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Lighting the Lamp of Learning:

Florida Freedmen's Education During Reconstruction

A Dissertation Submitted

By

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Abstract

While the American Civil War attracts significant research attention, Reconstruction often receives little attention in comparison. Focus the research on Reconstruction in Florida, and the scholarship narrows even more. This study reveals the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and the freedmen teachers who advanced the education of the freedmen in Florida during Reconstruction. The cooperative effort included the freedmen who participated inspiringly during this period in their pursuit of education. The freedmen understood education represented the key to unlocking the potential of their new freedom. The Reconstruction period in Florida underwent progress and setbacks. However, the zeal of the freedmen for education, accompanied by the devoted freedmen teachers, spurred significant changes for a period for black people in the state.

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Contents

Abbreviations

AFAC	American Freedmen's Aid Commission
AFUC	American Freedmen's Union Commission
AMA	American Missionary Association
NEFUC	New England Freedmen's Union Commission
NFRA	National Freedmen's Relief Association
KKK	Ku Klux Klan

Illustrations

Chapter 1

Introduction

"We shall never get any good at this education, massa; we expect to suffer as long as we live; but our children will get the benefit of this education." "We have been praying for this all our lives, and now our children are going to get it." Remarks made by a freed slave to the son of Henry Ward Beecher, 1864

Shack Thomas grew up on the large Campbell plantation, close to Tallahassee, Florida, as a slave. His father shared his story about his capture into slavery with his son. Thomas' father was a native of the West Coast of Africa. One day he witnessed a ship near his home. The ship's men held brilliantly colored red fabrics, which attracted Thomas' father's attention. But before Thomas' father realized what unfolded, he found himself "securely bound" and processed for sale in America. Thomas recalled, "I guess that's why I can't stand red things now…my pa hated the sight of it."[1]

Slavery and freedom represented clashing contradictions. Although the Founding Fathers attempted to postpone the debate, a middle point did not exist between slavery and freedom. Thus, the Civil War provided the only solution for the nation to iron out the incompatible differences between the North and South.[2] For the North, the war represented the fight for the "flag, the Union, the Constitution, and democracy." For the South, the war meant soldiers fought for the preservation of "state sovereignty, the right of secession, and Constitution 'as they interpreted it.'" Even though Republicans did not deem slavery their core issue during the

[1] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Shack Thomas and Martin Richardson, Centenarian, December 8, 1936"(1936). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 29.

[2] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (United States: W. W. Norton, 1975), x.

opening of the Civil War, slavery evolved into their primary focus during the course of the war. The war was believed, by many northerners and southerners, as a fight that would not last long.[3] Yet, the war that unfolded endured from April 1861 to April 1865. The military engagement between the Union and Confederate armies resulted in catastrophic loss whereby more Americans lost their lives than during World War II. The Union's strategy of "total war" created devastating losses for the South physically and economically.[4] Incredibly, though, "3.9 million emancipated African Americans" no longer felt the constraints of slavery.[5]

When the Civil War ended with Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, the healing of the nation's wounds was of the utmost importance.[6] As Union General Ulysses S. Grant expressed, "The war is over. The Rebels are our countrymen again."[7] Florida freedmen teacher Esther Hill Hawkes expressed her total joy over the news of the Union victory in her diary from Jacksonville, Florida, in 1865: "Glory to God! Charleston has fallen! I feel like shouting all over." She continued, "How can we thank God enough for these victories—brave Sherman and his army have reached the sea, and the war is virtually ended. The whole city is wild with excitement."[8] However, many white Floridians did not share in the excitement because "a way of life had ended" for them. Farmers, businessmen, and officials in the state government were left in a disgraced and addled condition. Because Florida did not suffer as much war time physical destruction to the landscape and infrastructure, the state improved

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[3] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2003), 309-312.

[4] James M. McPherson, *The War that Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015), 46.

[5] Allen C. Guelzo, *Reconstruction: A Concise History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), Allen C. Guelzo, *Reconstruction,* 18.

[6] Guelzo, *Reconstruction,* 18.

[7] Robert A. Doughty, *The American Civil War: The Emergence of Total Warfare* (United States: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996), 157.

[8] Gerald. Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 117.

impressively both economically and politically. For black Floridians, about half of Florida's population, now freed but the outcome was not always victorious. Slaves who decided to leave the plantations of masters and mistresses faced joblessness and homelessness. In some instances, freed slaves died from the lack of food and medical attention.[9]

January 1, 1863, marked the historic date of the landmark Emancipation Proclamation, which aimed to free "all slaves in the region still in rebellion against the United States." However, it was not until the Spring of 1865 and the defeat of the Confederate Army that the Emancipation Proclamation took on its full meaning in the South. Even still, it was six months later, at that point, that the South officially accepted the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation. The South only conceded to the Emancipation Proclamation because President Andrew Johnson mandated it as part of a Reconstruction measure for southern states and their readmission to the Union. Even the terminology of slave underwent a progression. First, the freed slaves became labeled "contraband of war" and finally addressed as freedmen.[10]

Florida slave Acie Thomas recalled hearing about his freedom from "A soldier in blue" who delivered a document to his master at the plantation. The master read the document to all the slaves at the "big house," where he called them to hear the news.[11] Another Florida slave, Willis Williams, remembered the Cavalry delivered the news of his freedom. Similarly to Acie Thomas, the slaves gathered together to receive the news of their freedom. Yet, Willis Williams noted in his case that slaves were "jubilant" and, at the same time, not "boastful" about the news of their emancipation.[12]

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[9] Michael Gannon, *Florida: A Short History* (Norwood: University Press of Florida, 2003), 87.

[10] Salmon Portland Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America (New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]), 6-7.

[11] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Acie Thomas: slave interview, November 25, 1936" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 23.

[12] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Willis Williams: slave interview, March 20, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 33.

Freedom for slaves did not mean immediate relief or success. In many instances, life for the freed slave became much more difficult following emancipation. One of the most troubling points following emancipation was the search for lost loved ones. Black newspapers posted ads of freed slaves in their search for "missing loved ones."[13] Freedmen teacher Sarah Jane Foster described the condition of the freed slaves in her 1866 letter as "scattered" and living in "very destitute circumstances."[14] Harriet Jacobs, author of *Life of a Slave Girl* and once a slave herself, described in1866 the "ragged condition" of freed slaves. She wrote about Georgia freedmen but said she also witnessed the condition of Florida former slaves. Jacobs described the freed slaves' condition this way: "They are not allowed to have a boat or a musket." And, "They are not allowed to own a horse, cow, or pig."[15]

Changing the mindset of the white Southerners to accept the new freedoms of black people caused a struggle. Salmon P. Chase, President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of Treasury, wrote, "But the abolition of slavery and the establishment of freedom are different. The emancipated negroes were not freemen." He continued by saying the freedmen were not in "chains" and not thought of as "chattels," but the question concerning how the freed slaves "fit into society was not solved." "What shall be done with the negro?" Chase asked. Chase's question reflected his concern about how the freedmen were still treated as slaves. For example, they were still punished with "whippings" in the South. White southerners believed the institution of slavery was their right and that emancipation denied them a fundamental right. The certitude to own slaves ran deeply for white slave owners in the South. Therefore, it demanded a

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[13] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 84.

[14] Foster, Sarah Jane Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen: A Diary and Letters* (United Kingdom: University Press of Virginia, 1990)., 95. This book was edited by Wayne E. Reilly.

[15] Simpson, Brooks D., Editor. *From Reconstruction Voices From America's First Great Struggle For Racial Equality*. New York, NY: The Library of America, 2018.

grand combination of dedicated action by the government through the establishment of agencies such as the Freedmen's Bureau and the generosity of the Christian endeavor by northern aid societies to offer freedmen the opportunity to experience a true freedom.[16] Helping freedmen find that path to their full realization of rights was not an easy task. After the Civil War ended with the defeat of the Confederacy, the South needed to develop a different social structure.[17] Harriet Beecher Stowe observed the post-Civil War South and felt that altering the mindset of the South was problematic. Stowe astutely noted that it was because of this "difficulty" that the Founding Fathers stepped aside from the slavery issue, knowing it led to "bloodshed and violence."[18] The Civil War, as Mark Twain astutely summarized, "uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be measured short of two or three generations."[19] Putting the North and South back together did not come without its difficulties.

Reconstruction, the period from 1865 to 1877 following the Civil War, represented a time when the nation had the opportunity to heal the wounds of a long past of racial inequality. However, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated before the government implemented a set plan for Reconstruction. Presidential Reconstruction from 1865 to 1867 started only two months after Lincoln's death. Reconstruction resulted in a period of enormous changes in the South. One of those efforts included the effort to establish schools to bring about the equality of the white and black races.[20]

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[16] Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission, 8, 11, 13.
[17] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War*, vi.
[18] Harriet Beecher Stowe and University of Virginia. *The Education of Freedmen. Vol. 1.* (Charlottesville, VA: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, 1996), 609-10.
[19] McPherson, *The War that Forged a Nation,* vii.
[20] Eric Foner, *Forever Free*, xix, xxvi, xxviii, xxix, 79.

In the case of education, during the mid-nineteenth century, New England "led the world in educational facilities and literacy." The region boasted of 95 percent of adults with the knowledge of reading and writing and three-fourths of the children, five to nineteen, signed-up for school. Other parts of the North performed almost as well. Conversely, the South fell behind because it contained a population where only 80 percent of the white population had the ability to read or write. And, only one-third of the white children signed-up to attend school. When they did attend school, the average attendance was three months out of the year. Clearly, slaves did not attend school in the South in a uniform sense prior to Reconstruction.[21]

When they were slaves, black people were often "kept in utter ignorance and subjection."[22] Solomon Northup, in his autobiography *Twelve Years a Slave*, sharply accounted for the scenario of the life of a slave regarding education:

> Shortly after this time a circumstance occurred that came nigh divulging the secret of my real name and history, which I had so long and carefully concealed, and upon which I was convinced depended my final escape. Soon after he purchased me, Epps asked me if I could write and read, and on being informed that I had received some instruction in those branches of education, he assured me, with emphasis, if he ever caught me with a book, or with pen and ink, he would give me a hundred lashes. He said he wanted me to understand that he bought 'niggers' to work and not educate.[23]

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[21] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 19-20.

[22] *Christian education for the South.* Boston, Massachusetts: s.n, 1865. Readex: African Americans and Reconstruction: Hope and Struggle, 1865-1883.

[23] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation Near the Red River in Louisiana* (United States: Applewood Books, 2008), 229-230.

How did such a barbaric condition exist for the black slaves? White plantation owners considered slaves as instruments only intended for their economic prosperity.[24] As Fergus M. Bordewich explained in his book, *Bound for Canaan*, "Slaves were a form of real estate, or human furniture, so to speak, whose personal life had no more intimate meaning than that of a cow, or a settee."[25] Slave codes forbade slaves from learning to read and write. Bible societies were even prevented from passing out Bibles to the slaves and slaves in most cases were not able to read the Bible on their own if they had received one.[26] One of the most prominent historians to write about slavery, Eugene D. Genovese, explained as the result of his research, laws that forbid the slave to receive an education resulted from a "variety of fears." He said that in some Southern states it was considered a crime to sell "writing materials to slaves." He attributed the Nat Turner Revolt (1831) to setting in motion the "reactionary course in the Lower South and influenced the Upper South as well."[27] However, slaves found ways around these cruel laws. Amidst the most oppressive conditions slaves discovered ways of "asserting their humanity."[28] For example, Frederick Douglass offered "hungry white boys" pieces of bread in turn for instructing Douglass using a *Webster's Spelling Book*. Historian Henry Bullock best summed up this situation: "Probably the heaviest blow that Negroes struck against slavery came from those slaves who had gained their education under bondage and who had escaped North to join the anti-slavery movement."[29] W. E. B. DuBois was convinced that "about five percent of slaves had

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[24] Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2.

[25] Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 23.

[26] William Goodell and American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features Shown by its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*. New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1853. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[27] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 578-579.

[28] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (United States: W. W. Norton, 1975), ix.

[29] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South,* 14.

learned to read by 1860 is entirely plausible and may even be too low." Free blacks and slaves valued education, so they pursued a way to learn, "even at the risk of punishment."[30] A significant reason slaves, against their peril if caught, circumvented slave codes and secretly learned to read was their earnest "desire to read the Bible." Frederick Douglass understood that education served as "the pathway to freedom" for a former slave. It was a natural course of events that freedmen so vigorously sought an education during Reconstruction.[31]

The overarching research question for my dissertation entails the following: How did the freedmen teachers and the newly freed people working together bring a second freedom for black people through education? The sub-question includes: Why did education serve to liberate freedmen from a life lived under the control of slavery? The experiences of freedmen's education coincided with massive changes during Reconstruction in the South, and I chose to narrow the focus, especially to Florida. To fill the research gap, I demonstrate the connection between education and the opportunity it afforded the freedmen to experience their new freedom in Florida. I emphasize the agency of the freedmen in their passionate pursuit of an education for themselves and their children. Authors of Reconstruction and freedmen's education, such as Joe M. Richardson, Jacqueline Jones, and Laura Wakefield, focused on many of the same features of Reconstruction as my study—the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and teachers. However, I illuminate the link between true freedom for the former slaves and equate that with their desire for an education. I conclude that the prominence the freedmen, the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and teachers placed on education gave freedmen the knowledge and power to make their own decisions, something they never experienced as slaves. Even though it was an endeavor some whites in Florida never accepted, the freedmen did not give up

[30] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll,* 580.
[31] Eric Foner, *Forever Free,* 21.

on their quest for learning. Additionally, I surmise that learning to read and write was a way for former slaves to strike against their past lives as slaves and a crucial step in changing their place in the social order of the South and Florida. Therefore, I argue that the agency of the former slaves in the pursuit of education, accompanied by dedicated teachers, ushered in true freedom for Florida's freedmen during Reconstruction beyond merely their emancipated status.

Historical writing on Reconstruction evolved considerably since the early 1900s. The main question earlier Reconstruction authors addressed concerned whether Reconstruction succeeded or failed. For example, W. E. B. DuBois famously summarized Reconstruction as a time black people in the South "went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back into slavery."[32] Historical writing about Reconstruction began with authors who presented sources that revealed a view that sympathized the Old South. Over time a shift occurred. Authors focused their works on black people who claimed their position in society. This viewpoint contrasted with the idea that new freedoms were handed to ex-slaves during Reconstruction. Reconstruction histories, explicitly focusing on Florida, have emphasized the period's political, social, and economic aspects. Other Florida Reconstruction research stressed singular subjects such as black people, the Freedmen's Bureau, or the Northern aid societies, for example. Whereas, some Florida Reconstruction studies highlighted how the era saw the development of the public school system.

Starting with a broad analysis of Reconstruction, William A. Dunning (1907) presented Reconstruction in a way sympathetic to the Old South. Instead of looking at what was gained now that the Civil War was over the tone of his writing reflected more about what the South had lost because of the war. From his standpoint, it was as though it was a point of annoyance for the

[32] Guelzo, *Reconstruction,* 117.

South that black people demanded rights during Reconstruction.[33] One of the first authors who viewed Reconstruction through the lens of Florida history was William Watson Davis (1913). Davis was part of the same philosophy as Dunning, which he echoed with statements such as this one, "The attempt to found a commonwealth government upon the votes of an ignorant negro electorate proved a failure." Davis called Reconstruction a "sad experience."[34] An author that continued with the school of thought that northern efforts were problematic for the South was Susan Eppes (1926). Eppes' revealed her point of view through quotes like this in her book, "Then the Freedmen's Bureau was established and the carpetbaggers came like unto an army of locusts, seeking what they could devour." Eppes continued by writing, "If life for the Southerner was hard before, it became almost unendurable under these conditions."[35] Continuing into the 1930s, scholars analyzed Reconstruction from the following perspective: African Americans were "inferior beings," the actions of Congress were wrong, and "white people had to deal with annoying 'outsiders' who only wanted the black vote to keep political power."[36] However, historical writing on Reconstruction changed toward the 1960s and the 1970s. Professor George Bentley (1955) published his work on the Freedmen's Bureau. Bentley initially prepared this work as part of his dissertation research for the University of Wisconsin. Bentley's work highlighted how historians cannot portray the Bureau as entirely positive nor ruled out as unsuccessful. Bentley's interpretation highlighted his assessment that education paved the way

[33] William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (Harper & brothers, 1907).

[34] Watson William Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913)., 737.

[35] Susan Bradford Eppes, *Through some Eventful Years* (Eppes Macon, GA: Press of the J. W. Burke company, 1926).

[36] Jerrell H. Shofner, "Political Reconstruction in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1966): 146.

for a cultural shift. He explained, "The idea of Negro schools had become established in southern thinking, white and black."[37]

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s shaped society and impacted how historians wrote about black history. Two revisionist authors of the 1960s and 1970s, who contributed to Florida's Reconstruction history were Joe M. Richardson and Jerrell H. Shofner. Joe M. Richardson, in particular, added a tremendous amount to Reconstruction history. In Richardson's (1963) article on the Freedmen's Bureau, he introduced several research questions and methodically addressed the history behind each. For instance, his culminating thought occurred when he referenced the inability of the Freedmen's Bureau to change the "attitudes of the white South," which was thought-provoking.[38] Richardson's book (1965), *The Negro in in the Reconstruction of Florida*, represented a key shift in the way the freedmen were assessed in Reconstruction history. The main theme of Richardson's book was that freedmen were not "shiftless" or "incompetent."[39] Richardson narrowed his research even more on Florida and Reconstruction when he focused on the American Missionary Association (1971). Richardson's treatment of the AMA benevolent organization was favorable regarding its presence in Florida. Richardson addressed numerous topics in the article, including the philosophy of the AMA teachers, the school buildings, the students' attitudes toward instruction, and religion.[40] Richardson broadened his work on the American Missionary Association in his book, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890*, (1986).

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[37] George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau.* Reprint 2016 (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), vii, 183.

[38] Joe M. Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1963): 223-238.

[39] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), xi.

[40] Joe M. Richardson, "Christian Abolitionism: The American Missionary Association and the Florida Negro," *Journal of Negro Education* (1971): 35-44.

This book commended the work accomplished by the AMA yet recognized the organization's imperfection.[41] How Richardson treated black people in all of his publications commenced a new trend in historical writing about freedmen. Later historians capitalized on the idea of the empowered freedmen in their writing on black Reconstruction history.

Jerrell H. Shofner (1966) wrote more about the political aspect of Reconstruction in Florida than Richardson. He assessed that "Reconstruction in Florida was radical, from the point of view that great changes were attempted in the state's political, economic, and social arrangements." Shofner argued that assisting freedmen meant a social and political advantage for Florida.[42] Shofner in his book, *Nor is it Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (1974) presented Reconstruction through a political lens. He gave a favorable impression to the reader of the Freedmen's Bureaus' education assistance in Florida. His thesis was insightful about the Reconstruction period when he wrote, "Racial slavery was abolished during the Civil War, but Reconstruction ended before Negroes secured a place in society. The problem of extending the promise of America to the newly freed blacks was deferred to later generations."[43] Shofner's assessment captured the entire dilemma of the Reconstruction period. While the Freedmen's Bureau, aid societies, and teachers made progress, the period that followed Reconstruction almost served to undo so much that had been accomplished.

James M. McPherson, who won a Pulitzer Prize for *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era*, continued the revised view of Reconstruction in his book *The Abolitionist Legacy* (originally published in 1975). His view was favorable toward Reconstruction educators. He

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[41] Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), ix.

[42] Jerrell H. Shofner, "Political Reconstruction in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1966): 146-147.

[43] Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 1-3, 72, 344.

held the position that teachers working as missionaries did not "melt away" as Reconstruction ended. His method of research was unique because analyzed the activities and beliefs of approximately 300 people who were "abolitionists, or children of abolitionists."[44] Sarah Whitmer Foster and John T. Foster (1999) added to the balanced historical narrative of Reconstruction. In their book, the Fosters featured a prominent individual from the Civil War and Reconstruction era: Harriet Beecher Stowe. The Fosters explained that Reconstruction was a time in which the "Yankee strangers" represented "neither demons or angels."[45] Eric Foner (1988), still considered one of the foremost Reconstruction authors and lecturers, turned the focus of Reconstruction on black people. He portrayed Reconstruction as a time black Americans strove for equality.[46] Foner in his later publication, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (2013), upheld his earlier Reconstruction viewpoint when he wrote the "era witnessed a profound experiment in reshaping the country's social and political institutions." Foner labeled Reconstruction a "social revolution." The best assessment of Reconstruction in this book was that it was a time when the United States, even though temporarily, "experimented with genuine interracial democracy." The book left the impression that Foner viewed Reconstruction as a troubled time of "successes and failures."[47] An author that overlapped with Eric Foner's view of Reconstruction was Allen C. Guelzo (2018). Guelzo's concise book made the following argument, "Not everything that should have been gained was gained in Reconstruction, but not everything was lost, either." His book masterfully depicted the disappointment Americans experience when looking back at Reconstruction. It was a time in which so much was

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[44] James M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (United Kingdom, Princeton University Press, 1995).

[45] Sarah Whitmer Foster, and John T. Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* (United States: University Press of Florida, 1999), xii-xiii.

[46] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. United Kingdom: HarperCollins, 1988.

[47] Eric Foner, *Forever Free*, xix, xx.

accomplished, yet at the same time almost equally unfinished. For Guelzo it oversimplified matters to label Reconstruction a failure. Rather, in his estimation, Reconstruction was "overthrown, subverted, and betrayed." Ultimately, Guelzo contended that Reconstruction accomplished its principal goal following the division that occurred because of the Civil War. Politically, the North and the South reunited in the constitutional regard.[48]

Nearing the 2000s and beyond, it became popular in Florida's historical writing to somewhat exclusively focus on black reconstruction history and narrow the focus to a specific region of Florida, such as Tampa. Kathleen S. Howe (1998), a published author of multiple black history articles, focused on the political ramifications of Reconstruction on black people in Tampa.[49] Canter Brown (2000) painted a clear picture of what life was like living in Tampa Bay, Florida during the Civil War and Reconstruction period. Brown believed that Tampans enjoyed their isolated community and preferred to remain free of the "strife in the national scene." Of course, that was not the situation, even for those living in remote Tampa Bay. A unique feature of Brown's book was how it took the reader through the development of a "small number of black residents" in Tampa to what became a solid black community.[50] Through meticulous research, Canter Brown and Barbara Gray Brown (2003) made another invaluable contribution to Tampa history. They compiled numerous genealogical records of black individuals and family pioneers of Tampa and Hillsborough County into one book. They revealed the names of the many black Tampans and how they contributed to developing what became a great city.[51]

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[48] Guelzo, *Reconstruction*, 1, 12, 115-116, 129.

[49] Kathleen S. Howe, "Stepping into Freedom: African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, during the Reconstruction Era," *Tampa Bay History: Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 3* (1998): Digital Commons USF.

[50] Canter Brown, *Tampa in Civil War & Reconstruction* (Tampa Bay History Center Reference Library Series) (United States: University of Tampa Press, 2000), 19, 95.

[51] Canter Brown and Barbara Gray Brown, *Family Records of the African American Pioneers of Tampa and Hillsborough County* (United States: University of Tampa Press, 2003).

Heather Andrea Williams (originally published in 2005) made a thoughtful effort to put black people at the center of her research by "reading between the lines" as she explained her research methodology. When researching black education, Williams prioritized analyzing the individuals neglected in previous studies. Williams discussed how her book took a different approach from author Robert C. Morris, who, according to Williams, presented the "education of freed people as a 'cooperative venture.'" Williams did not offer a negative view of the teachers; conversely, she chose to draw attention to black people. This interpretation presented black people as active participants during the process of Reconstruction rather than acted upon by white people and the government.[52] William's viewpoint was reminiscent of W.E.B. DuBois (1935), who promoted the view that black people possessed more control in their affairs of the state than given credit.[53] Larry E. Rivers (2009) brought the historical discussion back to the core issue—slavery. Core in that it was slavery the freedmen had to work to break free from if they were to ever really practice freedom as citizens. His methodology was unique because, as he stated, his "goal was not to follow any certain model." He provided compelling insights into the slave and master relationship in education. Rivers included an account of a noncompliant family who disagreed with the laws denying slaves an education (the Parkhill family). Explanations such as this might be why Rivers concluded that "Slavery existed as a complicated affair that evolved and varied from time to time and place to place."[54]

Traditional studies about Reconstruction focused on the politics or economics of the period as leaders worked to restore the Union. However, historians changed the conversation

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[52] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 13-14.

[53] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017).

[54] Larry E. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (United States, University Press of Florida, 2009), XII, XIV, 113, 120-21.

when they chose to analyze the era by focusing on the education aspects of Reconstruction. Historian Eugene D. Genovese noted the importance of recognizing freedmen education in an observation he made in his influential work on slavery (1976): "The freedmen's efforts to educate themselves and their children provide one of the most moving chapters in American social history, and historians are finally giving it the attention it deserves."[55]

Carter Godwin Woodson is an example of an earlier author who focused on specific educational matters, such as the curriculum taught or the philosophies of the freedmen teachers. Woodson (originally published 1933) completed a powerful assessment of black education in his book, *The Mis-education of the Negro*. As the book titled indicated he focused on the philosophy that accompanied black education. He categorized early black education attempts into three categories: Slave masters who desired better laborers. People who felt sympathy for the exploited. And "Zealous missionaries" who focused on a mission of "divine love" and Christianity in their message to the freedmen. Woodson's main contention rested in his belief that while the education attempts after the Civil War were genuine, the objective aimed more at changing black people than to, as he explained, "develop them." As Woodson explained, "The education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of the Negroes, is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them and now segregate them. He contended that black teachers were unable to implement adjustments to the viewpoint given in the curriculum. His claim about the "mis-educated Negroes" meant that the education system for black people did not have the potential for sweeping changes because the black people in control were a product of the problematic education given by white people. From Woodson's perspective of black education, "The black person is still doing what the white person tells him

[55] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 582-583.

to do."[56] Robert C. Morris (originally published 1981) focused on the philosophy of black education from a more positive perspective on the period of black education during Reconstruction. His work, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction*, provided a history about the manner of education freedmen received during this period. His methodology involved studying "educators' statements, class lessons, and textbooks." He aimed to demonstrate in his study the lessons and the intentions behind the type of instruction given by the reformers to the freedmen students. Morris interpreted the period as a time where the accomplishments of Reconstruction represented a period where the Freedmen's Bureau, benevolent societies, and teachers worked together to educate the freedmen. He presented the narrative in a way that connected the antebellum years of black education to the Civil War and the Reconstruction period to the early 1900s.[57] Teacher Laura Wakefield continued the educational focus of Reconstruction. In her historical research she focused on the freedmen teachers as part of her Master's Thesis for the University of Central Florida (2004). A chapter of this thesis, "Set a Light in a Dark Place," was published in *The Florida Historical Quarterly* scholarly journal (2003). The article undertook all of the main aspects of this period—the Freedmen's Bureau, the American Missionary Association (and other aid societies), and the education of the newly freed slaves. Although, Wakefield's Reconstruction education thesis focused more on the development of the system of public education in Florida.[58] Jacqueline Jones (2004) completed an impressive contribution to Reconstruction history. Jones followed a similar approach as Wakefield, but because she researched for a book it provided more depth about the era of freedmen teachers during

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[56] Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (United States: Associated Publishers, 1969), 1-35.

[57] Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (United States, University of Chicago Press, 2010), x-xi.

[58] Laura Wallis Wakefield, "'Set a Light in a Dark Place': Teachers of Freedmen in Florida, 1864-1874," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2003): 401–17.

Reconstruction. Jones focused on freedmen teachers and education in the context of Georgia. She narrowed her study to Georgia because of its large population in terms of slaves and slaveholders. The large slave population meant more involvement from the Freedmen's Bureau and Northern aid societies, an essential feature of her research. She focused a substantial amount of attention on the sub-issues of race, class, and sex in her discussion of the subject. Jones portrayed the teachers driven by "evangelical abolitionism." Jones made an important assessment of education during Reconstruction when she argued, "After emancipation, going to school became a political act as well as a means of personal edification." Jones's book did not present an argument necessarily that all freedmen teachers were exclusively white, single females who sought teaching positions during the Reconstruction period. Although, women as educators were the essential focus of her book.[59] In contrast, Ronald E. Butchart (2010) intended to demonstrate that freedmen education did not entirely result from the work of "privileged single white northern women motivated by evangelical beliefs and abolitionism." In his book, Butchart demonstrated that the teachers who educated the freedmen were "far more interracial than historians have realized." When he conducted his research to illustrate that all backgrounds of men and women engaged in freedmen education, he created a comprehensive database. Butchart made an invaluable contribution to Reconstruction education history through his Freedmen's Teachers Project database. The database represented a unique research tool for any future scholarship on freedmen's education, primarily if the research intended to focus on recognizing the men and women who participated in freedmen's education.[60]

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[59] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 3, 8, 10, 11.

[60] Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), x, xii, xv, xvi.

While the works of the aforementioned authors focused on the political, social, or education elements of Reconstruction, Daniel R. Weinfeld (2012) brought to the forefront the violence taking place during Reconstruction in Florida. Weinfeld focused on a specific Florida county—Jackson County. He described the Reconstruction period with the following summary, "Jackson County became a battlefield, its citizens terrorizing each other until the federal troops arrived to impose order at the end of the month."[61]

The primary methodology of my dissertation followed an education viewpoint. Because I am a teacher, the narrative I provide shares an educator's perspective. For example, I examined all of the major topics of my study—the freedmen, the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern aid societies, teachers, schools and curriculum—through a teacher's perspective. The decision to geographically focus on Florida narrows the research to a region typically overlooked in southern history. For example, during the Civil War and Reconstruction period, Florida looked more like the "Texas frontier" than part of the "cotton-growing" region.[62] By narrowing the focus to Florida, details emerge that historians tend to ignore when exclusively focusing on states that receive considerably more attention in Civil War and Reconstruction research. Limiting the subject to Florida also presents challenges when writing about the education of the freedmen in Florida. Florida did not hold as many slaves as the other states considered part of the Old South. This meant that I had to scrutinize every source for the educational initiatives that took place in Florida, whether by the Freedmen's Bureau or northern aid societies, to account for the development of freedmen's education in the state. However, the decision to focus on Florida brings individuals to the forefront of Reconstruction history who might otherwise receive far less

[61] Daniel R Weinfeld, *The Jackson County War: Reconstruction and Resistance in Post–Civil War Florida* (United States: University of Alabama Press, 2012), xi.

[62] Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan,* 269.

attention. The personal letters and diaries that belonged to the freedmen teachers, such as Esther Hill Hawkes and Harriet B. Greely, are essential to this project. The correspondence and diaries the freedmen teachers left behind open the possibility for authentic research. When I combed through the personal documents of freedmen teachers in Florida and the South it allowed personal insight into the story of freedmen's education. The letters and diaries that reveal the freedmen teachers' experiences, such as the joys and difficulties of their work for the freedmen, illuminated my research. I allocated the same attention to the Freedmen's Bureau records, correspondence, and education reports that focused on Florida's education progress and status during Reconstruction. Another major part of the research included an analysis of northern aid societies' correspondence and publications, such as those provided by the American Missionary Association, to give an example.

Furthermore, the research methodology of my research follows the consideration of the freedmen teachers' faith and dependence on God reflected in the numerous diary entries and letters. Freedmen who desired to read the Bible represented another way faith received attention in my study. Various historical scholars cited the religious nature of the freedmen teachers or freedmen; however, historians conveyed the discussion indifferently or did not include as much in their works about the teachers' faith. My research focuses on several writings completed by the freedmen teachers that reflected the legitimacy of the message and power of the Gospel. My study reveals the correlation between religion and the recognition by freedmen teachers and northern aid societies of the value of freedmen's education. While correct, someone cannot validate the spiritual intentions of another person's belief in the Gospel; nonetheless, the records individuals left behind in diaries and letters shed light on their motivations. The entire purpose of Christianity prioritizes a humanitarian mission focus. The men and women who participated in

freedmen's education who identified with the Christian belief did so because they sincerely felt education was a way to change the slave's life to have more fulfillment after emancipated. Slavery equaled pain and restraint, while education equaled hope and a future for the freedmen.

I did not set out to prove that every person involved in freedmen's education believed in God or accomplished what they did out of religious motivations. Conversely, I incorporated a renewed way of viewing this era of tremendous outreach for freedmen in my narrative. Former slaves were men, women, and children who were overdue for compassion. The teachers and benevolent groups who partnered with the freedmen and made a difference during a challenging time fulfilled a significant Christian duty in the nation's history.

During the research process I focused on making the story personal to the reader. For this reason, my research followed a systematic process built first on the accounts given by Freedmen's Bureau agents, northern aid societies, freedmen teachers, and the freedmen. When possible, I let the freedmen and the freedmen teachers represent themselves, so to speak, through the numerous personal writings included in the chapters. By choosing this organizational method, I intended to put the reader into the period when reading through the dissertation. The research process involved using experts in Reconstruction history to confirm findings about the primary source information. Understanding the state's geography was essential for the research because, during the Civil War and Reconstruction, different parts of the state reflected more of the Old South than other areas. I emphasized local history in the case of Hillsborough County (Tampa, Florida). Throughout this project, I prioritized how Floridians reacted to an event that shaped the nation's affairs, such as Reconstruction. Equally important to me during the research process was considering the opposition of the freedmen or anyone involved in the education effort during Reconstruction in the South. Another crucial element of my research process

included historical images and photographs from the period. A vital part of drawing the reader into the story meant using images that told a story in a way that words cannot do justice. Additionally, I selected pictures or photographs that served to reinforce the arguments in the chapters.

Access to research for my dissertation depended largely on primary sources available in online databases, local libraries, and local archives. This project illustrated the wide-range of digital tools available to historians today. The research for this project was conducted almost entirely through digital research. Living in the "digital age," historians need to view technology as a tool for completing research.[63] Historian William Cronon recognized the importance of digital historical research when he wrote, "History, like the world itself, is changing in ways that none of us yet fully understand." Before the digitization of historical records, access was limited. However, documents and sources made available through digital libraries created "an immense democratization of knowledge," as Cronon explained of the digitization process of research. Sources that at one time were not accessible for a project such as mine are now available to anyone who pursues an understanding of the topic.[64] However, research inside physical libraries and archives certainly adds depth to a research project. Ideally, more in-person research was desired for my project.

The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative contained a remarkable collection of Freedmen's Bureau records utilized for research at the Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library. The HCPLC online system allowed access to another important piece of research,

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[63] Stephanie Kingsley Brooks, "Search History: Making Research Transparent in the Digital Age," American Historical Association, March 9, 2018, https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/march-2018/search-history-making-research-transparent-in-the-digital-age.

[64] William Cronon, "The Public Practice of History in and for a Digital Age," American Historical Association, January 1, 2012, https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/january-2012/the-public-practice-of-history-in-and-for-a-digital-age.

historical local Florida newspapers. Historical newspapers showed the everyday reaction of the public to the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau and freedmen teachers in Florida. In a respect, the Reconstruction era newspapers allowed the possibility to step back in time and analyze how people felt about the education efforts in Florida at the time the policies were implemented in the state. The University of South Florida library contained a special black history collection in their Digital Commons, "Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians." Recognizing the men and women who, for too long, were denied fundamental rights as slaves represented an essential goal of my study. For this reason, the testimonies of Florida ex-slaves, provided in the USF database, revealed their life experiences during the Antebellum, Civil War and Reconstruction days. The accounts given by the ex-slaves were critical to provide context in the chapters. Most importantly, the ex-slave narratives allowed the reader to hear from the freed slave in his words.

The Tampa Bay History Center offered inspiration for the research interest of my dissertation. Recently, the center opened a black history exhibit, *Travails and Triumphs,* which correlates with the objective of my project. The museum display provided the visitor with a visual walkthrough, and artifact-based, timeline of the history of the black Floridian. The walkthrough began with the history of the first black people in Florida and continued to the present day black Floridian experience. As the museum objective stated: "People of African descent have lived and labored in the Tampa Bay area for over five hundred years. Travails and Triumphs tells the story of the communities and families they forged, the hardships they endured, the jobs they worked, and the triumphs they celebrated."[65] Similarly, I aimed to demonstrate the expansion of rights and freedoms for black Floridians and the ongoing challenges black people faced in the context of Reconstruction.

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[65] "Travails and Triumphs," Tampa Bay History Center, https://tampabayhistorycenter.org/exhibit/travails-and-triumphs/.

While primary sources in the form of archives, books, letters, and documents were vital resources for my research, secondary sources that indicated the perspectives of other Reconstruction historians were equally essential for my project. Ronald E. Butchart's Freedmen's Teacher Project database contributed a great amount to the research and focus of my work. The FTP database presented another way to bring to light often-forgotten names of Reconstruction history in the context of education. Butchart cataloged in a database he created the names of a large majority of the freedmen teachers. The database contained data about their race, religion, abolition status, teaching qualifications, aid society support, locations taught, and number of years taught. When pertinent to the chapter content, the FTP database proved an invaluable tool when researching specific freedmen teachers.

To present my narrative, the chapters in this dissertation follow a topical order, more than adhering strictly to a chronological sequence of subjects discussed. The date range of my study focuses mainly on the period from 1860 to 1877. However, for context, a few chapters include historical content prior to the Civil War and beyond Reconstruction. Ultimately, each chapter resulted in a reflective tone lending way to the importance of education for fulfilling individual rights for black people in Florida. A theme apparent in every chapter, through first-hand accounts given by Bureau agents, teachers, and students, revealed how much the freedmen wanted an education. Additionally, how Florida navigated their new post-Civil War reality along with the rest of the South involved an essential part of the content of each chapter.

Chapter 2 serves the purpose of laying the foundation for the future chapters of my dissertation. The overview of the economic, political, and social status of Florida are essential to setting the backdrop of my thesis. The discussion of the transition of black people from slavery to eventual emancipation paves the way for subsequent chapters that focus on the education of

the freedmen. Ultimately, Chapter 2 aims to demonstrate what made Florida a unique southern location for its northern visitors during Reconstruction. Issues regarding the states' geography and distance from the North created a distinct environment.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 present the essential supporters of educating the freedmen in Florida during Reconstruction. The Freedmen's Bureau (Chapter 3), northern aid societies (Chapter 4), and freedmen teachers (Chapter 5) demonstrate how freedmen received assistance in their quest for an education. Therefore, the way these chapters unfold shows the connection between these three groups and their role in freedmen's education. Specifically, Chapter 3 demonstrates how the Freedmen's Bureau, although an imperfect agency, fostered the growth of education for freedmen in Florida. Chapter 3 stresses how the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau helped Florida progress with its education system in the state. The issue of opposition towards the Bureau was recognized as well as its role in the protection of the freedmen teachers. A significant aspect of Chapter 3 deals with the way the Freedmen's Bureau aimed to help the freedmen in their transition from slavery. Chapter 4 addresses the contributions made by northern aid societies and how these groups facilitated the success of education for freedmen in Florida. I discussed the history, philosophy, and kinds of agencies. The chapter focuses on the northern aid societies that participated in the education assistance for the freedmen in Florida. Chapter 5 represents a critical focus of my argument because of its recognition of the freedmen teachers. The main objective of Chapter 5 delves into the motivations of the freedmen teachers. The application of their extensive correspondence and diaries to the research made Chapter 5 a notable point of this study. The chapter mainly focuses on women freedmen teachers in Florida; however, the study spotlights the diversity of all involved in freedmen education.

