

General Education Board ^[1]

General Education Board

by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

See also: [State Board of Education](#) ^[2]

The General Education Board (GEB) was a philanthropic organization endowed by the [Rockefeller](#) ^[3] family and chartered in 1903 by the U.S. Congress for "the promotion of education in the United States of America, without distinction of race, sex or creed." During its 62-year existence (1902-64) the GEB appropriated more than \$325 million, of which about 20 percent was earmarked for [African American](#) ^[4] education. Because rural areas in North Carolina, as in other southern states, were generally without schools, the GEB designated much of its initial support to developing rural schools. It also funded training in [agricultural](#) ^[5] economics and community development on the premise that the southern economy had to improve before educational development could occur.

From the mid-1920s until the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* ^[6] (1954) outlawing segregation, the GEB was increasingly concerned about the weakness of Black educational institutions and disenchanted with industrial education as the major tool for Black development. This led to an increase in its grants to southern institutions of higher education, its efforts to make southern governments less discriminatory toward Black citizens in their distribution of public funds, and its support of interracial conferences. The GEB did not directly attack Black poverty, segregation, and political powerlessness—the root causes of the problems that plagued the southern Black community. Instead, the board sought to aid Black individuals primarily by grants, fellowships, and programs designed to create a strong, separate Black community.

Many GEB grants were given to [Duke University](#) ^[7], the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) ^[8], [North Carolina State University](#) ^[9], and [Wake Forest University](#) ^[10], among others. For instance, the libraries of UNC, Duke, and N.C. State participated in an unusual cooperative enterprise directed by Nathan Carter Newbold, longtime director of the [Department of Public Instruction](#) ^[11]'s [Division of Negro Education in North Carolina](#) ^[12]. In 1935 the libraries began, with a GEB grant, to build collections of books by and about African Americans to support study in that field. Over the course of several years, each library added to its collection, with the result that a total of 12,000 volumes was assembled.

References:

Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller Sr.* (1997).

Louis Round Wilson, *Louis Round Wilson's Historical Sketches* (1976).

Additional Resources:

Preliminary Guide to Records Relating to African in the North Carolina State Archives:

<http://www.ncdcr.gov/Portals/26/PDF/findingaids/Circulars/aic17.pdf> ^[12]

Subjects:

[Black and African American People](#) ^[13]

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[N.C. Industrial Revolution \(1900-1929\)](#) ^[15]

[Philanthropy](#) ^[16]

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From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[18]

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