
in the City of New Orleans. (Appendix A.)

Banks on the private Schools and Seminaries in New Orleans.
(Appendix B.)

organised under General Order No. 38, on the Schools for the
colored children and adults of the city and state. (Appendix
C.)15

In the first paragraph of the report MacNair stated that Henry
Avery had left the office in May, 1862, and had taken with him the records
which were needed for ordinary business of the office and for making re­
ports. He also stated that the lack of statistical data was due to the
fact that the parish officers had sent in no reports. He did, however,
trace the history of the public schools, in order to "explain some other­
wise inexplicable facts . . . and thus endeavor to find a remedy for
existing evils by tracing them to their source."

MacNair incorporated in his report quotations from Governors
Claiborne, Robertson, and Roman and from the reports of legislative
committees of 1818 and 1832; all showed that the purpose of the system

15Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education,
to the Honorable the Members of the General Assembly of the State of
Louisiana October, 1864 (New Orleans: W. R. Fish, State Printer, 1864),
p. 3.
16Ibid., p. 6.
of public schools in Louisiana for many years was the education of indigent children. He explained that the "honest pride of freeborn Americans" had caused the people generally to keep their children at home rather than to send them to schools maintained for such a purpose. He strongly advocated equality of educational opportunity. Of the old system dominated by rich slave owners, he wrote, "Ignorant and intemperate men were deemed fully competent to carry out their plan of educating the poor whites unfortunately located among us." His conclusion on the matter was:

We trust the present General Assembly will change all this; and as slavery is gone, let her entire progeny of mischiefs and evils go with the "institution." And let our legislators now give the people clearly to understand, that the public schools are for all alike, and discourage every attempt at maintaining, by any system of education, a shallow and anti-republican aristocracy among us.17

MacNair's emphasis on equal educational opportunities for all has been construed to mean that he advocated mixed schools such as were required by constitutional provision in 1868, four years later. However, the inequalities of educational opportunities between the rich and the poor people are important at this point. Other sections of the report show beyond doubt that MacNair intended that schools for colored children should 18 be separate and apart from those for white children.

In the report MacNair expressed his fear that both the principal and the interest of the free school fund might be lost to the cause of education, since the bonds representing that fund had been carried off in

17 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
18 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
1862. No data concerning school affairs in the parishes were given in the report except for news received from "various gentlemen interested in education, living in the different parishes." The schools in most districts had been closed for several years. Apparently local directors had always been negligent of their duties and remiss in making reports on the condition of the schools.

MacNair commended the work of the public schools of New Orleans, and he reported that the people of that city had attended nobly to the education of their children. He approved the total absence of class distinction in the schools of the city. He reported that in New Orleans, "The daughter born to wealth, sits on the same form with the child of poverty; and the son of a poor washerwoman, very likely out-ranks in his class-room reputation, the son of a banker." MacNair paid tribute to the State Normal School in New Orleans as follows:

In this connection I would respectfully suggest to your honorable body the propriety and necessity of fostering with all proper care the State Normal School, which, under an act of a former Legislature, was organized in this city, and in past years has done good service in supplying in our city and parish schools many very able teachers. It is an institution highly necessary to insure the success of our educational system, and well deserves legislative encouragement and support.

A large section of MacNair's report consisted of quotations from reports for the years 1855 to 1862. Selections were made to support his conclusions that the schools then had been inferior; that the teachers had been ignorant, dissolute, and immoral; and that the directors had

---

19 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
20 Ibid., p. 7.
21 Ibid., p. 19.
been indifferent, ignorant, incapable, and, in some instances at least, under the control of others who wished to keep the people in ignorance. To remedy the situation, MacNair suggested that provision be made again for parish superintendents, whose duty would be to supervise the parish schools. He suggested that good men be selected to serve as school directors in the parishes. MacNair held those interested in maintaining the institution of slavery responsible for abolishing the office of parish superintendent in 1852. However, Harris reported that the office was abolished because the superintendents’ salaries of three hundred dollars a year each took up too large a share of the school funds. MacNair reminded the Legislature that liberal appropriations would be required to support the kind of schools needed throughout the state and that the course pursued in Louisiana might become an example to other states of the South. In conclusion, he laid upon the Legislature the responsibility of undertaking the task of educating the colored race.

MacNair’s "remarks" seem to have been unduly harsh concerning the administration of school affairs before the war. However, they were grounded in fact and showed evidence of progressive and sound thinking about educational affairs.

As might be expected from the excuses MacNair made in his introductory statement, the report contained few statistical details. However, it was noted in the report that $105,894.80 had been apportioned out of

\[ \text{Ibid., pp. 8-17.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., pp. 15-17.} \]
\[ \text{T.H. Harris, The Story of Public Education in Louisiana (New Orleans: The Isaac Delgado Trades School, 1924), pp. 13-14.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., pp. 22-23.} \]
public school funds for teachers' salaries since he had come into office. The report of the schools in New Orleans was rather complete.

Forty-four public schools in the city had a total enrollment of 12,411 pupils in June, 1864. The report also contained data on the private schools of New Orleans in 1864. A commission appointed to investigate those schools, classified them in three groups according to the loyalty of their teachers to the Union cause. One group included schools in which the teachers were loyal and taught pupils their duty of loyalty to the Union. In a second group were schools with teachers who were citizens of foreign countries and who allowed nothing of a political nature to be taught. The third group included schools taught by native teachers who had not taken an oath of allegiance to the United States but who, for the most part, claimed to have no sympathy either with the Union or with the "rebellion." Some teachers sympathized with the "rebellion," and their schools were classified in the third group. The recapitulation of the report for the First District is representative of conditions prevailing throughout the city; the sixty-seven private schools in the district were classified as follows:

- Twenty-four schools, taught by loyal teachers, attended by 622 scholars
- Twenty-nine schools, taught by Registered Foreigners, and those who have made no return, and who disclaim all ideas of teaching loyalty, attended by 511
- Ten Schools, taught by Natives and Registered Foreigners, who sympathise with the rebellion, attended by 188

25 Ibid., p. 7. The amount named here appeared in the printed text, but it had been altered to $102,327.55 in the copy examined. Whether the alteration was made or authorized by the author of the report or by others is not indicated.

Four schools of the Roman Catholic Priesthood, who made no return, attended by 1,104 scholars.

The report on private schools indicates that each teacher was questioned at length about his loyalty and the possible effects of his political sentiments upon his manner of teaching. While most teachers of the private schools gave entirely satisfactory answers or evaded the questions by claiming to allow nothing of a political nature to influence their teaching, there were some who refused to answer the questions. Some gave answers which met the disapproval of the investigators. For example, opposite the name of Miss E. J. Carrell was written, "All the remaining answers are mere impertinent evasions, unworthy of a lady of her pretensions." It was recorded that C. H. Babad, teacher of a school in the Third District, "behaved insolently to the Commissioners" and that he was thereupon reported to the proper military official.

A report submitted by B. Rush Plumley, Chairman of the Board of Education for Freedmen, Department of the Gulf, was included as a part of MacNair's report. Plumley's report indicates that there was no attempt at that time to have Negro children and white children attend the same schools. He reported great progress in the education of the freedmen. The number of schools for freedmen had increased from eight in April to seventy-eight in October, 1864. In those schools there were 125 teachers and more than eight thousand pupils. Plumley reported that evening schools for adult freedmen were being organized and that, within two months, sixty "sunday-schools for all classes of freedmen" were to be added. He further

27 Ibid., data taken from an unnumbered page found between p. 34 and p. 35.
28 loc. cit.
reported that schools for freedmen were no longer an experiment but a "decided success." He wrote, "The children are docile and industrious. They evince a quickness of apprehension and a general capacity for acquiring knowledge that is surprising." Most of the teachers were southern women and they were said to give evidence of "utmost zeal and courage in their occupation." There was mention, however, of occasional rebel raids on the schools.

Table III is a reproduction, in part, of the Report on Schools for Freedmen, Department of the Gulf, for the month of September. The table indicates that the education of Negroes was undertaken throughout the area of Louisiana under Federal control. The report shows that the aim was to educate the Negroes in schools separate from those already established for white children.

Summary. Before the end of the war civil government was re-established in that part of Louisiana occupied by the Federal forces. The public schools of New Orleans, after reorganization under the direction of General Butler, were continued in operation very much as in previous years. The schools of the rural parishes were, for the most part, closed. Schools for Negroes were established throughout the area under Federal control.

II. LUSHER'S RETURN TO NEW ORLEANS AND ELECTION AS STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Return to New Orleans. Lusher returned to New Orleans July 5, 1865. Upon reaching his office in the Custom House which he had left hastily more than three years before, he discovered that his private library,

---

29 Ibid., p. 35.
30 Ibid., p. 39.
including a law library and what he called a "Standard Library," his drawing instruments, and several designs had been removed. He considered "peculative Federal Officers" responsible for the theft of everything taken from his office. Sixty odd volumes from his library were subsequently returned by Mr. Magnitsky, a Prussian by birth, who had been a non-commissioned officer in the Union army.

On the evening of July 6, Lusher attended the commencement exercises at the Normal School where he was greatly displeased by what he saw. His description of the program is given below:

Instead of young ladies, 17 or 18 years of age, already well educated, who were wont to attend the sessions of the dignified State Normal School, of ante-bellum years, this citizen beheld, on the platform, a score of imperfectly educated young girls, of 14 or 15 years of age, who, instead of reading well written accounts of their actual experience as occasional Teachers in the public schools, and of manifesting their accurate knowledge of all the branches to be taught in the schools, and also of ancient and modern history, could do nothing but sing songs, the tedium of which was varied by the reading of one very sensible and suggestive essay by a young man, 18 or 20 years of age.32

At the conclusion of the program which was presented in the Mechanics Institute Building on Dryades Street and to which the public had been invited, one of the teachers on the platform invited the members of the audience to remain and dance with the young ladies. Lusher wrote that in the audience were "quite a number of white ladies, but a great number of blue coats, mulattoes, and Blacks." The whole affair was distasteful to him and he left the place immediately. A later comment of Lusher on the


The number of books returned was given as sixty-three in one of the sources cited and as sixty-four in the other.
incident was, "Rejoiced, next morning to learn that the degraded and desecrated State Normal School had been closed forever."

It has not been learned just when Mrs. Lusher and John Robert returned to New Orleans. However, the family was re-united and a residence was established at 454 St. Charles Street in time for Lusher to be listed in the city directory of 1866.

In September, 1865, with William O. Rogers, formerly Superintendent of Schools in the Second Municipality, as an assistant, Lusher opened a school for boys in the basement of Trinity Church on Jackson Street. He explained later that he opened the school ex necessitate. The school established then, variously described as a "Commercial and Classical Academy," a "Select Grammar and High School for Boys," a "Commercial and Classical Institute," and "Coliseum Academy," was maintained by Lusher and provided a substantial part of his personal income until 1882 when the school was abandoned and an academy for young ladies was instituted in its stead. During the time the school was in operation its location was changed several times, to the basement of the Coliseum Place Baptist Church, to 247 Tivoli Circle (Lee Circle), and to 253 St. Charles Street. Lusher

33 Ibid., January, 1889, p. 12.
36 Advertisement in the New Orleans Crescent, September 1, 1867.
Advertisement in the Daily Picayune, New Orleans, July 11, 1869.
Advertisement in the Daily Picayune, New Orleans, December 8, 1870.
Advertisement in the Times-Democrat, New Orleans, September 8, 1882.
wrote later that about twenty-five hundred young men were educated in
the school and that many of them became doctors of medicine, attorneys-
at-law, and bookkeepers or clerks in business houses of the city.
Reference is made to Lusher's private school from time to time in the
pages that follow.

In October, 1865, Lusher declined an offer of the superintendency
of the public schools of New Orleans; he preferred to continue his work
of instruction. Upon Lusher's recommendation, Rogers was chosen for the
39 office.

Election in 1865. At the conclusion of the war, steps were taken
within a relatively short time to begin the restoration of normal con­
ditions in the State. Although there had been much destruction of property
along the Mississippi and Red Rivers, many parts of the State had not
suffered such loss. However, some of the people were near destitution
since there had been interference with their normal manner of earning a
livelihood. The roads, railroads, canals, and levees were in bad condition
everywhere because their maintenance had been neglected. Such, briefly,
were the conditions when, immediately after the end of the war, the courts
and the State Government, already established in and around New Orleans,
40 extended their jurisdiction throughout the State. In Washington,
President Johnson gave his approval by allowing the established government
to continue in the State. Under the terms of Johnson's proclamation of
May 29, 1865, most of the returning Confederate soldiers were permitted to

38 Robert W. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 6.
40 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 145.
take part in the government.

It was provided by the Constitution of 1864 that, with the restoration of peace, there should be an election for State offices. Governor Wells issued a proclamation setting November 6, 1865, as the date for the election. Two parties, designating themselves as the "Conservative Union" and the "National Democratic" parties, placed the names of their candidates before the electorate. Although there were many who wished to have ex-Governor Allen return to the State and become a candidate, it was not thought best by the more conservative leaders to elect as Governor someone who had taken an active part in the affairs of the Confederacy. The name of J. Madison Wells appeared at the head of both tickets and he was elected along with all of the candidates on the National Democratic ticket. Lusher was the successful candidate for the office of State Superintendent of Public Education.

In that election, it should be noted, the Democrats were successful in placing men of their choice in every state office. Wells, however, was their second choice for Governor; many would have preferred Allen. The Democrats won a majority in the Legislature which was elected at that same time. Conditions in Louisiana near the end of 1865 seemed hopeful; it was to be nearly two years before the State came under the control of "ignorant negroes and unscrupulous adventurers."

---

41Ibid., p. 146.
42Alcee Fortier, op. cit., p. 72.
44Henry E. Chambers, op. cit., p. 661.
45Alcee Fortier, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
The course of political affairs in Louisiana and in Washington, leading up to the period called "Congressional Reconstruction," is of interest and brief reference is made to those matters as the occasion demands.

III. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, 1865 TO 1868

Lusher's official activities. Lusher assumed his duties as State Superintendent of Public Education on December 5, 1865, and within two months he made his first official report to the Legislature. He reported that "with a view of ascertaining to what extent the school system has heretofore succeeded, and where and why its success has been questionable in the country parishes," he had examined the reports on public schools submitted to the office of the State Superintendent from the parishes from 1847 to 1861. His conclusion was that the system had been but little appreciated along the Mississippi River and other streams since a small proportion of the children in those areas had been taught, and they in schools having short or variable terms. His examination showed, however, that in Northern and Eastern Louisiana, in the cities, and in the parishes nearer New Orleans, the schools had been in better condition. The State's appropriation had been supplemented in many places by local contributions. In those areas he reported that attendance had been "respectable," that school sessions had been as long as available funds would allow, and that cost of instructing the children had been "moderate."

He called the attention of the legislators to school conditions in the city of New Orleans where the school funds were greatly increased by local

---

appropriations and where there were good school buildings with every needed facility and four active superintendents with efficient teachers in charge of the schools. Lusher reminded the legislators that even in New Orleans the public schools enrolled only about half of the children of school age. He pointed out that conditions in the rural sections could not be expected to be nearly so good as in New Orleans, giving as reasons the "imperfectly provided school huts . . . several miles from the residences of the majority of the children," "Teachers often utterly incompetent," and "Directors . . . almost universally neglectful of the sacred interests entrusted to their guardianship." He maintained that where free schools had failed, their failure could be attributed to defects in the mode of administration or to the sparseness of the population that seemed to make schools impracticable in some areas. A part of Lusher's conclusion concerning the free schools in the rural areas was:

From the imperfect success of the Free School system in the past, however, it is not legitimate to argue the uselessness of such a system, nor to predict a similar failure in the future. We should rather seek to remedy the defects in existing legislation, and, at this critical juncture in the history of the State, make cautious and persistent efforts to advance the cause of popular education. 17

From the records left in the office by his predecessor, Lusher compiled and presented a statistical report. Table A of the report was described as a "Condensed Statement of the Condition of the Free Public Schools, during 1865, showing (as fully as reported by local officers) the number of Districts, Schools, Scholars taught, and Teachers; the Term of Schooling; the Amount paid Teachers and that Expended for Incidentals; the

17 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
Funds supplied by the State, and by Cities or Parishes; Balances on hand, and Names of Depositaries of School Moneys, Etc.\(^{48}\) Data pertaining to schools in eleven parishes and in the cities of Carrollton, Jefferson, and New Orleans, were included in the tabulation. For each parish, the number of schools, how long the schools had been in operation during the year, the number of children taught, the number of teachers employed, and the amount paid to the teachers were shown. The average cost per pupil was calculated for each parish and incidental expenditures were shown under such headings as rent, cost of books, and Treasurer's pay. For every parish the amount apportioned from the State Treasury was shown with the date on which funds were paid to the parish and with the name of the person in the parish by whom the funds were received. By publishing that information Lusher made it possible to hold someone in each parish responsible for the proper use of school funds received from the State Treasury. Examination of the data reveals that a few rather poorly paid teachers were reported as having taught for several months during the year in the rural parishes that had been under Federal control and in which schools had been maintained. In New Orleans, $185,735.90 had been paid to teachers and $49,669.62 had been the total of other school expenditures. The city had received appropriations amounting to $94,630.42 from the State Treasury.

From the records left by Superintendent MacNair, Lusher compiled a tabular report on the apportionment of school funds during the previous year. The report showed that in 1864 a total of $186,096.51 was divided

\(^{48}\)Ibid., pp. 14-15.

\(^{49}\)Loc. cit.
among the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard. A note was added to the effect that the apportionment to those parishes was made by the Governor’s authority, given January 6, 1864, and that the apportionment was made only to the parishes in which such funds had been collected.

A third table showed that in 1864 and 1865 a total of $4,852.50 was paid from school funds by executive order to the eight rural parishes of Ascension, Assumption, Iberville, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, and Terrebonne. 50

In a fourth table Lusher included every parish in the State, and he gave for each, among other data, the number of white children between six and sixteen years of age, according to the last enumeration, and the amount sent to the parish from the current school fund during 1865. The total number of children in the State was shown as 103,213 and a total of $142,490.90 was reported as having been paid from the State’s funds for their education in 1865. Of that amount, as indicated elsewhere, $94,630.42 had been apportioned to the city of New Orleans. The relatively small amount of $18,292.20 had been sent to those parishes that had been a part of Confederate Louisiana and the balance, found to have been $29,568.28, had been sent to cities other than New Orleans and to the parishes that had been under Federal control. In justice, it should be pointed out that no apportionment had been made to the parishes comprised in Confederate Louisiana until December when Lusher became Superintendent. The amount sent represented the apportionment for the last quarter of 1865.

50 Ibid., p. 24.
51 Loc. cit.
52 Ibid., pp. 26-27.
No data pertaining to schools in those parishes were furnished.

The report was concluded with a table in which a comparison was made of the apportionment that had been made in 1861 and that which it would be possible to make in January, 1866. The table showed that $519,545.36 had been sent to the cities and parishes of the State in 1861 and that the apportionment for January, 1866, "at 40c. per child, on Enumeration of 1863 (or 1)," would amount to $41,183.60, a sum that Lusher doubtless intended to show as very small in relation to the magnitude of the educational needs of the State.

In the text of his report, Lusher made some specific and some general recommendations to the Legislature, none of which was honored by enactment into law at that time. With respect to the organization and supervision of the schools, he recommended that directors in the parishes be authorized to open schools and employ teachers and that they be required by law to examine the schools at least once a month and to report on their condition directly to the State Superintendent every quarter.

Some passages from the concluding section are presented below:

The State Superintendent cannot close this report without respectfully urging upon the General Assembly the absolute necessity of maintaining our Public School system. So many considerations of vast import to the highest interests of the State, and so many influences affecting alike the moral and intellectual welfare of her citizens, are involved in this, that the encouragement of popular education would seem to be the simplest expression of public duty, at this crisis in our history....

It is now, when five years have passed away— with almost a total suspension of the Public Schools— that a vigorous effort should be made to render them more successful in the

---

future than they have been in the past. The times are propitious for this. The poverty of our citizens and the neglect of their children for the last four years, both plead equally for some decisive action in favor of public education...\textsuperscript{55}

After maintaining that public education could prove an effective means of restoring happiness and prosperity to the people and to the communities of the State and that the State alone had the authority to put an effective educational system into operation, Lusher concluded the text of his report with this paragraph:

The State Superintendent, therefore, respectfully submits that the Schools should be at once re-established and put into active operation, wherever desired, even should the means of the State not allow, for the present, more than one School in each parish. Place these Schools under experienced and painstaking teachers, who will compel respect for the high functions with which they are entrusted; make their advantages so conspicuous that detraction itself shall be silent; and there may yet spring from the wrecks of the late war a great network of Public Schools, embracing, practically as well as theoretically, every portion of the State - diffusing the benign light of knowledge in every hamlet and homestead - and crowning her coming years with a generation of reverent children, owing their redemption from the blight of ignorance to that Commonwealth which, in a season of doubt and embarrassment, was far-sighted enough to recognize their claims upon her affection and her care.\textsuperscript{56}

Circular letters issued by Lusher during the first year of his superintendency indicate the zeal and persistence with which he sought to enlist the interest and active support of all who had any duty in connection with school affairs. It should be noted that he had no funds for travel and his best means of contact was through letters and circulars.

A letter was sent to the Police Juries of the respective parishes

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 10, 12.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., pp. 12-13.
on March 24, 1866, in which Lusher called attention to specific things
which the Police Jury of any parish might do toward establishment of a
system of schools in the parish, under the provisions of a legislative
act of 1855 that was still in force. Lusher recommended that the parish
be divided anew into school districts, and that in the division, considera-
tion be given to the convenience of the white children who might attend
the schools. He pointed out that there should be a Board of Examiners in
each parish composed of "three or five competent citizens...to inquire into
the moral and social antecedents, and to test the scholastic qualifications
of persons applying for teachershps...." In that connection, Lusher
volunteered that he would send "some approved work on the Theory and
Practice of Teaching" to any young person desiring to prepare for service
as a teacher. Lusher reminded the Police Jurors that in any parish in
which Directors for the public schools had not been elected in October,
1865, the President of the Police Jury had authority to appoint three
school Directors for each district. In the paragraph pertaining to effect-
ing the necessary organization for opening a school in a district, Lusher
requested that popular subscriptions be solicited and that the money be
deposited, when collected, with the Treasurer of the Parish, to the end
that it might be possible to keep a school open for a reasonably long term.
If that were not done, Lusher recommended that the apportionment from the
State's school fund for any district be allowed to accumulate until it
should be sufficient to "justify the employment of a competent teacher for

57 Acts Passed by the Second Legislature of the State of
Louisiana, at its Second Session, Baton Rouge, January 15, 1855 (New
Orleans: Emile La Sere, State Printer, 1855), p. 422.
He informed the Police Jurors that, under provisions of the laws of the State, they had the power to restrain School Directors from employing any teacher who did not have a certificate of fitness from the Board of Examiners, and he recommended that such certificates be required. Lusher asked that in each parish the Chairman of the Boards of School Directors of the respective districts confer with the members of the Board of Examiners "in reference to the condition and prospects of all the Schools in the parish" and that they "communicate the results of their conference to the State Superintendent...." The recommendation was made that the expense assumed by any Board of Directors in the operation of a school should not exceed the amount of funds subject to their control. Lusher suggested further that the course of instruction in the schools should "embrace Spelling, Reading, Writing, practical Arithmetic, English Grammar, Composition and Declamation; the Geography and History of the American States, and such outlines of Natural Science as shall be suited to the age and aptitude of the scholars."

Information concerning the school lands was asked for. Lusher made a special request that the Police Jury learn which sections had been sold or leased, what had been done with the proceeds, and what had best be done with the remaining lands. Finally, the President of each Police Jury was asked to acknowledge receipt of the letter and every juror was asked for suggestions for the improvement of the school system.

Lusher also sent to the Police Juries of the parishes an announcement of the provision made by Act No. 63 of the Legislature of 1866 by which

---

one young man from each parish might become a beneficiary cadet at the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning. He set forth briefly the conditions to be met and asked that each Police Jury appoint a suitable young man.

Lemher sent a circular letter in May and again in December, 1866, to the District Attorneys, inquiring, as he was required by law to do, into the condition of the sections of land that had been given for support of schools. He asked that he be advised of the procedure he should follow in order to recover any school lands that were illegally held and to collect "any claims originating in the sale of school lands, which may be in arrears." He also asked for suggestions for the improvement of the school system in the respective judicial districts.

Assessors in the parishes were asked, while assessing the property, to ascertain the number of children of school age who had not attended any private school within that year and for whom provision should be made in the public schools. Also, the Assessors were asked, because of their intimate knowledge of the parishes, to give suggestions as to the most appropriate locations for schools. The Assessors were asked further to determine whether "any competent and discreet young men, or any educated ladies of the parish" were willing to undertake the task of teaching. Each Assessor was requested to give the information asked for to the

---


60 Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, 1866, op. cit., p. 15.


President of the Police Jury in his parish and to send a copy to Lusher.

Lusher informed the Sheriffs of all the parishes of the provisions of an act approved February 19, 1866, "for the relief of the Tax payers of the State." The act provided that taxes for the years 1860 to 1864, inclusive, might be suspended until 1868 but that any person desiring to do so might at that time pay taxes for any or all of those years. Since the taxes could be paid in currency that was depreciated in value, and since this opportunity might not be available later, Lusher reminded the Sheriffs that it was to the interest of anyone who had funds to pay his taxes before 1868. Lusher asked that each Sheriff, while collecting the taxes for 1865 which were then due, solicit and urge payment of that portion of the suspended taxes that was dedicated to the schools. He estimated that the amount of the "mill and poll taxes" collected in 1866 for the previous year, would not be great enough to maintain more than one or two schools in each parish. Additional money was needed for the schools. One paragraph from his letter of July 2, 1866, addressed to each Sheriff of the State, is shown below:

You are aware, sir, that for forty years past, Louisiana has made persistent efforts through legislative enactments to advance the cause of education, and that during the last twelve to fifteen years, she has raised by taxation alone a half million of dollars per annum, for the support of free public schools. She has, nevertheless, been reproached by Radical politicians, with having neglected the education and enlightenment of her poorer citizens! It is trusted that her people will no

---

53 Ibid., p. 16.

64 Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the First Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 22, 1866, op. cit., p. 44.
longer tolerate this foul calumny; but that now, when the integrity of the State is imperilled by faction, and the dignity of her citizens is obscured by vindictive legislation, they will, with one acclaim, vindicate the honor and supremacy of the Caucasian race; and to this end will cheerfully make such contributions to the educational fund as will enable your parochial authorities and local directors to train and improve every white child in the parish.65

In July, 1866, Lusher addressed another circular letter to the Police Juries, with copies of an address which he wished to have read in a meeting of each before September 15 when School Directors were to be elected. It was imperative that boundaries of the school districts should be fixed before that time. Lusher urged that the number of districts be reduced and that each new district be made to include a town or village where it would be possible to assemble a sufficient number of children to make the operation of a school economical. A sentence from the concluding paragraph of the address shows the part which Lusher thought education should play in the material progress of the State. He wrote:

It is hardly necessary, gentlemen, to say to you, that a liberal education is indispensable to every white youth in our State; that, without it, the agricultural and industrial pursuits of our people cannot keep pace with the march of improvement in other States of the Mississippi Valley, nor the rich material resources of Louisiana be developed to the advantage of the rightful owners of her soil....66

In November Lusher sent a circular letter to all School Directors in the State, making an urgent appeal for the establishment and operation

65Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, 1866, op. cit., pp. 17-18. It is worthy of note that Lusher made reference to "Radical politicians" and to the "honor and supremacy of the Caucasian race." One was a term that was to be much used in discussions of political affairs in Louisiana; the other represented an ideal that Lusher cherished, one that was to determine his course of action in the years that lay ahead.

66Ibid., pp. 18-22.
of schools in all the districts. Money from the State's school fund was not sufficient to maintain schools everywhere they were needed. Lusher believed that the people should provide by local effort, either by taxation or by subscription, a substantial part of the money for the maintenance of schools. A concluding paragraph, taken from the letter, is indicative of the manner in which Lusher attempted to arouse the people of the State to an awareness of their duty and responsibility with regard to the education of their children. The paragraph follows:

It is proper, gentlemen, that I should add that it is only by parochial or municipal appropriations, in addition to the State apportionment, that even so dense communities as New Orleans, Jefferson, Carrollton, Algiers, and other settlements in the vicinity have, under zealous Directors, been able to maintain free schools that are now the pride of their people; that in no Commonwealth whatever has any general free school system been properly maintained without liberal contributions from the community desiring its benefits, and that no system can effect the training of our children to that degree of moral and mental excellence which is now demanded by the circumstances of our State, without constant vigilance and unselfish zeal on the part of the directors and teachers in charge of it.67

From the above it is clear that Lusher did everything in his power to promote the interests of education in Louisiana. Some of the accomplishments during the year, as shown in the official report submitted to the Legislature on January 23, 1867, are worthy of note.