Chapter 6 concerns the practical matters of education: the school day, the schoolhouse, the curriculum, and the students. Discussion about each reveals the educational experience of the students during Reconstruction. For example, what was it like for freedmen students to attend school? What school books did they read? Additionally, this chapter emphasizes the degree to which the freedmen loved to learn. Chapter 6 establishes the importance and degree to which education mattered to the freedmen.

Chapter 7 serves to reflect on the gains and the losses of Reconstruction in Florida. How did the hostility felt by some white Floridians impact the ability of the Reconstruction policies to endure? The chapter discusses the numerous gains made by Florida's black political leaders. Yet, the chapter explores how the end of Reconstruction returned Florida to many of its previous conditions regarding black rights, especially in the context of segregation. The chapter continues into the 1960s to illustrate the degree of the impact of segregation and the changes that occurred in the state after Reconstruction ended. Nonetheless, the chapter demonstrates that despite the setbacks education remained an achievement of freedmen during Reconstruction, even if challenged in later decades.

The underlying question I address in every chapter involves: What meaning did freedom hold for the former slave if he were limited in his power to read, write, and participate as an equal part of society? I brought forth the relationship between learning and freedom and how essential freedmen teachers were to the success of the education movement during Reconstruction in Florida. My research considers the setbacks, prejudices, and obstacles freedmen faced while pursuing an education during Reconstruction and beyond. For that reason, I focus on teachers who cooperated with the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and the freedmen to advance the cause of education for black people in the Florida. Freedmen teachers,

despite their imperfections, worked diligently to provide an education for freedmen who for too long were denied their fundamental human rights. In the unfolding the chapter content, I reveal the hope that came with the education of the freedmen. Former slaves held the promise that, even if not fulfilled permanently beyond Reconstruction, future generations gained from pursuing what many freedmen prioritized at the time—access to education.

Chapter 2

The Journey from Slavery to Freedom in Florida

I had the faith and courage of Jesus to carry me on…even the best master in slavery couldn't be as good as the worst person in freedom, Oh, God, it is good to be free, and I am thankful. Reverend Squires Jackson, September 11, 1937

Reverend Squires Jackson, born in a shack in Madison, Florida, on September 14, 1841, recalled joining his mother in the cotton fields as a child and shared how attached he was to his mother. Jackson's memories of his mother were endearing, considering he lived as a child in a grim environment, such as remembering the "threat of the overseers [sic] lash." While Jackson acknowledged benevolence in his master's treatment of slaves, his account illustrated that such amelioration of conditions did not extend to allowing his slaves to read and write. Jackson shared a compelling account of an exchange he had with his Master regarding his knowledge of reading and writing. Jackson revealed in the interview that he did know how to read and write and one day "he was caught reading a newspaper by the Master." His Master "demanded to know what he was doing with a newspaper," to which Jackson shared that he "immediately turned the paper upside down and declared 'Confederates done won the war.'" At this point, according to Jackson, "The Master laughed and walked away without punishing him." The tensions between masters and slaves were exacerbated over the attainment of knowledge. Even before emancipation, both understood this to be a critical battleground in the war over racial equality. Jackson's circumstances did not deter him. He explained that when the Civil War began, he ran away, and dramatically, he kept out of sight by hiding in trees and groves when a group of men searched for him. His time on the run demanded strict concealment. At night, when he slept, he

used Spanish moss to cover his face to keep out of sight of the men who pursued him. Jackson continued to become Reverend Squires Jackson after God called him into the ministry when he attended church one Sunday. Once a slave child following his mother in cotton fields, Jackson persevered to become a preacher in 1868 and an ordained church elder in 1874.[1] From the beginning of a slave's life, the circumstances they were born into were so humbling that reading their testimony, such as shared by Reverend Squires Jackson, revealed the significant meaning education represented for the emancipated slave.

On November 17, 1860, Dr. Edmund Jones placed an ad in a Tampa newspaper for the loss of his "possession." As it would occur, the lost property was a slave boy, perhaps fifteen or sixteen years of age, who ran from a plantation on the Hillsborough River.[2] The sentiment that a slave belonged to an owner was enshrined in Florida law dating back to 1828. The life of a slave was not his own, and "An Act Concerning Slaves, Free Negroes and Mulattoes" passed by the Florida Legislative Council on January 19, 1828, confirmed this. One aspect of the Florida law addressed runaway slaves and the concern over their "lurking in swamps, woods and other obscure places…".[3] The state continued this pattern of treatment against black people with laws in 1832 and 1846 making it clear that they were not permitted to assemble. When emancipation finally came to slaves in the state, it was not greeted warmly by the large number of white inhabitants living in Florida. The idea that in some fashion slavery might "revive" existed in the minds of white Floridians, according to an 1865 Gainesville, Florida newspaper account.[4] Governor John Milton of Florida, who served during the Civil War, referred to emancipation as a

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[1] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Rev. Squires Jackson: slave interview, September 11, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 18.

[2] Tampa Newspaper ad offering a reward for the return of Dr. Edmund Jones' slave, Nimrod - Tampa, Florida. 1860-11-17. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[3] Florida. Legislative Council. An Act Concerning Slaves, Free Negroes and Mulattoes, Approved January 19, 1828. 1828-01-19. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[4] Joe M. Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1969): 365–66.

"scheme of Lincoln" only intended "for the subjugation of the South."[5] Yet, emancipation resulted in a significant outcome for Florida, and many freedmen extraordinarily embraced this new freedom. The most enduring transformation of slaves to freedmen in Florida came from the education movement. Black teachers fulfilled the role of lifting "their brethren" through teaching.[6] Black people, who once were forbidden to gather for any uplifting purpose, now assembled at night schools to "...learn their books around the pine fire."[7] Despite all of the complexities of Florida, the sparse tracts of land, the primitive standard of living, and the condition of the freedmen, the state demonstrated progress in the education of the freedmen following the Civil War.

Although often an afterthought in the realm of southern history, Florida encompassed the ways of the South in every regard, as demonstrated in its 61,745 slaves reported in 1860. Florida indeed held to the customs and viewpoints of the region described in history as the "Old South." An editor of the *Charleston Mercury* wrote in 1859, "We stand committed to the South, but we stand more vitally committed to the cause of slavery." Leading to secession from the Union, this statement mirrored the sentiment held in Florida. At the time of the Civil War, Florida was not known for its developed economy, but the state, similar to the other southern states, valued slavery. Even without a robust economy, Florida mattered in the Confederate war effort through its cattle, salt, and cotton supply to the other states in the South. A breakdown of the numbers illustrated Florida's place during one of the most transformative periods of American History: More than 15,000 Floridians fought for the Confederacy, while 1,200 white Floridians and more

[5] Office of the Governor of Florida. Milton Letterbook: February 17, 1863. 1863-02-17. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[6] Barnard, Henry. "The American Journal of Education." Vol. 19, F.C. Brownell; [etc., etc.], 1856-82.

[7] E.B. Duncan, Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen, 1866. 1866-11-08. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

than 1,000 ex-slaves and free black Floridians served in the Union Army. Historian William H. Nutty best summarized Florida's place during this period when he wrote that Florida was "psychologically, economically, socially and politically attuned with the other southern states."[8]

Even though Florida was not the site of numerous military engagements during the Civil War, the state experienced loss and faced serious difficulties following the war. Surveying the post-war general landscape of Florida revealed less destruction than states farther north. Regarding war-related damages, Florida experienced the least, except Texas. Yet, the war resulted in a distressed condition for Florida.[9] Estimates revealed that the loss for Florida reached $42,000,000; only Alabama and South Carolina faced a more challenging economic position after the war. The Floridians who inhabited the state preferred their seclusion. The isolated mindset created obstacles for the state regarding how well Floridians perceived northern assistance and legislation that involved societal changes.[10] Even if Florida was rebuilt structurally and institutionally after the war, it was far more challenging to change the heart of the rebels.[11] The hardened mindset of white Floridians pre-dates the close of the Civil War. Not every traveler to Florida during the United States territorial days sought a new way of life. Settlers from South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia brought their elitist mentality with them that pursued "land acquisition, controls of dependents, and staple crop production" so they might economically benefit and maintain control.[12] A land known historically as *La Florida,* which possessed a rare environmental beauty and adventure dating back to the days of Spain, had

[8]Jonathan C. Sheppard, ed. *A Forgotten Front: Florida During the Civil War Era* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2018), 1, 5, 11.

[9] James C. Clark, *A Concise History of Florida* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 60, 62.

[10]Derrell Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1965): 2.

[11]*The Freedmen's Record*, 1868. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice (Volume 4-Issue 8-08-1868), 123.

[12]Sheppard, ed. *A Forgotten Front*, 6.

evolved.[13] Plantation owners accomplished making the state, in 1845, part of the traditional Southern society. Florida retained its floral appealing landscape, but cotton and slaves encompassed the surroundings in Middle Florida, known as the "black belt," which comprised Jackson, Leon, Gadsden, Madison, and Jefferson.[14]

Nowhere was the mentality of white Floridians as part of the traditional southern society more evident than in their reaction to the education of black people in the state. On Monday, February 29, 1864, a truly remarkable event took place in Jacksonville, Florida when the first racially integrated free school in the state opened its doors. Classes commenced with thirty students, one of the them was black. Sixteen additional black students joined the school on the second day. Miss Mary Magdalin Lamee's mother tainted the success of the school opening when she stopped her daughter from receiving an education along with black children. Notably, the school opening was largely facilitated by the occupation of Jacksonville in 1864 by Federal troops. Jacksonville was one battle-damaged location in Florida where physical damage was visible in areas where "only tall chimneys stood" because of Union soldiers burning the city.[15] Astonishingly, some prejudices were overcome during the Reconstruction of Florida primarily through the heroic efforts of the freed people themselves along with the assistance they received from Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and the teachers.

The path to freedom for each slave varied. For example, one former Florida slave recalled that upon learning of emancipation at his master's house, "About half of the slaves consented to stay with the master" and "the others went away 'glad of their freedom.'" Sadly, ex-slaves frequently found themselves without a place to go and found their circumstances as lacking a

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[13] Auctore Hieron. Chiaves. *La Florida.* 1582. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.
[14] Sheppard, ed. *A Forgotten Front*, 7, 11.
[15] Gerald Schwartz Ed., A *Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 59, 79.

plan for the next step in their lives.[16] An 1865 *New York Times* article discussed the situation of the freedmen when it discussed the "wandering" of the Florida freedmen and described their circumstances as lacking a plan for the next step in their lives.[17] For the freed slaves who remained with the former master, this often meant turning to a system known as sharecropping by which freedmen worked the land of plantation owners keeping only a small percentage of the crop's profits.[18]

For the former Florida planters, the system of sharecropping appeared as a logical conclusion because, as one Florida ex-slave explained of the Florida economy: "Cotton was the main product of most southern plantations, and the owner usually depended on the income from the sale of his yearly crop to maintain his home and upkeep of his slaves and cattle."[19] Slaves long cherished the thought of ending the cruel institution of slavery. The result for the former master meant a crippled economy and the reality of a large number of slaves fleeing plantation life to experience freedom. In Tallahassee, the state's capitol, cotton represented a major economic function of this region. As a matter of survival, several of the freedmen eventually returned to the place of their former master out of necessity, searching for work. Thus, the system of sharecropping functioned as a way of returning the South to its former days by regaining economic prosperity. However, more purposefully, sharecropping paved the way for the most powerful upper-class whites to resume their former position in southern society.[20] As

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[16] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Acie Thomas: Slave Interview, November 25, 1936" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 23.

[17] Joe M. Richardson, The *Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 10-11.

[18] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Acie Thomas: Slave Interview.

[19] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Willis Williams: slave interview, March 20, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 33.

[20] Ouzts, Clay "Landlords and Tenants: Sharecropping and the Cotton Culture in Leon County, Florida, 1865-1885," *Florida Historical Quarterly:* Vol. 75: No. 1, Article 3. (1996), 4, 5, 6, 9.

illustrated in Figure 1.1, the imagery of black people who labored in the cotton fields in Florida continued well into the 1890s.

Figure 1.1. "Ex-slaves and children picking cotton in Jefferson County fields, circa 1890" Florida Memory State Library and Archives of Florida. This work is a Public Domain.

Governor Harrison Reed referred to the "old system" in his message to the Florida legislature as the path from which the State of Florida must depart if ever to be deemed a developed and successful state. The previous system to which Governor Reed referred in his message, economically speaking, dated back to 1848. White Floridians viewed the period as a time of "peace, prosperity and harmony 'before the war.'" In reality, this was a time the former government did not maintain the best accounts. Reed seemed almost to mock the men of the former government when he stated" "There were no 'scalawags,' 'carpetbaggers,' nor

'freedmen' to disturb the political sea–all were 'honest' men in those days." Regarding plans for finances and taxation, Governor Reed declared all taxes needed to be delivered in cash for reasons of fraud and false returns. Governor Reed expressed, "Now is the time to inaugurate a system of true practical economy, and the Legislature should begin at its own doors, and thence through all departments of the government." Beyond its economy malfeasance, Governor Reed declared that the "old system" represented "the whipping post and pillory, Bowie knife and pistol."[21]

Under the Reconstruction government, the state witnessed social progress through "free schools, and courts open alike to all."[22] The true economic growth of regions such as Tampa, Florida, and elsewhere in the State did not come until the 1880s through the cigar industry, the Henry B. Plant railroad system, and businesses in conjunction with these economic structures.[23] However, the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, teachers, and the freedmen resulted in one of the most crucial improvements made during Reconstruction—education.

The freedmen of Florida deserved as much attention and educational instruction as freedmen living in the other southern states despite the isolation and developmental obstacles of teaching in the state. The orange trees and the untouched nature of Florida created a beauty distinctive from the other States of the South, yet for all its natural appeal, the region remained undeveloped.[24] The small population of Florida included a harsh element of "renegades and desperados."[25] Some perceived that Florida represented a place for a "new and better life" or the

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[21]Reed, Harrison, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message of His Excellency Governor Harrison Reed to the legislature of Florida, January 4, 1872.* January 4, 1872. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.,7-9, 10, 14, 17.

[22] Reed, Harrison, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message,* 17.

[23] Canter Brown and Barbara Gray Brown, *Family Records of the African American Pioneers of Tampa and Hillsborough County*, xvi-xvii.

[24] Harriet Beecher Stowe, Palmetto-*leaves* (United States: J.R. Osgood, 1873), 20.

[25] Richardson, The *Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 1-2.

"South's newest frontier."[26] For the aid societies and teachers seeking to make a difference after the Civil War, the idea of traveling from the North to Florida presented challenges and was not as appealing a thought as journeying to states such as Virginia. Geographically, the settlement of Florida was widely spread out, and to add to the obstacles, the roads were not well established for travel.[27] Additionally, life in Florida was at times an unhealthy experience. It was not uncommon for teachers to contract diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, or tuberculosis while working in Florida. Disease posed such a problem that in certain locations schools were forced to close due to local epidemics.[28] But this did not deter many individuals who sought to assist the newly freed slaves from braving these challenges and coming to serve in far off Florida.[29]

Despite the obstacles a teacher encountered teaching in Florida, an 1866 Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen declared: "The noble action of our State was every wherelauded. I found in comparing our condition with other Southern States we were much in the advance with our freedmen."[30] The 1866 Report was a testament to the tenacity of the freedmen teachers and the formerly enslaved people of Florida. Agencies and the federal government provided aid; nonetheless, progress was not possible in an undeveloped state without daring individuals committed to the cause of education for the freedmen.

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[26] Sheppard, ed. *A Forgotten Front*, 6.

[27] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871, 337.

[28] Laura Wallis Wakefield, "'Set a Light in a Dark Place': Teachers of Freedmen in Florida, 1864-1874." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2003): 408.

[29]Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871, 337.

[30] E.B.Duncan, Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen, 1866. 1866-11-08. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, 2.

The aid societies maintained and distributed numerous publications telling the stories of freedmen teachers' experiences in the South. One such publication from *The Freedmen's Record* included a column about the "Festival for Welcoming the Returned Teachers," and it detailed the ceremony where flowers were given as a token of appreciation to the forty-five teachers present. One teacher representing Florida, "Mrs. Hawkes," gave a very amusing account of her pioneer life in Florida, where pumpkins 'were the chief of her diet.'"[31] Pumpkins grow wild in Florida and can easily be stored for later use. It makes sense that a teacher found pumpkins for eating in the rustic Florida setting. Mrs. Hawkes' pumpkin diet also revealed the practical nature of a teacher who had to persevere in the challenging geography and social climate of Florida. The "scattered and unsettled condition" of Florida, combined with the lack of funds from the poor inhabitants of the state, created a challenging environment to develop education in the region.[32] The term "Cracker," found frequently in the writings of Florida freedmen teachers, in most instances, referred to the messy condition of the poor whites encountered by teachers in the region.[33] The condition of the poor whites in the South lagged behind black people regarding the thirst for education, so much so that William Stone, a Freedmen's Bureau agent in a neighboring Southern state, believed that over time, the freedmen possessed the capability of surpassing the poor whites in intelligence.[34]

Trouble with the physical elements and infrastructure of the Florida were not the only limitations for teachers heading to the state. Freedmen teacher, Esther Hill Hawks, described her experiences in Florida in her diary. In an 1866 diary entry while in Jacksonville, Florida, she

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[31] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1868. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice (Volume 4-Issue 8-08-1868), 122.

[32] Linda Warfel Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South* (Elm Street Printing Co., 1869. HathiTrust), 182-183. In this regard, Florida was much like Alabama, which also struggled with poverty and economic hindrances to its education system.

[33] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1868. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice (Volume 4-Issue 8-08-1868), 122.

[34] Johnson, Suzanne Stone and Robert Allison Johnson, ed. *Bitter Freedom: William Stone's Record of Service in the Freedmen's Bureau* (United States: University of South Carolina Press, 2021), 39.

noted the hostility of the southern women who were "bitter" and described the atmosphere as uncooperative about the idea of schools and teachers. Her frustration was apparent in her question: "How can they be so blind! And so neglect their own interests?" If traveling from the North to Florida, room and board presented problems because Floridians did not permit teachers to live with them and, to add to the hurt, verbally insulted the teachers.[35] The majority of the dissatisfaction by native white Floridians stemmed from the fact that they "could not seem to believe the Negroes were really free."[36]

Friction best described the political, social, and economic circumstances of Florida following the Civil War as the state moved from its previous structure to fostering improvements for the newly freed slaves. Politically, Florida experienced turmoil throughout the Reconstruction period as control of the political landscapes shifted from the Democratic to Republican party, further exacerbating tensions. Where wartime damage and other post-Civil War factors might have been a less detrimental impact on the experience for Florida compared with other Southern states, the political conflicts were comparable.[37]

Almost immediately following the end of the war, Florida began the challenge of readmission to the United States. While under the control of the Federal Government, President Andrew Johnson appointed a Provisional Governor of Florida in July 1865. The Provisional Governor William Marvin was given the expressed purpose of restoring the state government of Florida that had fallen under rebel control. For this reason, Marvin's views on the war and

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[35]Gerald Schwartz Ed., A *Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 243. Gerald Schwartz edited the pages of Esther Hill Hawks diary and compiled the documents into his book. Hawks' original diary was contained in a set of three 6 ½ inch by 7 ¾ inch bound composition books. The diaries were actually thrown out in the trash and discovered by Mr. and Mrs. Eldon Porter who currently own the works by Hawkes (From the Introduction, vii).

[36] Richardson, The *Negro in the Reconstruction*, 13.

[37] Canter Brown, *Ossian Bingley Hart: Florida's Loyalist Reconstruction Governor.* Southern Biography Series (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press. 2018), 177.

slavery provided insight about the actions he took and remarks he made during his tenure as Provisional Governor of Florida. According to Marvin's Autobiography he always thought of himself as a Democrat in regard to the political label. In his own words he indicated that he owned slaves, but remarked that the slaves owned were for domestic purposes, which came across in a manner meant to lessen the concern over his slave ownership. Marvin stated that he disagreed with the ideas promoted by John C. Calhoun and felt strongly that secession contradicted the original meaning of the Union as expressed in the Constitution by the Founding Fathers. He described the Civil War as a period of great "anxiety" and felt so strongly that it led to resigning his Judge position in Florida, and ultimately moving his family to New York where he resided until he returned for the Provisional Governorship in Tallahassee, Florida. Even though Governor Marvin made his position clear about the war, slavery, and secession, when he returned to Florida he was greeted and aided amicably by his "old friends."[38]

About a month after his appointment as Provisional Governor of Florida, Marvin addressed in his proclamation the steps Florida would take "to restore its constitutional relation to the Federal government." The most powerful excerpt of this message delivered in Tallahassee on August 23, 1865, expressed the following in the Ninth point:

> By the operations and results of the war, slavery has ceased to exist in this State. It cannot be revived. Every voter for delegates to the convention, in taking the amnesty oath, takes a solemn oath to support the freedom of the former slave. The freedom intended is the full ample and complete freedom of a citizen of the United States. This does not necessarily include the privilege of voting; but it does include the idea of full constitutional guarantees of future possession of quiet

[38] Kevin E. Kearney, "Autobiography of William Marvin," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 36: No. 3, Article 3. (1957): 36-38.

> employment. The question of his voting is an open question—a proper subject for discussion—and is to be decided as a question of sound policy by the convention to be called.

An institution once etched into Florida's history and way of life had now "ceased to exist." Now, the enormous task followed whereby the State Legislatures had to uphold the new orders to retain statehood in the Union. This was addressed in the Tenth point of Marvin's proclamation: "establishment of a republican form of State government, under a constitution which guarantees and secures liberty to all the inhabitants alike, without distinction of color."[39] As stirring as the words given are to read, the dilemma was that Floridians did not believe in their hearts they were defeated. A point of bragging for Floridians was that Tallahassee "was the only capital east of the Mississippi not captured during the war." The racist mentality that pervaded the mindset of the post-war Floridians created hope among them that President Andrew Johnson likewise supported legislation favorable to their former way of life more than for the benefit of freed black people.[40] In the southern States, such as Georgia, the physical destruction of the war was evident, which explained how the people residing in that region recognized defeat. Charles Nordhoff, an observer of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia, noted from his travels that "Slavery is now seen, all over the South, to have been a huge economic blunder, and a proposition to re-establish it would not get fifty thousand votes in the whole South." In an interview with one southerner, Nordhoff noted in his book that the man stated, "owning slaves meant living in 'constant anxiety' and the idea of enslaving the freedmen

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[39]William Marvin, 1808-1902. *Proclamation by William Marvin, Provisional Governor of the State of Florida, 1865.* 1865-08-23. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[40]Joe M. Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," 367, 369, 371.

again "tempted them to 'murder us.'"[41] In contrast, a teacher in Florida referenced a startling quote from a planter who felt even after emancipation the freedmen "would still be their slave in some way."[42]

Between 1865 and 1877, Florida progressed through the leadership of seven governors. Governor Harrison Reed, whose term lasted from 1868-1873, remarked in his 1872 message to the legislature of Florida about the "old government" of the state and how it worked against "progress, improvement, cultivation, population, intelligence."[43] Under the Reconstruction Act of 1867 and the eventual passage of the 1868 Florida Constitution, cautious progress came to the state socially and politically regarding the freedmen.[44] Yet, overturning the tide of influence of the previous Florida political leaders who, according to Governor Reed, sought "to keep the masses ignorant and degraded, in order that the few might revel in luxury and power" would not come without cost.[45]

Socially, the bitterness of the ex-Confederates combined with a state lacking a dedicated interest in religion meant it was a ripe mission field for both building schools and churches. For outsiders, such as teachers from the North, Florida appeared to be a place of "ignorance," and "hostilities" were part of the teaching experience in the State. Yet, to the credit of the teachers and the freedmen's eagerness to learn, as early as 1866, advancements in the education of the formerly enslaved people in Florida had been made. A letter dated April 23, 1866, from the assistant commissioner for Florida included an overall positive description of the state of affairs across the state concerning education: "opposition to the education of the freed people is

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[41] Charles Nordhoff, The *Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875* (United States: D. Appleton, 1876), 10. Interestingly, Nordhoff did not visit Florida.

[42] Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," 366.

[43] Harrison Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message of His Excellency Governor Harrison Reed to the legislature of Florida, January 4, 1872.* January 4, 1872. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory, 17.

[44] Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," 378.

[45] Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message,* 17.

diminishing under the operations of the law establishing free schools for the free people."[46] Obstacles to education of the freedmen might have been alleviated through government agencies and legislation; however, the social composition of the state remained complicated. Women, in particular, displayed stronger resentment against the United States than even the men did in the State. Men of Florida did not view freedmen as genuinely equal and disagreed with the notion that the ideas of the Declaration of Independence applied to all people. And, a large part of the population of Florida consisted of whites living in poverty who often held a status as impoverished as the freed slave.[47] Destitute aptly described the economic status of the people of Florida and their spiritual condition. The Freedmen's Bureau included record of a letter written on December 9, 1865, that noted the following about Florida's condition: "Schools and Churches are very few in number, and the consequence is the people generally are in a Semi Barbaric state but little better than the Seminoles so recently [were] driven from the soil they now occupy."[48] A similar letter, although dated two years later on January 1, 1868, by Captain Wilder, noted an uneasiness about issues regarding civility in Jacksonville, Florida. He remarked, "This city is to Florida what Charleston is to South Carolina, only very much poorer in the necessity comforts of life." The stagnation of Florida was no doubt driven by the fact, according to Wilder, that "The spirit of slavery is the 'ruling passion' still among the Southern people." Yet, pushing through the darkness was a desire among the freed people for Bibles and New Testaments, which represented the "most pressing wants of the colored peoples," according to Wilder. Powerfully,

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[46] American Freedman's Union Commission. *The American Freedman*. Vol. 1. New York: American Freedmen's and Union Commission, 1866-1869, 10, 32, 74.

[47] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 3*,* 4, 18.

[48] Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Offices for the State of Florida, Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. Roll 2. Office of Assistant Commissioner, Correspondence, Press Copies of Letters. The letter was part of Microfilm records located at the Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library, as part of the Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative. The letter was not legible in parts due to the condition of the Microfilm record, but the significant parts were legible.

Wilder understood that the Gospel contained the power of "permeating the whole lump," he wrote.[49] Social changes taking place in Florida during Reconstruction extended beyond the physical and entered the spiritual realm for both whites and the freedmen.

The sharp contrast between two Florida counties, Jackson County and Hillsborough County, demonstrated that the Reconstruction period in Florida was complicated and cannot be described as monolithic. Jackson County experienced significant violence during the Reconstruction period. Violence in the region was so extreme it is described as existing in a "virtual state of warfare" from 1868 to 1871. Where Hillsborough County saw a lack of violent outbreaks in the region, Jackson County went through a much different experience during Reconstruction. Jackson County represented one of the worst areas in Florida regarding violence. The racism between the white and black people evolved into bloodshed. As a result "one hundred fifty-three persons were murdered in Jackson County during the turbulent years of Reconstruction."[50] The violence in other Florida counties reached the attention of Governor Harrison Reed, who in 1869 chose to issue martial law in the Third Circuit in Columbia, Suwannee, and Hamilton Counties.[51] Even though Governor Reed received demanding requests to establish martial law in Jackson County, politics might have been to blame for his hesitation to implement martial law in this county. Governor Reed wanted to calm Jackson County Democrats; therefore, instead of declaring martial law he used the Florida press by placing ads that sought information to help locate and arrest offenders of the violence in the county.[52] The brutality extended beyond a battle among the races. If Florida men opposed serving in the

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[49]Congregational Home Missionary Society. American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 12 1867-1878 Magazine.

[50] Ralph L. Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida, 1868-1871," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1961): 165, 173-174.

[51] Harrison Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message*, 5.

[52] Daniel R. Weinfeld, *The Jackson County War: Reconstruction and Resistance in Post–Civil War Florida* (United States: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 101, 123.

Confederate Army or served in the Union Army, the cruelty toward them often resulted in death. Governor Reed noted in his 1872 address to the Florida legislature of these men that "many of them have been assassinated."[53] Because of this sharp contrast, Hillsborough County, with its smaller population of both white and black residents during the Civil War and Reconstruction period, served as a compelling investigation into the political, social, and economic history of Florida.[54]

From the outset, the education situation in Tampa, Florida, did not look promising. One explanation for the Tampa community's disregard for education stemmed from residents' difficulties at the outset of 1860. Tampa residents lived through a "bloody civil war, terrifying plague, and brutal vigilante reprisals."[55] A Baptist pastor published a discouraging article in *The Florida Peninsular* on July 21, 1866, outlining the challenges of teaching in the city, ultimately leading to his inability to continue as a teacher. A practical reason education during this period did not draw men to the profession involved the lack of ability to support their families with a teacher's pay. In this instance, salary and support from the Tampa residents factored into his apparent departure from teaching; nonetheless, his description of the status of education in Tampa leaves no doubt of his concerns: "I have never found a place of equal apathy and apparent indifference on the subject [education interests in Tampa], especially, in regard to *male* children, as I have found in Tampa."[56] While the newspaper article reflected a discouraging point of view from one individual, the education of freedmen commenced in Hillsborough County in 1866. With the help of the Freedmen's Bureau a school was constructed in 1870, which was a 35x75

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[53] Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message of His Excellency,* 5.

[54] Canter Brown and Barbara Gray Brown, *Family Records*, xvi-xvii.

[55] Canter Brown, *Tampa in Civil War & Reconstruction* (Tampa Bay History Center Reference Library Series) (United States: University of Tampa Press, 2000), 3. An outbreak because of yellow fever occurred in 1858.

[56] "To My Friends in Tampa," *The Florida Peninsular*, July 21, 1866, Newspapers.com.

room and did not have many windows. Even though not considered much of an impressive establishment at the time it was immensely appreciated by the black residents of Tampa.[57]

In the instance of race relations, Hillsborough County, because of its smaller population, created an uncommon circumstance between the white people and slaves living in Tampa. The tight-knit nature of the community contributed to conditions for slaves that were more ameliorated than most of the South. Oliver O. Howard remarked in 1857, "Slavery here is a very mild form. You wouldn't know the negroes were slaves unless you were told." In keeping with the sleepy nature of Tampa, residents did not like the idea of the difficulties at the national level disturbing life in the city, such as fears over the outcome of the election of Republican President Abraham Lincoln.[58] However, the disruption from the Civil War and political shifts eventually came to the city significantly through the emancipation of slaves. The demise of slavery in Tampa posed common results as cities elsewhere in Florida, economically speaking. When observing the population of Hillsborough County, it could be assessed that emancipation had little impact on the region. Before the Civil War, it is estimated that Hillsborough County contained 2,377 residents with 1,706 of those free whites, 11 free blacks, and 660 slaves.[59] As a dramatic comparison, according to an 1860 Census, Atlanta, Georgia, contained 462,198 slaves.[60] The numbers alone do not reveal the impact emancipation had on Tampa. The breakdown of the economic structure of Hillsborough County includes the following. The combined real estate in Hillsborough County in 1861 amounted to $108,402. "Slave value almost

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[57] Larry Eugene Rivers and Brown, Canter Jr. "Rejoicing in their Freedom" The Development of Tampa's African-American Community in the Post-Civil War Generation," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 27, Article 3. (2018): Digital Commons USF, 7.

[58]Brown, *Tampa in Civil War & Reconstruction*, 8, 20-21. Oliver O. Howard would famously continue in his career to become head of The Freedmen's Bureau.

[59]John Solomon Otto, "Hillsborough County (1850): A Community in the South Florida Flatwoods," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 62: No. 2, Article 5. (1983): 7.

[60] Population of the United States in 1860: Georgia. Census.gov.

doubled that figure at $200,035. When cattle, horses, and other farm animals, plus personal property, are added to these figures, a total of slightly more than $800,000 is reached as the value of all of Hillsborough's taxable property that year." The importance of the financial estimation of Hillsborough County rested in the fact that the residents faced the repercussions of the politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction, even within their small community. When emancipation came to Tampa, slaves reacted in various ways. In 1864, during the Union Army's occupation of Tampa, some slaves remained to find safety behind Union control or decided to leave the city. Over time, the small black population of Tampa increased because ex-slaves relocated to the city. "Many plantation owners…not wishing to callously shut the gates on their newly-released former charges," a former enslaved person recalled, "brought them as far as Tampa and 'dumped' them as the ex-slaves put it."[61] From these unjust circumstances, slaves rose to improve their current condition, and one of the most powerful ways black people chose to do so was through their determination to receive an education.

The small but growing city of Tampa stood apart from other cities across the South during Reconstruction in the agency exercised freedmen as they took education into their own hands. By 1867, Hillsborough County included African Americans who, on their own accord, collected funds for the purpose of schooling and education.[62] An 1868 Freedmen's Bureau report by James H. Roberts provides the status of freedmen's education in Tampa. The report was given by a black male teacher named James H. Roberts, who was located at a Tampa school, and two questions on the report reveal a promising outlook. The Bureau records form inquired about what kind of aid is given, and Roberts wrote, "Paid Teachers and assistance to erect School Houses"

[61] Brown, *Tampa in Civil War & Reconstruction*, 11, 93, 95. The $800,000 figure is based on an 1861 Hillsborough County tax roll.

[62] Brown, *Tampa in Civil War & Reconstruction*, 136-37.

and "Tampa is the only place" claimed Roberts, "where the Freedmen aid to erect School Houses." The report also inquired of the public sentiment toward efforts at educating freedmen and poor whites. To which Roberts answered, "The public sentiment I think has changed in regard to the education of Freedmen from whites. The intelligent people of this portion of the state are in favor of educating the people generally without regard to class or color." Another 1868 report by teacher A. H. Lowe posed the question, "Is your school supported wholly or in part by the Freedmen?" The answer on the form stated, "Wholly." But Lowe's report disagreed with that of Robert's and claimed instead that the public response was "generally cold" regarding black schools.[63] The answers given by Roberts and Lowe revealed the remarkable spirit of the freedmen who pursued education. For black people, acquiring an education during the Reconstruction period in Florida meant gaining a sense of autonomy.

Florida became part of the United States as a territory in 1821. During its territorial days land was designated for public schools, but ten years passed and no schools were established because of opposition from wealthy planters. Their children attended private schools in Charleston, Savannah, and even Europe. When Florida became a state in 1845, a few public schools existed, but nothing to the degree that came with the changes to education in Florida established by the new 1868 State Constitution. Certainly, schooling in the state of Florida underwent advances and setbacks in the period following the Civil War; nevertheless, the volume of progress made in a short period was truly remarkable for a state once slow in developing its education system.[64] By 1872, Governor Harrison Reed boasted in his message to

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[63]Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Officers for the United States of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. National Museum of African American History and Culture. Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives. According to "The Freedmen's Teacher Project" database James H. Roberts is listed as black male with military service background in the Union Army. The record indicates he taught for one year in Brooksville, Florida.

[64] Clark, *A Concise History of Florida*, 42. Florida became part of the United States as a territory in 1821.

the Florida legislature that the State had "An efficient system of common schools, free to all, with 331 school-houses and an annual attendance of 14,000 children." As Reed pointed out in the same message, the accomplishment of education in the State for all people was not possible under the "old government" of Florida.[65]

Economically, Florida was as undeveloped as it was remote. Even though not considered one of the largest slaveholding States, counties within Florida faced financial consequences as slaves deservedly became free. Florida did not withstand as much physical war damage, yet repairs during Reconstruction proved a struggle.[66] Without a doubt, the most pressing change to Florida's economy came as the result of the emancipation of the laborers.[67] The hierarchy established throughout the Antebellum period in the southern states positioned the laborer at the bottom of the ladder and the plantation owner at the top of this societal structure. When slaves were freed, the plantation owners panicked about their changing workforce and assumed that the freedmen would not willingly work. Federal General Israel Vogdes, in his 1865 report, noted "that Floridians were generally opposed to the freeing of their slaves."[68] Vogdes knew the social atmosphere of the state because he served in Florida. He was an artillery captain in 1861 and was captured near Pensacola in October 1861, and freed in 1862. He continued his career to serve in Florida, Virginia, and North Carolina.[69] The state of affairs in Florida following emancipation resulted in a tumultuous mixture of thoughts from the former master, which primarily included their concern about the lack of authority over the laborer and, ultimately, their deep conviction of

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[65] Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message,* 14.

[66] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 4.

[67] Jerrell H. Shofner, Nor *is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 65.

[68] Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," 365.

[69] James P. Jones, "Lincoln's Courier: John L. Worden's Mission to Fort Pickens." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1962): 150.

the inferiority of the freedman. Former masters held on to the notion of compensation for the loss of their slaves or the prospect of an apprenticeship that utilized freedmen labor.[70]

The backlash in response to the enormous changes unfolding in the south resulted in a series of laws enacted across the southern states. Laws recognized as Black Codes during Reconstruction and, in a later period, known as Jim Crow laws. One intent of these laws "aimed at keeping blacks on the farm." The system of slavery was embedded into the Southern economic structure, often with the implementation of such brutality that for the former plantation owner, it seemed unthinkable the black laborer would complete the task without force.[71] For this reason, the institution of slavery might have ceased to exist, but the management of labor on plantations continued to consist of whipping the freedman or pushing a freedman into "working sunrise to sunset." To add to the insult, the freedmen became scapegoats if problems arose with crops or in society, as well as the view held by the white men that the freedmen were sluggish workers[72]

Before their freedom from slavery, the life of a black person in Florida meant their lives were not their own. For example, during the Civil War, a majority of the slaves from Florida, numbering about 63,000, remained working for their masters or were forced into service for the Confederate Army. In many instances, the master left and engaged in fighting elsewhere, such as Virginia, Tennessee, or Georgia. In other scenarios, slaves were ordered in 1862 by the Florida General Assembly to labor for building defenses. Thus, when the news of emancipation finally came to slaves, it seemed to be relayed in the same backward fashion comparable to other conditions of Florida during this period. Many of Florida's slaves first received the news of

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[70]Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," 365, 366.

[71] William Cohen, "Negro Involuntary Servitude in the South, 1865-1940: A Preliminary Analysis," *The Journal of Southern History* 42, no. 1 (1976): 5, 18, 19. "Between 1890 and 1910 there was a rash of racially motivated legislation, including Jim Crow laws as well as a host of acts relating to the southern labor system."

[72] Ouzts, "Landlords and Tenants": 7- 8.

freedom when Union General Edward McCook read the words of the Emancipation Proclamation on May 20, 1865, on the steps of the Florida State Capitol.[73] Yet, when the words of the Emancipation Proclamation finally resounded in the ears of the Florida slaves, the message validated the potential of the emancipated slave. Acquiring an education by whatever means symbolized a tremendous way to experience their new freedom.

