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Thomas de Saliere Tucker: Reconciling Industrial and Liberal Arts Education at Florida's Normal School for Colored Teachers, 1887-1901

By Peter A. Dumbuya

At one and the same time, Thomas de Saliere Tucker's life and career in academia exemplified the triumph of liberty and human rights over slavery in the second half of the 19th century and the difficulty often encountered by those who challenged the long-held notion that equal education could be provided to blacks and whites in separate but equal educational institutions. In 1889 the Florida Superintendent of Public Instruction proclaimed that "it has become a settled policy in the State that competent colored teachers shall be employed to teach the colored children and youth."¹ Seven years later, the United States Supreme Court decided *Plessy v. Ferguson*. There, the Court held that the establishment of separate schools for white and black students was a valid exercise of legislative power, and it was, therefore, a "fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority."² The educational philos-

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1. Albert J. Russell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the School Year Ending September 30, 1889*, 15.
2. *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

ophy of the day harkened back to the mindset of colonization, an early 19th century scheme that proposed the establishment of black-run independent republics in the Caribbean or Africa in order to avoid a race war in the United States. By the end of the century educational leaders presupposed that blacks and whites could be educated in separate schools and that adult blacks could “then be brought up, at the public expense, to tillage, arts or sciences, according to their geniuses.”³ As the United States became more industrialized, agricultural and industrial education became the model that historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) followed.

Not surprisingly, in the post-Civil War era, blacks redoubled their efforts to embrace education as a cornerstone of the struggle for liberty and racial equality. Nonetheless, in the provision of education to the freed men and women, the historiography has accorded great deference to the work of northeastern teachers and missionaries and their southern counterparts. A good number of them were graduates of Oberlin College in Lorain County (Ohio), the first institution in the U.S. to enroll black students (male and female) at the urging of Lewis Tappan, a New York merchant, leading abolitionist, and one of the institution’s benefactors. After the Civil War, black teachers began to outnumber their white counterparts in black schools, signaling “the high value that blacks placed upon education.”⁴ Most of the black teachers were graduates of church-affiliated colleges and universities, including Oberlin College.

Tucker, a native of Sierra Leone in West Africa and the product of one of its mission schools, was also a graduate of Oberlin College, but his contribution to the education of southern blacks has remained as obscure as his genealogy. To date there is no full-length scholarly article or biography about Tucker and his pioneering work in the area of black education even though he spent fourteen years (1887-1901) as the first president of Florida’s Normal School for Colored Teachers, now Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), in Tallahassee, Florida. The historiography is incomplete and is based, in some instances, on incorrect information about his early life and work. According to

3. Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 264.

4. Adam Fairclough, “Being in the Field of Education and Also Being a Negro ... Seems ... Tragic,” *Journal of American History* (June 2000), 66.

one account, "There is even an element of doubt as to the correct method of spelling his middle name;" it varies from "DeSaliere" (Oberlin College listing) to "DeS." (official Florida documents). The authors of that study, a book-length history of FAMU, concluded that "While the authenticity of Tucker's genealogy may forever remain hidden as a secret of history, much of his later life can be reasonably authenticated."⁵ In a biography of Nathan B. Young, the institution's second president (1901-23), the author merely mentioned Tucker's birthplace of Sherbro country in Sierra Leone and suggested that he was brought to the United States by a missionary.⁶ The missionary turned out to be George Thompson of the American Missionary Association (AMA), an organization with deep roots in the Oberlin College Christian community.

In a scholarly article devoted to Young, the author misidentified Tucker's home country as South Africa,⁷ although a quick check of the AMA's Mendi Mission could have revealed its location in present-day Sierra Leone. Another study on state-supported black higher education in Florida merely mentioned Tucker as "a native of Sherbro, Sierra Leone, Africa, and a graduate of Oberlin College" who, as president, fell out of favor with the State of Florida's Superintendent of Education, William N. Sheats, over the latter's insistence on the provision of agricultural and mechanical education to black students at the Normal School.⁸ A commemorative work by Margaret F. Wilson and N.E. Gaymon, titled *A Century of Wisdom*, apologized profusely for being unable to locate any speeches by Tucker, and instead relied upon "strategic documents" such as selected minutes of the faculty and the First and Second Morrill Acts to reconstruct Tucker's life and academic work.⁹ The official program of the March 1975 Founders' Day

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5. Leedell W. Neyland and John W. Riley, *The History of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), 12.
 6. Antonio F. Holland, *Nathan B. Young and the Struggle Over Black Higher Education* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006).
 7. Reginald Ellis, "Nathan B. Young: Florida A&M College's Second President and His Relationships with White Public Officials," in David H. Jackson and Canter Brown, Jr., *Go Sound the Trumpet! Selections in Florida's African American History* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2005), 153-172.
 8. Leedell W. Neyland, "State-Supported Higher Education Among Negroes in the State of Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* XLIII (October 1964), 108-109.
 9. Margaret F. Wilson and N.E. Gaymon, *A Century of Wisdom: Selected Speeches of Presidents of Florida A&M University* (Winter Park: Four-G Publishers, 1990).

Observance, "FAMU Forges Forward During an Era of Change," offered sketches of Nathan B. Young and Thomas Van Renssalaer Gibbs but none for Tucker. Instead, the program described Tucker as "an outstanding attorney who had gained stature during Reconstruction" before accepting the presidency of the Normal School in 1887.¹⁰

Few, if any, of the books and articles devoted to the history of FAMU and its presidents have given much thought to the AMA which established the Mendi Mission out of the celebrated 1841 case of *United States v. Libellants of Schooner Amistad* that spurred American anti-slavery forces to press for the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and the slave trade worldwide. Tucker attended a Mendi Mission school in Sherbro country in Sierra Leone, and therefore one cannot understand Tucker's personal and professional life and struggle to impart his educational philosophy to students at the Normal School in Florida without digging deeper into the influence the Mendi Mission and the AMA had on him in the second half of the 19th century. However, more recent studies have begun to account for Tucker's orientation toward a liberal arts education for blacks, the core of his educational policy disagreements with the Superintendent of Public Instruction William N. Sheats. For instance, an article by Larry E. Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr. looked at the sources that influenced Tucker's educational world view, including the pioneering efforts of Oberlin College to integrate women and minorities into its educational programs and Christian world view.¹¹ Tucker's attempts to model the Normal School upon Oberlin College's curriculum which provided both industrial and liberal arts education to its students eventually cost him his job.