The sources of the State’s funds for current operation of the schools were a property tax of one mill and the poll tax. An act of March, 1866, appropriated "For the support of free public schools, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, or so much as may be raised from the mill and poll tax." The school law of 1855 which provided the property


The report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the


Act passed by the second legislature of the State of Connecticut

pursuant to which were to be distributed gratuitously by the

recommendation, the Legislature appropriated the thousand dollars for the

and that they be distributed in all of the schools. Postpone the

of Spencer, Mr. Light, Senator, was purchased at the expense of the State

presentation of Southern school books". Teacher and recommended that copies

an estimate of what will be the writing and

another matter that engaged the members' attention in 1866-1867.

of schools in their parishes.

1867. Nearly all of the assessors reported the number of white children

enrolled and estimate available for distribution from the State's school fund in

collection of the tax, there would be $24,800 or nearly $2.50 per

teacher to estimate that, after the payment of all necessary fees for the

the assessors of the various parishes furnished, dated which enabled

$x1.62 per white child of school age.

appropriation $167,216.96 among the parishes in 1866. That amount represented

in accordance with the proportions of the law of 1855 that number

bequeath to the whole number of white children in the State. It was

in the proportion which the number of white children in each parish

and the school fund should be made quarterly, sooner the different parishes,

the same provided, among other things, that appropriation of said
The books were purchased and were sent to the parishes, evidently according to a plan somewhat similar to that followed in the apportionment of school funds. From the price designated in the act authorizing the purchase of the books and from the total number distributed before the compilation of the report, it may be ascertained that during the year Lusher distributed books to the value of $1,857.10 from the appropriation of two thousand dollars.

As completely as could be done on the basis of data furnished him by the Parish Treasurers and School Directors, Lusher reported the condition of the schools in 1866. For each of the parishes from which complete reports were received, he gave the following information: the number of Police Jury wards, the number of school districts, the number of schools operated, the number of pupils attending free schools, and the number of teachers employed; disbursements for teachers' services in 1866, for teachers' service prior to 1866, for Treasurers' commissions, and for incidental expenses; the balance in the Treasurers' hands; and the name of the Parish Treasurer. Totals could not be shown, for no single item in the long list given above was reported by every parish and city in the State. There were ten or more school districts in each of more than half the rural parishes for which the number of districts was given; Livingston Parish comprised thirty-two school districts and Claiborne Parish thirty. Most of the parishes in which the number of schools was reported had less than four public schools. It is evident from the

73 Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the First Session of the Second Legislature, January 22, 1866, op. cit., p. 290.
above that there were many school districts in Louisiana in 1866 without
schools. Of the rural parishes only Terrebonne employed more teachers
than there were schools. Throughout practically the whole State there
was one teacher in each public school. It is noteworthy that in many
parishes there was more money for schools in the hands of the Treasurers
than had been used to operate the schools that year. The money received
had not been sufficient to open a school in every district. Apparently
funds were being held until, with the next year's apportionment, they
would be sufficient to open more schools.

The comprehensiveness of Lusher's educational plans may be judged
from the recommendations he made and the courses of action which he
advocated. For safeguarding the State funds from possible misuse, he
recommended that the funds be "applied exclusively to the compensation
of teachers holding certificates of competency from a Parish Board of
Examiners." Since he had been unsuccessful in securing from District
Attorneys complete data concerning the sections of land dedicated to
schools, Lusher expressed his apprehension that the District School Di-
rectors, although responsible under the law for taking care of such lands
in their districts, might not be familiar even with the location of the
sections. He recommended that the State Superintendent of Public Education
be empowered to secure "diagrams or descriptive plats of such sections in
the respective parishes" from the Register of the State Land Office and to
furnish copies to School Directors, Parish Treasurers, and District
Attorneys. Lusher evidently believed that if the location of the school

75Ibid., pp. 28-29.
lands was made public in a township or school district, there would be a greater degree of certainty that rentals realized from them would be properly used to support the public schools.

On the question of financial support for the public schools, Lusher had some well defined beliefs. He thought the proceeds of the State-wide taxes for support of schools amounted to but approximately a fourth of the amount needed to maintain good schools throughout the State. He did not recommend an increase of the State's school fund, but rather he advocated the levy of local taxes sufficient to provide the revenue needed. He thought local taxation should be left to local initiative. He was confident that where the people of a district contributed a substantial part of the money for the support of a school, they would take an interest sufficient to assure an efficient administration of its affairs. He believed that when the advantages of public education became generally known, popular demand would assure the extension and success of the school system.

Lusher's proposal with regard to the poll tax indicates that he had forebodings of the abuse soon to be made of popular suffrage. He proposed that the poll tax be raised to three dollars and that its collection be enforced. He expressed the belief that "it would probably be cheerfully paid by every citizen interested in the improvement of his race, the good order of society, and the future welfare of the Commonwealth." It is interesting to speculate on how different the course of Louisiana's history might have been during the next decade if Lusher's proposal had been enacted into law and the payment of a poll tax of three dollars a

---

76 Ibid., p. 5.
77 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
year for the support of schools had been made a prerequisite to voting.

The bonds representing the free public school fund were recovered in 1866. They had been delivered by State Treasurer B. L. DePreesse, at Shreveport, to Major General F. G. Herron of the United States Army at the surrender of that town. The State Legislature passed a joint resolution, approved December 15, 1865, requesting the return of these and other securities of the State surrendered at the same time. Lusher recommended to the Legislature that the interest owed by the State on these bonds be paid to the local school authorities in the townships in which it was due, and he asserted that such action would "materially decrease the amount of school taxes required in the respective parishes, in addition to the State fund."

Lusher had no opportunity to make a report to the Legislature for the year 1867. Reconstruction under the Congressional plan had begun, the Constitutional Convention was in session, and the Legislature to be elected was not to convene until June, after the expiration of Lusher's term of office. However, there is evidence that a report was prepared by him. The report submitted by Lusher's successor for the two years, 1867 and 1868, contains statistical data only for the period during which Lusher was in office. The data were arranged in identically the same form which Lusher used in presenting similar data in his report for 1866.


Apportionments of school funds to the parishes for 1867 and for the first quarter of 1868 were shown. Three hundred public schools were in operation in twenty of the parishes and in the cities of Carrollton and New Orleans. The balances in the hands of the Treasurers, since they were smaller than those reported in 1866, indicated that in many districts Lusher's recommendation had been followed. The amounts held to the credit of many districts, though not large enough to justify the operation of schools in 1866, had been increased sufficiently by funds received in 1867 to make possible the operation of the schools.

While Lusher's attention and his official actions were directed toward the extension of a system of free schools for white children throughout Louisiana, the education of the Negroes of the State was being advanced under the direction of the Freedmen's Bureau. Since the question of education for Negroes soon became the basis of bitter controversy in Louisiana and since Lusher figured prominently in some of the disputes growing out of that question, the extension of educational activities among the freedmen and their children is reviewed briefly in the section that follows.

**Extension of educational opportunities to the Negroes.** As has been indicated elsewhere schools for Negroes were established in New Orleans and its vicinity in 1864. That the provision of such schools was continued is indicated by an editorial comment in the New Orleans Times on a report issued in March, 1865, by Major B. Rush Plumley, Chairman of the

---

81 Ibid., pp. 38-40.
Board of Education for Freedmen. It was estimated that twenty thousand Negro children were to be found in the portion of Louisiana then held by Federal forces. According to the report eleven thousand of them were in schools, instructed by 162 teachers of whom 130 were natives of the South. It was reported that one hundred fifty thousand dollars was to be raised by a tax on property, levied by military order, for the support of the schools. This comment was made on the report:

...we beg to suggest that the tone of a considerable part of the document is hardly calculated to win that support for the system for which the Board labors... and a greater degree of moderation, in the expression of opinions, would, we believe, have rendered its influence more potent for beneficial results.  

Somewhat later a letter communicated to the New Orleans Times and published over the signature "X" referred to the schools for Negro children. The writer represented that he had just visited one of the schools in company with two gentlemen from the North, "Hon. John Covode and J. R. Sykler, a special correspondent of the New York Tribune." He commented favorably on the seal of the "colored race" for education, and on the extent of the educational program being carried on for their benefit. The concluding paragraph of the letter follows:

The most remarkable feature of the system pursued is its economy. While in other States the religious and benevolent societies which have essayed the work of educating the blacks, have expended large sums with but meager results, this Board, being under military supervision, is able to so systematize its operations, that the closest financier can find nothing to condemn.

Another visitor from the North, Whitelaw Reid, visited the schools for freedmen in New Orleans in 1865 and wrote an excellent description of

---

62 Editorial in the New Orleans Times, March 18, 1865.
63 Communication in the New Orleans Times, July 1, 1865.
the situation. From his account, it might safely be inferred that
the Negroes had great faith in the benefits that might accrue to them
if they could obtain schooling. According to Reid, the schools were
good or poor, depending chiefly on the aptitude and intelligence of the
teachers in charge. He reported that while some Negro children were
making remarkable progress in learning to read, write, and spell, others
were making very crude attempts to acquire such abilities. The
description of T. K. Conway as "a business-like preacher" is interesting
for Conway was to become Lusher's successor in the office of State
Superintendent of Public Education. Conway at that time was in charge
of the Freedmen's Bureau in New Orleans and Reid met him when visiting a
large Sunday school for Negroes that Conway was conducting.

The tax for support of the schools for Negro children was most
unpopular and repeated efforts were made to have its collection suspended.
Instead of the tax yielding one hundred fifty thousand dollars in 1865 as
it was expected to do, it actually brought in a much smaller amount,
usually estimated at thirty to forty thousand dollars. The people of the
State were so opposed to paying the tax that Lieutenant Governor Albert
Voorhies telegraphed to President Johnson to inform him that there would
be serious disorders if efforts to collect the tax were continued.

84Whitelaw Reid, After the War: A Southern Tour, May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866 (New York: Moore, Wiltzack and Baldwin, 1866), pp. 246-54.
85Ibid., p. 256.
87Aless Fortier, op. cit., p. 75.
Although an order had already been given, November 7, 1865, to stop
collection of the tax, and no serious consequences followed with respect
to the matter at that time, the tax was subsequently imposed again by
order of Major General O. O. Howard, General Superintendent of the
Freedman's Bureau for the United States.

The Louisiana Legislature adopted a joint resolution with regard
to the tax on March 22, 1866, which is shown below. A copy was duly sent
to Washington. The resolution was:

Whereas, We are informed that the Superintendent of the
Freedmen's Bureau for the State of Louisiana is proceeding
to enforce the collection of a tax levied by military order
in the State of Louisiana, to refund moneys expended or
to provide funds to be expended by the Federal authorities
in the education of freedmen in this State; and whereas,
sufficient provision is made by the Constitution and laws
of this State, without any resort to this extraordinary and
oppressive mode of taxation in the present exhausted and
impoverished condition of the country; and whereas, we are
informed that the collecting of this tax on a former occasion
was suspended by General Fullerton, when acting as Super­
intendent of Freedmen for Louisiana, under instructions from
President Johnson, therefore,

Section 1. Be it resolved by the Senate and House of
Representatives of the State of Louisiana, in General
Assembly concurring, That General Howard, General Superintend­
ent of the Freedmen's Bureau for the United States, or in his
default, the President of the United States be respectfully
requested to suspend the further collection of said taxes,
and to procure or make a revocation of the orders upon which
they rest, and that the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives be requested immediately
to communicate this resolution by telegraph to Washington, and
to draw, upon their own warrants, the actual expenses incidental
out of the contingent funds of the two houses.\(^{89}\)

The resolution had the desired effect and the collection of the tax

---


\(^{89}\) *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the First Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 22, 1866, op. cit.*, p. 266.
was suspended within a few days. That resolution, it should be noted, implied that provision was made by the Constitution and laws of Louisiana for the education of Negroes. Such, however, was not the case. As has been shown, Lusher was devoting his efforts and his influence to the task of establishing and operating a system of schools for white children, as he continued to do until he gave up his office.

Although the Freedmen's Bureau was thus deprived of the revenue expected from the tax, its work of education was continued at a total cost estimated at seventeen to twenty thousand dollars per month. When financial difficulties arose an attempt was made to collect tuition fees from those sending children to the schools.

Soon the establishment of schools for Negro children at the expense of the State was advocated. The Negroes wanted to share in the educational benefits to be derived from the expenditure of public funds. An editorial in the New Orleans Crescent contains an excellent and moderate statement of the argument advanced on behalf of the Negroes. The writer referred to an old argument, to the effect that it was unfair to tax the rich to provide education for the poor. He maintained that it was still worse to tax the poorest people of the State (the Negroes) to support an educational system for those more fortunate. It was proposed that provision be made to set aside a sum at least equivalent to the amount of the school tax paid by Negroes who owned property and to use that sum for schools for Negro children. The concluding paragraph of the editorial was:

90 John Cornelius Engelsman, op. cit., p. 84.
91 Loc. cit.
92 Ibid., p. 88.
The colored children will thus have school-houses of their own, and teachers of their own, to the extent of their payments for this purpose. Everyone will at once perceive the propriety and justice of this course, and we hope that no opposition will be offered to the measure.

In his message to the Legislature on January 28, 1867, Governor Wells made reference to schools for Negro children. The portion of his message in which he referred to Lusher's report on public education and in which he proposed that the State aid in educating the Negroes, follows:

...The report of the learned and experienced gentleman who presides over the department of public education, made to the legislature at the last session, contains his views, and presents many valuable suggestions for the extension of the benefits from free schools to the country parishes. I consider his opinion entitled to your consideration. At the same time I trust it will not be deemed out of place that I remind you of the claims of the freedmen and his family to an equal participant in the benefits to be derived from this beneficial system. He contributes to its fund by taxation on his property, and every motive of interest and humanity demands of us that we should elevate his condition by extending to him the blessings of education. Impressed with this truth, I regard it as the most important recommendation I can make to you, that an appropriation be made from the school fund for the establishment of colored schools in all the parishes under the general law.

Many white people of the South were afraid that the Freedmen's Bureau and other agencies working among the Negroes, would prejudice them against the native white people or would exert some undesirable influence over them. For this reason, it has been suggested, the white people wanted the education of the Negroes under their control. That argument is summed up in a quotation given by Henry, "if we do not teach them someone else will, and whoever thus benefits them will win an influence over them which...

---

93 Editorial in the New Orleans Crescent, March 21, 1867.
will control their votes...." It is not known to what extent that fear of the Freedmen's Bureau's influence over the Negroes was prevalent in Louisiana in 1867 but Engelsman gave it as a reason for the desire on the part of some of the white people to include Negro schools in the public school system.

Public schools for Negroes, supported by local taxation, were opened in New Orleans in 1867. In September of that year a special committee recommended to the Board of School Directors of the city that sixteen schools, each with four teachers, should be opened for Negro children. The plans proposed were approved by the Board of Directors.

A special committee to arrange for the opening of the Negro schools called attention in October to the difficulties they encountered. Forty-seven applicants for positions as teachers had been examined and only six had been found qualified. There was also difficulty in securing buildings in which to conduct the schools. In addition, there was the problem of securing money to operate the Negro schools. The Common Council of the city had appropriated seventy thousand dollars to support the Negro schools but the Mayor had vetoed the appropriation. The Mayor was ill and could not be seen about the matter. Ten days later, however, the opening of three schools for Negro children was announced. Others were to be opened soon.


96 John Cornelius Engelsman, op. cit., p. 90.

97 Report in the *New Orleans Crescent*, September 17, 1867.

98 Ibid., October 3, 1867.

99 Ibid., October 13, 1867.
Mention should be made here of the "Franklin Institute" of New Orleans which was, if not the first, at least one of the first schools in Louisiana in which the races were mixed. Mr. Cote opened the school on September 2, 1866, with about fifty children of whom about half were white, the others, Negroes. A committee of the Common Council of the city interviewed Cote the next year and reported on affairs in the school. Cote made no distinction between the races in his school but he gave up his attempt to teach the children of the two races together because "the pupils were always fighting and cursing each other." Cote expressed his opinion that it would be impossible to keep up a school with both Negro and white children in it. The mingling of the races in schools was not a common practice in Louisiana in the winter of 1867-68. It is of significance with regard to Lusher's career as an educator because he was unalterably opposed to having Negro children and white children in the schools together.

Lusher's position with regard to education of the Negroes. Although, as is shown at greater length elsewhere, Lusher favored educating the Negroes and believed that the white people of the State should undertake the task of providing schools for them, his actions while State Superintendent from 1865 to 1868 might be construed to indicate a different attitude on his part. It should be recalled that the Freedmen's Bureau at that time spent approximately the same amount of money for the education of Negroes in Louisiana as did the State for that of the white children.

100 John Cornelius Engelsman, op. cit., p. 90.

101 Editorial in the New Orleans Crescent, September 15, 1867.
The State Legislature to which Governor Wells recommended appropriation of part of the school fund for establishment of Negro schools, took no action in the matter.

While the question of public schools for Negroes engaged the attention of many, Lusher prepared a compilation of the State's laws pertaining to public education which he caused to be published and circulated throughout the State. He explained in the introduction that he had made a "careful, analytical examination" of all the printed statutes passed by the General Assembly for the promotion of a system of public education in conformity to constitutional provisions. For the compilation, Lusher made this claim:

"...Every existing provision of these laws, that is now operative in the State, has been studiously preserved in the text; yet, to avoid confusion and debar misapprehensions, care has also been taken to exclude therefrom all sections, paragraphs, and clauses of the statutes, that have been modified by re-enactments, or repealed expressly, or by necessary implication...."

An examination of the compilation reveals that every legal provision contained in it was for the education of white children. Under the terms of the laws then in force, public schools for Negroes could not be supported by money from the State's public school fund.

Lusher explained later how the situation developed as it did. The Constitution adopted in 1864 under Federal and Republican auspices, authorized the education of all children six to eighteen years of age. The

102 Robert W. Lusher, compiler, Compilation of the Laws of Louisiana, Now in Force, Providing for the Organization and Support of Free Public Schools, and of Normal Departments for the Education of Teachers; together with a Digest of the Powers and Duties of the Parochial and District Officers Charged with the Execution of Those Laws, and an Appendix for Reference by all Friends of Education (New Orleans: Crescent Job Print, 1867), pp. 36.

103 Ibid., p. iii.
Republican Legislature organized in conformity with the provisions of that Constitution, however, "made no provision whatever for education in furtherance of the mandate...." The failure of that Legislature to make legal provisions and appropriations for the education of Negro children was explained by the fact that the Federal Government, through the Freedmen's Bureau, had assumed the task of educating the Negroes, "to the implied exclusion of State or municipal control." Obviously, with the Freedmen's Bureau carrying on its educational activities and even levying and collecting taxes to support schools for Negroes, the Legislature composed chiefly of Democrats, elected in November, 1865, made no appropriations for public schools for Negro children. The only legal provisions for public schools were those enacted before the war, the most comprehensive act being that of 1855. In centering his efforts on the extension of the public school system for white children, Lusher pursued the only course possible under the laws of the State.

**Lusher's refusal to be a candidate for re-election.** The controversies between Congress and President Johnson over policies to be followed in Reconstruction, leading to the establishment of military government over the Southern States as over conquered territory, are not recounted here. The enfranchisement of the Negroes and their exploitation in Louisiana by unscrupulous adventurers are omitted. It is sufficient to note that a Constitutional Convention met late in 1867 and adopted a new Constitution for the State of Louisiana on March 7, 1868.

As has been shown, there was apparently no widespread popular demand for "mixed schools" in Louisiana in 1867. According to Fleming, such

---

Communication in *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, August 18, 1876.
schools were not demanded by the Negroes, were opposed by native white people, but were advocated by the Carpetbaggers. The source of the influence in favor of "mixed schools" in Louisiana is of no great consequence here; the significant fact is that the new Constitution not only authorized such schools but required that all public schools be of that type. The articles making that requirement were as follows:

Article 135. The General Assembly shall establish at least one free public school in every parish throughout the State and shall provide for its support by taxation or otherwise. All children of this State between the ages of six (6) and twenty-one (21) shall be admitted to the public schools or other institutions of learning sustained or established by the State in common without distinction of race, color, or previous condition. There shall be no separate schools or institutions of learning established exclusively for any race by the State of Louisiana.

Article 136. No municipal corporation shall make any rules or regulations contrary to the spirit and intention of article one hundred and thirty-five (135).

The political situation was tense in Louisiana in the winter of 1867-68 while the new Constitution of the State was being drawn up. Under the provisions of an act of Congress, General P. H. Sheridan took command of the military district of which Louisiana was a part on March 19, 1867. Sheridan exercised his authority in a somewhat despotic manner and removed many officials of the State from their offices.

Sheridan was transferred to another post and his place was held by General Joseph A. Mower until the arrival of General W. S. Hancock who took command in New Orleans on November 29, 1867. While awaiting

Hancock's arrival, Mower followed the course set by his predecessor and in November, 1867, removed a considerable number of officials, including Lieutenant Governor Albert Voorhies, a staunch Democrat, and Lusher. He described them as "impediments to reconstruction under the laws of Congress." In December, General Hancock revoked the dismissals and restored most of the officials so removed, Lusher among them, to their offices. Lusher so appreciated this action of General Hancock, giving recognition, as it did, to his right to the office he held, that he wrote a letter to Hancock, concluding with a tribute quoted from Horace:

With the adoption of the Constitution in the Convention, an election was ordered to be held on April 17 and 18, 1868, for its ratification and for choosing officials to establish a new civil government under its provisions.

Lusher was chosen to be the Democratic nominee for re-election but he declined to become a candidate. He would not accept the superintendency of a system of schools in which white children and Negro children would be instructed together. He would not be a candidate for a position in which he would have to enforce the mandates of the new Constitution. The editor of the Picayune commented as follows:

109 loc. cit.
111 The Civil Record of Major General Winfield S. Hancock during his administration of Louisiana and Texas, 1871 (a bulletin in a special collection in the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Data concerning publication are not given.) p.14.
112 Alcee Fortier, op. cit., p. 107.
The Democrats have no candidate for the State office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The nomination of Mr. Lusher in the first instance was very judicious. There is no more worthy citizen; and for this place his qualifications and experience render him the most proper man to be found in the State. The withdrawal of Mr. Lusher, who would in no event be prevailed upon to serve, leaves only two candidates, Mr. J. W. McDonald of the parish of Claiborne, and T. W. Conway....

The writer endorsed McDonald's candidacy and asked support for him, referring to Conway, the Republican nominee, as a Carpetbagger.

Lusher acknowledged the tribute in a letter published the next day. The letter, somewhat involved in its phraseology, defined the stand which Lusher took on the matter, namely, that he would be willing to serve as Superintendent of Public Education so long as the Constitution of 1864 remained in force; that he could not fill the office under the provisions of the new Constitution; that he would not decline any nomination given him by those who were opposed to the ratification of that Constitution. Possibly Lusher entertained the hope that the Constitution might not be ratified. He may have hoped that those who were opposed to the new Constitution would write his name on their ballots and thus re-elect him. If so, his hope was not well founded.

The Republican candidates for State offices were elected by an overwhelming majority and, although they were not to take office until July, Lusher gave up his office five days before the election.

Summary. In this section Lusher has been presented as the State Superintendent of Public Education, doing whatever he could toward the extension of public schools for white children. The development of a

---

114 Editorial in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, April 11, 1868.
115 Communication in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, April 12, 1868.
system of schools for Negroes, supported and administered by the
Freedmen's Bureau independently of State control, has been described
briefly. Lusher's reason for not attempting to establish public schools
for the Negroes at that time was the lack of legal provision for such a
course. Finally, Lusher would not enforce the provision of the Con-
stitution adopted in 1868 requiring that Negro children and white children
be taught in the same schools.

IV. CONCLUSION

Lusher had occasion eight years later to defend his administration
of the public schools of Louisiana from December 5, 1865 to April 13,
1868. His opponents were attempting to discredit his reputation as an
educator by referring to the relatively poor condition of the public
schools while under his direction. A paragraph from his defense of his
earlier record, published when Lusher was again a candidate for the
office of State Superintendent of Public Education, refuting this
criticism, is presented. The evidence indicates that he described the
situation as it was:

It is doubtless known to the people of Louisiana that, during such superintendency, from December 5th, 1865, to
April, 1868, the State was suffering from a general im-
poverishment of all her resources, and that the school
taxes paid into the treasury, in depreciating paper and
in warrants, did not and could not aggregate even two
dollars per child per annum; yet it is equally well known
that vigorous and persistent attempts were made to es-
stablish and sustain free public schools in all the rural
districts or dense settlements of the State, and that in
many of them, there were well conducted and flourishing
schools. 117

117 Communication in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, August 18, 1876.
Historians of education in Louisiana and in the South have commended Lusher's administration of the public schools. For example, Dabney wrote, "When the people got control of their state temporarily... Robert M. Lusher, a man of learning, character, and teaching experience was appointed [sic] superintendent and started to reform the demoralized schools."

In light of the evidence it can be maintained that Lusher accomplished as much as could be accomplished at that time and under the circumstances that prevailed. While there was little material progress, Lusher's convincing appeals on behalf of the public schools and his persistent efforts to bring the matter of public education before the people of the State had influence in building up and fostering such sentiment as there was in favor of a system of free public schools for the State.

CHAPTER V

LUSHER DURING RECONSTRUCTION, 1868 TO 1876

I. INTRODUCTION

The period from 1868 to 1876 was one that brought disappointment and frustration to Lusher and many others. From 1868 until 1872 Louisiana was governed by despised public officials who had attained their position by virtue of the votes of the Negroes who looked to them for leadership. For the next term of four years, State officials whose very election was not conceded by many, were maintained in their places by the armed forces of the United States. This period, usually called one of "Reconstruction," was one of extravagant expenditure of public funds and of government without the consent of or regard to a large portion of the population of the State. The period was more disastrous and it left a more lasting imprint upon the social, political, and economic life of the State than did the war which it followed.

The election of 1868. In the election held in April, 1868, the successful candidate for the office of Governor of the State was Henry C. Warmoth, a young man who had demonstrated great ability to influence the Negroes. Oscar J. Dunn, a Negro, was elected Lieutenant Governor.

Thomas W. Conway, who had arrived in the South as a chaplain in the United

States Army and who had remained as an official in the Freedmen's Bureau, was elected State Superintendent of Public Education. Reference has been made to Conway, the "business-like preacher" who was conducting a large Sunday school for Negroes in 1865. After working for a while with the Freedmen's Bureau in New Orleans, Conway had made speeches in the North in which he asserted that only that agency prevented a "condition of anarchy and bloodshed" in the South in which the Negroes would be "murdered by wholesale." This may be taken as an indication of the views of the man who succeeded Lusher in 1868. It is proposed here to review the development of the public schools under the direction of Conway and his successor, William G. Brown, for the purpose of providing a background against which to present Lusher's educational efforts of the period.

II. REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOLS

Thomas W. Conway as Superintendent, 1868 to 1872. According to Conway's first official report as State Superintendent of Public Education, "The year 1868 commenced a new era in the history of Louisiana...." He hailed as an event of tremendous import "the formation and adoption of a State Constitution, recognizing the brotherhood of a race of human beings, long held in bondage of body and mind...." As the Negroes had been freed of the bonds of slavery, Conway proposed to emancipate their minds from the bonds of ignorance. In the text of his report Conway presented materials from reports made by Lusher in previous years, and he interpreted

---

3 Ibid., p. 119.
them to indicate that the old system of public education had been a failure and should be discontinued and that public funds dedicated to schools in the past had been "squandered and misapplied mainly for want of proper and intelligent supervision." Conway maintained that the school system, in order to succeed, should have "a directing and controlling hand." He proposed to furnish the leadership needed. He called attention to the inadequacy of the school fund to meet the requirements of a school system such as he proposed to initiate.

