

ALACHUA COUNTY

Gainesville, Florida.

Hon. W. N. Sheats, Superintendent Public Instruction, Tallahassee, Fla.:

Dear Sir--In compliance with your request, I shall endeavor to give you a brief report of the condition of the schools in this county, and the status of educational affairs generally.

Making due allowance for the disaster brought about by the freeze of '95, and the devastating effect of the recent cyclone, which materially injured the school property in the county, our schools have had a steady growth during the past two years. As the educational system of this county is, for the most part, a continuation of the policy of my honored predecessor,--his policy at that time being practically that of the State at present, the improvement incident to the operation of the new school law, has not been so marked as in other counties, possibly, but one of excellent growth and development under such a system.

We have, in every way possible, endeavored to develop and perfect the system. We maintain an active interest upon the part of teachers by being greatly in earnest and interested ourselves.

Schools Visited.--As the law directs, every school is visited and carefully inspected by the Superintendent, notwithstanding there are one hundred and twenty in the county. Good teachers are encouraged, and inexperienced ones taught how to teach by teaching classes for them.

County Institutes.--A county institute is held annually at the county site, and every teacher is compelled to attend and participate in the exercises of a carefully prepared program. Generally some noted educator is engaged to lecture on such occasions.

Monthly Local Institutes.--The county is divided into four local districts, and an institute is held monthly at some point in each of them. It is not infrequent that the interest manifested at these meetings equals that at the county institute.

Sub-district Tax.--Our school facilities have been greatly enhanced, and the funds materially augmented by the operation of a sub-district tax in each of twelve districts in the county. The funds accruing from these districts, aggregate \$3,000.00 annually. This, of course, is expended for new buildings, furniture, lengthening the term of school, and otherwise as the law directs.

New Buildings.--During the period covered by this report, about \$10,000.00 have been expended in the way of new buildings; notably among the number, those at Hawthorne and Micanopy, the latter being one of, possibly, only seven brick public school buildings in the State. Its value is \$5,000.00.

Suggestions.--1. I am in favor of an educational qualification for County Superintendent--say to be the holder of a First Grade Certificate, and I hope the next Legislature will enact such a law.