What did formal education mean for the freedmen? The status of formal education reflected the condition of a society and its economy; therefore, the importance of education extended beyond a student learning letters and numbers. There is no doubt that the denial of education to the slaves existed as a manner of maintaining a social order predicated on white supremacy, which meant those in power retained their position over the laborer. Therefore, the education of freedmen revealed that a new order emerged in the South. The significance of the new order for black people meant that learning to read and write represented a type of resistance to their former white mastery. However, from the perspective of a white person, education for the freedmen signified the tearing down of the boundaries white society established.[74]

Similarities between Georgia and Florida existed when comparing southern states and the reaction to the new educational opportunities of freedmen. Most white Floridians equally felt concerns about the idea of black education, similar to Georgia's white community to the concept of education for the freedmen. Another parallel between Georgia and Florida regarding the education of freedmen during Reconstruction was the lack of a structured educational system at the start of Reconstruction. Georgia presented a "veritable vacuum of educational activity" in the state. When the northern aid societies came for the purpose of bringing education to the freedmen, they encountered "no existing structural framework on which to graft their freedmen's

[73] Sheppard, ed. *A Forgotten Front*, 14, 15.
[74] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 49.

schools in Georgia."[75] Florida did not fare much better and was also in dire need of solving its educational problems. By 1865, "Any system of education that existed before the war was nearly extinct." Even for white children in this period the educational opportunities were not much improved because in the Fall of 1866 schools were not in existence in Florida either, according to a Freedmen's teacher report. To add to the complications in Florida, teachers who were available to educate children were typically poorly qualified for their profession.[76] But despite these challenges, both black children and adults eagerly pursued learning in Florida.

Freedmen quickly impressed their teachers with their aptitude for learning. Esther Hill Hawks wrote in her diary, "These Florida slaves are certainly far superior to those of the Sea Islands. They are intelligent and active–and many of them have picked up a little book learning. It is not uncommon to find a *fair* reader among those who have always been slaves." Both black children and adults were eager to learn in Florida. Mrs. Hawks described a school in Jacksonville that was attended by children as well as fifty soldiers. This diary entry was dated 1864, so the soldiers attending school most likely would have been black Union soldiers. It was not unusual for black people to follow along with the Union Army as it advanced through cities during the Civil War. Local cooks, laborers, and waiters even made time to frequent the school house and advance their own knowledge. The enthusiasm of the freedmen to learn "would inspire even the dullest of teachers," Mrs. Hawkes wrote in her diary. As early as 1864, the children of slave men and women attended school regularly, recited multiplication tables, wrote on a slate or the blackboard the mathematical principles from *Adam's Arithmetic,* and studied subjects such as spelling and geography. Mrs. Hawkes who viewed this transformation from slavery to freedom

[75] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 86.

[76] Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," 3. Due to the societal structure during the Civil War and Reconstruction the assumption could be made that white children in Florida were better off concerning education.

firsthand, captured the magnitude of this progress: "Do not forget that these are black children, lately held as property, and quite as unfamiliar with arithmetic and writing as their masters' other 'beasts of burden.'"[77] For this reason the rise of black teachers in Florida represented one of the most critical aspects of the Reconstruction period when considering the position of the ex-slave. An 1866 Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen noted about the teachers: "most all colored" and were of "good moral character" who were found "delighting in their work."[78] In Florida, the freedmen's desire to pursue learning persisted throughout Reconstruction.[79] The freedmen's efforts might have been opposed throughout the period, but did not decline.

White Floridians were divided in their reaction to education initiatives by either support or rejection of the notion of universal education, regardless of race or economic status. The most fitting word that described how the southerners perceived the shower of changes during Reconstruction was distressing.[80] The Florida "Cracker," or poor white, as described in a Hawks' diary entry, was often in a worse condition in manner and aptitude than the slaves of Florida. In her 1865 diary entry, Mrs. Hawks did not restrain her words when she described the circumstances of the white Floridians:

> There are about five hundred colored and six hundred white aside from the military force here. The greater portion of the whites belong to the lowest class or 'Crackers' and are miserably poor and degraded—ignorant and filthy it is seldom we find one who can read, and instead of appreciating the free school privilege,

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[77] Schwartz Ed., A *Woman Doctor's Civil War*, 77, 81.

[78] Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen. November 8, 1866. The Florida Senate, 2.

[79] Richardson, The *Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 118.

[80] Hall, Robert L. "'Yonder Come Day': Religious Dimensions of the Transition from Slavery to Freedom in Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1987): 419.

> many of them refuse to go, and in visiting among them they offer all kinds of *poor* excuses for not going.

Because of the undeveloped nature of Florida during this period, the quote showed that education benefited the freedmen and, similarly, the white Floridians. It was not unusual to encounter a white person, as late as his twenties, who lacked the ability to identify the letters to his own name. Although inaccurate to state that all white Floridians rejected learning or attending school; still, family pressure often kept children out of the free schools. Mrs. Hawks recalled the following account,

> The streets are full of white children, who out of school hours, are the friends and playmates of our pupils, and I confess that I dislike to have them exposed to such *demoralizing influences*! The white children come about the door looking wistfully in, but if I ask them to come in, they invariably say, "Ma won't let me come."[81]

Nonetheless, education advanced from its rough beginnings in Florida. By 1870, a government report boasted of "over 250 schools in operation" in the state. Enormous obstacles of "ignorance and prejudice" were overcome during Reconstruction in Florida and in such fashion that the report optimistically took notice of how the free schools were "gaining favor with the people."[82] Why had sweeping changes taken place during a tumultuous time? The dedication of the freedmen teachers and the freedmen themselves propelled the progress of education in Florida. While the improvements were challenged and some even reversed in later decades of Florida's

[81] Schwartz Ed., A *Woman Doctor's Civil War*, 80, 111.

[82] Report of the Commissioner of Education [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1870.

history, the passion and pursuit of education by the freedmen laid a foundation on which later strides toward equality were built.

Education accompanied a cascade of changes taking place during this period for freedmen. The empowerment of black people through education represented a light in their lives. The knowledge offered freedmen a chance to gain dignity even though economic or social conditions placed upon them by the old ways of the South sometimes thwarted progress. Understanding the plantation owner and laborer relationship illuminated how education for the newly emancipated slave served as a powerful tool toward fully realizing their Constitutional rights as freedmen. While the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and teachers contributed greatly, nothing was accomplished without the drive of the freedmen. The ex-slaves brought meaning and validation to their emancipation and applied the same spirit to their second freedom initiated through education. As Figure 1.2 illustrated, black people continued to endure humble circumstances even into the 1870s in Florida. Yet, however humble the beginnings, nothing surpassed the choice to act and live as they pleased, free of the master's domain.

Figure 1.2. *African American family and their log cabin.* 1870 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

The dynamic between white and black people at the close of the Civil War represented a time of "uncertainty and emotional peaks and valleys."[83] In the evaluation of the journey of Florida's slaves the words of Reverend Squires Jackson served an important point of reflection. Jackson shared how at one time slaves were denied the freedom of singing while working on Florida cotton fields, yet he knew in his heart that "nothing could stop those silent songs of labor and prayers for freedom." He recalled the painful treatment he received as a slave; nonetheless, resilient, he understood that "no storm lasts forever."[84] Reconstruction did not resolve all of the trials faced by black people living in Florida. Some challenges remain in American society still today. However, education opened doors through the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, teachers, and the freedmen themselves. Education allowed the experience of a second freedom beyond the legal sense of emancipation.

[83] Hall, "'Yonder Come Day': Religious Dimensions, 418.

[84] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Rev. Squires Jackson: slave interview.

Chapter 3

The Freedmen's Bureau and Education for the Freedmen in Florida

The greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau lay in the planting of the free school among Negroes, and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the South.
W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1901

Patience Campbell, born in Jackson County, Florida, around 1853, spent most of her childhood with her mother and recalled that when she was very young, she played in the sand while her parents worked in the fields. Her parents, both slaves, belonged to two different plantation masters. At the age of seven or eight, Patience worked separating the cotton seed from the cotton. Then, by the age of ten, she learned spinning and weaving. At the time of the Civil War, Patience remembered that black slaves had the option of fighting for the Confederacy; however, none of the men she knew wanted to serve the Confederacy. Instead, as she eloquently explained, the men desired to fight "for the thing they desired most, freedom." At the age of twelve, Patience Campbell entered a school provided by the Freedmen's Bureau. From first childhood memories of parents struggling in slavery to the progression of attending a Freedmen's Bureau school demonstrated the powerful transition that took place for Patience Campbell in Florida during Reconstruction.[1]

The history of the Freedmen's Bureau began when the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves. President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed on January 1, 1863 that "all persons held as

[1] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Patience Campbell and James Johnson, Slave Interview, December 15,1936" (1936). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians.

slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."[2] Regardless of the decided cause of the Civil War, the slaves understood the root issue of the conflict was slavery. Even prior to the Emancipation Proclamation slaves took it on themselves to engage in a form of "self-emancipation" by running to the protection of the U.S. Army. To complicate the situation for the runaway slaves the army was not equipped to handle the influx of slaves. Food, clothing, and shelter was not available because the army was not a social welfare agency. Sadly, because the army was unequipped to help the refugees, some slaves were returned to masters who came searching. The irony of this decision was that slaves worked the land and provided Confederate food. In a real degree the army returned "valuable property" to the enemy. Frederick Douglass noted the contradiction: "The very stomach of this Rebellion is the negro in the form of a slave."[3] For the Emancipation Proclamation to mean something to slaves, a system had to be established to protect the freedmen's path to freedom.

The question of how to manage the "contrabands," former slaves, was a problem the U.S. Government answered through the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau on March 3, 1865. From the vantage point of the U.S. Government, the issues before the Freedmen's Bureau were threefold. First, when slavery ended, the freed people no longer answered to masters, so as backward as it sounds it presented concerns of who would control the newly freed people. Second, the government felt obligated to provide for the freed people because it was during the rebellious period of the Civil War the Federal government freed the slaves. Third, the need existed for the freedmen to be protected and educated by the government so they could leave the

[2] "Transcript of the Proclamation," https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation/transcript.html.

[3] Paul Finkelman, "Lincoln, Emancipation, and the Limits of Constitutional Change," *The Supreme Court Review* 2008, no. 1 (2008): 15-16.

master.[4] The South did not want further intrusion by the federal government, but the slaves needed help. Thousands of slaves existed without basic necessities. And without employment how could the slaves provide for themselves? The Freedmen's Bureau worked to help the freedmen. The aid given by the Bureau meant freedmen now had the opportunity to lift themselves from a humble position and become part of society. The most important way the freedmen sought improvement was through education.[5] Although the results of the Freedmen's Bureau's efforts are mixed, the agency's success in Florida was its recognition that education was an essential step in elevating the freedmen from slavery.

The Freedmen's Bureau assisted in making a place for the freedmen in society.[6] "An Act to Establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees" was passed by both Houses of Congress and President Lincoln authorized the bill. The Freedmen's Bureau faced the enormous task of advancing the freed people from the institution of slavery to freedom.[7] Section 2 of the First Freedmen's Bureau Act, passed March 3, 1865, stated: "the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing and fuel as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen, and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct."[8] In the original act, education of the freedmen was technically not included as an objective of the Bureau. Initially, the Treasury Department observed the treatment of the freedmen, but then the agency was

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[4] The Papers of Andrew Johnson Digital Edition, ed. LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2020. Source is a letter from Benjamin S. Nicklin dated October 22, 1864.

[5] John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard. The North's Civil War (*New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1999)., 87, 92.

[6] Derrell Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1965): 12.

[7] Linda Warfel Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South* (Elm Street Printing Co., 1869. HathiTrust), 94, 98.

[8] Walter L. Fleming, 1874-1932. *I. Freedmen's Bureau Documents. II. The Freedmen's Savings Bank.* 1904.

transferred to the War Department. The agency was intended to last for one year after the conclusion of the Civil War. However, a special act extended and increased the scope of the Freedmen's Bureau.[9] The 1866 act, passed in the House and Senate, to extend the Freedmen's Bureau included several key provisions. The supervision and care for freedmen, organization of Bureau agents and military protection are referenced as well as the assistance the agency provides in large part because of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. However, Section 12 specifically addressed the land set aside for schoolhouses so that "the education of the free people" was prioritized. For the first time in a Freedmen's Bureau act, the momentousness of this education addition was expressed: "and whenever the bureau shall cease to exist, such of said so-called Confederate States as shall have made provisions for the education of their citizens without distinction of color." Section 13 of the 1866 act dictated into how the government executed education for the freed people. Only through the partnership and assistance of private benevolent associations, qualified teachers, establishment of school buildings, and protection of schools would the Bureau succeed in demonstrating the importance of education for freedmen.[10]

President Abraham Lincoln envisioned Major General Oliver Otis Howard to lead the Freedmen's Bureau. The confidence Lincoln had in Howard stemmed from his reputation as "a Christian soldier." Howard believed the Civil War was a "righteous cause." His faith grew stronger during his war service. The Freedmen's Bureau advanced to a significant organization under Howard's leadership.[11] Howard expressed that the March 3, 1865 Act signed by President Lincoln was "destined by its fruitage to accomplish great things." The Bureau was fully

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[9] Salmon Portland Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America. New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]., 18.

[10] United States Congress. House. *An Act to Continue in Force and to Amend "An act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees," and For other Purposes.* Washington, District of Columbia: s.n, 1866. Readex: African Americans and Reconstruction: Hope and Struggle, 1865-1883.

[11] Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch*, 86, 90.

operational by September 1865, organized and providing relief. Yet, Howard intended to keep the relief "temporary." He explained that, over time, the "crutches" needed to be eliminated. According to Howard, the one feature of the Bureau relief that remained critical for the freedmen was the school. Efforts to educate the freedmen were extended when other Bureau roles were reduced. With great emphasis, he wanted children to be taught. Howard thought that if slaves were free, they should receive an education, such as reading.[12] The reality for the period was that a majority of the former slaves were uneducated. Thus, an Act that initially excluded the specific language to mandate education fostered a movement of education for freed people. The leadership of Major General Oliver Otis Howard, who understood how integral education was to function in a free society, worked to propel the education initiative education for freed people.[13] W. E. B. DuBois described Howard as "honest and sincere" and "hard working." According to DuBois, Howard's only drawback was that he might have been too trusting of people's intentions.[14] Howard's significance in the discussion of the Freedmen's Bureau is in understanding his viewpoint of education for freed people. The government did not consider including black schools in the first Freedmen's Bureau Act. Howard comprehended that true freedom for the former slaves came through education. Under Howard's leadership, the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida grew.[15]

President Andrew Johnson did not support the education initiative of the Bureau. In the veto message delivered to the United States Senate on February 19, 1866, President Johnson

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[12] Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard Major General United States Army Volume Two* (The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 195, 201, 207, 214-217, 226.

[13] Alva T. Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent: Alfred B. Grunwell in Jefferson County, Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2017): 30.

[14] W. E. B DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic Monthly*. (1901): In The American Mosaic: The African American Experience, ABC-CLIO

[15] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 98.

declared: “It [the Congress] has never founded schools for any class of our own people, not even for the orphans of those who have fallen in defense of the Union, but has left the care of education to the much more competent and efficient control of the States, of communities, of private associations, and of individuals.”[16] According to Major General Howard, the president believed that only by working would freedmen find “true relief.”[17] President Johnson disagreed with the constitutionality of the Bureau’s education involvement. And, a Lincoln appointed Cabinet member, Secretary William Dennison, said to Howard: “General, it is feared the Freedmen’s Bureau will do more harm than good.”[18] Johnson demonstrated his lack of support through his initiation of the Steedman-Fullerton investigation. An investigation meant to show the folly of the agency resulted in a positive report in the case of Florida.[19] Generals Steedman and Fullerton were appointed as inspectors.[20] The first location Steedman and Fullerton investigated was Fernandina, Florida. Here they found 1,000 freedmen. While problems arose in this location between freedmen and whites it was resolved without litigation. The investigation continued to Jacksonville, Florida. Here the investigators found freedmen working and receiving compensation. Tensions arose in Jacksonville between whites and freedmen and it was blamed on “irritating false reports circulated by vicious persons.” However, the problem was solved and “harmony” revived because of a joint effort given by the Governor of Florida, the Department Commandant, and the Bureau officers. The investigators proceeded to Tallahassee, Florida. This was the location of the headquarters for the Department Commandant and the Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for Florida. It was upon visiting this location that the investigators

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[16] Fleming, 1874-1932. *I. Freedmen’s Bureau Documents*

[17] Howard, *Autobiography,* 227.

[18] Howard, *Autobiography,* 228.

[19] Joe M. Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1963): 223.

[20] J. L. M Curry and African American Pamphlet Collection. *Education of the Negroes Since 1860*. Baltimore, Published by the Trustees, 1894. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/10014788/.

included a commentary on the Bureau's rations policy.[21] The discussion on provisions is significant because in Florida the Bureau did not encourage an environment whereby the freedmen were inactive. However, when the Bureau assisted, it was not impossible for individuals, both freedmen and whites, to use the aid as a way to sidestep labor.[22] In the case of Tallahassee's rations distribution the supply was given solely to inmates of the Asylum and Hospital. Only in rare cases were rations given to freedmen when it was clearly demonstrated they experienced legitimate "destitution and inability to provide for themselves and families."[23]

Not every report on rations by Steedman and Fullerton conveyed a favorable outcome for those involved. In Newbern, North Carolina a freedman was allegedly killed over an issue involving rations. The incident began when Bureau officials suspected that a freedman stole provisions. The sentence the freedman received was digging ditches on a plantation. However, while serving his punishment, the freedman ran away. The men pursuing the runaway freedman shot him while he tried to cross a river in a canoe. While speculation existed about whether the shot hit the freedman, no one heard from him again. The general theory among the community was that he fell into the river after the shot hit him. The freedman's body was not recovered. Most freedmen expressed frustration with how the situation unfolded and the lack of investigation. Steedman and Fullerton blamed the remoteness of the plantation, which hindered communication, so they did not look into the problem because they did not have time. This account illustrates the mixed results of the Bureau's contribution to the freedmen. While

[21] Steedman, James Barrett, J. S Fullerton, and African American Pamphlet Collection. The Freedmen's Bureau: reports of Generals Steedman and Fullerton on the condition of the Freedmen's Bureau in the southern states. [United States: s.n, 1866] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/92838840/.

[22] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 224.

[23] Steedman, James Barrett, J. S Fullerton, and African American Pamphlet Collection. The Freedmen's Bureau: reports of Generals Steedman and Fullerton on the condition of the Freedmen's Bureau in the southern states. [United States: s.n, 1866] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/92838840/.

significant improvements were made, a man's life did not warrant further time and attention to define how and why he died.[24]

Steedman and Fullerton encountered a much different experience while in Tallahassee, Florida. Their interaction with Brevet Col. T. W. Osborne, the assistant commissioner of the Bureau for Florida, impressed the investigators. Osborne was described in the report as an "intelligent and just man, and an energetic and impartial officer." Steedman and Fullerton noted how positive the citizens, military and Bureau officers and the freed people were about the "good condition of the freedmen" in this region. The final place of the Steedman-Fullerton investigation in Florida was Monticello. This location contained many plantations with numerous freedmen working these crops. The report noted that the planters and the freedmen were cooperating with each other. Major General James B. Steedman and Brevet Brig. General J. S. Fullerton concluded their report on Florida with these words:

> Throughout the entire State the military, the Bureau, and the civil authorities are generally acting in harmony, which, in our opinion, is the main reason why the freedmen are more quiet, orderly, and thrifty here than they are in localities in which there is antagonism between these powers. The only exceptions to this state of things in Florida is at Jacksonville, the cause of which has already been stated.[25]

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[24] Steedman, James Barrett, J. S Fullerton, and African American Pamphlet Collection. The Freedmen's Bureau: reports of Generals Steedman and Fullerton on the condition of the Freedmen's Bureau in the southern states. [United States: s.n, 1866] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/92838840/.

[25] Steedman, James Barrett, J. S Fullerton, and African American Pamphlet Collection. The Freedmen's Bureau: reports of Generals Steedman and Fullerton on the condition of the Freedmen's Bureau in the southern states. [United States: s.n, 1866] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/92838840/.

Faced with an unprecedented task the Freedmen's Bureau accomplished a great deal in Florida and in the rest of the nation. The *Floridian*, a conservative Tallahassee newspaper, reported: "we doubt whether the duties of the Bureau could have been administered by anyone more acceptably, alike to the blacks and whites, than they have been by Col. Osborn…. Few could have done better—many might have done worse."[26]

In Florida, as with the rest of the South, the freedmen were at the center of the urgent and challenging social issues during Reconstruction. From the time the Civil War ended, Florida was under military control, and with that control came strict supervision. March 2, 1867, the first Reconstruction Act passed, which outlined the following: the act divided the South into five military districts, and each district fell under the supervision of a general. Florida fell under the third military district. Colonel John T. Sprague commanded forces in Florida.[27] Colonel Sprague believed that freedmen left other states and traveled to Florida because of a "strong desire" to live there. Sprague's explanation for the cause of the emigration, which led to a rise in homesteads in the state, came from the desire of the freed people to live in Florida's weather. For context, there were 2,012 homesteads reported in October 1867. This marked an increase in Florida's population from 1860. Sprague stated that Florida's climate "suits them as well as Africa, and is much better adapted to the negro than the white man. A warm humid climate, though unhealthy for the Anglo-Saxon, precisely suits the negro." Sprague viewed the freed people as individuals with poor habits who required strict laws to govern them so they are not a "terror in society." Sprague saw the Freedmen's Bureau as a temporary measure, and while he favored schools it was in the demeaning sense of controlling the freed people. Ultimately,

[26] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 223, 238.

[27] Caroline Mays Brevard and James Alexander Robertson, *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times* (United States: Florida state historical society, 1925), 133-34.

Sprague saw the freed slaves as a difficulty more than he viewed them as individuals deserving of equal treatment in every regard.[28] Sprague's views on freedmen, the Bureau, and education revealed the complexities of the era in Florida and in the South. Nonetheless, as the South, continued under military control during Reconstruction teachers were recruited, schools built, textbooks acquired, and confiscated land allocated for freedmen.[29] Freedmen of Florida were uplifted by the January 16, 1866 action by the Florida Legislature to establish a system of education for them. As one education report described, the Bureau was an "efficient friend" of the freedmen, which is an apt description of their relationship in the context of education.[30]

The Freedmen's Bureau emerged from the government's intention to assist the freedmen so they might genuinely experience their new freedom. In Florida, the Freedmen's Bureau provided various assistance and oversight for the freed people, that pertained to food, medical, labor, contracts, justice, land acquisition, seed for cultivation, politics, and black education.[31] As important as the Emancipation Proclamation was for black people who lived under the threat of slavery, initially, their new freedom brought more obstacles but that would change at the direction of the Freedmen's Bureau.[32] Whites in Florida did not fully grasp the social condition of the freed person post-slavery. The meaning of labor for freed people took different forms for black people. For instance, black women wanted to maintain a sphere of influence in the home. They continued to help their husbands in the field. However, now their labor advanced their own

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[28] Paul A.Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction. Vol. 1st ed. Reconstructing America* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1999), 83.

[29] Urban, Wayne J., Wagoner, Jennings L., Jr., and Gaither, Milton. *American Education: A History* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 122.

[30] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871., 30.

[31] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 223-238.

[32] DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau."

family and was not entirely for the economic benefit of a master. Evidence of this economic labor transition was seen in the 50 to 64 percent increase of black women working in their own homes and not working outside of the house from 1870 to 1880.[33] Another example of the challenges faced by the freed people was the presence of thousands of black orphans following the end of the Civil War. The Freedmen's Bureau anticipated the enormous task of situating the children; however, unexpectedly, existing black families took the children into their family unit.[34] Families taking in children, served as a small illustration of the resilience of the freed people during this period. Yet, not every case of orphaned children followed the same path. In Florida, in the case of two children who were orphaned by a freedman who had no legal authority over them, the Bureau agent contract provides a compelling look into Bureau motivations. In the contract, paramount to the settlement of the orphaned children was that the new guardians "will cause them to be instructed in reading and writing and train them up in the habits of industry."[35] The contract reveals the link between the Bureau's success of helping the freedmen and the pursuit of education.[36]

As noble an effort as education was for and desired by the freedmen, concerns existed at the time that the Bureau operated as a "political machine" manipulating the black voter. With Bureau agents present in numerous communities across the South, the idea was that the agency used its influence in churches and schools, thus swaying the politics of the time.[37] Florida was

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[33] Kathleen S. Howe, "Stepping into Freedom: African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, during the Reconstruction Era," *Tampa Bay History*: Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 3 (1998). Digital Commons USF.

[34] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 84.

[35] Dilworth, William Scott. *Contract Between William Scott Dilworth and Alfred B. Grunwell & Martha Binyard and Lewis Binyard*. 1867-03-30. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[36] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 19.

[37] Brooks D. Simpson, Editor. *From Reconstruction Voices From America's First Great Struggle For Racial Equality*. New York, NY: The Library of America, 2018. The source is from Joseph S. Fullerton to Andrew Johnson "Objections to the Freedmen's Bureau: Washington D.C., February 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Washington February 9, 1866.

not an exception to the concern of politics mingling with Bureau activities in the state. White Floridians did not agree with the political influence Republican agents imparted to the freedmen.[38] The suspicion of the Bureau pushing political ideas created a strain in Florida. While the Bureau aimed to develop productive citizens among the freedmen and offer protection for the freedmen, the agency grew as an influential arm of the Republican Party in Florida, a view held by some. For this reason, a pessimistic interpretation of the Bureau's activities in Florida resulted in the belief that the main reason the agency assisted the freedmen was for political and economic advantage for the leadership and agents involved.[39]

The Florida legislature expressed concerns about the Bureau's presence early during Reconstruction. Florida's legislature passed an act in 1865 that resulted in two negative outcomes for schools. First, the act led to financial challenges for the freedmen when a special $1.00 tax was imposed on all black males. For freedmen struggling to find employment this act was especially unfair. Second, the act imposed stricter teacher guidelines, such as the mandate for teachers in the state to obtain certification by the superintendent to instruct. The means of requiring the certification was to control instruction given by teachers as well as supervise the freedmen schools. While qualifications and oversight sound helpful the outcome led to friction within the state over freedmen schools.[40] *The Florida Times* reported about the conflict: "We wish the schools to be taught by Floridians" and referred to the teachers who came to the state as "unfit, alien, hostile, and dangerous agents."[41] Floridians preferred black teachers for the

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[38] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 24.

[39] Caroline Mays Brevard and James Alexander Robertson, *A History of Florida*, 132-33.

[40] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 40.

[41] George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, Reprint 2016)., 182.

freedmen because it maintained a race-stratified system of whites maintaining a higher status and was another way to control the type of education delivered.

The years after the Civil War were critical for white Floridians, most of whom supported the Confederacy. During Reconstruction Florida had to comply with President Andrew Johnson's policies. At the same time Florida strategized ways to keep as much as the old system in place. Under the old system white Floridians represented a paternalistic role for their slaves. From this perspective of white and black relations the slaves lived strife-free even in their limited conditions. Therefore, to preserve a system based upon racial chattel slavery, the Florida legislature of 1865-1866 passed Black Codes. These laws were passed to keep the separation of the black and white races and to maintain the domination of white people in Florida. White Floridians felt justified in the enactment of Black Codes because they viewed blacks as intellectually inferior and incapable of governing their own life. When slavery ended so did the entire system white Floridians were accustomed to socially and economically.[42] The freedmen in Florida experienced a stringent political system not favorable to their new freedoms. Article 16 of the 1865 Florida Constitution stated:

> Section 2: In all criminal proceedings founded upon injury to a colored person, and in all cases affecting the rights and remedies of colored persons, no person shall be incompetent to testify as a witness on account of color; in all other cases, the testimony of colored persons shall be excluded, unless made competent by future legislation. The jury shall judge the credibility of the testimony.

[42] Jerrell H. Shofner, "Custom, Law, and History: The Enduring Influence of Florida's "Black Code"," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 55: No. 3, Article 4. (1976): 278.

> Section 3: The Jurors of this State shall be white men, possessed of such qualifications as may be prescribed by law.[43]

The rationalization for this manner of laws came down to control. Slavery ended, but the white Floridians wanted to remain in control of the freedmen.[44] Freedmen were arrested for vagrancy if found without an occupation, forbidden from owning firearms, and prevented from jury duty or being called as witnesses. When courts issued fines, freedmen still faced whipping (39 lashes) in some instances.[45] General Thomas W. Osborn's appointment in 1865 signaled the start of the Bureau activities in Florida. [46] General Osborne observed of Florida on December 31, 1865: "The people at large show a spirit of dislike or hatred to the freedmen that is hard to account for." He explained further that the attitude was "contemptable."[47] In one example of the unfair treatment because of Black Codes, a freedman was sold in order to pay a fine as illustrated in Figure 1.3. This revealed Florida's determination to maintain the part of society lost because of the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation.

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[43] Florida. Constitutional Convention (1865). *Constitution of the State of Florida, 1865.* 1865-11-07. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[44] Joe M. Richardson, "Florida Black Codes," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1969): 374-375.

[45] Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent," 2, 4.

[46] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 21, 23, 109-111.

[47] Walter L. Fleming, 1874-1932. *I. Freedmen's Bureau Documents. II. The Freedmen's Savings Bank.* 1904.

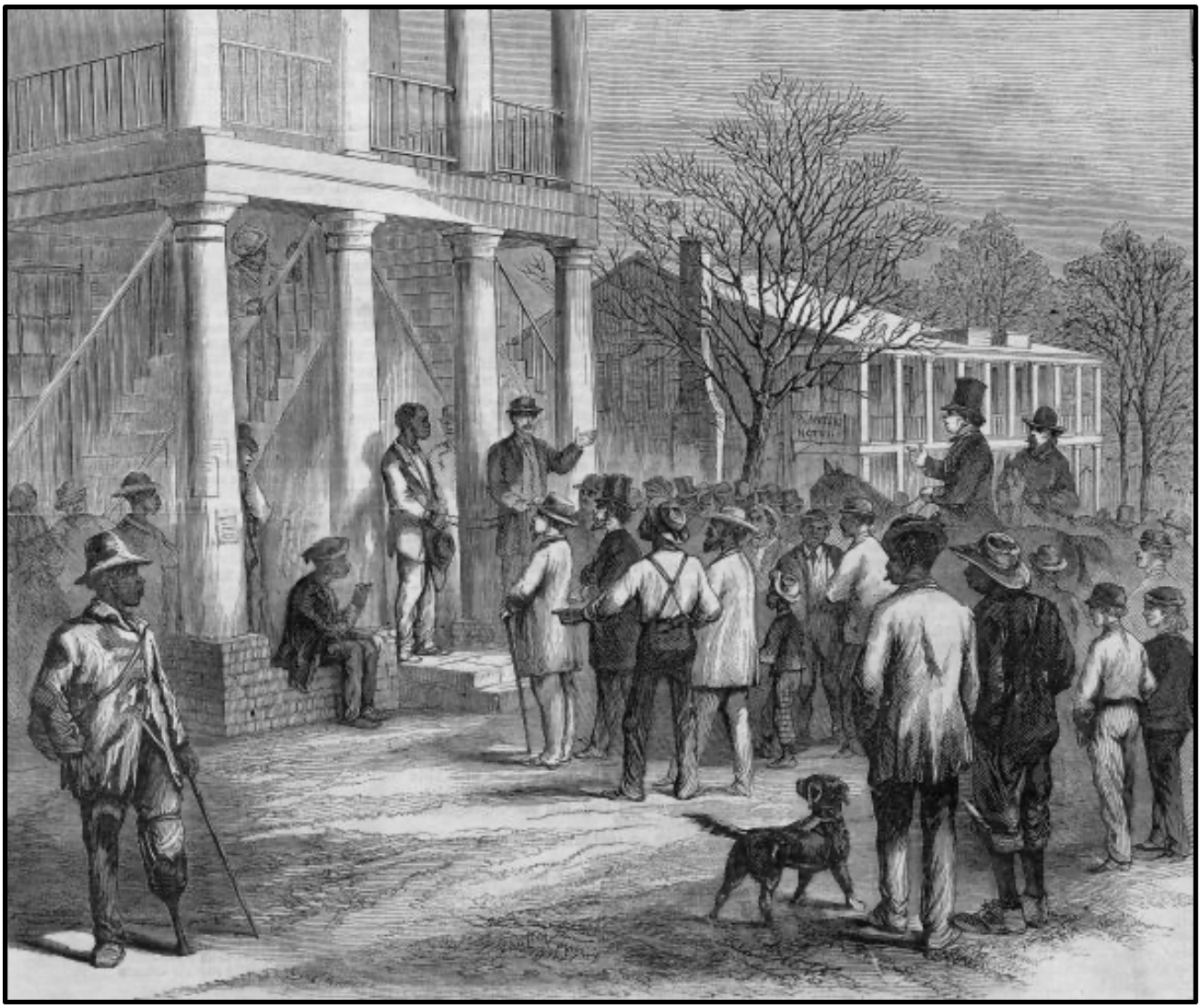

Figure 1.3. Taylor, James E., 1839-1901. *Selling a freedman to pay his fine at Monticello.* 1867. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

The support of the freedmen was the key to the success of the Bureau regarding education in Florida.[48] Florida wanted black educators in the state. A demand grew for teachers on plantations and of that interest was the desire for black male teachers in those locations. Although the motivation for acquiring black educators was not always entirely out of elevating the race.[49] When relations worsened between the races it was deemed sending white teachers to

[48] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 107.

[49] Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen. November 8, 1866. The Florida Senate., 2.

the state dangerous. For example, an 1867 Report on Schools for Freedmen noted the following: "A feeling prevails, to a considerable extent, that the schools of the freed people should be taught by teachers of their own color, and I am of the opinion that such teachers might, in many instances, be sent into the interior and be allowed to engage their vocation unmolested, when white teachers would be liable to abuse and insult." The concern at the time was so great that assistant commissioner in Florida did not recommend sending more than twenty white teachers into the state yet needed at least thirty to forty teachers to fill the positions.[50]

One way the Florida legislature tried to circumvent the work of the Bureau and northern teachers was to require teachers in the schools to have a teaching license and, if teaching without a license, receive a fine. However, the federal military presence in Florida prevented the teacher licensure law from being enforced against Bureau schools or schools established by aid societies and churches.[51] Some of the friction between the races in Florida stemmed from two factors. Florida did not experience significant damage to planting fields during the Civil War. For example, in Jefferson County, Florida, an influx of agricultural workers, many black, moved into the area. Problems arose between white and black people, when freedmen attempted to experience their new freedoms and rights. A second issue stemmed from some white Floridians' dislike of the Freedmen's Bureau. Some of the whites claimed that agents merely used education initiatives as a tool to brainwash black voters and gain new Republican registered voters.[52]

Some believed the Freedmen's Bureau worsened the situation for the freedmen due to the belief that the Bureau had, in a sense, replaced the master and that a lack of independence among

[50] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869, 24.

[51] Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," 3.

[52] Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent," 6-7, 24.

the freed people ensued because of the Bureau's assistance.[53] A travelling secretary for the American Colonization Society, John Orcutt, remarked in his correspondence about the Bureau on April 25, 1866: "I have no hesitation in saying that I firmly believe the freedmen's Bureau *on the whole*, is undesirable and mischievous. And I can say the same of the system of teaching the freedmen by northern teachers and organization." Orcutt did not entirely question the kindhearted motives of a majority of the teachers; however, he thought some of the teachers were "naive." Wife of former President John Tyler, Julia Gardiner Tyler, equally expressed hesitations about the Freedmen's Bureau in her correspondence. She expressed concerns about the Government seizing land for schoolhouses, which she complained no doubt was "occupied by teachers of negro children." She also suspected that the Bureau confiscation of land permitted the funds to compensate teachers.[54] The Bureau's goal was to grant black people confiscated land to assist with the building of schools.[55] Although the freedmen highly motivated for learning often built schools without assistance from the Bureau.[56]

Freedmen's journals recorded concerns and fears about the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau. The journal records declared progress despite the hindrances the Bureau faced. Pressure from southern whites, according to the journal, only served to reveal the Freedmen's Bureau acted righteously. From the perspective of the journal publication, the Bureau accomplished grand accomplishments in only about a ten-month period. The Bureau brought economic

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[53] Brooks D. Simpson, Editor. *From Reconstruction Voices*. The source is from Joseph S. Fullerton to Andrew Johnson "Objections to the Freedmen's Bureau: Washington D.C., February 1866, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Washington February 9, 1866.

[54] The Papers of Andrew Johnson Digital Edition, ed. LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2020.

[55] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 27.

[56] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871. 337.

improvements, industrial help, judicial assistance, and, most significantly, invaluable educational work to the South. The Bureau was undoubtedly a friend to the aid societies by providing land, schoolhouses, and protection. For this reason, the numerous individuals, aid societies, and religious groups seeking to assist in the education of the freedmen recognized the Bureau was an essential government agency.[57]

Opposition regarding the education of the freedmen did not remain a battle of words. W. E. B. DuBois described the resistance toward the Freedmen Bureau's education efforts in the South as "bitter."[58] Early in the education efforts of the freedmen little support was given by the white Southerners. Reports noted how schoolhouses were burned, teachers attacked or pressured to leave the town. Routinely teachers experienced a general lack of support and places to lodge while living in the South. Verbal insults were common, such as calling a teacher of the freedmen a "Nigger teacher."[59] A Freedmen's Bureau agent noted similar treatment of teachers in his records. William Stone described the following: "When this school was first started, the teacher found written in chalk on the door, 'Take Notice. Let the first one who opens this door look out for himself for I will blow his brains out.'" Stone explained that the perpetrator of the threat did not follow through on it, yet for anyone working to aid the freedmen, it nonetheless presented a terrifying message.[60] A Florida Freedmen's Bureau agent told of an incident in Monticello where a teacher fled the state after her belongings were burned and six gunshots directed into her home while she was inside.[61] And, a report issued about Gulf states noted the danger and even "peril" teachers experienced. For instance, objects hurled at the windows of a schoolhouse and

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[57] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice., 62, 64.

[58] DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau."

[59] Chase, Salmon Portland, and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America. New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]., 28-29.

[60] Suzanne Stone Johnson and Robert Allison Johnson, ed. *Bitter Freedom: William Stone's Record of Service in the Freedmen's Bureau* (United States: University of South Carolina Press, 2021)., 13.

[61] Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent," 30, 113-14.

individuals who desired to open schools faced resistance. At the center of the debate were the freedmen who were increasingly disturbed by the thought of the "rebels taking their teachers."[62] Because white teachers who came from the North were subject to mistreatment, harassment, and even violence the Bureau intervened for the purpose of protection. In addition to providing textbooks, buildings, and construction supplies for schoolhouses the Bureau worked to keep teachers and the freedmen safe from those who tried to thwart their education efforts.[63] The ability of the Bureau to protect teachers and to help the white population of Florida see the importance of freedmen education represented an invaluable service.[64] For the freedmen, education represented a pathway to true freedom. Anyone who obstructed their education was not viewed with understanding. A Bureau educator remarked on the treatment of the freedmen concerning their education:

> It is for the safety and interest of the whole community to have the laboring population, that is and must be free, well informed. The colored people certainly will not consider them to be friends who oppose their being taught, who throw difficulties in the way of their obtaining school rooms, who deprive them of the use of places which have heretofore been accorded to them.[65]

The Freedmen's Bureau was not responsible for the mechanics of learning in the classroom, other than the supply of clothing and textbooks. Nonetheless, the agency acted as an essential protector for the multitude of teachers, aid societies, and freedmen engaged in the education.[66] The presence of the Bureau in the South and in Florida made

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[62] Report of the Board of Education for Freedmen, Department of the Gulf, for the Year 1864. United States: Printed at the Office of the True Delta, 1865.