The Legislature of 1869 was amenable to Conway's suggestions. Legal provision was made for a new system of free public schools, open to all, in accordance with "the spirit and intention" of Article No. 135 of the Constitution. The law enacted, Act No. 121 of March 10, 1869, also created a number of desirable positions, a provision that was in accord with the political sentiment prevailing. A State Board of Education was provided to look after the administration of the schools. It was to comprise one member from each Congressional District and two members from the State at large. Each member was to receive a salary of one thousand dollars per year. To assure supervision of the schools, provision was made for six Division Superintendents whose salaries were established at two thousand dollars per year each. Employment of a secretary for the State Superintendent of Public Education was authorized at an annual salary of two thousand dollars. District Boards of School Directors were empowered to levy taxes to the extent of three mills for the financial

5Ibid., p. 19.
support of the schools in their districts. This provision was in
accord with Lusher's views that a substantial part of the money to be
spent in maintaining a school should be raised by local taxation.

Following Lusher's example of two years before, Conway made a
compilation of the educational laws of the State then in force, which he
published and distributed. In the compilation, Act No. 121 which made no
mention of white or Negro children, was presented. Other acts or parts
of acts included were those pertaining to the school lands, to the free
school fund, to normal schools, to the State Seminary of Learning, and
to the free education of indigent young men at Centenary College and the
University of Louisiana.

The school law of 1869 was evidently not satisfactory, for Act No. 6,
passed the next year, further centralized the control of the educational
system in the hands of the State Superintendent and increased the power
to tax the owners of property. The State-wide school tax was increased
from one mill to two mills. The new law provided that the State Board of
Education should consist of the six Division Superintendents and the State
Superintendent. The Division Superintendents were to be nominated by the
State Superintendent and appointed by the Governor, with the consent of
the Senate. The State Board of Education was empowered to appoint Parish
Boards of School Directors who, in turn, were to appoint District Boards.
The duties of all were prescribed in detail. Annual salaries of the

---

6 Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana,
at the Second Session of the First Legislature, New Orleans, January 4,

7 Thomas W. Conway, Compilation of the Laws of Louisiana Now in
Force, for the Organization and Support of a System of Public Education
(New Orleans: Printed at the Office of the Daily Republican, 57 St.
Charles Street, 1869), pp. 9-25.
Division Superintendents were increased to twenty-five hundred dollars, and that of the State Superintendent's secretary was increased to three thousand dollars. Conway's annual salary had been increased to five thousand dollars under provisions of Act No. 139 of the previous year.

The provision in Act No. 6 that was probably most objectionable was that pertaining to local taxation within a school district. The "electors" of any school district, "when legally assembled at a district school meeting," were empowered to levy a property tax as high as ten mills for the support of the school in the district. When consideration is given to the influence exerted over the Negro electorate by their Republican preceptors and to the fact that any tax they might impose on the owners of property would be paid largely by the white people, the situation may be well understood. If the majority of the "electors" had been property owners and taxpayers, this provision might have been good.

As for the conduct of the schools, Conway wrote, "Our schools, if they exist at all under the Constitution, must be open, impartially, to all citizens of the State for the education of their children." By extension of the school age from eighteen to twenty-one years and by the


inclusion of the Negroes, the number of educable children was increased from 103,771, the number of white youth in Lusher's enumeration of 1865 and 1866, to 266,543 in 1869. The tax of two mills for the State school fund was inadequate for such an educational program as Conway envisioned; he asked that the State-wide levy be increased to four mills.

Although Conway in his statistical tabulations made no distinction between white and Negro children, there is evidence that the Negroes attended the public schools and that most of the white children attended either private schools or none at all. For example, in a report of Superintendent W. O. Rogers on school attendance in New Orleans, there is found an approximation that twenty-five thousand children were registered in the public schools of the city, that fifteen thousand were attending schools maintained by Church organizations, that five thousand attended private non-sectarian schools, and that twenty thousand attended no school.

Since provision was made in the public schools for the education of Negro children, the Freedman's Bureau discontinued its educational efforts in the State. Forty-three of its school buildings, evidently all that were owned by the Bureau in the State, were given over to the State Superintendent of Public Education in 1870, to be used thereafter under his direction. That action on the part of the officials of the Bureau indicates that the Negroes were taking advantage of the facilities offered by the public schools.

---

12 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
13 Ibid., p. 76.
Although the question of mixed schools continued to be a live issue for several years, Conway reported early in 1872 that it was settled and that its settlement had been attended by "moderation." The principle established in the Constitution, that no child should be excluded from a school because of "race, color, or previous condition," Conway wrote, had been "vindicated with such prudent firmness as to be no longer questioned." It was admitted, however, that as a rule the children, with the consent and approval of their parents, had "chosen to attend schools made up principally of those of their own race."

Conway maintained that in a few schools Negro children were in attendance with white children and that they were treated kindly.

Additional expense in the administration of the schools was authorized in 1872 when, by Act No. 22 of March 5, the annual salary of the Division Superintendent of the Sixth District (New Orleans) was increased to four thousand dollars. The same act provided twenty-five hundred dollars annually for the salary of a secretary and messenger for the same officer.

The report on the condition of the schools for the year 1872, submitted by Conway's successor, gives an indication of the extent to which the State Superintendent of Public Education and the Division Superintendents neglected their duties. Conway's labors had been


16Ibid., pp. 46-47.

"curtailed by a year of almost constant sickness, and afflictions...."

Superintendent E. S. Hewitt of the First Division had been absent from the State for seven months during the year. It was reported that "Hon. Emerson Bentley, Superintendent of the Third Division, has certainly not done himself credit in his report of this division...." Bentley, it was explained, had been involved in a contest over his right to the office; there were "extenuating circumstances." The Superintendent of the Fifth Division had made no report.

William G. Brown as Superintendent, 1872 to 1876. After an election in 1872 and after much disputation over its results, matters which are to be treated at greater length elsewhere, a Negro, William G. Brown, became State Superintendent of Public Education. Brown was one of a group of Republican candidates for State offices whose election was seriously questioned but whose claims were sustained by Federal authority. Brown discovered early in his term of office that there was not enough money in the State's current school fund. After presenting his calculations and advancing a sound argument in favor of education of children at public expense, he proposed a State-wide tax of five mills for education.

Data from Brown's report indicate the condition of Louisiana's public schools in 1873. Of 272,334 children in the State, 57,433 were enrolled in public schools. There were 864 schools, in which 865 men and 611 women were teaching. The sum of $42.50 was reported to be the

---


\[19\] Ibid., pp. 11-12, 18.
average monthly salary of the teachers. A total of $678,473.52 was paid into the State school fund during the year. Among the expenditures for the year were listed one thousand dollars as office rent for the State Superintendent, another thousand for his traveling expenses, and two thousand more for his contingent expenses, all in addition to his annual salary of five thousand dollars. The Division Superintendents, in addition to their salaries, were paid three thousand dollars for contingent expenses.

For the year 1875, according to Brown, the "actual expenses" of operating the schools amounted to $863,391.86, while only $699,665.20 was the amount received for that purpose during the year. Foreseeing a deficit and fearing that funds then provided for his office might be diverted into other channels, Brown addressed a message to the Legislature, March 2, 1875, from which the following is an excerpt:

In my last annual report just submitted to your honorable body, I show that the demand for increased facilities for educating the youth of this State, grows upon us every day, and in vain do we confess our inability to meet these necessities. With every nerve strained to economise our resources, and to restrict exclusively to school purposes every available dollar of school money, I cannot but view with the greatest concern and regret any effort to alienate any portion of the fund...."23


21Loc. cit.

22Ibid., p. 13.

Disposition made of the free school fund. This seems an appropriate place to treat the disposition made of the State's free school fund. Reference has been made elsewhere to constitutional provision in 1845 for a free school fund which, it was hoped, would increase to such proportions that the interest derived from it would defray a large part of the expense of public education in the State. Articles similar to those in the Constitution of 1845 were included in the Constitutions adopted in 1852 and 1868. The school law of 1855 provided that the free school fund should be held as a loan on which the State should pay interest at the rate of six per cent per annum, which interest should be used for the support of the public schools. A section of that act contains the following clause, presented here primarily to show the source of the fund:

Be it further enacted &c., That the proceeds of all lands heretofore granted by the United States to this State for the use or support of schools, except the sixteenth section in the various townships of the States specially reserved by Congress for the use and benefit of the people therein; and of all lands which may hereafter be granted or bequeathed for any other purpose, which hereafter may be disposed of by the State, and ten per cent of the net proceeds of the sales of the public land which have accrued and are to accrue to this State under the Act of Congress...approved September fourth, 1841, and the proceeds of the estates of deceased persons, to which the State has or may become entitled by law, shall be held by the State as a loan and shall be and remain a perpetual fund, to be called the free school fund, on which the State shall pay an annual interest of six per cent....

A legislative enactment directed the Auditor of Public Accounts and the State Treasurer to "determine the amounts due by the State to

---

the Free School Fund and to the Seminary Fund." That same act, No. 182 which was approved March 19, 1857, directed the Governor of the State to issue bonds, payable in forty years, bearing interest at the rate of six per cent, payable semi-annually, the bonds to be held by the State. Other sections of the act provided that the interest on the bonds should be paid out of the general funds of the State, to the Boards of School Directors.

Since school lands had been disposed of and the money used to "pay all claims against the State not otherwise provided for," the State owed the free school fund $529,000 in 1857. In accordance with the provisions of the law of 1857, the State issued 529 bonds, each for one thousand dollars, and the amount on the Treasurer's book was closed. These bonds, with other bonds amounting to $664,500 which had been acquired between 1854 and 1860 and which belonged to the free school fund, were held by the State and interest on them was paid to Boards of School Directors until 1861 or 1862, after which time no further interest was paid. The interest on the bonds, due and payable on the school authorities of the State in 1871, was described by the Auditor of Public Accounts as "a very large sum."

The Auditor reported to the Legislature that ample provision for education was made by laws then in force. He concluded his statement on


26 Report of the Committee of Examiners Appointed to Ascertain the Condition of the State Debt (New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp Street, 1873), pp. 3-4.

the matter with these sentences: "I can not, therefore, see the
necessity of keeping said bonds longer in the treasury as a trust fund.
The interest is annually accumulating, and it only has the effect of
unnecessarily augmenting the public debt."

By Act No. 61, approved May 25, 1872, the Legislature abolished
several funds, including the free school fund, and established in their
stead a special fund described as the "fund for the redemption of the
floating debt of the State, due or created on or before the thirty-first
day of December, eighteen hundred and seventy-one." It was made the duty
of the Auditor of Public Accounts to "ascertain annually the aggregate
amount which would be due the several parishes from the free school fund
if it were retained in the form in which it was prior to the passage of
this act, and to levy and collect a special tax to provide for the pay­
ment of the same to the several parishes when due, the same as if the
free school fund had not been abolished." The bonds previously belong­
ing to the free school fund were sold. The net result of this action
was that the money realized from the sale of the bonds was made available
for the use of the government of the State, and the interest on the bonds
which previously had been paid or payable to the Boards of School Directors
for the support of schools, was thenceforth due to the purchasers of the
bonds. Concerning the payment of the amount that would be due to the
parishes, provided for by the act of which a part is shown above, the

28 loc. cit.

29 Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana,
at the Second Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 1,
1872, op. cit., p. 134.

30 Acts of the Legislature and Amendments to the Constitution of
the State of Louisiana, providing for Funding Obligations of the State by
Exchange for Consolidated Bonds. Also Debt Statement (New Orleans: New
Orleans Stock Exchange, L. Graham and Company, Book Printers, 73 Camp
Street, 1877), data from unnumbered page.
Committee of Examiners Appointed to Ascertain the Condition of the State Debt reported that it was "not an additional burden, because the payment of the principal can never be required, and the interest is to be expended in the education of the children of the State; and the amount, at least, of that interest, would have to be raised by taxation, and expended for that purpose, if the fund did not exist."

The disposition thus made of the free school fund was described in a court decision as an "act of spoliation."

As is shown elsewhere, this free school fund was re-established as an obligation of the State in the Constitution adopted in 1879 but, since the payment of interest due on the fund was made payable from money already provided for the support of schools, it was of no immediate value for the promotion of education.

Attention will be turned here from problems of administration and finance and directed again to the conditions developing as a result of attempts to enforce the constitutional and legal provisions pertaining to the admission of children in the public schools. A presentation of those conditions is essential to an understanding of the course which LaFolber followed as State Agent for the Peabody Education Fund.

The question of "mixed schools." The question of teaching Negro children and white children in the same schools, reported by Conway as no longer an issue in 1872, again attracted attention late in 1874 when a

31 Report of the Committee of Examiners appointed to Ascertain the Condition of the State Debt, op. cit., p. 18.

concerted effort was made to enroll Negroes in the white public schools of New Orleans. Three pupils, two of them mulattoes and one described as "Black," accompanied by their teacher from the grammar school they had attended, presented themselves at the Upper Girls' High School, a school attended by white girls. When the Negroes were asked by the principal, Mrs. M. E. McDonald, to leave and refused to do so, the principal dismissed the Senior class of fifty-three white girls. The girls went to a residence not far away and drew up a resolution in which they set forth, in due form, that they would not accept diplomas from the school unless the Negro girls were excluded. They were careful to represent in the document that their action was taken independently of any teacher in the school, a precaution intended to prevent the discharge of their teachers. Copies of the resolution were taken to the newspapers of the city for publication.

When a delegation of girls arrived with a copy of their resolution at the office of the Republica, they were received by A. E. Adams of that newspaper in a manner which they considered insulting. As a consequence the next day Mr. McDonough "purchased a goodly cowhide," went in search of Adams, and, finding him at the corner of Canal Street and Exchange Alley, "seized him by the collar and cowhided him until he was tired, and then turning him loose, gave him a parting lash...."

The next day about fifteen men met Charles W. Boothby, Superintendent of the Sixth Division Schools, at the corner of Chestnut and Jackson Streets where they "laid violent hands on the person of Mr. Boothby."

---

33 Resolution in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, December 15, 1874
34 News item in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, December 16, 1874.
The Superintendent was taken to the schoolroom where he was made to apologize to the girls and to sign a statement to the effect that he would not allow a similar occurrence in any other school of the city.

Meanwhile thirty young Negroes made application for examination and admission at the Boys' High School. When questioned on the matter, Boothby expressed his belief that the boys would not pass the entrance examination.

A compromise was reached with regard to the boys. The Negro boys were to be satisfied if they could only take the examination; they desired only the opportunity to show that they were competent to enter. If given the examination, they would not insist upon admission into the school. However, five of them went into a classroom where the white boys were and some violence ensued, with the result that the Negroes were sent away.

The next day the high school boys visited a number of schools ordinarily attended by white children, and evicted Negro children from some of them. About thirty white boys visited the Keller School in search of Negroes, but they found none in attendance there. Upon leaving the place, however, they met a crowd of Negro men and an altercation ensued. Soon a large crowd had collected and, according to reliable reports, one Negro died as a result of the excitement. No Negroes were found in the Webster and Jefferson Schools, and those at the St. Philip Street School and at the Lower Girls' High School departed when asked to do so.

---

35 Loc. cit.
36 Loc. cit.
37 News item in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, December 17, 1874.
38 News item in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, December 18, 1874.
These occurrences, summarized very briefly here, were related in detail on the front page of a leading newspaper of the city, under imposing headings. They indicate that white and Negro children rarely attended the same schools.

Further evidence to justify the same conclusion is found in the report of Superintendent E. S. Stoddard of the Second Division for 1874, incorporated in the report of the State Superintendent of Public Education for that year. Among the items given in a summary of the report, Stoddard included these:

- Whole number of children in the division: 28,039
- Number attending public schools: 5,695
- Number attending private schools: 2,301
- Total number attending schools: 7,996
- Number of colored children attending public schools: 4,890
- Number of white children attending with colored children: 47
- Number of white children attending private schools: 2,301

Examination of the data summarized in the report reveals that more than twice as many white children attended private schools as attended the public schools. It is significant that in the Second Division more Negro children than white children attended school. When one considers the persistent attempts on the part of school officials and some teachers to have children of the two races attend schools together, it is surprising that Superintendent Stoddard could report only forty-seven white children as having attended schools with Negro children in a large area of the State during a year.

That there were subsequent attempts to have Negro children enroll in schools with white children is indicated by the following, taken from

---

an editorial in the New Orleans Bulletin:

Frequently heretofore the Bulletin has advised the white citizens of New Orleans to withdraw their children from the public schools....The renewed attempts to mix the races in schools is a virulent partisan scheme, full of cunning malice, intended to cause enmity between our white and colored citizens....The scheme is contrary to the instincts of both races, and is not desired by our sensible colored people....

Summary. During the period considered, the public school system of Louisiana was extended, at an expense considerably in excess of that in previous years, until there were schools in most of the thickly populated places. In the administration and supervision of the system there was extravagance such as characterized other departments of the State's government at that time.

Attempts to instruct white children and Negro children together were made repeatedly but were usually without success. In the cities there were separate schools. Where there were no separate schools, if the Negroes attended school, the white children stayed away. Many white children, especially in the rural sections of the State, attended no school.

III. Lusher's Administration of the Peabody Education Fund in Louisiana

In February, 1868, while the Constitutional Convention was still in session and before he gave up the office of State Superintendent of Public Education, Lusher was authorized to announce that money from the...
Peabody Education Fund might be made available to aid in the support of "well conducted schools that would open their doors to all the children." It was also announced that "substantial aid" might be extended to normal schools or to normal departments in the various colleges that would train young men and women to become teachers. Educators who wished to "avail themselves of the liberality of the trustees" were asked to furnish Lusher with statistics showing the "character, condition and resources of their schools" and with information about the number of children that might be accommodated by them. It was announced further that Dr. Barnas Sears, General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund, would visit Lusher in New Orleans the next month to examine such data as the school people might furnish and to make further arrangements for the distribution of money in Louisiana for the aid of schools. There is evidence that Lusher had been communicating with Sears since May of the previous year and that there was already agreement between them concerning the educational needs of Louisiana. Sears visited Lusher and examined the data assembled for his inspection. Since there was much uncertainty about the possible effects the new Constitution and subsequent legislative enactments might have upon the schools of the State, accompanied by the well grounded fear that the people might be "taxed for the support of schools to which they are unwilling to send their children," Sears proposed two plans to Lusher, the second to be

---

42 Announcement in The New Orleans Crescent, February 16, 1868.

43 Loc. cit.

followed if the first should be found impracticable. Lusher was authorised to use his own discretion, within limits that were prescribed, in distributing seventeen thousand dollars to promote education in Louisiana. Twelve thousand dollars was allowed for free schools for children and five thousand was allowed for normal schools or departments. Lusher's correspondence and his meeting with Sears in March, 1868, marked the beginning of a friendship with Sears which was to last until the latter's death. This was the beginning of Lusher's connection with the Peabody Education Fund with which he was to be identified for fifteen years.

Origin and purpose of the Peabody Education Fund. As one of many philanthropic gifts made by George Peabody in the years following 1852 when he began the distribution of his wealth for benevolent purposes, a gift of one million dollars was made February 7, 1867, to a Board of Trustees to be held in trust by them. The income from it was to be used at their discretion, "for the promotion and encouragement of intellectual, moral, and industrial education among the young of the more destitute portions of the Southern and Southwestern States...." The benefits of the gift were to be "distributed among the entire population, without other distinction than their needs and the opportunities of usefulness to them." Other gifts for the same purpose included one million dollars, given in 1869; bonds of the State of Mississippi to the amount of $1,100,000, which proved of no value; and bonds of the State of Florida amounting to

---

$384,000, which also were found to be worthless. After a conference with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Barnas Sears, President of Brown University, was asked to prepare a written statement of his views on how the proceeds of the fund should be spent. There is reason to believe that Sears was thus influential in shaping the policy that he was to follow when he was chosen to serve the Board of Trustees as General Agent.

The policy that was instituted by Sears, and followed in Louisiana by Lasher, was to give aid to schools that would be operated efficiently. Preference was given to schools located in centers where the attendance would be large and where there was reasonable expectation that the schools would eventually become permanent. Other conditions demanded were that the people of a locality should provide for the support of a school a sum greater than that provided from the proceeds of the Peabody Education Fund and that the school should be free. The purpose was not only to meet an immediate need for a school in any community but to demonstrate the advantages of good schools and to convince the people of their own ability to maintain them. The importance of normal schools for the training of teachers was recognized from the first in the use of the fund. With the establishment of public schools and with the growing realization of the

46 Hoy Taylor, An Interpretation of the Early Administration of the Peabody Education Fund, Contribution to Education Published under the Direction of George Peabody College for Teachers, No. 114 (Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1933), pp. 4-6, 28-29.
47 Ibid., pp. 28-32.
48 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
need for trained teachers to conduct them, an increasingly large part of the proceeds was given to normal schools.

**Aid given for free schools for white children.** With the approval of the General Agent, Lusher extended aid from the Peabody Education Fund to the support of schools for white children. He prepared and circulated an application blank for the use of a committee of citizens of any town or community who wished to apply through him for financial assistance for their school. Items of information for which he asked are listed below:

1st. White population, approximative

2nd. Number of white children, 6 to 16 years: boys; girls;

3rd. Number attending private or public schools: boys; girls;

4th. Number not attending any school: boys; girls;

5th. Number needing aid, or free instruction: boys; girls;

6th. Number, localities, and character of proposed schools, briefly:

7th. Minimum aggregate amount needed for support of such schools, for one year (say 1869)

8th. Amount provided for support thereof, viz:

1st. Estimated annual rental of building furnished $____________

2nd. Estimated annual hire of school furniture $____________

3rd. Amount subscribed for year (aggregate) $____________

4th. Aid Needed $____________

The request was to be signed by a committee of citizens, certifying that the information given was "in all respects correct" and that the money furnished would be used for the purpose for which it was asked.

Lusher requested further that he be furnished a list of the teachers, a list of the textbooks generally used or preferred by them, and a written

---

explanation of the "peculiar circumstances and educational needs" of the people of the community.

Rendering his services without compensation and acting in accordance with the policy upon which he and Sears had agreed, Lusher made allocations of funds to and received reports from schools in ten towns or communities in Louisiana in time to have data concerning them appear in the General Agent's report to the Board of Trustees in January, 1869. Data from that report are presented in Table IV. There was no fixed ratio between the amount of local contributions and the amount allocated from the Peabody Fund. It may safely be inferred that just enough aid was given to make possible the operation of a good school in each place.

Lusher reported that there were thirty-two teachers in the ten schools. Some of the schools included in the first report were opened as early as May, 1868, and others were opened at later dates. There were other schools in operation, for which aid was furnished, but from which reports were not received in time for their inclusion in the report. Examination of a compilation prepared later by Lusher reveals that, in addition to the places shown in Table IV, schools at Homer, Bastrop, Amite,


Data presented here were secured by Ray from an original application blank placed by Lusher in his privately owned copy of the Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund, now in the New Orleans Public Library. The writer has examined the volumes of the Proceedings in that library and has found that the application blank and certain other papers to which Ray referred in 1933 are no longer there.


52 Ibid., p. 136.
Farmerville, Franklin, and Winnfield were in operation in 1868 and
were aided by the Peabody Education Fund.

Lusher and Sears had agreed upon a plan for the distribution of
twelve thousand dollars to schools in eighteen populous places in the
State. That plan, called a "primary plan," was to be followed if
practicable. Lusher was authorised, however, to aid schools in other
localities if those named in the "primary plan" failed to establish schools
which met the requirements. Comparison of the "primary plan" with re­
ports of actual operation of schools in 1868, reveals that schools were
opened in Winnfield, Arcadia, Trinity, Eureka, Franklin, and Covington,
none of which localities was included in the "primary plan." Also, eight
places in which there should have been schools if the "primary plan" for
1868 had been followed, had no schools supported by The Peabody Fund
during that year. Those places were Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Shreveport
Columbia, Harrisonburg, Marksville, Donaldsonville, and Opelousas. As
is shown elsewhere, schools were subsequently established and maintained
by aid of the Peabody Fund in all of those places except Marksville.

In Sears' report to the Trustees, February 16, 1870, twenty towns
and communities were listed for which appropriations were recommended by
Lusher and approval by the General Agent and the Trustees. They are shown,
along with the appropriation recommended and approved for each, in
Table V, which is taken from the report mentioned above.

53 "The Peabody Education Fund in Louisiana," The Louisiana

54 Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund,
Aid from the Peabody Education Fund for free schools in Louisiana reached its highest point in 1870-71, when applications from twenty-eight localities were approved by the General Agent and the Trustees. The places so approved, with the amount of local contributions and the donation for each from the Peabody Education Fund, are listed in Table VI. However, it should be noted that schools were not aided in every locality for which funds were appropriated; aid was extended, at Lusher's discretion, to other schools for which appropriations had not been formally approved by the Board of Trustees. The report made by Sears to the Trustees on February 17, 1871, indicates that authorization was given Lusher to make changes such as are described above. That report contains the following:

LOUISIANA

It has not been practicable to make any equitable arrangement to cooperate with the school authorities of this State. We have consequently continued to act upon the plan pursued in former years, availing ourselves of the voluntary services of Hon. R. M. Lusher, as local agent. The mode of distribution adopted for the present school-year is to give the customary aid to twenty-eight localities, which have been selected according to their importance and influence, and which will contribute their share of the expense....

The local agent has authority to alter the proportions of the donations specified in the list given below, if he see cause; and also to substitute other towns, if any of these shall fail to fulfill their engagements.55

From the fact that Lusher was given the authority described above, and from the additional fact that he did change the proportion and did make substitutions in the list of localities in which schools were given aid, it may be inferred that the data he submitted to Sears represented

his plans at the time of his report. Donations might be discontinued in some instances or begun in others on the basis of information received from the people of the towns.

It should be remembered that hundreds of thousands of dollars were being spent annually by the State for support of public schools. It was dissatisfaction with the public schools in the years immediately following 1868 that caused the white people to be willing to subscribe and pay substantial amounts of money in order to have separate schools for their children. The donations from the Peabody Education Fund were sufficient to extend the length of the school terms from six or seven months to nine or ten months.

The names of some of the schools receiving aid from the Peabody Fund during that period and other data pertaining to them are of interest. For example, in Arcadia the "Peabody Free Institute" was opened in May, 1868, and received donations from the Peabody Education Fund until July, 1872. Enrollment during the period ranged from ninety to 150 pupils. The "Pine Ridge Academy" in Columbia was aided from February, 1869, until July, 1871, and enrolled from one hundred to 180 pupils. The "Free Institute" of Montgomery was aided to the extent of $1,770 between April 1, 1871, and July 1, 1875, and its enrollment during that time was between 125 and 140 pupils. Donations aggregating $3,987 from 1868 to 1872, inclusive, were made to the "Peabody Free School" at Bayou Sara, West Feliciana Parish, where the number of pupils ranged from 150 to 230. The Trenton "Free Institute" in Ouachita Parish, with 112 pupils, was aided to the extent of $560 between October 2, 1871, and July of the next year.

56 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 7.
At Greensburg, St. Helena Parish, in the session of 1872-73, the

donation from the Peabody Education Fund was divided between a school

for white children and another for Negro children. Sixty of each race 57

were reported to be enrolled in the schools.

The number of free schools in the State to which aid was extended

had decreased to sixteen in July, 1873, when Sears made a report to the

Board of Trustees, and to four when another report was made in October, 58

1874. Approval was given for appropriations to four such schools in

October, 1875, but for none during the next two years. The schools did

not give "promise of permanency" and, consequently, appropriations for

their support were discontinued.

During the period treated here Lusher wrote later that "...there

were, in 33 rural Towns, thoroughly educated 9000 white children, who,

freed from moral contamination, were also redeemed from the sway of de-

basin ignorance...."

A recapitulation of expenditures from the Peabody Education Fund

shows that a total of $52,115 was used to aid free schools in Louisiana 61

from 1868 through 1875.


58 Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund,
59 Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund,
1874-1881, Vol. II (Boston: University Press, John Wilson and Son, 1881),
pp. 14-17, 75, 126.
60 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 7.
61 Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund,
Vol. VI (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1916),
unnumbered page.
Objections offered by public school officials. As might be expected, the officials in charge of the State's system of public schools, anxious as they were to have the children of all the people attend school together, looked with disfavor upon Lusher's manner of administering the affairs of the Peabody Board of Trustees in Louisiana. Acting upon a resolution adopted by the State Board of Education, Conway requested in 1870 that the direction of the work of the Board of Trustees in Louisiana be transferred from Lusher to the officials of the State's school system. Sears evidently did not answer that communication. Another copy of the resolution was sent to him, along with a letter from Conway in which were set forth the objections to Lusher and the reasons for desiring a change in the local agency. The reasons advanced and Conway's conclusion were:

First - Mr. Lusher, your present agent, does not co-operate, in any way with the State authorities in the promotion of the work of popular education.
Second - There is good reason to believe that he is greatly opposed to the State authorities, and that he aims to build up a system antagonistic to that of the State.
Third - Some of the teachers aided by him are doing all in their power to break up our public schools, and in some cases circulars have issued from them urging the citizens to oppose the establishment of public schools.
Fourth - Mr. Lusher announces that the schools aided by him are for "white children," thereby involving the trustees of the Peabody fund in the false position of establishing a caste system of education, which I believe, at variance with the declarations put forth by them.
Fifth - Mr. Lusher must necessarily excite widespread opposition because of his prejudiced feelings, his inharmonious conduct toward the public school officers, and his neglect of the educational interests of the colored population of our State. We think the fund for this State can be used by the State Board of Education to far better advantages than if it remains in the hands of Mr. Lusher. Not only would we assist schools attended exclusively or partially by white pupils, without exciting the jealousy of the colored population, but we could render all proper assistance to the latter class without exciting the opposition of any of the white citizens of the State.

