The First Black History Textbook by a Black Educator for Black Students: Edward A. Johnson's *A School History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1890*

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Abstract:

This paper explores the content of the the first Black history textbook written, published, and used in American schools by Black students. In addition, it explores the biography of its author and textbook publication history.

> "But how must the little colored child feel when he has completed the assigned course of U. S. History and in it found not one word of credit, not one word of favorable comment for even one among the millions of his foreparents, who have lived through nearly three centuries of his country's history? . . . Much, of course, will depend on you, dear teachers into whose hands I hope to place this book. By your efforts, and those of the children, you are to teach from the truth of history that complexions do not govern patriotism, valor, and sterling integrity" (Johnson, 1891, iv).

Edward A. Johnson, the African American teaching principal of Washington School in Raleigh, N. C., forthrightly asserted the overriding purpose of his new history textbook for use by Black schoolchildren in his native state and, to some unknown extent, in other Southern states of the Union. He wanted these students, most if not all born outside of slavery, to know about their racial past, especially in the United States, and to develop cultural pride in their being Black rather than being given only "a passing notice in many of the histories in the schools" (Johnson,1891, iv.). Even in the few separate schools available to them, southern Black pupils of the times used textbooks written by white authors with white pupils in mind. Although his Raleigh superintendent of schools encouraged him to write this textbook, Johnson surely recognized that his book, narrowly focused as it was on the Black experience in America, would find its usefulness exclusively and strategically aimed at African American students. A Black history textbook written by an African American for use by both Black and white pupils would have found no curricular home in that period. Moreover, even when selected for use by Black pupils, Johnson's book likely was understood to supplement the regularly used textbook overview of the nation's history written by a white author.

Johnson's textbook in its several editions (printings) was published within the final decade of the 19th century. This era witnessed a blossoming of American Black

history written by African American scholars. For example, George Washington Williams, known as the dean of these new Black historians, wrote his *History of the Negro Race in America from 1610 to 1880; Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens* (1883) with attention to important primary and secondary sources. It was highly regarded by historians throughout the nation (e.g., Franklin, 1946; Meier, 1963; Bruce, 1984). In the Preface to Volume 1 of his two-volume work, historian Williams claimed that he wrote the book, "not as a partisan apologist," but as one who searched for and wrote "the truth . . . I commit this work to the pubic, white and black, to the friends and foes of the Negro, in the hope that the obsolete antagonisms which grew out of master and slave may speedily sink as storms beneath the horizon; and that the day will hasten when there shall be no North or South, no Black, no White, - but all be American citizens, with equal duties and equal rights" (Williams, 1883, pages xii & xiii). Johnsons' history textbook, although it carried a remarkably similar title to Williams' history was not written by one of the emerging Black historians of the times. Rather, its author was a school teacher and administrator, albeit an amateur historian. He had taught in all-Black, segregated schools in Georgia and North Carolina for eight years prior to the appearance of his textbook. Johnson's practical experience within these schools prompted him to write this textbook for Black students in order that they might better understand African-American achievement throughout the nation's history and that it should be considered as a part of the "apex of human achievement" (Hall, 2009, 155).

Johnson: From Slave to Freedom, From Teacher to Author, From Teacher to Successful Attorney and Politician

Born enslaved in Raleigh, N. C., on November 23, 1860, Edward Austin (or Augustus, as he sometimes was referenced) Johnson was one of eleven children of Columbus and Eliza Johnson, the property of a prominent Wake county farmer. Young Johnson received his initial education from a free Black woman, Nancy Walton. At the conclusion of the Civil War, he attended Raleigh's Washington High School for Negroes at which two "Yankee" teachers from New England taught him.[1]

Following the completion of his studies at Washington High School at age eighteen, Johnson considered continuing his education at Oberlin College, but he decided to enter Atlanta University in the winter term of 1879. Like most other students at Atlanta University, Johnson sought a teaching position during the following summer terms. His efforts were unsuccessful at first until he accepted the teacher's post at the several thousand acre Lamar plantation. Some 55 mainly young children were his pupils in the school building in the "Quarters" where the plantation's Black laborers and their overseer lived. Johnson also privately tutored the plantation owner's son in Latin. Paid on the basis of the number of pupils attending each day's session, Johnson received $12.85 in salary for the summer. This sum was supplemented by a gift of $25 from parents of his pupils (Johnson, 1942).

Johnson's studies at Atlanta University continued in this general pattern for the next three years: class attendance toward a degree during the long term, October-May, and teaching in a school during the summer. As well, he became a barber in order to pay for his college expenses. He graduated from Atlanta University in 1883 and, that Fall, he became a teacher and the principal of Atlanta's Mitchell Street School. Two years later, he returned to Raleigh, N.C., his hometown, to become a teacher and assumed the post of principal of its 1,250 pupil Washington High School that he had attended as a youngster some years earlier.

