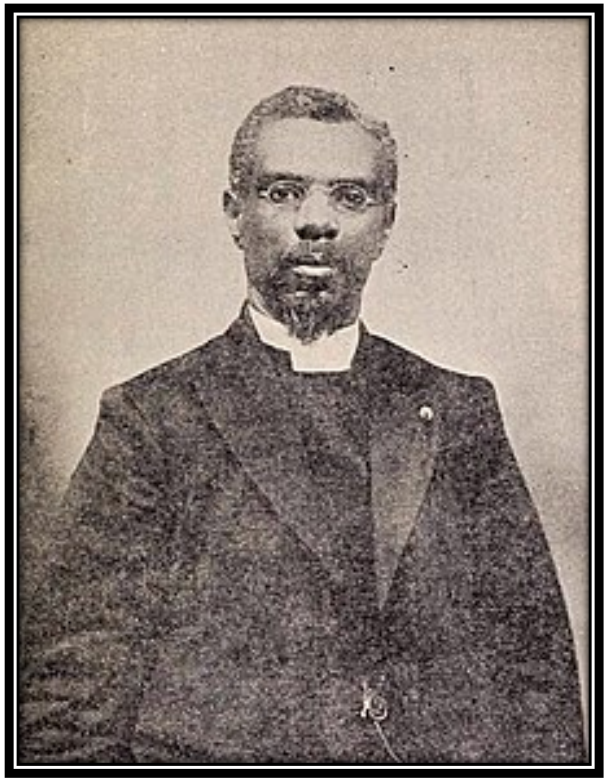
Reconstruction Era (1865-1877)

Legare College in the 1870s as it would have looked when the first African American students attended. (UofSC Historic Horseshoe website)

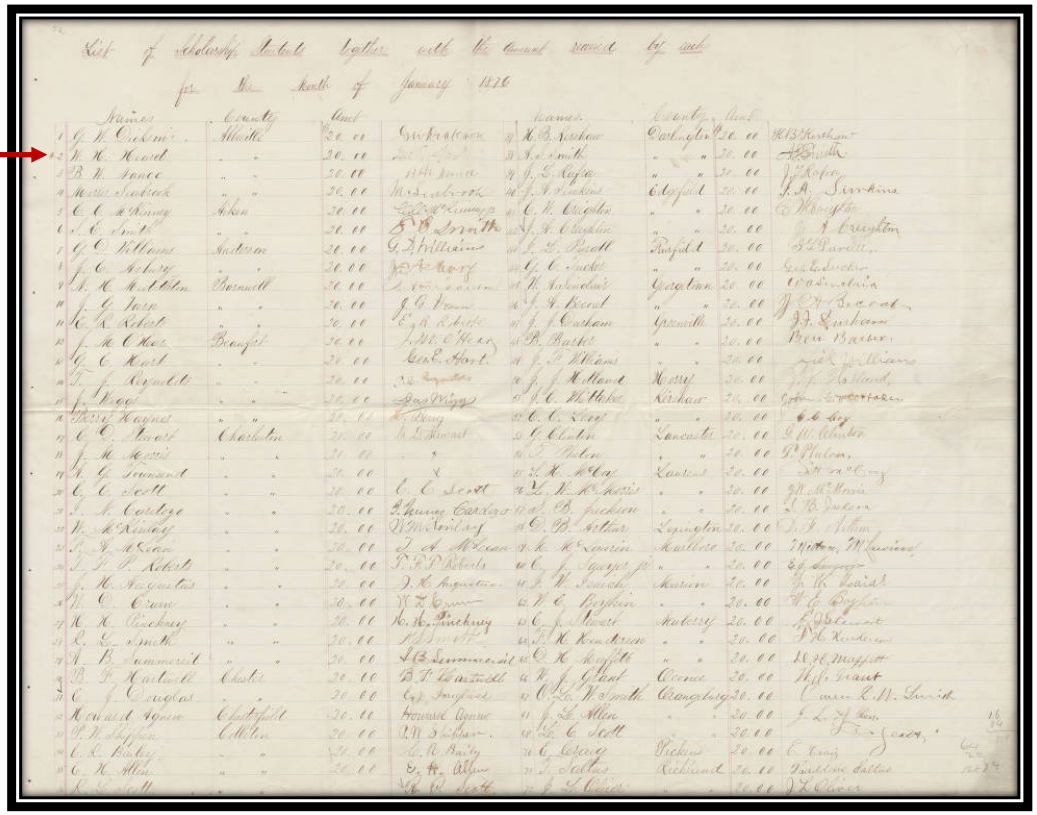
During Reconstruction, Americans had the difficult task of restoring order in the South, unifying a warring nation, and extending equality to Black Americans (1865-1877). The federal government implemented a series of constitutional changes aimed at granting enslaved persons rights and citizenship.