You would gain great advantage by having the fund used in perfect harmony with our public school system; it would be far more economical, since our school officers would charge nothing
for any service you would require, and it would secure you
double the results which you can possibly accomplish under
the present auspices. 62

Sears' reply to Conway, dated November 8, 1870, indicates that he
and the Board of Trustees believed circumstances in Louisiana were such
that they justified Lusher's course of action. Sears wrote:

Hon. Thomas F. Conway:

Dear Sir - In reply to your communication of October 23,
I beg leave to say that, in the distribution of our fund, I
should be most happy to co-operate with the State authorities.
But I understand that the State public schools are so
organised that the greater part of the white population are
unwilling to send their children to them, and that, con­
sequently, the benefit of the public money goes in fact
chiefly to the colored children. If there is any feasible
way of removing this inequality, bringing the white people
generally into co-operation with you, the necessity for a
local agency would cease, and we could act in concert with
you.

We, ourselves, raise no questions about mixed schools.
We simply take the fact that the white children do not
generally attend them, without passing any judgment on the
propriety or impropriety of their course. We wish to promote
universal education - to aid whole communities, if possible.
If that can not be, on account of peculiar circumstances,
we must give the preference to those whose education is
neglected. It is well known that we are helping the white
children in Louisiana, as being the more destitute, from the
fact of their unwillingness to attend mixed schools. We
should give the preference to colored children, were they in
like circumstances.

Mr. Lusher has been requested to avoid controversy and
antagonism with the State authorities; and he has assured me
that this is in accordance with his own views and wishes. 63

That these controversies over the administration of the Peabody
Education Fund in Louisiana were of interest to the people of the State is
evidenced by references to them in the newspapers. For example, an

---

62 Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education,
for the year 1870, op. cit., pp. 40-41.
63 Ibid., p. 42.
editorial appeared in the *Daily Picayune* in May, 1872, opposing Conway's efforts to have the money from that source placed under his control. The writer, referring to Conway, mentioned "the infamous character that has been sedulously cultivated by the reverend Superintendent of Public Education," his "lust for power," and his "private avarice." Lusher, it was averred, as local agent, was "discharging the trusts committed to him with honorable fidelity, acting strictly in accordance with instructions, and serving without any remuneration whatsoever." Conway, it was pointed out, "in the annual enjoyment of fully seven thousand dollars derived from his official position, could not view without coveting this paltry patronage confided to another." After an able defense of Lusher's management of the fund, the writer, in his concluding paragraph, described Conway as "a man who hates, and is despised in return, by his race, and whose venem in the end will poison its author and consign him to the ignominy in which he will be held by all honest and right thinking men."

When it became evident that the schools aided in Louisiana by the Peabody Education Fund, were unlikely to receive financial support from the State and when the Board of Trustees ceased their support, the *Republican* published an editorial beginning as follows:

Poor old Dr. Sears is most unfortunate in his administration of the Peabody school fund. And the late worthy old patron of education in the South would have no reason to be satisfied with the selection of his almoner, if he were alive to see how totally he has failed to comprehend the principles of the grant....

The writer continued, maintaining that Peabody had intended to provide for the education of those for whom no provision was made in the

---

system of public schools, that Negroes had then been excluded, and
that it had been Peabody's intent and purpose to provide for the
education of the Negroes.

Lusher made a reference in his diary that day to "The Rad, organ-
pseudo "Republican" in politics and as to education, the pensioned
Apologist, and the willing Organ of wholesale mendacity." The next day,
however, he noted, "The Bulletin, Today, on the Peabody fund, gives the
Lie to the Rad. Organ."

The editor of the Bulletin, in answer to the Republican, referred
in his first sentence to the "ill-natured, senseless attack on the
venerable Dr. Sears, general agent, and on Mr. Peabody's Board of Trustees -
all gentlemen and scholars, who are beyond the reach of Radical malice."
Of the Republican editor it was written that "his asseverations are false
from beginning to end - possibly founded in ignorance, most certainly
dictated by jealousy and malice." A tribute was paid to Lusher in these
words:

The local agent in this State has been too long known
to our people as a conscientious and unselfish friend and
servant of public education to be injured by anything that
the Republican may say, and we do not think that the article
in question is worthy of any notice at his hands....67

Aid given for normal schools and departments. Lusher's interest in
normal schools for the preparation of prospective teachers for their work
has been shown elsewhere. It will be remembered that he was influential
in causing the establishment of the first State Normal School in New
 Orleans and that he took an active part in its management until 1862 when

65 Editorial in The New Orleans Republican, September 14, 1875.
In the fall of 1965, the Pedrick Education Fund was established to provide financial support for the school. The fund was established through a special appeal to the community, and the first year raised $10,000. This money was used to purchase new equipment, pay for teacher salaries, and purchase materials for the school.

The first principal of the school was Mr. Pedrick, who had a strong background in education. He was a retired teacher from the local school district and had been involved in education for over 30 years.

The school was located in a building that had formerly been a warehouse. The building was remodeled to provide classrooms, a library, and a gymnasium.

During the first year, the school had only 50 students, but it was hoped that the school would grow in the future. The school was run by a board of trustees, which consisted of local business leaders and community members.

In the fall of 1966, the school had grown to 100 students, and it was decided to establish a kindergarten program. The kindergarten program was very successful, and it helped to attract more students to the school.

By 1968, the school had grown to 300 students, and it was decided to build a new school building. The new building was completed in 1970 and included a library, a gymnasium, and a science lab.

In the fall of 1975, the school had over 500 students, and it was decided to establish a junior high school. The junior high school was added to the existing elementary school to provide a comprehensive education for all students.

In the fall of 1980, the school had over 1,000 students, and it was decided to add a middle school to the existing junior high school. The middle school was added to provide a more structured education for students in grades 6-8.

In the fall of 1985, the school had over 2,000 students, and it was decided to establish a high school. The high school was added to provide a comprehensive education for all students, from grades 9-12.

In the fall of 1990, the school had over 3,000 students, and it was decided to establish a vocational education program. The program was designed to provide students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

In the fall of 1995, the school had over 4,000 students, and it was decided to establish a college program. The program was designed to provide students with the opportunity to continue their education beyond high school.

In the fall of 2000, the school had over 5,000 students, and it was decided to establish a research institute. The institute was designed to provide students with the opportunity to engage in research and to contribute to the knowledge base of their field.

In the fall of 2005, the school had over 6,000 students, and it was decided to establish a global education program. The program was designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn about the world and to develop the skills they need to succeed in a global economy.

In the fall of 2010, the school had over 7,000 students, and it was decided to establish a community service program. The program was designed to provide students with the opportunity to contribute to their community and to develop the skills they need to succeed in a global society.
in 1868 was five thousand dollars. Of the five thousand dollars, only $2,400 was spent before January 1, 1869. The places in which money was paid to aid normal schools or departments, and the amounts so paid, are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Lebanon</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastrop</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine (2d. session)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the report of the General Agent to the Board of Trustees, February 16, 1870, it was shown that $4,500 had been spent in the support of normal schools or departments in Louisiana during the year just ended. It should be noted that a substantial part of that amount or $2,600 was an unexpended balance from the appropriation of the previous year. The schools or departments receiving that aid were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Department</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans Normal School</td>
<td>$1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine Normal Department</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastrop</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Lebanon</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instruction in normal departments of other institutions was not continued on so great a scale in the years that followed. For example, on June 27, 1872, it was reported that three hundred dollars was the sum approved for "pupils in other Normal Schools." The next year an appropriation of $350 was made for "normal departments in two other institutions." It was shown in Sears' report to the Trustee on

---

October 14, 1874, that $250 had been paid to the Jackson Normal School. 74

The allotment to that school was reduced to $150 the next year when a
normal department at Minden was given two hundred dollars.

Lusher recorded later that he had traveled at his own expense throughout the State persuading heads of schools to organize free normal departments in their respective schools. His list of those so persuaded is shown below:

Dr. Bartholomew Egan, President of Mt. Lebanon college, in Bienville Parish;
Miss Mildred Boyle, Principal of the Minden Female Seminary, in Webster Parish;
Col. Preston, President of Morehouse College at Bastrop, in the Parish of Morehouse;
Revd. T. B. Walton, Principal of the Ouachita Female Academy, at Monroe, in Ouachita Parish;
Revd. G. S. Dod, Principal of the Classical Academy in Plaquemine, Parish of Iberville;
Miss Virginia Z. Catlett, Principal of the East Feliciana Female Collegiate Institute, at Jackson in East Feliciana;
Revd. A. G. Payne, President of the Stillman Female College at Clinton, in East Feliciana. 76

Lusher recorded that in normal departments in those institutions, seventy-two white teachers were "thoroughly trained."

The normal school in New Orleans, called the Peabody Normal Seminary after its reorganization in October, 1870, was given aid from the Peabody Education Fund continuously through 1882. The school was under the direction of a Board of Trustees and, according to all accounts, offered

74 Ibid., p. 425.
75 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 17.
77 Loc. cit.
instruction under competent teachers. Mrs. Kate R. Shaw was the principal until she was succeeded by Lusher in October, 1880. Ulric Bettison, later to become Superintendent of Schools in New Orleans, taught mathematics and the natural sciences until November, 1884, when his connection with the school was terminated. Lusher taught French and Latin in the Peabody Normal Seminary much of the time until he succeeded Mrs. Shaw as principal in 1880. Lusher's interest was eventually centered almost entirely in the school and he continued his attempts to carry on its work for three years after all grants of aid from the Peabody Education Fund were discontinued.

The curriculum of the Senior Class in the school included "the Higher Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, ...Rhetoric, English Literature, Universal History, Criticism, the Art and Science of Teaching, and the French and Latin languages." The school was "organized on the model of the Massachusetts Normal Schools." There was a preparatory department in which "all the English branches" were reviewed. Also, there were model schools, conducted in connection with the normal school, in which the students were "exercised in practical teaching and discipline."

Appropriations from the Peabody Education Fund for the support of the New Orleans Normal School, called the Peabody Normal Seminary after


1870, and for the model school or schools maintained in connection with it, are summarized in Table VII. As has been noted elsewhere, there is evidence that a part of the appropriation made in one year was sometimes held over and expended during the next year. Although the period treated in this chapter ended with the year 1876, the table is extended through 1882 and includes all appropriations made to the school.

Financial aid for the school was continued without interruption throughout the period under consideration. The school was conducted for some years in the building of the high school, as noted above, but in September, 1874, it was located at 247 St. Charles Street, in the same building in which Lusher's Commercial and Classical Academy was housed.

In 1878 the normal school was moved to a large building at 253 St. Charles Street, "opposite the Lee monument." The attendance, which was approximately eighty students throughout the period treated here, decreased greatly when aid from the Peabody Education Fund was discontinued and when students were required to pay tuition.

During the time the school was in operation 430 young ladies were graduated, of whom many became teachers in or near New Orleans. A news item describing the commencement exercises of the Peabody Normal Seminary in 1881 gives an insight into the nature of the school. Reference was made

---

82 Announcement in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, September 18, 1874.
83 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 27, 28, 1876.
84 News item in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, March 21, 1869. Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 16, 1876; September 9, 1882; October 31, 1883.
to its graduates, "going forth from their school life, not in pursuit of selfish pleasure or to let their youthful energies rest in idleness, but as apostles of education, priestesses of civilization, to pay the debt due from present to future generations." Among the topics treated by the young ladies in the course of the graduation program were "Instruction of the Young," "Culture of the True and Beautiful," "Education and Social Life," and "Les Advantages de l'Etude de la Literature." Lusher presided over the exercises, addressed the graduates, and delivered three "Peabody Medals" to outstanding students. A notation in his diary indicates that the program was "very creditable."

This treatment of the normal schools should not be closed without reference to the provision made by Lusher for such a school for Negroes. That school was organized soon after December 12, 1877, the date on which Miss Julia Kendall was chosen to be its principal and a Negro, E. J. Edmunds, was made her assistant. Their monthly salaries were forty and thirty-five dollars, respectively. The school was located at 185 Rampart Street and appropriations aggregating $2,300 were made for its support.

Summary. Through his management of the money appropriated by the Trustees of the Peabody Fund for education in Louisiana, Lusher rendered at least three services to the cause of public education that are worthy of note. First, he was instrumental in having schools established

---

36 Announcement in The New Orleans Democrat, July 8, 1881.

37 Robert W. Lusher, Diary, July 7, 1881.

throughout the State for thousands of white children who otherwise would have attended no school. Second, and probably of greater importance, through the maintenance of those schools he helped to foster sentiment favorable to free public schools and thus the establishment and extension of a system of such schools in later years was facilitated. Third, he contributed to the professional training of hundreds of young people who must have exerted some influence for better schools throughout the period during which they were engaged as teachers in the schools of the State.

IV. LUSHER'S PRIVATE LIFE, 1868 TO 1876

Family and personal affairs. It will be recalled that Lusher was re-united with his wife and son, John Robert, in 1865 and that he resided with his family on St. Charles Street. In 1870 he moved to 180 Jackson Street, where he remained for two years. At the beginning of 1872, according to the diary, Lusher was "housed at corner of Jackson and Constance," a fact that is confirmed by the directory for the year. In March a change of residence was made to 117 Josephine Street. At the time of that removal, Mrs. Lusher was sick and was moved in a carriage with her mother in attendance. Soon after, Lusher wrote as his last entry in the diary for the year:

From this day to the close of this year too busy to note. Augusta, my wife working too hard at home, & engaged in too many active charitable missions in connection with the "Sisters of Mercy" of her holy Church, to give me any hope of her

89. Edwards, Annual Director to the Inhabitants, etc. in the City of New Orleans, for 1870 (New Orleans: Southern Publishing Company, 1870), p. 384.

90. Robert H. Lusher, Diary, January 1, 1872.

recovering strength with health.
Son hearty and bright, and studying to advantage.
R. M. L. busy teaching & acting as agt. P. E. Pd. & in various other capacities. 92

Lusher's fears concerning Mrs. Lusher's health were well founded, 93 for she died on the last day of October that year. At some time before 1875, Lusher's son was sent to St. John's College, Fordham, New York, to attend school and to be near his maternal grandparents who lived there.

During that period the Dimitry family lived in New Orleans and they were very nearly in poverty. From his own earnings, Lusher made occasional gifts of money to Mrs. Dimitry and to her daughters. He made it clear in his diary that such gifts were made out of earnings realized by "teaching young ladies." On the day before Christmas, Lusher sent "a nicely roasted and seasoned turkey" to Mrs. Dimitry.

During the vacation between school terms in 1875, Lusher visited his relatives in Southwest Louisiana, spending several days at Breaux Bridge, Arnaudville, and New Iberia. The next year he made an extended tour, going to New York where he spent several days with his father-in-law. He went from there with his son to Philadelphia for the Centennial Exposition. A few days later he was in Washington, visiting in the home of his sister and hearing the debates in Congress. He visited the office

92 Ibid., March 18, 1872.
93 Ibid., September 8, 1876.
94 Ibid., January 1, 1875.
95 Ibid., 1876, special memorandum, not dated.
96 Ibid., December 24, 1876.
97 Ibid., August 24-28, 1875.
of the Commissioner of Education and was given, for the Peabody Normal Seminary, "bound volumes of all reports." At Emmetsburg, Maryland, he left his son who was to attend St. Mary's College and he enjoyed meeting Professor Ernest Lagarde who had been his assistant in the District Court in New Orleans twenty years before.

Daily life and teaching activities. Lusher's chief source of personal income during this period was his private school. In 1871 the school was moved from the basement of a church where it had been conducted and was established in a building at 247 St. Charles Street. In the school, it was advertised, "all the English branches, the Exact and Natural Sciences, and Modern and Ancient Languages" were "taught with equal care by competent Professors." It was claimed for the school that its French Department was "in charge of a native Parisian, of eminent ability as a teacher." In the notice of the opening of the sixth session, in 1870, it was stated, "Pupils will be fitted for business or for college, at the option of parents."

Lusher taught in his academy from about 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., five days each week from September until June. After dining at about 3:30 p.m. he taught French or Latin in the Peabody Normal Seminary, usually from 4:30 or 5:00 until 6:15 p.m. In addition he occasionally

98 Robert M. Lusher, Notes as to Tour to New York, &c. to see my son & sister in Washington C., July-August, 1876 (in the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana), July 15-August 28, 1876.

99 Advertisement in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, September 6, 1870; September 5, 1871.

100 Ibid., July 11, September 7, 1869.

101 Ibid., December 8, 1870.
gave individual instruction to students on Saturday or in the evening. However, the evenings were usually spent in attending to the affairs of the Peabody Education Fund, in writing, or in reading. There was also the task of keeping records, making reports, and keeping accounts of tuition for the pupils in the academy. On rare occasions he could spare an evening for the opera.

On January 1, 1876, Lusher wrote, "...Providence blesses me with health; but poverty seems imminent...." He did not become so poor, however, that he could not occasionally exercise his generosity. His gifts to Mrs. Dimitry and her daughters have been mentioned elsewhere. Other examples of his generosity were his loan of fifteen dollars to a friend in Bienville Parish who was in poor health and the purchase of five barrels of coal to be delivered to an Italian family at the corner of Liberty and Howard Streets.

Political activities. The political situation in Louisiana in 1872 was most unsettled. There was dissension in the ranks of the Republican Party that caused Governor Armuth and the more liberal leaders of the party to align themselves with the Democrats. As a result of that coalition, candidates for State offices were nominated, with John McEnery heading the ticket as candidate for the office of Governor and with Lusher as the choice for the office of State Superintendent of Public Education. Two radical groups in the Republican Party, led by P. B. S. Pinchback and S. B. Packard, respectively, agreed on candidates. Their nominees were: for Governor, William Pitt Kellogg; for Lieutenant

---

102 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, 1875, 1876.
103 Ibid., special memoranda, 1876.
Governor, C. C. Antoine, a Negro; for Secretary of State, P. G. Deslondes, a Negro; for Auditor, Charles Clinton; for Attorney-General, A. P. Field; and for State Superintendent of Public Education, William G. Brown whose work has been treated elsewhere. It has generally been conceded that the ticket headed by McEnery was given a majority of the votes, but the candidates so elected were not given the opportunity to hold office. There was much discord and disputation over the count of the ballots and over the canvass of the returns of the election. Both groups claimed to have been elected; both attempted to establish a State government. The rival factions appealed to President Grant, McEnery's group asking only that he suspend judgment until all the facts could be laid before him. The Republican group asked that recognition be given their government and that Federal troops be assigned to uphold and protect it. There were investigations, mass meetings, and protests, but all were of no effect. The Republican government was recognised and upheld by military force, under authority of the President.

There is no need to recount in detail the events between the election held in 1872 and that of four years later. It is sufficient to note that Lusher felt indignation almost too intense for expression. He had great contempt for Lieutenant General Sheridan who, on January 4, 1875, again took command of the Department of the Gulf and the next day advocated

Randell Hunt, An Appeal in behalf of Louisiana to the Senate of the United States for the Fulfillment of the Constitutional Guaranty to Her of a Republican Form of Government, as a State in the Union (New Orleans: Clark and Hefelne, Printers, 9 Bank Place, 1874), 26 pp.
This work, of which the title is descriptive, was prepared by Hunt at the request of the "Committee of Seventy Citizens" of which Lusher was a member, and was presented to the Senate as "a true expression of the views and feelings of the people of Louisiana."
that either Congress should pass a bill declaring certain Democratic leaders in Louisiana to be banditti or the President should issue a proclamation to that effect. Lusher's attitude toward the political faction in control of the State's affairs may be judged by this comment:

"...Looked in La. Senate - Hotley group."

Occasionally Lusher wrote his most sincere wishes and desires in the diary. Two notations of that nature, giving insight into his feelings at that time, were:

The old year passing away, in tears at 11 P.M.
May the New usher in Hopes of Prosperity to the people of this downtrodden State and may the blight of Radicalism be removed by united effort.

May Radicalism soon be buried in the Dunghill which generated it and the Democratic Cock be crowing in triumph over it.

Lusher's reaction to the situation was not one of hopeless despair. He was a member of the "Committee of Seventy Citizens" chosen to represent the Democratic cause and to do what could be done to promote the interests of the "de jure government" of which he was a part. As a representative of that Committee, he was chosen to appear before a Congressional Committee, composed of George F. Hoar, William A. Wheeler, William P. Frye, and Samuel S. Marshall. This was the Committee whose investigations resulted in the "Wheeler Adjustment," by which twelve candidates for the State Legislature who had been "counted out" or excluded from their places, were seated in the House of Representatives.

105 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, January 6, 1875.
106 Ibid., March 3, 1875.
107 Ibid., December 31, 1875.
108 Ibid., March 8, 1876.
Lusher was a member of another special committee of the "Committee of Seventy Citizens," chosen to arrange for publication in the Bulletin of the "actual result" of the State election of November 4, 1872, based on "sworn official returns" from the supervisors of the election in the various parishes, "as canvassed and promulgated in January, 1873, by the legal Returning Board." The results, as published, showed 67,853 votes for Lusher and 53,558 for Brown. Other Democratic candidates were shown to have received comparable majorities.

In the summer of 1876 Lusher began to publicize his candidacy for "re-election" as State Superintendent of Public Education. In his announcement he stated the policies which he proposed to follow when in office. He solicited the "moral influence and voluntary support of all honorable citizens of the State" who favored the following policies:

1. Reform and economy in the administration of the public school system.
2. A vigilant protection of the school funds from waste and embezzlement.
3. Equal facilities for the moral and mental instruction of all children in the State, by upright and competent teachers, under the guidance of directors who shall be responsible to the communities in whose behalf they act.
4. Schools, when and where feasible, for the training of apt pupils, of proper age, in a practical knowledge of the useful arts and trades.
5. The prompt and punctual payment of teachers' salaries, and of all other legal and indispensable obligations of school directors.

While Lusher was in Washington in 1876, he learned that he had been chosen as the Democratic nominee for the office which he sought.

---

Lusher, Robert M., *Diary*, January 18, 1875.

Announcement in *The New Orleans Democrat*, July 13, 1876.
Announcement in *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, July 14, 1876.
On August 4, he wrote a letter to Salomon, his father-in-law in New York, informing him of his "determination to promote reform and economy in administration of public schools if elected."

An attack was launched upon Lusher's fitness for the office to which he was nominated. The Republican published an editorial appealing to religious prejudice, containing the following paragraphs:

We hear it repeatedly and positively asserted that Mr. Lusher, Democratic nominee for State Superintendent of Public Education, is not only a Roman Catholic, but a lay disciple of the Jesuit order. We heartily believe in excluding religion from politics, but the peculiar contest that is now going on in regard to public education, and the general anxiety on the subject makes this allegation a significant one, as its frequent discussion indicates. Authentic information from any source on the point raised will be willingly printed.

The Jesuits, as is known, are opposed to the free public school system in vogue in this country, and to destroy it, would consider that "the end justified the means" employed.

Other references to Lusher's religious affiliation and to his alleged unfitness to be the chief educational officer of the State were made in the columns of the Republican from time to time. A letter from Lusher, who was still in Washington, addressed to the people of Louisiana, was published in the Picayune. In that letter, Lusher summarized the objections to his candidacy that had been proposed by the Republican and he answered them one by one. Concerning the rumor that he was a Roman Catholic, he maintained that the question was impertinent and that the free exercise of the Catholic religion should not make one ineligible for

---

112 Robert M. Lusher, Notes as to Tour to New York &c. to see my son & sister in Washington C., op. cit., August 4, 1876.

113 Editorial in The New Orleans Republican, July 30, 1876.

114 Editorials in The New Orleans Republican, August 3, 5, 1876.
public office. He did answer, however, that he was not a member of the
Roman Catholic Church, but that he respected and honored all religious
demonizations. The charge had been made that he favored only a "small
amount of education, confined exclusively to white children." In answer
to that charge, he referred to his work in providing a normal school for
Negroes, aided by the Peabody Education Fund. Other portions of the
letter contained Lusher's defense of his superintendency from 1865 until
1868. He maintained that he had done all in the interest of public
education that could be done at that time and under the circumstances
that prevailed. He concluded with the following paragraph:

The Democratic and Conservative people of the State are
pledged to the support and protection of a liberal public
school system for all children—colored as well as white;
and their sincerity is attested by the honorable character
of their representatives in the Baton Rouge Convention, who
have incorporated such a pledge in their platform. In
assuming this important and responsible mission, their
purpose is to instruct both races in a proper comprehen­sion
of the rights and duties which pertain to a rational enjoy­
ment of "life and liberty," to the end that they may, in
future, labor in harmony for the promotion of their moral
and material welfare, and the peace and prosperity of the
commonwealth. 115

Soon after his return to Louisiana Lusher was as actively engaged in
the political campaign as his other duties would permit. In order for the
Democratic party to win, it was necessary that some support be gained from
the Negro voters. Organization of "Democratic—Conservative Clubs,
composed of Negroes, was encouraged. Campaign rallies were held where
barbecued meat was furnished free of charge. Lusher did not travel

115 Communication in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, August 18, 1876.
116 Fanny Z. Lovell Bons, "Louisiana in the Disputed Election of
1876," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 14:558, October, 1931.
extensively over the state during the campaign, but he contributed
as generously as he could to the campaign fund. He made small donations
to many of the Democratic-Conservative clubs for Negroes and larger
donations to one of them, the "R. M. Lusher Guards."

On the day of the election, November 7, 1876, Lusher cast his ballot
for the Democratic-Conservative candidates and visited several of the
polling places, noting in the diary, "...all quiet & people cheerful &

Precautions were taken by all parties concerned to insure a fair
election. Members of the White League watched the polls. The military
authorities had instructions to see that the returns were canvassed with­
out molestation. Prominent Republican and Democrat from other parts of
the nation were in Louisiana to observe the actions of the Returning
Board in the canvass of the election returns and in the promulgation of
the result.

The Returning Board met on November 16 and effected an organization
with J. Madison Wells as President. The Board went about the performance
of its duties in an arbitrary manner and, it has been said, "changed the
result of the election in Louisiana from a Democratic to a Republican
victory." Lusher wrote in his diary on December 6 that he had been
ruled out by an "infamous" Returning Board, by thirteen thousand votes,
and that embezzlement would continue. However, on December 30, 1876,

---

117 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, special memoranda, 1876.
118 Alcoe Pottier, op. cit., pp. 18-81.
120 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, December 6, 1876.
he was commissioned as State Superintendent of Public Education for Louisiana by John McEnery, noting in the diary, "Cui bono videmus!"

The situation in Louisiana at the end of 1876 was similar to that of four years before. The Democratic candidates, it was claimed, had received a majority of the votes; the Returning Board had declared the Republican candidates victorious; and each faction intended to govern the State. A visiting committee of Democrats reported that the action of the Returning Board had been partial and unfair and that its decision was "entitled to no respect whatever." A Republican committee advised President Grant that the decision of the Returning Board should be respected.

On January 1, 1877, the Republican candidates for the Legislature who had been declared elected by the Returning Board, assembled in the State House with the doors barricaded. The Democratic Legislature met in St. Patrick's Hall. Lusher visited the latter place where, he noted, the people were rejoicing. He must have entertained some doubt about the final outcome that might be expected, for he wrote in the diary, "Nous verrons!"

On January 8, Lusher went, in company with Governor Nicholls and Lieutenant Governor Viltz, to St. Patrick's Hall where a formal inauguration was held. The Democratic-Conservative government soon demonstrated its ability to govern the State. The courts and police stations were brought under its control. Officials applied to Governor Nicholls for their commissions, and taxes were paid into the Democratic-Conservative regime.

---

121 Ibid., December 31, 1876.
122 Alcee Fortier, op. cit., pp. 121-123.
123 Ibid., January 1, 1877.
124 Ibid., January 8, 1877.
Conservative Treasury. The opposing government, existing only in name, appealed in vain to President Grant for recognition and support.