The goals of this article are manifold. Primarily it seeks to fill a void in the growing historiography of the then Normal School for Colored Teachers by placing Tucker in the proper historical context of his formative years in Sierra Leone and the United States. At mid-century, the anti-slavery movement led a worldwide moral

10. Tucker, Thomas De Saliere, 1844-1903 (Collection, 1883-1976), Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, File 2182.

11. Larry E. Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr., "A Monument to the Progress of the Race": The Intellectual and Political Origins of the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, 1865-1887," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 85 (Summer 2006), 1-41.

awakening that equated human rights with freedom for blacks from the shackles of slavery. In Tucker's era, education also came to be viewed as a human right much sought after by blacks. The Oberlin College Christian community and the AMA declared slavery a sin, and forbade their members from dealing with organizations that supported or failed to renounce it.¹² Tucker, the product of AMA schools and colleges, carried with him to the Normal School for Colored Teachers the seed which these mission schools had planted in him, preparing him to infuse students with a liberal arts education that would complement the agricultural and mechanical curriculum of Florida's segregated normal school. Tucker saw liberal arts education as fundamentally compatible with industrial and mechanical education, the former serving as the building block of the latter. This article also suggests that while Tucker's educational experiences, spanning the AMA's Mendi Mission, Oberlin College, and Straight University (now Dillard University) in New Orleans, prepared him to make the case for liberal arts education, it also put him at odds with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Florida's other elected officials who steadfastly defended the Normal School's original mission. First, let us examine the Mendi Mission which the AMA established in Sherbro country in 1842, two years before Tucker's birth.

The Mendi Mission was the culmination of the three-year saga of Sengbeh Pieh, or Joseph Cinqué according to his Spanish slave master, and fifty-two other African slaves that ended with a groundbreaking decision by the United States Supreme Court in the *Amistad* case. In January 1839, twenty-six year old Pieh was captured in Mende country in Sierra Leone and sold by Mayagilalo to the son of the Vai King Manna Siaka to redeem a family debt. The king's son then sold Pieh to a Spanish slave trader named Pedro Blanco on the island of Lomboko off the Gallinas coast southeast of the then Colony of Sierra Leone.¹³ From Lomboko, the schooner *Teçora* transported Pieh and more than five hundred African slaves to Cuba. In Havana, José Ruiz bought forty-nine adult slaves, including Pieh, for \$450 each, while his companion, Pedro Montez, bought four children, three of whom were females

12. Robert S. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College From its Foundation Through the Civil War*. Two Vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1971).

13. Arthur Abraham, "Amistad Revolt: An Historical Legacy of Sierra Leone and the United States," located at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/archive/amistad>. Accessed on 2/21/2008.

(Margru, Tehme, and Kagne) and one boy (Kali) for a total of fifty-three slaves.¹⁴ On 27 June 1839, Ruiz and Montez set sail for plantations in Puerto Príncipe, northwest of Havana, in the chartered schooner *Amistad*.

On 1 July 1839, Pieh, Grabeau, and Burnah seized control of the schooner and ordered Montez to sail to Sierra Leone. On 26 August, Lt. Thomas R. Gedney of the *USS Washington* seized the *Amistad* as it anchored off Long Island, New York, and towed it to New London, Connecticut, for salvage in the United States District Courts in Haven and Hartford. Among those who filed claims and libels in admiralty asserting ownership of the slaves, the schooner, and its cargo were Ruiz and Montez. The Spanish government intervened, urging the American government to ensure the restoration of the Spaniards' property pursuant to article 9 of the 1795 treaty between the United States and Spain.¹⁵ Pieh and his compatriots denied they were the property of Ruiz and Montez, and asserted that "they were native born Africans; born free, and still of right ought to be free and not slaves."¹⁶

For American abolitionists, the *Amistad* case became a *cause célèbre* in their campaign against slavery. They formed the Amistad Committee in New York on September 4, 1839, to solicit donations for the captives. Led by Joshua Leavitt, editor of the *Emancipator*, the official organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Rev. Simeon S. Jocelyn, and Lewis Tappan, the Amistad Committee issued an "Appeal to the Friends of Liberty," and retained former President John Quincy Adams and Roger Baldwin to argue the case before the United States Supreme Court. In its opinion, the Supreme Court held that "It is plain beyond controversy, if we examine the evidence, that these negroes never were the lawful slaves of Ruiz and Montez, or of any other Spanish subjects. They

14. Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of a Slave Revolt and its Impact on American Abolition, Law, and Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Marlene D. Merrill, "Sarah Margru Kinson: The Two Worlds of an Amistad Captive," located at: <http://www.oberlin.edu/external/EOG/Kinson/Kinson.html>. Accessed on 4/10/2008.

15. John Quincy Adams, "Argument of John Quincy Adams, Before the Supreme Court of the United States, in the Case of the United States, Appellants, vs. Cinque, and Others, Africans, Captured in the Schooner Amistad, by Lieut. Gedney, Delivered on the 24th of February and 1st of March 1841," located at: http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/amistad/amistad_002.html. Accessed on 2/19/2008.

16. *U.S. v. Libellants of Schooner Amistad*, 15 Pet. 518 (1841), 2.

are natives of Africa, and were kidnapped there, and were unlawfully transported to Cuba, in violation of the laws and treaties of Spain, and the most solemn edicts and declarations of that government. By those laws, and treaties, and edicts, the African slave trade is utterly abolished; the dealing in that trade is deemed a heinous crime; and the negroes thereby introduced into the dominions of Spain, are declared to be free.”¹⁷ The Amistad Committee organized fund-raising campaigns and secured commitments from the British government, through its ambassador in Washington, Henry S. Fox, and the Governor of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Lt. Col. Sir John Jeremie, that the liberated Africans would be protected by Her Majesty’s ships to ensure their safe arrival in West Africa.¹⁸

