

Taken from the Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, W. N. Sheats, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1898.

ALACHUA COUNTY

My Dear Sir--In compliance with your request, I herewith transmit to you a report of the progress and condition of the schools of this county for the last two years.

Buildings.--During the period embraced in the above, there have been erected eight buildings, ranging in cost from \$150 to \$25,000 each. Some twenty have been repaired at an aggregate cost of \$1,000.

There are now operated in the county seventy-four white schools and forty-eight colored schools. Three of the white schools are conducted in magnificent brick structures, seventy in framed buildings, and one in a log building. Most of the buildings are in a state of good repair, and are furnished with good patent desks. Forty-six of the colored are operated in good framed buildings, and two in log buildings. Nearly all of these schools are equipped with modern furniture and appliances.

Financial.--The deficit in our school fund is somewhat greater than it was two years ago. This is due to a gradual decline in property valuations assessed, but not any actual decline in values. However, by careful management we are still paying our teachers, promptly at the end of each month. If there be not speedily adopted a more equitable plan for returning property for taxation, or if the constitutional five mill limit be not abolished and the levy placed in the hands of the school board, so that it can meet the exigencies of the case, inevitable retrogression must follow in all matters pertaining to the schools in the future. It is true that the Special Tax Districts are accomplishing some good in the communities where established, but only local benefits accrue from them. Since it is impracticable, if not impossible, to form a whole county into a Special Tax District, if we were no longer restricted by the five mill maximum limit, I would favor the abolishment of such districts and the placing of such a rate of taxation on the property of the whole county as would meet the requirements of the case.

Teachers.--The improvement in the teachers of this county continues, and will as long as the present examination law is rigidly enforced. Primarily, the improvement is due to the examination law, as summer training schools, institutes, and associations are but the natural incidents of the operation of such a law.

Hitherto, our teachers have not done as much general reading as they should, but recently much enthusiasm has been aroused on this subject, the result being the establishment of a large County Teacher's Library. Besides the county library for teachers, there are in many of the best schools of the county as many as a hundred volumes in the local libraries for the use of the pupils and teachers.

Compulsory Education.--Having worked with and talked to the people of this county on educational lines for the last eight years, I feel safe in saying that ninety per cent. of them are in favor of the enactment of a judicious