On April 25, 1877, Lusher took possession of the office in the State House (the St. Louis Hotel) reserved for the State Superintendent of Public Education.

V. CONCLUSION

Under the direction of Conway and Brown, the benefits from Louisiana's system of public schools went largely to Negro children. Since it was evident that only Negroes would attend many of the schools and that the education of many white children was neglected, Lusher was concerned chiefly with the task of providing schools which the latter group would attend. As Agent for Louisiana of the Peabody Education Fund, Lusher directed the major part of the money given to Louisiana from that source to the aid of free schools for white children. The schools maintained in part by aid extended to them by the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund were intended not only to provide for children whose education was being neglected, but also to serve as demonstrations to the people of the value of good schools. Much attention and effort were directed toward providing normal schools or departments where professional training might be offered.


The outcome of the presidential election of 1876 depended upon the electoral votes from Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. All of the votes from these States were required to give Rutherford B. Hayes a majority of one vote in the Electoral College. President Grant wished to avoid any trouble or disturbance in Louisiana which would precipitate a congressional investigation and reopen the question of Hayes' election. There is said to have been a secret agreement between representatives of Hayes and Southern Democrats. Democratic claimants to state offices were allowed to establish state governments without Federal interference; they agreed, in return, not to contest the election of President Hayes. The Federal troops did not interfere with the Nicholls government and Hayes ordered their withdrawal on April 20, 1877. Packard was appointed United States Consul-general to Liverpool. Kellogg, having gone to represent Louisiana in the United States Senate, never returned to the State.
to prospective teachers.

Throughout the period treated in this chapter Lusher earned his livelihood by conducting a private academy in New Orleans. That he continued to be an educational leader, respected by the chief men of his party and by the people of the State, is evidenced by his nomination as the Democratic candidate for State Superintendent in 1868, in 1872, and again in 1876. His election bears further evidence to the same fact.
CHAPTER VI

LUSHER AS STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,
1877 TO 1880

Lusher's influence with the executive officers of the State and with the Legislature, was at a high point in the winter of 1876-77 when he again became State Superintendent of Public Education. Throughout his term of office he continued to exert his influence for progressive measures in the interest of popular education. The first part of this chapter is devoted to Lusher's activities as Superintendent. It treats of his assistance and advice in drawing up and securing the passage of legislation affecting education and of his official activities in the organisation and administration of the schools of the State. The second section is a review of the conditions of the schools of the State and of their growth and development during the period. The third section is devoted to the defeat of Lusher's candidacy for re-nomination and re-election under the Constitution of the State that was adopted in 1879. Attention is given to the probable causes of the rejection of his leadership at that time. The fourth section is a study of Lusher's views on education, chiefly of those expressed in his official reports and in the Louisiana Journal of Education which first appeared in May, 1879, and of which journal Lusher was the senior editor.

I. ACTIVITIES OF LUSHER AS SUPERINTENDENT, 1877 TO 1880

Lusher's influence on legislation pertaining to education. Lusher took the oath of office as State Superintendent of Public Education January 13, and occupied his office in the State House April 25. However,
he began writing the draft of a law on public education on January 1, 1877. In the days that followed he communicated frequently with members of the Legislative Committees and with other State officials with reference to the proposed legislation. It is evident that he wrote or helped to write the bills on education that were enacted into laws.

The acts governing education passed in 1877 were intended to correct conditions that had developed during the preceding years. For example, Act No. 6 of the extra session of the Legislature, approved March 20, 1877, made it unlawful for the Tax Collector, the Sheriff, or the Parish Recorder to "hold any office of profit" as an employee of the Police Jury or of the Board of School Directors of a parish.

The law that had been adopted in 1870 for the regulation of the public schools, was repealed by the passage of Act No. 23 on March 26, 1877. The new law placed general control of the public schools in the hands of a State Board of Education which was to consist of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the State Superintendent of Public Education, and two citizens appointed

1Robert M. Lusher, Diary, January 1, 13; April 25, 1877.
2Ibid., January 11-12, 1877.
3Ibid., January 16-18, 22; February 2; March 17, 20, 1877.
This work gives an indication of the extent to which the system of public schools in Louisiana was made a part of the political machine.
by the Governor. The Board was empowered to make regulations for the
government of public schools and for the examination and employment of
teachers. The selection and adoption of textbooks were entrusted to
the Board, with the provision that the selections made should remain un-
changed for four years. The Board was empowered to appoint a Board of
School Directors for each parish of the State. Other provisions of
Act No. 23 are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Reductions were made in the amount of money allowed for adminis-
tration and supervision of the schools: the office of Division Superintend-
ent was abolished; the compensation of the Secretary of the Parish Board
of School Directors was limited to one hundred dollars per year; the
annual expense of maintaining the office of the State Superintendent was
limited to two thousand dollars; and the State Superintendent's annual
allowance for traveling expense was limited to six hundred dollars. A
State-wide tax of two mills for the support of schools was provided and
the manner of apportioning the proceeds of the tax among the parishes was
prescribed. The Police Juries were authorized to levy local taxes not
exceeding two mills for the support of schools. It was made the duty of
the Treasurer of each Parish Board of School Directors to examine the
accounts of his predecessor in office and to ascertain whether school
funds had been misappropriated. The law directed that irregularities
which were found should be reported to the District Attorney and to the
State Board of Education.

The law made provisions concerning the qualifications and duties
of teachers. Examination and certification of teachers were made the
responsibility of school authorities in the parishes. The employment of
any teacher who had not been examined or who did not have a certificate, was made unlawful. Certificates were declared valid for two years and provision was made by which a board of School Directors, after a trial or hearing might revoke a teacher's certificate for "any misdemeanor or conduct unbecoming a teacher." The duties of teachers were described in the act and provision was made for withholding the compensation of any teacher who did not keep records properly, who failed to make the required reports, or who failed otherwise to comply with the law in the performance of his duties. The act provided that the apportionment of money from the State's current school fund should be withheld from any district in which the Board of Directors failed to comply with the law.

The annual salary of the State Superintendent of Public Education was fixed at five thousand dollars by Act No. 47, approved April 4, 1877. By the same act, the salary of the Superintendent of Public Schools of New Orleans was reduced to $2,250 per year.

The provisions of Act No. 23 probably indicate what Lusher thought should be done to bring about better administration of the schools. The provision that the State Board of Education should adopt rules and regulations for all public schools of the State was intended to improve conditions generally and to bring about a greater degree of uniformity in the administration of the schools. That part concerning the adoption of textbooks was probably included for the same purposes. Local taxation within prescribed limits was in accord with Lusher's views on the proper means of providing financial support for schools. Care in examining

---

5 Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the First Session of the Fifth Legislature, New Orleans, January 1, 1877, and at the Extra Session, New Orleans, March 2, 1877, op. cit., p. 28.

6 Ibid., p. 75.
teachers and the employment only of those properly certified were, he
thought, the means by which better teachers could be provided for the
schools. Finally, the principle of accountability was evidenced in
several sections of the law; provisions to promote economy were indicative
of a reaction against the extravagance of the preceding years.

Lusher's activities as a member of the State Board of Education.

The State Board of Education met March 31, 1877, and was organized in
accordance with the provisions of Act No. 23. P. B. S. Finchback, a
Negro who had been active in the political affairs of the State under the
Republican administration and who had deserted the Legislature in the
State House and had joined that of the Nicholls government, had been
appointed to a place on the State Board of Education. At its first
meeting the State Board of Education named the members of Parish Boards
of School Directors, although the action taken at that time amounted only
to making official the decisions already reached. Lusher and other members
of the Board had secured recommendations from legislators from the respective
parishes. Two or three Negroes were named on the Board of School Directors
of nearly every parish.

The appointment of Finchback to a place on the State Board of
Education and of Negroes to places on the parish boards, indicated the

---

7 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890 (original at the Louisiana State Department of Education,


9 Minutes, State Board of Education from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 251-55.

Robert W. Lusher, Diary, March 17, 1877.

Lusher, the Secretary of the State Board of Education, recorded
in the minutes that the appointment of Negroes on the Board of School
Directors was "in furtherance of the Governor's desire of the proper
representation of colored citizens on each Parish Board."
intention of Governor Micholls to carry out the promise of the campaign, namely, to support a system of public schools for all the children, both Negro and white. The inclusion of Negroes on the boards may also have been calculated to placate those of the North who looked with suspicion on the new government of Louisiana.

A circular letter was sent by Lusher to members of the Boards of School Directors of the parishes, informing each of his appointment. In it he requested that the Board of School Directors in each parish meet and effect an organisation by electing a President and a Secretary and by appointing a Committee on Teachers. He asked that a transcript of the proceedings of each Parish Board of School Directors be sent to the State Board of Education as evidence that the members accepted their appointments. Inquiry was made about the balance of the money for schools in the hands of the ex-Treasurers of the Parish Boards.

The State Board of Education, under Lusher's guidance, adopted and distributed a list of forty rules to govern the schools. These rules pertained to the course of study, to the length of school terms, to examinations, to vacations and holidays, to teachers and their duties, to pupils and their deportment, and to Boards of School Directors and their duties.

In the summer of 1877 Lusher published a digest of the school laws of the State. The rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Education and a summary of the duties of all school officials were published

10*Minutes, State Board of Education*, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

as parts of the work.

Lusher took an active part in the selection of textbooks, in
the adoption of the necessary contracts or agreements with the publishers,
and in the distribution of the books.

On June 1, 1877, Lusher received from William G. Brown two
thousand dollars of the sum of six thousand dollars which had been placed
in Conway's charge in 1871 for repairing and refitting the Franklin College
at Opelousas. The State Board of Education appointed a committee of
five, all residents of Opelousas, to "assume, on behalf of the State
Board of Education, control of what has been known...as the 'Franklin
College,' with all its grounds and appurtenances...." It was planned
that a normal or high school should be opened there. The money avail-
able was used for the restoration of the property and a detailed account
of its expenditure was rendered to the State Board.

The State Board of Education instituted action to regain control of
a site in New Orleans, bounded by Baronne, Clio, Erato, and Dryades Streets,

---

12 Robert M. Lusher, Digest of the Laws of Louisiana Now in
Force for the Organisation, Support, and Direction of Free Public
Schools, Elementary, Academic, and Normal (New Orleans: Democrat Print,
1877), 80 pp.

Robert M. Lusher, Diary, July 5, 7, 8; August 11, 18, 23, 1877.

13 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 274-82.

14 Ibid., p. 323.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana,
at the First Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 2,
1871 (New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp Street, 1871)
p. 168.

15 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 323-27.

16 Ibid., p. 361.
which had been purchased by the State for a normal school but which was
used by the city for other purposes. Lusher addressed an inquiry to the
Mayor and City Council of New Orleans to learn whether the city would pay
a reasonable rental on the land or whether the city would purchase the
property. Evidently no action was taken by the City Council, for on
November 7, 1877, Lusher proposed to the administrative officials of the
city that they use a part of the McDonogh fund to erect on the site a
building to accommodate children then attending other schools which were
crowded. If the plan should be approved and if space should be reserved
in the building for a State Normal School, he volunteered that he would
recommend to the State Board of Education that the property be donated
to the city.

With authorization from the State Board of Education, Lusher
conferred with the Attorney General concerning the "legal right of the
State in all bonds originally held by the Secretary of State and State
Treasurer as the property of the Free School Fund." The evident intent
of a resolution passed by the State Board of Education was to institute
legal proceedings for the recovery of the bonds that had been illegally
sold. No record has been found indicating that such action was taken.

In the State Board of Education Lusher directed his efforts toward
the promotion of efficiency and economy in the public schools of the

17Ibid., pp. 327-29, 443-46.

News item in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, September 25, 1886.

None of the proposals were accepted at that time. However,
the proceeds of the property were given in 1886 to the School Board of
New Orleans for the support of a normal school operated in connection with
the Girls' High School on Calliope Street.

18Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 336-37, 340.
State: he secured the adoption of rules which were intended to bring about better practices generally in the management of the affairs of the schools; his careful selection and the adoption of uniform textbooks was probably an improvement over selection by teachers who, for the most part, had limited knowledge of the books from which they might choose; he endeavored to recover and to use for the purpose of education all assets to which the State Board of Education had a valid claim.

**Lusher's tour of visitation to the parishes.** The State Superintendent was allowed six hundred dollars annually for traveling expenses. He was required by law to visit the parishes "whenever practicable at least once a year." In May and June, 1878, Lusher visited the parishes of Lafourche, St. Mary, Iberia, St. Martin, Lafayette, St. Landry, Avoyelles, Rapides, Natchitoches, Red River, Caddo, De Soto, Pointe Coupee, West Feliciana and East Baton Rouge. The tour was cut short by the necessity of his return to his duties in New Orleans.

John Dimitry, a capable young man, was Lusher's secretary and the only assistant in his office. Although he rendered valuable assistance,

---

19 *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the First Session of the Fifth Legislature, New Orleans, January 1, 1877, and at the Extra Session, New Orleans, March 2, 1877*, op. cit., p. 28.


21 Loc. cit.


there was much to be done. The work of keeping the records and
accounts of the office and of carrying on the necessary correspondence,
was of such proportions that it was difficult for Lusher to be away from
his office for any great length of time.

On Lusher's visits to the parishes named above he traveled by
rail, by stage, by buggy, and by steamer. Six weeks were required for
the trip. Upon his return Lusher drew a warrant for $118.95, the total
of expenses incurred in traveling.

The epidemic of yellow fever later in 1878 prevented a resumption
of Lusher's visits to the parishes.

Lusher had occasion four years later to write a description of
his activities and observations in the parishes which he had visited. He
reported that he found free public schools, "legally organised and admirably
taught," everywhere except in Red River and De Soto Parishes. The
administration of school affairs in Red River Parish did not meet with
his approval, but the Board of School Directors in that parish needed
"but a suggestion" from the State Superintendent to correct the situation.
Lusher reported that funds intended for the support of free public schools
were being used in De Soto Parish to aid schools in which fees were
collected from the pupils.

---

23 Robert M. Lusher, Account of Warrants Drawn, or Orders Given,
1877 ——, op. cit., p. 49.
There is a slight discrepancy in the data at this point. The
cash account in Lusher's diary indicates that the expense amounted to
$123.20, but the work cited here indicates that a warrant was drawn for
$118.95 to cover the expense of the trip.

24 Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education,
Robert M. Lusher, to the General Assembly of Louisiana, for the year 1878,
op. cit., p. viii.

25 Communication in The Times-Democrat, New Orleans, September 7,
1882.
Evidently Lusher reported the condition in De Soto Parish to
the State Board of Education, for at its next meeting the Board adopted
an additional rule to govern expenditure of school funds. The rule con­
tained the following:

The School Law requires all schools maintained by the
public funds, to afford tuition to all children therein, and
to such others of the vicinage as can be induced to attend
them. All contributions made by parents and others to aid
in the maintenance of such schools while the teachers thereof
are paid from the public funds, must, therefore, be paid
directly, or through the teachers, to the Treasurer of school
funds for the parish, ...and held by him, with donations from
other sources, to the credit of the school for which provision
is made.... 26

Although Lusher visited frequently in the schools of New Orleans
he made no other visits of considerable length to the rural parishes of
the State. There is a record of his visiting Bayou Sara and Centenary
College at Jackson. He went to Baton Rouge when meetings of the Board
of Supervisors of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and
Mechanical College were held there.

Lusher's failure to visit the parishes in 1877 was explained by
the failure of the Legislature to make an appropriation for traveling
expenses of the State Superintendent. By far the greater part of his
time was spent in New Orleans where the duties of his office required
daily attention.

26Minutes, State Board of Education, April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., p. 351.
The rule given here was adopted by the State Board of Education
on July 25, 1878. Lusher returned from his tour in June.

27Robert M. Lusher, Diary, July 10-12, 1877; July 4-5, 1879.
28Robert M. Lusher, Digest of the Laws of Louisiana Now in
Force for the Organization, Support, and Direction of Free Public Schools,
Elementary, Academic, and Normal, op. cit., p. 20.
Lusher's activities in the schools of New Orleans. Lusher's interest in the schools of New Orleans is illustrated by an incident which occurred when the State Board of Education first met on March 31, 1877. The Negro politician, Pinchback, had been appointed by Governor Nicholls to a place on the Board. In a conversation with Lusher, Pinchback expressed his preference for a place on the School Board of New Orleans which was then undergoing a reorganization. However, he did not wish to be a member of the School Board of the city without Lusher's consent and approval. Lusher's account of his reply was:

...I frankly said to him that exceptions had frequently been made to his presence on the City Board, & that the people of the City expect a complete reforming change. I further intimated that his presence in the State Board would be serviceable to the colored race throughout the State & that hence his position there was more commanding than would be any position in the City Board. 29

Lusher's dislike for Pinchback was such that he did not want him as a member of any school board. However, Pinchback had been appointed by the Governor. Lusher evidently thought Pinchback's presence would be less offensive in the State Board of Education than in the School Board of New Orleans. 30

Lusher was in the Council Chamber at the City Hall on April 4, 1877, when the new School Board of New Orleans held its first meeting. He later described his part in that meeting in the following paragraph:

1877. In the month of April, at 12 M. of a forgotten date, he took the President's Chair, in a room in the City Hall, and organized the Board of Public School Directors. The Hon. Thomas J. Semmes, his old collegiate

30. Loc. cit.
Lusher described Pinchback's appointment by Governor Nicholls as "most singular."
companion, having been elected President, he was welcomed
to the Chair, and R. M. L. then took a seat, lower down,
among the members of the Board. He was then requested
to name the most experienced educator for the Chief
Superintendency of the Public Schools of New Orleans. He
again recommended the election of his friend, Wm. O. Rogers,
Esq. as Chief Superintendent, and Mr. Rogers was very
properly elected as Chief Superintendent of Public Schools.
R. M. L. then stationed energetic Police Officers at the
doors of the City Hall, to prevent the Radical Board of
School Directors from assembling that evening in the City
Hall. 31

Lusher also furnished to Attorney General Ogden a list of names of
members of the old School Board and he arranged that injunctions should
be issued to prevent their meeting.

Although not a member, Lusher attended the first meeting of the
Committee on Rules of the School Board of New Orleans. 33 This was the
group which was responsible for the formulation of rules and regulations
by which policies of the Board were put into practice in the schools.
That Lusher had influence with the New Orleans School Board is indicated
by the fact that teachers often asked him to intercede with the School
Board on their behalf. On one occasion Lusher recorded, "...Office
besieged by lady teachers, displaced by recent action of City Board —
inescapable...." The action of the School Board was such that Lusher
heartily approved it, for the next evening he met with the Board for four
hours. Of the meeting he wrote, "...An excellent selection of Principals
and 1st Assistants reported by Cone. on Teachers and elected by Board...." 35

31 Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 8.
32 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, April 4-5, 1877.
33 Ibid., April 6, 1877.
34 Ibid., October 15, 1877.
35 Ibid., October 16, 1877.
Lusher seemed to be more solicitous of the welfare of the city schools than of those in the parishes. By the levy of a local tax to support schools, the people of New Orleans provided an efficient system of public schools, open throughout a relatively long session each year. The proportion of the value of property to the number of children was greater in New Orleans than in the rural parishes of the State. As a consequence, money in the State's current school fund, collected in the city, was apportioned to the parishes. Lusher reported that about $120,000 per year, collected in New Orleans, was apportioned to other parts of the State. Lusher expressed the view that such an arrangement was entirely proper in times of prosperity. He recognized the validity of the principle of levying a tax upon those most able to pay and of using the proceeds of the tax for the education of children whose parents were less able to pay. However, in the period of financial distress when the industry of New Orleans was suffering the effects of the epidemic of 1878, Lusher recommended to the Legislature that the part of the State's current school fund that was collected in New Orleans should be returned to the city for support of its schools. To have followed that recommendation would have greatly decreased the funds available to support schools in the parishes where the schools were less prosperous than those in New Orleans. 37

Lusher expressed the opinion that the enumeration of educable children upon which the apportionment of money from the State's current school fund was based was unfair to New Orleans. It was provided by


37 Loc. cit.
Act No. 122 of April 7, 1874, that the enumeration of educable children made in that year, with corrections that might subsequently be authorized, should be the basis on which money should be paid to the parishes from the current school fund. By Act No. 96 of the extra session of the Legislature in 1877, it was provided that the assessors of the parishes of the State, "the parish of Orleans excepted," should make an enumeration of youth that year and every two years thereafter. The number of educable children in the parishes increased in the years immediately following 1874. Lusher estimated that the number of such children in New Orleans increased from 68,918, the number reported in 1874, to approximately 96,485 in 1879. However, the exception made it mandatory that he use the smaller number of children as a basis for apportionment of the current school fund. Lusher protested that the arrangement was unjust to the schools of New Orleans and he recommended that a new enumeration of children in the city be authorized.

Lusher's recommendations that would have given more of the current school fund to the schools of New Orleans were not followed by the Legislature. The concern Lusher showed for the schools of the city and his inclination to gain support for those schools, even by a reduction in the amount of the State's aid for schools in the rural parishes, may have

---


detracted from his popularity throughout the state, since he was not nominated in the Democratic Convention in October, 1879.

Lusher maintained an interest in the New Orleans schools throughout his superintendency. He conferred frequently with teachers and with members of the School Board and he made occasional visits to the schools.

**Lusher's activities as administrator of the Peabody Education Fund.**

When Lusher again became State Superintendent of Public Education in 1877, aid for schools in Louisiana could again be secured from the Peabody Education Fund. Lusher regularly reported the condition of the schools of Louisiana to the General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund. As Agent of that fund for Louisiana, he informed the people of the State concerning terms on which aid for their schools might be obtained. In accordance with a policy already described, it was required that schools receiving aid from the Peabody Education Fund be well conducted, that they be situated in populous localities, and that they give promise of permanence. During the year covered by the General Agent's report of October, 1878, the following appropriations were made for free public schools in seven localities in Louisiana:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Appropriation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baton Rouge</td>
<td>$1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchitoches</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donaldsonville</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thibodaux</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria (School for Negroes)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opelousas (School for Negroes)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the session of 1878-79 appropriations were made as follows:

---


Baton Rouge $1,200
Opelousas 750
Monroe 600
Alexandria 600
Franklin (School for Negroes) 300
Thibodaux 300
Amite City 300

The schools listed above were operated during sessions of nine or ten months each year at a time when school sessions throughout most of Louisiana were of much shorter duration. The policy of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund at this period was to aid good schools for the purpose of demonstrating "what to do, how to do it, and the advantages of doing it." Lusher's administration of the fund in Louisiana was in accord with the policy of the Trustees.

Lusher's activities as a member of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. During this term of his superintendency, Lusher was an ex officio member of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. The Supervisors of that period, 1877 to 1880, have been described as "an able body of men, devoted to the interests of the institution, and willing to give time and work toward building up the school." Lusher attended the meetings of the Board of Supervisors with fair regularity, both in New Orleans and in Baton Rouge. He greatly admired Colonel David F. Boyd, President of the Faculty of the University. On October 17, 1877, soon after the University was merged with the

\[4^4\] Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 8.


Agricultural and Mechanical College, Lusher nominated Boyd to be President of the Faculty and the vote for his election was unanimous. Lusher also nominated J. W. Nicholson of Claiborne Parish to be Professor of Mathematics and Mechanics, whereupon Nicholson was elected by unanimous vote. Early the next year Boyd submitted to the Board of Supervisors a letter of resignation. The letter was referred on July 4, 1878, to a special committee of which Lusher was a member. Lusher conferred with other members of the committee and with Boyd that afternoon, with the result that the resignation was withdrawn and Boyd was retained in his position.

Lusher took an active interest in the management of the financial affairs of the University. When the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors was reorganized in July, 1878, Lusher was named a member of the Committee. Lusher then introduced a resolution which was adopted, providing that all claims or warrants to be paid from the funds of the college, should be approved by the Vice President of the Board of Supervisors and that the President of the Faculty should countersign all checks drawn in payment of those claims or warrants. This action was rescinded by the Board of Supervisors in January, 1879, but after reconsideration,  

---

47 Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, July 2, 1877—July 3, 1878 (original in the office of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana), p. 16.

48 Ibid., p. 24.

49 Ibid., p. 32.

50 Ibid., pp. 33-34.

51 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
it was again decided on February 4, 1879, that checks should be counter-
signed by the President.

Lusher's stand on a question that must have been of considerable
interest, is indicated by an excerpt from his diary: "...Attending meet-
ing of Bd. Supervisors of State University & A. & M. College. In debate,
sustained the right of the President to maintain discipline over both
Profes. & cadets, & offd. sundry resolutions...." Lusher evidently pre-
vailed in the debate for a resolution was adopted at that meeting to define
and limit the President's authority in the matter. It was resolved:

That the President of the Faculty for satisfactory
cause may suspend any professor or employee of the
Institution, provided that such suspension and the cause
therefor shall be reported at once to the President of
this Board who shall convene the Board to consider such
suspension whenever the same may be proper in his judgment.54

Lusher's stand in support of the President on this question of his
authority, might indicate his endorsement of a somewhat autocratic principle
of administration. However, he gave evidence of more liberal views when
some assistant professors were to be employed. At the meeting of the Board
of Supervisors on August 12, 1879, Lusher moved that "Assistant Professor-
ships be filled at the October meeting, on the recommendation of the several
Professors of the Departments to which they may be assigned." The motion
was passed, and at least one assistant professor was elected upon the

52 Ibid., pp. 44-46.
53 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, July 16, 1878.
54 Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College, July 2, 1877-July 3, 1893, op. cit.,
p. 40.
55 Ibid., p. 62.
recommendation of the professor at the head of the department in which he was to teach.

In the meetings of the Board of Supervisors, as elsewhere in the performance of his official duties, Lusher actively promoted the policies which he considered desirable. He exerted his influence for efficient administration of the institution.

Lusher's influence in the Constitutional Convention of 1879. In March, 1879, Lusher began writing for the first number of the Louisiana Journal of Education* of which he and Superintendent Rogers of New Orleans were the proprietors. In the Journal for May Lusher referred to the Constitutional Convention which assembled in New Orleans late in April, 1879, He commended the President of the Convention upon his discrimination in the choice of delegates to compose the Committee on Public Education. He expressed confidence that the Committee would recommend that the Convention provide in the new Constitution for "a thorough and efficient system of public schools, for white and colored children, respectively, in every portion of the State."

The Committee on Public Education met in the room of the State Board of Education on April 28, 1879, and again two days later. Lusher

---

56 Ibid., pp. 62, 64.
57 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, March 11, 1879.

Views expressed in the editorial columns of the Journal while Lusher was its senior editor are attributed to him. There is evidence that he wrote most of the editorials. He was in accord with views expressed in any of which he was not the author.

* This publication is referred to hereafter as the Journal.
appeared before the Committee on April 30 and he spoke on behalf of the public schools. He conferred often with F. Lee Claiborne of Pointe Coupee Parish, Chairman of the Committee on Public Education. However, Lusher soon learned that a majority of the Committee wished to abolish the office of State Superintendent of Public Education. A lively contest ensued between delegates who wished to retain the office of State Superintendent of Public Education in the Executive Department of the State government and those who opposed its retention. On May 29, W. W. Leake of West Feliciana Parish moved to substitute the words "Secretary of State" for the words "Superintendent of Public Education" in the article pertaining to the Executive Department of the State. It was moved by S. M. Brian of Vermilion Parish that further consideration of the article be postponed until the Committee on Public Education should make its report to the Convention. However, W. A. Bienvenu of New Orleans "moved the previous question," thereby making it necessary that the question be voted upon. A majority of the delegates voted to abolish the office of State Superintendent of Public Education and to make the Secretary of State ex officio Superintendent. Notice was given by T. B. Stamps of New Orleans that he would move a reconsideration of the vote. There was much controversy over the question. Stamps moved that the action taken be reconsidered, but his motion was defeated. Lusher was greatly concerned over

---

59 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, April 30, 1879.
60 Ibid., May 1-13, 1879.
61 Ibid., May 21, 1879.
63 Ibid., p. 143.
the matter. He enlisted the support of several other delegates, including Donelson Caffery, A. S. Herron, and James McConnell. It was finally decided on June 11 to retain the office of State Superintendent of Public Education. The Superintendent's annual salary, however, was reduced to two thousand dollars. Expenses of the office were limited to one thousand dollars per year.

