



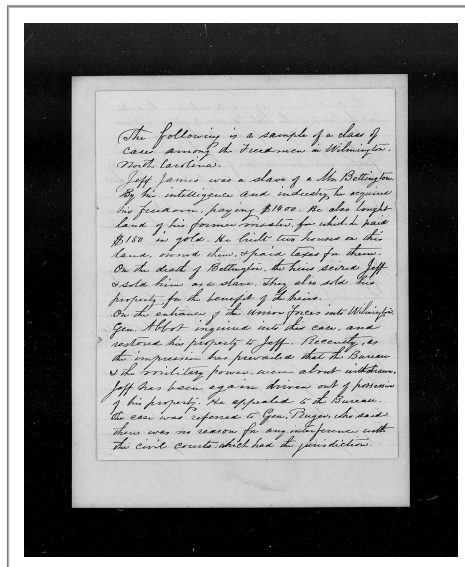
Smithsonian

National Museum of African American History and Culture

## Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection

NMAAHC Staff

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of African American History and Culture
<b>Title:</b>	Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection
<b>Date:</b>	1865-1872
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAAHC.FB
<b>Creator:</b>	United States. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
<b>Extent:</b>	1,917,680 Digital images (1918 digitized microfilm rolls)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection is comprised of digital surrogates previously available on the 1918 rolls of microfilm held by the National Archives and Records Administration.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Note

Acquired from FamilySearch, International in 2015.

### Existence of Originals Note

The Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection is provided courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, FamilySearch International, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Original archival records are held by the National Archives and Records Administration.

### Citation Note

Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Historical Note

As the Civil War drew to a close, President Lincoln and members of Congress debated how to reunite the nation, reconstruct Southern society, and help formerly enslaved individuals make the transition to freedom and citizenship. As one response, in March 1865 Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly referred to as The Freeman's Bureau. In May 1865, President Andrew Johnson appointed Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard Commissioner of the Bureau. Howard, who served until

the Bureau was discontinued, maintained his headquarters at Washington, D.C. Assistant commissioners supervised the work of the Bureau in the States.

The Bureau was responsible for providing assistance to four million formerly enslaved individuals and hundreds of thousands of impoverished Southern whites. The Bureau set up offices in major cities in the 15 Southern and border states and the District of Columbia.

The Bureau provided food, clothing, medical care, and legal representation; promoted education; helped legalize marriages; and assisted African American soldiers and sailors in securing back pay, enlistment bounties and pensions. In addition, the Bureau promoted a system of labor contracts to replace the slavery system and tried to settle freedmen and women on abandoned or confiscated land. The Bureau was also responsible for protecting freedmen and women from intimidation and assaults by Southern whites.

By most accounts, the Bureau was only partially successful. Congress did not provide sufficient funds or staff for the Bureau to be truly effective. The Bureau only operated from 1865 to 1872. It generally failed to protect the freedmen or their political and civil rights from white Southerners intent on re-establishing their local power.

Administered by the War Department, the Bureau followed the record-keeping system inspired by the war effort and the expansion of the Federal Government it required. Those hundreds of thousands of documents provide an unexcelled view into the lives of the newly freed slaves.

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## Arrangement

The Freedmen's Bureau digital collection consists of 44 collections.

Headquarters:

- [Selected Series of Records Issued by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872](#) (M742, 7 rolls)
- [Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872](#) (M752, 74 rolls) Transcription in process
- [Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871](#) (M803, 35 rolls)

Superintendents of Education:

- [Alabama](#) (M810, 8 rolls)
- [Arkansas](#) (M980, 5 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [District of Columbia](#) (M1056, 24 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Georgia](#) (M799, 28 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Louisiana](#) (M1026, 12 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [North Carolina](#) (M844, 16 rolls)
- [Tennessee](#) (M1000, 9 rolls)
- [Texas](#) (M822, 18 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Virginia](#) (1053, 20 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED

Assistant Commissioners:

- [Alabama](#) (M809, 23 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Arkansas](#) (M979, 52 rolls)
- [District of Columbia](#) (M1055, 21 rolls)
- [Georgia](#) (M798, 36 rolls)
- [Louisiana](#) (M1027, 36 rolls)
- [Louisiana - New Orleans Asst. Commissioner](#) (M1483, 10 rolls)
- [Mississippi](#) (M826, 50 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [North Carolina](#) (M843, 38 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [South Carolina](#) (M869, 44 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Tennessee](#) (M999, 34 rolls) Transcription in process.
- [Texas](#) (M821, 32 rolls)

- [Virginia](#) (M1048, 67 rolls)

Field Offices:

- [Alabama](#) (M1900, 34 rolls)
- [Arkansas](#) (M1901, 23 rolls)
- [District of Columbia](#) (M1902, 21 rolls) PARTIALLY TRANSCRIBED
- [Florida](#) (M1869, 15 rolls)
- [Georgia](#) (M1903, 90 rolls)
- [Kentucky](#) (M1904, 133 rolls)
- [Louisiana](#) (M1905, 111 rolls)
- [Maryland/Delaware](#) (M1906, 42 rolls)
- [Mississippi - Pre-Bureau Records](#) (M1914, 5 rolls)
- [Mississippi](#) (M1907, 65 rolls)
- [Missouri](#) (M1908, 24 rolls)
- [North Carolina](#) (M1909, 78 rolls) Transcription in process.
- [South Carolina](#) (M1910, 106 rolls)
- [Tennessee](#) (M1911, 89 rolls)
- [Texas](#) (M1912, 28 rolls)
- [Virginia](#) (M1913, 203 rolls)

Marriage:

- [Marriage](#) (M1875, 5 rolls)

Adjutant General's Office:

- [Office of the Adjutant General, 1872-1878](#) (M2029, 58 rolls).

Freedmen's Savings and Trust:

- [Freedmen's Savings and Trust](#) (M816, 27 rolls)

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

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