

**VIRGINIA SCHOOL REPORT, 1871;  
FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC  
INSTRUCTION, FOR THE YEAR  
ENDING AUGUST 31, 1871**

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Virginia School Report, 1871; First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction,  
for the Year Ending August 31, 1871 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31, 1871**



Virginia Dept. of public instruction  
**VIRGINIA SCHOOL REPORT,**

**1871.**

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**FIRST ANNUAL REPORT**

**OF THE**

**Superintendent of Public Instruction,**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDING AUGUST 31, 1871.**

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**1871.**



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA,  
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION,  
*Richmond, December 1, 1871.*

*To the General Assembly of Virginia:*

The Board of Education has the honor to transmit herewith the First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, together with the report of the Second Auditor upon the subject of the Literary Fund.

Respectfully,

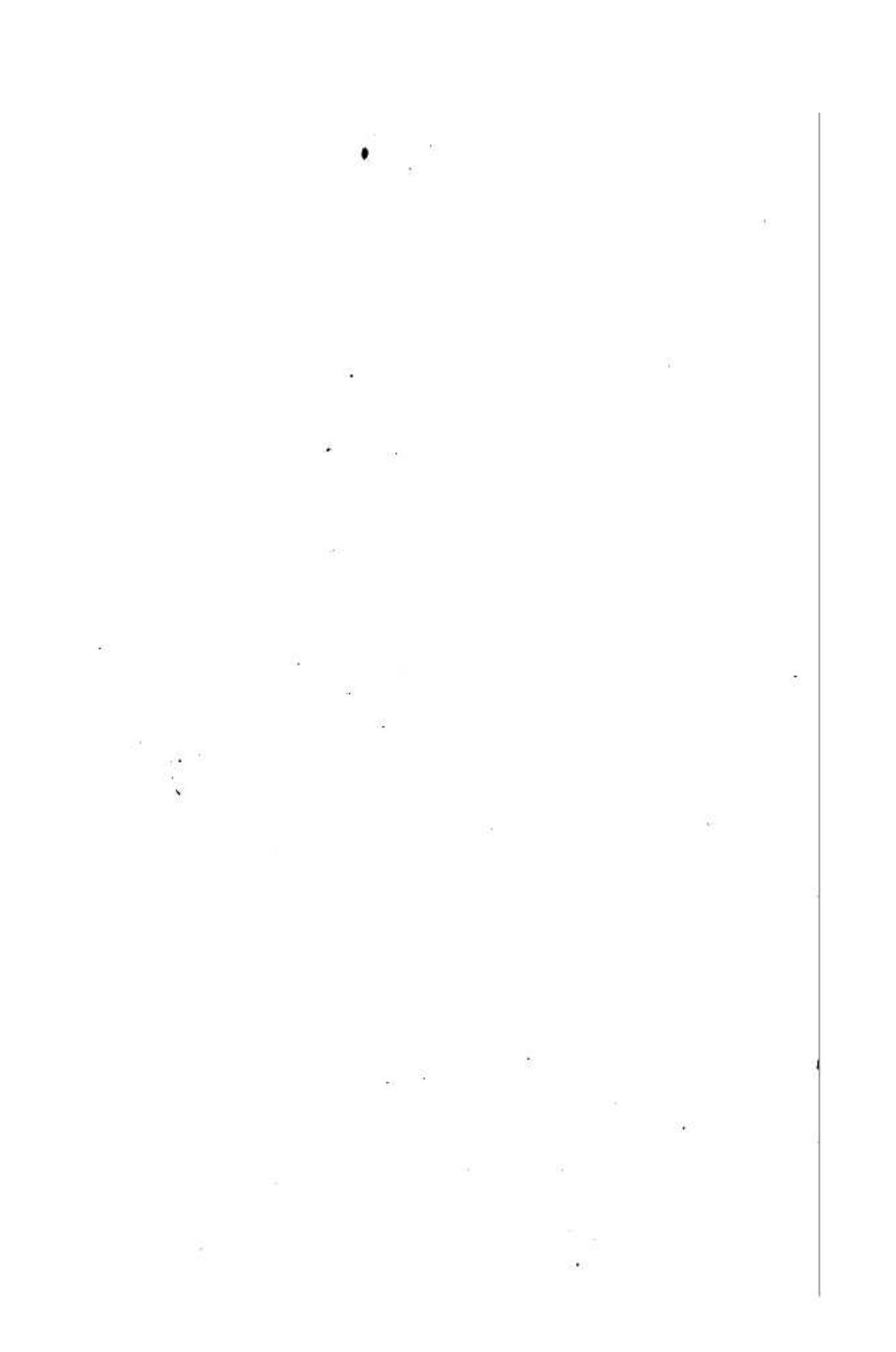
G. C. WALKER,  
President Board of Education.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA,  
OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,  
Richmond, October 1, 1871.

