

RESEARCH, RESOURCES, AND LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE SOUTHEAST

By BENJAMIN EDWARD POWELL*

If Walter Hines Page could look upon the South today he would see much that would restore his faith in his "old home land." Three-quarters of a century ago the voice and pen of this North Carolinian, a brilliant editor and statesman, were active in behalf of education for the masses in the South, of university training for all who had the ability and aptitude for it, in behalf of industrial training, industry, libraries, and all the other good things he saw possessed by Americans outside the South. Twice he came back to the South to make it his home and help it overcome the depression into which it had fallen during the Civil War and Reconstruction, but it was not ready for him and received cordially neither him nor his ideas.

Page was acridly bitter and critical of his own and other southern states for not shaking off the effects of the war and moving ahead more rapidly. He was impatient of a South whose people did not read, whose libraries were scarcely worthy of the name, and whose universities supported little, if any, research. He had outgrown, by this time, his Southern bias with which he must have started life. Many of the things he saw in the South now irritated him: the atmosphere of shiftlessness that generally prevailed; the tobacco-chewing loafers; the plantation houses in need of repair; the unpainted and broken-down fences; and the rich soil so wastefully cultivated with a single crop. The young philosopher found himself comparing these vestiges of a half-moribund civilization with the vibrant cities of the North, the beautiful villages of New England and the fertile prairie farms of the West.¹ And the comparison was odious.

The South of that day remained the country where the old fashioned Southern gentleman was the controlling social influence, where knowledge of Greek and Latin made its possessor a person of consideration, where Emerson was a Yankee philosopher, and therefore not important, where Shakespeare and Milton were regarded almost as contemporary writers, and where the church and politics and the matrimonial history of friends and relatives formed the staple of conversation.²

Here and there in the 1880's and 1890's a Ph.D. was offered; but organized graduate programs were not to come for twenty years or more. The region lagged behind the remainder of the country in industry. Its manufactured products in 1880 were valued at \$295,000,000, while those of the remainder of the country were worth \$5,369,000,000. In 1900 the ratio was about the same, \$979,000,000 to \$13,039,000,000.³

Page was remembering a South that once was more industrial than New England; that had supplied much of the country's leadership; whose per capita value of property in 1860, including the slave population, was higher than that of New England; that was spending in education three times as much per capita as the North; a region with fewer than half the population of the North, but with more colleges, more professors and almost as many students (27,055 to 29,044).⁴

*Dr. Powell is Librarian at Duke University. This is a paper given by him at the Southern College and Research Libraries Workshop at Florida State University last June. It was published in *The Humanities, the Sciences and the Library in the Southeast*, Proceedings of the First Southern College and Research Library Workshop (Tallahassee: Florida State University Library School, 1958, pp. 1-12.)

¹Burton J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923). I, 30.

²Ibid. p. 15.

³U. S. Bureau of Census. Reports. 12th Census . . . 1900. *Manufactures. Part II* (States and Territories), pp. 982-989.

⁴Richard H. Edmonds, "The South of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *Blue Book of Southern Progress* (Baltimore, Manufacturers Record, 1922 edition), pp. 5-14.

Although the South forgot about its industries with the invention of the cotton gin in 1810, and turned again to them and to a fuller utilization of its own natural resources only when the bottom fell out of cotton prices in the 1840's, still, when the war started, the region was outstripping the rest of the country in railroad building and was undergoing a renaissance in industry. Now, twenty to thirty years later, Page was needling this South that was exhausted—as completely exhausted as any country had ever been. Freeing the slaves cost an estimated five billion dollars. The freed slaves became a financial burden; and the war debts were staggering. But more irreparable was the manpower loss: the thousands who died in battle and the hundreds of thousands who moved to the North and West in the twenty-five years immediately following the war.⁵ The South of Page's time was pulling itself up by its bootstraps, but its progress was so slow that one could scarcely tell whether it was advancing or retreating.

Conditions improved steadily below the Mason-Dixon line following World War I and during the 1920's. Just after the depression of the 1930's the region's most remarkable progress in development and trade was initiated. In 1936 and the first half of 1937, for example, \$450,000,000 was invested in constructing and improving Southern industries. During the previous five years one billion dollars had been invested for the same purpose.⁶ The depression brought closer cooperation between agriculture and industry which, through scientific research, enabled the expansion of manufacturing in the South to make greater use of its raw materials. The combination of agriculture, industry and science was opening new industries and creating new wealth and employment opportunities.