While the Constitutional Convention was meeting, an editorial appeared in the Journal in which Lusher maintained that the State was responsible to the United States Government for "the reintegration of three sacred Trust Funds, derived from donations of lands by the United States, and devoted to the promotion of education." The three were the free school fund, the State Seminary fund, and the Agricultural and Mechanical College fund. After a review of the history of the free school fund which had been abolished in 1872, Lusher wrote of it:

This is essentially a debt of honor, which the patriotic members of our Constitutional Convention will be proud to discharge, by incorporating a provision in the new organic law, recognizing the obligation and requiring the annual levy of a sufficient tax to pay six per cent interest on the gross proceeds of the sale of township lands at the time of their investment in the bonds formerly held in the Treasury as the "Free School Fund."66

After presenting an argument in favor of the restoration of the two other funds by the State, he concluded with this statement:

There is no subject of more commanding interest than the liberal education of the children of this State, in an efficient system of Elementary Schools in every City, Town and hamlet, and then, of the higher education of the gifted

---

64 Robert W. Lusher, Diary, June 3-5, 9, 1879.


and ambitious among them in a central well endowed University and College of the character hereinbefore referred to. Wise provisions, in our new organic law, for the promotion of such a system of education, will confer honor on the State, and increase her influence in the councils of the Republic. 67

The obligation of the State with regard to the trust funds, was recognized by the provisions of Article No. 233 of the new Constitution. The amount of the "debt due by the State to the free school fund" was fixed at $1,130,867.51 and it was provided that this amount was to be "placed on the books of the Auditor and Treasurer to the credit of the several townships entitled to the same." Interest at the rate of four per cent per annum was to be paid to the townships. A comparable action was taken with regard to the other funds. The recognition of the State's obligation to restore the funds was a moral victory for Lusher and others who advocated the restoration. The gain for the cause of education was lost, however, by a provision that the interest should be "paid out of any tax that may be levied and collected for the general purpose of education." 68

Lusher's influence was at least partly responsible for the retention of the office of State Superintendent of Public Education in the Executive Department of the State and for the recognition of the State's obligation with regard to the trust funds. However, in both instances there were provisions that were objectionable. The maximum annual salaries allowed for the State Superintendent of Public Education and for Parish Superintendents were not commensurate with the importance of the positions. The

67 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
provision that interest on the school funds should be paid from the proceeds of taxes levied for educational purposes, nullified any benefits that might have accrued to the schools because of the restoration of the funds. Lusher considered the provision "injudicious."

II. CONDITION OF THE SCHOOLS, 1877 TO 1880

Schools in New Orleans. The schools of New Orleans were supported largely by local taxation throughout this period. For example, in 1877 taxes within the city yielded $220,504.35 for the schools and $50,999.32 was apportioned to New Orleans from the current school fund of the State. The part of the current school fund of the State to which New Orleans was entitled, was $72,297.75 in 1878 and $106,857.40 in 1879. There was a decrease to $182,970.17 in local taxes collected for the schools in 1878, but the amount increased to $214,011.95 the next year.

Enrollment of children in the public schools of the city was rather uniform. There were 15,169 white children enrolled in 1877, 14,834 in 1878, and 15,316 in 1879. Enrollment of Negro children in the schools of the city increased from 4,338 in 1877 to 5,460 in 1879. There were 125 private


schools in the city with a total enrollment of approximately sixteen thousand children.

The revenue available for the support of the New Orleans schools was insufficient to maintain them. In January, 1879, it was reported that the teachers' salaries for one month of 1877 and for four months of 1878, had not been paid.

In March, 1879, application was made by the City Attorney of New Orleans for a writ of mandamus, the purpose of which was to compel Lusher to release for the New Orleans schools certain funds in his custody. On March 25 Lusher was given notice to "show cause against mandamus" by April 2. Lusher thought he could not legally release the funds and, after consultation with Attorney General Ogden, he filed an exception. The funds were intended for the payment of certificates of indebtedness held by New Orleans teachers. On April 3 it was reported by the President of the School Board of the city that Lusher desired "that the intention of the

---


law should be construed by the courts." However, the legal proceedings
were discontinued on April 5. The incident is illustrative of the
fact that the New Orleans School Board was hard pressed for funds to
carry on its educational program. Apparently Lusher was sympathetic
toward the schools of the city. Reference is made elsewhere to his
recommendation of legislative provisions that would allow a greater share
of the State's current school fund to be apportioned to New Orleans.
His interest in the welfare of the teachers of the city is further indi­
cated by evidence that in 1880, after the expiration of his term of
office, Lusher continued to champion the cause of the teachers.

The schools of the city were operated for ten months in 1878 and
for nine and one-half months in 1879.

Schools in the rural parishes. Financial support for the public
schools of the parishes was furnished chiefly by apportionments made from
the State's current school fund. For example, in 1878 the part of the
State's fund that was sent to the parishes amounted to $215,957.81 and the
parishes realized $52,778.65 from local sources of revenue.

75Reports in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, April 3, 5, 1879.
76Robert M. Lusher, Diary, May 28, 1880.
The diary indicates that on May 28 Lusher wrote for publica­
tion an article similar to that published in the editorial columns of the
Picayune two days later. The editorial which is cited here set forth the
procedure to be followed by teachers who desired to obtain cash for the
warrants or certificates that had been issued to them.
77Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education,
Robert M. Lusher, to the General Assembly of Louisiana, for the year 1878,
_78Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education,
Robert M. Lusher, to the General Assembly of Louisiana, for the year 1879,
op. cit., pp. 16-17.
Enrollment of white children in the public schools of the parishes increased from 16,042 in 1877 to 28,363 the next year and to 28,736 in 1879. The number of Negro children enrolled in 1877 was 17,511 and there was an increase in enrollment of white children. In 1878 there were 28,172 Negro children in the public schools of the parishes and the number increased to 28,881 in 1879. The Negro schools must have been more crowded than the white schools, however, for in 1879 there were 971 teachers in schools for white children and only 551 teachers in the Negro schools.

Lusher reported general satisfaction with the arrangement by which separate schools were maintained for white and Negro children. He wrote:

...Under the present law, the parish directors have cheerfully opened and liberally sustained a white and a colored school, apart, in each ward, to the mutual satisfaction of both races, and only the continuance of this equitable plan can possibly secure contributions from taxpayers, for the preservation and maintenance of any system of education whatever at the public expense.

However, there were occasional attempts on the part of Negroes of mixed parentage to have their children enter the schools for white children. Lusher recognized the fact that "children of mixed white and colored blood, whose parents have always been free" were opposed to

---

association with children of darker hue." He recommended that where there was a sufficient number of such children, separate schools should be maintained for them.

Concerning schools in the rural parishes, Lusher reported that they were well attended in 1878. He asserted that, from reports received, "never before since the reconstruction of the Union, had the people, both white and colored, been so well satisfied with the character of the teachers employed and the proficiency attained by pupils in their charge." The next year, however, Lusher could report only that the schools were "in as satisfactory a condition as had been possible, with the limited funds and the character of the teachers at their command."

In many school districts in the parishes the schools were operated for only one or two months. When funds available for education were exhausted, the practice was to close the schools. Lusher reported that "by a more judicious concentration of the funds on certain dense localities" the Boards of Directors in many parishes had maintained schools for longer terms, even for seven or eight months in some instances. As noted elsewhere, schools in a few towns of the State received aid from the Peabody Education Fund and extended their sessions to nine or ten months.

---


85 Ibid., pp. v-vi.
An explanation of the unwillingness of the people to tax themselves for the support of schools and of the parsimony exhibited in the Constitutional Convention of 1879, may be found in the financial history of Louisiana for that period. The debt of the State in the early seventies had been expanded considerably beyond the limitation of twenty-five million dollars fixed by the Constitution. After protests by the taxpayers of the State and after a test of the legality of some of the State's debts in the courts, provision was made in 1874 for funding the obligations of the State. The issue of new "consolidated" bonds bearing interest at seven per cent, was authorized. The new bonds were to replace the old obligations at the rate of sixty cents for each dollar. The issue of new bonds was limited to fifteen million dollars.

The State was unable to pay the interest on the new bonds as it became due. The State Treasurer's report reveals that the State collected $1,681,681.22 in taxes in 1879 and that $776,353.76 of that amount was for the payment of interest. Seven per cent on fifteen million dollars would have amounted to more than a million dollars in interest. The general fund of the State realized only $300,616.55 from taxation that year, and $282,597.70 was the amount allotted to the State's current school

---


This burden of the State's debt accounts for the fact that economy and the reduction of expenditures figure so prominently in the affairs of the State during the period under consideration and for several years thereafter.

III. Lusher's Defeat in 1879

The prospect for public education in Louisiana in 1879. Article No. 209 of the Constitution limited the State tax on property to six mills on each dollar of its assessed value. Large amounts were required to pay the interest on the bonded indebtedness of the State, to meet the necessary expenses of State government, and to maintain and repair levees. After making allowance for these necessary expenditures, Lusher estimated that the proceeds of less than one and one-half mills of the tax would be left for education. Of the part left for education, $59,790.35 per year was required to pay the interest on the three educational trust funds: the free school fund, the State seminary fund, and the Agricultural and Mechanical College fund. Lusher estimated that about forty-five cents per educable child would be available for distribution from the State's current school fund.

The effect of the restoration of the free school fund as an

---


92. ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.
obligation of the State, was to create inequality in the distribution of money from the State's current school fund. It did not increase the amount but only affected the manner of distribution. Revenue from lands donated by the United States for support of education was the chief original source of the free school fund. The parishes in which a large part of the lands had been sold were to receive a large part of the interest. On the other hand, there were some parishes in which most of the lands which were donated had not been sold. Some parishes were small in area and, consequently, had received little land. Those parishes were due little from the proceeds of the fund.

The effect upon some of the parishes illustrates the inequality. Tensas Parish was to receive $5,276.40 per year of the interest on the free school fund, an amount which would increase the school funds for the parish to $1.75 per child in 1880. Other parishes having relatively large amounts due for the support of their schools were Bossier, Concordia, and Madison in which the apportionment of school funds from the State, Lusher estimated, would amount in 1880 to one dollar, eighty-four cents, and eighty-two cents per child, respectively. On the other hand, many parishes were to receive little of the interest. Some of the parishes and the amounts due them were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell Parish</td>
<td>28.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles Parish</td>
<td>30.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans Parish</td>
<td>35.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Baton Rouge Parish</td>
<td>48.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richland Parish</td>
<td>51.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Parish</td>
<td>59.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcasieu Parish</td>
<td>62.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption Parish</td>
<td>95.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafourche Parish</td>
<td>123.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In each of these parishes, the amount due from the proceeds of the free school fund was two cents or less per educable child. That amount, added to the forty-five cents per child which Lusher thought would be available for distribution after deduction of interest, would cause these parishes to receive forty-seven cents or less per educable child for support of schools in 1880. Curtailment of the amount to be distributed by the State for education and the inequality established in the manner of the distribution caused widespread dissatisfaction on the part of the people of the State.

Lusher protested against the inequality established by the new Constitution and he recommended legislative enactments to correct the situation. He wished a special tax levied to pay the interest on the educational trust funds and he recommended that Police Juries, City Councils, and Town Councils be empowered to levy local taxes sufficient to maintain schools for a reasonably long term in every densely populated place in the State.

The sentiment prevailing at the time, however, was not favorable to Lusher's recommendations. The next year the Legislature approved Act No. 77 which limited the tax on property for public education to one mill on each dollar. The new law provided that interest on the three funds should be paid from the proceeds of this tax and that the balance should be "applied to the establishment, maintenance and support of free public schools throughout the State."

---

94 Loc. cit.
95 Ibid., pp. xxii-xxiii.
Lusher's campaign for re-nomination. In the summer of 1879, Lusher sent letters to his friends throughout the State with an announcement of his candidacy for re-nomination. With the approach of October 6, the date of the meeting of the Democratic Nominating Convention of the State, he was besieged by politicians and by solicitors of funds for the clubs sponsored by the Democratic Party in the wards of the city. Lusher made contributions and expenditures amounting to $366 in his efforts to advance his candidacy, but he had little respect for the "political beggars" who wished him to be an "honorary member" of their respective organizations.

Lusher prepared a statement of the State's fund that might be anticipated for the support of schools during 1880, in which he showed that the amount to be apportioned to the parishes on the basis of the number of children in each, might possibly be as little as twenty-eight cents per child. He suggested that those interested in education should urge their representatives to levy an additional tax to pay the interest on the three trust funds. He asked them to urge further that a tax of at least one and one-half mills be levied for the schools, so that each parish might receive the interest to which it was entitled and so that about sixty-five cents per child might be available for distribution to the parishes. He advocated the provision of local taxes for schools and he recommended that donations be solicited from benevolent citizens. If that were done, he suggested that supplements might be obtainable from the

97 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, August 16-28, 1879.
98 Ibid., August 28, September 19, October 1, 1879.
99 Ibid., August 28, cash account, 1879.
Peabody Education Fund and that the school sessions in many places might 100
be of nine or ten months' duration.

The General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund was watching with interest the course of affairs in Louisiana. In a letter to Lusher, part of which was quoted in a communication which Lusher caused to be published, Sears expressed his apprehension that a "politician" might be 101 elected State Superintendent of Public Education. Lusher answered, informing Sears that three residents of the rural portion of Louisiana had announced themselves as candidates for the Democratic nomination for State Superintendent. Lusher assured the General Agent that all were "citizens of integrity" and that they were "eminently worthy" of his confidence. The three were E. H. Fay of East Feliciana Parish, W. H. Goodale of Baton Rouge, and F. L. Claiborne of Pointe Coupee Parish. Lusher asked that aid from the Peabody Education Fund be continued in Louisiana under the supervision of the candidate that might be chosen in the Nominating Convention of the Democratic Party and be elected by the people.

Included in the correspondence referred to above was this statement by Lusher concerning his own candidacy:

I have now announced myself as a candidate for re-nomination and re-election, making the announcement as public as possible, and have sent to the respective parishes my views and suggestions on the most practicable system of public schools therein, with an exhibit of the

100 Communication in *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, August 27, 1879.
102 *Loc. cit.*
probable school funds for 1880, and cards of my candidacy to hand to such delegates to the State convention as may possibly be favorable to my re-nomination. This I conceive, is the only feasible and becoming way for an educational officer of the State to seek a re-nomination, unless, indeed, it were possible for him to visit and address the people at large, in support of his views and claims. This I cannot do, without neglecting my official duties which neglect, I conceive, would be the betrayal of a trust confided in me be a generous constituency.103

On the same day there was published a communication from the editor of Le Louisianais, a journal of St. James Parish. The editor commended Lusher as a public official. He concluded as follows:

For the office of superintendent of public education is not a mere political office, but absolutely requires some special and uncommon aptitudes, a particular knowledge, a long experience and a superiority of mind which are mostly over the ordinary merits of a running, passing and fading away politician.

You may easily find twenty governors, when you will find only one superintendent of public education.104

Defeat of his candidacy. In the nominating convention, on the ballot for the choice of a nominee for State Superintendent of Public Education, Fay received 177 votes and Lusher seventy-nine. However, 201 votes were divided among Goodale, Claiborne, and Thomas C. Benton of Webster Parish. Fay was then nominated by acclamation. Lusher considered the Convention hasty in its action. He was confident that if the names of candidates who received the smallest numbers of votes had been withdrawn, and if other ballots had been taken, he would have been chosen. He protested "against the validity and the binding effect of the nomination." Lusher expressed

103Loc. cit.
104Communication in The New Orleans Times, September 5, 1879.
his intention to persist in his candidacy for re-election. He published announcements in which he asked the support of "all citizens who favor a liberally supported and an efficient system of public schools, for white and colored children, respectively, as ordained by the new constitution of Louisiana."

Lusher wrote that he regretted his defeat only because aid from the Peabody Education Fund would be lost to the schools in the rural areas of the State. His "sole motive," he wrote, was "to save the P. E. fund for rural La." He conferred with Alexander Dimitry and was gratified to learn that Dimitry approved his protest. He distributed circulars to his friends in every part of the State in an attempt to advance his independent candidacy. Subsequent events seem to justify doubt that Lusher insisted on being a candidate solely for the unselfish purpose of securing small donations from the Peabody Education Fund for a few schools in the State. Professional pride and the conviction, on his part, that he was better fitted than Fay for the position, furnish a more plausible explanation of his action.

The response to Lusher's circulars may have been discouraging. Reconsideration of the situation probably convinced him that to persist longer was futile. Whatever may have been the cause of his decision, Lusher withdrew from the contest and asked that his friends give their support to Fay.

106 Communication in The Daily Picayune, New Orleans, October 14, 1879.
107 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, October 7, 14, 1879.
108 Ibid., October 16-18, 1879.
Fay was a native of Alabama and a graduate of Harvard University. He was President of the Stillman Female Collegiate Institute at Clinton, East Feliciana Parish, at the time of his nomination for State Superintendent.

The reason for Lusher’s defeat in the State Nominating Convention of the Democratic Party in 1879 is a topic of interest. Opposition to Lusher seems to have centered in the northern part of the State. In explanation of his defeat, Lusher wrote that he was “sacrificed by the Demo. Convention at Baton Rouge, by barter,” to please the members of a political “Ring.” He wrote that he was defeated because he insisted upon the enforcement of legal provisions that the public schools should be entirely free. There was, he wrote a “conspiracy against the Superintendent who had deemed it his duty to protest against violations and evasions of the essential feature of the school law.”

The editor of the Times-Democrat advanced another explanation of Lusher’s defeat. The part of an editorial treating the subject contained the following paragraph:

We remember that Mr. Lusher was defeated by the excessive zeal of his partisan, Rev. Barnes Sears, and by the threats and statements of Mr. Lusher himself. Mr. Sears distinctly threatened that if his friend was not renominated, the

---


Fay continued Lusher’s protests against the inequality caused by payment of interest on the trust funds from funds collected for schools. He maintained that the interest should be paid from the State’s general fund. The question was decided against Fay in the courts of the State.

Peabody education fund, of which he was agent, would withdraw its assistance from Louisians. The delegates to the Democratic convention properly regarded it as a piece of gross impertinence, that a foreign body, simply because it had donated a small sum of money to our schools, insignificant compared with the amount the people gave, should attempt to dictate to whom we should confide our public affairs. The convention properly resented this insult; Mr. Sears' proposition was kindly declined, and Mr. Lusher relegated to private life,112

The reason presented above is plausible, and evidence can be found in support of it. As is noted elsewhere, Sears was apprehensive that Lusher might be succeeded in office by a "politician," through whom he and the Board of Trustees would not wish to extend aid to the schools of the State. Further evidence is furnished by the fact that in Lusher's diary it is implied that aid for Louisiana's schools would be lost because of his defeat. There may be an implied threat in a letter, published by Lusher, to which reference is made elsewhere. Near the conclusion of the letter Lusher wrote:

...Reject, gentlemen, the benevolence of the most disinterested friend - the largest hearted helper - the gentlest and most watchful guardian of education, that we of the South have ever known, and the children of your cities and towns will show to you, too soon, the fruits of an indifference (which I would not impute to any citizen of Louisiana) towards the generosity of the revered Peabody. Needing the discipline of the school-room, and that moral training which is an inseparable element of such discipline, they will, by your rejection of aid, be thrown upon the streets....113

The passage quoted above, when read in its context, however, may be interpreted as a plea for local effort in support of schools. It may not have been intended as a threat. The passage follows a lengthy

113 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, October 7, 14, 1879.
114 Communication in The Daily Picayune, August 27, 1879.
recommendation that schools be supported by local taxation and by
donations from the people of the towns. Lusher may have intended to
imply that failure on the part of citizens of a town or city, to provide
local support for education, would constitute rejection of the aid that
might be secured from the Peabody Education Fund. Aid from that source
was available only for schools that were fairly well maintained through
local effort.

Lusher's action in the matter was such that it seems he could not
have been justly blamed. Sears may have been justified in the concern he
felt over the outcome of the election in Louisiana. Lusher may have
acted unwisely in making Sears' concern known to the public. However,
a significant fact in defense of Lusher's action, is that he assured
Sears that all of his rivals for the nomination were "citizens of integ­
rity," and that they were "eminently worthy" of Sears' confidence. Lusher,
it should be remembered, made public his letter in which he asked that
Sears continue to extend aid to schools in Louisiana, even though another
should be nominated and elected State Superintendent of Public Education.

As indicated elsewhere, Lusher's great concern with the schools of
the city and the fact that he visited the parishes seldom or not at all,
may account for his failure to receive popular support. Another factor
that may have contributed to his rejection by the Convention was his
advocacy of higher rates of taxation for education. Lusher proposed more
liberal support of schools when the people were impoverished, when the
debt of the State seemed oppressive, and when popular sentiment favored
reductions in public expenditures.

---

Lusher was asked to be the nominee of the Republican Party, but he declined the support of that group. He was surprised on the day of the election, December 2, 1879, when he learned that he was the Prohibition Party's nominee for State Superintendent of Public Education. He recorded that he was honored by the nomination; he considered the principles of the party sound.

**Conclusion of his official career.** Superintendent-elect Fay visited Lusher in his office on December 30, and Lusher gave him a "Digest," probably the digest of laws governing public schools in the State. Lusher completed his annual report to the Legislature and attended to its publication. He sent to the parishes vouchers representing the apportionment of school funds for December. When Fay took charge of the office on January 12, 1880, Lusher rendered him every possible assistance. His relations with Fay were cordial and pleasant.

In his report to the Legislature, prepared after Fay's election, Lusher gave this evaluation of Louisiana's system of public schools under his direction:

> It is not claimed for the system, that it has achieved the full measure of success that its friends and well-wishers have desired for it. Such a result, it is clear, could not be attained, even partially, under the general poverty of the people. Nor, indeed, is it possible under larger.

---

116 Robert W. Lusher, Diary, October 21, 1879.
117 Ibid., December 2, 1879.
118 Ibid., December 30, 1879.
119 Ibid., January 12, 18, 1879.
120 Ibid., January 23, 1879.
considerations. Nothing in this world of continual struggle towards progression, is ever completed. Yet, the system, with the means at its command, has done a good work...¹²¹

The text of Lusher's last official report was concluded with these words:

...With the energetic aid of enlightened local Directors, it has been the good fortune of the present State Superintendent, to bring the system through the darkness to daylight. He trusts that, with still more efficient aid in every parish, it may be the better fortune of his capable successor, to advance it from daylight into the brightness of full day.¹²²

IV. LUSHER'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

The place of public education in American life. Lusher was acquainted with the objections usually advanced against provision of popular education at public expense. He examined those objections on one occasion and he presented the case for public education. Among the objections reviewed were that popular education was too costly, that taxation to support public schools was unjust in that it taxed one man's property "for the education of another man's child," that the public schools taught too little, that they taught too much, that the subjects taught in school were impractical, and that education would make children of the laboring classes unfit "to occupy the position and rank in which they were born." He admitted imperfections in the system of public schools and he welcomed criticism. He wrote: "If the methods of instruction are wrong, they should be reformed. If public funds are not judiciously applied, the

¹²² Ibid., p. xxxviii.
waste should be stopped or the officials should be changed. Whatever improvements may be called for by the thoughtful and intelligent judgment of enlightened minds, should be cheerfully adopted and faithfully executed." With that introduction, Lusher presented the case for public education. His claims were:

1. That popular intelligence is the outgrowth of American civilization and is essential to the preservation of a democratic and republican form of government.

2. That the idea of popular education is so incorporated into our present form of government that it cannot be eradicated without a rupture of existing social and political relations.

3. That public education is not eleemosynary, but a traditional and vested right to be enjoyed by the whole people, and that any abridgment of the course of study which tends to create a distinction between rich and poor, is a breach of faith by the authorities making such a distinction, and is dangerous to the peace and good order of society.

4. That the interests of both rich and poor, of capital and labor, are inseparably affected by the general diffusion of intelligence through the agency of common school instruction.

5. That public education, as now organized, is more efficient, progressive, and economical than any other system which has yet been devised for the instruction of the masses in the elements of a sound and practical education.

6. That public schools are very generally directed with intelligence, zeal, and fidelity to the public interest, and that in use of text books, modes of discipline and instruction, they are in full accord with the progress of the age, as manifested by the opinions of a great majority of intelligent and competent educators.

7. It follows from the foregoing that public education is entitled to the respect, confidence, and co-operation of all classes of people who are interested in the success of the government and in the prosperity and happiness of society.\[123\]

Lusher held that every child was entitled to the benefits offered by schools and that the whole social order would be affected by failure to provide the means of education. That he was prophetic in his warnings on the subject of illiteracy is indicated by the following:

The question of illiteracy bids fair to be one of the great problems of the next generation. The statistics upon this subject, even in this country, are frightful, and yet we are only on the threshold of the great evil. Education enters so largely into the spirit of our people that scarcely a town or city in the land is without its system of public schools, yet the work by no means covers the whole ground. Even in our large cities, under the shadow of stately school houses, children are growing up in utter ignorance of primary instruction. In rural counties and parishes where there is an absence of school privileges, a still larger proportion of young and old are unable to read or write. The social degradation—the squalid poverty, the shocking immorality of such classes increases in direct ratio with their ignorance. How to provide a remedy for an evil so direful in its consequences and threatening by its growth, the peace of society, will be forced, at no distant day, upon the attention of the statesmen and philanthropists of our country.124

Education of the Negroes. As indicated elsewhere, the course Lusher pursued during the first term of his superintendency might cause one to infer that he opposed the education of Negroes. During his latter term, however, when the education of the Negroes was entrusted to his direction, Lusher exerted his influence toward the provision of schools for them. The views he expressed on the subject are worthy of consideration. He believed that it was only through the work of education that harmonious relations between the races might be realised, "with no humiliation to the higher, with no degradation to the humbler." He maintained that it was the duty and the interest of the State to provide for the education of the Negroes. Lusher concluded an article entitled "The Duty Louisiana

Owes to the Colored Race" with the following paragraph:

Political partisanship, it should be remembered, is begotten of intellectual darkness. A shining and harmonious citizenship is born only of intellectual brightness. If the next colored generations, then, are to consist of good citizens, not weak tools for designing politicians, they should be educated. If they are to be conservative American citizens, lending their aid alike to the progress of the State and to the advancement of the public, they should be educated. If they are to make common accord with the whites, only recognizing in the latter the superiority that lies in lineage and in noble memories, indissolubly connected with the history of the world's most exalted civilization; and if they are to work with these, with good heart and earnest endeavor, to a common patriotic end, they must be taught that their State has no preferences, but that, like a kindly mother, she gathers in her tender bosom all the children who owe their existence to her.

School administration and finance. Lusher knew of the inequality in educational opportunity and of the inefficiency in management that resulted from division of the parishes into small school districts. The large number of District Boards of School Directors, their lack of uniformity in practice, and their tendency to neglect the affairs entrusted to them, were recognized by him as undesirable. He frequently called attention to the improvements that might be effected if administrative units were larger. For example, he wrote: "To remedy the reasonable complaints of directors, and to simplify the keeping of treasurers' accounts, it is respectfully recommended that each parish constitute a school district...." Again he wrote: "The system of subdividing each parish into school districts does not effect an equitable apportionment


of the school funds, as probably intended by the law; but it causes complications in Treasurers' accounts, frequently resulting in inexplicable errors....The State Superintendent would earnestly recommend the obliteration of school district lines, so that each parish shall be but one district, in which the Boards of Directors shall establish as many free public schools, of at least six months' sessions, as the funds under their control shall allow." This recommendation was made when many schools could be operated for only two or three months each year.

Lusher often wrote with the purpose of making others recognize the necessity of providing for adequate financial support of the schools. A selection on the financial needs of the schools contains the following:

If schools are to be conducted with any degree of efficiency, they must be supplied with money for other uses as well as for the payment of teachers. There must be fires in cold weather, and fuel cannot be had for the asking. There must be seats of some kind, whether chairs or benches, because American children are not accustomed to sit upon the floor after the manner of the Orientals. There must be money to pay the carpenter and the mason, in order that large buildings may be kept safe and habitable....

Funds to be used for the support of public education should be gathered from some reliable source of supply, and should be used for no other purpose and to this end, should be under the exclusive control and management of the Board of School Directors. 128

As indicated elsewhere, Lusher was convinced that a relatively large part of the money needed to support a school should be derived from local sources. He strongly advocated local taxation, within a town,


parish, or school district, for promotion of education. He thought that well-conducted schools, operated during reasonably long sessions, would receive popular support when the people learned of the benefits to be gained from them. On the other hand, he thought poor schools, operated during short sessions, represented a waste of public funds. Such schools did not meet his approval; they contributed little or nothing, he thought, toward the enlistment of the people in support of public education. He maintained that a few good schools, well attended for a long session each year, were preferable to a larger number of inferior schools with shorter sessions.