On November 21, 1841, Leavitt, Jocelyn, and Tappan gave their “suggestions and instructions” to Rev. James Steele, Rev. William Raymond and his wife Eliza, and Henry Richard Wilson and his wife Tamar as missionaries and teachers to Mendi country. The abolitionists implored them as “disciples of Jesus Christ” to “illustrate his gospel” and impress his image upon the minds and hearts of the Mendians.¹⁹ On 15 January 1842, the missionaries and Mendians arrived in Freetown. After protracted negotiations that lasted until 1844, Raymond concluded an agreement for the establishment of a school with Chief Harry Tucker who was initially suspicious of the missionaries’ intentions.²⁰ The rent for the building was \$150 a year.²¹ Raymond set up the Mendi Mission on a tract of land near the chief’s town of Kaw Mendi on the Little Boom River about a hundred and fifty miles southeast of Freetown.²² The 1845 war that engulfed Sherbro and Mende countries delayed the departure to the Mendi Mission. While some *Amistad* returnees pursued other interests, Pieh became an

17. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

18. Letter from John Scoble to Lord Aberdeen, 10 December 1841, Amistad Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Microfilm No. A1435.

19. The “suggestions” and “instructions” are located in the Amistad Collection at Tulane University.

20. Peter L. Tucker, *The Tuckers of Sierra Leone, 1665-1914* (Herts, England: Copyzone, 1997), 34.

21. George Thompson, *Thompson in Africa: Or, An Account of the Missionary Labors, Sufferings, Travels, and Observations, of George Thompson in Western Africa, at the Mendi Mission*. Second Edition (New York: S.W. Benedict, 1852), 92.

22. *AMA Pamphlet No. 2, 1878*, Amistad Collection, Tulane University. Microfilm No. A1435.

interpreter for the AMA missionaries. Following the death of Thomas Garnick on July 10, 1847, the AMA selected George Thompson to fill his place at the Mendi Mission. Thompson had been incarcerated for five years in a Missouri prison for attempting to aid two slaves escape from Missouri to Illinois. He then studied at Oberlin College (1846-48) and was ordained a minister by the Council of the AMA in 1848.²³ Before Thompson's departure, Raymond also died of the fever on 26 November and was buried in Freetown.

On May 9, 1848, Thompson and Anson J. Carter landed in Freetown and then proceeded to the Mendi Mission where they arrived on 22 July; Carter died 8 days later. Thompson soldiered on through incredible bouts of illness and war. He departed the Mendi Mission in July 1850 to recover his health in the United States. By the time he retired and severed his ties with the AMA in 1856, the AMA had established mission stations in Kaw Mendi (abandoned in 1856 as too unhealthy), Mo-Tappan (in honor of Lewis Tappan), and Good Hope.²⁴ The Mendi Mission established schools in York Island, while Thompson made it his life's work to help suppress the slave trade, slavery, and the worship of idols through the influence of the Gospel, moral suasion, and temperance.

The AMA, formed on September 3, 1846, consisted of four missionary organizations that were dissatisfied "with the comparative silence of the older missionary societies in regard to Slavery, and were a protest against it."²⁵ These were the Amistad Committee, Union Missionary Society (UMS) of Hartford, Connecticut, Committee for West-Indian Missions (CWM), and Western Evangelical Missionary Society (WEMS). The UMS was formed "to discountenance slavery, and especially, by refusing to receive the known fruits of unrequited labor."²⁶ In 1837 Rev. David S. Ingraham founded the CWM, and among its members were Lewis Tappan and Anson G. Phelps.²⁷ Together with Oberlin abolitionists, Ingraham cared for liberated Africans in Jamaica, but

23. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*, 259-260.

24. Thompson, *Thompson in Africa; AMA Pamphlet No. 2*.

25. AMA: *History of the American Missionary Association: Its Churches and Educational Institutions Among the Freedmen, Indians, and Chinese (1874)*, 3, Amistad Collection, Tulane University.

26. *Ibid.*, 4.

27. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*, 257-258.

the organization foundered around 1844 and its work was transferred to the AMA. Founded in 1843 by the Western Reserve Association in Ohio, WEMS undertook missionary activities among Western Reserve Indians. What united these organizations was their association with Oberlin College and their opposition to the "domination of the slave-power in the United States."²⁸ AMA executive secretaries, George Whipple and Michael Strieby, were Oberlinites.²⁹ In 1883 the AMA turned over the Mendi Mission and its stations (Good Hope on Bonthe Island, Avery, and farms at Kaw Mendi and Mo-Tappan) to the United Brethren in Christ (UBC) which had begun its missionary work in Sierra Leone in February 1855. The AMA abandoned the Mendi Mission because it was "discouraged over the meager returns, and wishing to engage mission work elsewhere, after an expenditure of \$300,000."³⁰

Neyland and Riley have suggested that information about Tucker's early life was obscured and beset by contradictions arising from a lack of authentic records from which to reconstruct the past. Even the correct spelling of his middle name, they wrote, was doubtful and, therefore, concluded that the authenticity of his genealogy might forever remain hidden as a secret.³¹ To understand Tucker's background and early life requires a much more thorough and painstaking search of the available documents and published accounts than has been done by previous scholars. Furthermore, much of the uncertainty about Tucker's early life stems in part from the fact that George Thompson, the AMA missionary who brought him to the United States to continue his studies, did not mention him by name in his 1852 memoir, *Thompson in Africa*. However, in his second book on his work in the Mendi Mission Thompson wrote: "We had suffered so much from want of efficient native teachers, I resolved to bring home with me some of our schoolboys to be more thoroughly educated, and fitted for thorough teachers."³² Thompson brought two students to the

28. *History of the American Missionary Association*, 3.

29. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*, 259.

30. J.S. Mills, *Mission Work in Sierra Leone, West Africa* (Dayton: United Brethren Publishing House, 1898), 78.

31. Neyland and Riley, *The History of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University*, 12.

32. Thompson, *The Palm Land or West Africa, Illustrated* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys Company, 1858), 426.