[63] Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent," 30, 113-14.

[64] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 235.

[65] Fleming, 1874-1932. *I. Freedmen's Bureau Documents.*

[66] Marjorie H. Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," *The Journal of Negro Education* 23, no. 1 (1954): 11.

the education of the freedmen possible. The extension of the Freedmen's Bureau that came with the 1866 act accomplished more for freedmen in Florida than state legislatures. The extension permitted Bureau agents enough time to solidify black education in Florida before entrusting the system completely to the care of the white Floridians.[67] When extended in 1866, the Freedmen's Bureau expressly listed education as part of its function. This step provided the tools essential for the freedmen striving to function within a free society.

Major General Howard commissioned assistants to establish schools for black people in the South.[68] Many of the men under Howard's leadership were, as he described them, of "high character" and were known nationally as honorable men.[69] One such man under the charge of Howard was C. Thurston Chase. Chase served in Florida and would continue to become Florida's first Superintendent of Education. The assignment of Chase to his position came under some controversy. The Reverend E. B. Duncan was removed by O. O. Howard when he discovered that Duncan used his official position to persuade black people to follow his denomination. Another criticism was that Duncan preferred white southern teachers more than northerners. Duncan said the accusations against him were not true. Duncan acknowledged that he promoted southern teachers over northern because if the southerners did not teach black students, then the people from the north would "be only too happy to do so." The ultimate penalty came to Duncan when he objected to distributing Radical Republican Thaddeus Steven's speech in the Florida schools. Chase, supported by Howard for his confidence in handling

[67] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 101.
[68] Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent, 30.
[69] Howard, *Autobiography,* 215.

freedmen affairs and favored by the aid societies, was appointed Superintendent of Florida schools in July 1866.[70]

Observation of reports from the period starting in 1866 and ranging to 1870 showed that Florida grew more accepting of the education of the freedmen during Reconstruction. A practical reason such documentation exists stemmed from a direct command given by O. O. Howard in the Rules and Regulations for Assistant Commissioners given on May 30, 1865. Section XII stated: "Assistant Commissioners will require regular and complete reports from their subordinates, and will themselves report quarterly, as directed by law, and correspond frequently with this bureau, directing to the Commissioner in person."[71] Proper documentation represented a fundamental way the government workforces measured and maintained the accomplishments and obstacles of this period. The transformation that took place from 1866 to 1867 in Florida was remarkable. In 1866 a Florida Superintendent of Education stated: "in no case have the people shown a willingness to render us any assistance." He continued to explain that white people strongly detested the education and elevation of the freedmen. The hatred extended to teachers. The Superintendent said, "Every respectable family shirks from the idea of boarding our teachers, as from a pestilence." By 1867 reports showed that "a decided change has been noted." A difference began to show in how whites responded to black people learning, and animosity was lessening. A practical explanation for the change was planters realized educated employers served their interests because the freedmen felt satisfaction at their access to schools. The Freedmen's Bureau ushered in positive changes in Florida for the freedmen, such as education,

[70] Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," 3-4.

[71] Walter L. Fleming, 1874-1932. *I. Freedmen's Bureau Documents. II. The Freedmen's Savings Bank.* 1904.

yet the federal agency also failed in other regards. For this reason, the Bureau's legacy is viewed with mixed results.[72]

Early in the freedmen's education efforts, Florida lacked funds, books, and compensation for teachers; nonetheless, the understanding existed that if black people received books, someone would teach them. Book donations trickled in from Philadelphia and New York; however, if freedmen in the state were to receive an education it was up to Florida to make that happen.[73] Beginning in 1866 Florida showed signs of progress. An 1866 Bureau Report stated: "There seems to be an improvement in the treatment of the negroes by the courts and by the planters, and I think both are commencing to appreciate the fact that is for their interest to treat the colored people with justice and kindness."[74] Another 1866 Bureau Report stated: "Probably there has been less abuse of freedmen in Florida, than in any other of the extreme southern States." Florida promoted the establishment of schools and proceeded with organizing toward this goal. State law allocated for a general superintendent and assistants, and their expressed purpose was to create black schools in every county. During this time, twenty-five-day schools and sixty Sabbath schools were active. The 1866 Report noted the achievement of the functioning schools when it stated: "This is a move in the right direction, and should be followed in every southern State." The same report noted the "unruly whites" who oppressed the freed people which showed the dichotomy of the period. The paradox was in the fact that other whites mentioned in the same report were known as "Loyal whites" who came from the North to assist Florida's Reconstruction progress. These white men were friends of the freedmen and worked to prevent corruption in the courts, reveal injustices, and ensure proper conduct of authority. According to

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[72] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 223, 235.

[73] Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen. November 8, 1866. The Florida Senate., 2.

[74] Report of the Commissioner. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1866, 35.

the 1866 Bureau Report, the Freedmen's Bureau found work in Florida as "less complicated" than other states farther north or west. This most likely was due to Florida's lower population of free people and isolated terrain. At this point, Florida was mostly wide-open spaces full of swamp and forest land. The Bureau Report noted the quality soil and climate for agriculture, which opened the possibility for northern men looking for a place to relocate to Florida.[75]

While 1866 represented incremental growth for freedmen's education in Florida, the following year marked an important milestone in black schools. The Bureau had more substantial budgetary authority to assist in educating the freedmen. Signs were evident of whites who began to show more acceptance of the education of the freedmen. By 1867, Bureau agents believed that Florida had the potential to become "among the first of the Southern states to establish and sustain a public school system for all children."[76] C. Thurston Chase summarized Florida's educational status in the following manner. He explained that two types of schools operated in Florida: Schools started and financed through aid societies and schools formed by people who aimed to obtain assistance from the state. Regarding the schools designed by benevolent societies, Chase believed the schools were quality schools, including morals, and he saw their efforts blessed. Such schools were under construction in Pensacola, Warrenton, Milton, Monticello, and Madison. At this point the Florida legislation had not introduced a condition for schools; however, a bill was awaiting approval. Unfortunately, this held back progress until the state officially supported a school system.[77] On June 29, 1867 Chase received a letter about the physical status of a school building in Florida. The structure was described as "ragged" with no seats for students and in "poor" condition. Clearly Florida required assistance in the efforts to

[75] Report of the Commissioner. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1866., 35-36, 58-59.
[76] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 106.
[77] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869, 21-55.

develop its education system. The lack of suitable buildings did not deter the freedmen. The same letter detailed how destitute freedmen were yet how deeply they wanted their children to attend school.[78]

According to the 1867 Superintendent's Report on Schools for Freedmen, teachers were an ongoing need in Florida. Even though teachers continued traveling to distant Florida from the North, their assistance was a pressing need. The report indicated that black teachers "in the interior are sadly in need of education themselves." The Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Florida, Colonel George W. Gile, noted the importance of schools for the freedmen in the report: "they are the only means by which the colored people can be taught fully to enjoy their present status, and become valuable members of the body politics." He expressed concern about Florida's economy, which presented an obstacle to funding the schools. Despite Florida's poverty, a condition similar to that of other states, he remained optimistic about what Florida had the potential to accomplish in the "years to come." Gile knew what Florida could do because he did a complete state review. The status of the freedmen and the Bureau relationship in Florida was described as one in which the agents acted as "friends and advisors to the freedmen." The report noted favorable results in how law and order were "harmoniously restored" at this time. One indication Florida improved the lives of freedmen during this period was that day schools numbered 36, night schools numbered 24, 30 schools operated partly by freedmen, 8 white teachers, 33 black teachers, 827 male students attended night schools, and 810 female students attended night schools. Subjects taught during this period included the alphabet, spelling, reading lessons, geography, mathematics, writing, and needlework. Within the same

[78] Letters Received June 1867-Dec. 1868. June 1867-Dec. 1868. MS, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices: Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices for the State of Florida. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

report the following was noted: "The freedmen's condition here is rather better than in many other places; yet even in this vicinage in many cases it is pitiable." This estimation revealed the hesitation by Bureau officials in the South to declare confidently that circumstances were free from complications.[79]

One phrase that appeared multiple times across the Freedmen's Bureau Florida records, often noted with great emphasis and pressing need, was the petition for "good teachers."[80] The implication of "good teachers" referred to individuals who lacked measurable qualifications for the profession and simply the need for teachers to fill teaching vacancies in Florida. Teachers who did not hold up to the Bureau expectations faced some hostilities from agents. In a letter dated July 1867 from Ocala, Florida to C. Thurston Chase it noted a teacher who did not follow through on documentation and conveyed how the teacher dismissed school for a "vacation."[81]

The year 1868 marked another pivotal year for the Bureau. One explanation for the significance of this year for the Bureau related to its extension for an additional year of operation. The other dealt with Major General Howard's agenda regarding pay for teachers. The objective involved teachers who received a salary from rented buildings for educational purposes.[82] Teacher salaries, or the lack thereof, continued to present obstacles for acquiring and maintaining "good teachers" in Florida. The urgency for teachers appeared in an 1868 Bureau report. In a letter by John W. Alvord, the General Superintendent of Education, he remarked on

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[79] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869, 21-55.

[80] Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Officers for the United States of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. National Museum of African American History and Culture. Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives.

[81] Letters Received June 1867-Dec. 1868. June 1867-Dec. 1868. MS, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices: Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices for the State of Florida. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[82] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 109.

the immediate request for teachers because of the mission to provide education for the freedmen. A request for many teachers was listed in the letter.[83] As Florida education efforts headed into another year of Bureau work and influence in the state, Alvord documented in a 1868 Superintendent Report on Schools for Freedmen: "Florida will be among the first of the southern states to establish and sustain a public school system for all children."[84] A state with humble beginnings regarding its education system, definitely in the case of black education, was on its way to successfully operating a functioning school system.

The opening of 1869 Superintendent Report on Schools for Freedmen for Florida was reported as "very meager," but improving. With the exception of the benevolent societies, Florida in the beginning did not help the freedmen as much as it should have. The reasons given for the initial lackluster help granted to freedmen's education by the state was due to funding, hindrances because of an expansive territory, and inadequate communication. Though the 1869 report offered an optimistic tone about the future of Florida, "southern men in this State recognize the necessity of education for the masses and are its avowed friends, that no political opposition has to be met, and that the whites of the western coast have always been loyal to the government, are happy omens of the future." As for the status of schools, the report noted the existence of thirty schools, five schoolhouses constructed, and the desire of white and black students for learning. To this end, individuals donated buildings to use as schoolhouses. While donations of buildings represented a turning point, the lack of teachers prevented advancement in freedmen's education. The report noted with emphasis: "We again call attention to the statement

[83] Letters Received June 1867-Dec. 1868. June 1867-Dec. 1868. MS, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices: Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices for the State of Florida. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[84] Alvord, John Watson. Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

that good teachers are the great necessity in Florida." The call for "good teachers" explained the establishment of a normal school in Jacksonville, Florida in 1869. The construction of the normal school, a structure for the purpose of training teachers in the methods of instruction, was made possible by the Bureau and the American Missionary Association. The structure included six classrooms, one lecture room, a library, and a janitor's space. The construction of a normal school was an accomplishment for Florida, not only in the manner of education for the freedmen but also for the teachers who strove to provide instruction. Regarding the teachers, the 1869 report included an account of a woman teacher enthralled by students who chose to remain after class for additional instruction. The teacher emphasized the work the students continued practicing on the blackboard, such as reviewing maps, mathematics, multiplication tables, and reading. The anticipation that came with this observation was that, over time, "good teachers" developed from the students receiving the education. On this account of students advancing to become teachers, the observation was noted that the black children learned as easily as the white children.[85]

Altogether, the 1869 Superintendent Report on Schools for Freedmen continued in an optimistic tone. The government report noted: "On the whole, our anticipations have never been so high in regard to the schools of Florida at this present time." Superintendent of Education for Florida, C. Thurston Chase, received high adoration for his role in overseeing the state education system. An additional status of schools showed the Bureau had constructed and supplied six buildings for used as schoolhouses. However, the quality of Florida's equipment and school structures varied. Sometimes, a lack of proper accommodations restricted the teachers' efforts

[85] Alvord, John Watson. Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

because of inferior structures.[86] A letter from Key West, Florida confirmed the issue with Florida school structures when it noted the need for the repair of a school building and the pressing need for "suitable buildings." Even though deficiencies existed at the time, the Bureau assisted education efforts in Florida when the agency either fully or in some instances partially furnished school buildings.[87]

The Freedmen's Bureau persevered in its education efforts of the freedmen in Florida. The Superintendent Report on Schools for Freedmen in 1869 noted a significant change in state affairs: "The prevailing sentiment throughout the State now is in favor of educating the negro." So much so that even the wives of wealthy plantation owners visited black schools for the purpose of assisting the northern teachers. However, the report recognized a concern about the freedmen during this period. Some freedmen displayed "apathy" about education efforts, which was blamed on a lack of "confidence" in the Bureau because they doubted the extent to which the agency followed through on their assistance. Leading into 1870 Florida's educational status for the freedmen remained positive if "good teachers" were provided to the state. A state that once lagged in its education system presented potential for continued growth.[88]

Letters from Bureau agents indicated Florida's education achievements. Remarks made by agents from one Florida county said "Schools are free" and contain at least thirty students each. And, another letter reported the growth of the children's interest in schooling in one

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[86] Alvord, John Watson. Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[87] Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Offices for the State of Florida, Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. Roll 2. Office of Assistant Commissioner, Correspondence, Press Copies of Letters.

[88] Alvord, John Watson. Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

Florida county.[89] An 1869 Florida law solidified the progress when it pledged to a "uniform system of public instruction, free to all youth." The law provided the means to supply books, salary for teachers, and construction of buildings. In 1869, the Bureau funded more money toward education than Florida expended. Florida experienced higher growth in schools in 1869 than other states. At the end of 1869, Florida boasted 153 schools, 157 teachers, and 6,992 students.

Under the leadership of the Freedmen's Bureau a transformation took place in the Southern states. Schools for blacks were entrenched in the system of thinking for both whites and blacks. In 1869, the Freedmen's Bureau claimed over 9,500 teachers in freedmen schools across the South. In 1870, at the conclusion of Bureau education efforts, 4,329 schools were created and over 247,000 students attended.[90] Peppered across the Southern states were schools for black people. Although the Bureau was not responsible for creating the education system open for all in the South it guided and protected the institution through challenging years. The contribution made by the Freedmen's Bureau to the lives of freedmen and the Reconstruction of the South was favorable regarding their work on assisting the development of education.[91] In Hillsborough County, the Freedmen's Bureau contributed to the first public school for black people. The Bureau viewed education as a "regenerator of the colored race." Education was a mechanism through which the potential for restoration among the black and white races existed. An optimistic Bureau agent recognized that, in due time, white people held the potential to forsake their prejudiced views and pursue education for their children. Education of both white and black

[89] Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Offices for the State of Florida, Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. Roll 2. Office of Assistant Commissioner, Correspondence, Press Copies of Letters.

[90] Urban, Wagoner, Jennings, and Gaither, *American Education: A History,* 123.

[91] Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau,* 183-84.

races came to Florida. Eventually so did segregated schools.[92] The Bureau's function in the Reconstruction South was not perfect, but its presence resulted in significant results regarding education. Teachers, aid societies, and religious groups felt more comfortable traveling to the South to assist the freedmen under hostile circumstances, under the guardianship of the Bureau's assistance.[93]

From 1865 to 1868 the Freedmen's Bureau expended $7,985,285.88. For the millions of slaves who paid an enormous cost with their lives under a brutal system, the support that came from the government, along with benevolent agencies and churches, fostered an environment that protected the freedmen so they experienced their full citizenship. Slaves who at one time had no say in their own lives now labored as freedmen. The importance of family relationships and citizenship was reinforced by the Bureau. Several hundreds of thousands of freedmen received an education. The Freedmen's Bureau represented an essential segment of Reconstruction in which the United States Government completed a vital task with little money spent.[94]

Nothing exhibited the success of the Freedmen's Bureau as did its role in education. And, little of the success of the Bureau in the field of education was possible without the freedmen. An 1868 Congressional Committee on Freedmen reported the "Surprising thirst for knowledge among negroes." Another component equally essential to this task were the teachers. The same report noted the numerous volunteer teachers, possessing "character and culture," who came to instruct.[95] Education was the critical function of the Freedmen's Bureau. From the beginning of operations, Major General Howard directed Assistant Commissioners to assign an officer in the

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[92] Howe, "Stepping into Freedom," Digital Commons USF.

[93] Paul Skeels Peirce, *The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction* (United States: The University, 1904), 83.

[94] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 12 1867-1878 Magazine.

[95] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South*, 99.

state to function as the Superintendent of Schools. Of their duties they were expected to monitor the treatment of freedmen, protect schools and teachers, ensure efficiency, and communicate with the benevolent agencies serving the region. Even though the Freedmen Bureau's education plans did not long endure, the importance of the contribution was undeniable. The drawbacks that hindered the permanence of the Bureau's education activities included funding issues, lack of competent teachers, and Black Codes. Valiant efforts were made at securing a higher number of quality school structures, teachers, and teaching methods. Despite inadequate buildings or teachers, in a post-Civil War period, freedmen preferred even a small amount of education over no education when moving from a life of slavery to freedom.[96]

The readmission of southern states to the Union played a part in the diminishing presence of the Freedmen's Bureau. In 1868 Florida was one of seven states readmitted to the Union. Under pressure from conservative Republican leadership in Florida the Radicals conceded to end the Freedmen's Bureau. The function of the Bureau was briefly extended. However, on January 1, 1869 the only operation of the Bureau included schools and payment of black veteran's claims.[97] The year 1870 marked the conclusion of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida; the last Bureau agent departed from Florida.[98] The late 1860s and early 1870s marked a decreased role of government intervention in the assistance of freedmen in the South. The Freedmen's Bureau diminished in its capacity.[99] The Freedmen's Bureau functioned as the protector of the freedmen

[96] Richard Fleischman,Tyson, and David Oldroyd. "The U.S. Freedmen's Bureau in Post-Civil War Reconstruction." *The Accounting Historians Journal* 41, no. 2 (2014): 93, 99, 100.

[97] George R. Bentley, "The Political Activity of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1949): 36-37.

[98] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 23, 111.

[99] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 12.

from the "revengeful master."[100] If not for irate whites during the period, the Bureau could have accomplished more in education for the freedmen in Florida.[101]

The Freedmen's Bureau aimed to elevate freedmen because of the recognition of the importance of education for freedmen. Free schools were established in cities across Florida, such as St. Augustine and Jacksonville.[102] The goal of establishing schools for freedmen was considered honorable work by many. Dignified in the sense, according to an 1866 Superintendent Report, that teachers understood they imparted a knowledge of God and religion to the freedmen, thus creating productive citizens for the state and country.[103] While praising the Bureau's educational achievements, DuBois quickly pointed out the Bureau's failure to build "goodwill between ex-masters and freedmen."[104] Despite all the barriers the freedmen faced—financial, land disputes, and judicial restrictions—they still contributed enormously to the cause of their education. Although the Bureau granted assistance to black people, the freedmen handled an enormous part of the trouble, financially and socially, on their own.[105] For W. E. B. DuBois, the Freedmen's Bureau was both a mixture of both successes and a failure.[106]

Undoing the consequence of over 200 years of slavery in America did not produce immediate and uncontested changes in the country during Reconstruction. Returning to the life of Patience Campbell, a student in a Freedmen's Bureau school, her perception of Reconstruction as a former slave in Florida offered the perspective that black people witnessed

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[100] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South,* 90-91.
[101] Richardson, "An Evaluation of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida," 237.
[102] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 16.
[103] Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen. November 8, 1866. The Florida Senate., 2.
[104] DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau."
[105] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 27.
[106] DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau."

growth in their communities and churches, and later their political promotion and descent.[107] Although an idealistic goal during Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau aimed to see fair treatment given regardless of race. The agency granted numerous rights and privileges to the freedmen. In a relatively brief span of time the Bureau issued relief for the freedmen, promoted the education of the freedmen, supported a free labor system, and encouraged equality of the freedmen in legal matters. While government agencies cannot necessarily mandate an end to racism, a matter of conviction in the heart and mind, the Freedmen's Bureau accomplished a tremendous amount for the freedmen in the South and in Florida considering the obstacles it faced.[108] Where the government intervention at times reached its limits in helping the distressed conditions of the freedmen, the benevolent societies and churches zealously embraced this opportunity as an abundant Christian mission field.[109] It took a combined effort by the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, teachers, and the freedmen to bring America closer to fulfilling equality for all. The means embraced to stimulate this new freedom was education. The Freedmen's Bureau acted as a protector of the new rights for freedmen as illustrated in Figure 1.4. The presence of the Bureau following the Civil War ushered in an environment that allowed for black education in the Florida and signified meaningful development in the state regarding black education.[110]

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[107] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Patience Campbell and James Johnson, Slave Interview, December 15,1936" (1936). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians.

[108] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 25.

[109] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South,* 90-91.

[110] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 111.

Figure 1.4. Waud, Alfred R., Artist. *The Freedmen's Bureau / Drawn by A.R. Waud*., 1868. Photograph. Removed to comply with copyright. https://lccn.loc.gov/92514996.

Chapter 4

The Mission of the Northern Aid Societies in Florida

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John, Chapter 8 Verse 32

Charlie and Anna Dorsey lived free in Maryland. One day slave traders deceived the couple, trapped them, sold them into slavery, and put the couple on a boat destined for Florida. The couple was sold to the master of a large plantation holding eighty-five slaves in Suwannee County, Florida. The mistress, the wife of the plantation owner, was especially cruel.[1]

In 1851, Charlie and Anna had a son named Douglas Dorsey. As a young child, Douglas carried the master's children's books to school. The plantation owner had many children, one of whom was a boy named Willie, and at the age of eight, Willie shared what he learned in school with Douglas. Over time, Douglas knew the alphabet and numbers. When the mistress discovered Douglas received instruction in reading and math from her son, the most unthinkable consequence unfolded for Douglas. The mistress called for Douglas and Willie to go to the dining room. She proceeded to write out the alphabet and numbers, then revealed to Douglas what had been written and inquired if he understood what had been written. Douglas "proudly answered in the affirmative, not suspecting anything." The mistress asked Douglas to recite the numbers and letters, which he did. Finally, she asked him to write the letters and numbers. As Douglas reached his writing down of the number ten, "very proud of his learning," the mistress walloped Douglas across his face and threatened, "If I ever catch you making another figure anywhere, I'll cut off your right arm." Both Douglas and Wille were astonished at what had

[1] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Douglas Dorsey and James Johnson, Slave Interview, January 11, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 21.

taken place because, for them, the sharing of learning was deemed by the two boys as an "achievement." The mistress administered such a violent whipping that the shirts stuck to the backs of the boys for two weeks because of their torn flesh. In a bittersweet fashion, Willie stole grease from the house, and the boys hid in the barn and spread the grease on each other's backs to ease the pain of the beating.[2]

Douglas said he would never forget hearing the news of his freedom when he was around fourteen. The slaves, about eighty-four, gathered at the master's house. He recalled how some slaves stood to hear the news while others sat on tree stumps. Slaves were free to leave the plantation or stay, yet Douglas aptly noted how no one wanted to remain because the slaves were "too glad to leave the cruelties" experienced on this plantation.[3] Slavery demeaned black people in every aspect of their lives, and one of the most oppressive elements of slave life was the denial of an education. Historian Orlando Patterson explained the reason behind the oppression of the slaves resulted from the fact that "Slavery is one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination." The relationship of master to slave meant "total power from the viewpoint of the master" and "total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slaves." The slaves' lack of power stemmed from three conditions. First, the masters often used violence to intimidate slaves as a means of controlling the slaves. Second, there was a "psychological facet of influence." This involved the ability of the masters to manipulate the slaves to think their condition was well-intended. Third, was the cultural angle which involved convincing the slaves they ought to

[2] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Douglas Dorsey and James Johnson, Slave Interview, January 11, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 21.

[3] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Douglas Dorsey and James Johnson, Slave Interview, January 11, 1937" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 21.

submit because it was their responsibility and even right.[4] Therefore, education was integral to the northern aid societies' mission, as they sought to assist the freedmen after their emancipation from the demeaning control of slavery.

Even in the midst of the Civil War the slaves fled to the Union lines and followed the military along its path seeking freedom. The military did not have the means to assist thousands of slaves. The unpreparedness of the military was often combined with an unconcerned attituded for the refugees. Freedmen needed the assistance from benevolent groups after their escape from slavery and eventual legal emancipation. General John Eaton, part of Ulysses S. Grant's army, captured the condition of the runaway slaves who escaped to Union lines:

> "There were men, women and children in every state of disease or decrepitude, often nearly naked, with flesh torn by the terrible experiences of their escapes. Sometimes they were intelligent and eager to help themselves; often they were bewildered or stupid or possessed by the wildest notions of what liberty might mean."[5]

In the North, education was understood as a vital step in freedmen's utilization of their liberty. As the military advanced, new places for missionary labor opened up so much that "the schoolmaster followed the flag wherever it went…" because the slaves were "eager students."[6] Teaching the "contrabands of war," as runaway slaves were called, began five months after the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861 at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. A Congregational clergyman was commissioned by the American Missionary Association, an Abolitionist

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[4] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 1985), Introduction.

[5] Paul D. Escott, "Freed Slaves in Reality," In *The Worst Passions of Human Nature: White Supremacy in the Civil War North*, 101–23 (University of Virginia Press, 2020), 1, 7-8.

[6] *Harper's Weekly*, Year 1868, Issue 1003.

organization established fifteen years before the Civil War, to teach.[7] Northern aid societies were present and teaching in Florida before the Freedmen's Bureau. Associations that took interest in Florida included the National Freedmen's Relief Association, New England Freedmen's Union Commission, and the American Missionary Association.[8] For Florida, 1865 represented a significant year regarding freedmen's education and the education system. This shift appeared to have begun because of the northern aid societies' involvement .[9]

As northern aid societies descended across the South, the missionary teachers viewed their position as God ordained.[10] Initially aid societies assisted with basics of life such as clothing and provisions. Of the items considered essential were the Primer, a beginning book for learning to read, and the Bible. The Bible Society distributed over a million Bibles across the South and largely to freedmen. A joint effort consisting of teachers, churches, and the government labored to bring relief as well as promote the freedmen through an education. In the case of churches both missionaries and teachers were commissioned. The government worked to establish schoolhouses and provide supplies to the teachers. The northern aid societies, which supported the efforts of the teachers, were crucial to advancing the education of freedmen in the South.[11]

One method used by northern aid societies to fund assistance for the freedmen came from aid sent across the Atlantic. *The Derby Mercury* of Derbyshire, England, reported on a gathering to discuss the "American war." A representative from the National Freedmen's Relief

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[7] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 15-16.

[8] Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 73-74.

[9] Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida* (United States: Press of the New era printing Company, 1921), 31.

[10] Urban, J. Wayne, Wagoner, L. Jennings, Jr., and Gaither, Milton. *American Education: A History* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 122.

[11] Salmon Portland Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. *The Results of Emancipation in the United States of America* (New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]), 14-17.

Association attended the meeting about the state of the freedmen. The purpose of the NFRA's presence was to ask for help through donations. During the meeting, it was expressed that the situation of the freedmen was an issue of "Man's humanity to man" and how the circumstances of the freedmen were "the most pressing necessity and ours the grandest opportunity of the nineteenth century. For many years we have prayed for the complete emancipation of the slave." Aid given to the freedmen helped them move from being slaves to "finding their liberty" after the Civil War. The article reported that Reverend W. Griffith and Reverend W. Jones approved sending money, clothing, and supplies to relieve the freedmen. [12] The NFRA sought the opportunity to work in "harmony" with Great Britain and viewed contributions to their efforts for the freedmen as an intervention by the "hand of God."[13] In conjunction with the American Missionary Association, it was estimated that Great Britain sent "a million dollars in money and clothing" to aid the freedmen.[14]

Northern aid societies promoted the passage of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill in 1865.[15] The American Missionary Association believed the leadership of Major General Oliver Otis Howard protected the agency and the AMA thought quite highly of Howard.[16] Howard understood how essential the northern aid societies were to helping the freedmen and referred to their efforts as "generous." Howard recognized that northern aid societies had taken steps to aid the freedmen before the Freedmen's Bureau was established and operated in the South.[17] Despite

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[12] *The Derby Mercury*, "The Freedmen," March 8, 1865.

[13] "Extract from a Letter from the Hon. C. C. Leigh, Chairman of the National Freedmen's Relief Association, New York." Friend, January 1, 1865.

[14] Curry, J. L. M, and African American Pamphlet Collection. Education of the Negroes Since 1860. Baltimore, Published by the Trustees, 1894. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/10014788/.

[15] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 27.

[16] Augustus Field Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood: A History of the American Missionary Association* (United States: Pilgrim Press, 1909), 170.

[17] Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard Major General United States Army Volume Two* (The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 196.

the goodwill between the Bureau and northern aid societies, the Bureau alone could not support the efforts of providing relief and education to the freedmen. The Bureau had difficulty providing teachers' salaries and even supporting schools, which the Bureau started.[18] A heartbreaking way funding from the Bureau fell short was in relation to the "aged and worn-out slaves." The Emancipation Proclamation did not come soon enough for senior slaves who at that point of their lives found it difficult to support themselves. The National Freedmen's Relief Association worked to fill the void and help the "old people."[19] Limitations of age did not deter all of the senior slaves. The NFRA shared an account of an elderly woman, 80 years old, who was losing her memorization abilities. She still attended school and stared at the school book "through cracked spectacles." Eventually she learned the alphabet even though it took her months longer than the average student. Cruel laws denied her the opportunity to receive an education her entire life, and even though freedom came to her very late in life, she still wanted to experience an education.

Much of the financial responsibility of helping the freedmen fell to northern missionary efforts and the freedmen. Yet the cost was invaluable in the lives of the freedmen. William Stone, a Freedmen's Bureau agent remarked, "No missionary enterprise of this generation has promised or accomplished so great results as this movement for raising up and educating the emancipated blacks of the South."[20] W. E. B. Dubois echoed a similar assessment of the northern aid societies when he referred to organizations such as the American Missionary Association, the National Freedmen's Relief Association, the American Freedmen's Union, and the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission as "sincere groups" that aimed to provide assistance by offering

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[18] Suzanne Stone Johnson and Robert Allison Johnson, ed. *Bitter Freedom: William Stone's Record of Service in the Freedmen's Bureau* (United States: University of South Carolina Press, 2021), xxiv.

[19] *Work of the National Freedmen's Relief Association for the Year: Report of Mrs J.S. Griffing*, 1869.

[20] Suzanne Stone Johnson and Robert Allison Johnson, ed. *Bitter Freedom*, xxiv.

the freedmen clothing, money, school books, and instruction.[21] Northern aid societies sent the "noblest" of their sons and daughters to teach freedmen; however, the contribution made by the freedmen toward their education was essential. Together, the aid societies and the freedmen strove to make the words of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation a reality. The northern aid societies believed that by obtaining an education, the freedmen furthered their independence as "intelligent citizens." However, to make education possible, teachers were needed to make this endeavor a reality. In the case of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, this benevolent organization asked freedmen to provide teachers with homes, corn, eggs, chickens, and milk. The explanation given was that the freedmen's help saved money. The available funds opened the possibility of the organization sending additional teachers. The New England Freedmen's Aid Society explained their motivation for petitioning the cooperation of the freedmen: "The teachers will toil many hours for your children." The thought behind encouraging the involvement of the freedmen was that a freedmen supported school possessed the opportunity to accomplish more than a school "wholly maintained by the charity of others."[22]

In the United States during the 1830s, a turning point occurred in the roles of women who experienced an increased visibility in society. Textile factories drew young women from their homes to work and live with peers. One profession women specifically sought was teaching, which, because of the low pay, did not draw as many men to the occupation. Women were particularly passionate about the anti-slavery movement. Because of this, the call to join

[21] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic Monthly*. (1901): In The American Mosaic: The African American Experience.

[22] Andrew, John A. New England Freedman's aid society to the colored people of the South. Letter from Gov. Andrew, of Massachusetts. Fellow-Citizens ... Boston, Mass. Sept. 1. Boston, 1865.

Christian benevolent associations attracted several women.[23] Northern aid societies sought strong women from economically independent backgrounds to fulfill the never-ending work in the South. The northern aid societies held a high standard regarding the women selected to teach for their organizations. For example, the American Missionary Association was blunt in its ads about teaching in the South. References were made concerning the sacrifice expected in addition to living in tight quarters, mosquitos, leaky classrooms, and low compensation. The idea of women in a self-sacrificial role fit the mid-nineteenth perception of the women's role in society. The notion of the "cult of true womanhood" meant the ideal American woman only found happiness by "suffering for others." In a larger sense, American women used the idea of "self-sacrifice" to leave the conventional roles of middle-class American women.[24] The mindset of selflessness fit the missionary mindset expected of teachers from the North. Teachers in the South sometimes faced a life of isolation or were called "Nigger teachers" by whites who opposed their presence, so a humble spirit was an essential quality to avoid disillusionment.[25]

Women took the task of helping the freedmen personally. Letters written by the women freedmen teachers reveal a deep pride in accomplishing their work of teaching freedmen. The only way a teacher remained in the South was through the proper funding. Aid societies needed the Freedmen's Bureau to help with expenses, such as schoolhouse rent and teachers' travel costs to the South. In 1868, Ednah Dow Cheney from the New England Freedmen's Aid Society wrote, "I suppose we are all safe if the Bureau is continued, but what if it is not? Is there any prospect that the Bureau will not be continued?" Women used their correspondence to petition for support from sponsors. Ellen Collins from the National Freedmen's Relief Association wrote

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[23] Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 6-7.

[24] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 37-39, 48.

[25] Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood*, 169.

to General Howard and expressed concerns about the longevity of the aid society if the Freedmen's Bureau ceased operation. The ultimate fear was the demise of the schools.[26]

The addition of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments led to gains made by black males. However, the expectation for black women meant continued laboring in the field or working in the homes of white people. Aid society women felt a unique sympathy for the freed*women*.[27] All women during this period experienced some form of oppression, yet for black women, it indeed was a worse situation. Whether white or black, women were expected to be mothers. This is not to say motherhood is not a noble position. The issue during this time was the lack of possibilities for women to pursue in addition to wife and mother. For white women, teaching was viewed as a short-term occupation. However, for black women, choosing to teach typically led to a "lifelong dedication."[28] Martha D. Sickles, a black female, taught in Monticello, Florida for twenty-one years. Grace G. Waterman, a black female, taught for thirty years in Lake City, Florida. And, Susan L. (Rait) Waterman, a black female, taught for fourteen years in Lake City, Florida.[29] During a later period, teaching for women was a respected profession. Black women teachers in Florida maintained places of honor in their community in the late 1880s, coinciding with a time of racial unfairness.[30]

Ybor City, a neighborhood within Hillsborough County, was once the location of a slave plantation. The plantation, which resembled a dairy farm, belonged to Major William T.

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[26] Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 55-56, 60.

[27] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction,* 46, 56.

[28] Kay Ann Taylor, "Mary S. Peake and Charlotte L. Forten: Black Teachers During the Civil War and Reconstruction," *The Journal of Negro Education* 74, no. 2 (2005): 125.

[29] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3.

[30] Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort. Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880-1920s* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago, 2004), 29.

Brown.[31] The former slave who resided at Brown's plantation revealed that only two churches existed in Tampa: Methodist and Baptist. The ex-slave explained how the slaves went to "Sunday School on Sunday afternoon."[32] This was a significant mention from the slave's interview because churches in Florida served as an important center for meeting the freed people's religious and educational needs. The connection between literacy and the Bible cannot be understated in this period; Florida was no exception. Freedmen largely desired the skill of reading so they might grasp the sacred words of the Bible on their own.[33]

Slaves were not always denied the opportunity to practice religion, but their masters often manipulated how they heard the Bible preached. During Florida's frontier days, "pro-slavery theology" was incorporated into preaching. In 1828, a preacher spoke to blacks about the need to "humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God." Plantation owners invited preachers from mostly Baptist and Methodist denominations to speak to the slaves to evoke the proper way of thinking about spiritual matters, masters, and mistresses. Due to laws in Florida against slave literacy, the more liturgical denominations, such as the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches, did not attract as many slaves. The correct mindset of the slave-to-master relationship was of such importance that some plantation owners requested in their wills that preaching to slaves continued even after the masters died. The masters' incorporation of spiritual values into the lives of the slaves cannot be mistaken for the elevation of the slaves in Florida. Slave codes in the state did not permit eight or more black people to gather unless a white person was present. And, slave owners were apprehensive of black preachers. In one instance it was reported that a slave

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[31] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Reminiscences of old Aunt Sarah, a former slave of Grandmother's: slave interview, Tampa" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 35.

[32] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Reminiscences of old Aunt Sarah."

[33] Robert L. Hall, "'Yonder Come Day': Religious Dimensions of the Transition from Slavery to Freedom in Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1987): 430-31.

was whipped to death because of attending a "secret religious meeting."[34] For this reason, the idea of religious freedom for black people and the formation of their own churches represented a turning point after the Civil War in Florida.[35] The link between education and the strong desire among freedmen to read the Bible came from a life spent under the control of being told what the Bible said instead of reading and interpreting God's Word on their own, free of a manipulated message. Yet, exceptions existed during the Antebellum period. Harriet Beecher Stowe mentioned in her writings on the education of the freedmen that "conscientious Christians among the southern slaveholders" permitted slaves to learn to read and write.[36]

Early abolitionist attempts at Bible distribution among the slaves met some criticism even from a reformer. Frederick Douglass expressed concerns in 1848 about charitable groups donating Bibles to illiterate slaves. Because of "wicked laws," slaves were forbidden to learn to read. Douglass thought it was a "mockery" to give the slave a Bible he did not have the option of reading, let alone owning. According to Douglass:

> The Bible is peculiarly the companion of liberty. It belongs to a new order of things—Slavery is the old—and will only be made worse by any attempt to mend it with the Bible. The Bible is only useful to those who can read and practice its contents. It was given to Freemen, and any attempt to give it to the Slave must result only in hollow mockery.

In a prophetic tone Douglass questioned, "Then, again, of what value is the Bible to one who may not read this contents? Do they intend to send teachers into the Slave States,

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[34] Ernest F. Dibble, "Religion on Florida's Territorial Frontiers," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2001): 18-20.

[35] Robert L. Hall, "Tallahassee's Black Churches, 1865-1885," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 58: No. 2, Article 7. (1979): 185.

