From 1865 until 1868 Robert M. Lusher was serving as State Superintendent of Education for Louisiana. He attempted a program to elevate the level of education. But Lusher was replaced by a carpetbagger named T. W. Conway who was successful in adding new provisions for education in the Constitution of 1868. However, Conway could not get much done because of the political radicals stole most of the Educational funds. The first black state Superintendent of Education, William G. Brown, replaced Conway.

The aftermath of the Civil War left Louisiana with little or no educational facilities—the system was in an elementary stage. The Freedmen’s Bureau along with other religious organizations sought a means for higher education for Blacks. The American Missionary Association was one of the first of these religious organizations to undertake higher educational work among Negroes in Louisiana. The Congregationalists controlled this Association. Other religious organizations such as the Freedmen’s Aid Society which was controlled by the Methodist Church and the American Baptist Home Mission Society, played important roles in setting up higher education for Blacks in the State.

The most influential institutions of higher learning for blacks in New Orleans were Straight University, New Orleans University, and Leland University. Straight university founded in 1869 on Esplanade Avenue and Burgundy Street, established in New Orleans by the American Missionary Association. This institution was named after Seymour Straight. New Orleans University founded in 1869 on Camp and Rice Streets and later moved on upper St. Charles Avenue, was established in New Orleans and operated by the Methodist Church, to train Methodist ministers. This institution grew out of the Union Normal School which was founded by the Freedmen’s Aid Society on July 8, 1869. The institution became larger and became necessary for the institution to sell its property on Camp and Rice Streets and purchased a few acres of land along with a plantation mansion on St. Charles Avenue in 1884. Leland University founded in 1870 in the basement of Tulane Avenue Baptist Church and later purchased ten acres of land fronting St. Charles Avenue. Leland was constructed near Audubon Park on St. Charles Avenue.¹

¹ Leland College Collection. Archives & Manuscripts Department, John B. Cade Library, Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, LA.
Leland University was incorporated in 1870, under the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of Louisiana, which reads:

“The purposes and objects of its corporation are the establishment and maintenance of one or more institutions of learning for the education, under Christian auspices, of young men and women, particularly for the training of preachers and teachers and to receive donations of property for educational purposes.”

It is open to all persons who are fitted to enjoy its advantages, without distinction of race or religious opinions.

Leland University owes its existence to the wise forethought and broad generosity of Holbrook Chamberlain, a resident of Brooklyn, New York, who purchased the ground in 1869. Chamberlain came to New Orleans for the purpose of establishing an institution of higher learning for Blacks of Louisiana. Leland University was founded in 1870. Leland University was named after the wife of Chamberlain, whose father was Elder John Leland of Cheshire, Massachusetts.

Holbrook Chamberlain accepted the position as the first treasurer of the college and served until his death in 1883. He had a personal interest in the institution and supported it very liberally. At his death Chamberlain bequeathed to Leland $100,000 as an endowment fund, the interest of which was to go to the payment of teachers. Chamberlain was also successful in receiving funds from other organizations. The United States Government through the Freedman’s Bureau appropriated $17,500 toward the first building, and the American Home Mission Society appropriated $12,500 toward the purchase of the grounds. In addition, the society donated to the trustees, for school purposes, during the years of 1874 to 1886 and various sums averaging over $3,000 annually. During the years of 1884 and 1885 the society by special arrangement assumed the entire support of the teachers paying over $4,000 each year—in 1884, $7,544 less $3,371 received.

On March 1, 1870 Holbrook Chamberlain, Elish E. Taylor, Seymour Straight, Charles Statchell, James B. Simmons, Thomas W. Conway and Esau Carter requested a meeting with H.C. Dibble who was the Notary Public of New Orleans. The purpose of that meeting was to incorporate Leland University as a literary and religious institution of higher learning. The corporation of Leland gave the institution the power to make, have and use a common seal. The officers of the corporation were to be a Board of Trustees consisting of not less than seven, nor more than thirteen persons. The aim and objectives of Leland University were of “educating and training young men and women for preachers, teachers, irrespective of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”
On **February 13, 1892** the Board of Trustees of **Leland University** met in one of the institution’s buildings. The purpose of this meeting was to amend the original charter of 1870. This amended charter provided that the Trustee Board was to be divided into three classes.

**Leland University**’s charter extended to all people regardless of sex or color, but the institution’s first educational recipients were the descendants of the Black race. *Edwin Whitfield Fay* pointed out in *The History of Education in Louisiana* that, “The beginning of Leland University’s interval work was humble and primitive. The school, at first a primary grade, gradually advanced to grammar and to high school instruction and for some years chiefly provided for the preparation of teachers to supply the needs of public and private schools then springing up in all the Southern States.”