United States; the two others had gone to bid farewell to their parents and did not return on time before his departure from the Mendi Mission in April 1856. Thompson did not mention the names of the two students who embarked upon the journey with him, but from other accounts one can surmise that they were Tucker and Barnabas Root.³³ This is consistent with Thompson's references to young children whose parents and guardians had handed them over to the Mendi Mission for their education and Christianization, a practice not uncommon in Sierra Leone where parents often entrusted the care and education of their children to relatives and trusted friends in major towns and cities; inevitably such children performed minor domestic chores for their guardians as they pursued their education. Thompson also made numerous references to Sherbro chiefs such as Harry Tucker (who died on July 13, 1855), William S. Tucker, David Tucker, and William E. Tucker, but stopped short of providing any specific information about the young students who accompanied him to the United States. However, it is possible to reconstruct the genealogical history of Tucker through various sources.

According to information provided to J. S. Mills by J. A. Cole, a Sierra Leonean Bishop of the United Brethren in Christ (UBC), three Englishmen, Cleveland, Tucker, and S. Caulker arrived in Sierra Leone around 1750 on board a vessel laden with trade goods.³⁴ Cleveland landed at Banana Island, Caulker at Plantain Island, and Tucker in the country of the Gbas. The strategic location of Plantain Island and Caulker's slave trading activities aroused the enmity of Cleveland who raised an army and attacked Caulker who was forced to surrender and give up his island. After several years in captivity on Banana Island, Caulker also raised an army among the Sherbro people and recovered Plantain Island. After Cleveland's death, Caulker and his brother ruled Plantain Island without further provocation from the Clevelands. Christopher Fyfe has identified another Englishmen, Thomas Corker (Caulker), who came to Sherbro country in 1684 in the service of the Royal African Company.³⁵ The Company transferred

33. Abraham, "Amistad Revolt;" Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*.

34. Mills, *Mission Work in Sierra Leone*, 75.

35. Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 10; Fyfe, *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 62.

him to the Gambia in 1698; he died in England in 1700. His descendants still inhabit the Sherbro area in Sierra Leone.

Peter L. Tucker's account is slightly different from Cole's rendition of events. Tucker, a direct descendant of the Tuckers, has identified the Englishman John Tucker as the scion of the Tucker family. John Tucker, an employee of the Company of the Royal Adventurers into Africa (chartered by Charles II in December 1660, it was re-chartered in January 1663 as the Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa, and renamed the Royal African Company in September 1672³⁶), was stationed at Mano in Korah country around 1665. His son, Peter Tucker, was born in the 1670s and was educated in England. Upon his return home in the 1680s, Peter Tucker set up shop in Tawor close to his mother's hometown in Korah country in Kittam, near the border of Gallinas country. He traded in cam wood, ivory, and timber, and acted as agent for the Royal African Company in these products toward the end of the 17th century. At the beginning of the 18th century, Peter Tucker moved to the Shebar Peninsula (later renamed Turner's Peninsula by Governor Charles Turner after Chief James Tucker refused to cede it to the British government in 1825) and founded the town of Bohal. His brothers were Joseph (who owned a trading factory at Mano) and Henry Tucker (in Bohal). According to Tucker, Peter Tucker died in the 1760s (and was succeeded by his son Louis Tucker) and Henry in the 1770s.³⁷

Like the Caulkers and Clevelands, the Tuckers were of English (paternal side) and Sherbro (maternal side) descent. And as Mills reminds us, "The natives are fond of getting a new name of foreign origin. Many of the children in the mission schools bear the names of patrons in America; others bear English names for the same reason."³⁸ It is undisputed that Thomas de Saliere Tucker was born on July 21, 1844, in Victoria, Sherbro Island in present-day Sierra Leone. His mother was the youngest daughter of the Sherbro Chief James Henry Tucker (1780-1828) whose English ancestor was said to have arrived in Sierra Leone about two hundred years earlier.³⁹

36. George Frederick Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa* (Lancaster: New Era Printing Company, 1919).

37. Tucker, *The Tuckers of Sierra Leone*, 13.

38. Mills, *Mission Work in Sierra Leone*, 76.

39. D.W. Culp, ed., *Twentieth Century Negro Literature or A Cyclopaedia of Thought on the Vital Topics Relating to the American Negro* (Atlanta: J.L. Nichols & Company, 1902). 418b.

Peter L. Tucker has identified James Henry Tucker as Henry Tucker's son. James was also educated in England and carried on the family business in Bohal. Upon his return home, "He became Chief of the Bulloms at an early age by virtue of the fact that his mother was from Nongoba Bullom (Bolome) and his grandmother a Bullom from Koranko in the Kittam. He was also the most educated and most powerful of the Bullom people."⁴⁰ On the paternal side, Thomas de Saliere Tucker was said to have descended from an ancient noble family, the *de Salieres*, of Marseilles, France. His father, Joseph, was a French officer and an admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte.⁴¹ Therefore, the myth about the spelling of his middle name is one that can easily be disposed of. In a form dated December 22, 1899, filled out, signed, and returned to Azariah S. Root, Librarian of Oberlin College, Tucker spelled his middle name "de Saliere." In the annual reports to the Florida Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tucker signed his middle name "De S." A photo engraving in the *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* spelled his middle name "de S."⁴²

Tucker attended the Mendi Mission's school and in 1856 was brought to the United States by George Thompson to continue his elementary education (1858-60) in the public schools of Oberlin. After completing his elementary education, Tucker enrolled at Oberlin College, an institution financially supported by Lewis Tappan who in 1835, two years after the college's founding, urged its trustees to admit black students, thereby earning the reputation as the first college to open its doors to non-whites and subsequently to women as well. The Rev. John Jay Shipherd founded the original Oberlin Institute to honor the memory of John Frederic Oberlin (Jean Frederic Oberlin or Johann Frederich Oberlin, 1740-1826), a native of Strasbourg in France.⁴³ The college's curriculum, which greatly influenced Tucker at the Normal School in Tallahassee, was inspired by Oberlin's benevolent social work in Alsace where he ministered to the needs of the poor through road and bridge construction, health care programs, improved agricultural methods, industrial development, and a school system that catered to infants. Shipherd's vision was for Oberlin College to

40. Tucker, *The Tuckers of Sierra Leone*, 14.

41. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 418b.

42. *Ibid.*, 418a.

43. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College*, 92.

model Oberlin's work in Alsace, to produce not only "gospel ministers and pious school-teachers," but also to "provide for the body and heart as well as the intellect; for it aims at the best education of the *whole man*."⁴⁴ The education of the "whole" man and woman required a broad-based curriculum that offered literary, agricultural, and mechanical subjects, in addition to housekeeping, textile work, and gardening. This holistic approach to education at Oberlin College would serve as the basis for the Normal School's curriculum under Tucker's leadership and a point of departure for Florida's segregated industrial schools for black and white students.

After two years of study at Oberlin College, Tucker and four other students volunteered to teach recently freed slaves at a school in Fortress Monroe in Virginia. The decision to work in Virginia came at the conclusion of the AMA's annual meeting in Oberlin in October 1862. Among other convention business, the organization, known "from the beginning as an Oberlin anti-slavery enterprise," praised President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.⁴⁵ General Benjamin F. Butler laid the groundwork for the AMA to become involved in providing relief and education to the freed slaves when his order of May 27, 1861, declared runaway slaves "contraband of war" and provided a safe haven for them in Fortress Monroe and Hampton. With Butler's permission, Tappan and the AMA immediately dispatched Rev. L.C. Lockwood to Hampton to establish a mission there for the benefit of the freed slaves.⁴⁶ The AMA was active in Fortress Monroe, and its early work led to the founding of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1868 with General Samuel C. Armstrong as its first principal. One of the Hampton Normal school's graduates was Booker T. Washington who founded Tuskegee Institute in 1881. According to one account, Tucker did a "credible job of teaching until he fell in love with a freed slave, Lucinda Spivey, who assisted in the Fortress Monroe school."⁴⁷ By his own account, he considered her ignorant and therefore unworthy of marriage.

44. *Ibid.*, 119.

45. *Ibid.*, 911.

46. *History of the American Missionary Association*, 11-12.

47. Clara M. DeBoer, "Blacks and the American Missionary Association," located at: <http://www.ucc.org/about-us/hidden-histories/blacks-and-the-american.html>. Accessed on 4/9/2008.

Tucker graduated from Oberlin College in 1865 with an A.B. degree in classics and humanities. He taught day and night schools for freed slaves in Lexington (1865-66) and Georgetown (1866-70), Kentucky, before moving on to New Orleans, Louisiana, where he worked for the customs service. His first wife, Eudora Cliola Williams, whom he married on May 23, 1871, died in 1872. One child, Ernest Vidal, was born during this marriage. Tucker remarried on September 27, 1883 to Charity Bishop. While in New Orleans, Tucker edited a number of newspapers including the *New Orleans Standard* (1871), *The Citizens Guard* (1871-73), *The Louisianian* (1879-80), and *The Louisianian Republican* (1881-82). At one time, President Ulysses S. Grant "advised him that he intended to offer him the Liberian Mission, but Tucker was so indifferent in the honor that he made no effort to be commissioned."⁴⁸ At the time Grant made his unsuccessful overture to Tucker, Haiti and Liberia, the so-called independent black republics, "would continue to be the two nations where both Republican (and later Democratic) presidents would appoint black Americans to represent the United States" as a reward for their loyalty to the Republican party; for example, Frederick Douglass served as minister to Haiti in 1889-91.⁴⁹

In 1882, Tucker earned a Bachelor of Laws degree from Straight University (now Dillard University) in New Orleans, and was admitted to practice in the Louisiana Supreme Court.⁵⁰ Straight University, named after its chief patron, Seymour Straight, opened its doors as a normal school in 1869 with the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau on land purchased by the AMA. Straight University prided itself on its work of "supplying the feeble churches with the means of the Gospel, in the establishment and maintenance of Sunday-schools, and is thus a power of great good."⁵¹ Following his admission to the Louisiana Bar, Tucker formed a partnership with Robert Brown Elliot, the first black congressman from South Carolina.⁵² The New Orleans firm "gave promise of a

48. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 418b.

49. Clarence Lusane, *Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice: Foreign Policy, Race, and the New American Century* (Westport: Praeger, 2006), 17.

50. *New York Freeman*, 1887, 1.

51. *History of the American Missionary Association*, 36.

52. J. Clay Smith, Jr., *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-1944* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). The academic department of the university was opened in 1870, and the law department opened four years later.

very brilliant and lucrative practice,” serving clients of both races.⁵³ Tucker opened a branch of the law firm of Elliott & Tucker in Pensacola, Florida, and was admitted to practice law in both the state and federal courts there on January 11, 1883. Two months later, the firm was renamed Elliott, Tucker & Thompson with the admission of James D. Thompson. With the death of Elliott, the senior partner, in 1884, the firm became known as Tucker & Thompson. Tucker described the Pensacola practice, whose clientele was predominantly black, as “a flattering success from the very beginning,” and credited his law firm with desegregating the “white people’s car” in the city’s rail service in 1883.⁵⁴

In the midst of a very busy law practice, Tucker found time to earn a master’s degree (A.M.) from Oberlin College in 1890. Parenthetically, other beneficiaries of the AMA schools in Sherbro country also pursued further studies in the United States, including Barnabas Root and MarGru (Sarah Kinson), one of the female *Amistad* captives. A graduate of Knox College (1871) and the Chicago Theological Seminary (1873), Root was ordained as a missionary in 1874. Before returning home to Sherbro country in 1875, he was employed by the AMA as pastor for a Congregational Mission Church for freed slaves in Alabama.⁵⁵ Root died in 1877 before completing a Mende language dictionary and other books he had been working on shortly after returning home. This prompted the AMA to observe that: “As one of the fruits of the Association’s missions, he was, despite his brief life, a witness not only to its usefulness, but an instance of what native Africans may yet become as preachers and teachers to their own countrymen.”⁵⁶ In the summer of 1846 MarGru returned to the United States with Mrs. Eliza Raymond whose “health was very poor, so that she was deranged much of the time.”⁵⁷ In November 1849, after receiving her education at Oberlin College with the assistance of Lewis Tappan, MarGru went back home to the Mendi Mission accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Brooks. In part because of her acquaintance with Thompson in Oberlin, Margru headed the Mendi Mission’s girls’ school before moving further into the interior of Mende country to establish her own school.⁵⁸

53. *New York Freeman*, 1887, 1.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Abraham, “Amistad Revolt.”