[36] Harriet Beecher Stowe and University of Virginia. *The Education of Freedmen. Vol. 1.* (Charlottesville, VA: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, 1996), 608.

with Bibles, to teach the Slaves to read them"?[37] Teachers sent by northern aid societies eventually traveled to the South to teach slaves. Many of these teachers viewed their occupation as a calling from God. [38]

The connection between the abolition movements of the 1830s and 1840s and religion stemmed from the Second Great Awakening. Evangelists such as Charles Grandison Finney spoke against the sin of slavery. Finney especially disliked ministers who did not stand against the "abomination" of slavery. He even criticized the "silence of Christians," which was deemed by Finney as a demonstration of approval for slavery by not speaking out against the institution. Finney admonished that Christians "cannot be silent without guilt." And, Finney asked concerning slavery, "Will the church ignore this?" "God forbid," Finney wrote.[39] With rhetoric such as that given by Finney, it is comprehensible how Christian young men and women were called to action against slavery. Many men and women who answered the call to teach freedmen followed an abolitionist ideology. The abolitionists urged the education of the "black race."[40]

Many of the northern aid societies wholeheartedly embraced the Gospel as central to their mission of helping the freedmen. The American Freedmen's Aid Commission, founded in 1855, emphasized the government's role during Reconstruction in ensuring the success of the "cause of education and religion."[41] In 1863, the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission distributed a letter that stated their southern reconstruction goal for the freedmen this way: "They must be

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[37] McKivigan, John R., Jeffery A. Duvall, L. Diane Barnes, Rebecca A. Pattillo, Lauren Zachary, Mark G. Furnish, Angela White, et al., eds. "Bibles For The Slaves (1848)." In The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series Four: Journalism and Other Writings, Volume 1, 11–14. Yale University Press, 2021.

[38] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 106.

[39] Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures On Revivals of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 287-288.

[40] Stowe and University of Virginia, 607.

[41] *The Liberator*, October 27, 1865, "The American Freedmen's Aid Commission —Its Origin."

instructed, guided, elevated, and prepared for the position and duties of Christian freedmen. For this purpose, school books, Bibles, Testaments, and teachers must be provided."[42] The Freedmen's Aid Society equally held religion and education in high regard for the helping freedmen with statements such as, "The emancipation of four million slaves has opened at our very door a wide field calling alike for mission and educational." The Freedmen's Aid Society led to the organization of The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Church. Their expressed purpose was to "bring Christianity and education" to black people. The formation of the organization was due to an urgency they felt in the ministry to the freedmen. The report stated: "*The emergency is upon us, and we must begin work now*." One of the locations they followed through on their mission was Florida. The reason given for the chosen focus of their ministry was that the locations held the "promise of the greatest usefulness in the education of the freed people, and the best opportunities for co-operation with the missions of our Church." One way the society followed through with their mission was by its support of the Cookman Institute in Jacksonville, Florida.[43] The Cookman Institute was the "first school of higher education of Negroes established in the State of Florida."[44]

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[42] Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, February 12, 1863. Duke University Repository. https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r46h4g07s.

[43] Reports of the Freedmen's Aid Society, 1866-1882, 1885, 1887. 1866-1882, 1885, 1887. MS 615; 1, Freedman's Aid Society Records, 1866-1932: Annual Reports, 1866-1924. Interdenominational Theological Center. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[44] Foster, John T., and Sarah Whitmer Foster. "The Last Shall Be First: Northern Methodists in Reconstruction Jacksonville." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1992): 277. Other locations included Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

Figure 1.5. *Cookman Institute - Jacksonville, Florida.* 1898. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1866, believed schools were a vital way to spread the Gospel to freedmen. Interestingly, the organization found that while hearing the Gospel and seeing churches established was important to the slaves, they were "more anxious to have schools for themselves and their children." Emancipation ignited an excitement among the freedmen to receive an education. The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church saw the teacher as a tremendous complement to missionary work. Thus, the relationship began when Sunday churches served as places of worship and as day schools during the school week. The purpose of combining missionary and educational work was for children to advance in academics and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Like all of the northern aid societies the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist

Episcopal Church had an idealistic vision of their work. They saw the efforts of their teachers and missionaries as "restoring social order" and "peace and harmony." The Annual Report given in 1868 noted about the organization: "Our teachers have been pioneers in the work of reconstruction, and are laying a foundation upon which the most enduring superstructure can be reared."[45]

While southern churches evoked religion to maintain their social order, northern churches utilized evangelism to improve society through "repentance and reformation."[46] Thus, northern churches represented a natural partnership with northern aid societies. Both endeavored to help people who suffered, whether spiritually or physically. Over 100 northern aid societies were organized to assist freedmen, and church ministers and church leaders partnered with them. Many churches equally despised the institution of slavery so the combination of church denominations with northern aid societies was an appropriate fit. Schools and church cooperated to bring education to the freedmen. While education equipped the freedmen to better experience their new freedom, church leaders viewed the Gospel as a redeeming eternal change. For example, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in 1865, ordered the establishment of the General Assembly's Committees for the Education of Freedmen. Headquartered in Philadelphia and Indianapolis, the committees aimed to back the freedmen's schools and missionaries.[47] The American Freedmen's Aid Commission saw the "co-operation of all denominations of American Christians" as essential to the process of helping the freedmen gain their civil rights. Moreover, the AFAC viewed their duty to the education of the freedmen as

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[45] Annual Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. United States, Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1868.

[46] *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction* (United States: Mercer University Press, 2005), vii-viii. From the Foreword written by Charles Reagan Wilson.

[47] Oliver S. Heckman, "The Presbyterian Church In The United States Of America In Southern Reconstruction, 1860-1880," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 20, no. 3 (1943): 223, 225.

"holy work."[48] Harriet Beecher Stowe in her writings on freedmen's education observed that the Presbyterian Church helped establish a "church and school conjointly," known as a parochial school. Stowe observed that the Episcopalians accomplished the same feat.[49] One way to follow the involvement of church denominations in assisting the freedmen is to follow the funding of the endeavor to educate them. The Freedmen's Aid and Southern Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church spent $6,000,000 for the education of freedmen. The Baptist Home Mission Society spent $2,451,859.65 to help freedmen. Included in this amount was $3,164 toward salaries for teachers in Florida.[50]

Aid societies and missionary organizations played a significant role in prompting the education of the freedmen in Florida. After the Civil War ended, approximately 62,000 Florida slaves were freed and needed assistance because of their illiteracy and unpreparedness for their new freedoms. The lack of preparedness was not the fault of the slave; rather, the system they lived under their entire life allowed for no formal education. Education was the gateway to the slave's ability to transition from a life lived entirely under the direction of a master to one of independence. Florida's freedmen wanted to learn. In 1862, the Freedmen's Aid Society based in New York established schools in Fernandina and St. Augustine, Florida. In 1865, the National Freedmen's Relief Association sent twenty-four teachers to Florida. The American Missionary Association was the most impressive of all the aid societies because of its large role helping the freedmen in Florida and in the South.[51]

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[48] *The Liberator*, October 27, 1865, "The American Freedmen's Aid Commission —Its Origin."

[49] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Education of the Freedmen. Vol. 2* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Library, 1998), 81.

[50] J. L. M. Curry and African American Pamphlet Collection. *Education of the Negroes Since 1860.* (Baltimore, Published by the Trustees, 1894.) Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/10014788/. For comparison, it is interesting that $65,254.44 was allocated to Virginia, a much larger slave-population state. The slave population seemed to drive the amount of time and funding Churches and northern aid societies spent in a region.

[51] Joe M. Richardson, "'We Are Truly Doing Missionary Work': Letters from American Missionary Association Teachers in Florida, 1864-1874," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1975): 178.

The American Missionary Association was founded on September 3, 1846 as part of the Christian anti-slavery movement.[52] In 1849, the AMA created and accepted their guidelines for the organization. The stated goal of the AMA was "to send the Gospel to those portions of our own and other countries which are destitute of it, or which present open and urgent fields of support." In keeping with the religious focus of many of the abolitionist organizations of the Second Great Awakening era, the AMA expected its members to be followers of Jesus Christ (evangelical). Additionally, members were required to oppose slave ownership and be individuals of high morals. The AMA required a fee for membership in the organization. The AMA's expressed purpose, aside from sharing the Gospel, was to administer the "intelligent Christian culture to the colored race."[53] Aside from the Federal Government, the AMA served as the main organization "in the great enterprise of meeting the needs of the negroes."[54] The purpose of the AMA was to persuade southerners that slavery was an evil institution. The AMA led efforts to provide relief and education to the freedmen when the Emancipation Proclamation was passed. Ultimately, the AMA wanted to see freedmen enjoy the full rights of citizenship. For this reason, the AMA tried to prevent any teachers from joining the organization who did not see black people as equals. Florida's first AMA teacher was Carrie E. Jocelyn who went to St. Augustine in 1863. The AMA established schools in the following Florida locations in 1865: Key West, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Strawberry Mills, Tallahassee, Ocala, Monticello, Gainesville, and Magnolia. Teachers faced hostilities in Florida, such as families refusing to board or allow teachers to rent buildings for educational purposes, but severe violence directed

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[52] C. L. Woodworth, "American Missionary Association," *New England Journal of Education* 11, no. 12 (1880): 181–82.

[53] *The American Missionary Association. Its Missionaries, History, and Teachers.* New York: The Association, 1869. The Library of Congress.

[54] J. L. M. Curry and African American Pamphlet Collection. *Education of the Negroes Since 1860.* (Baltimore, Published by the Trustees, 1894.) Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/10014788/.

towards teachers in Florida was uncommon. Still the AMA faced limitations in Florida as compared with other southern states. The distant location of Florida along with its sparse population caused aid societies to show less interest in the State. For instance, the AMA did not send more than fifteen of its teachers to Florida during one year, and to add to that, the teachers commissioned to Florida oversaw many students. In 1869, Carrie M. Blood, a teacher in Monticello, Florida, oversaw more than 100 students during the school day. Additionally, she taught several students in a night school, and over 100 in a Sabbath school. Teachers Maggie Gardner and Emma B. Eveleth taught over 100 students. Teachers Abbie Bowker and Lydia P. Auld instructed several students in a "graded school," as well as taught students in a night school and Sabbath school. Despite obstacles teachers faced because of large class sizes, the AMA produced positive results for the freedmen in Florida. When the AMA departed Florida the basis for education in the state was established. Meaning, a standard for schools and education was in place for the state to follow.[55] The class sizes Florida AMA teachers faced meant a considerable workload. However, the large class sizes also revealed freedmen's enthusiasm regarding their education. An article in *The American Missionary,* an AMA publication, titled "Florida" began by noting freedmen's desire for an education. Freedmen sought learning to such a degree that the article explained a situation where children led men and women students who were older. Students of all ages wanted an education by whatever means they could acquire it.[56]

The American Missionary Association contributed greatly to freedmen in Florida. The efforts of the AMA were often chronicled in its publications and through the extensive correspondence from its missionary teachers. In an article titled "The Freedmen" from *The*

[55] Richardson, "'We Are Truly Doing Missionary Work,'"178.

[56] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 11, 1867 Magazine.

American Missionary, terms such as "providence" and "religious development" regarding the freedmen showed the emphasis the AMA placed on the spiritual aspect of the aid they offered to the freedmen. The same article provided an update about Jacksonville, Florida, in1866. Along with the "very gratifying" progress of the school and its students in subjects such as reading, spelling, writing, and geography, the author of the letter highlighted how the building they used for a school was also used for "public worship." Additionally, the letter noted, "The moral condition of the people is perceptibly improved." In another Jacksonville letter from 1867 the author expressed several obstacles the freedmen faced: trouble with "securing land," clothing, and shoes—the lack of clothes concerned freedwomen to the extent that they did not want to attend church. Essentially, freedmen were so destitute that they had to choose between proper clothing and having enough food to eat.[57] A letter published in an 1868 Volume of *The American Missionary* written by General Howard confirmed the spiritual side of the assistance the AMA brought to the freedmen. Howard was likewise known for his Christian beliefs during this period. Howard supported the AMA efforts for the freedmen and declared, "Now is the time for a missionary association to work for the Master."[58] These articles illustrated the mixture of temporal and spiritual needs the American Missionary Association aimed to meet for the freedmen.

Visitors to the cities that contained AMA schools observed the intent to maintain a Christian focus in the education of the freedmen. A minister from the Home Mission Committee reflected on two aid societies he visited in St. Augustine, Florida: American Missionary

[57] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 11, 1867 Magazine.

[58] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 12, 1868 Magazine.

Association and American Freedmen's Commission. During his observation of the AMA school, he witnessed Christian teachers and principals whose schools "are conducted on religious principles." For example, the school day began with prayer and reading the Bible. The minister observed the AMA's ongoing objective of uplifting the freedmen by meeting their spiritual and educational needs. He stated: "I am sure nothing can so elevate and improve the colored people as education based on religion, the religion of the Bible." In contrast, he faulted an American Freedmen's Commission school for employing teachers and neglecting to prioritize their Christian character in the selection process. He accused the American Freedmen's Commission schools of lacking a faith basis and criticized the schools he observed "infidel" behavior such as playing cards.[59] Whereas, in an ad for a freedmen teacher that appeared in *The American Missionary,* the consistent emphasis on Christian character by the AMA was made clear: "Wanted—A teacher of vocal and instrumental music, for one of our most important institutions in the South. We require for this position, a lady who has an earnest Christian missionary spirit, as well as excellent qualifications as teacher of music. For such a person, this is an unusual opportunity for doing good."[60] For the AMA organization, simply educating the freedmen was not enough. They wanted the teachers to impart character along with the curriculum because that has the greatest impact on students.

Teachers represented an essential part of the American Missionary Association and its mission of providing assistance to the freedmen. The AMA attracted men and women who held similar ideologies to their beliefs. To illustrate the standard of teachers who sought positions

[59] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 12, 1868 Magazine.

[60] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 16, 1872 Magazine.

within the AMA, a letter written by Henry Ward Beecher merits attention. Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who rose to fame in this era for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was a preacher who took a stand against slavery.[61] Henry Ward Beecher's philosophy as a "Moral reformer" who accepted that "all men were Christ's Men" aligned with the thinking of organizations such as the AMA who equally supported teachers who held the same viewpoint about humanity.[62] Henry Ward Beecher favored his brother's teaching application submitted to the AMA. Beecher wrote that his brother was the right "fit as a teacher."[63]

The American Missionary Association commissioned numerous teachers and missionaries in its endeavor to provide an education for freedmen in the South.[64] Central to the mission of the AMA was that teachers delivered lessons that were offered as "Christian education."[65] The AMA firmly adhered to its religious philosophy; even so, the organization understood that within "Christian training," elements of scholarly and industrial education were essential to their goals. [66] Because of the strong Protestant Christian beliefs of the AMA organization, its teachers often conflicted with the Catholic presence in St. Augustine, Florida. And the AMA held a powerful influence across the South. By 1868, 532 AMA missionaries had served in the South, which meant many teachers who identified with evangelical Protestant beliefs. These ideas were was not compatible with Catholicism. Moreover, teachers who served

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[61] Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America* (United States: Crown Publishing Group, 2007).

[62] Henry Ward Beecher and Lyman Abbott, *Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher: With Biographical Sketch* (United States: H.S. Goodspeed & Company, 1893).

[63] Fisk University. Library. American Missionary Association Archives in Fisk University Library/ [by Arna Bontemps, Librarian]: 1947. Tennessee: 1947.

[64] Salmon Portland Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. *The Results of Emancipation in the United States of America* (New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]), 16.

[65] American Missionary Association. The thirty-seventh annual report of the American Missionary Association and the proceedings at the annual meeting held in Brooklyn, New York, October 30th and 31st, and Nov. 1st, 1883, together with a list of the life members added during the year. New York City, New York: New York published by the American Missionary Association, 1883.

[66] John M. Pierce, "Educational Work Of The American Missionary Association," *The Journal of Education* 44, no. 18 (1101) (1896): 308–308.

in Florida "were in direct competition with the Sisters of St. Joseph."[67] Correspondence by AMA teachers revealed their frustration with the Catholic presence. Harriet B. Greely, an AMA teacher in St. Augustine, Florida, wrote in her letter, "There is one strong anachronistic [word illegible] element here which sets against the education of colored people as far as it dares [word illegible]—the Catholic Church." She continued, "This is a Catholic City—there is not a Protestant minister residing," except for her husband, Mrs. Greely wrote.[68] For teachers determined to elevate the freedmen in the spiritual sense as much as through providing an education, the Catholic doctrine at times interfered with their mission.[69] The conflict with the Catholics stemmed from the view of the northern evangelicals that the Catholics "held people in spiritual bondage," similarly to how slaveholders "held people in physical bondage." Furthermore, the Catholic presence ultimately delayed the reform efforts of the northern evangelicals, and this meant the hindrance of "the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth," from the viewpoint of the northern evangelicals.[70] Nonetheless, the Protestant northern Aid Society's presence held such a "strong foothold among freedmen in Florida" that Catholics did not prevent their goal of assisting the freedmen.[71]

In 1868, fourteen teachers and missionaries from the American Missionary Association ventured to teach in far off Florida.[72] A letter submitted by the AMA to the Superintendent of

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[67] Barbara E. Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White: The Sisters of St. Joseph in the American South.* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 69, 72, 75, 77. For context, starting in 1687, Spanish Florida offered freedom to runaway slaves upon their conversion to Catholicism. In the period from 1687 to 1738 almost 100 slaves escaped South Carolina for Spanish Florida. The Catholic influence was tremendous in St. Augustine, Florida, and in 1867, "three-fourths of the population was Catholic, including a majority of the freedmen."

[68] American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive. Letter to M. E. Strieby dated September 30, 1865.

[69] Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White,* 69, 72.

[70] Adam Tate and Society of Catholic Social Scientists, "Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelicalism 1835-1860 by W. Jason Wallace," *The Catholic Social Science Review 16*, (2011): 262.

[71] Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White,* 69, 72.

[72] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 98.

Education in Florida in1868 expressed concerns about the "supply of teachers" to the state. The positive news was that the AMA received a "large number of applicants" who were well-qualified. However, the issue the organization faced was funding. The obstacle for the AMA was sending out teachers who faced a lack of compensation. The letter expressed the hope by the AMA that the Freedmen's Bureau assists by closing the fund gap. A teacher coming from the northern aid societies, such as the AMA, meant the teacher met specific teaching standards and was considered more reliable. The letter revealed the positive relationship between the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA because it closed with an optimistic perspective on how General Howard would "favorably" hear their request.[73]

One way to measure the influence of the American Missionary Association in Florida was its role in the establishment of The Stanton Institute. The school, established for black students, represented one of the first of its kind "of any importance set up in the State." The teachers who taught at The Stanton Institute were considered "pioneer teachers" who were "resolute, self-sacrificing" in their work for black students. In this period discriminatory thinking existed about the aptitude of black students. However, the students at The Stanton Institute were described as "better than many grown up white adults" and progressed well in subjects such as spelling, reading, geography, and math.[74] A report addressed to the Bureau of Education in 1874 confirmed the success of The Stanton Institute. The report titled "Mission-Schools" commended the schools supported by aid societies which were "devoted to the elevation of the colored race." In this same report the AMA received high praise regarding The Stanton Institute of

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[73] Letters Received June 1867-Dec. 1868. June 1867-Dec. 1868. MS, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices: Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices for the State of Florida. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[74] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 18, 1874 Magazine.

Jacksonville, Florida. The report confirmed that teachers at this school created structure in the classroom and that black students performed well academically.[75]

Figure 1.6: *Stanton Institute - Jacksonville, Florida.* 1870 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

[75] Report of the Commissioner of Education [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1874. Every state made a periodical report on their education status.

During the 1870s the American Missionary Association sent teachers to Florida but the numbers represented a modest amount. For example, in 1873, AMA teachers in Florida included E. B. Eveleth and Maggie Garnder who taught in Gainesville. Alicia S. Blood taught in Monticello. Isidore Hamlin and L. W. Russell taught in St. Augustine. And, the only locations that had fewer AMA teachers than Florida were Washington D.C. Kansas, Arkansas, and Illinois.[76] In 1875, similar AMA participation in Florida existed, regarding teachers. Isadore Hamlin and Alice M. Kearney taught in St. Augustine.[77] And, in 1876 only M. O. Beale and Miss Owen are on the Florida AMA roster and they taught in St. Augustine.[78] For strategic purposes, the AMA did not designate as much attention to Florida.[79] During the 1860s and 1870s, philanthropic aid "marked a period of retrenchment, if not retreat in the voluntary and government effort." Moreover, charitable donations declined, fewer teachers entered the mission field, and the Freedmen's Bureau lessened its capacity.[80] Furthermore, Florida and other parts of the South experienced a change that started in the early 1870s. Hostility and violence increased against black people as they challenged the established southern social order and became citizens with rights.[81] Even though the fight for black equality in the South dimmed as Reconstruction drew near to a close, the AMA continued its fight for the complete recognition, integration, and rights of black Americans after a law in Florida threatened the opportunity for both white and black students to receive an education in the same school. The action taken for black Americans

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[76] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 17, 1873 Magazine.

[77] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 19, 1875 Magazine.

[78] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 20, 1876 Magazine.

[79] C. L. Woodworth, "American Missionary Association," *New England Journal of Education* 11, no. 12 (1880): 181–82.

[80] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 12,

[81] David A. Bateman, Ira Katznelson, and John S. Lapinski. "Southern Politics." *In Southern Nation: Congress and White Supremacy after Reconstruction,* 3–27 (Princeton University Press, 2018), 13.

by the AMA in 1896 pre-dated the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The AMA understood that separation of the races was "an undemocratic practice."[82]

The American Missionary Association accomplished a tremendous amount for the freedmen across the South. The drive of the AMA led to the "training of black teachers, ministers, attorneys, physicians" and the establishment of several schools and colleges. Freedom alone was not enough for black people coming out of slavery and organizations, such as the AMA, understood the North had to help freedmen "transition to freedom." Historian Joe Richardson best summarized the accomplishments of the AMA this way, "Nevertheless, the American Missionary Association became the most significant of the many benevolent societies assisting blacks during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and it came closer to a full recognition of black rights and needs than did most nineteenth-century Americans."[83]

While the American Missionary Association maintained an impressive reputation for assisting the freedmen, numerous other northern aid societies and church organizations impacted the South and Florida. Considered the "foremost aid society in Florida" was the American Freedmen's Union Commission based in New York.[84] The American Freedmen's Union Commission chose to focus on education more than relief for the freedmen. The shift from prioritizing relief for the freedmen to education for the freedmen by northern aid societies was not uncommon after the Civil War. J. Miller, a "Garrison abolitionist" and founder of the AFUC, saw the education of the freedmen "as a matter of national significance." It was understood that education provided freedmen with the tools necessary to function as independent citizens in the

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[82] Joe Martin Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 260-261.

[83] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction,* 259, ix.

[84] George Gary Bush, *History of Education in Florida* (United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1889), 27.

United States. An underlying fear by all involved in assisting the freedmen was that "direct assistance" led to economic dependence.[85] The northern aid societies and the Freedmen's Bureau challenged the ex-slave to avoid laziness. Both groups believed that the aid for the ex-slave was intended as temporary aid. A black man in Augusta, Georgia conveyed this account years after the Civil War. He explained the "Yankees" said to the black people, "You are free, Don't steal! Now work and make an honest living. Do honest work, make an honest living and support yourself and children. There are no masters. You are free!"[86]

The American Freedmen's Union Commission made a helpful contribution with the number of teachers the New York branch sent to Florida.[87] The AFUC believed Florida was not any different from other places in the South regarding the freedmen's "eagerness" for an education. The AFUC teachers were reported as "laboring with energy and faithful zeal amidst many discouragements."[88] The AFUC worked to bring education to freedmen in Florida. The organization played an important role in "sustaining the model of schools for the Florida Freedmen." Teachers who worked for the AFUC possessed dedication in their task of educating the freedmen. An 1867 article that assessed the progress of the AFUC noted how teachers visited the families of their students. But, similar to a discriminatory tone found in American Missionary Association writings on freedmen education, the article noted that the teacher visits served as a way of "civilizing" the freedmen.[89] Many idealistic northern teachers viewed their contribution

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[85] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction,* 43-44.

[86] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 28.

[87] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871.

[88] American Freedman's Union Commission. *The American Freedman*. Vol. 1. New York: American Freedmen's and Union Commission, 1866-1869.

[89] American Freedman's Union Commission. *The American Freedman*. Vol. 2. New York: American Freedmen's and Union Commission, 1866. The date of the New York article is 1867.

as leading to a better and "godly society." The spirit of the freedmen's education movement matched the mindset of other "antebellum reform programs," such as temperance.[90] However, freedmen were not searching for more power over their lives; instead, they valued learning to read and write because they understood that it correlated to their "self-determination" and freedom.[91] Nonetheless, compassion was not lacking from the AFUC because the same article noted the story of elderly freedmen who received a "large supply of spectacles" because they were losing their vision in their old age. In keeping with the freedmen's desire for Bible reading, the AFUC reported the freedmen wanted the reading glasses so they were able to "read the Bible for themselves before they died."[92] However, the AFUC did not embrace a Christian emphasis like the American Missionary Association. The AFUC envisioned a common school system that did not have a "formal religious affiliation." The decline of the Freedmen's Bureau impacted the AFUC which "suffered a swift decline." Aid societies needed the Bureau's support in order to cover all of the expenses associated with operating schools in the South.[93]

Another northern aid society that impacted Florida was the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New York. The NFRA began on February 20, 1862. The objective of the organization was to relieve the "sufferings of the freedmen" and "their women and children." Essential to the relief of the freedmen meant the goal "To establish and sustain schools at all points in the South, where it is safe to do so, for the education of the freedmen and their children," as stated in their third objective of the NFRA. The NFRA wanted to put 5,000 teachers in the South, but the issue with aid societies was always a matter of funding. The demand for

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[90] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 4.

[91] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. (United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 90.

[92] American Freedman's Union Commission. *The American Freedman*. Vol. 2. New York: American Freedmen's and Union Commission, 1866. The date of the New York article is 1867.

[93] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction,* 44, 46.

teachers was in direct relation to the student's interest in learning. The NFRA gave an account of a young female student who was so enthusiastic about learning she "even offered to pay for the education." The student insisted on learning "fast" and wanted "extra" instruction from the teacher. The mission of the NFRA promised "free" education "to all who will come." By 1865, the NFRA sent twenty-four teachers to Florida and had record of 1,835 students.[94] Historian Joe Richardson believed the NFRA "probably sent the largest number of teachers to Florida."[95] Analysis of "The Freedmen's Teacher Project" database confirmed Richardson's assessment. The FTP database revealed multiple names of black and white teachers supported by the NFRA and taught in Florida. One example is Miss Charlotte J. Henry, a white Episcopal woman the NFRA supported. She taught in Jacksonville and Palatka, Florida. Additionally, Susan Johnson, a black woman, was endorsed by the NFRA and taught in Tallahassee, Florida.[96] The efforts of the NFRA and the various other northern aid societies contributed to Florida and the rest of the South by their mission to reconstruct a "civil society." The teachers and missionaries understood that schooling alone would not restore the United States. Nonetheless, the Fifteenth Amendment's success was limited if black males could not read and write.[97]

An account exists of a slave mart in Savannah, Georgia, "Bryan's slave mart," that at one point during the Civil War served as a location for a slave auction, yet post-Emancipation served as an area where children gathered to learn to read.[98] The imagery of "Bryan's slave mart"

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[94] American Freedman's Union Commission. New York Branch., Durst, S. B. (1866). *Brief history of the New York National Freedmen's Relief Association: to which are added some interesting details of the work together with a brief view of the whole field, and the objects to be accomplished, concluding with the fourth annual report of the association for 1865, with statement and appeal.* New York: N.Y.N.F.R.A.

[95] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 98.

[96] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3.

[97] "The Education of the Freedmen." *The North American Review* Vol. 101, No. 209 (1865): 528–49.

[98] Linda Warfel Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South* (Elm Street Printing Co., 1869. HathiTrust), 100.

illustrates the transformation of the South during Reconstruction. With intense dedication, the teachers maintained a worthy commitment to this transformation. W. E. B. DuBois understood the importance of the efforts to provide educational opportunities for the freedmen. DuBois thought that if black schools and colleges did not exist, then "to all intents and purposes," black people would "have been driven back to slavery."[99] Slavery cast a dark presence across the South. When well-intending men and women traveled to the South and Florida from organizations such as The American Missionary Association, they carried with them the truth, the Gospel. The light of the Gospel broke into the darkness of often cruel masters and mistresses who, at one time, held control over the lives of black slaves. The efforts given by the northern aid societies toward freedmen's education during Reconstruction were a "grand triumph," measured by the establishment of a "system of public schools, available to all classes and conditions" in the South.[100] While northern teachers contributed tremendously to freedmen's education in the South and Florida, the diligence with which the former slaves pursued education marked the crucial part of the story. The freedmen sparked the endeavor to receive an education, which prompted the dedicated action of the men and women who answered the calling.[101] When the initiative of the freedmen merged with the efforts of the northern aid societies, a significant opportunity for the former slaves arose—an education.

Providing assistance by giving clothing and food to the freedmen was critical; however, the northern aid societies quickly realized the establishment a public school system in the South was of the utmost importance.[102] The Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and the

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[99] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction*, 259.

[100] Congregational Home Missionary Society, American Missionary Association, The American Missionary. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 16, 1872 Magazine.

[101] Williams, *Self-taught*, 44.

[102] Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction*, 43.

freedmen faced a heavy task because the advancement of the freedmen symbolized an essential aspect of the United States' ability to maintain lasting stability.[103] Education offered freedmen hope. Like a small force, the northern aid societies came to the South and even to distant Florida, disseminating Bibles and supplying teachers to raise the status of the freedmen in a reconstructed society. Northern aid societies, by 1870, accomplished "millions of dollars" in fundraising. Additionally, "more than five thousand women and men had gone south to teach in black schools."[104] A letter written by General Howard in 1866 stated the significance of education, "Education underlies every hope of success for the freedmen." He continued in the same letter and expressed how essential education was for the South:

> Everything depends on the youth and the children being thoroughly instructed in every industrial pursuit. Through education, embracing moral and religious training, the fearful prejudice and hostility against the blacks can be overcome. They themselves will be able to demand and secure both privileges and rights that we have now difficulty to guarantee; therefore I earnestly entreat benevolent necessitations to leave no stone unturned to give them the opportunities for gaining knowledge.[105]

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[103] *The Liberator*, October 27, 1865, "The American Freedmen's Aid Commission —Its Origin."
[104] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 12.
[105] *The Liberator*, October 27, 1865, "The American Freedmen's Aid Commission —Its Origin."

Chapter 5

The Freedmen Teachers

"It has been to me a labor of 'love' and great interest—and I feel amply rewarded for all my pains-taking [sic] in the good improvements of the children—and in feeling that I have so great an influence over such a wide circle of children's hearts. I know they love me, because *I love them*." Esther Hill Hawkes, June 29th, 1864

When the news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached Frank Berry, an eight-year-old child, he lived as a slave in Florida. When asked about his life as a slave, he explained he did not recall much from his time as a slave because he was so young. Berry reminisced that his master was "kind in an impersonal way." However, Berry's master did not offer "provisions" for his slaves, such as land grants, as did some Southerners after slavery. However, Berry said that the slaves of his master's plantation were at least told of their freedom when their Emancipation from slavery was declared.[1] Frank Berry learned to read and write because of the efforts of Miss Townsend. She was a "colored teacher from the North," Berry described. Miss Townshend brought education to Berry because she traveled to various churches and taught students at least once a week.[2] This account marks one of the most endearing aspects of the Reconstruction period: how teachers used their knowledge to empower and improve the lives of children freed

[1] Frank Berry; Pearl Randolph and Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Frank Berry and Pearl Randolph, Slave Interview, August 18, 1936" (1936). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 19.

[2] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Additional information, Frank Berry" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 12. The "Freedmen's Teacher Project" database created by Ronald E. Butchart included multiple female entries for "Townsend," but for three of the women their race was not given or the home state was not Northern. There was included a "Mina" Townshend from Massachusetts.

from slavery. Who were the freedmen teachers, and what motivated these men and women to travel to distant Florida to educate the freedmen?

Prior to the Civil War in the 1850s, the population of any one of Florida's towns did not exceed 3,000 people. During the Civil War Florida underwent a "complicated" period.[3] The state did not experience tremendous battlefield fighting such as its more northern neighbors did. Additionally, the slave population was not as high as the other Southern states.[4] All of these issues factored into the hesitation by Northern aid societies and the freedmen teachers whether to direct their focus on Florida's freedmen. Yet, Northern aid societies and freedmen teachers came to Florida. In 1865, the National Freedmen's Relief Association noted in a communication that a "Large number of teachers" were sent to Florida. Teachers travelled to St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Fernandina, Tallahassee, and Madison as well as other parts of the state.[5] The teachers sent by the NFRA to teach the freedmen were described as "faithful teachers" in their work of freedmen education. As interest in black schools grew in Florida so did the need for teachers to fill these teaching positions.[6] The NFRA was not the only Northern aid society that operated in Florida or took an interest in the state. Even though Florida did not pose as urgent a priority in southern post-Civil War development, the state still represented a bountiful mission field for freedman teachers who wanted to make a difference in the lives of freedmen. The progress made for freedmen's education in Florida and the rest of the South served as a testament to the freedmen's teachers' belief in their mission and for many of the teachers' their faith in God.

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[3] Canter Brown, Edgar, Jr., and James M. Denham. *Cracker Times and Pioneer Lives: The Florida Reminiscences of George Gillett Keen and Sarah Pamela Williams* (United Kingdom, University of South Carolina Press, 2023), 105.

[4] Canter Brown, Edgar, Jr., and James M. Denham. *Cracker Times*, 144.

[5] "The National Freedman." A Monthly Journal of the New York National Freedman's Relief Association. Vol. 1, No. 10. National Museum of African American History & Culture. Smithsonian.

[6] Third Annual Report of the National Freedman's Relief Association. United States: n.p., 1865.

The institution of slavery held millions of people in a deliberate ignorance by the majority of white plantation owners in the South. During the early days of the Union Army's occupation of the Confederate South, schooling of "contrabands of war" was initiated. Schools sprang up accordingly in areas of Virginia (Fortress Monroe), Washington, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Newport News, Coast of South Carolina, Newbern, and North Carolina. With the Passage of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 the number of refuges grew and with it the conviction by Northern aid societies to meet their "physical, moral, and intellectual" needs.[7]

The American Missionary Association started the first school for the freedmen on September 17, 1861, at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. The school operated under the supervision of the Union Army. The first teacher of freedmen, Mary L. Peake, was a free black woman who received her education in England.[8] Peake was a respected, religious woman, who even before slaves were freed, taught them to read and did so at great danger to her own life. It was reported that "scores of negroes" came at night so they could learn to read.[9] Peake, similar to Miss Townsend, who taught freed Florida slave, Frank Berry, provided a tremendous opportunity by inspiring black people through education. The process by which Peake, through her determination, worked to educate freedmen, knowing that this knowledge provided a way for freedmen to improve their entire lives possessed a sacred meaning. The work completed by Peake and the scores of freedmen teachers who followed her resulted from genuine care for the freedmen.[10] Stemming from this love for the freedmen were courageous, many of whom were

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[7] J. L. M Curry and African American Pamphlet Collection. Education of the Negroes Since 1860. Baltimore, Published by the Trustees, 1894. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/10014788/.

[8] William Preston Vaughn, *Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South, 1865-1877* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021), 5.

[9] Augustus Field Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood: A History of the American Missionary Association* (United States: Pilgrim Press, 1909), 121-122.

[10] Kay Ann Taylor, "Mary S. Peake and Charlotte L. Forten: Black Teachers During the Civil War and Reconstruction," *The Journal of Negro Education* 74, no. 2 (2005): 131, 134-35.

women, teachers, and missionaries who followed the Union armies to teach freedmen.[11] This new type of "army" were teachers who were "armed with the Bible and spelling-book" and went South with a mindset similar to that of a soldier wanting to heroically and patriotically serve their country.[12] The American Missionary Association aptly described the mission of their "Army Corps" this way: "The war with bullet and bayonet is over at the South; the invasion of light and love is not."[13]

The 1840s and 1850s saw immense social changes in America, such as immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Coinciding with these societal changes was confirmation of the viewpoint that teaching was a "woman's true profession."[14] In a sense, society had always viewed women as natural teachers. Catharine Beecher, who supported the traditional role of women, wrote: "Woman, as mother, and as teacher, is to form and guide the immortal mind."[15] The idea of women using their knowledge to advance future generations was reminiscent of "Republican Motherhood." Under this concept, the "female domain" also changed. With "Republican Motherhood," women's new political participation was a "justified extension of women's absorption and involvement in the civic culture."[16] During Reconstruction, young women felt justified to leave their homes and travel to the South because it was deemed a righteous cause to help the freedmen. Organizations such as the American Missionary Association welcomed women to the cause of freedmen's education as long as they met their

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[11] Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood,* 129.

[12] Linda Warfel Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South* (Elm Street Printing Co., 1869. HathiTrust), 110.

[13] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 13 1869 Magazine.

[14] Nancy Hoffman, "'Inquiring after the Schoolmarm': Problems of Historical Research on Female Teachers," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 1/2 (1994): 107.

[15] Catharine Esther Beecher, *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator: With Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (United States: Geo. Maclean, 1872), 28.

[16] Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 204.

qualifications and possessed the physical capabilities to endure the arduous task of teaching in the South.[17]

Reconstruction, like the Civil War, offered women the opportunity to serve in a capacity outside of the expected "Cult of Domesticity" role of wife and mother. The typical freedmen teachers were women in their twenties who received a normal school, female seminary, academy, or college education and were from New England or the Midwest. These women were typically unselfish and idealistic.[18] Sarah Jane Foster represented the characteristic female freedmen teacher. Foster wrote of her teaching, "I am in love with my work." Foster's views reflected many of the young women who pursued teaching and wanted to make a difference during Reconstruction. Foster did not like housework and was not known for her submissive attitude. But Foster in keeping with the religious fervor of this period held deep religious beliefs. She illustrated that in her numerous letters and diary entries written while a freedmen teacher. In a letter she wrote while teaching in West Virginia in1865, she described her role as a "Mission Teacher to the Freedmen" and referred to her time as "blessed richly with the Spirit and power of God."[19]

During the Civil War women witnessed the men leave for battle and women envied this opportunity to serve the country. A woman applicant for a freedmen teacher position wrote: "The voice we hear today is Go! Work. This people must be educated, and may we rejoice that God permits us to aid in such a work." Another woman, a widow, wrote: "I have a good home and all the comforts of life and my friends are surprised, that I can not be happy. But I feel I must go

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[17] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 35.
[18] *Soldiers of Light and Love,* 30-42.
[19] Sarah Jane Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen: A Diary and Letters* (United Kingdom: University Press of Virginia, 1990), Forward, 3, 31-33.

among the Freedmen if possible. I will pay my own expenses." Men did not seek the freedmen teacher positions as strongly as women. The American Missionary Association went as far as posting ads for male teachers titled, "Men Wanted" because of the demand for male freedmen teachers. The teaching occupation was often a hard job with little or even no pay so for this reason it even more solidified teaching as women's work. Women who came from wealthy or financially stable homes were fiscally able to leave home for the South to face "exhausting" work. The difficulty of the teaching occupation restricted older teacher applicants who did not typically have the endurance for such work.[20] The women sent by the Northern aid societies usually held teaching credentials.[21] One essential quality among the many credentials of the women freedmen teachers was their devotion to educating the freedmen.

