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Ronald E. Butchart. *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. xxii + 314 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3420-6.

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Revisioning the Teachers of the Freedmen

The companion piece to this book is the Freedmen's Teacher Project (FTP) that attempts to do nothing less than to identify by name every teacher who worked in schools for the freed people between 1861 and 1876. In addition, the database also includes "prosoporgraphical data" (use of collective biography) on race, gender, birth year, all locations and years taught, sponsoring organizations (if any), home, marital status, parents' occupations, teachers' occupations before and after teaching in the South, educational attainments, schools attended (academy or normal school and above), evidence of antebellum abolitionism, military experience, religious affiliation, and other data, along with more traditional archival information such as diaries and letters (p. 179). The FTP is eventually to be published as a Web site, but author Ronald E. Butchart is still analyzing the data. It should be noted that full data is known for only a minority of the teachers. Nevertheless, this is the most comprehensive demographic examination of the people variously known as Yankee Schoolmarms, Gentle Invaders, Solders of Light and Love, and "nigger teachers."

The book consists of a preface, six chapters, and two appendices. In addition, there are several illustrations and tables. The preface sets the stage for Butchart's rejection of the William A. Dunning School's interpretation of southern history. According to Dunning, the schoolteachers were foolish, messianic, and educational carpetbaggers–nothing less than the rear guard of the conquering army. Butchart goes on to dismiss W. E. B. DuBois's interpretations of southern history as romantic. DuBois depicts the teachers as New England schoolmarms, white, young, single, female, and well educated, who came south with a mission to spread education throughout the region. Subsequently, an interpretive middle ground rises–the teachers were well intentioned but determined to domesticate the freed people and inculcate Christianity and Protestant values. This is the view of historians such as James McPherson, Jacquelyn Jones, and Linda Perkins, who have investigated the teachers' geographic origins, motives, race, religion, and class.[1] But the narrative has remained largely represented by the image of a white young woman from a well-to-do New England family who bravely ventured south, propelled by noblesse oblige. The representation that Butchart gives readers in this book is drawn from a database of thousands of teachers. The portrait Butchart paints is of a much more self-serving purpose–the teachers were out to land a job or a husband or to escape the harsh New England weather. Moreover, the portrait of the teachers also suggests what may have taken place in the schoolhouse.

In chapter 1, "At the Dawn of Freedom," Butchart reiterates that even before formal emancipation, southern black slaves began to build their own institutions that also included schools. In their desire to create a world that could be occupied by freed people, blacks did not wait for white assistance or support. As slavery began to give way, blacks began to empower themselves. Black teachers began filling freed people's schools in a way that eclipsed any interest in education on the part of poor whites. Blacks contributed their labor, land, and fuel and relied on their bravery to persevere in a hostile climate. Although the motive for literacy has often been explained as a desire to read the Bible, literacy was also perceived as a political means to true emancipation and a way to defend oneself against being cheated by whites. Although

the motivation varied, the movement included thousands of black teachers, many from the North, former slaves or free blacks, and a small group of northern white teachers who envisioned a reconstructed social order. Others, however, were teachers who were simply looking for employment in a devastated South and who saw teaching as an extension of white supremacy.

In chapter 2, "To Serve my Own People," Butchart provides portraits of black teachers in the southern black schools and moves beyond the standard inclusion of well-known subjects such as northern black teacher Charlotte Forten. According to Butchart, "Between 1861-1876, black teachers outnumbered northern white teachers four to three" (p. 19). Since many of the teachers had little education themselves, this period was also the beginning of the normal schools–in fact, six of the early black normal schools were established by African Americans. Butchart uncovers a pattern of prejudice on the part of the federal department known as the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (1865 to 1870), or the Freedmen's Bureau, which preferred to hire and support white teachers to teach the freedmen: "Most black teachers never received bureau or northern benevolent aid" (p. 36). In contrast to their uniform preference for northern white teachers, benevolent and aid societies varied as to their attitudes toward hiring black teachers. The American Missionary Association sometimes turned down white applicants who were well trained but not sufficiently dedicated to missionary work. Abolitionist tendencies were perceived as less important than evangelizing among the freed people. Throughout the book, Butchart reinforces the notion of border crossing–borders of race, class, gender, and even occupation as blacks began to form a new professional identity as teachers.