He served pupils at Washington School during the following five years. Johnson was very busy during this particular eight-year period of his life. He strongly advocated more and more suitable textbooks for use by Black pupils, ones that would enable these individuals to recognize the contributions made to their communities and nation by members of their race. In 1888, while still teaching, Johnson also enrolled in Raleigh's Shaw University's program in law. Apparently, he attended law school for three years while he taught at Washington High School. During this period, he recognized the need of a school history textbook for Black pupils. Johnson understood that in order to instill pride and confidence within the recently enslaved, students needed to be acculturated with a legitimate understanding of the African-American experience through such an historical text (Hall, 2009). Warned that such a book might cost him his position as Principal, Johnson talked with Edward P. Moses, Raleigh's white superintendent of schools, about his idea to write a history of Blacks in America for use in schools. Superintendent Moses' verbal support spurred Johnson to rapid action. He wrote the manuscript that became *A School History of the Negro Race in America* (1890) when he was 30 years old and saw it through publication the year before Shaw University conferred on him the LL.B. degree and the year before Johnson left the education field to engage in the full-time practice of law.

Johnson quickly made an impressive impact as an attorney in Raleigh. He joined the law faculty at Shaw in 1893, became a professor and, later, served as dean of the law school until 1907. During the sixteen years of his legal practice in North Carolina, Johnson won each of the many cases that he argued before the state's Supreme Court. He also was involved in several real estate and business ventures. For example, with six other Black men, he helped organize the North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association that became, after some years, the largest Black insurance company in the world. He was elected an Alderman in Raleigh and also served for seven years as Assistant U. S. District Attorney in North Carolina's Eastern District. In addition, Johnson became very active in local and state Republican Party activities, including service as a delegate to two national Republican Party national conventions. At age 47, having become deeply dispirited by the disenfranchisement of Black citizens in his home state, Johnson moved permanently to New York City to live and to work.

He opened his law offices in Harlem and became active in Republican politics. Ten years after he moved to NY City, he was

elected to the New York State Assembly, the first Black person to serve in that legislative body. Johnson's major legislative accomplishment was the passage of a Civil Rights Bill that guaranteed privileges of access to all individuals without regard to race, to hotels, restaurants, schools, and places of amusement. Having served a single term, he was defeated for reelection after the city was redistricted. In 1928, Johnson chose to stand as a Republican for a seat in the U. S. House of Representatives, but he lost this election. However, he continued his lucrative law practice, even though legally blind during the last decade of his life. Johnson died in New York City on July 24, 1944 at age 84.

Johnson's role as author of *A School History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1890* and several other books appears to be straight forward. Although a number of details remain murky at best, he appears to have self-published and marketed at least his school history textbook and perhaps his other books as well. Names of the publisher on the title page of his school history book changed with each printing, ordinarily an indication of a new edition of the book. However, the text remained the same throughout its printing history. Johnson, therefore, very well could have found successively more favorable production prices for each subsequent printing than he had for earlier jobs. Moreover, the printing firm was identified as that year's (not an edition's) publisher/printer.

Note, in this regard, that the 1890 initial printing, or as it was known as the First Edition, was undertaken by the Raleigh firm of Edwards and Broughton, a printing and binding firm that had published school textbooks for use in Confederate (mainly North Carolina) schools during the Civil War. This First Edition may not have included a large number of copies, perhaps enough to satisfy the local market in Raleigh and possibly some other North Carolina schools. The second printing carried an 1891 date. It also used Raleigh as the place of publication, but the publisher/printer was the W.B. Conkey Co. of Chicago, Illinois. In fact, Johnson's school history textbook may well have been one of the early book printing jobs that the Conkey firm undertook. Johnson's use of Raleigh as the place of publication reasonably was politically based. He surely recognized that "Chicago" might "put off" prospective Southern purchasers and teachers but that his home city would not have this potential liability.

That Johnson returned to use the Raleigh printers, Edwards & Broughton, rather than the Conkey firm for the 1892 printing is not easily explained. However, Johnson may have sold more copies of his school history than he had expected and ran short of time for the Conkey firm to print and bind another order of the history textbook. In such a case, Edwards & Broughton could have been a simple and strategic choice. Johnson's possible need for additional copies to fill the number of orders for the book, actual and anticipated, may have prompted him to use this local printer because it perhaps could guarantee a faster production schedule than could Chicago's William B. Conkey printing firm. By the following year, 1893, Johnson may have been able to arrange a favorable production schedule from the Conkey firm and chose it to produce the

projected needed copies of the book in its fourth printing. Six years elapsed until Johnson contracted for the fifth printing of his school history with the Conkey firm, by then with its printing operations in Hammond, IN, and with one of the most modern printing plants in the world. This edition of the book appeared in 1901, eight years after the fourth printing and more than a decade after its first printing. For this final printing likely under his control, Johnson again used his own name as publisher, but also listed Raleigh's Capital Printing Co. as a printer of the books.