In 1935 the value of goods manufactured in the South was \$8,632,000,000. This total has now increased to more than seventy billion dollars. Of the 35,000 industries now operating in the South, two out of three have come in since 1935; and half of the plants are in some way related to agricultural activities or production. Between 25% and 30% of the food processing manufacturers in the United States are now located in the South; over half of the country's textile mills; nearly 90% of tobacco manufacturing; and 25% of the pulp paper industry.⁷

The chief source of intellectual progress in any country must be the universities, and the South had none of first rank in the 19th century. Little systematic graduate work was offered in the region before 1900, and most graduate departments were established after 1920. As late as 1931 the region was still without a first-rate university, according to Edwin R. Embree.⁸ Only three Southern universities were members of the Association of American Universities. Four others have since been admitted. While there were evidences of sporadic research activities in the South from 1900 to 1925, only four institutions were actually granting doctorates with any regularity and only 150 degrees were conferred during the two and a half decades after the turn of the century.

From 1900 to 1930 American university presidents and their faculties devoted much attention and effort to the encouragement of research and to its establishment on a sounder basis. Research councils were established in such national scholarly bodies as the Association of American Universities, the Association of University Professors and the American Historical Association, to mention only a few. And out of these in 1919 came the American Council of Learned Societies whose assistance greatly stimulated research and publication in the South.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Blue Book of Southern Progress (Baltimore, Manufacturer's Record), 1937, p. 7.

⁷Ibid., 1958, pp. 5-6.

⁸Edwin R. Embree, "The Place of Universities in the Southern Renaissance", *Proceedings of the 4th Southern Conference on Education*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Extension Bulletin, XI, no. 7, 1931) pp. 34-35.

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In 1934 the Committee on Graduate Instruction of the American Council on Education conducted a study to determine the universities of the nation equipped and staffed to grant doctorates. It found that of a total of 660 departments so equipped, only twenty-five were located in the eleven southern states, and all of these were concentrated in six institutions. Eight of these states were without a single department that was considered adequate for offering the doctorate.⁹ Twenty-three institutions in the South are now granting the doctorate in 182 departments. Whether or not the Committee on Graduate Instruction would grade all of them favorably, it is obvious that this study encouraged the strengthening of faculties, and they in turn demanded better libraries.

In 1925-26 the undergraduate enrollment in southern universities was 32,878 and graduate, 5,642. These figures had increased in 1956-57 to 127,472 and 23,784. Faculty members increased from 3,157 in 1925-26 to 12,144 in 1956-57.¹⁰ Further evidence of the renaissance is the increased attention given research. Many university faculty are "research" members and devote most of their time to research rather than to teaching. Southern universities granted 150 Ph.D.'s during the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1941 they granted 230,¹¹ and in 1954 687.

Research costs money, and the amount spent is another important barometer of the virility of a state or region. Back in 1938 fifty million dollars was spent by American universities for research. Of the six universities spending more than two million, none was in the South. One southern institution spent between 500,000 and a million. Total spent in the region was less than five million dollars.¹² In 1954 \$372,643,000 was spent in the institutions of higher education in the United States, of which 39 million was spent by southern institutions.

Foundations have made major contributions to the increase in research activities in the South, and one of the forms this has taken has been in the support of institutes through which universities have been able to extend the benefits of teaching and research to many phases of the citizen's life. In 1947 seventy-eight institutes were operating in southern universities.¹³

Published research is another barometer by which the creative spirit and ability of a region may be gauged. Thirty years ago one would have been hard-pressed to find a dozen scholars from the South included in *Chemical Abstracts*. In 1951 1,025 articles in chemistry abstracted for *Chemical Abstracts* originated in the South; in 1956 the number had increased to 1,776.¹⁴

Graduate work and research is not stimulated unless publication of the results is likely. Seven university presses are presently operating in these eleven states, the first having been established in 1922. In 1956 they published 82 books. They also

⁹Mary Bynum Pierson, *Graduate Work in the South* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1947), pp. 179-80.

¹⁰All statistics for the South are for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, the states represented in A.S.B.R.L., and the institutions included are the twenty-three degree-granting schools.

¹¹Pierson *op. cit.* p. 218.

¹²Ibid. p. 5.

¹³Ibid. p. 99-101.

¹⁴*Blue Book of Southern Progress*, *op. cit.*, 1957. pp. 24-25.

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