56. AMA *Pamphlet No. 2*, 15.

57. Thompson, *Thompson in Africa*, 336.

58. Ellen M. Lawson and Marlene D. Merrill, *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 22-23.

Tucker's experiences as a student at the Mendi Mission, Oberlin College, Fortress Monroe, and Straight University helped shape his educational philosophy which was at variance with Florida State's prevailing notion of black education. Tucker was one of the first educators to argue for broadening the base of black education to include the subjects described in the Morrill Act of 1862. This federal law authorized states to benefit from the sale of public lands (thirty thousand acres for each senator and representative of each state) and use the interest on the capital to endow, support, and maintain "at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."⁵⁹ As some commentators have suggested, the Morrill Act of 1862 "gave more impetus to the development of historically black land-grant institutions of higher education," and extended higher education to blacks who made up a significant portion of America's industrial and working classes in the second half of the 19th century.⁶⁰ The Normal School for Colored Teachers did benefit from the Morrill Act of 1862 principally in the procurement of land for the school and new dormitories. The second Morrill Act of 1890 authorized funds for agricultural and mechanical education in the amount of \$15,000 per annum, with a yearly increase of \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$50,000.⁶¹ In the same year, the Florida State legislature authorized the use of these funds for the Normal School for Colored Teachers.

The history of the normal school dates back to the 18th century in Europe where those who championed the natural and physi-

59. "An Act Donating Public Lands to the Several States and Territories Which May Provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts." Ch. 130, 12 Stat. 503, 7 U.S.C. 301, *et seq.*, July 2, 1862.

60. National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), *Leadership and Learning: An Interpretive History of Historically Black Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (1990), 5.

61. "An Act to Apply a Portion of the Proceeds of the Public Lands to the More Complete Endowment and Support of the Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts Established Under the Provisions of an Act of Congress Approved July Second, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-Two." Ch. 841, 26 Stat. 417, 7 U.S.C. 322, *et seq.*, August 30, 1890.

cal sciences looked to agriculture and the mechanical arts to counter the domination of classical and theological studies in the universities and colleges. In the United States, adoption of courses in agricultural and mechanical arts held out the promise of greater skills and income for the industrial and laboring classes. Agricultural and mechanical education also offered a means to solve society's economic and political problems, while at the same time removing economic, social, and political inequalities. It underscored the reality that modern industrialized American society needed skilled factory workers and scientific farmers to compete with Europe and other emerging regions. These concerns placed the burden on colleges and universities to teach the useful trades and mechanical and agricultural skills. The AMA hailed the normal schools as "the evidence and demand of the advancement in learning of the colored children," and as the "leading and most valuable educational gift of the North to the Freedmen, because it was the grand means of fitting them to be their own educators."⁶²

For some educators and policy makers, there were moral and practical imperatives to teach industrial education subjects as ways to promote the gospel of the dignity of labor. For instance, Booker T. Washington, a graduate of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, modeled Tuskegee Institute upon his *alma mater*. Of students at Tuskegee Institute, which opened its doors on 4 July 1881, Washington wrote:

From the very beginning, at Tuskegee, I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings. My plan was to have them, while performing this service, taught the latest and best methods of labour, so that the school would not only get the benefit of their efforts, but the students themselves would be taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity, would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil, and would learn to love work for its own sake."⁶³

Throughout his tenure at Tuskegee Institute, Washington remained faithful to industrial education because it "train[ed] stu-

62. *History of the American Missionary Association*, 19.

63. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, in John Hope Franklin, ed., *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 108.

dents to become independent small businessmen, farmers, and teachers rather than wage-earners or servants of white employers,” promoted racial progress through self-help, and overcame some of the shortcomings of southern black education through literary training.⁶⁴ While Washington made industrial education the centerpiece of his educational philosophy, he also acknowledged the importance of academic education as a complement to the former and worked hard to blot out the differences between the industrial and literary departments at the Tuskegee Institute; this policy was known as “correlating” or “dovetailing.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, Washington encouraged graduates of his school to seek further study in academic institutions, acknowledged the role played by higher education in preparing black professionals to compete with their compatriots, and served as a trustee of Howard and Fisk Universities.

The Florida legislature established the “Normal School for the colored teachers” on 31 May 1887, in College Hill, Tallahassee in Leon County, along with a “Normal School for the training and instruction of white teachers” in DeFuniak Springs in Walton County. According to the legislature, the black school was “similar in all respects” to the white school with the same amount of funding which was \$4,000.00 per annum for each school for 1887 and 1888.⁶⁶ The Normal School for Colored Teachers opened on 3 October 1887 with Tucker as president (with a salary of \$1,100) and Thomas Van Renssalaer Gibbs (with a salary of \$1,000), a former member of the Florida State legislature, as his first assistant. According to some accounts, Leon County State Senator John Wallace and former United States Congressman Josiah T. Walls had recommended Tucker to former Governor William D. Bloxham, who, as Secretary of State and a member of the State Board of Education, then recommended him to Governor Edward A. Perry. Tucker had taught Wallace and Walls, who were enlisted soldiers serving in Company “D” of the Colored Infantry, at the Mary S. Peak School, a United States Army institution in Fortress Monroe in Virginia. It may be recalled that while at Oberlin College, Tucker had taught school in Fortress Monroe in the early

64. Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press), 142, 144-145.

65. *Ibid.*, 149.

66. An Act Providing for the Establishment of State Normal Schools in this State. *Laws of Florida, 1887*, Chapter 3692, No. 12.

1860s before returning to complete his degree program in 1865. According to one account, "He demurred, he objected; but leading Colored men and the Chief Executive importuned and requested his acceptance of the place."⁶⁷ In the end, it was the personal relationship between Perry (a former Confederate general) and Tucker that finally convinced the State Board of Education to hire Tucker. As one newspaper reported, "Governor Perry, who was an active promoter of this institution, was also a great admirer of the ability and integrity of Mr. Tucker. It was through the personal persuasion of the Governor that Mr. Tucker consented to abandon a good law practice and accept the presidency of this school."⁶⁸

The State of Florida designed the Normal School for Colored Teachers, like its white counterpart, to "prepare the students who enter to go out into the field of teaching prepared to teach the books, and literary knowledge, and also be thoroughly enabled to give instruction in tool craft, and trade work, practical, economical farming, the dairy, and care of stock."⁶⁹ The course work was divided into preparatory and normal work. The two-year normal course work consisted of Latin, higher mathematics, natural, mental, and moral philosophy, physiology, astronomy, general history, rhetoric, and pedagogics. The preparatory department, established to address student deficiencies in preparation for work in the public schools, included courses in the "elements of algebra and Latin and a thorough review of the common school branches," music, drawing, and bookkeeping.⁷⁰ Deficiencies in preparation delayed the graduation of the first class of students until June 1892 while its white counterpart graduated its first class of thirteen students at the end of the 1888/89 school year.