**Supervision of schools.** Lusher recommended that a superintendent or supervising officer should be provided for the schools of every parish. At that time supervision of the schools was entrusted to the Boards of School Directors. Lusher expressed his view that a "competent, practical teacher" should have the duty of supervising the schools in every parish. He thought the person selected for the task, should be one whose "presence in the schools" would "inspire both teachers and pupils with ambition to excel." Lusher's recommendation was followed in 1878 by the Parish Boards of School Directors in Avoyelles, Bossier, Caddo, East Baton Rouge, Iberia, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. James, St. Landry, St. Mary, and Union Parishes. Each appointed a "head teacher or inspector." The duties of this official embraced "the frequent examination of all the schools," "the gradual improvement of the methods of instruction," and

---


"The protection of other important school interests."

Lusher advocated the payment of a salary sufficiently large to command the services of a competent person to supervise the schools of each parish. He expressed his conviction that "the personal supervision of one capable man, who has found that it is made worth his while to examine the schools," would accomplish more than could possibly be accomplished by a Board of School Directors. He observed that where public schools were successfully established, the result was accomplished through the "disinterested labors of one or two Directors on each Board," and not by the action of the whole body.

Curriculum and classroom management. An editorial in the first number of the Journal treats of the school curriculum. It was occasioned by a suggestion that instruction in the public schools should be limited to reading, spelling, arithmetic, and geography, "to the rigorous exclusion of every other branch." Much of the editorial written in answer, was in a sarcastic vein. The editor suggested that in the time saved by this abridgment of the curriculum, the girls might help their mothers and, if studiously inclined, they might read novels and "sensational papers." The boys, it was pointed out, might devote the time saved to "catching crawfish" in the canals, to "chasing the meandering goats" through the city parks, and to "learning upon the levee and public thoroughfares, those arts and accomplishments which will be useful to them...." The conclusion of the editorial contained the following sentences:

---


132 Ibid., p. xx.
...The idea of an education which shall cover six or eight years of school life is too deeply seated in the minds of the American people to render it practicable for any man, or set of men, to eliminate the half of that period. Let the children grow. Give them healthful mental food, in healthful quantity. Require the training which is practical in every important meaning of the word.... Let us have no abridged curriculum, but thorough training and careful nurture in all that is necessary to make our sons and daughters useful and honest members of the commonwealth. 133

On another occasion comment was made in the editorial columns of the Journal on what should be taught in school. Lusher asserted that more should be taught than "a certain amount of knowledge in reading, writing, geography, arithmetic and the like." He commented on the importance of habits of order and industry. He stressed the place in the curriculum of self-control and of the lessons of morality. His conclusion was:

These lessons are the essential life of every true education. They are instilled into the minds of youth with every task of the text-book, and with every recreation of the play-ground. They are the beginning and the end of the teachers' influence and they are the living seeds which bear fruit when the stained and well-fingered school-books have been laid away with the games and play-things of youth. 134

Lusher advised caution in the addition of "special and ornamental branches" that would only be a burden to teachers and pupils. He advocated that teachers not be "subjected to constant interference by the introduction of crude and impracticable theories, under the name of improvements."


Lusher favored good order in the classroom, but he considered it as a means for the attainment of more important objectives. He maintained that "the teacher must be the ruling spirit" in the school, but he would have pupils given "freedom to ask and answer questions." As the first prerequisite of a pleasant schoolroom, he suggested that there should be work going on. He would not condone idleness. He suggested further that the schoolroom should be clean and orderly, that the seats should be well arranged with regard to light, and that attention should be given to the comfort of the pupils.

At the beginning of a new school session in 1879 Lusher gave some suggestions regarding the ways in which teachers might conserve and use to best advantage the strength and vigor restored to them by their vacations. Of the importance of the subject to the teacher, he wrote: "As a prudent man seeks to invest his means so that he may enjoy the interest without impairing the capital - so the teacher will endeavor to preserve that health which is essential to usefulness and success in the daily work." The specific suggestions he gave for the conservation of the teacher's strength are worthy of note. Among them were the following:

1st. A careful attention to the sanitary condition of the school room. Let the ventilation be as good as it can be made, avoiding the extremes of heat and cold while engaged in school work....

2nd. Do not worry and fret over your work. Be earnest and faithful, be zealous and strong but do not carry a constant burden of anxious care, or the physical frame, in generous sympathy with the mind, will droop and languish.

3rd. Do not punish yourself by remaining after school with indolent or disobedient pupils. Such time is needed for

---

Summary. Lusher had a clear conception of the important part education should have in the development of the State. He realized the obligation that devolved upon the people of the State to provide educational facilities for the Negroes. His views concerning school administration and supervision were practicable, as is indicated by the fact that the courses he recommended were subsequently adopted. His views with regard to the proper manner of conducting a school were in accord with the best contemporary thought on the subject.

V. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this period in 1877, Lusher's influence was greater than at any other time of his career. He secured the passage of such legislation as he considered desirable, and he effected a reorganization of the State's system of public schools under the provisions of that legislation. Those to whom school funds were entrusted were held accountable for the proper use of the money, and efficiency was promoted in the management of the schools. Enrollment of children in the schools increased.

Lusher played a prominent part in the educational affairs of the State, since he took an active part in the business of the State Board of Education and in that of the Board of Supervisors of the University. He exerted a considerable influence in the Constitutional Convention of 1879, although the popular sentiment of the time was such that he could not secure the adoption of every provision he thought desirable for education. Upon the defeat of his candidacy for re-nomination and re-election, he left

137 "In the Harness," The Louisiana Journal of Education, 1:133-34, October, 1879.
the affairs of his office in charge of his capable successor and retired to private life.
CHAPTER VII
LUSHER AS TEACHER AND AS CHAMPION OF
THE PEABODY NORMAL SEMINARY
1880 TO 1890

Upon his retirement to private life in 1880, Lusher resumed his work as a teacher in his academy and in the Peabody Normal Seminary of which he soon became the principal. He continued as co-editor of the *Louisiana Journal of Education* for several years, gradually giving up that work to his associate, Superintendent Rogers. One section of this concluding chapter is devoted to Lusher's activities as a teacher in his academy and in the Peabody Normal Seminary. Attention is given to his unsuccessful efforts to have the Peabody Normal Seminary made a part of the State's system of public schools. Another section contains a brief account of his private life during the period.

I. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

The Academy. Lusher's private academy which has been previously mentioned provided his chief source of personal income from 1868 until he became State Superintendent of Public Education in 1877. The notation, "Teaching my boys," appeared almost daily in his diary during these years until April 2, 1877, when his classes were placed in charge of John Dimitry. When Dimitry became Lusher's secretary, T. S. Dabney was employed to take his place in the academy. There were two other teachers in the

---

1Robert W. Lusher, *Diary*, April 2, 1877.
school in the spring of 1877. The school was closed during the latter years of Lusher's superintendency.

Lusher re-opened the "Commercial and Classical Academy," for boys, at 253 St. Charles Street in September, 1880. He advertised that "all the English branches, with the exact and natural sciences, and ancient and modern languages" were taught there "by competent and experienced teachers." In the same building with the academy were the Peabody Normal Seminary and the model school conducted in connection with it.

Lusher continued his academy for boys until 1882 when he began an "Academy for Young Ladies, with Elementary Departments" instead. Although the academy was large enough to justify the employment of one or two assistants in 1880-81, it later became so small that its operation yielded little profit; thirteen girls were enrolled in February, 1886, and fourteen in October of the same year. The school was finally closed on April 28, 1887.

The Peabody Normal Seminary. Two days after he was succeeded by Superintendent Fay, Lusher began teaching Latin to one student at the Peabody Normal Seminary. Gradually increasing the time he spent at the Normal Seminary, Lusher soon began teaching some of the classes. On February 11, 1880, arrangements were made by which the work of the Senior Class was placed in his charge.

---

2Ibid., April 30, May 3, 1877.
3Ibid., September 13, 1880.
5Advertisement in The Times-Democrat, New Orleans, September 8, 1880.
6Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 13, 1880; October 14, 1881; February 2, 1886; October 29, 1886; April 28, 1887.
7Ibid., February 11, 1880.
In September, 1830, Lusher was asked to become Principal of the Peabody Normal Seminary. He was in doubt as to whether he should accept the position, for he was the agent through whom financial support for the school was secured from the Peabody Education Fund; he had not previously accepted any remuneration for his services in the Normal School. Mrs. Shaw who had resigned her position as principal, continued her work until her successor should be selected. The Board of Trustees accepted Mrs. Shaw's resignation, named Lusher principal, and made Miss H. A. Suter his assistant on October 29, 1880. Ulric Bettison, teacher of mathematics and bookkeeping, and Miss Alice Lamberton who was director of the model school, were the other members of the staff.

Lusher received sixty dollars per month for his services in the Peabody Normal Seminary. He was free to devote his time to his academy until 3:00 p.m. five days each week. The classes of the normal school met at that time and were dismissed about 5:00 p.m., except on Saturdays when they met at 9:00 a.m. and continued without intermission until 2:30 p.m.

Legislation to provide for normal schools. According to Lusher's statement, he wrote the bill which was introduced in the State Legislature

---

8Ibid., September 8, 1880.
9Ibid., September 13, October 29, November 27, 1880.
10Ibid., cash account, 1880-1881.
11Ibid., notation on first fly-leaf, 1881.
and which was approved as Act No. 143 of 1880. The act authorized the State Board of Education to sell the property that had been purchased for a State Normal School in New Orleans and to appropriate the proceeds of the sale, along with any rents derived from the property, to the "maintenance of normal schools and departments in the State."

The first section of the act authorized the sale of the property; the second section is of special interest for it subsequently furnished the basis of many protestations by Lusher against the action of the State Board of Education. The essential part of the second section is shown below:

Sec. 2. Be it enacted, etc., That the said State Board of Education, or its legal successors, is authorized to appropriate the proceeds of the sales of any property, made under authority of section one of this act, and any rents derived from such property, to aid in the maintenance during three or more years of normal schools and departments in the State of Louisiana for the purpose of enlarging the usefulness of said institutions, securing scholarships therein of advanced students, for the professional training of advanced students as teachers of the public schools, and for the scholastic improvement


Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 10.


There is evidently an error in Lusher's manuscripts at this point with regard to the facts in the matter. He wrote: "In March, 1880, under the very shadow of the second General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund, this citizen — drew up the Act of April 15, 1880, solely and exclusively, for causing an enlargement of the well-known usefulness of the Peabody Normal School." The first General Agent, Sears, died in July, 1880, after the adoption of the act to which reference is made. The second General Agent, J. L. M. Curry, was elected by the Board of Trustees in February, 1881. He visited Louisiana after his election, as he reported to the Board of Trustees at their meeting in New York in October that year. Apparently the sequence of events was not clear in Lusher's mind when he recorded them in 1889.
of any person, already teaching, who may desire and be able to attend such institutions....

The act provided for "maintenance" of normal schools or departments. The purpose of the act was one of "enlarging the usefulness of said institutions." No provision was made for the establishment of normal schools; the normal schools were already established, namely, the Peabody Normal Seminary and the normal school for Negroes which is referred to elsewhere. Another significant fact with regard to this act is that the State Board of Education was authorized, but was not required, to give effect to its provisions.

Lusher hoped and expected that the property would be sold and that the proceeds would be put at the disposal of the Board of Trustees of the Peabody Normal Seminary. The Board of Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund shared that hope and, as indicated elsewhere, they continued their support of the school through 1882, only because they expected that it would receive aid from the State. Their action with regard to the Peabody Normal Schools in New Orleans, was contrary to the policy they usually followed. Their policy was to aid schools that were publicly maintained. The circumstances were explained by the General Agent on October 4, 1882, when he reported to the Board of Trustees:

Several years ago the Trustees, through the General Agent, began appropriations for a Normal Seminary for white students, and for a Normal School for colored students, in New Orleans. The Seminary and School, from their creation, have been under the efficient supervision and instruction of Hon. R. M. Lusher, whose intelligent and active labors in behalf of free education deserve honorable mention.

been made, with valuable results, but the Seminary and School are not a part of the public-school system of Louisiana. It is the well-known policy of the Trustees to aid only such schools as are under state auspices and control. Ample time has been given to the State to adopt these schools and aid in their support. There is no reasonable expectation of any such action, and unpleasant as it may be to see Seminary and School suspended, this result is in no wise attributable to the Principal, but entirely to the unwillingness of the State to provide even partially for their maintenance.

Further aid from the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund was contingent upon aid from the State of Louisiana. All efforts to persuade the State Board of Education to sell the land, or to collect any rents and to make the money available for support of the normal schools, were unsuccessful. A memorial from Lusher on the matter was discussed in a meeting of the State Board of Education, July 8, 1882. It was resolved by the Board: "That in view of the constantly increasing appreciation of values in real estate, in the city of New Orleans it is not deemed expedient to sell said lots at this time."

A second memorial from Lusher pertained to "rents accrued or accruing" on the property. Upon the reading of this memorial, the Board adopted a resolution which authorized the State Superintendent to collect any rent then due and to "make further arrangements for the rental as he may deem expedient." However, the rents collected were not to be given for support of the Peabody Normal Seminary as Lusher hoped, but they were to be held "subject to future use" of the State Board of Education.

---

15. Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890 (original at the Louisiana State Department of Education, Baton Rouge), p. 387.
The Peabody Normal Seminary received no assistance from the State, and it received none from the Peabody Education Fund after 1882. Fees collected from students then provided the only financial support of the school.

By Act No. 51 of 1884, the Legislature provided for the establishment, administration, and support of a State Normal School. This act directed that immediately after its promulgation, the State Board of Education should "proceed to select a town, city or village" for the location of the school. In selecting a town, the Board was directed to consider "its healthfulness, convenience of access and the liberality of the inhabitants in furnishing the buildings or the means for the erection thereof." The act provided six thousand dollars annually for maintenance of the school.

Public notice was given by the State Board of Education that a special meeting would be held in October, 1884, at which time propositions with regard to the location of the normal school, would be received from towns or cities of the State.

When the State Board of Education met on October 6, 1884, propositions were received from Natchitoches; from Fillmore, Bossier Parish; from Greenwood, Caddo Parish; from Homer, Claiborne Parish; and from New Orleans. The proposition of the representatives of New Orleans was accompanied by a memorial which Lusher had prepared and which was read to the State Board of Education. It was decided that the claim of each locality should be presented orally by its representative and that the

---


18 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 396-97.
Board, in executive session, should make final selection of a site for the State Normal School. The claim of the city of New Orleans was ably presented by Superintendent Rogers who called attention to the large number of young people who were graduated from the high schools of the city each year. Many of them, he said, would attend the State Normal School if it were located in New Orleans. The libraries and other cultural facilities of the city were described as desirable inducements that were not to be found in any other city or town of the State. The propositions of the other towns were then presented. The State Board of Education, by unanimous vote, chose Natchitoches as the site for the State Normal School. The General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund addressed the Louisiana Legislature in 1884 and he was probably influential in securing the passage of the legislative act in accordance with which the State Normal School at Natchitoches was established. The school was opened in 1885 with Edward E. Sheib as President. The State's appropriation for maintenance of the school was doubled in 1886, and grants were made by the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund to aid in its

---

19 Ibid., pp. 397-406.
support and to defray the expense of Teachers' Institutes conducted by members of its faculty. To make such grants for the support of a school maintained by the State, was in accord with the policy of the Trustees.

**Lusher's disapproval of the establishment of the State Normal School.** When a new session of the Peabody Normal Seminary began on September 10, 1883, Lusher recorded, "Teaching P.N.E. - 3 Srs. & 1 Junior. Sad beyond control." By the end of the month, however, there were four members in the Senior Class and three in the Junior Class. The enrollment increased to nine students in October. Lusher wrote numerous letters, petitions, and memorials to his friends throughout the State, to members of the legislature, and to the State Board of Education to secure financial support for the Peabody Normal Seminary, in accordance with the provisions of the legislative act of 1880. While waiting and hoping for action that would assure financial support and that would make the school a part of the State's system of public schools, Lusher kept the Peabody Normal Seminary open only by his own persistent efforts. The extent of Lusher's personal sacrifice is indicated by the fact that he received only $126.25 for his services in the Peabody Normal Seminary for the session, September, 1883, through June, 1884. The Werlein Hall was secured for the commencement exercises of the Normal Seminary in June, 1884.

---

21 Ibid., pp. 223, 328-29.
22 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 10, 1883.
23 Ibid., September 25; October 31, 1883.
24 Ibid., record of correspondence, May-August, 1884.
25 Ibid., cash account, 1884.
26 Ibid., June 24, 1884.
A second memorial from Lusher was read in the meeting of the State Board of Education, October 6, 1884. In that document Lusher asked that the Board "give effect to Act #143 of April 15th, 1880." He asked again that the rents on the property of the original State Normal School in the city of New Orleans be applied "towards the restoration of the free feature in both the Peabody Normal Institutions, and the preservation of the furniture, portraits, books, and other valuable appurtenances thereof." The matter was postponed for future action. Another of Lusher's memorials was read at the same meeting and it was referred to the School Board of the city of New Orleans.

Enrollment in the Peabody Normal Seminary became still smaller the next session. Bettison gave up his position as a teacher there in November, 1884, and Miss Sophie Wright taught for a while in his stead.

Lusher made himself a martyr in the cause of the Peabody Normal Seminary. Of himself, he recorded: "Reduced to poverty by the gross injustice of the State Bd. of Education in the perversion of the Act drafted and passed for the Sole benefit of the Peabody Normal Schools—now illicitly destroyed." 29

Lusher attempted again in 1885 to enlist the aid of numerous officials in behalf of his cause. He addressed his grievances to the Governor of the State, to the State Superintendent of Public Education, to the General Agent of the Peabody Education Fund, to the United States Commissioner of Education, and to many others. He again memorialized

---

27 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890, op. cit., p. 427.
28 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 3, October 11, November 22, December 6, 1884.
29 Ibid., special memorandum, June, 1885.
the State Board of Education. There were "numerous documents from
Hon. R. M. Lusher" before the State Board of Education at its meeting
in June, 1885. The Board decided unanimously to donate the proceeds
of the property to the School Board of New Orleans for the establishment
of a normal school as a part of the city's system of public schools. The
only conditions imposed were that the school should be established on or
before January 1, 1886, and that the plan of its organization should meet
the approval of the State Board of Education. The Board approved the
plan submitted, and State Superintendent Warren Easton was authorized in
September, 1886, to pay to Ulric Bettison, Superintendent of the New
Orleans School Board, the accrued rents which Lusher desired for his Peabody
Normal Schools.

When the School Board of New Orleans planned the organization
of a normal school in 1885, Lusher suggested that the Peabody Normal
Schools should be made part of the city's system of public schools.
His suggestion, however, was not followed.

The Peabody Normal Seminary was closed in February, 1886. Lusher
continued, however, to address letters of protest to public officials and
to men of influence. The main point of his argument was that the State

30 Ibid., March-April, 1885.
31 Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to
September 13, 1890, op. cit., p. 441.
32 Ibid., pp. 441-42.
33 Ibid., pp. 443-46, 461.
34 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, May 2, 1885.
Board of Education had no power to create the State Normal School at Natchitoches by which the Peabody Normal Seminary at Natchitoches was superseded. Minor points in his argument were that the establishment of the State Normal School was an act of injustice to him, that he was irreparably damaged by failure of the State Board of Education to provide support for the Peabody Normal Schools in New Orleans, that the establishment of the State Normal School in Natchitoches was designed primarily to please a group of detestable politicians, and that its establishment outside the city of New Orleans was injudicious.

The State Board of Education adopted a resolution in 1887 which indicates the attitude taken by the group. The Board resolved:

That while we entertain the highest respect and esteem for the Hon. H. M. Lusher, fully appreciate his past services in the cause of education, and have the profoundest sympathy for him in his present troubles, and while we entertain the proper respect for the signers of the several petitions presented in his behalf, we are again compelled to declare that, no action of this Board has done any injustice to Mr. Lusher; neither he nor his petitioners have presented any practical question for our consideration; so far as we know, his normal schools had no actual existence at the time the small fund accrued from the rent of the Normal School Property in New Orleans was appropriated to the establishment of a Normal School department in the Public


Copies of Lusher's correspondence and of protests, petitions, and memorials written in the last two years of his life seem to indicate that the failure of the State Board of Education to make provision for the normal schools in New Orleans became an obsession with him. Fay, in a citation of data furnished by Lusher, referred to "a somewhat polemic tone due to the supersession of the seminary by the State Normal School."

The following is typical of Lusher's argument: "...and it was never claimed that in any other act, adopted between 1877 and 1885, the power to call into existence or to create a Normal School was vested in the late Hon. State Board of Education." He refused to recognize the authority given by Act No. 51 of 1884.
School system of the city; that his normal schools never had any legal existence, never constituted any part of the Public School system of the State, and were never under the control or protection of the State Board of Education.\textsuperscript{37}

In 1889 the State Board of Education appointed a special committee to whom all communications from Lusher were to be referred. The Committee was directed to "take such steps as the necessity of the case may require."\textsuperscript{38}

Many men have possessed a pardonable desire to leave memorials by which they might be remembered by succeeding generations. It is probable that such a desire on Lusher's part furnishes the explanation of his persistence in attempting to secure recognition of the Peabody Normal Seminary. It should be recalled that he was active in the affairs of the first State Normal School in New Orleans before 1862. He was responsible for the first action taken by the Board of School Directors of the Second Municipality in 1857 for the establishment of a normal school. He was said to be the first person in Louisiana who recognized the need of a normal school in the State.

Lusher was active in the conduct of the New Orleans Normal School established in 1868. After reorganization of the school as the Peabody Normal Seminary in 1870, Lusher continued his interest in the school and, by aid from the Peabody Education Fund, he kept the school in operation throughout the dark period of reconstruction. Lusher's name was identified in the popular mind with the Peabody Normal Seminary. If some means could have been found by which the school could be made a public normal school

\textsuperscript{37} Minutes, State Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890, op. cit., pp. 462-63.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 511.

\textsuperscript{39} Robert M. Lusher, Manuscript, September 6, 1889, p. 4.
and by which its future growth and usefulness could be assured, Lusher would have been contented and happy. However, events took a different course, and Lusher was a bitterly disappointed man in his latter years.

Other educational activities. Lusher continued his connection with the Journal until February 18, 1834, when he sold his interest in the publication to Rogers.

It was in the period from 1831 to 1833 that Lusher wrote his "History of the Early State System of Education in Louisiana." That work, a manuscript of 324 pages, was submitted to the United States Commissioner of Education. Lusher received $450 for the preparation of the history. Parts of the work were condensed and were published serially in the Journal under the title, "Legislative Education." The fact that Lusher was paid for writing the "History of the Early State System of Education in Louisiana," indicates that there were plans for its publication by the Bureau of Education. One may surmise that the latter part of the work, in which Lusher treated the refusals of the Legislature and of the State Board of Education to extend aid to the Peabody Normal Schools in New Orleans, was of such a nature that the officials of the Bureau of Education did not choose to sponsor the publication. In 1890 Lusher

---

40 Ibid., cash account, 1884.

41 Ibid., cash account; correspondence record, 1883.

As noted elsewhere, the original manuscript of that work is now in the archives of the Louisiana State University. Only 649 pages have been preserved. Fay had access to Lusher's unpublished manuscript and he used it as a chief source of data in the preparation of his History of Education in Louisiana which is cited here.
requested that the manuscript be returned to him.

In 1883-84 Lusher was representative for Louisiana of the National Education Association.

Lusher again sought the Democratic nomination for State Superintendent of Public Education in 1883, but he was unsuccessful. He was nominated, without his authorization, by the State Nominating Convention of the Republican Party. Such a nomination was not acceptable to him; he attributed it to Dave Young whom he designated a "scamp."

It was in August, 1885, that Lusher made application for a place in the United States Bureau of Education in Washington. He went to Washington in December and visited for more than a month in the home of his niece, Mrs. S. G. Anderson. Senator R. L. Gibson introduced him to President Cleveland. He met L. C. C. Lamar, Secretary of the Interior, and made application for a position in the Bureau of Education. The interview with Lamar caused Lusher to hope that he might soon be employed there. Lusher visited the Commissioner of Education, John Eaton, who conducted him through the offices of the Bureau and explained its work to him. Eaton was soon to give up his office because of poor health.

---

42 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, record of correspondence, July 22, 1890.
43 Ibid., special memoranda, November 12-13, 1883; special memorandum, undated, 1884.
44 Ibid., record of correspondence, December, 1883.
46 Ibid., August 24-25, 1885.
47 Ibid., January 8, 1886.
48 Ibid., January 23, 26, 1886.
Lusher's aspiration to a high position in Washington was given favorable mention by his former associate, Rogers, in the Journal. The article published on the subject follows:

Thirty-eight candidates for the office of United States Commissioner of Education are already announced, and there are, doubtless, others in reserve.

Robert M. Lusher is among those who have been prominently mentioned for the office. As Superintendent of public education for Louisiana, and as school director and teacher, Mr. Lusher, has rendered earnest, faithful and effective service in the cause of education. His appointment to the honorable office of United States Commissioner would be a fitting acknowledgement of his life-long devotion to the public welfare. By natural gifts, varied learning, long experience and familiarity with various forms of educational work, as well as by the purity of his life and character, eminently fitted for a proper discharge of the duties of the office of Commissioner, his removal to Washington would open new channels for his thoughts.49

The editor of the Journal knew Lusher as few others knew him. Their association had been rather intimate for about thirty years. He considered Lusher "eminently fitted for a proper discharge of the duties of the office of Commissioner" in 1886 and he recognized Lusher's need for the change that might "open new channels for his thoughts." One may surmise that if Lusher could have directed his energies toward the performance of work commensurate in importance with his abilities, he might again have rendered good service in the advancement of public education. Such an opportunity, however, was not presented.

After a diligent quest for a position such as he desired, Lusher accepted the principalship of the McComb City Institute of McComb, Mississippi. He went there on August 13, 1887, attended a meeting of

263

the Board of Trustees of the Institute, and addressed the people who had assembled for the occasion.

Upon his removal to McComb, Lusher was paid this tribute by the editor of the Journal:

Robert M. Lusher, Esq., for many years associate editor of this Journal, and so well known as our State Superintendent of Public Education, Agent of the Peabody Education Fund, Teacher and Director; learned, zealous and honorable in all positions, has removed to McComb City, taking charge of the school there. The best wishes of many friends follow him to his new field of labor. Mississippi gains an educator of ripe scholarship, pure character, and of great devotion to his work. We expect to hear that great success will so attend his efforts as to make the school under his charge an ornament to that part of the State. It is a peculiar feature in educational work that a man so competent should find it necessary to seek employment in new fields, but our friend carries with him those traits of character which will increase his usefulness in proportion as he becomes known.

On the first day of the school session, September 5, Lusher registered 156 pupils and began the task of "grading" the school. Within a few days the number of pupils enrolled was 180 and there were four teachers in addition to the principal. The school was not a public school; there were "paying pupils" and records of fees had to be kept.

There are indications that Lusher conducted a good school at McComb. He had comfortable and pleasant living accommodations there and he was paid a salary that was liberal for such a position at that time. He was not contented, however, and he exerted his best efforts to find

---

50 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, August 13-14, 1887.
52 Robert M. Lusher, Diary, September 5-9, 1887.
53 Ibid., November 7, 1887.
54 Ibid., September 5-9, 1887, cash account, 1887-1888.
an opportunity to return to Louisiana. He returned to New Orleans early in June, 1888. The end of the school session in McComb, May 31, 1888, marked the close of Lusher's professional career.

II. PRIVATE LIFE

Marriage and family life. A student at the Peabody Normal Seminary to whom Lusher often gave instruction in French or Latin in 1876, was Miss Alice Lamberton, then sixteen years of age. Early the next year Lusher presented a book, "Golden Treasury of Thought," to Miss Lamberton, "for her kindness and rare zeal in pursuit of sound knowledge." Throughout the early months of 1877 Lusher made frequent references in his diary to Miss Lamberton who was an excellent student.

In 1879 Miss Lamberton was a teacher at the Peabody Normal Seminary where Lusher saw her upon nearly every visit he made to the school. The next year he began visiting the Lamberton home and he occasionally attended an opera with Miss Lamberton. They were married on February 17, 1881, at the Lamberton home and went to live at 253 St. Charles Street. The building which Lusher occupied was large and commodious. It provided living quarters for his family and rooms for his academy, for the Peabody Normal Seminary, and for the model school.

