



National Archives and Records Administration

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Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for Georgia, 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 by Federal authorities 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 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, DC.

The Bureau in Georgia provided temporary rations and medical treatment for individuals in extreme need. At first, the Bureau had limited financial resources and encouraged freedmen, and Northern benevolent societies, to support black schools. In 1866, Congress granted the Bureau the authority to "seize, hold, use, lease, or sell" Confederate property, after which the Bureau was able to construct and repair school buildings.

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

Administrative Records

 M798, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869*. 36 rolls. DP. There are reports of operations, reports relating to murders and outrages, and a list of freedmen assaulted during 1867.

Educational Records

 M799, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 28 rolls. DP. The Bureau offered advice, protection, and financial assistance to local citizens interested in sponsoring schools for freedmen, and also examined and appointed teachers. Records consist of general correspondence, school reports, and accounting records.

Field Office Records

__M1903, *Records of the Field Offices for the State of Georgia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 90 rolls. DP. These records provide information about issuing rations, providing medical relief, supervising labor contracts, administering justice, providing resettlement transportation, and establishing schools. They contain registers of complaints, labor contracts, patients, and court papers. The records are generally arranged by office, with records of the Assistant Commissioner first, followed alphabetically by locations of the subdistrict offices.

Other Records

__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. Rolls 19 and 34 specifically relate to activities in Georgia.

__M869, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 44 rolls. DP. On June 10, 1865, Commissioner Howard appointed an Assistant Commissioner to oversee South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. By September 1865, separate Assistant Commissioners had been appointed for each state. Early Bureau records for Georgia may be included in this publication. A few of the records are dated as early as 1863. The records generally consist of applications for the restoration of property and reports about murders, outrages, conditions, and operations. Other records contain information about the issuance of rations, contracts, legal actions, transportation, and personnel.

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