Principals instead of presidents headed the institution from 1870-1876. The names of the Principals were as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals Name</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reverend William Rollinson</td>
<td>1870-1873</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend S.B. Gregory</td>
<td>1873-1874</td>
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<td>Reverend L.B. Barker</td>
<td>1874-1876</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidents Name</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reverend William Rollinson, Principal</td>
<td>1870-1873</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend S.B. Gregory, Principal</td>
<td>1873-1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend L.B. Barker, Principal</td>
<td>1874-1876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend Marsena Stone, President</td>
<td>1876-1878</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend Seth J. Axtell, Jr., President</td>
<td>1878-1881</td>
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<td>Reverend J. F. Martin, President</td>
<td>1881-1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend H. R. Tarver, President</td>
<td>1883-1887</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend E.C. Mitchell, President</td>
<td>1887-1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Reese W. Perkins, President</td>
<td>1901-1912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend I. Newton Earle, Jr., President</td>
<td>1912-1913</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend Alfred E. Earle, President</td>
<td>1913-1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLOSED DUE TO THE HURRICANE IN 1915</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor J. B. Watson, President</td>
<td>1923-1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor I. S. Powell (acting)</td>
<td>1928-1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. J. A. Bacoats, President</td>
<td>1929-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. J. M. Frazier, President</td>
<td>1942-1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. James H. Owens</td>
<td>1952-1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The grounds of Leland comprise approximately ten acres. The row of live oaks directly fronting the avenue, the palms, roses and shrubbery are over the campus. The two main buildings were University Hall and Chamberlain Hall. University Hall was a brick structure, 100 X 80 feet, and three stories above the basement. Within University Hall were the chapel, rooms for the purpose of recitations, the library, the museum, offices and other facilities for the president, professors, male students, along with equipment in the basement for the purpose of industrial shops and printing offices and recitation rooms for the Preparatory School. Chamberlain Hall was also a brick structure, 100 X 50 feet, and three stories above the basement. The purpose of this facility was to accommodate rooms for the president, the female teachers and students. It also had within its confines, music rooms, boarding and laundry, and industrial rooms for girls. The grounds comprise ten acres, furnishing ample opportunities for horticultural and agricultural training. The Manual Training Shop a frame building, fitted out with fairly good equipment of hand-tools and a number of foot-power machines.

AUXILIARY SCHOOLS OF LELAND UNIVERSITY

“A system of affiliated schools was inaugurated by which the faculty of the university could exercise control over the preparatory course of study in secondary institutions established at important centers outside of New Orleans.” “The Board of Trustees of Leland University initiated the following criteria for affiliated schools:

1. That property valued at $2,000 shall be provided by the trustees and kept in regular repair by them, with taxes, insurance, and incidental expenses paid.

2. That the tuition, to the amount of at least $1.00 per month for each pupil, be reported and paid to the University before the 15th of each school month, that

3. The course of study prepared by Leland faculty for use in preparatory schools (or “Leland academies”) be adopted by the school with such textbooks as are from time to time prescribed.

4. The teachers of the school are to be appointed by the President of Leland in consultation with the trustees of the school, and their names will appear as members of the faculty. Their salaries are to be paid by the university on terms, which may have been agreed upon, to be adjusted with reference to the apparent needs and probable income of the school.

5. Graduates of the school will be received into the regular normal classes of the university without examination. The best scholar in each graduating class will receive from the university a prize of $1 per month deducted from his first term bill, and the second best scholar will receive $.50 cents per month in the same year.

The auxiliary schools consisted of the following: Howe Institute, Leland Academy, Monroe Academy, Coleman Academy, Ruston Normal and Academic Institute, Opelousas High School, Central Louisiana Academy, Cheneyville Academy, Bunkie Academy, Houma Academy, Israel Academy – Belle Alliance and Minden Academy.
HOWE INSTITUTE

The first auxiliary which became a part of Leland University was Howe Institute of New Iberia, founded in 1890 by “the son of Peter Howe of Wenona, Illinois” for preparatory and grammar school work. In 1905-1906 the Sixth District Baptist Association erected a beautiful three-story brick building costing $8,000. At the head of this institution was Professor Jonas Henderson, M.A., who filled the chair of History and Mathematics at the University for nine years. His ability as a teacher was well known. Mrs. Rebecca J. Henderson, a normal graduate of Leland University, was matron of the boarding department.

