



Smithsonian

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Records of the Superintendent of Education for
the State of North Carolina Bureau of Refugees,
Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of African American History and Culture
Title:	Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of North Carolina Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870
Date:	1865–1870
Identifier:	NMAAHC.FB.M844
Extent:	14,528 Digital files
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection is comprised of digital surrogates previously available on the 16 rolls of microfilm described in the NARA publication M844. These digital surrogates reproduced the records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–70. The records consist of 24 volumes and approximately 7 feet of unbound records. There are 10 volumes of press copies of letters sent, a volume of endorsements, four registers of letters received, a register of monthly rents for school buildings, a volume of reports of persons and articles hired, six volumes of statistical school reports, and a list of teachers. Unbound records consist primarily of letters received by the Superintendent and school reports, but also include contracts, agreements, issuances, and returns of stores.
Digital Content:	Image(s): M844-Representative-Image

Administrative Information

Acquisition Note

Acquired from FamilySearch International in 2015.

Related Archival Materials

See also [Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection](#)

Citation Note

Courtesy of the U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, FamilySearch International, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Access Note

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Historical Note

[The following is reproduced from the original NARA descriptive pamphlet for M844.]

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, often referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau, was established in the War Department by an act of March 3, 1865 (13 Stat. 507). Congress assigned to the Bureau responsibilities that previously had been shared by military commanders and by agents of the Treasury Department. The duties included supervision of all affairs relating to refugees, to freedmen, and to the custody of abandoned lands and property. Under the provisions of the initial legislation, the Bureau was to have been terminated 1 year after the close of the Civil War. It was twice extended, however, by laws of July 16, 1866 (14 Stat. 173), and July 6, 1868 (15 Stat. 83). Its functions were limited to education and assistance in the collection of claims by an act of July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193), effective January 1869. Remaining Bureau functions were terminated following the discontinuance of the Bureau in 1872, in accordance with a law of June 10 of that year (17 Stat. 366).

In May 1865 Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard was appointed Commissioner of the Bureau and established his headquarters at Washington, D. C. Assistant commissioners were appointed to supervise the work of the Bureau in the States.

The first Assistant Commissioner of North Carolina was Col. Eliphalet Whittlesey, assigned in June 1865. The following officers succeeded Colonel Whittlesey as Assistant Commissioner of the State: Bvt. Maj. Gen. Thomas H. Ruger, May–June 1866; Bvt. Maj. Gen. John C. Robinson, June–November 1866; Col. James V. Bomford, November 1866–April 1867 (Acting Assistant Commissioner); Bvt. Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, April 1867–October 1868; Bvt. Lt. Col. Jacob F. Chur, October 1868–January 1869; Bvt. Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, February–March 1869; Bvt. Lt. Col. Charles E. Compton, April–May 1869.

Bureau headquarters in North Carolina was established in June 1865 at Raleigh. The organization of the Bureau in the State was similar to that of the Bureau headquarters at Washington. The staff of the Assistant Commissioner usually included an Assistant Adjutant General, an Assistant Inspector General, a Disbursing Officer, a Surgeon in Chief, and a Superintendent of Education. Officers subordinate to the Assistant Commissioner carried out the policies of the Bureau in the districts and subdistricts into which the State was divided.

In a circular issued by Commissioner Howard in July 1865, assistant commissioners were instructed to designate one officer in each State to serve as Superintendent of Schools (later renamed Superintendent of Education). The superintendents were to "take cognizance of all that is being done to educate refugees and freedmen, secure proper protection to schools and teachers, promote method and efficiency, correspond with the benevolent agencies which are supplying his fields, and aid the Assistant Commissioner in making his required reports." In October 1865 a degree of centralized control was established over Bureau educational activities in the States when Rev. John W. Alvord was appointed Inspector of Finances and Schools. In January 1867 Alvord was divested of his financial responsibilities and was appointed General Superintendent of Education.

Bureau educational activities in North Carolina officially began with the appointment of F. A. Fiske as Superintendent of Schools on August 9, 1865 (Special Order 21, 1865, Assistant Commissioner of North Carolina). As Superintendent, Fiske was responsible for executing Bureau policies relating to the education of the freedmen. The Bureau promoted the establishment of schools for freedmen by offering advice, protection, and financial assistance to local citizens interested in starting schools. The Superintendent frequently acted as an intermediary between freedmen and members of the benevolent societies that offered to provide teachers and aid for the schools. The Superintendent corresponded with State and local authorities, with teachers, with members of benevolent societies, and with Bureau officers stationed in the subdistricts. He collected information about the schools and about the attitudes of the white populace toward the education of the freedmen and reported his findings to the Bureau headquarters at Washington.