Whereas this account of the printing history of Johnson's book seems reasonable, it remains incomplete and somewhat speculative. However, acknowledgement must be made of two other efforts to print and market this book contemporaneously, quite possibly without benefit of Johnson's involvement and without adherence to the federal copyright that Johnson held for the book. In both 1892 and 1893, Sherman & Co. of Philadelphia reprinted the book likely from the 1892 or 1893 Conkey printings. Some years later, in 1911, a decade after Johnson's likely final printing was released, Isaac Goldman of New York city reprinted what possibly may have been the 1901 Conkey edition.

Information is unavailable about Johnson's reactions to both these efforts to capitalize on his original work, perhaps without proper payment due him as the copyright holder, as well as about the nature of the commercial success or failure of these ventures, ones likely not condoned by Johnson. That he did not seek legal recompense from the publishers of these likely unauthorized editions remains somewhat mystifying. Some half-century later, and after Johnson's death, AMS Press issued a third printing of this textbook as part of the firm's efforts to make available for research and study notable books that had been long out of print. By this time, Johnson's original copyright probably had expired and the title was in the public domain.

By his own efforts at marketing during the last decade of the 19th century, Johnson likely added to his income amounts of money beyond what a publisher would have paid him in royalties. Also to be recognized is that no multi-state southern publisher of schoolbooks primarily for Black pupils existed at the time.

The number of copies of Johnson's school history textbook that were produced, in each printing and overall, remains unknown. Even though the book was placed on the state-adoption list of textbooks in both North Carolina and Virginia, the prospect of only limited sales of the book may have restricted the numbers of copies that Johnson had printed and available for sale. In 1895, Johnson advertised for sales agents in Indiana who would buy this school history book at a substantial discount and then resell it for use by school pupils and, even, by adults (E.A. Johnson advertisement, *The Freeman*, Indianapolis, IN, 13 April 1895). The use of local agents to sell books to individuals was popular during this period and reasonably could have been the principal means by which Johnson marketed this book. One agent was quoted as claiming that he sold 121 copies in two hours; another agent reported selling 200 copies during a period of

inclement weather. This advertisement also asserted several special virtues to attract interest in the book. It claimed, for example, that the book "gives the race credit for what it has done. It teaches race pride and self-respect. No white history gives these acts. They completely ignore or humiliate us."

Johnson also wrote to Booker T. Washington to solicit his endorsement of the textbook and hoping that Washington would adopt it for use at Tuskegee and, possibly, to act as a sales agent for the book (Letter from A. E. Johnson to B. T. Washington, 12 January 1891, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol.3, 121). This act appears to have been audacious, but Johnson lacked ready access to individual Black school teachers and principals, not only throughout North Carolina, but in other areas, particularly in the South, that were populated by large numbers of Black people who might purchase copies for their children's use on the recommendation of their teacher at school. No record exists that Washington entertained Johnson's hopes. On the other hand, Washington did send a copy of the book to Edward Atkinson, a Boston industrialist and economist. In his accompanying letter, Washington commented on Johnson's portrayal of the progress of African Americans. "I do not know how accurate these figures or statements are [about the wealth of African Americans]. In some cases I feel that they are exaggerated . . ." (Letter from B. Washington to Edward Atkinson, 7 November 1897, reprinted in Johnson's *A School History*). Washington, himself a novice historian, was an active participant in the writing of African-American history. Essentially, his sociopolitical strategy in recording this history was to "reflect his self help agenda at Tuskegee and to present this historic personalities of the race in a realistic but uplifting manner" (Hall, 2009, pg. 212). A grandiose reflection of African-American participation within American history possibly would have threatened Washington's long-term goal of social uplift for southern Blacks within the eyes of white allies of the Hampton-Tuskegee model.

Johnson's publication of his school history textbook brought him national recognition as an author. Some critics like Washington commented about errors of excess and misinterpretations, but historian Charles H. Wesley probably understood the book in its context as well as any other observer and commented positively about it. "While this textbook has its limitations," he wrote, "it was a first effort based upon a need and served this purpose in its day" (Wesley, 1980, 198). That purpose would have been to portray a history buried by vestiges of enslavement and would acknowledge the African-American experience as one worthy of exploration and illumination (Hall, 2009).

Johnson wrote several other books intended for adult audiences that never became as well known as did his school history textbook. They included *History of Negro Soldiers in the Spanish-American War, and Other Items of Interest* (1899), *Negro Almanac and Statistics* (1903), *Light Ahead for the Negro* (1904), and *Adam vs. Ape Man* (1931).