LELAND ACADEMY

Another institution, which became a part of Leland University, was: Leland Academy which was located in Donaldsonville. In November 1893, the Trustees of the Slater High School at Donaldsonville, Louisiana, made application for acceptance as an auxiliary school under the name of Leland Academy, and was accepted by the Board. The Principal was, Professor S.S. Gray. The academy had the services of Miss Pauline Taylor as directress of instrumental music, and of Dr. John H. Lowery as lecturer in Physiology and Hygiene.

MONROE ACADEMY

Still another school, which became a part of Leland University, was Monroe Academy, which was first called the Industrial High School at Monroe, Louisiana, and in 1898 the name was changed to Leland Academy. Mrs. Pruitt, of the class of 1898, was the first lady to receive the degree of A.B. from Leland University. In 1904-05 the Reverend J.L. Crossley, B.A., a graduate of Leland College was acting Principal and in 1906 Professor Madison J. Foster, B.A., graduate of Leland College was the Principal.

COLEMAN ACADEMY

The next of these auxiliaries was: Coleman Academy. In February 1893, the Academy at Gibsland, Louisiana, applied and was accepted as an auxiliary. The Principal was Professor O.L. Coleman. His assistants were: Mr. J.D. Steward, Mr. P.P. Mellon, Mrs. M.A. Coleman, Miss L.A. Bryant, R.A. Glasco, Industrial Instructor and Elira Ivory, Kindergarten Teacher.

RUSTON NORMAL AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTE

At the turn of the century in 1900 the Ruston Normal and Academic Institute at Ruston, Louisiana was accepted as an auxiliary school. Its principal, Professor I.S. Powell, a graduate of the College Department and of the class of 1899 and was a resident of Baker, Louisiana. He was an excellent scholar, and an able and efficient teacher, and pushed the work of the school with energy and success.
**OPELOUSAS HIGH SCHOOL**
In February 1902, the [Opelousas High School](#), formally made application to become auxiliary to the University. The school was a new one and bid fair to be useful. Professor Filman P. Jackson, B.A., a graduate of the College was the Principal.

**CENTRAL LOUISIANA ACADEMY**
Central Louisiana Academy, A well-known school had been some years under the charge of Professor W.R. Wright, graduate of the Normal Department. The school had a large influence. It became an auxiliary in 1902.

**CHENEYVILLE ACADEMY**
Cheneyville Academy for some time had been sending well-prepared students to the University. In 1902, it became an auxiliary according to the prescribed conditions. W.G. Thomas, was the principal.

**BUNKIE ACADEMY**
Bunkie Academy became an auxiliary in 1902.

**HOUMA ACADEMY**
The Fifth District Association established the [Houma Academy](#). It became an auxiliary in 1902.

**ISRAEL ACADEMY, BELLE ALLIANCE**
The Israel Academy, Belle Alliance, the Reverend H.C. Cotton, Pastor, built a good school building and maintained a good corps of teachers. Miss Philomene Joseph, a graduate of the Normal School was the Principal.

**MINDEN ACADEMY**
The Fourteenth District Baptist Association established a school in Minden, Louisiana called: [Minden Academy](#). The Reverend P.P. Mellon, Th.B., (Bachelor of Theology) was the Principal. The school became auxiliary in 1907.

**Other Academic Schools**
In addition to these Auxiliary Academies mentioned above they were under the Baptist State Convention and the Association, and supported by the churches of these bodies/schools in Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Homer and Mansfield of Louisiana with an enrollment for the year of about 1930. There were also a great number of private schools held in Baptist meetinghouses, and supported by the churches with a very large enrollment.

Between 1900 and 1901 Leland University’s enrollment gained tremendously. The senior class had
two students—Joseph Samuel Clark, who was from Bienville Parish, Louisiana along with James Douglass Stewart from Sparta, Louisiana. The junior class had two students also—Anderson Cheatham from Tallien, Louisiana and Adam Joseph Lagarde who was from Lafourche Crossing.

Leland University’s graduates from 1881 to 1914 have held important positions throughout the United States. During the above period there were 53 graduates from the College Department. Among them were Thaddeus A. Walker, M.D., who became a local physician in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Israel Smith Powell who became a college professor at Leland College from Baker, Louisiana, Dr. Joseph Samuel Clark who became President of Southern University and A&M College of Scotlandville (Louisiana) from 1914 to 1938, Adam L. Lagard who became a professor of a local high school in Baton Rouge, Samuel P. Nelson, A.M., who became the President of Arkansas Baptist College of Little Rock, Arkansas, James Monroe Frazier who became the supervisor of Black schools in Baton Rouge, Eleanor V. Kyzer who became a high school teacher in Baton Rouge, and Leonidas Yates who also taught in a local high school in Baton Rouge.