On July 31, 1868, Fiske resigned and H. C. Vogell was named to succeed him (Special Order 77, 1868, Assistant Commissioner for North Carolina). The Office of the Assistant Commissioner was terminated in

the first week of May 1869, but the Superintendent of Education remained, and it was not until August 31, 1870, that Vogell's appointment was withdrawn.

When the Freedmen's Bureau was abolished, its records were sent to the Office of the Adjutant General. Clerks in the Adjutant General's Office numbered the volumes or book records and prepared "indexes" or lists of these books. In this microfilm publication the number assigned to the volume by the clerks in the Adjutant General's Office appears in parenthesis. This number is useful only as a more precise method of identifying the volume.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- American South
- Education
- Freedmen's Bureau
- Reconstruction, U.S. history, 1865-1877
- Slaves -- Emancipation

Container Listing

Series 1: Letters Sent

Scope and Contents: The 10 volumes of letters sent, June 28, 1866–July 28, 1870, are generally arranged in chronological order. They consist of press copies of letters sent by the Superintendent of Education mainly to Bureau officers, teachers, officers of benevolent societies, and freedmen.

The legibility of some of the letters is poor and a few are not readable. There is a name index for each volume. The indexes for the first two volumes, not previously indexed, have been prepared by the National Archives.

1.1: Volume 1 (39), June 28, 1866–Feb. 23, 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.2: Volume 2 (40), Feb. 23–Apr. 1, 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.3: Volume 3 (41), Apr. 1, 1867–Mar. 11, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.4: Volume 4 (42), Mar. 12–July 3, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.5: Volume 5 (43), July 6–Sept. 29, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.6: Volume 6 (44), Sept. 29–Dec. 26, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.7: Volume 7 (45), Jan. 6–June 17, 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.8: Volume 8 (46), June 17–Oct. 14, 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.9: Volume 9 (47), Oct. 19, 1869–Jan. 31, 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.10: Volume 10 (48), Jan. 27–July 28, 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 2: Endorsements Sent and Received

Scope and Contents: Among the records of the Superintendent is a volume containing endorsements sent and received, July 3, 1867–November 24, 1868. Frequently, instead of writing a letter, the Superintendent, like other officers in this period, wrote his reply or forwarding statement on the incoming letter and either returned the communication to the sender or forwarded it to another officer. These replies or forwarding statements were copied into the endorsement book with a summary of the contents of the incoming communication. Endorsements received were also copied in this book.

Endorsements in this volume are arranged chronologically. In the left margin is the name and occasionally the title of the person who wrote the original letter. There are also notations in the form of a fraction. The numerator is the number of the page in the volume on which there is a subsequent endorsement to the same correspondent, and the denominator is the number of the page on which there is a subsequent endorsement. A name index has been prepared by the National Archives.

2.1: Endorsements (49), July 3, 1867–Nov. 24, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 3: Registers of Letters Received

Scope and Contents: According to the recordkeeping practices of the day, incoming communications were entered in registers of letters received. The entries in the registers usually give the date of the letter, the place of origin, the date of receipt of the letter, the author, an abstract of the contents, and the number of the register entry.

The entries in the four volumes of registers of letters received, June 1867–July 1869, are, with exception of the first register, arranged alphabetically by initial letter of surname or office of correspondent and thereunder chronologically. They are numbered in a separate numerical sequence for each letter of each volume. Entries in the first register, on the other hand, are in chronological order with letters and numbers added to provide an alphabetical and chronological system resembling succeeding volumes. Thus "W3" indicates the third letter received from persons with last names beginning with the letter "W."

The registers contain notations or references to related records. These related records may be found by referring to the notations "L" or "LB," which direct the reader to the volumes of letters sent, and "EB," which stands for "Endorsement Book." Some endorsements, written either by the Superintendent of Education or by officers forwarding the communications to him, have been copied into the first register. Entries of letters received by the Assistant Commissioner for the period January–April 1869 are entered in the last register as well as entries March–June 1869 filmed as M843, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870. Name indexes, compiled by the National Archives, appear at the beginning of each volume. The index for the last register indexes only the letters received by the Superintendent of Education.