Author Johnson's contributions to the education of the young freedmen mainly in the post-Civil War South pointed in a direction that the American school history

curriculum reasonably should have followed. That this direction was a path not taken for more than half a century was not only a loss to both Black and white children and youth, it was a loss to the nation as well.

The Content and Organization of Johnson's Black History Textbook

Through its decade of five authorized printings, Edward A. Johnson's Black history textbook maintained its basic organization. Its Chapter One, appropriately titled "Introduction', constituted an eight-page discussion of the origin of the "race". Based on Biblical (Jewish Testament) accounts, the Negro race was asserted to have descended from Ham, one of the three sons of Noah, whose descendants customarily were alleged to have settled in Ethiopia and other parts of Africa. Subsequently, these early African Negroes were understood to have helped construct the Egyptian pyramids as well as their having enjoyed the sciences and learning of ancient Greece and Rome. Their decline in influence was Biblically prophesied, the text noted, because they forgot God and worshipped idols.

The book's story of Negroes in America began with a short account of the introduction of Black slavery in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. Indeed, a general attention to slavery was the prominent focus of each of the chapters that treated the thirteen original British colonies (Chapters 2 - 10). However, author Johnson also chose some prominent Black individuals in several but not all of the colonies/states whom he treated as a kind of hero, an exemplar that could serve as an emblem of pride to the young Black pupils who would use his book.

For example, the book noted that the first and most of the subsequently purchased slaves in Virginia worked primarily in agriculture, particularly in the production of tobacco. Johnson elaborated, "The greater part of the manual labor of all kinds was performed by the slaves" (17). Johnson claimed that "the ancestors of American slaves (i.e. African natives) were not so bad as many people think" (17); nevertheless, they were held in servitude and kept in ignorance even with respect to their religious instruction. That is, to Johnson, slavery was a vile system that corrupted relationships and perpetuated economic, political, and social power structures. Johnson did not designate one or more specific individual Negroes as "heroes" during Virginia's colonial period. However, he accorded generous attention to *Thomas Fuller*, known as "The Virginia Calculator". Fuller could not read or write, but he could calculate prodigious sums mentally and was widely accepted as a prodigy (pp. 20-22). To be sure, Fuller's accomplishments served to negate general white claims of mental inferiority of enslaved African people.

The textbook's treatment of New York Negroes, both slave and free, was thin and slighting. Johnson did acknowledge that Blacks in this colony could be taken to church and be baptized. Although no laws restricted them from becoming educated, authorities commonly excluded them from schools. Blacks could not own land and were subject to arrest for striking a "Christian" or "Jew", even in self-defense.

In 1712, according to Johnson, Negroes in New York rebelled at such treatment. They burned homes and killed whites until troops halted the riots (23-24).

Johnson noted that African enslavement came to Massachusetts by 1633, only fourteen years after the arrival of slaves in the colony of Virginia. Paradoxically, the Puritans came to America in search of liberty, but their involvement in the slave trade, their denial of some other people's humanity, was extensive. Johnson conflated the treatment of slaves in Massachusetts with that in all the New England colonies. He noted that the New England slave traders who went to Africa for shiploads of Blacks sold most of their cargos of slaves in the South, but they also sold quite a number in the northern colonies as well. Johnson additionally recognized that British governors in the northern colonies opposed loosening the repressive slave regime on Negro slaves. In keeping with his aim to highlight special virtues of individual Negroes, slave and free, Johnson devoted almost four pages of text praising the distinction of the early Black poet, *Phillis Wheatley* (27-31).

As a companion to Wheatley's acceptance as a distinguished lady of letters, Johnson included two pages of text about *Prudence Crandall*, a white Quaker woman and white ally, whose efforts to educate black girls in Connecticut met strident frustration. When she admitted a Black girl to her school, parents of the white girls withdrew them from the school. Then, Crandall opened her school only to Negro girls, but general white opposition to this move did not yield. Connecticut even passed legislation in 1833 that prohibited schools for Negro children in the state. Crandall kept her school open, but officials arrested and jailed her. Freed at her trial, she reopened her school, but local opposition increased and, afraid for the girls, she closed the school. This repressive legislation against schools for Black children was repealed in 1838 (31-33).

Author Johnson highlighted Maryland-born *Benjamin Banneker* as the preeminent Black contributor to American culture in the northern states. As mathematician and astronomer, Banneker (called "Banneka" by author Johnson) published an almanac in 1791, reputed to be the first to be published in America. For this achievement, Thomas Jefferson accorded him high personal praise as well as the acknowledgement that Blacks were endowed with talents equal to those possessed by whites (37). Johnson also included a poem, "Ellen Harris", written by the black Maryland anti-slavery advocate *Francis Ellen Watkins*.