To his Excellency GILBERT C. WALKER,  
Governor of Virginia, and ex officio  
President of the Board of Education:

MR. PRESIDENT,—

I have the honor to submit herewith my first annual report to the Board of Education.

The occasion allows me the pleasure of testifying to the large amount of valuable service rendered to the cause of public education during the past year by yourself and the Attorney General.

From the 17th of September, 1870, to the 31st of August, 1871, there were held forty-eight meetings of the Board of Education, averaging, perhaps, three hours in length. These meetings were frequently held late in the evening, and more than once, were continued until midnight. Besides attending upon sessions of the Board, each of you kindly gave me the benefit of your counsel on many informal occasions. All the commissions and money orders were signed by yourself as President of the Board, and many legal opinions in regard to public school affairs were given by the Attorney General. The large additions thus made to the ordinary duties of your respective offices, seem worthy of special recognition.



Allow me, Mr. President, also to allude to the great moral support given to the cause of universal free education, by your manly public utterances on the subject, both before and since your election as Governor.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WM. H. RUFFNER,  
*Supt. Public Instruction.*

## FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Superintendent of Public Instruction of Virginia,

*For the Year ending August 31, 1871.*

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The General Assembly which met on the 10th day of February, 1870, scrupulously obeyed the new Constitution in regard to education. It appointed a Superintendent of Public Instruction on the 2d day of March, eight days within the time required. That officer qualified March 5th, and reported his plan of public instruction to the General Assembly March 28th, five days before the expiration of the extremely brief period of thirty days allowed by the Constitution for preparing it.

By request of the chairman of the committee of schools and colleges of the House of Delegates, the Superintendent next addressed himself to the preparation of a bill to be submitted to the Legislature, embodying in detail the plan which had been reported in outline. The bill, after being revised by Prof. J. B. Minor, and much improved, especially in its technical phraseology, was laid before a joint meeting of the Senate and House committees on the 26th day of April. It was first reported without alteration by the joint committee to the Legislature, which ordered it to be printed.

This having been done, the committee, faithfully and in the best spirit, worked over the bill in all of its details, and improved several of its points. On the 6th day of June, it was taken up

by the Senate, and on the 27th of the same month by the House of Delegates. Some changes were made for the better, others for the worse. Great interest was manifested in the discussions, which were animated and courteous. No serious opposition was shown to the main features of the bill, which was finally passed under the able leadership of Col. Edmund Pendleton in the Senate, and Major Henderson M. Bell in the House. It was signed by the Governor, and became a law July 11th, 1870—a day which marks an epoch in the history of Virginia.

The first work to be done under the school law, was the appointment by the Board of Education of county superintendents and district school trustees—about 1,400 in number. As may readily be imagined, this was a work of no inconsiderable magnitude, demanding the utmost caution, and involving immense correspondence. The first meeting of the Board of Education was held on the 29th of July, at which time twelve county superintendents were appointed. Before the 15th of November more than a thousand officers had been commissioned; and by the 2d day of January the whole work was done; and now, after a year's intercourse with these officers, we may say that the work was well done.

It then devolved upon the Superintendent to instruct these officers in their new and somewhat complicated duties. This he did by means of circulars, correspondence, and the columns of the *Educational Journal*. This monthly magazine had been established in 1869 as the organ of the Educational Association of Virginia, and by an arrangement, as economical as it was convenient, eight pages of the *Journal* were every month placed under the control of the Superintendent, and proved to be a highly important means for conveying information, and for educating school officers, teachers, and other readers of the *Journal*, in the ideas and methods of the school system.

#### THE OPENING OF SCHOOLS.

The first duty of county superintendents, after the trustees were appointed, was to organize the various district boards, and set them to work in taking the census of school popula-