Not all letters entered in the registers are among the series of letters received by the Superintendent of Education. Some letters were forwarded to the Assistant Commissioner or the Bureau headquarters a Washington, and others were returned to the sender. In the first three registers, the National Archives has placed an asterisk (*) by the entry number of letters that remain among the letters received. In the last register, a double asterisk (**) indicates those letters still on file received by the Superintendent of Education, while the single asterisk indicates those filed with letters of the Assistant Commissioner.

3.1: Volume 1 (36), June–Aug. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.2: Volume 2 (37), July 1867–June 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.3: Volume 3 (38), June–Dec. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.4: Volume 4 (6), Jan.–June 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 4: Letters Received

Scope and Contents: The letters received consist of one registered and three unregistered series. There are approximately as many unregistered as registered letters received. The registered letters received, June 1867–June 1869, are arranged in the order in which the letters are entered in the registers. However, those entered in the first register, June–August 1867, were originally entered in chronological order without a number and later were given filing numbers similar to those of the other letters received. The letters entered in the first volume are arranged by the numbers, that is by initial letter for the surname of the writer, and thereunder chronologically. The file citation on the letters gives the letter of the alphabet under which the communication is registered, the entry number, the year, and the volume.

The main series of unregistered letters, August 1865–August 1870, complements the registered letters. The letters are arranged by year, thereunder alphabetically by the first letter of the surname of the writer, and thereunder chronologically. Indexes for these have been supplied by the National Archives and are found at the beginning of each year.

There are two special series of unregistered letters received. One is composed of letters originally addressed to the Superintendent of Education and of letters received by endorsement from the Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioners, or their staffs, March 1866–July 1870, and is arranged chronologically by date of the letter or the endorsement. Many of these letters are registered in the Assistant Commissioner's records and therefore contain a file number from the Assistant Commissioner's Office. A substantial number of them were originally written by the Superintendent of Education and were received back with an endorsement from the Assistant Commissioner or his adjutant.

The other special series contain unregistered letters and communications received from George W. Balloch, the Chief Disbursing Officer of the Bureau at Washington, D. C., May 1869–August 1870. The letters are arranged chronologically.

4.1: Registered Letters Received

4.1.1: Entered in Register 1

4.1.1.1: [A – W, June–Aug. 1867](#)

4.1.2: Entered in Register 2

4.1.2.1: [A – W, July 1867–June 1868](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.3: Entered in Register 3

4.1.3.1: [A – Y, June–Dec. 1868](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.4: Entered in Register 4

4.1.4.1: A – Y, Mar.–June 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.2: Unregistered Letters Received

4.2.1: [A – W, 1865](#)

4.2.2: [A – W, 1866](#)

4.2.3: A – W, 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.2.4: A – W, 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.2.5: A – Y, 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.2.6: [A – Z, 1870](#)

4.3: Letters From the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioners, and Staffs, Mar. 1866–
July 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.4: Letters From the Chief Disbursing Officer, May 1869–Aug. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 5: Issuances

Scope and Contents: The issuances consist primarily of orders and circular received by the Superintendent of Education and copies of circular letters issued by the Superintendent, March 1866–July 1870. They are arranged by type of issuance and thereunder chronologically.

5.1: Issuances, Mar. 1866–July 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 6: School Reports

Scope and Contents: The school reports, which are in five series, include both retained copies of outgoing reports and originals of incoming reports. Included are reports of the Superintendent, district superintendents, agents and assistant superintendents in the subdistricts, and teachers. Two of the series contain bound volumes, and three consist of unbound records. The series are arranged generally in chronological order.

One series of five bound volumes contains monthly statistical school reports of the Superintendent, August 1865–July 1869. The bulk of these reports was submitted on printed forms, and all of them are retained copies of originals sent to Bureau headquarters at Washington that give statistical information about schools. They provide such data as the names of locations of schools, the dates they were opened and closed, the names of patrons or sponsoring benevolent societies, the number of schools sustained by the freedmen, and the facilities of the building. The reports also give information concerning pupils' sex, race, attendance, age, and the number studying each subject.