The sacrificial nature of the freedmen's teachers helped them cope with a low salary, making it challenging to care for their needs. And the long hours accompanying their work required they put others ahead of themselves.[22] General Oliver Otis Howard summarized the freedmen teachers as "Zealous, self-denying Christian teachers" who furthered the cause of starting schools.[23] In the case of Florida's freedmen teachers, their efforts were no less inspiring. A report from Florida Commissioner of Education C. Thurston Chase to Governor Harrison Reed on January 9, 1869, stated the freedmen teachers were wealthy women from "high social positions at home" who were "ignorant of the duties thus thrust upon them" and "labored with sincere Christian devotion, amidst hardships."[24]

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[20] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 36, 40-42.

[21] Joe Martin Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 168.

[22] Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood,* 175-76.

[23] Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard Major General United States Army Volume Two* (The Baker & Taylor Company, 1908), 192.

[24] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia:

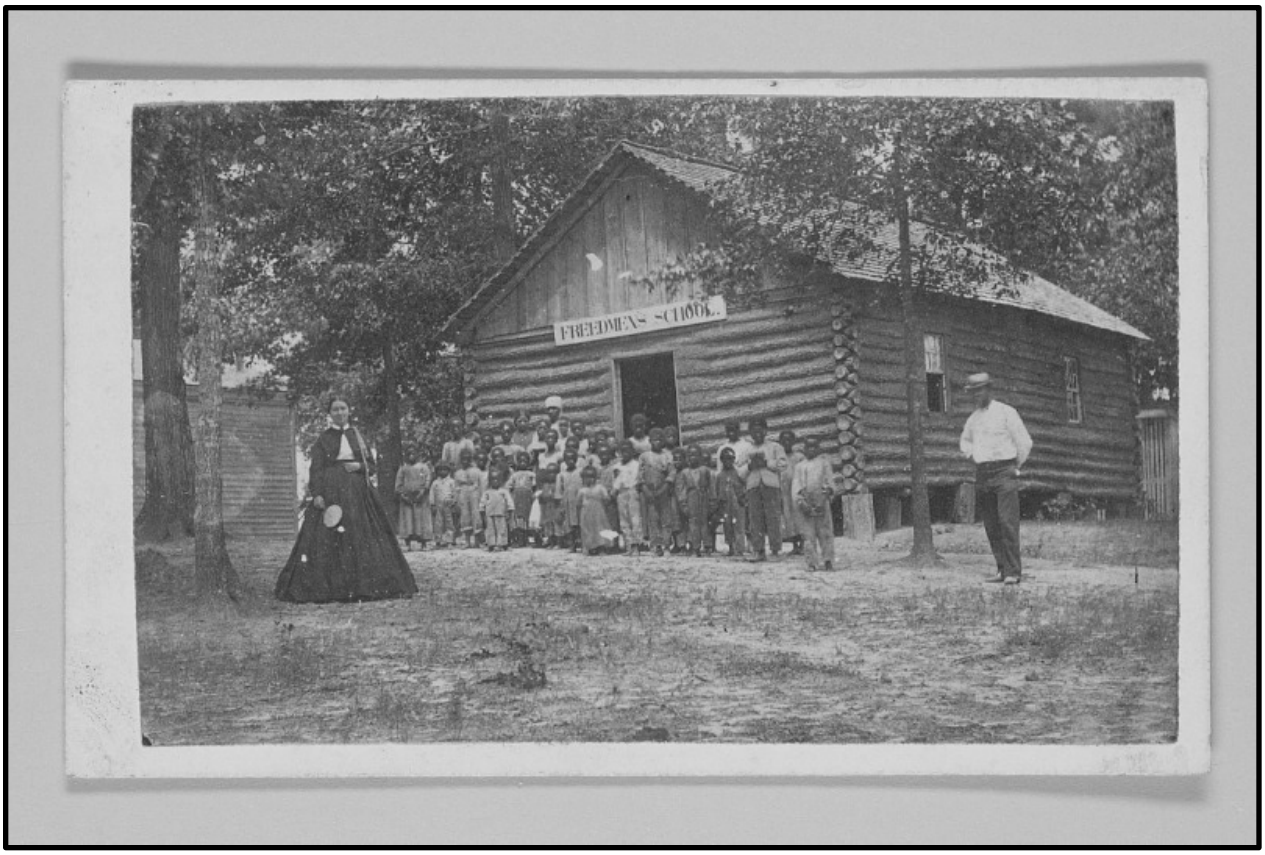

Figure 1.7. "Carte-de-visite of a Freedmen's School with students and teachers." ca. 1868. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. This work is a Public Domain.

The freedmen teachers held an evangelical Protestant worldview and were stirred to action during Reconstruction because of their religious devotion. Yet, some women viewed teaching in the South as an opportunity for adventure or excitement in their lives.[25] The majority of the freedmen teachers, whether driven to the South because of their missionary background or the wish for excitement, truly wanted to help the freedmen. Abolitionism was a core belief of many of the women and had been part of their thinking long before they became a freedmen teacher.[26] The teachers, who also included men, engaged in their endeavor because of their "Philanthropic and Christian" beliefs. The efforts they made toward black education in the South

Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871.

[25] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 41.

[26] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction,* 164-166.

was tremendous.[27] The Christian worldview, which many of the teachers possessed, poured into the schools they began. The Freedmen's Aid Society reported of its teachers in 1866: "A true Christian spirit pervades our day-schools, and all our teachers are regular workers in Sunday-schools established by the missionaries of our Church."[28] Sharing the Gospel with the freedmen was as critical as a freedmen's education for the teachers and organizations involved. In Florida, Superintendent of Education E. B. Duncan stated the goal of education for the freedmen: "that they may be able to read the word of God, understand more clearly their moral duties, have a better basis for their religion…" and he continued, "All of this will make the freed people 'better citizens, better neighbors and better men."[29] Because faith was part of the mission it empowered many of the freedmen teachers to carry out their duties. Sarah Jane Foster wrote in her letter from West Virginia in 1866: "Christians pray for us here. God is at work. I need grace to help me in what I have to do."[30] For teachers who embraced a Christian worldview, their faith made them stronger and enabled them to do what they needed to do to help the freedmen. This philosophy of life embraced the idea of God's providence, which implied that regardless of the events that unfolded in the lives of these freedmen teachers, they believed God was in control.

While faith was an essential element for many freedmen teachers, several of whom were God-fearing women, many of the men and women who taught came from various backgrounds. Several black educators, both men and women, taught in Florida. And some of the Florida freedmen teachers were once slaves themselves. For example, John Lee and Michael Rutther taught in Florida and were once slaves and the children of slaves. Former slave Nicholas Said

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[27] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South,* 109.

[28] Reports of the Freedmen's Aid Society, 1866-1882, 1885, 1887. 1866-1882, 1885, 1887. MS 615; 1, Freedman's Aid Society Records, 1866-1932: Annual Reports, 1866-1924. Interdenominational Theological Center. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[29] E.B. Duncan, Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen, 1866. 1866-11-08. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[30] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 54.

remarkably noted that his service as a freedmen teacher in the South and Florida was done in the hope he "could be of great use to my benighted people," and he emphasized that teaching meant to him the practice of "self-denial" and "to render myself useful to my race." Memorable were the freedmen male teachers who served in the Union Army. That was the case for Frederick Hill and King Jackson who were both Florida freedmen teachers and military veterans of the Union Army. And, for an occupation typically thought of as a women's profession it was remarkable that Alexander Pettiway served as a freedmen teacher for fifteen years and part of his service was in Escambia, Florida. Similarly, in the case of black female freedmen teachers, not every teacher fit the mold of a white female teacher who traveled to the South. Examples of black female Florida freedmen teachers included Mary Eliza C. Kent, Mary E. Lightbourne, Caroline Myers, Frederica B. Nolta, Charlotte S. Smith, and Lydia Smith.[31] In the instance of Georgia freedmen teachers, historian Jacqueline Jones contended that not much background information was known about their black female freedmen teachers, except for Harriet Brent Jacobs.[32] A comparable situation occurred in Florida. For instance, the Hillsborough County 1880 census listed two black female teachers, Harriet Henderson and Catherine Hamilton. Still, other than their names, little information was available about them.[33] Nevertheless, census data illuminated at least some information about the freedman teachers who otherwise received less focus than the more prominent freedman teachers. Merely knowing the names of the black male and female freedmen teachers who worked to educate the freedmen is inspiring. The fact that black people

[31] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. The examples of teachers included in this commentary were given as a sample and not intended to provide an exclusive list of the Florida freedmen teachers who fit the profile discussed. Over 40 black teachers who taught in Florida are included in the FTP database.

[32] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 34.

[33] Kathleen S. Howe, "Stepping into Freedom: African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, during the Reconstruction Era," *Tampa Bay History*: Vol. 20: Iss. 2, Article 3 (1998). Digital Commons USF.

claimed their rightful position in society and encouraged other black people, once slaves, through education represented a remarkable facet of Reconstruction.

Obtaining good teachers for the freedmen was an ongoing issue in Florida during Reconstruction. Men and women answered the call to teach, but were not necessarily qualified. A Freedmen's Bureau report from Tampa, Florida, in 1868 included this question on the form: "What more can this Bureau do for educating the children of Refugees (or Poor Whites)?" The response given stated: "to establish a free school in each county in the districts." Then added in parenthesis next to the answer was "with good teachers." The insertion of the phrase captured an essential issue regarding the education of the freedmen—the need for capable instructors. The impact of a "good teacher" on the lives of freedmen was invaluable. Otherwise, freedmen did not gain the most they could from their education pursuits.[34] To add to that issue, teacher longevity was unpredictable. The time teachers spent in the South correlated to the depth of their dedication to the task of freedmen's education.[35] Two women who maintained a faithful and honorable effort to assist freedmen's education in Florida were Esther Hill Hawkes and Harriet B. Greely.

The diary entries from Mrs. Hawkes revealed the accomplishments and struggles of a freedmen teacher in Florida. At first Mrs. Hawkes travelled to the South as part of the Freedmen's Aid Society. She was a well-qualified, trained teacher described as "intelligent and studious." Her New England background made life in rustic Florida difficult. Her diary entries described encounters with fleas, mosquitoes, and poisonous snakes. In her Jacksonville, Florida,

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[34] Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Officers for the United States of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872. National Museum of African American History and Culture. Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives. The report was given by James H. Roberts, a teacher in Hillsborough County, Florida.

[35] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 45.

May 18, 1864 entry Mrs. Hawkes noted that she had another sore throat and that she lost her watch chain when teaching at school. On top of that she expressed concern about a "terrific thunder shower." At Port Orange, Florida she encountered an area where "Religious services were rare," which conflicted with her New England upbringing. Yet, as with northern travelers to Florida even today, Mrs. Hawkes appreciated the milder winters compared to what she experienced in New Hampshire. Yet, weather was not the only obstacle Mrs. Hawkes faced during her time in Florida. Her Jacksonville, Florida, February 24, 1865 entry revealed an intense situation about her teaching experience in Florida. Mrs. Hawkes explained that during a "sewing society meet" she sensed other women who objected to "Nigger Teachers," she wrote. Mrs. Hawkes continued to explain that it was "*quite* humiliating" to be thought of that way. Essentially, southern white women did not want to socialize with teachers who taught black children.[36]

Like many of her fellow freedmen teachers, Mrs. Hawkes was an abolitionist. She was from New Hampshire, and her major accomplishment regarding freedmen's education in Florida was the establishment of the "first racially integrated free school" in Jacksonville, Florida in 1864. The combined classroom experiment did not continue long in Florida. However, her school remained known as the "first in any southern state" to include white and black races.[37] Mrs. Hawkes' Jacksonville, Florida, May 31, 1864 diary entry recorded this milestone of her teaching career: "Monday morning! Just three months ago to-day I commenced the first free school in Florida! Three months!" The multiple exclamation points demonstrated Mrs. Hawkes' pride in her accomplishment for the freedmen. She described the school as "large, orderly and

[36] Gerald Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), vi, 1, 20, 22, 74, 115.

[37] Gerald Schwartz, "An Integrated Free School in Civil War Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1982): 155.

intelligent." Mrs. Hawkes expressed of the accomplishment: "I feel that I can look upon my labors here as successful." Equally of importance to Mrs. Hawkes was the adoration she received from her students. She described the students' reaction to her teaching efforts in her Jacksonville, Florida, December 23, 1864 entry: "It is pleasant to find ones self so fondly remembered even by poor little black children." Hawkes recalled that when she walked on the street or passed homes she heard from the children, "Thers Miss Hawk." A later diary entry given by Mrs. Hawkes noted the formation of a sabbath-school within the school-house she operated. Attendance included 140 students who she described having "clean, happy faces." Multiple entries demonstrated Mrs. Hawkes' continued interest in the growth of the schools for the benefit of the children in Florida.[38]

Mrs. Hawkes' career advanced during her time in Florida. Her August 21, 1865, Jacksonville, Florida entry noted her appointment as the Acting Assistant Commissioner for the Freedmen's Bureau. This role meant she was an administrator for the Bureau. Even though Florida was remote, this appointment reflected the quality performance by Mrs. Hawkes during her time as a Florida freedmen teacher. The next day she wrote about her new role and how she was approached by white and black people "for all manner of things." She felt it was a scenario where the "natives" tried to take advantage of the new leader. The main issues she dealt with related to controversy over "abandoned lands between the freedmen and the old owners." Land disputes constituted one of the greatest issues during Reconstruction in Florida. Colonel Thomas W. Osborne, Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Florida, offered Mrs. Hawkes the chance to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Florida. Interestingly, she noted that if she were a man, he would not have offered the choice, but because Mrs. Hawkes was a

[38] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 79-81, 100, 110.

woman, she could turn the position down. She wanted to take the post but did not think her husband, Dr. J. M. Hawkes, approved. Amazingly in the midst of career opportunities Mrs. Hawkes remained a highly sought teacher. She noted in her diary a few days later about her educational initiatives: "Many of the men begged me to stay and give them a month's schooling."[39]

The life of Mrs. Hawkes illustrated one of numerous women freedmen teachers who impacted the lives of freedmen during the Reconstruction of the South. Mrs. Hawkes left Port Orange, Florida, in 1870 and returned to New England. When Mrs. Hawkes died on May 6, 1906 the eulogy offered by the minister at her funeral succinctly described her life: "She has been doing God's work in the world."[40]

When President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, a significant humanitarian mission field opened in the South. Multiple Christian organizations who believed in evangelism worked with freedmen in Florida. One of the foremost organizations was the American Missionary Association. The AMA, founded in 1846 by George Whipple and Simeon S. Jocelyn, commissioned teachers and preachers who worked in Florida even during the Civil War. The AMA committed to three goals for helping freedmen: equipping them to defend themselves politically and socially and training them to run their schools. Gorham and Harriet B. Greely, both AMA missionaries, served in Florida and embodied the AMA mission. They served in St. Augustine, Florida from 1864 to 1866. After they left St. Augustine, they served in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1867. Gorham Greely was a Methodist minister, born in Maine, who ministered in

[39] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 176-177, 184, 191.
[40] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 27.

Boston, Massachusetts, according to an 1850 census. His wife was Harriet B. Greely. Gorham and Harriet had two daughters, Harriet E., and Caroline G. Greely[41]

As established, most teachers from Northern aid societies were single, religious, and energetic young women. Mr. and Mrs. Greely were an exception as it was unusual for a husband and wife to serve on the mission field together in the field of freedmen's education. Mr. and Mrs. Greely followed a division of labor typical for married couples in the mission field. Mr. Gorham Greely preached, handled official AMA dealings, and taught Sabbath School. Mrs. Harriet Greely visited homes and taught school. The dedication Mr. and Mrs. Greely exhibited in their service to the freedmen was remarkable in displaying the genuine Christian testimony in their service to God. For example, Florida summers were unbearably hot during many months and this contributed to the return of AMA missionaries back to the North. However, Mr. Greely explained on July 1866 that he and Mrs. Greely remained in Florida because they did not want their absence to lessen the spiritual growth they witnessed progressing with the freedmen.[42] Mrs. Greely believed in her work regarding the education of the freedmen to the extent she chose to teach an enthusiastic adult class instead of taking a summer vacation.[43] Mr. Greely's final letter documented with the AMA was completed in 1867. Mrs. Greely's letters concluded December 1867. The conclusion reached by the dates on the letters was that the couple left Florida and returned to Maine.[44] The correspondence of the men and women who served with northern aid societies, such as the American Missionary Association, revealed the sacrificial attitude of the

[41] Barbara E. Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White: The Sisters of St. Joseph in the American South.* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 71-72, 74-75.

[42] Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White*, 72, 74-75

[43] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 150.

[44] Mattick, *Teaching in Black and White*, 74-75

freedmen teachers. Like Mrs. Hawkes, Mrs. Greely's writings showed a teacher's dedication during her ministry for the freedmen in Florida during Reconstruction.

The letters Mrs. Greely wrote usually reported on the status of her mission and the condition of the freedmen in Florida. For example, in her January 23, 1865 letter from St. Augustine, Florida, Mrs. Greely referenced the Freedmen's Relief Association which also sent teachers to her location. Her impression was that they were "good teachers." The FRA had two schools, primary and advanced. Mrs. Greely requested copies of a "large print Testament." Greely found the situation of the elderly freedmen astonishing because even though "the very life elements of those faculties which God had given them had been so nearly crushed out by the design [word illegible] of their task-masters," their fervor for learning remained. To that point Mrs. Greely wrote: "But they can learn, and <u>will</u> learn to read the word of God, which is more precious idea to them than the possession of silver and gold." She underlined the word "will" in her letter and that revealed her determination to see her students, of all ages, succeed in learning to read. As a motivational tool, common place for educators, Mrs. Greely promised her students a large print New Testament after they learned to read. She described the "joy" that overtook their face when they heard this news. That instance revealed how the freedmen accepted the New Testament as an incentive and how teachers used the Bible in AMA teaching practices. The letter addressed some mistreatment by those who did not accept her involvement with "colored people." But this did not deter Mrs. Greely. She wrote about the "importance of our mission in light of the Gospel and the example of Christ." In keeping with Christian terminology she used phrases, such as "if God wills it" repeatedly. Not every part of the letter contained a serious tone. She also discussed the weather in this letter, which she described as "delightful." And, she described flowers she gathered from gardens. During the period of this letter, she provided an

update about her health which she explained was "very good." Mrs. Greely made an astute observation during her time as a freedmen teacher in Florida when she referred to the impact of emancipation on the "poor whites" or "Crackers" in this letter. She described their condition as possibly worse than the "fugitive negro." As a result, women made an effort to start a school for the children of the destitute whites.[45] The significance of Mrs. Greely's outlook as a freedman teacher in Florida concerned how she witnessed the devastation of slavery on the lives of both poor white people and the freed slaves in the state. The portrayal of poor whites as harmed because of slavery was promoted in Hinton Helper's book, *The Impending Crisis of the South*. He did not oppose slavery in the moral sense but in the economic regard of how backward it made the South. Slave owners were in total control of all affairs of the government for the South, Helper contended. He made this assessment about the situation of the poor whites:

> To the illiterate poor whites—made poor and ignorant by the system of slavery—they hold out the very idea that slavery is the very bulwark of our liberties, and the foundation of American independence!
>
> The lords of the lash are not only the absolute masters of the blacks, who are bought and sold, and driven about like so many cattle, but they are also the oracles and arbiters of all non-slaveholding whites, whose freedom is merely nominal, and whose unparalleled illiteracy and degradation is purposefully and fiendishly perpetuated."[46]

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[45] Harriet B. Greely and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[46] Hinton Rowan Helper, *Compendium of the Impending Crisis of the South* (United States: A. B. Burdick, 1860), 24.

Mrs. Greely opened her April 29, 1865 letter from St. Augustine, Florida with "good news of Lee's Surrender." She commented about the freedmen and how the news of Lee's surrender made them feel more assured about the status of their freedom. She noted how the mistresses, plantation owner's wives, reacted unfavorably to the news and felt "that all was lost!" Mrs. Greely included the most revealing remark about the mistresses who "wept and groaned saying, we shall never have our Niggers back again." The control the white plantation owners and their wives once possessed was lost. But the gain was freedom for the slaves. However, the freedom the slaves experienced was threatened, according to Harriet Greely. When whites in Florida learned about President Abraham Lincoln's assassination they began "taunting the Colored people" about their freedom. President Lincoln's death unsettled some slaves who because of their fears and loss of hope discussed returning to the North "to escape enslavement again." Yet, as a testament to the willpower and faith of the freedmen she encountered in Florida, Mrs. Greely recognized how they put their "confidence back again into the strong arm of their God, which they said was above all, and they would trust Him to carry their cause through."[47]

Mrs. Greely referenced health issues she experienced in Florida in her September 30, 1865 letter from St. Augustine, Florida. A shipment of supplies she received seemed to offer "comfort" amidst "this place of destitution," she wrote. In keeping with her spiritual viewpoint on all things Mrs. Greely expressed, "I deeply felt the force of our Savior's words— "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things; and therefore He had sent them just in time." Not only did she find relief because of the act of "others kindness," but also the poor received aid from the boxes of supplies, in this case, clothing was included in the shipment. Part

[47] Harriet B. Greely and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, April 29, 1865, to George Whipple. 29 Apr. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

of the supplies contained the New Testaments she previously requested for the freedmen learning to read. In keeping with the testimony left by Mrs. Greely she included the following summary of her experience as a teacher in Florida: “But I have the testimony of a good conscience that with a deep interest for this oppressed people and in all sincerity and ardent devotion to their cause, I have labored night and day— in season and out of season to develop their moral and mental faculties— and I know my labor has not been in vain.” Even while she faced illness and challenges, Mrs. Greely wrote this statement.[48]

While a freedmen teacher in Florida Mrs. Greely struggled with the “Catholic presence,” as she called it, in St. Augustine, Florida. She conveyed great concern about the Catholics. Mrs. Greely, a devout Protestant Christian, disagreed with the Catholic Church and their attempt to convert black people to Catholicism. A second issue was that the Catholics attracted black children to attend their schools. To this she remarked of their efforts: “if they are in favor of colored people learning to read, why haven’t they done it before?” She continued, “I want my children to go where they can learn every thing that white children do.” If the Catholics succeeded Mrs. Greely reported it would cut her school attendance by half. Yet in the midst of her trouble, she explained that two adult Catholics became members of her class and asked “what they must do to be saved.” She estimated that approximately 40 men and women were now members of her class, and they all wanted to learn about the Bible. Many of the students accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, according to Mrs. Greely.[49]

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[48] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, September 30, 1865, to M. E. Strieby. 30 Sept. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[49] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, September 30, 1865, to M. E. Strieby. 30 Sept. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

Interestingly, Mrs. Greely originally was not commissioned to the South to teach, but her duties changed. On April 1, 1866, her letter from Jacksonville, Florida, reflected her role change because Mrs. Greely now operated a school in Florida. Mrs. Greely emphasized how she asked for the "blessing of God" to aid her work for the freedmen. Mrs. Greely explained regarding the freedmen that she aimed "to do something toward the development of their manhood as also their moral & religious interests."[50] As Mrs. Greely reflected on the condition of the freedmen during their transition from slavery to freedom in Florida, she opened her May 9, 1867 letter from Jacksonville, Florida, with the following Scripture reference: "the substance of things hoped for & the evidence of things not seen." She found the work difficult at times and compared the faith she needed to complete her work to the biblical illustration of "Peter walking on the water to Jesus." In a perfect conclusion and picture of the service of Harriet Greely, she signed her letter, "Yours in the bonds of Christian affection H.B. Greely.[51] The letters from Mrs. Greely demonstrated the faith and devotion of a dedicated freedmen teacher in Florida.

Not everyone viewed the work of the freedmen teachers as noble. Teachers faced setbacks because the white southerners stubbornly kept to their way of thinking.[52] Southerners deemed the work completed by the teachers as intruding in the lives of black people or, to a worse degree, hurting the affairs of black people. The women freedmen teachers received criticism and were called "bigots, feminists, and temperance zealots" because white southerners disagreed with their mission.[53] The disagreement over the presence of northern freedmen

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[50] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: Jacksonville, Florida, April 1, 1866, to Samuel Hunt. 1 Apr. 1866. MS American Missionary Association Archives,1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[51] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: Jacksonville, Florida, May 9, 1867, to M.E. Strieby. 9 May 1867. MS American Missionary Association Archives,1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[52] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 30.

[53] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen*, XI, 16, 20, 34-36.

teachers in the South stemmed from two issues during the government's education efforts. The first controversy involved whether northern missionary teachers or the native southern whites controlled the schools. Second, questions existed during this period about whether black people should receive an education. Northern missionary teachers came to the South intent on helping black people because they detested slavery and the social hierarchy in the South. In their mind they were enlightening the South and "transforming a barbarous land." Organizations like the American Missionary Association intentionally pursued teachers who possessed missionary focus and religiousness. Typically, white southern women resented the presence of the northern teachers more than the men did. A teacher in Georgia remarked that the southern white women "shrink from contact with us in the streets, point us out, and stare at us in church, evidently desiring to annoy, and make us uncomfortable." [54] In Florida, the freedmen teachers faced isolation because the white residents, including women, disliked their presence in the state. The lack of hospitality complicated the freedmen's teachers' access to suitable housing conditions which certainly contributed to the difficulty of securing "qualified teachers."[55]

Another degree of difficulty teachers experienced resulted from their occupation as a teacher. Sarah Jane Foster described spending "long hours in the classroom" both in the daytime and at night teaching students of all ages. She had few breaks during the school day. Foster revealed a struggle in her routine when she wrote, "It seems strange to serve God on the Sabbath by teaching grown men to read about cats, bats, and rats."[56] An additional frustration felt by teachers related to irregular attendance. For example, Mrs. Greely often lost many students

[54] Vaughn, *Schools for All,* 24-26, 32.

[55] Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 73, 75.

[56] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen*, XI, 16, 20, 34-36.

during “planting time.”[57] Florida freed slave Acie Thomas recalled that “Northerners came South ‘in swarms’ and opened schools for the ex-slaves.” However, Acie Thomas did not advance in his “blue back Webster.” The reason given was that he had to work, and his parents believed that “politics and learning” were not intended for the “humble.” Acie Thomas explained the rationale given was that “too much book learning made the brain weak.”[58] However, other parents approved of their children's education. One father in Florida with nine children kept his children in school despite being valuable laborers because he understood the vital role of education in their lives.[59]

The conditions of teaching in the South following the Civil War required courage of the freedmen teachers. An article in *The Freedmen’s Record*, a publication of the New England Freedmen’s Aid Society, reported on the mindset of the whites in the South that they were unwilling to recognize the education of the freedmen benefited them also. The argument was that an “intelligent” laborer was “more profitable, than an ignorant laborer.” Therefore, the teachers sent by Northern aid societies to the South helped both the freedmen and whites in the South. While the freedmen “thronged to the school” and “warmly welcomed” the teachers, whites often reacted “violently” at the news of a school opening in their region, such as throwing stones. Changing the “attitudes” of the majority of whites in the South seemed impossible. The North and South engaged in a terrible Civil War and that presented an opportunity for the nation to learn from that point of history; however, a portion of the South “have learned nothing, and never will learn any thing, by the results of the war,” *The Freedmen’s Record* reported. That translated to teachers who entered the South's mission field and faced severe opposition. One

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[57] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction*, 50.

[58] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Acie Thomas: slave interview, November 25, 1936" (1937). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 23.

[59] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction,* 50.

teacher was attacked. Even though reactions such as this did not represent all of the whites in the South it demonstrated that a number of Southerners did not "comprehend liberty" or "appreciate generosity." Near the nation's capital teachers were threatened and needed protection in order to carry out their "mission of charity and civilization," *The Freedmen's Record* noted. However, in the same report it mentioned teachers were able to "hold their ground" and described them as possessing a "heroic and self-sacrificing spirit." Teachers remained in their teaching posts despite the hostilities they faced. Freedmen teacher, S. Fannie Wood, knew about the violence toward the teachers, yet resolutely stated, "I have no fears."[60]

Opposition to Northern freedmen teachers in Florida often stemmed from the insistence on acquiring black teachers for the freedmen. This desire for black educators did not come from a place of helping the black race. Some whites in Florida did not agree with the presence of Northern teachers in their state, despite being well qualified teachers. Floridians tolerated a black teacher teaching other black people. Some white people in Florida preferred the untrained black teacher over the well-qualified Northern freedmen teacher. Another fear held by white Floridians related to the viewpoints of the Northern freedmen teachers who "tended to foster racial and social equality."[61] The fear of certain teachers educating black people correlated to the entire mission of the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern aid societies, and the Freedmen teachers, and that was how education offered freedmen the opportunity to achieve their full rights as citizens.

White superiority dictated that the freedmen never advanced above the status of a slave. The formation of organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, existed chiefly to protect the former way of life for white society in the South. Freedmen teachers on a mission to elevate freedmen

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[60] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[61] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 104-105.

directly contradicted such philosophies. The Ku Klux Klan posed a terrifying opposition to the freedmen teachers in the South. A Georgia man who taught in a black school reported on Ku Klux Klan violence: "They beat and cut me with knives," the white man explained. The victim said the reason for the attack resulted because "I had often spoken of the colored people of this place and said they ought to have learning the same as the whites…. I am in for equal rights and that was the cause they done me so."[62] In Mississippi, a Ku Klux Klan "conspiracy" was present. *The Cecil Whig* newspaper reported in 1871 about an incident where the Superintendent of Education was "taken out of his bed by a band of Ku Klux assassins and whipped in a most unmerciful manner." A teacher, Mr. Newsom, received such an intimidating threat from the Ku Klux Klan that he was forced to closed the school. If he had not followed the Klan orders, he faced the threat of a "fearful penalty." The growing threats towards teachers in Mississippi made it difficult to find teachers willing to teach in the black schools because they feared the "disguised men." Multiple teachers were forced to stop teaching in the black schools. The article chronicled several threats the Klan made against teachers in the state. A teacher, V. Granger, described as a "quiet, inoffensive man, having never meddled with politics," was beaten with 150 lashes. Another teacher was attacked by stoning and the school house set on fire. Burning schoolhouses seemed to be the method of choice for the Klan, and it was grimly successful in forcing teachers to leave.[63] The reports about the brutality enacted against teachers concerned the men and women who participated in helping black people during this period. However, the tactic of threatening the teachers by the Ku Klux Klan typically worked to push teachers away. For this reason, it is uncertain precisely how many violent acts took place against freedmen teachers

[62] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 171-173.

[63] *The Cecil Whig.* [volume] October 7, 1871.

during Reconstruction as a result of the protest of Southern whites.[64] Because the mistreatment of freedmen teachers was not unusual in the South, teachers who traveled to Florida no less felt uneasy about the white southerners they encountered.

Figure 1.8. "Washington, D.C.—The Senate Committee for the Investigation of Southern Outrages—Scene in the Retrenchment Committee's Room, Capitol. —Hearing the Statement of a School-Teacher from New York, Who Had Been "Run Out" by the Ku-Klux." 1871. U.S. Senate Collection. Removed to comply with copyright. https://www.senate.gov/art-artifacts/historical-images/prints-engravings/38_00382.htm.

Jackson County, Florida, gained national attention in the case of violence against whites during Reconstruction. "Over 150 people were murdered" in Jackson County. Included in that death toll were black political leaders and one white man, a Jewish businessman who treated his black customers "fairly." A black minister remarked on the situation in Jackson County, "That is where Satan has his seat." During Reconstruction, the balance of power between whites and

[64] Vaughn, *Schools for All,* 35.

blacks was disturbed. The Ku Klux Klan felt justified with its actions that attempted to restore the version of society that kept blacks in a subordinate position.[65] While the response of white Floridians was the most extreme in Jackson County, other Florida counties experienced violence. In Alachua County, Florida an "assault" occurred when white teachers requested their students sing "Rally Round the Flag," another name for "Battle Cry of Freedom," and the white Floridians objected to the song choice.[66] The words of the song shed light on the reason some Floridians rejected the song. The chorus stated: "The Union forever, hurrah boys, hurrah! Down with the traitor, up with the star; While we rally round the flag, boys rally once again, Shouting the battle cry of freedom![67] In Mariana County, Florida a white teacher was "harassed" because he taught freedmen in a night school.[68] In Port Orange, Florida, a school building was burned.[69] In Florida, teachers were more intimidated than attacked. Nonetheless, the aggression directed toward teachers increased their awareness, especially when they were "traveling at night." One teacher departed from Florida "after six shots were fired into her home one night."[70] Freedmen teacher and former slave Nicholas Said wrote about Klan violence in his autobiography. When he was in Georgia and Florida, he received word that Alabama was "a very dangerous State" because of the Ku Klux. Life for the freedmen in that region was oppressive. The white people in that area restricted the freedmen to the extent that they did not "know what freedom was," Said wrote. Remarkably, in the face of known opposition to black people, Said explained his devotion to helping his fellow man: "I have no aspirations for fame, nor anything of the sort. But I shall

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[65] Foner, *Forever Free,* 173.

[66] Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974)*,* 76.

[67] *Battle cry of freedom, or, We'll rally round the flag, boys. Johnson, Song Publisher, &c., No. 7 N. Tenth Street, Phila*. Image. https://www.loc.gov/item/amss-cw100390/.

[68] Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet,* 76.

[69] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 105.

[70] Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction,* 220.

prefer at all times to find myself in the midst of the most ignorant of my race, and endeavor to teach the rising generation the advantages of education."[71] Freedmen teacher E. B. Eveleth provided an account in *The American Missionary,* an American Missionary Association Magazine, about a fever that "hit the school." Eveleth explained that no northern teachers or black people died as a result of sickness from the fever. In the most compelling explanation, Eveleth noted that it was due to "God's providence." Ironically, the individuals who succumbed to the fever and died were "some drinking persons and Ku Klux" members. The people that had been a "terror to us all, have died," Eveleth wrote. She continued and noted that most of the people who died because of the fever hated the black people and thought they were too low for God to care about them. But "Now they know God is no respecter of persons," Eveleth wrote. Interestingly, during this time of sickness, the black school was "not interrupted," but the white school closed. Eveleth closed the letter with a proclamation of her faith in God and recognized the need for a revival in this region.[72]

A compelling explanation for the violence in Florida after the Civil War involved the "conclusion that the former Confederates were determined to regain their former status at any cost." Evidence showed that in Florida the "Young Men's Democratic Clubs" used tactics that evoked extreme fear from their victims to strike a blow at "Radical power in Florida." These organized clubs were state-wide organizations.[73] It was a common reaction during Reconstruction for "Democratic clubs, 'Ku Klux' bands, or local regulators" to form. As far as the presence of the Ku Klux organization in Florida a Pensacola Democrat stated: "I know of

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[71] *The Autobiography of Nicholas Said, A Native of Bournou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa.* (Memphis: Shotwell & Co., Publishers, 1873), 205, 212.

[72] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 16 1872 Magazine.

[73] Ralph L. Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida, 1868-1871," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1961): 184-85.

nothing like the Ku Klux Klan in this part of Florida." The theory was that KKK ideas were more formulated in the rest of the South than in Florida.[74] Thus, the political harassment that occurred in Florida resulted because of "organized bands" and not necessarily the official KKK organization. In 1871, the passage of the Ku Klux Enforcement Act "ceased violence and brought peace."[75] The official name for the act was "An Act to enforce the Provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other Purposes." The purpose of the act was to ensure black Americans received all of the protections granted under the U.S. Constitution. Section 3 of the Act stated:

> "That in all cases where insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combinations, or conspiracies in any State shall so obstruct or hinder the execution of the laws thereof, and of the United States, as to deprive any portion or class of the people of such State of any of the rights, privileges, or immunities, or protection, named in the Constitution and secured by this act…".[76]

The passage of this act represented the back-and-forth flow of progress during Reconstruction. While black people gained a great deal in the context of freedmen's education, the South added measures that hindered access to their advancement. For example, Black Codes were passed in response to the civil rights measures taken by Congress during Reconstruction.[77] Regardless of what organization or club intimidated the teachers, freedmen, and other individuals who

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[74] William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), 563, 558.

[75] Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida," 184-85.

[76] An Act to enforce the Provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other Purposes. 1871. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. ProQuest Congressional. The National Constitution Center website provided a summary of the Historic Document.

[77] Foner, *Forever Free,* 109.

promoted black people, it all served as a way for some white Southerners to resist accepting the defeat of the Civil War and the realization of emancipation.[78]

Adversity for the Northern freedmen teachers in the South and in Florida also took a natural course—death. The American Missionary Association reported in their 1868 publication: "Death has been more than usually active among us of late." Teacher Julia M. Marshall, whom the students called "Miss Julia," died. Another teacher who passed, Mrs. Clift, obituary described her as an effective freedmen teacher with the "rare gift in a teacher, of securing good discipline, without severity." Mrs. Clift used music to inspire her students. The daughter of Reverend S. S. Jocelyn, AMA Secretary, died. The article described her as a "faithful Christian teacher." She taught in South Carolina and Florida. Reverend Jocelyn's daughter "won the confidence and love of the colored people, old and young" to such a degree that several black people came to her funeral. They honored her with flowers and "planted trees at her grave."[79] The 1872 AMA publication referenced the death of Mrs. R. C. Loveridge. In 1863, she travelled from her home in Syracuse, New York to accept the mission as a freedmen teacher. While working as a freedman teacher in Fernandina, Florida, she became ill with a disease. The magazine noted that Loveridge was "the only Christian lady in the place" and lived a humble life.[80] And, the death of freedmen teacher Alicia S. Blood was mentioned in the 1878 AMA magazine. She served in Monticello, Florida and was described as a "kind instructor." She contracted a "long and severe illness." C. Thurston Chase, Superintendent of Education in Florida, wrote a letter on August 15, 1867 that requested a woman teacher. In the description, he specified in the qualifications that

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[78] Caroline Mays Brevard, Robertson, James Alexander. *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to Our Own Times* (United States: Florida state historical society, 1925), 127.

[79] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 12 1868 Magazine.

[80] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 16 1872 Magazine.

the teacher possessed the ability of "enduring privations." The expectation meant a teacher who accepted a position in Florida had to do so with the understanding that her life was one of hardship.[81] Teaching was a demanding profession in Florida, whether the result of ostracization, the elements, or violence. This provided an explanation of why the state experienced an "overturn of teachers." However, Florida managed to keep schools operating.[82] The state's progress in education resulted from dedicated and "self-sacrificing" teachers who persevered even when they lacked proper compensation to support their basic needs.[83]

Analysis of the experiences of the women freedmen teachers, such as Esther Hill Hawkes and Harriet B. Greely, provided a picture of who these women were. Mrs. Greely confirmed the character of the teachers she encountered in her region while a teacher in St. Augustine, Florida. Overall, the teachers were "excellent ladies and teachers in all moral duties," Mrs. Greely wrote in her letter.[84] The achievements of the freedmen teachers in Florida were undeniable during Reconstruction. By 1868, the basis for black education in Florida was established.[85] In 1860, 276 teachers were listed in the Florida Census report.[86] By 1870, the Florida Census showed 228 Female teachers and 254 male teachers.[87] This no doubt reflected the growth in the interest in education in the state.

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[81] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 11 1867 Magazine.

[82] Barnard, Henry., Force, William Quereau., Goodwin, Moses B..., Douai, Adolf. Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June, 1868 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1871.

[83] Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida* (United States: Press of the New era printing Company, 1921), 49-50.

[84] Greely, Harriet B., and Mrs. Gorham. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, December 9, 1865, to George Whipple. 9 Dec. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

[85] Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida*, 31.

