



General Administrative Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau), 1865–1872

Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) on March 3, 1865. Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard served as the only commissioner of the Bureau. Part of the War Department, the Bureau managed all matters relating to refugees, freedmen, and lands abandoned or seized during the Civil War. Providing relief and assistance to freedmen, the Bureau issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps, and supervised labor contracts. It also managed apprenticeship disputes, assisted in the establishment of schools, helped former slaves legalize their marriages, and provided transportation to refugees and freedmen. The Bureau helped black soldiers, sailors, and their heirs collect bounty claims, pensions, and back pay. The Freedmen's Bureau was headquartered in Washington, DC, with field offices located in the former Confederate states, the Border States, and the District of Columbia. The Freedmen's Bureau operated until June 30, 1872, although most of its work concluded by December 1868. After 1872, the Bureau's records and activities were transferred to the Freedmen's Branch, Office of the Adjutant General, in Washington, D.C.

These records are part of **Record Group 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)**.

Administrative Records

M742, *Selected Series of Records Issued by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 7 rolls. DP. This publication includes copies of annual reports to the President, letters, telegrams, circulars, and special orders. The records generally relate to the organization and operation of the Bureau. Each register is preceded by an index. Some indexes are in a separate volume, and some are at the front of the same volume as the register. Roll 7 contains a subject index to circulars issued in 1865.

M752, *Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 74 rolls. DP. Each individual register has a name and subject index. The registers, and the name and subject indexes to the registers, are on rolls 1–12; the letters received are on rolls 13–73. The subject index lists information about Bureau activities in the states. Other topics relate to bounty claims, contagious diseases, destitution, education, hospitals, labor, land, laws, repairs and construction of school buildings, riots, violence and outrages, and wages. Roll 74 contains unregistered letters and several unidentified enclosures.

M803, *Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1871*. 35 rolls. DP. This publication contains correspondence and school reports that document efforts to establish and promote schools for freedmen, including day schools, night schools for adults, industrial (vocational) schools, and Sunday schools for religious instruction. Roll 5 contains name and subject indexes.

___M1875, *Marriage Records of the Office of the Commissioner, Washington Headquarters of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861–1869*. 5 rolls. DP. The records consist of marriage certificates, licenses, monthly reports of marriages, and other proofs of wedlock submitted by freedmen who wanted to legitimize marriages entered into during slavery. The records are arranged alphabetically by state, then alphabetically by the initial letter of the bridegroom's surname.

Related Records

There are similar reports for the records of the Freedmen's Bureau for the following states:

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maryland & Delaware
- Missouri
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia

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