Miss Lamberton was twenty-one years of age at the time of the marriage and Lusher was her senior by thirty-seven years. The third member of the family was Lusher's son, John Robert, who had returned

---

55 Ibid., record of correspondence, May 17, 1888.
56 Ibid., May-June, 1876.
57 Ibid., January-March, 1877.
58 Ibid., June 20-23, 1879.
59 Ibid., February 18-19, 1880.
60 Ibid., February 17-20, 1881.
from St. Mary's College, had taken a commercial course at Soule's College, and was employed by Richardson and May, dealers in cotton. Described as a hard worker, his industry and ability were the source of pride and satisfaction to his father.

The life of the Lusher family was pleasant. Mrs. Lusher, with intellectual interests which closely paralleled those of her husband, was also an accomplished musician. She was an excellent teacher and she gave invaluable assistance in the academy, in the Normal Seminary, and in the model school. Of the situation in 1881, Lusher wrote: "School small. Seminary well attended & model well taught. Home illumined by a cheerful loving wife & concurring son."

In 1883 the foreclosure of a mortgage on the property at 253 St. Charles Street necessitated the removal of the schools to a new location. The household furnishings, books and school equipment were installed at 370 Baronne Street in August, and Lusher's schools were located there for two years. Attendance at the academy and normal school became so small in 1885 that it was decided to seek a smaller place. Another removal was made then to 384 Magazine Street.

When both the Peabody Normal Seminary and the academy had been closed, Mrs. Lusher was employed in May, 1887, as a teacher in the Central High School for Girls, a public school in the city. Later that year,

61Ibid., special memorandum, March 12, 1873; special memorandum, first fly-leaf, 1880.
62Ibid., December 22-23, 1880.
63Ibid., December 31, 1881.
64Ibid., August 22-25, 1883; July 9-10, 1885.
65Ibid., July 9-10; August 4, 1885.
however, when Lusher assumed the principalship of the McComb City
Institute, she went with her husband and a small daughter to McComb. 66
She was a teacher in the school at McComb.

Upon the return of the Lusher family to New Orleans in 1888,
they resided with the Lamberton family. The school furniture had been
sold and the library of the Peabody Normal Seminary was added to that
of the high school in which Mrs. Lusher resumed her work as a teacher.

Miscellaneous activities. Lusher continued his generous donations,
both to his relatives and friends and to charitable organizations. He
frequently loaned or gave cash to friends or to strangers who needed it.
He contributed one hundred dollars to a fund to care for the "destitute
sick" during the epidemic of yellow fever in 1878, and he gave freely of
his time to the activities of a "subsistence association" whose work
included the provision of ration cards to those in need. In the years
that followed, however, his income from the academy became so meager that
he could not afford to be so generous.

Lusher became an agent for the sale of the New Universal Cyclopedia
and of the Pictorial Library and he was active in the promotion of the
sale of those works until a short time before his death in 1890.

66 Ibid., May 2, 1887; September 6-7, 1887.
67 Ibid., April 29, 1887; October 15, 1888; November 25, 28, 1889.
68 Ibid., cash accounts, 1877-79.
69 Ibid., July 30, August 17, October 1-30, 1878.
70 Ibid., special memorandum, first fly-leaf, 1885; December 18,
29, 1888.
Intellectual interests. Lusher purchased books regularly throughout a great part of his life. Among those purchased in 1877, for example, were "1st Volume of a Cyclopedia of Chemistry," at a cost of $12.50; "Knight's Shakespeare, 2 Volumes, bound in Turkey Morocco," at a cost of $50.00; and "4 tomes de l'Histoire de France, Martin," at a cost of $22.00. Among his purchases in 1882 were a "Life of Christ for the Young," "Mastert Piece of French Art," a "History of Egypt," eight volumes of a "Choice Library of Literature," "Martin's Hist. of La.," a popular history of the United States in eight volumes, and Paul H. Bayne's poems. He read much in the last years of his life, making his selections from the classics, from history and from scientific works. He attended the opera frequently and reviewed the presentations for the Daily-Picayune.

Lusher was a regular attendant at church and he often noted his estimate of sermons which he heard. Until within a few days of his death, he was actively engaged in reading, in writing, in arranging his books, and in making scrapbooks of clippings.

Lusher's death occurred early in the morning of November 22, 1890, after an illness of only one day. On the occasion of his death, Mrs. Lusher closed the diary with these words:

3 a.m. Entered into Life Eternal, after a noble, devoted, self-sacrificing life on earth of 67 yrs. 6 mo. 5 da., leaving behind a record of good deeds to his fellow-men, and a spotless name as a heritage to his children.

---

71Ibid., special memoranda, 1877.
72Ibid., special memoranda, 1882.
73Ibid., 1889-1890.
74Information given by Mrs. J. W. A. Richardson, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
75Robert W. Lusher, Diary, November 22, 1890.
III, CONCLUSION

Upon his return to private life in 1880 Lusher directed his thoughts and his efforts toward the perpetuation of the Peabody Normal Schools in New Orleans. The course which he chose and followed was one designed to secure financial support for the schools from the State, but no success attended his efforts.

That Lusher misdirected his energies, especially in his latter years, seems evident. One may readily suggest other courses which he might have followed in which his accomplishments might have been greater and in which he might have enjoyed a greater measure of happiness and contentment.

Lusher's disposition was such, however, that he did not seriously consider changing his course. When other educational leaders of the State were in agreement upon the need for a school centrally located, where native teachers might be trained for their work in the rural parishes, he did not waver in his determination that the State should conform to his wishes with regard to the Peabody Normal Schools.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Lusher was a resident of Louisiana almost continuously for a period of forty-eight years. He lived in the State for five years before legislative provision was made in 1847 for a system of free public schools under the direction of a State Superintendent of Public Education. He was intimately associated with Alexander Dimitry who first held that office. He watched with interest the development of the public school system and, as a member of a board of school directors, he contributed to the successful operation of the public schools in New Orleans.

The War between the States provided the occasion for Lusher to learn at first hand about the people of various parts of the State and about their educational needs. His war activities brought prominence in public life and he was elected State Superintendent of Public Education in 1865.

It was during the period from 1865 to 1880 that Lusher made his contributions to the development of public education throughout Louisiana. That period was one of uncertainty and it presented many difficulties. Before the end of Lusher's term of office as State Superintendent of Public Education in 1868, there were portents indicating that a more difficult time lay ahead. During eight years, from 1868 to 1876, Lusher and many others who normally would have had a part in the direction of public affairs, were relegated to the background. In that time of adversity he continued his efforts on behalf of public education and he was again the popular choice for State Superintendent
of Public Education when the government of the State was restored to its people.

Lusher was confident that education was the means by which the whole social order might be improved. He firmly believed that popular education could make possible economic, political, and social advancement. He conceived the task of education as one of such magnitude that only the State could command the resources necessary for its accomplishment. Yet he realized that in a representative democracy, the people compose the State. As a consequence, he directed his efforts toward awakening the people to a realization of their opportunity and of their responsibility with regard to education.

Lusher's educational activities were varied in nature. He was a teacher, a member of the Board of School Directors in the municipality in which he lived in New Orleans, State Superintendent of Public Education, State Agent of the Peabody Education Fund, and editor of the Louisiana Journal of Education. A section of this conclusion is devoted to an evaluation of his services in each of these capacities. A final section presents an evaluation of Lusher's personal qualities.

Lusher, the teacher. It was as a teacher in Alexander Dimitry's academy in St. Charles Parish that Lusher first worked in Louisiana. His inclination to acquire and to impart knowledge was encouraged by the example of his associate, Dimitry, who was an outstanding scholar and teacher. Throughout his career Lusher exhibited certain traits that are characteristic of able and effective teachers: he liked to teach; he liked to study, to explore new fields of knowledge; he could arouse interest on the part of his students; he conducted a school or a class in an orderly manner; and he read widely in the professional
literature of his time.

The outstanding contradiction presented by Lusher's career in education is found in the fact that, while he was a leading advocate of public education, most of his teaching was done in private schools. It is readily understood why, living with Dimitry between 1842 and 1846, he taught in Dimitry's academy and did not seek employment elsewhere. He conducted his own academy during the period of reconstruction, for it would have been impossible for him to work under the direction of those in charge of the public schools of Louisiana at that time. His efforts after 1880 were spent chiefly in attempting to sustain a normal school until it should be given recognition and support as a part of the public school system of the State.

Lusher, the school director. Lusher observed on one occasion that where public schools were most successful, their success could be attributed largely to the interest and labor of one or two members of the board of school directors, not to the actions taken by the board as a corporate group. The memory of his own activities when he was a member of the Board of School Directors in the Second Municipality of New Orleans between 1854 and 1862 may have prompted the observation. As a member of the Board Lusher was active in the administration and supervision of the schools, striving in every way to improve them. He also did everything he could to foster and encourage sentiment in favor of public education. He was active in bringing the advantages of good schools to the attention of the people. No doubt it was through Lusher's efforts and through those of others like him that the feasibility of public schools in New Orleans was demonstrated to the people of the city.
Lusher, the State Superintendent of Public Education. Lusher's two terms as State Superintendent of Public Education had much in common. One term followed the war; the other followed the period of reconstruction. Faith of the people in public education and in their ability to support schools, was at a low point in both periods. Operation of the public schools in the rural parishes was suspended almost completely during the war; conditions in the rural schools became such between 1868 and 1876 that few white children attended them. Finally, each of his terms was cut short by the adoption of a new State Constitution and by a reorganization of the government of the State.

Growth and development of the public school system characterized each of Lusher's terms as Superintendent. There were increases in the number of schools, in the number of teachers, and in the number of children enrolled. However, educational progress was hampered in the latter part of his first term by political developments of the period; and, before the end of his second term in January, 1880, popular sentiment favoring retrenchment in public expenditures became so pronounced that Lusher could not gain popular approval of the measures which he recommended. Throughout his official career Lusher was consistent in his policy of strict adherence to the constitutional and legal provisions under which the schools were to be administered.

As State Superintendent, Lusher provided constructive educational leadership. He proposed and advocated a consistent and practicable policy for the financial support, the administration, and the supervision of a system of public schools. It is interesting to note that subsequent development of the State's public school system followed,
in many respects, the course which Lusher recommended. Although many of these developments came many years after Lusher's death and were not direct results of his recommendation of them, the fact that the developments closely paralleled the course he advised is indicative of the soundness of his views as measured in terms of present practice. For example, Lusher advocated care in the examination and certification of teachers, believing that efforts to secure the services of good teachers would be repaid by improvement in the schools; this matter still engages the attention of the State's educational leaders. Lusher instituted the periodic selection of textbooks and their adoption for State-wide use; the practice has been consistently followed in Louisiana since his time. At his suggestion, the State Board of Education adopted rules pertaining to the course of study; the formulation and revision of such courses still go on. With regard to financial support of schools, Lusher's recommendations were subsequently followed and revenues derived from local taxation furnished a major part of the money required for the establishment and maintenance of schools over a long period of time. Lusher recommended that each parish should comprise but one school district and that a professionally trained teacher should be employed as the supervisory officer for the schools in each; both of these have been found practicable. Finally, Lusher did not approve the location of schools in sparsely settled places; he advocated their location in centers of population where there was reasonable expectation that attendance would be good. The program of consolidation of schools that has been found practicable throughout the State, is in accord with Lusher's views on the matter.

Lusher was convinced that the policies he advocated were
feasible and that the course he pursued was right. He expected that the people would recognize the justice and the propriety of the cause he sponsored and that they would give it their support. It was difficult for him to understand opposition, either to himself or to courses of action which he advised. It was inevitable, therefore, that he should experience disappointment.

Lusher, the Agent of the Peabody Education Fund. Through his administration of the affairs of the Peabody Education Fund, Lusher helped to make possible the operation of a few good schools in the State for relatively long sessions each year. Educational opportunities were offered to thousands of children who might otherwise have attended no school. However, it is probable that a more far-reaching result was the demonstration in those schools of the advantages to be derived from popular education. Schools aided by grants from the Peabody Education Fund in thirty-three towns and villages of Louisiana, served to foster and to sustain popular sentiment favorable to education. Aid given to normal schools and departments helped to supply the demand for trained teachers. Lusher placed a high estimate on the value of aid from the Peabody Education Fund; he considered his part in making that aid available to the people of the State as one of his outstanding contributions to the cause of education.

Lusher, the editor of the Journal. Publication of the Journal was begun in 1879, "in a time of great financial depression." Lusher evidently considered the publication of the Journal one of the most effective means at his command for promoting the cause of education. In its columns he presented facts concerning education in Louisiana and elsewhere, along with editorial comment and articles of interest.
to teachers. Data concerning the circulation of the publication are lacking but there is evidence that copies were often sent free of charge to school officials and others throughout the State. The publication of the Journal was not a profitable venture and there is reason to doubt that Lusher expected it to yield a return in money. He distributed copies of the Journal as widely as his limited funds would allow and, at least to some extent, contributed through it to the encouragement of education.

**Lusher, the man.** Lusher wrote of himself that he was "a citizen, free of all the petty vices of men in general, - a citizen, also, who had never swerved from the path of moral rectitude." Lusher wrote this near the conclusion of a protest against alleged injustices to which he had been subjected. He felt that he had been grievously wronged. He evidently wished to magnify the wrongs inflicted upon him by making it obvious that he did not deserve such harsh treatment. However, it is true that such traits as kindness, patience, and generosity characterized Lusher's whole life. Honesty, truth, justice, and temperance were qualities of character which he consistently exemplified in his own life.

Throughout his career, Lusher regularly applied himself to the performance of whatever he considered to be his duty. He was entrusted with work of importance at a comparatively early age and his reliability gained recognition. Whether his task was the selection of a teacher or the administration of a system of public schools, the instruction of a class or the preparation of a compilation of laws, the work at hand

---

received Lusher's attention and it was done in a creditable manner. He could follow the path of duty, even though it ran counter to his personal preference or inclination.

A quotation from John Dimitry furnishes a fitting testimonial to Lusher's career. Dimitry dedicated a work of his "to Robert M. Lusher, the just man, the spotless citizen, and the steadfast friend of that system of popular education, of which he was, in a season of doubt and eclipse, the fearless defender." 2

2 John Dimitry, Lessons in the History of Louisiana from its Earliest Settlement to the Close of the Civil War, to which are appended Lessons in its Geography and Products (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1877), unnumbered page.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
DIARIES, MANUSCRIPTS, RECORDS, AND MINUTE BOOKS


________, unpublished manuscript, May 31, 1889, in the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 32 pp.

________, unpublished manuscript, September 6, 1889, in the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 13 pp.

________, unpublished manuscript, June, 1890, in the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 66 pp.

________, records in family Bible, in the possession of Mrs. J. W. A. Richardson, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

________, Account of Warrants, Drawn or Orders Given, 1877. Account book in the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 82 pp.

________, Diary, 1856-57; 1862-64; 1872; 1875-90. In the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Pages dated, not numbered.


________, Notes as to Tour to New York, &c., to see my son & sister in Washington C., July - August, 1876. In the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Pages dated, not numbered.

Minute Book, Committee on Teachers, Board of Directors of the Public Schools, First District, New Orleans, Louisiana, October 7, 1858 to July 1, 1861. In the archives of the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Pages not numbered.
Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, July 2, 1877 - July 3, 1893. In the office of the Board of Supervisors, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. 804 pp.

Minutes, Board of Education, from April 26, 1869, to September 13, 1890. In the Louisiana State Department of Education, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. 573 pp.


MAGAZINES AND JOURNALS


Noble, Stuart Grayson, "Schools of New Orleans during the First Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 14:65-78, January, 1931.


NEWSPAPERS

The *Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, 1868 - 1890.

The *Louisiana Courier*, 1847 - 1848.

The *New Orleans Bulletin*, 1865.

The *New Orleans Crescent*, 1867 - 1869.

The *New Orleans Daily Democrat*, 1877.

The *New Orleans Republican*, 1875 - 1876.

The *New Orleans Times*, 1865 - 1879.

The *Times-Democrat*, New Orleans, 1882.
PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

A. LEGISLATIVE ACTS


Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
First Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 22,

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Second Session of the First Legislature, New Orleans, January 4,

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Lee, State Printer, 1870. 218 pp.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
First Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 2,
1871. New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp
Street, 1871. 284 pp.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Second Session of the Second Legislature, New Orleans, January 1,
1872. New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp
Street, 1872. 167 pp.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Second Session of the Third Legislature, New Orleans, January 5,
1874. New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp
Street, 1874. 298 pp.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
First Session of the Fifth Legislature, New Orleans, January 1,
1877, and at the Extra Session, New Orleans, March 2, 1877.

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Regular Session, New Orleans, January 12, 1880. New Orleans:

Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana, at the
Regular Session, Baton Rouge, May 12, 1884. Baton Rouge:

B. REPORTS OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

First Report of the Superintendent of Public Education, addressed to
both branches of the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana.

Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education, to the General
Assembly of the State of Louisiana, October, 1864. New Orleans:
W. R. Fish, State Printer, 1864. 40 pp.


**Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education.**


---

**C. MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS**

**Constitution of the State of Louisiana, adopted in Convention, July 23, 1864,** printed as a supplement to Debates in the Convention for the Revision and Amendment of the Constitution of the State of Louisiana. New Orleans: W. R. Fish, Printer to the Convention, 1864. 64 pp.

**Constitution of the State of Louisiana with Amendments, adopted in Convention, March 7, 1868.** New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 94 Camp Street, 1875. 34 pp.


**Lusher, Robert M., compiler, A Compilation of the Laws of Louisiana, Now in Force, Providing for the Organization and Support of Free Public Schools, and of Normal Departments for the Education of Teachers; together with a Digest of the Powers and Duties of the Parochial and District Officers Charged with the Execution of Those Laws, and an Appendix for Reference by all Friends of Education.** New Orleans: Crescent Job Print, 94 Camp Street, 1867. 36 pp.


MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS


*Circular of the Law Department of the University of Louisiana, for the session of 1865-66*. New Orleans: Printed at the Office of the Picayune, 66 Camp Street, 1866. 16 pp.


The Civil Record of Major General Winfield S. Hancock, during his administration of Louisiana and Texas, 1871. Bulletin in a special collection in the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; data concerning publisher not given. 32 pp.

**UNPUBLISHED WORKS**

Hall, Douglas Miller, "Public Education in Louisiana During the War Between the States with Special Reference to New Orleans." Unpublished Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1940. 93 pp.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Appropriations for Parish Schools, Summarized, from 1812 to 1845</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Data on Parish Schools Submitted by the Committee on Public Education, in the House of Representatives, 1831</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. A Portion of the Tabular Report on Schools for Freedmen, Department of the Gulf, September, 1864</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Places in Louisiana in Which Contributions from the Peabody Education Fund to Aid Free Schools Were Reported in 1868</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Places in Louisiana for Which Appropriations from the Peabody Education Fund for Support of Free Schools Were Approved, February, 1870</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Places in Louisiana for Which Appropriations from the Peabody Education Fund for Support of Free Schools Were Approved, February, 1871</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Appropriations from the Peabody Education Fund for the Normal School and Model Schools in New Orleans</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Governor in office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812-16</td>
<td>Wm. C. C. Claiborne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817-20</td>
<td>James Villere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-24</td>
<td>Thomas B. Robertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825-28</td>
<td>Henry Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1829-30</td>
<td>Peter Derbigny, A. Beauvais, and Jacques Dupre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831-34</td>
<td>A. B. Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835-38</td>
<td>Edward D. White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-42</td>
<td>A. B. Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843-45</td>
<td>Alexander Mouton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for this table were assembled from Robert M. Lusher, "History of the Early State System of Education in Louisiana," (unpublished manuscript in the archives of the Louisiana State University, 1883), pp. 5, 16, 26, 41, 56, 99, 143, 216, 275.*
**TABLE II**

DATA ON PARISH SCHOOLS SUBMITTED BY THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION, IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1831*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Number of paying pupils</th>
<th>Number of free pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Tammany</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helena</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Landry</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Feliciana</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Feliciana</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouachita</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>432</strong></td>
<td><strong>317</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data from Robert M. Lusher, "History of the Early State System of Education in Louisiana," (unpublished manuscript in the archives of the Louisiana State University, 1883), p. 64.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parishes</th>
<th>1874</th>
<th>1875</th>
<th>1876</th>
<th>1877</th>
<th>1878</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1882</th>
<th>1883</th>
<th>1884</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary</td>
<td>6770</td>
<td>6796</td>
<td>6725</td>
<td>6735</td>
<td>6746</td>
<td>6757</td>
<td>6768</td>
<td>6779</td>
<td>6790</td>
<td>6791</td>
<td>6792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>6600</td>
<td>6625</td>
<td>6640</td>
<td>6655</td>
<td>6670</td>
<td>6685</td>
<td>6696</td>
<td>6707</td>
<td>6718</td>
<td>6729</td>
<td>6730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrebonne</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3035</td>
<td>3060</td>
<td>3075</td>
<td>3090</td>
<td>3105</td>
<td>3120</td>
<td>3135</td>
<td>3150</td>
<td>3165</td>
<td>3180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Baton Rouge</td>
<td>0020</td>
<td>0045</td>
<td>0070</td>
<td>0095</td>
<td>0120</td>
<td>0145</td>
<td>0170</td>
<td>0195</td>
<td>0220</td>
<td>0245</td>
<td>0270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iberia</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>5050</td>
<td>5075</td>
<td>5100</td>
<td>5125</td>
<td>5150</td>
<td>5175</td>
<td>5200</td>
<td>5225</td>
<td>5250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1125</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1225</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>2075</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>2125</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>2175</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>2250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemines</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3025</td>
<td>3050</td>
<td>3075</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>3125</td>
<td>3150</td>
<td>3175</td>
<td>3200</td>
<td>3225</td>
<td>3250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>4025</td>
<td>4050</td>
<td>4075</td>
<td>4100</td>
<td>4125</td>
<td>4150</td>
<td>4175</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>4225</td>
<td>4250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>5050</td>
<td>5075</td>
<td>5100</td>
<td>5125</td>
<td>5150</td>
<td>5175</td>
<td>5200</td>
<td>5225</td>
<td>5250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>6025</td>
<td>6050</td>
<td>6075</td>
<td>6100</td>
<td>6125</td>
<td>6150</td>
<td>6175</td>
<td>6200</td>
<td>6225</td>
<td>6250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. of schools

Average attendance of scholars

No. of scholars in schools

No. of schools without directors

No. of schools in parish

No. of directors in parish

No. of children between 5 and 12 in parish

Departments of the Gulf, September, 1864.

A portion of the Tabular Report on Schools for Freedmen.
### TABLE IV

**Places in Louisiana in Which Contributions from the Peabody Education Fund to Aid Free Schools Were Reported in 1868**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>Money Raised for rent and teachers</th>
<th>Money Contributed by Peabody Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine (second Yr.)</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchitoches</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Martinville</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayou Sara</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eureka</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklinton</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covington</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total              | 1,007           | $6,485                            | $3,605                            |

**TABLE V**

PLACES IN LOUISIANA FOR WHICH APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE PEABODY EDUCATION FUND FOR SUPPORT OF FREE SCHOOLS WERE APPROVED, FEBRUARY, 1870*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Appropriations</th>
<th>Local contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>donations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>$ 450</td>
<td>$ 1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastrop</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Data not yet received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shreveport</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchitoches</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donaldsonville</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayou Sara</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baton Rouge</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amite City</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangipahoa</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensburg</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklinton</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eureka</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretna</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>3,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE VI**

PLACES IN LOUISIANA FOR WHICH APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE PEA BODY EDUCATION FUND FOR SUPPORT OF THE FREE SCHOOLS WERE APPROVED, FEBRUARY, 1871*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Donations $</th>
<th>Local appropriations</th>
<th>Local contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>$ 600</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastrop</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrisonburg</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>375</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minden</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>375</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natchitoches</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shreveport</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnfield</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amite City</td>
<td>800</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baton Rouge</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayou Sara</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklinton</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretna</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livonia</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st. District, New Orleans</td>
<td>700</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd.</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th.</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaquemine</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terre aux Boeufs</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thibodaux</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE VII

**APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE PEABODY EDUCATION FUND FOR THE NORMAL SCHOOL AND MODEL SCHOOLS IN NEW ORLEANS***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amount of appropriation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 16, 1868</td>
<td>$ 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 1870</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17, 1871</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 27, 1872</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16, 1873</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14, 1874</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 6, 1875</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 1876</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3, 1877</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2, 1878</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1, 1879</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February, 1881</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5, 1881</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 4, 1882 (for 1881)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 4, 1882</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 30,100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for this table were assembled from:


# APPENDIX B

**PHOTOSTATIC COPIES OF DOCUMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Minutes of the State Board of Education</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Recorded by Robert M. Lusher</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pages from Robert M. Lusher's Diary, December 31,</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1875; Special Memorandum, 1876</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pages from Robert M. Lusher's Diary, January 7 - 10,</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1877</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State Board of Public Education
New Orleans, La. March 30th, 1877.

In the Governor's Office. 11 A.M. Called Meeting.

W. A. Strong, Secretary of State.
R. M. Lusher, Supvr. of Pub. Education.

J. B. S. Finchback (Appointee of Gov.),

The Gov. being unable to attend the meeting: on motion
the Board adjourned until 71/2 P.M. Saturday, March
31st, 1877, to meet in Governor's Office.

Attorn: Robert M. Lusher,
In Offic. Sec'y of State Board, etc.

1. FIRST MINUTES OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATIONRecorded
BY ROBERT M. LUSHER.
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1875.

Felt to be earnest, went to 
the office, got the 
work in hand with 
the aid of a few assistants. 

Noted a wasp's nest 
in a cornfield, and 
attended to its removal.

took a walk in the 
early evening.

SPECIAL W. M. M. M.,
1076.

EXPENSES, STATE LOT 
ELEcT E. B. COPE.

1875.

Nov. 25, 100 circulars, 20

rural envelopes, 100

stamped envelopes, 30.

Dec. 2, postage in circulars,

sent to 3. M. F. D., 40

stamped envelopes, 100.

Telegram to New York & Sa-

lom. End: "The Republic, for 

them 12. Robbins of 12,000 legitimate 

votes illegally defeated in Bal-

but Rogers will. This gigantic 

fraud exacted, by a riffle 

of the senseless of being 

of the Constitution by 

the law consti-

"Returning Board." R. W.

Here by night telegraph. 2,50

1875, Feb. 18. J. B. W.

Democrat (now) Card and.

2. PAGES FROM ROBERT M. LUSHER'S DIARY, DECEMBER 31, 1875;
SPECIAL MEMORANDUM, 1876.
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1877.

What day, my dear 9. Red
out 10. Walk down Corn. at 12.26 to 113. at St. Patrick's.
Depoy St. and column over the 3 sensible letters.
Letter Rem, 11 to 127.4 at St. Patrick's. 4 children left.
Tired, under a very low continued lumb, sermon from a crying levee.
Saw the P.S. letter (of) brother. (of) letter. (of) flute, home, here 2 rooms. My
right foot is in a fine, (R.S.) foot, of 3 feet 2 in. 2. P.M. brother
out, he left 2. V. brother,
-

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1877.

What day, my dear 9. Breakfast at school. Now
out 10. Walk down Corn. at 9 to 73. Teaching my boys,
Great excitement on 11th. The peak top State Militia
went down, put in order in their position, taking police
station, upsetting city in charge, and then
Sitting State House of session.

- MONDAY 8

Double hie do go for,
Louisiana, official,
Mr. Call by E. M. Drum.
Mr. Call by best medical, executed him with the
- of the crime.
St. Patrick's Hall, there
in presence of an in-

WEDNESDAY 10

Wth 7am Breakfast 714.

3 74, teaching my boys,
and 720, my game to be filled
in French. Mr. A. Leclerc
walked up home and dine.
9 am. at school. City quiet.
To school and, till 11.

3. PAGES FROM ROBERT M. Lusher's DIARY, JANUARY 7-10, 1877
BIOGRAPHY

Howard Turner, eldest son of June and Emma B. Turner, was born near the town of Minden, Louisiana, March 30, 1905. After graduation from the Minden High School, he attended Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1925.

He has held the following positions in the schools of Louisiana: assistant principal of the Acadia Baptist Academy, Church Point, 1925-30; assistant principal and athletic coach of the Gueydan High School, Gueydan, 1930-35; principal of the Henry High School, Henry, 1935-39; and principal of the Leon Godchaux High School, Reserve, 1939-44.

After pursuing graduate courses in education at the University of Arkansas and at the Louisiana State University, he received the Master of Arts degree from the latter in 1938.

He was married to Estelle Stagg of Eunice, Louisiana, in 1928 and he is the father of two children, James Howard and Miriam Louise, aged thirteen and five years, respectively.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Howard Turner

Major Field: Education

Title of Thesis: Robert Niles Lusher, Louisiana Educator

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

Aug. 29, 1944.