[86] United States Census Bureau: 1860 Census: Population of the United States.

[87] United States Census Bureau: 1870 Census: Volume 1. The Statistics of the Population of the United States.

Freedmen teachers desired to see the nation restored from the "sin of slavery."[88] The work completed to help freedmen develop their identity as free citizens and learn about Jesus Christ represented the true spirit of evangelism. For that reason, the mission carried out by the northern aid societies and the freedmen teachers was historic, as one author described, regarding its Christian humanitarian outreach. The freedmen teachers, many of whom were women, fulfilled their duties for the freedmen under humbling and sometimes dangerous circumstances.[89] A letter addressed to *The Freedmen's Record* captured the enthusiasm of a freed female slave child for learning when she showed a "look of delight and joy" across her face when presented with a primer that she treasured.[90] The sheer delight over learning certainly motivated the freedmen teachers even during the most difficult days. Freedmen teacher Sarah Jane Foster expressed the following in her letter from West Virginia in 1866: "The black race will not again be enslaved, though years may elapse before they can take their rightful place. Just now education is their aim, and nothing is suffered to hinder them in its pursuit. As I look back, I am astonished at the progress that some of my scholars have made."[91]

Education for the freedmen represented the most enduring impact of the Freedmen's Bureau, "Yankee teachers," and northern aid societies during Reconstruction. The efforts of the teachers led to the literacy of "at least one-quarter of the total Southern black population." Moreover, their efforts contributed to the growth and instruction of black teachers who in turn inspired other black people.[92] W. E. B DuBois' keen reflection described the accomplishments of the freedmen teachers during Reconstruction:

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[88] Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love,* 40.

[89] R. T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (Clarendon, 1977).

[90] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice. The letter came from Washington D.C. and was written by Harriette Carter. A primer is a beginning book for learning to read.

[91] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 76.

[92] Vaughn, *Schools for All,* 23.

Behind the mists of ruin and rapine waved the calico dresses of women who dared, and after the hoarse mouthings of the field guns rang the rhythm of the alphabet. Rich and poor they were, serious and curious. Bereaved now of father, now of brother, now of more than these, they came seeking a life work in planting New England schoolhouses among the white and black of the South. They did their work well."[93]

[93] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 17.

Chapter 6

The Students, the Schoolhouse, and the Teaching Environment

"They rushed not to the grog-shop but to the schoolroom—they cried for the spelling-book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life." Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1879

"When he was set free he had *nothing*," Florida freedmen teacher Alicia S. Blood wrote in her letter for the American Missionary Association. She conveyed the story of a freed slave who, as an older man seventy years in age, attended school after hours for individual lessons. He wanted "to read the Bible for himself before he dies."[1] Freedmen teacher E. B. Eveleth wrote in her AMA letter the account of the "rush" of students to attend a new school that opened. Rules set age limits, and only those aged six to twenty-one were permitted to attend school. But Eveleth explained that "they plead so hard we have some older than that." When a woman, fifty years old, was restricted because of her age to participate in school, she became sick. As a result, an exception was made, and she was permitted to attend school. She responded, "Oh! Thank the Lord, he has heard my prayer. I asked him to open the way so that I could come, and I knew he would hear me."[2] The freedmen's strong desire for education created a unique learning environment. Freedmen diligently sought education regardless of the teacher's qualifications or conditions of the schoolhouses. Now emancipated from slavery, the freedmen of all ages wanted to practice independence in their way of thinking.

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[1] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 15 1871 Magazine.

[2] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 14 1870 Magazine. From an article titled, "Florida," Gainesville, 1869.

Though rare, slaves received an education before the Civil War. Plantation owners who thought an educated slave made a better laborer were taught by the master or, in some instances, the children of the master. Another method slaves were taught was through missionaries who desired for slaves to know the Bible. Other slaves managed to pick up learning through their interaction with whites or other slaves who knew how to read. Finally, some slaves were "self-taught." Everything changed regarding the thought of black education after the Denmark Vesey (1822) and the Nat Turner (1831) slave rebellions. After those occurrences southern whites adamantly believed "it was impossible to cultivate black minds without arousing a spirit of self-assertion and rebellion." Because of the slave revolts, southern legislatures passed harsher laws against slave literacy. Opposition to slave education stemmed from a few factors. Some were convinced black people did not have the aptitude for learning. Some opposed the idea of black people gaining access to abolitionist material. While others simply wanted to hold black people in a "state of ignorance." However, as often the case under oppressive conditions people found ways around the laws of society by secretly holding schools for slaves and free black people. And some people ignored the laws and taught black people. For this reason, it is believed that "By 1860 between 5 and 10 percent of the adult population (both free and slave) in the South was literate, although the level of achievement was low."[3] This form of defiant black education cannot be confused with the existence of a formal public system of education across the South. It was a "criminal" act to educate slaves, but still black people found a way to receive an education even if those teaching them were barely literate themselves. Poor whites were not part of regular school attendance in the South either until after the Civil War.[4]

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[3] William Preston Vaughn, *Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South, 1865-1877.* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021), 1-3.

[4] Salmon Portland Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America (New York City: American Freedman's Union Commission, [1867?]), 28.

During the Civil War, the Union Army acted as an "early agent" in educating black people, teaching them to read and write. Therefore, it was not uncommon for black soldiers to be literate. A teacher in 1866 remarked on her educator experience: "I do not find one who has been a soldier unable to read."[5] Nonetheless, it was not until 1862 that a formal effort toward education of the freedmen began. Northern aid society teachers and missionaries traveled to the South and brought education to the slaves residing in Union occupied territories of the South. The northern aid society efforts coupled with the Freedmen's Bureau undertook a tremendous task for freedmen education in the South. General Oliver Otis Howard, head of the Freedmen's Bureau, joined agreeably with the work of the northern aid societies. The link between the two groups was close. Howard stated regarding the education objective of the Bureau that he did not want to "supersede the benevolent agencies already engaged, but to systemize and facilitate them." As part of the educational organization of the Bureau, John W. Alvord was appointed general Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau education division. Alvord's role entailed several responsibilities: growth of new schools, teacher accommodations and protection, and protection of schools, to name a few.[6]

The changes the South and Florida experienced during the Civil War and Reconstruction period are illuminated when observed through the perspective of a black person. Revealing the details about the experience of black people during Reconstruction presents its challenges. Most Reconstruction historical narratives provide facts based on a "white perspective." The account given by Timothy Thomas Fortune offered something different—his life as a black child and young adult during the Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida. Fortune's memoir, *After War*

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[5] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 98.

[6] Vaughn, *Schools for All,* 1-3, 11. John W. Alvord, a Congregationalist, was part of the "evangelical abolitionist Oberlin College and Lane Seminary."

Times, shared his viewpoint as a student in a freedmen school in Florida. His account was significant because it conveyed the importance of education during this period through the student's outlook. Fortune attributed his childhood in Florida during Reconstruction as central to his academic growth.[7]

Timothy Thomas Fortune was born in Marianna, Florida, on October 3, 1856. This portion of Florida was known as the "cotton-belt region" or Middle Florida and was part of the "Old South" mentality. Fortune experienced a childhood in a region previously a "raw frontier" transformed into a "settled plantation economy." When he was four years old, Florida joined the Confederacy. Fortune did not remember much about slavery. He recalled the emancipated slaves he knew were unsure about their new freedom and were concerned about their "new condition of freedom, responsibility, and homelessness." He described the Union officers he encountered as "sent directly from heaven to help them in their troubles." However, the former masters were "sour and vindictive" because of all they had lost, according to Fortune. He captured the wide sentiment of white Floridians when he commented about the death of Florida Governor John Milton. He wrote, "He was not strong enough, at his age, to face the failure of the Confederate Cause and his own personal loss in slaves and other property. So, through all life runs the same double purpose; what brings joy and gain to some brings sorrow and loss to others." A significant piece of the "joy and gain" brought to Fortune and other Florida blacks was an education. Fortune recalled the Freedmen's Bureau supplied Bibles to the black people who wanted a copy. But his mention of the opening of a Freedmen's school in a black church was of special importance to him. He called the teachers "splendid men" and he said, "the children simply idolized them." Fortune described the freedmen schools as "crowded with anxious and

[7] Timothy Thomas Fortune, *After War Times: An African American Childhood in Reconstruction-Era Florida,* Edited by Daniel R. Weinfeld (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University Alabama Press, 2014), 12, 16, 23.

eager pupils from the beginning." The task before the teachers was "smooth sailing," according to Fortune, because of the students' excitement to learn from the *Webster's Blue Back Speller*.[8] He observed the progress regarding education that the public school system did not exist in the South until the government's actions during Reconstruction facilitated their development. White people from wealthier backgrounds sent their children to academies. Fortune witnessed that the poor whites suffered losses along with Florida black people when he explained that the non-slaveholding class of white people lived in extreme poverty and lacked an education. Many of these poor whites comprised a large part of the Confederate armies, according to Fortune.[9]
It was therefore compelling how much the freedmen sought an education compared to the white people in the South. An article from *The New York Times,* June 11, 1866, highlighted the success of schools in Florida and noted, "the freedpeople, as a general thing, manifest greater interest in education than do the whites." The key to the enthusiasm with which freedmen pursued education resulted because the system of slavery denied them an education their entire lives. Therefore, learning became a "holy" pursuit for the freedmen. Historian Francis B. Simkins summarized this phenomenon: " The zeal with which the ex-slaves sought the benefits of literary education is unparalleled in history."[10]

For slaves, learning to read and write symbolized opposition to the dominion over their lives. That was how instances occurred where black people started schools on their own before northern aid society teachers traveled to the South. Upon their freedom from slavery education became essential to function as part of society.[11] The freedmen's longing to receive an education

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[8] Fortune, *After War Times,* 13-15, 40-45.
[9] Fortune, *After War Times,* 13-15, 40-45. Governor John Milton, Florida Governor from 1861-1865, "shot himself" near his home in Mariana, Florida. From: https://dos.fl.gov/florida-facts/florida-history/florida-governors/john-milton/.
[10] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 97, 101-102.
[11] Heather Andrea Williams, "'Clothing Themselves in Intelligence': The Freedpeople, Schooling, and Northern Teachers, 1861-1871," *The Journal of African American History* 87 (2002): 372.

was so strong that schools were established anywhere instruction was possible. Students and teachers met in old churches, hospitals, homes, sheds, or under the shade of a large tree. The freedmen were not passive participants in their education. "More than half the schools in the South are sustained in part by the freedmen," Salmon P. Chase wrote.[12] Students who received spelling books were "begging to be taught."[13] Freedmen teacher E. B. Eveleth gave an account of a woman who walked four miles to take her child to the school. The mother and child liked the teacher and school better than what was available closer to home. When the mother was asked why they walked a longer distance to school, the mother replied, "Well they don't have the Bible and prayer as you do."[14] Sarah Jane Foster wrote in her 1866 diary entry that her students welcomed the "interest felt for them by strangers at the North."[15] And, Esther Hill Hawkes found her students "bursting with eagerness to learn."[16]

The rate at which the freedmen students learned impressed and surpassed expectations and preconceptions held by the teachers and missionaries from the northern aid societies. Historian Heather Williams noted, "Over and over, northern teachers and ministers remarked on freedpeople's intelligence."[17] For example, a thirteen-year-old boy in Tallahassee, Florida, taught about twelve adults and was paid fifty cents per month for his instruction. The American Missionary Association reported in its 1867 magazine that the children in Florida were "remarkable" in their spelling and reading abilities. One AMA description noted that children

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[12] Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America, 30.

[13] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 97, 117.

[14] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 14 1870 Magazine. From an article titled, "Florida," Gainesville, 1869.

[15] Sarah Jane Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen: A Diary and Letters* (United Kingdom: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 62.

[16] Gerald Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 20.

[17] Williams, "'Clothing Themselves in Intelligence,'" 378.

"not seven years of age, are able to read the Bible."[18] Harriet B. Greely included an account of an interaction with a veteran educator with twenty years of teaching experience in her AMA correspondence. Mrs. Greely reported the teacher said, "I could not have believed it possible that these people would have made such progress in this time. I am astonished at the improvement they have made."[19] Mrs. Greely reported about her students that they were "considerably advanced." She explained the students were progressing in their reading abilities and "read and spelled in monosylables of three and four letters." She included the account of an older student, seventy years old, "who was stolen from Africa." It made an impression on Mrs. Greely that a student from a painful background wanted to learn. Mrs. Greely dedicated herself to her student's education, and her students equally invested in their learning. She wrote, "My great eagerness of these to learn to read the Bible prompts them to such diligence and perseverance that I have no doubt they will soon succeed if they can get the large print Testament."[20] Sarah Jane Foster expressed the joy of teaching freedmen in her 1865 letter and mentioned that some of her students "have picked up a great deal of knowledge without ever having been to school."[21]

For all the praise northern teachers had for their students, a prejudicial mindset existed about their students at the same time. While many of the northern teachers cared about the success of their students, they also held ideas about black people that prevented them from

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[18] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 11 1867 Magazine. From articles titled, "Florida" and "Character of the Children."

[19] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, September 30, 1865, to M. E. Strieby. 30 Sept. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive. The teacher in Greely's account most likely referenced her adult students. The teacher explained that she would not have been as surprised if the students were children.

[20] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[21] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 34-36.

viewing black people as their equals.[22] For example, as sincere as Mrs. Greely was about her students' education, she included a peculiar discussion in one of her AMA correspondence letters. In the letter, she discussed the skin tone of her students, both light and dark, and even mentioned that some of her students were "so light, that you would never suspect their relation to the race." She continued in the same letter to explain that her students made "very good progress" and were learning "rapidly." However, Mrs. Greely mentioned how "color" was not a factor in the rate at which her students learned.[23] In Florida, a school in Monticello participated in an "Exhibition" where the teacher and students showcased the progress made. The school day began with a reading of Psalm 146, and the white people in attendance were pleased with what they witnessed during the school day. But the remark made was that they were surprised black people were able to "do so well."[24] Florida Superintendent E. B. Duncan in his report on the freedmen schools reflected a similar tone about the philosophy behind the education of the freedmen: "We of the South have been given the best missionaries the world ever knew, receiving this black race from English and New England ships as barbarians, we have brought them to the social and religious status which they at present enjoy." In the report, he continued to mention that the teachers had completed "noble work" and again portrayed the freedmen as "ignorant people."[25] Duncan's views were blunt about the black race. Even individuals involved with the efforts of freedmen education went along with the view that black people were "inferior." Lyman Abbott, part of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, wrote:

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[22] Williams, "'Clothing Themselves in Intelligence,'" 373.

[23] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[24] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 13 1869 Magazine. From article titled, "Florida" School Exhibition "Begun Under Difficulties—Ended Successfully" By Miss C. M. Blood, Monticello, Florida.

[25] E.B. Duncan, Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen, 1866. 1866-11-08. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

> No sane man supposes that all men are created equal in character or capacity. They are not equal in…nerve or brain development…By the doctrine of human equality is simply meant that all men have a right to an equal opportunity…The wisest and best friends of the freedmen do not aver that the African race is equal to the Anglo-Saxon. Neither do they admit any race inferiority. They simply assert that the negro must be accorded an opportunity for development before his capacity for development can be known."

This statement revealed the paradox of this period. Men like Abbott wanted to see freedmen educated and believed they deserved an education experience as much as white people, but at the same time, they did not see the black race as equal to the white race.[26] Harriet Beecher Stowe countered this philosophy when she wrote that black children were "bright" and expressed "They can be taught any thing."[27]

The success freedmen students experienced during Reconstruction was directly related to the efforts of skilled teachers. Another important element in creating an effective classroom environment was the elevation of the freedmen students who advanced to become good teachers.[28] A letter by Miss Jane Hosmer, published in *The Freedmen's Record* on March 5, 1866, discussed the success of her school. In the letter, she wrote about six black girls over eighteen who wanted to pursue teaching because of their improvement as students.[29] Black teachers were wanted, if qualified, by the American Missionary Association because of the belief in promoting independence among freedmen.[30] Additionally, black students viewed black

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[26] Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (United States, University of Chicago Press, 2010), 170.

[27] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Palmetto-leaves* (United States: J.R. Osgood, 1873), 317.

[28] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 119.

[29] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[30] Augustus Field Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood: A History of the American Missionary Association*. (United States: Pilgrim Press, 1909), 147.

teachers as possessing a more genuine interest in their black students. Florida ex-slave Douglas Parish did not remain in his Freedmen's Bureau school because he opposed the "confinement" of schooling. He was of the opinion that the white teachers did not care for the black students beyond the classroom experience, such as learning to read and write. Whereas, he felt the black teachers "went into the community in an effort to elevate the standards of living." The black teachers were "cordially received by the ex-slaves," Douglas Parish explained.[31]

The common school was a "type of schooling that would educate all in common, using the same curriculum." The "common man" ideology correlated to the idea of a common school. For context, the Market Revolution led to an increase in new technology which expanded backing for public projects such as the construction of schools. The key idea of the common school was that it was free and provided a general education for everyone despite their economic background. Northern society mobilized its thinking regarding public education, influencing how the South developed its education system during Reconstruction. However, the new educational development did not automatically include non-white children.[32] Harriet Beecher Stowe believed the existence of the common school helped avert problems in the community, such as idleness. In addition to common school education, Stowe felt proper training included hands-on knowledge: girls learned to sew, and boys learned agricultural methods.[33] A popular debate during this period was whether education should be industrial or focus on academic subjects. During Reconstruction industrial schools were another popular approach for educating the freedmen. In a trade school, freedmen learned hands-on skills such as sewing or shoemaking.

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[31] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida, "Interview, Douglas Parish and Rachel A. Austin, Slave Interview, November 10, 1936" (1936). Narratives of Formerly Enslaved Floridians. 32.

[32] Wayne J. Urban, Wagoner, Jennings L., Jr., and Milton Gaither, *American Education: A History* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 79, 84.

[33] Stowe, *Palmetto-leaves* (United States: J.R. Osgood, 1873), 318.

The motivation behind this approach was "to develop ideas of self-dependence and self-support" for freedmen. Under slavery a black person's independence was "crushed out."[34]

The Reconstruction period prompted the growth of the education system in the South and in Florida. Moreover, the freedmen teachers, "among the best in the country," worked hard to make the schools in the South as orderly as the schools in the North. And, freedmen students flocked to the classrooms. Four models of schools operated for the education of the freedmen: the day school, usually suited for children; the night school, attended by adults; the industrial schools, attended by women and children who learned sewing and "household arts;" and Sunday schools.[35] Florida's public school attempt began during its territorial period. In 1822, the state designated land for schools; however, the state did not witness growth in schools except for a few private schools. Factors blamed for Florida's slow growth regarding its education system included: the seclusion of the state and shortage of funds[36] In 1866, the Florida legislature enacted a law allowing a "separate school system" for black people. The schools were funded by a $1.00 tax, which was imposed on "all black males between twenty-one and forty-five years of age." Approximately twenty-five black schools resulted from the law and eventually merged with the Freedmen's Bureau's efforts. This relationship continued for the most part until Florida passed its new 1868 constitution.[37] The public school system for Florida originated with its 1868 constitution. By 1870, Florida had some quality schools in Ocala, Apalachicola, Key West, Gainesville, and St. Augustine. Hernando County contained a "large black school."[38]

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[34] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 157.

[35] Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America, 30-31.

[36] Norma Goolsby Frazier, "Education: From Its Beginnings in the Territory to Present," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 19, Article 6. (2018): https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune/vol19/iss1/6, 2, 4-5.

[37] Vaughn, *Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South,* 54-60.

[38] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 114, 116-117.

When Esther Hill Hawkes visited other Florida schools in 1865, she expressed concern. She was surprised to find that the schools were not "graded." The fact that schools were not graded made Hawkes reflect in her diary that it was "not considered of sufficient importance to be agitated or thought of!" Hawkes, a qualified teacher, was bothered that more attention was not given to standards of the education given.[39] For a school to be "graded" meant students were divided by the years attended. Once students met all requirements they advanced to the next level. Florida did not enact "graded" courses until 1889. Typically, there were eight grades and it took a student one year to complete each level.[40] Freedmen teacher Harriet Greely expressed concerns about how the Sabbath School was "prospering," but it was doing so despite their "great-want of teachers."[41] John Alvord's report on freedmen schools reflected the same concerns mentioned by Esther Hill Hawkes and Harriet Greely. He noted Florida needed schoolhouses, "well qualified teachers," graded schools, Normal schools, and schools for "advanced students."[42] By 1869, the American Missionary Association magazine reported that Florida's public school system was performing well. However, attention turned to the need for a normal school in the state. A normal school, a school where teachers received training, opened the door for black people to "continually become the educators of their own race." In the same article, the need for teachers persisted in the state.[43] The need for normal schools was common in the South as Salmon P. Chase observed, "The greatest educational need of the South at the

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[39] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 230-31.

[40] Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida* (United States: Press of the New era printing Company, 1921), 94.

[41] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, September 30, 1865, to M. E. Strieby. 30 Sept. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[42] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[43] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 13 1869 Magazine. From an article titled, "Florida."

present time is normal schools for the education of colored teachers."[44] The Stanton Institute of Jacksonville, Florida answered this need in Florida.[45] By 1869, nearly one-half of the Freedmen's Bureau teachers were black which fulfilled an important mission in furthering the educational interests of the freedmen students.[46]

Schools in Florida underwent slow-moving improvement. It was common for the individuals acting as teachers to lack the ability to read and write. Florida struggled to attract competent teachers. Interestingly, schools in Florida still competed with other states even though several of its teachers only understood rudimentary levels of instruction.[47] Even though some of Florida's teachers lacked qualifications they understood the task of education for the freedmen was vital. Regardless of issues such as teacher qualifications, the freedmen's strong desire for learning overshadowed the difficulties of Florida's educational system status. Black parents and students pursued education during Reconstruction in Florida through any means possible.[48] The early meeting places for freedmen's education were unsophisticated. At first, students attended classes in army barracks or confiscated buildings and the education they received was primary.[49] Confiscated buildings consisted of places such as mansions or buildings in the South once controlled by the Confederacy.[50]A primary education provided students with a foundation. For instance, students during the beginning stages of their education learned to read, write, and the basics of math.

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[44] Chase and American Freedman's Union Commission. The results of emancipation in the United States of America, 33.

[45] Report of the Commissioner of Education [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1874.

[46] Vaughn, *Schools for All*, 14.

[47] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 103, 108.

[48] Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (United States, University Presses of Florida, 1974), 76.

[49] Beard, *A Crusade of Brotherhood: A History of the American Missionary Association,* 145.

[50] Vaughn, *Schools for All:* 9-10, 27.

School buildings in Florida consisted of "old gin houses, out-buildings, negro quarters." Most were constructed out of logs.[51] The Superintendent of Education received a letter in 1867 from Tampa, Florida, detailing their lack of school buildings. Students wanted to receive an education if they could secure proper buildings. Additionally, the letter described a shortage of teachers. The need for school buildings and teachers seemed to go hand in hand during Reconstruction in Florida. A letter dated a year later in 1868 detailed the same issue in Tampa, Florida: "There are no school houses and the freedpeople would not be able to build them." The man writing the petition for buildings claimed the possibility for three black schools in Manatee, Hernando, and Tampa with the attendance of sixty to seventy students at each of these locations if he received assistance to build.[52] When possible, the freedmen scrapped together their own funds and built schoolhouses.[53] The Freedmen's Bureau assisted with acquiring buildings for educational purposes. The extension of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868 permitted additional funds from the government for the construction and rent of school buildings.[54]

Superintendent Thurston C. Chase was a vital part of the improvements made in Florida's education system. When he took his position as superintendent of Florida schools in 1868 a "revival" in Florida's education system occurred. At this point, Florida struggled in almost every category, and one of the main issues, aside from funding issues and finding qualified teachers, was the lack of adequate school buildings.[55] A critical part of Florida's transformation resulted

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[51] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[52] Letters Received June 1867-Dec. 1868. June 1867-Dec. 1868. MS, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices: Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands: Field Offices for the State of Florida. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive. The 1867 letter was signed by "Rich Comba." The 1868 letter was signed by someone possibly with the rank of "Captain." The signature was not legible.

[53] Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida,* 30.

[54] Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet; Florida in the Era of Reconstruction*, 77.

[55] Cochran, *History of the Public School Education in Florida,* 49-50.

from Chase's emphasis on proper school buildings. Chase wrote a manual on the requirements and importance of a quality learning environment. He submitted the manual to General Oliver Otis Howard. The manual was endorsed by Howard as a guideline regarding the education of black people in the South. The manual was detailed and addressed every aspect of a suitable school building and classroom. Howard remarked about the manual, "The following work is a little more extensive and covers every school structure related topic." Chase treated the subject of the construction of school buildings and classroom arrangements with vigor. It is essential to understand his philosophy about why quality school buildings matter.[56]

"Good school-houses attract good teachers; poor ones repel them and bring education into dispute," Chase wrote in *A Manual on School-Houses and Cottages for People in the South.* Chase did not take the education of children lightly. He wrote, "The Common School is the poor man's best friend." Through education, Chase believed children gained what their parents did not access. With education, children "attain the prizes of wealth, usefulness, honor, and power among the first and best." Chase used inspiring language regarding education in his manual. He wrote, "Schools are our best peace establishment. In them Liberty entrenches herself." He continued in the same line of thinking when he wrote, "They prepare the way for Christianity to go down among the vicious and depraved and draw them out of their misery and crimes to higher planes, where the practice of all things noble, pure, and true are possible." Chase equated the education of children as a high priority of the country. He went as far as to say that if the "republican institutions" were to endure, that depended upon people possessing "intelligence and virtue." Therefore, inadequate school structures did not measure up to Chase's standard of

[56] Thurston C. Chase, *A Manual on School-Houses and Cottages for People in the South*. (Making of America Books, 1868), 4-5.

education. Nor did rough school buildings attract teachers. Chase was concerned about school structures for the sake of the teachers as well. He explained,

> Nor are the wants of the teachers to be overlooked. There is no position more arduous, none requiring greater tact and skill, and certainly none more honorable and useful. Every aid should be extended, and every appliance provided which will heighten the effect of judicious teaching and at the same time diminish, as far as may be, the arduous labors and petty annoyances incident to the work.

Chase did not approve of the earlier schoolhouses that were "rude and unsuitable." He knew that if school buildings remained in that condition, it deterred good teachers.[57]

Chase included every tiny detail a teacher needed for a properly functioning classroom. His manual left no aspect of the school building or classroom untouched. For example, the "essential requisites" for a teacher's classroom included a desk and seat for every student, aisles, teacher's platform, and a teacher's room. His manual addressed heating, ventilation, and lighting in the classroom. Chase contended that "millions of dollars" were "unwisely expended in the construction of school-houses." The buildings were not constructed well in his opinion. He explained this occurred because states did not have time to focus on education when they were "busy building cities." The location of the school building drew the attention of Chase. He did not like when they were situated "on some barren and treeless hillside, where the hot suns of summer pelted down upon them, and the cold winds of winter had unbroken sweep." If the outside structure was unsatisfactory, Chase had even more to say about the "filthy" conditions found inside the classroom. He found the status of the common school classrooms "repulsive" and lacking in the right furniture. For example, he observed a situation where young children, too

[57] Chase, *A Manual on School-Houses,* 11-13.

small for the benches provided, had to kneel on the ground and use the seat of the bench as their desk. He was not satisfied that "In the rural districts of the South many school-houses are as yet but little better than log huts in the clearing, or deserted negro quarters in the old field." Teachers did not have blackboards. "Gin houses, outbuildings, workshops, hospital barracks, abandoned town halls, and churches" did not suffice as school buildings for Chase.[58]

Why was the physical school building and classroom essential to the education experience for children? Chase was convinced that "Through the blessings of the common school the State is honored and strengthened by the best talents of all its citizens." In the section of the manual titled, "The Wants of the School-House," Chase expressed, "The building should be fitted for the school on the same principle that a dwelling is made for a family." The "health and comfort of the children" were important to Chase. He understood that their well-being while at school factored into their educational growth and even their "future." To illustrate the extent of the manual details, he listed that a classroom consisting of one teacher and forty students was all that belonged in one classroom. The teacher needed a platform as a place for speaking but also for keeping order he felt. Concerning classroom order, he prescribed that every student had their own desk and that they should be spaced apart to prevent "temptations and disorder." He wanted teachers to maximize their instruction time and this meant teachers were not expending their time and energy on student disruptions. To this point, he added, problems with student discipline "wastes the nervous energies of the stoutest constitutions." A manual that provided detailed schoolhouse components, including the type of shingles used on roofing, showed the importance of education in the South and Florida for Chase.[59]

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[58] Chase, *A Manual on School-Houses,* 11-14.
[59] Chase, *A Manual on School-Houses,* 15-22.

During 1866, one location where black schools occurred in Florida was on plantations. Education created a more fulfilled ex-slave, the freedmen and plantation owners believed. An 1866 superintendent report confirmed the interest in "plantation schools" in Florida: "I found a general desire among the planters to have day schools, and some had teachers employed, paying half the expenses themselves. They were ready and willing to provide or build school houses," E. B. Duncan wrote.[60] For example, in Tallahassee, Florida, on William D. Bloxham's plantation, a black teacher, John Wallace, led a school. A "plantation school" was established for children and adults. The former plantation owner's intention was not always genuine. They viewed it as maintaining their dominance over the freedmen. Nonetheless, it was an opportunity for freedmen to receive an education.[61] William D. Bloxham, who hired Wallace was a well-known Democratic planter in Tallahassee when he employed Wallace to teach freedmen on his plantation.[62] Economics chiefly incentivized plantation owners to establish plantation schools because they believed educated laborers produced higher quality work. From the perspective of the student, the plantation school either resulted in advantages or operated as a manipulation only intended to keep black people on the plantation. The justification for encouraging black people to stay on the property suggested the plantation owner did not want to see freedmen wander the country with no purpose for their travels.[63]

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[60] E.B. Duncan, Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen, 1866. 1866-11-08. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[61] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 99. From Ronald E. Butchart's Appendix to "The Freemen's Teacher Project" Database:

[62] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. Information retrieved from Ronald E. Butchart's Appendix to "The Freemen's Teacher Project" Database.

[63] Vaughn, *Schools for All,* 39.

During the Antebellum period, common school teachers incorporated moral lessons into every subject, and reading was the central part of the experience for students.[64] Distribution of Christian literature, such as Bibles, Testaments, Gospels, Psalms, and Hymns, was common during Reconstruction. The American Bible Society distributed Bibles amounting in $1,540.35.[65] For Harriet Greely, Scripture was a central piece of instruction and motivation used with her students during classroom instruction, and her students sought the Bible as part of their instruction. She referenced students memorizing a Bible verse daily in one of her classes. She divided the verses so it was not too lengthy a piece to remember each day. The goal was for her students to know the chapter from memory. Students learning to read so they understood the Bible was paramount to Mrs. Greely. Multiple letters written by Harriet Greely to the American Missionary Association requested Testaments for her students.[66] The Freedmen's Bureau agents, northern aid societies, and teachers embraced the idea that an education uplifted the freed slave. Education was used a tool to create a stable South after the Civil War ended. Freedmen teachers aimed to help freedmen become a contributing part of society. Teachers wanted to improve the circumstances freedmen experienced under the detrimental conditions of slavery. For this reason, most instruction was rudimentary since "civilization" was the goal. Teaching focused on "the three R's" or "practical education."[67]

Analyze the content from textbooks used during Reconstruction, and the philosophy of freedmen's education was evident. For example, the American Tract Society stated goal was "to diffuse a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, and to promote the

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[64] Wayne J Urban, Wagoner, Jennings L., Jr., and Milton Gaither, *American Education,* 84.

[65] Tenth Annual Report of the Executive Board of the Friend's Association of Philadelphia and Its Vicinity, for the Relief of Colored Freemen, Philadelphia 4-21-1873 Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[66] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: Jacksonville, Florida, May 10, 1866, to R. B. Hunt. 10 May 1866. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[67] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 151, 173.

interests of vital godliness and sound morality, by the circulation of Religious Tracts."[68] *The Freedmen's Spelling Book* was published by the American Tract Society, Boston. Included in the lessons of this book were phrases such as "It is a sin to sip rum. A sot is a bad man. Do not get in a pet. A la-zy man can not get a job. God is ho-ly; he can see if men sin." Another page of the lesson stated, "Sin is a web. The bad boy is in it. No one but God can aid him." And, "Do not rebel at the law of God. If you do not sub-mit, it is a sin. You are for-bid to do a bad act."[69] A theme of submission and obedience was evident in these lessons read by freedmen. In a different lesson the theme pointed to God. For instance, in one lesson it read, "H, see the bird on the tree. You can al-most hear it sing. Birds are ver-ry mirth-ful: they chirp and twit-ter all day. They praise God who made them, and gave them pow-er to sing. Do you praise him, too?" And, scripture was included in the lessons: "In my Father's house are man-ny man-sions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to pre-pare a place for you."[70] The American Tract Society's publications tended to focus on "religious rather than educational" themes and that was demonstrated in *The Freedmen's Spelling Book* lessons.[71] Other examples of textbooks that promoted "Yankee virtues of industry, thrift, temperance, patriotism, and piety" were the *McGuffey Reader*, *Webster's Dictionary*, and Davis *Primary Arithmetic*. While these textbooks attempted to promote a "New England way upon the freedmen" one author took a different approach. Lydia Maria Child's *The Freedmen's Book* addressed blacks in the South. As an abolitionist, Child strove to create a book with a message for freedmen. Included in her book are

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[68] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 188.

[69] *The Freedman's Spelling Book*. Boston: American Tract Society, C1866. Repository Monroe C. Gutman Library Institution Harvard University. From Class IV Words and Syllables of Four or More Letters.

[70] *The Freedman's Spelling Book*. Boston: American Tract Society, C1866. Repository Monroe C. Gutman Library Institution Harvard University. From Class IV Words and Syllables of Four or More Letters. From Class IX Words Pronounced Alike, But Spelled Differently.

[71] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 199.

biographies of black heroes. The intent was to encourage "self-determination in the children."[72] Child's philosophy encompassed the belief that "Young souls are fed by what they see and hear, just as their bodies are fed with daily food." She wanted the freedmen to feel empowered to make a difference in their lives because they were "answerable to God." Education was an essential way for black parents, who once lived a life of brutality under slavery, to consider slavery in the past and to "expect better things of free children."[73]

The reaction of freedmen to Lydia Maria Child's book was compelling. In her book she included strong descriptions about slavery.

> Nothing has ever been done in this world more wicked and cruel than the slave-trade on the coast of Africa. But the temptation to carry it on was very great; for hundreds of men and women could be bought for a cask of poor rum or a peck of cheap beads, and could be sold in the markets of America or the West Indies for thousands of dollars.[74]

For context, white people in the South argued that freedmen teachers implemented propaganda for the Republican party. The complaint was that lessons often insulted the South or instigated "racial hatred." However, freedmen justifiably disagreed with white southerners that the cruelties of slavery were overemphasized in the curriculum. A teacher who used *The Freedmen's Book* noted this reaction from her class: "Their appreciation of all allusions to slavey life and hardships is very marked. Sometimes they say, 'Ah, Miss Alice, we could tell you bigger things than that!" And, Lydia Child received praise for her book from a student who said to her, "If I hadn't been a fool, I should have run away years ago, as Frederick Douglass and William Crafts did." Black

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[72] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Greece: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 126.
[73] Lydia Maria Child, *The Freedmen's Book* (United Kingdom: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 221-225.
[74] Child, *The Freedmen's Book,* 124.

students likewise identified with the accounts in textbooks about the "transition from slavery to freedom."[75] A poem in *The Freedmen's Book* titled, "Emancipation in the District of Columbia, April 16, 1862," included a stanza that stated: "No more, within those ten miles square, Shall men be bought and women sold; Nor infants, sable-hued and fair, Exchanged again for paltry gold."[76] An account exists of a South Carolina black woman who after hearing the poem released "*a heavy sigh*, from a heart that had ached oft on account of the evils of…slavery." For this reason, *The Freedmen's Book* was considered as "pioneering" because of its contribution for freedmen education.[77]

[75] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 177, 181, 209.
[76] Child, *The Freedmen's Book,* 245.
[77] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction*, 181, 209.

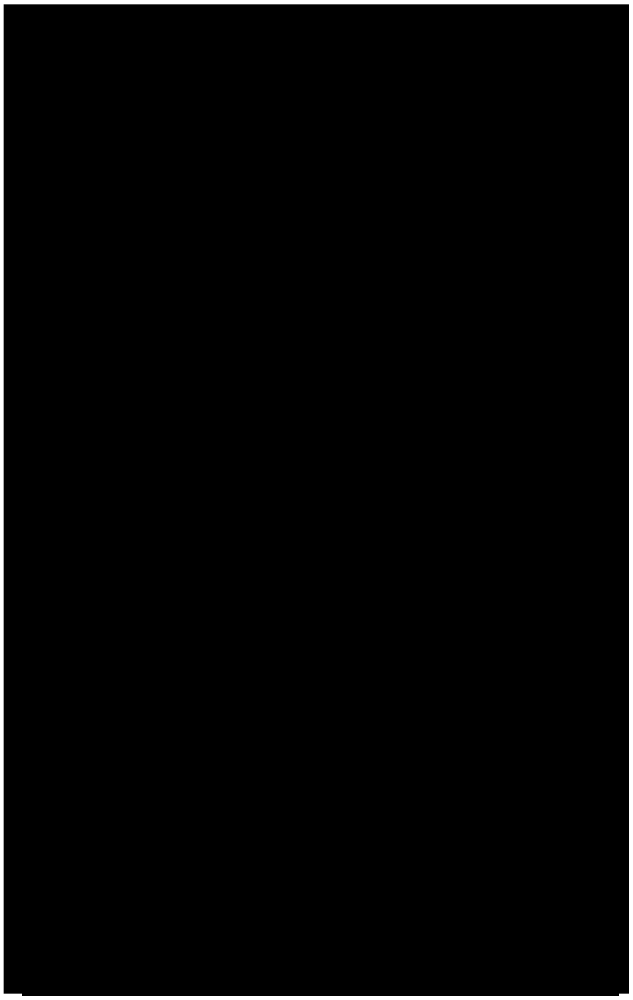

Figure 1.9. *The Freedmen's Spelling Book*, Boston: American Tract Society C. 1866. Harvard Library. Removed to comply with copyright. Permalink.