Surprisingly, North Carolinian Johnson wrote sparingly about his home state. He did note that the slave laws of the state were harsh, but asserted that they were not routinely enforced. Johnson correctly noted that the great majority of this North Carolina slaves lived in the eastern part of the state. Even with most Negroes enslaved, numbers of free Blacks also resided in this state. Johnson's choice of a North Carolinian to highlight for pupils was another poet, *George M. Horton*, a field hand who could read, but could not write. Consequently, he dictated his poems to a person who wrote them on paper for him. Some of his poems, Johnson wrote, managed to reach Boston and were used in argumentation against slavery.

Johnson's textbook treatment of slavery appears superficial and clearly inadequate to present-day readers. It likely was recognized as very thin gruel . . . insufficient, certainly casual, and superficial . . . for the Black children who read and studied his textbook when it was in popular use. Nevertheless, his Black students and their parents and teachers reasonably may have recognized that the very availability of this textbook was a major step in the general acknowledgement of Blacks as individuals and as a group meriting public notice. Also, this public acknowledgement could have signaled the achievement of humanity and polity that the institution of slavery had denied (Hall, 2009). Furthermore, his writings for schoolchildren, however scant, may be understood as subversively radical. The Civil War was only twenty-six years in the past when the book's first edition was published. Author Johnson likely decided that cautionary choices and tactical omission of blatantly contested situations were strategic options that would serve his purpose to get a history book about Blacks in the United States into the hands of Black schoolchildren more effectively than direct and public confrontation with prevailing Southern white attitudes toward African Americans. For example, Johnson routinely failed to highlight the brutality of slavery, even as he identified general and different types of field and housework in which Black slaves engaged. For almost all of his intended readers, however, they surely did not need to read about explicit slave mistreatment; they lived in families in which such accounts were staple elements of their home culture.

Following his usual cursory treatment of the Black slave experience in the several American colonies, author Johnson wrote of the participation of Blacks in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and in efforts to achieve freedom in the years prior to civil war that he labeled as The War of the Rebellion. His concern, as usual, was to tout the exploits of individual Blacks. To be sure, the most prominent of these revolutionary individuals was *Crispus Attucks*, a run-away slave of a Massachusetts master. Attucks, one of a group of colonial protestors, was the first American killed by British soldiers in what quickly became known as the "Boston Massacre". By naming Attucks in this first "battle" of the American Revolution, author Johnson provided him with special visibility rather than his being left in anonymity among the several Americans who were killed in this rather minor event. Johnson also highlighted the action of *Peter Salem*, another Massachusetts Black slave, who was killed in a ferocious attack that was credited as turning the tide against the British forces at a critical time in the Battle of Bunker Hill. In his account, Johnson also noted that Blacks fought on both sides of the Revolutionary War. Only about 5,000 Blacks, most of whom resided in northern colonies, fought against the British, but some 50,000 slaves supported the British with promises of freedom after the war ended and, of these, some 30,000 Negro slaves were from Virginia.

Blacks, freemen and slaves, also participated in the War of 1812. They were members of U. S. army troops and of naval ship companies. Their white commanding

officers, according to author Johnson, praised their performance. Johnson also accorded prominence to an unverified claim that an unnamed Black man, an African native, suggested to General Andrew Jackson that he erect breast-works of cotton bales to thwart the anticipated onslaught of British regular soldiers against the outnumbered United States forces at the Battle of New Orleans. Such possible "folk history" appears to be commonplace in many remembered and recorded historical accounts. Nevertheless, the story buttresses Johnson's case of the significance and merit of Black contributions to the American cause.

Author Johnson depicted the period between the War of 1812 and the Civil War as a time that fostered a variety of anti-slavery efforts in the United States. Although the period actually witnessed notable American advances in science, literature, and exploration, Johnson mainly ignored matters that did not deal directly with the highly politicized advocacies to abolish slavery and the roles of only a few notable Blacks in those endeavors. Highlighted, of course, were the actions of the Quakers of Pennsylvania who early freed slaves in that state. Johnson acknowledged the abolitionist advocacy of newspapers published by white journalists Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison. However, the author reserved his praise for *Frederick Douglass*, a former slave, and his speeches to northern assemblies that called for abolishment of slavery in the nation. Johnson also applauded the work of the American Colonization Society that sought to develop the Republic of Liberia in Africa as a place of refuge, independence, and a life in freedom for American freed slaves.

Acknowledgement of peaceful anti-slavery efforts in the politics of American life of this period, important as it was, could not obscure Johnson's attention to deliberate and sometimes violent actions by Black slaves to acquire freedom. His inclusion of the story of *Nat Turner's* "Insurrection" in Virginia, emblematic of long-feared slave uprisings throughout the South, served as the book's case study of direct action against slaveholders, their families, and property (90-93).