Tragedy struck Leland University in October of 1915. This occurred when New Orleans Hurricane of 1915 destroyed the university’s buildings. The losses were estimated to be many thousands of dollars. As a result, the institution had to remain closed. “In the spring of 1916 the property was sold for the sum of $175,000.” Following the storm of 1915 Leland University made attempts to re-establish its identity as an institution of higher learning in Louisiana. The Board of Trustees of Leland decided that the name of the school should be changed to Leland College instead of Leland University. The Board requested a meeting on February 2, 1917 with Jacob D. Dresner, a Notary Public of New Orleans. The trustees present were: A.T. Terry who was Vice President and Armond Romain, the Secretary. The aim of the meeting was to rename the institution to read in its charter Leland College and that the main building of Leland would be called Chamberlain Hall.

Seeking a suitable geographical site for the institution, Leland College purchased 212 acres of land in Rapides Parish near Alexandria, Louisiana. The transaction took place on May 14, 1917 before T.W. Holloman who was the Notary Public of Alexandria. Leland purchased this property, which was located on the Red River for the sum of $18,000 from Leroy A. Stafford. Leland also agreed to allow Stafford to remain on the property until December 31, 1917, and beginning January 1, 1918 rent would be collected.

At the beginning of 1918 Israel Smith Powell was sent to Alexandria to take charge of the property, farm the land and make annual reports to the American Baptist Home Mission Society on what income the farming brought in. The Board of Trustees did not rush into building the new school because of World War I. During the war materials for buildings were hard to come by and also sold at a high price. The white people of Alexandria that lived below the property of Leland objected to the construction of a Black Institution in their community. The whites thought that there would be a conflict between their children and the Black students of Leland because the white students had to travel by Leland to their school, which was located in
the city. Even though some years later after Leland College had acquired property in Baker, the white businessmen of Alexandria attempted to change the Board’s mind for relocation in Alexandria. From the economic point of view, the businessmen thought the Leland College would be an asset to the community.

Meanwhile, the Board of Trustees of Leland appointed Dr. Joseph S. Clark who was the President of Southern University and A&M College and Reverend W.M. Taylor who was the Pastor of First Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Baton Rouge and others to search for an appropriate place for Leland College to be built. After several attempts to secure desirable property elsewhere, the college was reopened in its present home November 1, 1923, under the control of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. The Society resumed control sometime during the eight years the college was closed.

The town of Baker originally was a part of a plantation owned by the Groom family. The area was largely cotton fields and woods. The first road was built by the Groom family to connect the swampland to the farming area called Groom Road. Later, the Groom family sold their plantation to a family named Baker. By 1840, Peter Black and Ben A. Williams moved into the Baker area and homesteaded two tracts of land. Sometime later B.A. Williams died and in 1860 his widow, Anne Christmas Williams, was given the land that her husband had homesteaded. This Act was initiated by President James Buchanan and was recorded in the county seat of Greensburg, Louisiana at that time. By 1875 the Illinois Central Railroad laid enough rail to connect New Orleans to Memphis, Tennessee, then back to Baton Rouge and Baker. The Illinois Central Railroad was responsible for the growth of Baker. Almost immediately after the track was laid a Cotton Gin and a Lumber Mill were constructed. Leland was to be erected about one-half mile outside the main town of Baker and from the train station. Five trains passed daily from each way and later one bus line was established.

The first property Leland purchased in Baker was 200 acres from Thomas M. Baker and John R. Baker for the sum of $30,000. This business transaction was carried out by Maude S. Dean, Notary Public of East Baton Rouge Parish. The Act of Sale took place on January 14, 1922. The second tract of land that Leland College acquired was from one of the institution’s graduates Dr. Joseph S. Clark. The grounds consisted of 60 acres and the sum cost was $1,607.36. The transaction took place on May 9, 1922 with Albert Ligon, Notary Public of East Baton Rouge Parish. About 35 acres of Leland grounds were used for campus facilities while the remaining grounds were for pasture and farming. The pasture was laid out into four 15-acres rotating plots for isolation of cattle, hogs, and horses.

The first three buildings were constructed in 1923 for school facilities, then followed two-frame residences, a building for laundry, a power-house, and a barn. The boys’ and girls’ dormitories were constructed for comfort and convenience. Hot and cold water were in each room and each floor was fixed with bathroom fixtures and shower facilities.

The faculty of Leland College between the years of 1923 and 1924 included: John Brown Watson,

Leland did not open in Baker, Louisiana until November 1, 1923. As a result, the institution’s calendar of events was not printed until 1924.

Between the years of 1923-1924 Leland had an enrollment of 68 students. The seventh grade had an enrollment of 18. The eighth grade had an enrollment of eight students. The high school department student enrollment for the first year was 13.

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