Tucker taught English, classical subjects, and rhetoric, while Gibbs taught mathematics and science. The school began with fifteen students. Although it expanded to more than ninety students by 1889, it was hampered by a lack of accommodation for non-Leon County residents. In his 1890 report to the Superintendent of

67. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 418b.

68. *Jacksonville Evening Metropolis*, 19 June 1903.

69. Albert J. Russell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year Ending September 30, 1891*, 15.

70. Russell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the School Year Ending September 30, 1889*, 15; Russell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Year Ending September 30, 1890*.

Public Instruction, Albert J. Russell, Tucker laid out his vision of education for students at the Normal School: "If education in its broadest term consists in a rounding off of all the faculties, then that course of instruction alone is complete which will wholly draw out and enlarge the capacities of the student." Contrary to what his critics had asserted, Tucker defended industrial education in the same report: "In the matter of social economy, we teach the doctrine that labor of the hand is the first need of the man who would be a useful and respected member of the people among whom he lives; that the poor person who regards work as a disgrace must live the life either of a shabby genteel beggar, or prey upon society and land in a felon's cell; that thrift and economy are synonymous with usefulness and respectability." In addition to the "acquisition of letters," which he called the main purpose of college education, Tucker also acknowledged the existence of overcrowded learned professions, and therefore recommended a policy whose aim was to teach morals (by precept and example), thoroughness and practicality in the abstract sciences, algebra, quadratics, geometry, and mechanic arts.⁷¹ By the time the state had leased the forty-nine acre Highwood site (former home of Governor William P. DuVal) in March 1891, a Mechanical department, which opened in November 1891, had been added to the Normal School's Academic, Normal, Agricultural, and Industrial training departments. Tucker described the Mechanical department as "one of the best, if not the best equipped in a school of this kind in the South," and reported the school's progress in raising millet, grain and fodder corn, peas, sweet potatoes, and hay, by far more than is needed for our wants."⁷² Enrollment for the 1890/91 school year stood at sixty-eight students, but was expected to rise to over one hundred with the return of current students by 1892.

In its sixth year (1894), the name of the Normal School was changed to Florida State Normal and Industrial College for Colored Students. The name change coincided with the ascendancy of William N. Sheats as Superintendent of Public Instruction. The new superintendent immediately set out to define the limits of black education and who should impart it to black students. While denying any discriminatory animus toward blacks in

71. *Annual Report, 1890*, 18-20.

72. *Annual Report, 1891*, 16.

educational opportunities, Sheats nonetheless wanted them to be educated “in their own schools separately, without any efforts at co-education of the races. Any effort to enforce mixed education of the races as it obtains in many of the States would forever destroy the public school system at one swoop, and cause the whites to abandon all efforts at their education.” He also suggested that the Florida legislature protect the right of the educated black to teach his/her own race. He grounded the “separate-but-equal” educational policy on existing constitutional and legal provisions that barred inter-racial or mixed marriages, co-education of the races, and amalgamation. He went on to say that “I have the temerity to ask the Legislature to enact a law prohibiting, in both public and private schools, any but negroes from teaching schools for negroes, excepting in the matter of normal instruction to their teachers in institutes and summer schools.” Sheats believed his position represented “an act of friendship to the race, to shield them from the folly of some of their friends.”⁷³

Tucker’s report for 1894 emphasized thoroughness in the training of students in the school’s Literary, Industrial, and Agricultural Departments. The Literary Department consisted of the Academic, Preparatory, and Normal Courses of study. The Academic Course was a three-year program of study “designed only for those whose previous opportunities may have been limited, or whose acquirements may prove, in the preliminary examination, to be superficial,” whereas the two-year Preparatory Course was intermediate between the Academic and Normal Courses. The Normal Course lasted two years and led to the award of regular diplomas and the degree of Licentiate of Instruction. The Industrial Course encompassed the Mechanical, Agricultural, and Dairy Departments. The five-year course of study leading to the degree of M.E. (mechanical education) incorporated subjects like carpentry, cabinet-making, wood-turning, and pattern-making. Tucker described the work of the Agricultural Department as comprehensive in scope, consisting of the cultivation of semi-tropical food crops, gardening, fruit-growing, dairy husbandry, rearing of livestock, poultry, and drainage. This department awarded the degree of Licentiate of Instruction. A Department of Domestic Economy, added to the school during the 1897/98 school year, graduated

73. William N. Sheats, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1894*, 70-71.

thirteen female students.⁷⁴ The program's success encouraged Tucker to propose other courses that would equip female students "to fight the battle of life" and break down social and legal barriers that "restricted [them] to only two or three ways of acquiring an honest livelihood."⁷⁵ One of the courses he had in mind was nursing for which he appealed to the legislature for funds to erect a building, hire a teacher, and purchase the necessary equipment for a Nurse Training Department.

Although Tucker remained faithful to the school's primary purpose, which was to prepare teachers for the state's public schools, he also expanded its curriculum to include a "practical education of a combined literary and industrial kind" that saw students erecting their own dormitories, planting crops, tending to animals, working with all manner of tools, and generally serving Florida as "good, useful citizens in their respective communities."⁷⁶ Critics of Tucker's work claimed it was too academic and charged that it did not provide the type of education needed by blacks—charges that are not supported by the facts. Although Tucker saw teacher training as the school's "special work," he was also keenly aware of the necessity for black students to be educated in the industrial subjects, and took pride in the fact that the school had "revolutionized the life of the race in the community in which it is located," changed the social status of blacks, and infused the black community with intelligence and moral principles.⁷⁷ In sum, Tucker succeeded in doing in Tallahassee what Oberlin had done in Alsace and Oberlin College had achieved in Lorain County, Ohio—to educate and train good and useful citizens who would then transform their respective communities into livable spaces. In this respect a conflict between Tucker and Sheats over the Normal School's curriculum and mission was inevitable. Whereas Russell and Sheats (and more so the latter) and other public officials saw agricultural and industrial courses as appropriate educational courses for black teachers and students, Tucker envisioned the school as a laboratory for the promotion of practical education

74. *Ibid.*, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1898*, 302.