According to Johnson's narrative, Turner and three of his friends decided to act in order to free slaves. Although he announced that he rejected the idea of killing slave holders, Turner and his friends agreed that circumstances might arise when they would kill whites. In August, 1831, their party set out to confront white slave holders. In the ensuing days, these Blacks indiscriminately killed 57 white persons, children and adults, men and women. Indeed, Johnson reported that one author noted that, in retribution, local whites "slaughtered" some 100 slaves; many of them were killed in cold blood . . . and grotesticly disfigured and butchered members of the Turner party who were captured. Turner himself escaped capture for several months, but he finally surrendered, was found guilty by an all-white jury, and was put to death on the gallows. Author Johnson wrote of Turner, " He was, undoubtedly, a wonderful character. Knowing as he did, the risk he ran, what an immense courage he must have had to undertake this bold adventure." Although Johnson did not use

the honorific term, "martyr", to categorize Turner, he clearly called schoolchildren's attention to Turner's worthy and meritorious behavior in an effort to free Black slaves.

Several other armed clashes between whites and enslaved Blacks in the pre-Civil War South were highlighted in this school history textbook. They included, for example, a story about the Amistad captives. However, the predominant feature of efforts to free slaves within the nation focused on the swelling efforts of the vigorous anti-slavery movement in its many variations within the civil society, most noticeably in the northern states. Featured, in this regard, was the "Underground Railroad" by which escaped slaves from the South were aided in their flight to freedom. Author Johnson noted several key developments of those pre-war years that included effects of the federal Fugitive Slave Law, *John Brown's* abortive attempt to capture the US arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and the escalating sympathies of many northern politicians to the anti-slavery cause. Although Johnson's treatment of the political maelstrom of those times was fragmentary and superficial, he emphasized the importance of the southern sentiment against Abraham Lincoln 's candidacy for the US presidency in 1860 and, with his inauguration the following year, the consequent secession of South Carolina from the United States. Following that state's leadership, ten other southern states, all of which recognized the legitimacy of slave holding, seceded from the Union. These acts of secession, author Johnson correctly observed, constituted "the signal for war" (103). He called this war "The War of the Rebellion", not the "Civil War" nor by other titles that became popular in subsequent years.

Johnson's treatment of the War of the Rebellion was sketchy by necessity. His concern was not to portray the war, its many battles on several fronts, and to accord honor to victorious commanders. Any history of that war is not a history of Blacks in America. Rather, his treatment of the war matched his intention to illuminate for young Black schoolchildren some of the major contributions of Negroes in this major conflict. He believed that they would find inspiration in the actions of adult Blacks who understood that the war, however described by different people, really was about the continuation or abandonment of slavery as an institution. Strikingly, the federal army and navy, as well as the nascent forces raised by the southern states of the Confederacy, were reluctant to recruit and to arm Blacks to fight in this war. Only slowly did public sentiment and military need combine to influence both Union and Confederate leaders to employ Black soldiers in combat roles. Even so, discrimination of Blacks persisted in various forms. Black soldiers in both armies, for example, were enrolled in regiments commanded only by white officers. Black soldiers in the Union army received pay of seven dollars per month plus food and clothing whereas white troopers received thirteen dollars per month plus food and clothing (106-107). Such incongruities surely were not lost on the Black children who used this textbook.

Battles in which Black Union soldiers demonstrated conspicuous achievement included the Battle of Port Hudson in 1863. Their fighting skills as well as their bravery

and determination in this battle were praised in a *New York Times* report mentioned by Johnson in his textbook. It also called their heroism to be "such as the proudest white men might emulate. Their colors are literally bespattered with blood and brains." Even in praise, the fighting behaviors of Blacks in this battle were known primarily in comparison with the actions of white soldiers. Acceptance of Black soldiers as valued and significant contributors to the warfare underway came haltingly from both northern and southern whites.

Author Johnson included in the textbook an abbreviated account of a draft riot in New York City in the weeks following the battle of Port Hudson. Some local newspapers stoked the resentment of the use of force (a draft) by which (white) men would "fight the battles of niggers and Abolitionists". Rioting whites killed some Black civilians and destroyed property owned by Blacks. Union army troopers put down the riot by the use of force. In those actions, a number of white rioters were killed and wounded. Following these riots, Black soldiers continued to demonstrate their bravery and heroism on battlefields. Their value to the Union became more widely accepted. Only a few other important battles were highlighted in this textbook. These battles included Fort Pillow near Memphis, Tennessee, the Wilderness at Petersburg, and at Richmond, Virginia. In each of these engagements, the valor of Black Union troops drew very positive regard. The war, as portrayed in this text, simply ended.

