

In May, 1898, the State Superintendent located a "Training School for Teachers" for both races at Fernandina, in this county, with a term of four weeks. The department for whites was but fairly well attended, while the attendance in the colored department was unusually large.

The effect of these schools has been very encouraging, and we hope by State or county provision to have one every summer.

Adopted Uniform Text Books.--Prior to June, 1897, no series of books had ever been prescribed by the School Board for use in the rural schools. The condition can be easily imagined. In some of the schools there were books in use of nearly as many different kinds as there were pupils, some of them so antiquated that they might almost be designated as souvenirs of the "Patriarchal Age." In June, 1897, the School Board adopted a uniform series of books. The Superintendent was made the agent of the Board to handle the books during the "introductory" period, and supply them to the patrons at their net cost to the Board, thus giving the patrons the privilege of "exchange," and the 10 per cent. commission allowed by the publishers. This order, at first, met with considerable opposition, but as its object became better understood its propriety was recognized, and now most of the schools are using the adopted books. As the "introductory" period has expired, the Superintendent no longer handles the books. An agent has been appointed, who furnishes the books at the publishers' catalogue prices.

Pupils Without Books.--In some parts of the county a good many pupils attending school are not supplied with books of any series. In visiting some schools I have seen classes of two or more reading from one book. In one instance I found a class of five reading from one Fourth Reader, it being the only one of that grade in the school. The parents say they are not able to make the outlay, and, in many cases, I believe this to be true. The only remedy that I can suggest is the adoption of the "Free Book System" as soon as our financial condition will permit.

Buildings.--During the period covered by this report, six new frame school houses have been erected, the houses that had been blown from their foundations replaced, and all other school buildings have been repaired and made comfortable.

Furniture and School Term.--Three of our schools have been equipped with new patent desks. We give our schools a uniform term of 5 months.

School Warrants.--Most of our schools usually begin their terms in September, and end the same February. The taxes levied to meet the estimated expenses of the current year are seldom collected before March or April, and thus we are deprived of the use of these funds until after the greater part of our work is accomplished, but in order to protect the teachers and other holders of school warrants against losses by discount, the Board has entered into an agreement with the First National Bank of Fernandina, whereby all school warrants issued are made payable at said bank and cashed upon presentation without discount or exchange. The Board pays interest on such warrants at the rate of 8 per cent. per annum, from the date on which such warrants are cashed until paid.

Financial Condition.--Our financial resources are not adequate to the needs of our work, although the County Commissioners have unanimously endorsed the efforts of the School Board by allowing the maximum levy of 5 mills. Economy