One volume, July 1868–June 1869, an "Appendix" to the previous series of monthly reports of the Superintendent, may be regarded as a series in itself. It provides financial information for each school not given on the standard report form, such as the amount of money received for tuition, the amount contributed by freedmen, and the amount contributed by societies.

Another series, which is unbound, consists of retained copies of monthly statistical reports of the Superintendent on the standard report form, December 1866–June 1870. Also included is one "Semi-annual" report dated January 1, 1867. While much of the information from the bound series is duplicated in these somewhat fragmentary reports, various figures, totals, and remarks for certain months provided in this series are not found in the other series of similar reports.

A series containing unbound monthly reports received from agents and assistant superintendents stationed in the subdistricts covers the period March 1867–November 1868. Occasionally, a district superintendent's report may also appear here. Although most of the statistical information is also found in other series, the reports in this series contain questions designed for nonstatistical answers, such as, "What efforts are you making to secure support for schools...?"

The lowest level in the hierarchy of reports is represented by a series of unbound monthly reports on printed forms received from teachers during the period February 1868–February 1871. Statistics on the number of pupils, attendance habits, and degree of literacy are given. The reports also provide information about the financial assistance received by the school. These reports were evidently used to furnish information for higher Bureau officials in compiling their reports.

6.1: State Superintendent's Monthly School Reports

6.1.1: [Volume 1 \(52\), Aug. 1865–Sept. 1867](#)

6.1.2: [Volume 2 \(53\), Oct. 1867–July 1868](#)

6.1.3: [Volume 3 \(54\), Aug. 1868–Jan. 1869](#)

6.1.4: [Volume 4 \(55\), Feb.–Apr. 1869](#)

6.1.5: [Volume 5 \(56\), May–July 1869](#)

6.2: "Appendix" Report (57), July 1868–June 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

6.3: Unbound Reports, Dec. 1866–June 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

6.4: Monthly Reports From Agents and Assistant Superintendents, Mar. 1867–Nov. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

6.5: Monthly Reports From Teachers, Feb. 1868–Feb. 1871

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 7: Records Relating to Teachers

Scope and Contents: These consist of one bound volume and one series of unbound records. The volume (Undated) contains a list of teachers who report to the Bureau. Many names are crossed out but legible. The volume is arranged alphabetically by initial letter of surname and includes a teacher's station and post office address.

The unbound records contain teachers' transportation certificates, with names, stations, homes, sponsoring societies, and amounts of money due for transportation, November 12, 1866–February 18, 1867. One teacher's commission, September 19, 1867, is also included.

7.1: List of Teachers (58)

[Image\(s\)](#)

7.2: Transportation Certificates and Commission, Nov. 1866–Feb. 1867 and Sept. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 8: Other Records

Scope and Contents: There are records consisting of unbound reports of persons and articles hired, arranged chronologically, October 1866–March 1869; one volume of reports of persons and articles hired by the Superintendent, arranged chronologically and thereunder by first letter of location of school, January–August 1870; one register of monthly rents for school buildings, arranged by initial letter of town, July 1868–May 1870; and several small series, relating to buildings, stores, and vouchers, January 1867–August 1870.

The reports of persons and articles hired vary from month to month in the information provided, but the amount of compensation paid is generally listed. The most numerous items are schoolhouses, for which the owners and locations are given. Employees and their occupations and articles hired (such as boats or teams) also appear.

Included in the short series are contracts, agreements, and certificates for construction, repair, and renting of schoolhouses, January 1867–April 1870; monthly returns for stores received and issued, May 1869–August 1870; and lists of vouchers forwarded to the Chief Disbursing Officer, February 1869–January 1870, with undated lists at the end of the series.

Copies of some of these list are also in the letter press books. A series of receipts for checks, 1868–70, has not been filmed.

8.1: Reports of Persons and Articles Hired, Oct. 1866–Mar. 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

8.2: Reports of Persons and Articles Hired (51), Jan.–Aug. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

8.3: Register of Monthly Rents for School Buildings (50), July 1868–May 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

8.4: Contracts, Agreements, and Certificates Relating to Schoolhouses, Jan. 1867–Apr. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

8.5: Monthly Returns of Stores, May 1869–Aug. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

8.6: List of Vouchers Transmitted to the Chief Disbursing Officer, Feb. 1869–Jan. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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