Author Johnson did not report the date of Confederate General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, or even an approximation of the human casualties or other costs to both sides of the conflict. Johnson did note that the freedom of the slaves, not a prominent goal at the beginning of the war, became one of its two central accomplishments. He observed that civil government in the secessionist states was reestablished with the organization of provisional state governments and adoption of state constitutions that conformed to the federal constitution. The fruits of freedom, voting and access, for example, were slow to become available to Blacks, but were later insured, at least for a time, by three new amendments to the U. S. constitution. With the Fifteenth Amendment, for example, "the eleven Southern States were reconstructed on the basis of universal suffrage, and the colored race began to develop statesmen, orators, lawyers, judges, teachers of various kinds, ministers, and discreet, far-seeing business men" (139). This casual overgeneralization was followed by Johnson's short account of the Freedmen's Bureau. This federal institution, according to Johnson, "was to educate the newly emancipated colored people into all the ways of freedom. Schools were opened, to which there was a general rush, so great was the thirst for knowledge" (139). Johnson's enthusiasm for freedom's prospects were touted to his intended Black readers with only casual attention to the shocking disruptions and distortions that actually accompanied many efforts to provide full citizenship rights to Black citizens freed twenty five years earlier.

The textbook closed with short chapters devoted to the progress of Negroes since their release from slavery and a rather longish chapter that featured notable Black

individuals, mainly from southern states not treated in previous sections. Author Johnson proudly noted the rapid expansion of churches for Blacks as well as the leadership of Black ministers in building church related schools and other institutions. In particular, the achievements of Black Methodists (i.e., African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church) and Baptists were highlighted. Particularly important to the burgeoning Black church membership was the development of congregational singing. As author Johnson wrote, "They composed their own music, which expressed, in their own way, thanks and petitions to heaven. Their music is original, entertaining, and pathetic -- and the only original music of the American Continent, when we remember that other than Negro techniques and melodies are all borrowed from the masters of Europe" (146). In this regard, the international popularity of the Fisk Jubilee Singers testified to the skill of these musicians and also to the Negro melodies and songs that they sang. Very helpful to the progress of Black religious interests included not only the efforts of local Black congregants, but also the financial support of northern Christian church groups, notably the Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as northern Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and others. Not only did Black church expansion profit from this assistance, but, also, the formation and development of schools and colleges. With political freedom, local Black leadership began the process of establishing schools for Black children and youth. Attention to reading and other elements of literacy and numeracy was stressed early, but attention to all branches of instruction found a place in their schedules. Across years, these schools increased in number and prestige.

By the end of the War of Rebellion, author Johnson claimed that only one of every four Black people in the entire United States could read. Within twenty-five years, he observed that the number of Black citizens had doubled to eight million individuals and half of them were readers. "The colored people of the South have made more progress in education since the war than in anything else and they are still thirsty for knowledge . . . No people," claimed Johnson, "ever learned more in so short a time" (161-162).

According to this textbook, another area of special progress for freed people was the financial success of a few of them. Author Johnson deplored, however, the failure of the Freedman's Savings Bank, a disaster which devastated most of the bank's depositors/savers who were former slaves and from which experience most Blacks had not recovered their financial confidence. On the other hand, Johnson asserted that "the Negro is putting his money into other enterprises, and through unsuccessful in his first, his last efforts at economy are bearing rich fruit"(162-163). Quite possibly, Johnson's remark may have referenced his own general financial situation. He continued to write, . . .many (Blacks) "though shut out almost entirely from the trades and business avenues, have accumulated handsome homes, and live in elegance and refinement" (163). Especially noteworthy was Johnson's identification of twenty-seven Black American individuals and one family who had amassed substantial wealth since the

Civil War, in amounts ranging from $50,000 by *Frederick Douglas* (of Washington, DC) to $400,000 held by *Amanda Eubanks* (of Georgia). Johnson also called attention to the fact that 322 individual Blacks in eight former slave states possessed personal wealth of at least $10,000. In this chapter, however, Johnson failed to comment on the common penury in which the vast majority of southern Blacks existed in these historical times. The author closed the chapter with the following charge to his young Black readers: "What has been said in this chapter is not to make you content and satisfied, but rather, to inspire new zeal and fresh courage, that each one of you may add something more to what has already been accomplished. You can, you must, and we believe you will. Do not falter on account of difficulties. Set your standard high and go to it, remembering that labor, coupled with a strong devotion to integrity, will surely conquer" (166).

Again, in the book's final substantive chapter, Johnson highlighted the prominence of twenty-one additional Black individuals, all but five of who were men. Some of these individuals enjoyed only meager identification, e.g., *Hiram R. Revels*, an A.M.E. minister who was the first Black person elected to the federal Senate; he took the Mississippi seat formerly held by Jefferson Davis; *Robert Small*, a former steamer pilot and captain; *William Wells Brown*, born enslaved but escaped and became a noted physician and a historian; *P. B. S. Pinchback*, soldier during the Civil War and, who, afterwards, was elected Governor of Louisiana*; T. T. Fortune*, born enslaved but became a newspaper editor in Florida and, later, a congressman; *Madame Selika*, "the colored Jenny Lind" (Author Johnson commented that "She would stand near the head of modern female voices were it not that she is colored" (183)); and Miss *H. Q. Brown*, an accomplished elocutionist. Individuals who received more attention in this chapter included *Robert E. Elliott*, an African Black with an English education and legal training who served as a congressman from South Carolina and gained considerable notice in debates about the post-war Civil Rights legislation; *W. S. Scarborough*, born in poverty, but a professor of classics at Wilberforce University and author of a set of Greek textbooks used at Yale and other universities; and Booker T. *Washington*, orphaned young but achieved widespread acclaim as Principal of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute.

