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 ***Schooling the New South Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920 (review)***

Richard Barry Westin

Southern Cultures

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

Schooling the New South Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880—1920 By James L. Leloudis University of North Carolina Press, 1996 338 pp. Cloth, \$39.95 Reviewed by Richard Barry Westin, professor of history at the University of Richmond. The last decade has seen the historiography of public education in the South begin to come of age. James Leloudis's *Schooling the New South* now takes its place along with the works of William Link and James Anderson as part of a major revisionist trend away from the early histories of southern education that presented pictures of unalloyed progress. *Schooling the New South* may be the best work yet in revealing the complexities of the transformation between 1880 and 1920 from one-room common schools to the modern graded school system. One factor that makes it such an outstanding work is

the balance it achieves. LeLoudis avoids a simple dualism between school reformers and their opponents and, for the most part, chooses the approach of historian Herbert Butterfield to mentally walk along with those of the past he is writing about in order to convey why they took the actions they did. LeLoudis uses the movement in 1881 for a graded school in the town of Wilson, North Carolina, as a vehicle to introduce the story of the graded-school revolution. One of the book's merits is that it helps the reader better understand the common school system, where local school committees tended to reflect local attitudes. In the common school era, teaching was not viewed as a profession. Good moral character, or even the need for employment, often took precedence over the degree of training in the selection of teachers. Formal schooling was only a small part of a child's education and thus not as important as it would be after the graded school revolution. Also, LeLoudis does an excellent job explaining the rationale for the "blab" school where students memorized their lessons by repeating them out loud rather than studying in silence. The movement toward graded schools reflected the change away from subsistence agriculture toward a market economy, and with the graded system came an emphasis on professionalization and standardization. In 1891 a bill to establish a 108 Reviews women's normal school passed. By 1900 the school had over 1,000 alumnae who were redefining the role of teaching, professionalizing the field but also defining it as women's work with most men in a supervisory role as principals or superintendents. The aim of the graded school reform programs was not to initiate students into local ways but rather to provide them with a port of entry into a much larger world. Giving support to William Link's thesis that urban reformers, through centralization, deprived rural communities of control over their schools, LeLoudis concludes that all of the efforts of the reformers were aimed at remaking "the countryside in the image of the town." The 1890s saw a fusion of Populists and Republicans who captured the North Carolina legislature in 1894 and then the governorship in 1896. These Fusionists seemed responsive to a Baptist demand for a reduction in support for the University of North Carolina and the Women's Normal. School officials, however, were able to turn back this challenge, and in the elections of 1898 and 1900, the Democrats regained control of the state government. Governor Charles Aycock waged the 1900 election on an education-disfranchisement platform. While many Democratic legislators viewed the education plank as window dressing, Aycock and the school reformers were sincere in their intentions. When adequate legislative support was not forthcoming, Aycock and the reformers allied themselves with northern philanthropists. Southern educators and northern businessmen set up the Southern Education Board to provide publicity for a school improvement campaign. Charles McIver, president of the Women's Normal and member of the campaign, turned to the state's women and founded the Women's Association for the Betterment of Public Schoolhouses (WABPS), which gave reformers critical access to the one-room common schools in rural areas. LeLoudis does a marvelous job of explaining how a seemingly innocuous group such as WABPS had a great effect on women's status and on the success of the publicity...



## Schooling the New South

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1880-1920

By James L. Leloudis

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