In chapter 3, the author explores southern white teachers and the limits of emancipation. The southern white teachers of black students were a desperate lot of men and women who included former slave owners, Confederate soldiers, farmers, and housekeepers. The FTP documented over sixteen hundred southern white teachers who taught out of necessity and usually not for long and who left little evidence of their time as teachers of the freed people. They were not motivated by religion or social uplift but rather by the desire to survive in a ravaged region. Although they served briefly, and with little enthusiasm, the women teachers did advance the feminization of teaching in the South. In chapter 4, Butchart focuses on the topic of northern white teachers and what he terms the "ambiguities of emancipation." The ranks of the northern white women were greater than those of men and they were more likely to come from middle and western states than the Northeast. More of them were single rather than married. If their representation in the schooling of the freed people was less than previously believed, their motives were also more broad-based. Some were devoted to evangelicalism while others were not motivated by faith or religious zeal. They often stated the desire to be "useful" or to "do good," but they had no understanding of the needs of their students. The South appealed to the evangelists much like a foreign country that was ripe for conversion. The white teachers/missionaries lacked a commitment to abolitionism, nor was it a requirement to work for the American Missionary Association. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they were more concerned with their own journeys (spiritual and otherwise) than providing education that could be a tool of liberation for blacks.

In chapter 5, Butchart turns to pedagogy. If the teachers were a more diverse lot than we, as historians, thought, how did that affect what was taught and how? It is in this chapter that readers begin to see the seeds of the arguments between black intellectual DuBois, who advocated a classical-liberal curriculum, and black leader Booker T. Washington, who emphasized vocational training. If there was a rudimentary curriculum such as one might see in the New England common school, was there also a hidden curriculum that sought to inculcate blacks into servitude? Although there were some specific primers produced for the effort, the instructional materials more often consisted of the ubiquitous McGuffey Eclectic *Readers*, a staple of the common school, and the classical canon. School was conducted by recitation and small-group work, but there were influences of the modernization brought about by the Progressive Era. If teachers insisted on the same curriculum used for whites, it suggested to blacks that their teachers thought that they had the intellectual capacity to handle it. It was, after all, the pedagogy of the dominant class.

In chapter 6, Butchart examines the fate of education during Redemption. White resistance to the efforts of blacks to gain literacy not only spurred threats to the lives of teachers and students, but also, in the end, reshaped education according to the ideology of white supremacy. Beginning during the Civil War, both black and white teachers suffered. Opposition to literacy came to a boiling point over the right to vote. As Butchart states, "Ultimately, education and the franchise cannot be disentangled, for effective use of the franchise was linked to literacy and, for many in the nineteenth century, the

point of literacy was the intelligent use of the franchise" (p. 173).

In the preface of an earlier book, Butchart stated: "Finally, an unintentional undialectical quality appears in this book as a result of its focus on northern white objectives and actions. Black uses of schooling and literacy were often at odds with the purposes, and beyond the control, of whites as intimated only briefly and impressionistically below. A more detailed sensitive analysis of the black response to schooling must await a subsequent volume. My purpose here is not only to understand fully the actions of one group, but to suggest that their clients were more than a passive mass waiting to be acted upon."[2] In this subsequent volume, Butchart begins to layer the image that historians have long held about the journey to literacy–and consequently, full equality–that began during the Civil War. Historians of the black educational experience are likely to find much to ponder in this work and the accompanying Web site. Beyond black education, Butchart also sheds light on the growth of the common school in the South and the southern school ideology.

In a larger sense, Butchart's elegantly written study reminds readers that this continues to be a complex and troubling topic for educational historians. If anything, I would have liked the author to strengthen and expand the references to border crossings that are included in the text. For example, "The carefully policed educational boundary between whites and blacks bespoke a deep fear among members of the dominant race" (p. 15). And, "Northern black teachers, meanwhile, crossed another border with both emotional and political freight, the geopolitical border between the North and South" (p. 51). In another chapter, he states that "the educational boundaries that such teachers built around their schools offered a moderately more expansive field of thought and action" (p. 119). And finally, "Like the African American and southern white teachers, northern white teachers also crossed racial, gender, and class borders in their work in the free people's school" (p. 118). Border crossing seems to be at the heart of this text, which encourages one to read between the lines of standard interpretations and consider the implications of newly uncovered evidence.

Notes

[1]. James M. McPherson, "The New Puritanism: Values and Goals of Freedmen's Education in America," in *The University in Society*, ed. Lawrence Stone, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 611-642; Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); and Linda M. Perkins, "The Black Female American Missionary Association Teachers in the South, 1861-1870," *Black Americans in North Carolina and the South*, ed. Jeffrey J. Crow and Flora J. Hatley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 122-136.

[2]. Ronald D. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875*, Contributions in American History, no. 87 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), xiii.

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