The only one of this chapter's featured individuals who was not a U. S. citizen was *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, a Black Caribbean native of Haiti. In fact, highlights of his life consumed almost four pages of the book. L'Ouverture, born enslaved, became commander in chief of the French forces on the island and, over time, came to believe that he was the one to lead a movement of Haitian slaves toward freedom. The revolution began in August, 1791, and ended after widespread murder of whites and pillage of plantations owned by whites. General L'Ouverture became the ruler of Haiti, but was deposed several years later, taken prisoner by French authorities, and, in 1803, he died from hunger in a French dungeon.

Obviously, Johnson's inclusion of biographical sketches of some notable Black individuals in his history textbook added

accounts of real persons to the sweep of larger social movements. In particular, these portrayals provided exemplars with whom Black children might identify and seek to emulate as they grew into adulthood. Moreover, the attention that Johnson gave to Black individuals from different occupations and coming from quite different backgrounds in different states, made possible Black pupils' thinking away from their isolated regions and their shallow vessels of family memory. They could be proud of what Blacks had accomplished in a number of business occupations and prestigious roles and possibly might recognize that unrealized opportunities for Black people really did exist . . . even for themselves.

A Small History Textbook to Meet a Particular Need: Inclusion of the Black Experience in the American Story, But for Black Pupils Only

Edward A, Johnson's *A School History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1890* was a notable publication. Prior to its appearance in 1891 and its use in some limited number of southern all-Black schools during the following decade, no singular book had been available previously for study by Black school pupils. Its writing, production, publicity, and distribution was conducted solely by the busy author and, in all likelihood, was not extensive. That Johnson reprinted the book five times and managed to sell a goodly number of copies, perhaps most or all of those available, is evidence enough of teachers' and others' interest in the book and their desire that it be used in the instruction of young freed persons. Distribution, on the other hand, appeared to have been limited, perhaps mainly to schools for Blacks in North Carolina and Virginia. One observer, on the other hand, noted, "Although brief and elementary, this book had a wide circulation and did much good inculcating an appreciation of the Negro." ("Obituary", 506).

A history textbook about the Black experience in early post-Civil War America for Black pupils who attended southern segregated schools reasonably should have been popular. However, no textbook publishing house in the nation, certainly not the major textbook publishers headquartered in Boston, New York City, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia would have found such a title socially inappropriate or economically unviable on their booklist. White members of state education agencies and local school boards controlled purchasing decisions for schools of both Black and white students. Moreover, no national or regional (e.g., southern) textbook publisher confined its business plan to the provision of especially prepared textbooks for use in schools for Blacks only. At the time, only one southern regional publisher, B. F. Johnson Publishing Co. of Richmond, Virginia, had begun operations and its first offerings, especially in its line of history textbooks, focused attention to particularly southern or former-Confederate positions on matters of race relationships. Segregated schools for Black pupils continued for more than half a century and, reasonably, they could have constituted a substantial market for Johnson's Black history textbook. However, adoption and subsequent purchases of schoolbooks by

southern state departments of education, initiated by Texas (Bailey, 1994) and rapidly spread throughout the southern region, mitigated against special textbooks for Black pupils. The overriding purpose of the state adoption movement was to select the "best" textbook available for each course and/or grade level such that a single standard of excellence or bias would be applied to all the instruction offered by the state and financed with state funds.

Notwithstanding the critical impediments to widespread use and to substantial financial success of Edward A. Johnson's Black history text, this book has the distinction of being the first Black history textbook to be written, published, and used in American schools by Black students. In addition, it well may have been the only Black history textbook to be so used. This book offered children and adults in black communities a modest but quite realistic portrayal of African-American contributions to the larger American experience. Very importantly, it created an opportunity for African Americans to visualize their human possibilities within the contemporary racist culture.

Endnote

1. For biographical accounts used in this biographical section, see "Obituary," *Journal of Negro History* 29 (No. 4), 505-507; "Edward A. Johnson," 1942; Gatewood, *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 2012; n. a., "The Life Work of Edward A. Johnson," *The Crisis* 40 (April 1933), 79; "Johnson, Edward A. (1860-1944)," An Online Reference Guide to African American History , 2012); Jessica Jina Salo, "Johnson, Edward A. (1860-1944), The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed. http://www.BlackPast.org (May 3, 2008).

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