The University of South Carolina became the first state-supported Southern university to completely integrate in 1873. By 1876, the majority of the student body was African-American. After Wade Hampton III was elected governor and whites reclaimed control of state government, the University shuttered for restructuring in 1877 and reopened as an all-white university in 1880. It would stay all-white until 1963, when it was desegregated (Greene II,&Parry, p 48, 2021).

Legare College was the primary residence hall during the Reconstruction period. It housed most of the student body, including the first African American graduates of the University (UofSC Historic Horseshoe website).

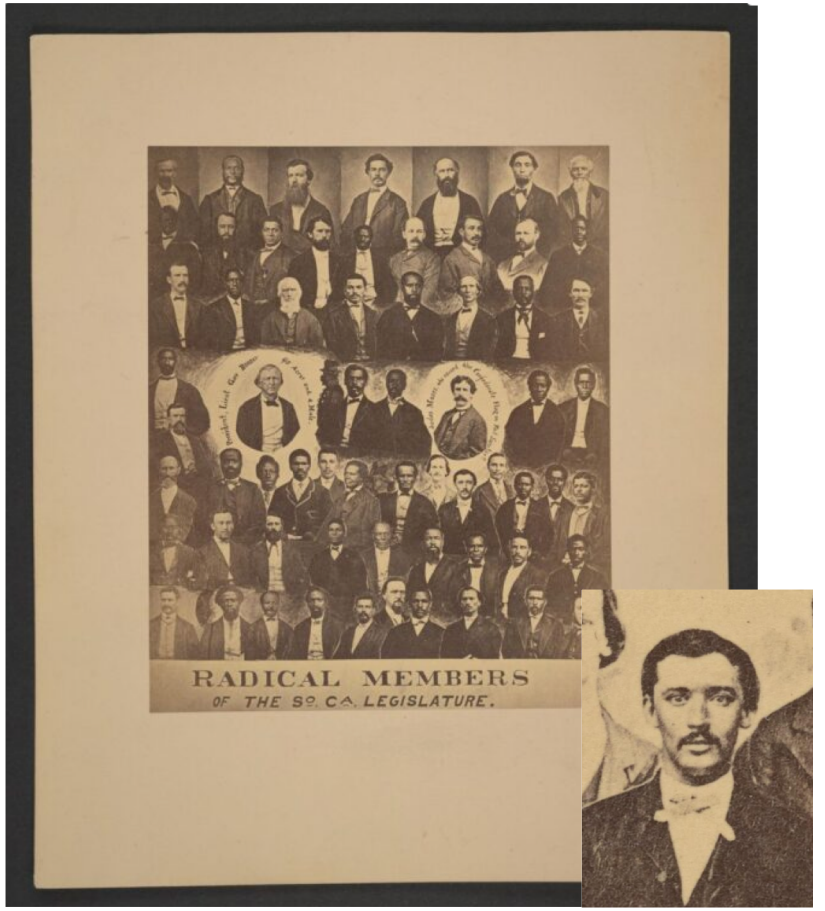


William Henry Heard, one of the formerly enslaved students who attended the University during the Reconstruction Period. Heard benefited from a scholarship that allowed him to support his family while he attended the school. *(The bright side of African Life,* Internet Archive*)*



A list of student's names with scholarship amounts they received each month from January of 1876. William Henry Heard's name is written on the second line. (University Archives, South Carolina Library)

Female students from the State Normal School, which trained African American teachers. The school was located on campus in Rutledge College during the Reconstruction Period. (University Archives, South Carolina Library)



The "Radical Members" of the South Carolina Legislature helped to make the Reconstructed University possible. Henry E. Hayne, pictured above, was the first Black student to enroll in the University, while serving as SC Secretary of State. (Princeton University Library)

Sources & Additional Information

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