that his greatest and most effective work was that in the cause of education by public schools.

In his earnest, quiet, unobtrusive way, he became one of the pillars of this noble work of the State in Wilmington, and his chief characteristics—virtue, intelligence, decision, industry, perseverance, and economy—were brought to bear upon this great enterprise with such far-reaching results that eternity alone can reveal their extent. He honestly regarded public office as a public trust, and carefully fulfilled his obligations with unflagging zeal and painstaking economy. His business life and studious habits preserved his mind in vigorous and healthful action. He made a constant study of popular education, and mastered its problems in each successive stage.

Prof. John J. Blair, who has been for nearly fifteen years our capable superintendent of city schools, has kindly prepared for the *Chronicles* a narrative of the development of popular education in Wilmington.

Public Schools.

By Prof. John J. Blair.

The history of education in the Cape Fear section is, of course, similar to and in accordance with the State's educational policy, modified to a certain extent by local influences and needs, and the ideas of individuals.

In 1825, a "Literary Fund" was created, the author of the bill providing for this being Bartlett Yancey, but it was not until 1839 that the first bill providing for free schools in every county was passed.[1]

Between 1840 and 1850 a more elaborate system of schools was put in operation, but for lack of one responsible head and uniformity of administration, chaos and failure resulted.[2]

DECADE OF 1850 TO 1860.

The educational history of our State from 1850, extending over a period of the next sixteen years, centers around the character and deeds of one man, Dr. Calvin H. Wiley. He was

[1]Dr. Frederick Hill, of Orton, was a strong advocate of public education, was one of the authors of the legislation on the subject, and was called in Wilmington the "father of public schools."

[2]There was financial coöperation, the State furnishing a part and the people of the district a part of the fund. It was good for a beginning.

elected in December, 1852, and on January 1, 1853, at the age of thirty-four years, assumed the duties of this newly-made and responsible office, under the title of superintendent of common schools. He began at once many needed reforms, and made provision by which teachers could be prepared and secured for the work.

An extract from Dr. Joyner's address at the unveiling of a monument to Calvin H. Wiley in Winston in 1904 can not be too often repeated in connection with this notable administration. The speaker said: "Under his shaping hand, the system grew and improved, and the schools prospered until it could be truthfully said at the beginning of the War between the States that North Carolina had the best system of common schools in the South." Dr. Wiley continued to hold the office of superintendent until it was abolished in 1866.

THE UNION FREE SCHOOL.

In addition to the schools of the town of Wilmington, there were in the county New Hanover Academy, 1833; Rock Fish Academy, 1834; Black Creek Female Institution, 1846; and there were schools at Rocky Point constantly from 1846 at least to 1850; Topsail, 1851; Union (at Harrell's Store), 1854; Rocky Point, 1867.

The name "Union" was applied to any school in which private and public interests were united in accordance with an act of the General Assembly.

In a letter written to Silas N. Martin by John W. Barnes, a history of the Union Free School from 1856 to 1862 is given:

"A meeting of citizens was held in the summer of 1856 in the vicinity of 'The Oaks,' and it was decided to raise the necessary money and material for the purchase of a lot and the construction of a building. The deed was executed November 3, 1856, to James Green, John Barnes, and Thomas Freshwater, as trustees, and the same recorded December 31.

"In April, 1857, a meeting of the subscribers was held in the new building, in which it was decided to start the school the first of May, and to continue three months experimentally. Mr. Martin, Mr. VanBokkelen, and Mr. Fanning were appointed to employ a teacher and put the Union Free School in operation. The Board of Superintendents of Common Schools for New Hanover coöperated with the committee,