75. *Ibid.*, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1900*, 203.

76. *Ibid.*, 202-204.

77. *Ibid.*, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1896*, 125.

of a combined literary and industrial kind. He steadfastly defended his philosophy of education and his belief in the potential of blacks to aspire to work not just in a "car wash" but in other professions as well. According to the *Apalachicola Times* of June 27, 1903, "Tucker was to Florida what Booker T. Washington is to Alabama," to the extent that both educators saw industrial education as complementary to academic education.

Sheats was involved in the 1885 state constitutional convention that guaranteed separate schools for blacks and whites, and continued to press for improving the quality of black public schools through uniform state exams for certification.⁷⁸ His disappointment with Tucker and eventual replacement with Nathan B. Young stemmed as much from Tucker's philosophy of education as from a realization that the black educator had challenged the white superintendent's authority to decide suitable education for blacks. In this regard Sheats received tacit support from Governors William D. Bloxham (1881-85; 1897-1901) and Edward A. Perry (1885-89) who admired Booker T. Washington's industrial and vocational programs at Tuskegee Institute which they held up as models for black education. The election of Governor William S. Jennings (1901-05) sealed Tucker's fate at the Normal School. Tucker resigned on 10 August 1901, after Sheats had chosen Nathan B. Young to succeed him as the school's second president. Young was also a graduate of Oberlin College and as subsequent events showed he shared some of Tucker's educational philosophy that a good education also required a good grounding in liberal arts training. Young had worked with Washington and left Tuskegee Institute in 1897 much as he did in 1923 when he left the Normal School as disagreement over industrial/vocational education and liberal arts education intensified.

Tucker moved on to Jacksonville where he became a law partner with J. Douglas Wetmore in the law firm of Wetmore & Tucker. In 1902, the *Jacksonville Evening Metropolis* noted that Tucker was "highly esteemed all over Florida as a man of profound learning and general ability, and his coming to Jacksonville to make this city his home is a matter of much congratulation."⁷⁹ Another commentator wrote:

78. Holland, *Nathan B. Young*, 74.

79. *Jacksonville Evening Metropolis*, 10 November 1902.

By patient perseverance and tact he succeeded in enlisting the hearty good will of all classes to the maintenance of the institution. The history of his work is a part of the educational records. Many men and women of worth and saving influence in their respective communities in Florida owe their training to the devoted consecration to duty of this native of the "Dark Continent." The school itself will ever remain a lasting monument to his tireless, efficient devotion to the welfare of his race."⁸⁰

In December 1902, Tucker suffered from "an acute attack of bladder trouble" for which his physicians, Drs. A. L. Pierce of Jacksonville, W. J. Gunn of Tallahassee and Sollace Mitchell of Jacksonville recommended further treatment at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.⁸¹ Tucker died at St. Joseph's Hospital in Baltimore on June 18, 1903.

The Normal School Tucker headed for fourteen years thrived after his death, becoming an institution of higher education in 1905. In 1909, with authorization by the State Board of Education to offer bachelor's degrees, its name was changed to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes. However, its core mission to educate and train teachers remained unhindered even as new programs were added to its curriculum and student enrolment increased. Further name changes in 1951 (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College) and 1953 (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University) brought the institution within the ambit of Florida State's public university system in 1971. This paved the way for FAMU to undertake far-reaching changes to its curriculum, degree programs, student enrolment, faculty recruitment, and physical infrastructure to bring it in line with other colleges and universities in the system.

Understanding Tucker as an individual, attorney, teacher, and college administrator will begin to close the gap in the historiography of the then Normal School for Colored Teachers where he spent fourteen years of his professional life. As an individual, Tucker grew up with AMA missionaries and attended their schools and colleges through the agency of the *Amistad* case and the Mendi Mission. In the United States, Tucker's first contact with

80. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 418b.

81. *Jacksonville Evening Metropolis*, 24 December 1903.

the plight of slaves occurred while he was a student at Oberlin College where he volunteered to work for the AMA in Virginia. There he taught individuals who had been freed by Union forces during the Civil War. As an attorney, he defended blacks against racial discrimination and helped desegregate Pensacola's railcar service. As a college administrator and teacher, he tried to model Florida's Normal School for Colored Students' curriculum upon the Oberlin College design as part of a broader crusade against slavery and for liberty through comprehensive education that would cater to a poor, marginalized, and discriminated segment of American society, namely people of African descent.

Tucker's world view and educational philosophy were shaped in part by his experiences in present-day southeastern Sierra Leone where he might have witnessed firsthand the horrors of the slave trade in Mendi Country. His life came full circle in the United States where he met with some of the anti-slavery crusaders and missionaries who had championed the cause of Sengbeh Pieh and the other Mendians through whom he met George Thompson. Therefore, to understand Tucker's contributions to black education at the Normal School requires the historian to dig deeper into the vast array of materials collected by the AMA as well as other published and unpublished materials. By placing Tucker in the proper historical context, one also begins to comprehend the moral awakening that equated human rights with freedom for enslaved blacks in the United States. In Tucker's time, education also came to be viewed as a human right and as his tenure at the Normal School has shown, this expanded meaning of education clashed with Florida's program of industrial education for blacks. Like John Oberlin whose work in Alsace inspired the founding of Oberlin College, Tucker believed that liberal arts education was compatible with industrial education, the goal of both being the education and social uplift of the poor and dispossessed. To that extent, Tucker's philosophy of education was also consistent with the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The challenge for Tucker, however, was to overcome the educational philosophy of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and other elected officials who cherry-picked the type of curriculum they thought appropriate for the education and training of black students and teachers. In essence they presumed to know what was best for the black population in terms of their education. It was rather ironic that praise for Tucker's contributions to the growth and development of the Normal School came only after his forced departure in 1901.