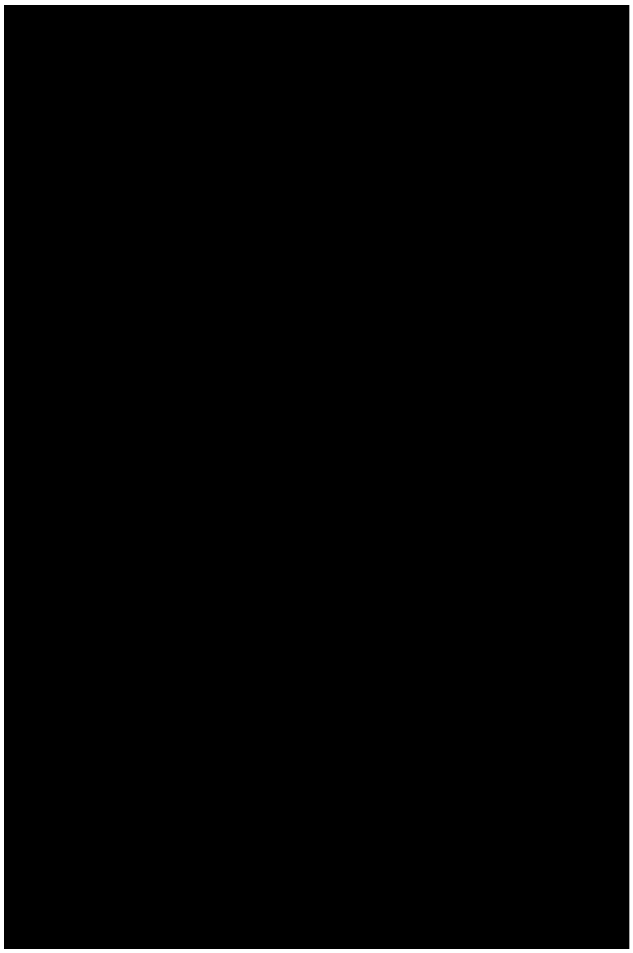

Figure 1.10. *The Freedmen's Second Reader,* Boston: American Tract Society C. 1865. Harvard Library. Removed to comply with copyright. Permalink.

Education for black people progressed from questioning during the 1830s whether slaves should receive an education to the full force effort by northern missionary teachers during Reconstruction to teach freedmen. Nonetheless with the education sometimes came a bias in the curriculum that impacted a range of subjects. The subjects included science, language, and literature, to name a few examples. The predisposition given in the curriculum did not suggest that the teachers who taught black students after Emancipation deserved condemnation for their use of the curriculum. Instead, the main issue related to the concern that the curriculum portrayed black people as second-class.[78] The central aim of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies,

[78] Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (United States: Associated Publishers, 1969), 1, 29, 35.

and teachers was to help freedmen enter a better station of life after the Civil War. Thus, it was certainly not the intention of those involved in the education of the freedmen to intentionally make students feel lowly. However, that did not keep contradictory messages about slavery from surfacing in the texts written for black people. For example, certain texts promoted ideas of forgiveness from the former slave to the master.[79] General Clinton Fisk, a Freedmen's Bureau agent, expressed the following in his book written for black readers, *Plain Counsels for Freedmen*:

> If bad men make insulting remarks about you, shut your ears, and do not hear them. Pass on about your business. Words will not hurt you much, or if they do grieve you, God will comfort and heal you. It takes two to make a quarrel; and if you are bent on being good and kind, and return soft answers to hard words and good for evil, you will have few troubles with white men, and nearly all men will be kind to you and esteem you.[80]

Although the message given by General Fisk followed biblical thinking, the words propelled the notion of how the freedmen ought to persuade white people of their ability to handle their new freedom.[81]

The freedmen student's interaction with the teachers varied based on the instructor's methods of teaching students. Issues students encountered ranged from discipline infractions to their condition as a student in the classroom. A January 1866 diary entry from Sarah Jane Foster revealed her teaching style. When a student in her class mocked an older student, she "rebuked"

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[79] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 192-193.

[80] Clinton Bowen Fisk, *Plain Counsels for Freedmen: In Sixteen Brief Lectures*. (Boston, American tract society, 1866] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/08013310), 18.

[81] Morris, *Reading, 'riting, and Reconstruction,* 210.

the student for laughing at the man. The correction was so stern that she did not think the disciplined student wanted to return to school. Foster believed that was an acceptable outcome. Throughout her correspondence Foster referenced "whipping" students. For instance, in a January 16, 1866 diary entry she wrote, "Whipped Mary Smith today," and continued, "I gave the other a severe flogging. Guess he'll not forget." In her January 30, 1866 diary entry, she recorded this comment: "Got along well in school today, only I had to whip four or five boys for ill behavior at noon." In her 1866 letter, Foster referenced her use of "strict discipline" that was needed with the students, but she noted their "progress." She credited the improvements to God who sustained her and allowed her to keep going. Faith was integral to the way Foster dealt with her students. Her severe approach did not appear to stem from the dislike for her students, but from her attempt to handle challenging teaching issues on her own. Her prayer for "the blessing of God on my work" showed the high standard she held for herself and her students. Yet, one account she gave in her 1866 letter revealed an instance where she approved of children laughing at the "blunders" of other students. Foster explained this was a method used to improve "dull scholars" because "they are sensitive to ridicule."[82] In contrast, Esther Hill Hawkes' interaction with her students took a different approach. Hawkes wrote in her 1864 diary entry, while teaching in Florida, that her students were "easily governed" and "generally disposed to obey." She mentioned that she did not experience issues of "discipline" or "revolts." Hawkes reflected on her work with students as "successful." Moreover, she discussed in 1865, the compassion of her students. They brought her peaches, eggs, and flowers. She wrote, "Some of them are constantly bringing me something."[83] Freedmen teacher Alicia S. Blood in Florida offered this explanation for the behavior of the freedmen students: "They have always been accustomed to

[82] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen*, 40-41, 44-45,53,76, 103.
[83] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 79, 118.

being governed by, instead of governing, their passions, and would not take anything from each other, without seeking revenge in some way."[84]

The condition of the freedmen students represented a genuine concern during Reconstruction. Esther Hill Hawkes wrote in 1865 that she witnessed a preacher ministering for the purpose of saving lost people. However, Mrs. Hawkes remarked about the freedmen: "I confess to being more seriously troubled about *their bodies* just at this time and so between us both I trust the poor creatures may be cared for."[85] Harriet Greely expressed similar concerns in her letters. She noted that several of her students "have impaired eyesight."[86] In another letter, Mrs. Greely conveyed a situation where she visited a home and observed "poor conditions" and a sickly child near death. She noted about the visit that she saw "Many women and girls barefoot."[87] Apparently, it was not uncommon to encounter a child without "good shoes and socks" in school.[88] On a similar note, Foster described in her 1866 letter that children did not have basic clothing to stay warm. The parents used all they had to clothe the children but it was not enough.[89]

Typical school planning of freedmen teachers for the interest of the students involved student attendance, age of students, school supplies, and weather. For Sarah Jane Foster, her school day consisted of teaching students from their twenties to sixties. She taught reading,

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[84] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 15 1871 Magazine. From article titled, "Florida" Monticello May 1, 1871.

[85] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 232.

[86] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[87] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: St. Augustine, Florida, March 1, 1865, to George Whipple. 1 Apr. 1866. MS American Missionary Association Archives,1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[88] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 11 1867 Magazine. From article titled, "Florida."

[89] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 44-45.

spelling, arithmetic, and geography. Her classroom environment mattered to her because she did not like that it did not have a U.S. map or blackboard. The classroom was a small room that lacked furniture and textbooks. Regarding attendance, Foster found her students punctual and "orderly." Multiple times in her letters she noted the need for "papers." This might have been a request for writing paper. Foster utilized a "bell system" and explained her students quickly adapted to the new system. And, it was not uncommon for freedmen teachers to reference the weather in their writings about their teaching experience. Foster noted bad weather, worried teachers.[90] Mrs. Hawkes highlighted aspects of her school day in her diary. She described a spelling game she played with her students. After the game, she and the students sang together. She typically described her school experience and students as "pleasant." Mrs. Hawkes was impressed that students learning arithmetic progressed to understanding the concept behind the correct answers. Her students enjoyed practicing their lessons. The class attendance for Mrs. Hawkes experienced increases and decreases.[91] In Florida, warmer weather attracted more students to attend the school day.[92]

Classrooms during Reconstruction contained a variety of students regarding their ages and academic levels. Mrs. Greely taught students from twenty to nearly eighty years of age.[93] Regardless of the age of the students, Mrs. Greely exhibited the same enthusiasm about the learning outcomes for all students. She was pleased that a class of six to eight-year-old students were "almost through their first reader." Similar to how Mrs. Hawkes was pleased with her students understanding the concepts behind the information, Mrs. Greely explained her aim was

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[90] Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen,* 13, 34-36, 41, 59-60, 103.

[91] Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War,* 68-71.

[92] Congregational Home Missionary Society., American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*. [New York: s.n.]. Volume 16 1872 Magazine. From article titled, "Florida" Monticello March 30, 1872.

[93] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

for students to process and explain what they read. Subjects Mrs. Greely emphasized compared to the other freedmen teachers. She taught spelling, geography, writing, grammar, and the alphabet. Mrs. Greely understood that attendance impacted the performance of her students.[94] But she was only able to do so much regarding attendance issues. For example, because of work that had to be completed at home the mother received her lessons during the day and daughter came to the evening lessons. She was honest about the challenges of teaching a multifaceted group but kept her optimism: "we see 'order coming out of chaos' we will be patient cheerful happy, looking on the brighter side."[95] In Florida, one explanation for irregular attendance was the result of "planting and harvesting seasons."[96]

Education reports for Florida revealed an optimism about the continuation of the "school system" as a "permanent polity of the state."[97] Nevertheless, Florida had issues to resolve, such as textbook uniformity and access to textbooks by those who could not afford the supplies.[98]An 1883 Florida education report described its expectations for teachers: "Persons duly authorized as teachers are required to teach deportment and morals, to inculcate the principles of truth, honesty, patriotism, and the practice of every Christian virtue." By this point of time efforts turned toward training teachers in "Teachers' Institutes."[99] *The Weekly Floridian* published an article on June 8, 1880, that spoke positively of the education efforts that had taken place in the

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[94] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: Jacksonville, Florida, March 1867, to _____. Mar. 1867. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[95] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter (incomplete and without signature): St. Augustine, Florida, January 23, 1865, to George Whipple. 23 Jan. 1865. MS American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[96] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida,* 101.

[97] Report of the Commissioner of Education Made to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1870.

[98] Report of the Commissioner of Education Made to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1874.

[99] Report of the Commissioner of Education Made to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year [with Accompanying Papers]. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1883.

state. The article reported: “I may say the whole of the intelligent people who have settled here recently desire; that is a liberal and improving school system.” The article referenced education as the “great sheet-anchor of good government.” And, it highlighted Captain Bloxham who “built at his own expense, the first after the war, a school-house and paid for a teacher for the benefit of the newly enfranchised slaves on his own plantation.” The article commended Bloxham for his efforts in what the article called the “new situation,” which was, of course, the education of freedmen.[100]

“Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea,” W. E. B. Dubois believed.[101] While the Freedmen’s Bureau and northern missionary teachers were critical to the development of education black people deserve the recognition for initiating the “education movement in the South.”[102] Union Academy in Gainesville, Florida was an ideal example of the efforts by the black people. The school was the first public high school in Gainesville, and “most of Alachua County’s black leaders and black leaders” originated from the school. The schoolhouse was constructed by black carpenters who learned their trade when they were slaves. Union Academy symbolized “the value they [black citizens] placed on education.”[103] Education was significant because it opened the possibility for blacks to experience their freedom to the fullest extent. It was the schoolhouse and not the government or even churches that opened the door for freedmen to realize their citizenship. In schools, handbooks were distributed that contained the Emancipation Proclamation, Declaration of

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[100] “Letter from Nassau,” *The Weekly Floridian*, June 8, 1880. Newspapers.com. Nassau County is near Jacksonville, Florida.

[101] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 5.

[102] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (United Kingdom: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 13-14.

[103] Murray D. Laurie, "Union Academy: A Freedmen's Bureau School in Gainesville, Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* Vol. 65: No. 2, Article 4. (1986), 163.

Independence, and the U.S. Constitution.[104] In Mrs. Greely's night school her attendance increased after black males received voting rights.[105] Mrs. Greely explained young men were "ambitious" because "they say they wish to know themselves what name they put into the Ballot box." She wrote about students who wanted to learn the U.S. Constitution.[106]

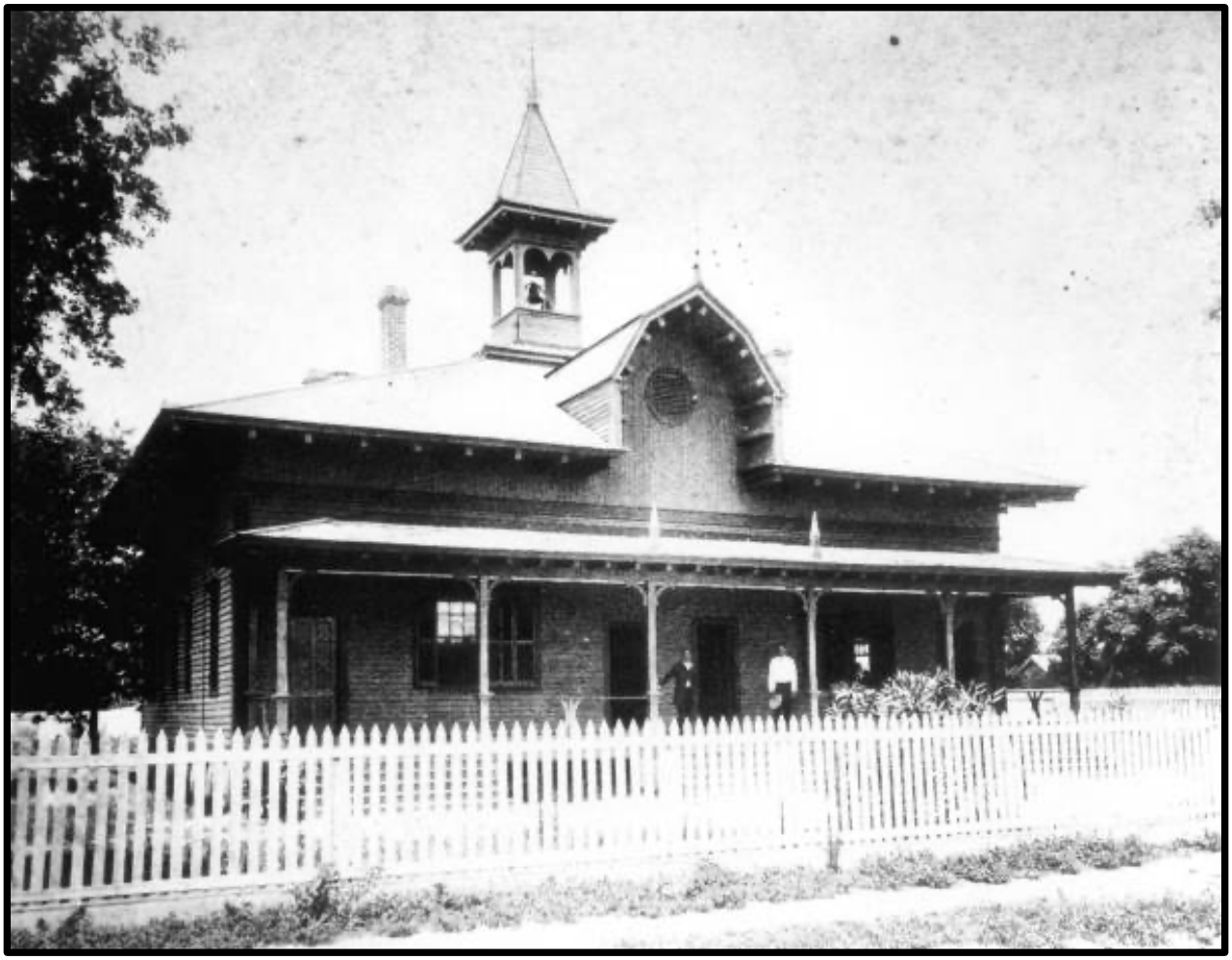

Figure 1.11: *The Union Academy - Gainesville, Florida.* 1870 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

[104] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[105] Joe Martin Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 38.

[106] Greely, Harriet B., and Gorham Greely. Letter: Jacksonville, Florida, May 9, 1867, to M.E. Strieby. 9 May 1867. MS American Missionary Association Archives,1839-1882. Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

Harriet Beecher Stowe estimated that "in the last sixteen years twenty million dollars" was "contributed and invested in the work of educating the freedmen." By 1878 the education system was incorporated into southern society. The South "conceded" to the idea of black education and the "common-school system" was incorporated across the South. As it happens, prudent white southerners understood the importance of education for whites and blacks. As a result of the help provided from church denominations, the drive for the education of the freedmen advanced.[107]

"Truly, God is breaking down the walls of prejudice, and letting in the light of heaven," a freedmen teacher from North Carolina wrote. There was an optimism about the potential for change during Reconstruction for the black and white races.[108] A. E. Kline, a teacher commissioned to Florida, submitted the following in a report to T. W. Osborne, Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Florida:

> Remove from off the freedman the bitter hate and prejudice which seems to be intensified now that he is free, and his condition will be rapidly improved. He is poor. He has always been poor, hence does not feel his poverty. He is hopeful because free. Hopeful of the future, for the means of education which he has heard is open to him.[109]

Thomas Fortune, who lived through Reconstruction in Florida, was disappointed by the regression he saw in the advancements blacks made. The progress achieved during Reconstruction faded into the Jim Crow era.[110] However, for a time, as Booker T. Washington

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[107] Harriet Beecher Stowe and University of Virginia, *The Education of Freedmen. Vol. 1.* (Charlottesville, VA: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, 1996), 610.

[108] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[109] Joe M. Richardson, "A Northerner Reports on Florida: 1866," *Florida Historical Quarterly:* Vol. 40: No. 4, Article 6. (1961) https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol40/iss4/6.

[110] Fortune, *After War Times,* 12.

eloquently summarized, “It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn.”[111]

[111] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 5.

Chapter 7

The Gains and Losses of Reconstruction in Florida

"Race prejudice is a stubborn brute. It dies hard, when it does not live and slime everything it touches and poisons unto death." Timothy Thomas Fortune, *After War Times: An African American Childhood in Reconstruction-Era Florida*, 1927.

The men and women who invested their time and lives in freedmen's education in Florida recognized the threats to their progress after military control ceased and Reconstruction ended in the state. John W. Alvord, Superintendent of Schools for the Freedmen's Bureau, recognized the enthusiasm freedmen had for learning. However, he likewise faced the reality, as shared with him by other superintendents, that if the government removed the military presence in the South, the schools open to freedmen "would cease to exist." While the Freedmen's Bureau operated in the South, combined with the efforts of the northern aid societies and teachers, freedmen made significant progress in their education in the South. During Reconstruction many southern whites were hostile toward the initiation of black education. Some whites were bitter about schools for black people and others acted more aggressively by burning schools and attacking teachers verbally and physically.[1] Esther Hill Hawkes called it "disastrous" for the military to leave Florida. She was concerned about the implications of the military withdrawal for northern teachers and black people who remained in the South. She wrote her remark in 1866 and hoped that in a couple of years the removal of the military could be done "safely." Yet, her conditions for a safe military exit entailed of the rebels learning "a few lessons" prior to their readmission to the Union. Hawkes explained that "To be a *rebel* must cease to be a virtue." With that, according

[1] Linda Warfel Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South* (Elm Street Printing Co., 1869. HathiTrust), 101.

to Hawkes, that meant the men associated with the Union were no longer to be "despised" or viewed as "*marked* men." Disturbingly what Mrs. Hawkes referred to with these comments were the shooting deaths of black people, according to her, taking place weekly with no justice sought for the individuals who were killed.[2] A July 25, 1868 article in *The Florida Peninsular* questioned the path of Reconstruction as it outlined the states that were readmitted to the Union: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina. The article listed questions such as "Is the army to be withdrawn?" and "Is the Freedmen's Bureau to be discontinued?" The article responded to these questions and stated, "To all of which we can only answer, no." A harsh tone toward the Reconstruction government was obvious in the article when it stressed that the Freedmen's Bureau was not going to be cancelled because "the negroes, into whose hands these States have been committed, need that institution in order to feed them, make their contracts for them, and teach them their a b c." The article concluded, "Congressional reconstruction is a failure."[3] Therefore, the hostility white Floridians felt about the aims of Reconstruction put the plans that were executed and accomplished for the freedmen in jeopardy from the outset.

There was tempered praise for the gains that were made in Reconstruction Florida. Governor Harrison Reed expressed, "Among the reconstructed States of the South none started upon a more truly conservative basis than Florida, and none have progressed more successfully in the scale of social, political, and industrial improvements." Nonetheless, in the same address he acknowledged violence taking place in the state "mainly upon colored citizens" and Republicans. He attributed the issues to the "bitterness resulting from the war" and harmful

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[2] Gerald Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 243.

[3] "A Poor Job, July 25, 1868, *The Florida Peninsular*, Newspaper.com

messaging by political opponents. Essentially, Governor Reed understood that the presence of U.S. soldiers and a small "police force" was necessary, under the circumstances, to ensure the rights of all citizens were protected. Governor Reed's time as governor revealed the uncooperative reaction by many white Floridians to the changes implemented during Reconstruction.[4]

The challenges did not deter the freedmen from their goal. An account existed of freedmen in Louisiana who gathered signatures of freed slaves after the removal of education funding. The petition was thirty feet long and contained numerous names and signatures of a "X." Some parents were not literate but knew the importance of schools for their children because education offered them options they never experienced.[5] A critical way the freedmen became "free *men*" was through the pursuit of the opportunities that were now open to them, such as education.[6] For many freedmen voting was critical to maintaining their new position of life. If Reconstruction were to create a new South it required that freedmen were an active part of the process.

The Republican Congress worked to control the Reconstruction agenda, which involved various matters, and one dealt with the aspects of citizenship for freedmen. Would freedmen be able to practice their new rights, such as voting, holding public office, participating in the court system, and owning property? The rebuilding of the South was dependent on the freedmen who were "foot soldiers" in the process of the transformation of the South's systems. For instance, abolitionist Wendell Phillips explained of this strategy, "In my view, the war has just begun…You do not annihilate a social system when you decree its death…You only annihilate it

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[4] Harrison Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message of His Excellency Governor Harrison Reed to the legislature of Florida, January 4, 1872.* January 4, 1872. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 2-6.

[5] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South*, 101.

[6] Slaughter, *The Freedmen of the South*, 89.

when you fill its place with another…another, in this case, meaning a regime based on free labor, universal education, and manufacturing." Radical Republican Congressman Thaddeus Stevens declared, "The whole fabric of southern society must be changed." This meant the system of slavery had to be replaced entirely. Stevens also questioned, "How can republican institutions, free schools, free churches, free social intercourse exist in a mingled community of nabobs and serfs?"[7] A necessary way to change the defenseless nature of the freed slave was through an education that offered independence in his thinking.

Frederick Douglass understood what was at stake during Reconstruction. He wondered "Whether the tremendous war so heroically fought and so victoriously ended shall pass into history a miserable failure, barren of permanent results." He argued that people had to possess their own ability to "protect themselves." The efforts of the government were noble, but the reach of the government only went so far into controlling the actions of the southern states. For this reason, Douglass was convinced the fulfillment of a citizen's right to vote was essential in the success of Reconstruction for the freedmen. Douglass wrote, "The true way and the easiest way is to make our government entirely consistent with itself, and give to every loyal citizen the elective franchise, —a right and power which will be ever present, and will form a wall of fire for his protection." The U.S. Constitution "knows no distinction between citizens on account of color," Douglass explained. For this reason, because the Fifteenth Amendment existed, freed black males possessed the right to vote.[8] The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified on February 3, 1870, stated in Section 1. "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of

[7] Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2012), 485.

[8] Frederick Douglass, "Reconstruction," *The Atlantic*, (1866): 761-765.

servitude."[9] John Alvord believed the safety of the continuation of education for the freedmen rested in the "future guard of the freedmen's ballot," he wrote in 1867.[10] And, in 1870 when he reported on the condition of the freedmen he declared, "The ballot is the grand hope; we must hasten to educate, that it may be a power used intelligently."[11] Frederick Douglass in a speech delivered in New York City, 1872, expressed "For the first time in the history of the Republic, the whole body of colored citizens will have the right to vote for a President of the United States in November." Douglass continued in the speech to equivocate the right to vote for freedmen as truly empowering them as "citizens of the Republic and men among men."[12] A continual objective during Reconstruction was to secure the rights of freedmen. The implications of this meant ex-slaves were more than simply free; they now had the power to practice their rights as other men in the United States.

The Reconstruction acts that enabled black voters marked a tremendous accomplishment of Florida's Reconstruction period. In Florida, the 1868 Constitution marked an advancement for the state and "democracy" regarding voting because it included "universal manhood suffrage."[13] However, with more blacks included for the first time in the political process in Florida came additional fears held by some whites. Because a connection existed between education and voting, the question arose among whites who wanted to preserve their old way of life, whether it

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[9] Amendment XV, *The U.S. Constitution: A Reader* (Hillsdale College Press, 2018), 62.

[10] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[11] Alvord, John Watson. *Letters from the South, relating to the condition of freedmen addressed to Major General O.O. Howard, Commissioner Bureau R., F., and A.L. by J.W. Alvord, Gen. Sup't. Education, Bureau R., F., & A.L.* Washington, District Of Columbia: Washington, D.C. Howard University Press, 1870. Readex: African Americans and Reconstruction: Hope and Struggle, 1865-1883.

[12] Brooks D. Simpson, Editor. *From Reconstruction Voices From America's First Great Struggle For Racial Equality* (New York, NY: The Library of America, 2018), 428. From "Grant Over Greely: New York, September 1872, Frederick Douglass: Speech at New York City."

[13] Merlin G. Cox, "Military Reconstruction in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1968): 8, 14.

was possible to open education to black men and simultaneously keep the black man from voting. The rationale behind this fear was that the more educated a black person was, the higher the chance for the same person to demand his equal rights.[14] W. E. B. DuBois explained that with education came "power" for the black people. White people living in the South feared the "danger and revolution" that potentially came as a result of a black man who received an education.[15]

Interestingly, because of his reputation as a slaveholder, Thomas Jefferson stated, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and in a free state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." The link between education, schools, and voting all relied upon individuals who understood the American political system. The longevity of the U.S. Constitution depended on educated people.[16] With the black vote came attempts to manipulate their ballot decision. Journalist Charles Nordhoff, who traveled the South, wrote about the "corruption" of the Republican Party. His concern was that black men were too "easily impressed by exhibitions of power." He also claimed a large number of black voters were "illiterate." According to Nordhoff, because freedmen were concerned about issues such as "safety" they were similar to "all ignorant masses" who were inclined to "follow a leader."[17] To keep this viewpoint from leading to the justification to exclude black people from their new voting rights, it was imperative freedmen accessed education the same as whites had the opportunity to do. Florida saw more

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[14] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 99.

[15] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Brooklyn (New York: Restless Books, 2017), 42.

[16] McCrady, Edward. *The Necessity of Education as the Basis of Our Political System. An Address Delivered Before the Euphemian Society Erskine College, Due West, So. Ca., by Edward McCrady, Jun'r, of Charleston, S.C., June 28, 1880.* Charleston, South Carolina: Charleston, S.C. Walker, Evans & Cogswell, publishers, nos. 3 Broad and 109 East Bay Streets, 1880. Readex: African Americans and Reconstruction: Hope and Struggle, 1865-1883.

[17] Charles Nordhoff, *The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875* (United States: D. Appleton, 1876), 11-13.

black "intellectual and political development" than perhaps realized for the period after the Civil War. The black communities in Jacksonville and Tallahassee contained several black writers during the period following the Civil War.[18] During the 1860s and 1870s, Hillsborough County and Tampa experienced many black men who served in public office.[19] Florida's leadership consisted of capable, honest, and educated black people who led state and local offices.[20] During Reconstruction, a surprisingly large number of black state legislators, nineteen, represented Florida in the same period.[21] Examples of black legislators who won political office in Florida during Reconstruction included men such as Josiah T. Walls, John Wallace, Henry S. Harmon, and Jonathan C. Gibbs.[22]

Josiah T. Walls was the first black man from Florida elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. At one time Walls taught in a Freedmen's Bureau school located in Gainesville, Florida. As a slave, Walls learned to read and write, which was not typical.[23] While a slave in the "northwestern Virginia hill country," he was able to become somewhat educated and used that to his benefit. Walls joined the Union Army and served until 1865. After his service, he moved to Alachua County, Florida, and like other settlers in that region, he was "young, eager, and poor." Walls participated in local and state politics actively. He won election to the House of Representatives three times. Historian Peter D. Klingman described Josiah T. Walls as "Florida's

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[18] Timothy Thomas Fortune, *After War Times: An African American Childhood in Reconstruction-Era Florida.* Edited by Daniel R. Weinfeld (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University Alabama Press, 2014), 16.

[19] Larry Eugene Rivers and Brown, Canter Jr. "Rejoicing in their Freedom" The Development of Tampa's African-American Community in the Post-Civil War Generation," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 27, Article 3. (2018): Digital Commons USF., 7-8.

[20] Joe M. Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs: Florida's Only Negro Cabinet Member," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1964): 363.

[21] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 18.

[22] Michael Gannon, *Florida: A Short History* (Norwood: University Press of Florida, 2003), 89.

[23] James C. Clark, *A Concise History of Florida* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 61.

most powerful black politician."[24] An article in *The Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, June 12, 1882, discussed Walls' adjustment from his time in politics to his life of a cucumber farmer in Alachua County. The article attributed the rise of the Democrat Party to power in the South for the reason Walls sought other ways to support himself. The articled revealed a defeatist tone when it labeled his time in Congress as "His only success…during Reconstruction."[25]

Figure 1.12. "The first colored senator and representatives - in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States. Group portrait of African American legislators: Robert C. De Large, Jefferson H. Long, H.R. Revels, Benj. S. Turner, Josiah T. Walls, Joseph H. Rainy [i.e., Rainey], and R. Brown Elliot," 1872. Library of Congress. Removed to comply with copyright. https://lccn.loc.gov/98501907.

John Wallace improved his station from the life of a slave life to become a prominent Florida political leader during Reconstruction. He used an "X" to sign his name when he enlisted in Union Army in 1863. He was self-taught or possibly instructed by someone else by 1865. Initially, in his career he taught at a plantation school in Tallahassee, Florida. A former Confederate officer asked Wallace to instruct freedmen at the school. A Florida newspaper, *The Semi-Weekly Floridian* on December 30, 1867, acknowledged the efforts of Wallace at the school. The article called the school an "experiment" started recently, but because of the "excellent leadership of Mr. John Wallace," more than seventy students attended. The article

[24] Peter D. Klingman, "Josiah T. Walls and the Black Tactics of Race in Post Civil War Florida," *Negro History Bulletin* 37, no. 3 (1974): 243.

[25] "Josiah T. Walls, *The Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, June 12, 1882, Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers.

commended his achievements with the school: "Mr. Wallace is one of the best qualified, most thorough and untiring of our colored teachers. His success must place him in the front rank of his race." Wallace began his career in the Florida Senate in 1874.[26] His career ended when the Democratic Party returned to power in Florida. His circumstances echoed what happened to other black political leaders when the Federal troops left the South. He was largely "forgotten" in Florida's political history.

John Wallace wrote a book later in his career, *Carpet Bag Rule in Florida: The Inside Workings of the Reconstruction of Civil Government in Florida After the Close of the Civil War*. The book oddly favored the Democrat Party more than the Republican Party. He demonstrated a sympathetic tone toward the Democrats when he wrote about the slaves contact with the "more enlightened race, though in the position of slaves" as a better option than to be "contaminated by strange white men who represented themselves to them as their saviours." John Wallace, because of his frustration with the "carpet-baggers" and their influence in Florida, took an unusual political position for that time. He argued, "the ascendancy of the Democratic party to the State government in 1877, has proved a blessing in disguise to the colored people of Florida."[27] Wallace earned the reputation as a black political leader who was critical of "fellow blacks and

[26] James C. Clark, "John Wallace and the Writing of Reconstruction History," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1989): 409–413.

[27] John Wallace, *Carpet Bag Rule in Florida: The Inside Workings of the Reconstruction of Civil Government in Florida After the Close of the Civil War* (United States: Da Costa printing and publishing house, 1888), 3-4.

Radical Republicans."[28] The Radical Republicans earned the reputation of traveling to Florida with the plan to organize the black vote.[29]

Henry S. Harmon was self-taught in the field of law. He was passionate about education as a means for "self-improvement" for himself and for freedmen. He was a "pioneer" in Florida's legal community. Harmon served in the Florida legislature from 1868 to 1870. John Wallace called Harmon a "[man] of education" and T. Thomas Fortune noted that Harman was "very intelligent and alert." The Redemption of the South impacted Harmon's career life as it did many other black Reconstruction leaders. Nonetheless, Harmon continued to plead for the rights of black Americans to participate in politics and hold political office. He expressed about the situation, "If the colored man cannot have the office of Assessor…then for God's sake what can he have?"[30]

Jonathan C. Gibbs received glowing praise as a black political leader in Florida during Reconstruction. He was described as "One of the most outstanding of the early Negro politicians." His ascension in politics was labeled "phenomenal." Gibbs moved to Florida after the Civil War and entered Florida politics through his connection to the Freedmen's Bureau.[31] His focus on schooling included meeting educational interests and spiritual conditions. Gibbs

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[28] James C. Clark, "John Wallace and the Writing of Reconstruction History," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1989): 409-427. According to Clark, speculation surrounded the book by John Wallace. One theory involved whether he authored the book. Discussions existed that possibly former Florida Governor Bloxham wrote or contributed to the writing of the book because of the way the book served as a type of "campaign tract" for the 1888 Florida governor race. Historians used the book to attempt to prove Reconstruction's failures since it was written by an ex-slave who was disgruntled with the actions taken during Reconstruction, such as with the Freedmen's Bureau. Walter Fleming was the first historian to quote Wallace (1906-1907) in his Reconstruction work. Florida historian William Watson Davis (1913) quoted Wallace in his Reconstruction book. Historian Joe M. Richardson argued Wallace's book was not fully accurate and "pro-Democrat," in the context of the political party.

[29] Gannon, *Florida: A Short*, 89.

[30] Darius J. Young, "Henry S. Harmon: Pioneer African American Attorney in Reconstruction-era Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly: Vol. 85: No. 2*, Article 5. (2006) https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol85/iss2/5. The office of Assessor was a "minor political office."

[31] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 17.

earned the reputation as an "educated and cultured" man during his political career in Florida. He served as a delegate to the Florida Constitutional Convention in 1868. Gibbs did not hold radical political views; however, he reflected similar thinking of leaders such as Thaddeus Stevens. *The New York Tribune*, reporting on Gibbs' convention participation, stated there was "no fitter man" in attendance "white or black." A Jacksonville, Florida newspaper proclaimed Gibbs was a "good example." In historian Joe M. Richardson's estimation, this meant Gibbs represented "what education would make of his race…probably the best educated man in the Convention."[32]

In 1868, Governor Harrison Reed requested Jonathan C. Gibbs perform the duties of Secretary of State. It was believed the governor appointed Gibbs to appease freedmen who felt that Reed ignored issues that concerned black people. Gibbs worked closely with Governor Reed and earned the respect of his fellow cabinet members. Some Democratic opposition even recognized Gibbs as a man of "fairness and honesty." Although not everyone held Gibbs in the highest esteem. The Ku Klux Klan clashed with Gibbs. They intimidated Gibbs to the extent that he "slept in his attic for several months for protection" because of threats he received from the Ku Klux Klan.[33]

In 1872, Governor Ossian B. Hart appointed Jonathan C. Gibbs State Superintendent of Education. This decision to choose Gibbs for the position was connected to a demand by black Republicans to appoint a black person. Florida's public school system experienced improvements under Gibbs' leadership. For example, uniform textbooks were a continual issue at the elementary and secondary levels in Florida. In 1873, the state, under the leadership of Gibbs, published textbooks. Gibbs' accomplishment represented a milestone in Florida's

[32] Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs, 363-364.
[33] Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs, 365.

curriculum development.[34] Gibbs attended an educator convention where he praised the merits of education and the status the Florida's school system. Gibbs said, "There is room for 25,000 more schoolhouses in the late rebellious States, because they contain 3,000,000 illiterate people." He did not approve of "ignorance." Regarding Florida he quoted statistics that demonstrated the growth of the states' population and its increase in school attendance. He was pleased the state served more students than in 1860 and accomplished the task with only thirty-three percent increase in spending.[35]

Jonathan C. Gibbs understood that education represented the basic necessity for society to maintain a free government. Sadly, Gibbs' service as superintendent ended abruptly because of his death.[36] He died because of odd even "suspicious circumstances," some believed.[37] His death was mourned by white and black people in Florida. Gibbs' legacy as a "minister-educator-politician" was defined by his dedicated, honest approach to life.[38] The official record created by the *Florida Senate Journal* summarized Jonathan C. Gibbs as a "faithful and valuable public servant, whose place it is not easy to fill."[39]

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[34] Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs, 366.

[35] "Hon. Jonathan C. Gibbs State Superintendents of Schools in Florida." *Christian Recorder*, August 28, 1873, 4. *Nineteenth-Century Collections Online*

[36] *Florida Senate Journal*, January 16, 1875. The Florida Senate.

[37] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 18.

[38] Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs, 367.

[39] *Florida Senate Journal*, January 16, 1875. The Florida Senate.

Figure 1.13. Portrait of Secretary of State Jonathan C. Gibbs. 1868 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

The triumph of Reconstruction came as the result of the ambition of the freedmen. They coordinated with Republican political leaders to influence the state governments, and their efforts opened the pathway toward public education in the South.[40] Freedmen schools represented the beginning of a new direction for the South and encouraged the black person to achieve his goals.[41] In the South, freedmen became teachers and taught in plantations which marked a sign of growth in the condition of the ex-slave. Many of the black freedmen teachers were described as "intelligent men, of good address, and sufficiently advanced in education to teach the freedmen in the first primary grades." Another victory for freedmen's education occurred when freedmen, with "their *own* initiative, established schools.[42] In Florida, instances developed where school attendance was higher for blacks than for whites.[43] For freedmen in Florida, Reconstruction ushered in a time when they increased their stature in education and religion, two fields where they were denied opportunities as slaves.[44]

Florida was behind in its establishment of a school system but the state progressed because of the persistent effort of local superintendents and the freedmen's enthusiasm for education. When the state acquired qualified teachers, it advanced the education initiatives in the state. Better teachers increased the freedmen's interest in education. By 1870, the Freedmen's Bureau equipped 87 school buildings in the state and proved to be an essential part of the development of freedmen's education in Florida.[45] In 1872, Governor Harrison Reed boasted:

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[40] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 5.

[41] Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 55.

[42] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[43] Richardson, "Jonathan C. Gibbs, 367.

[44] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 16.

[45] *Florida Senate Journal*, January 5, 1870.

"All classes of Floridians regardless of political or social prejudices and preconceived theories, appear to have united in the purpose of securing to all the benefit of free schools." Florida, although still in the developmental stages during Reconstruction, had established a "uniform system of common schools." Governor Reed described education as an outlet for lessening crime.[46] When children attended school crime lessened, thus the reason Governor Reed wanted to implement an education law that required school attendance.[47] *The Florida Agriculturalist* published an article, "The Duty of the State," and addressed the subject of compulsory attendance. The article discussed the importance of education for Florida and how residents knew its importance; however, the article likewise acknowledged that there was still "some of the *old regime* and the emancipated slaves who do not attach the same importance to it."[48] Other reasons for the opposition to the law came from the position that the law was deemed "un-American" or interfered with the rights of the parents. Florida was not alone when it faced opposition to a compulsory attendance law. All states faced controversy about passing the law. Florida passed its compulsory attendance law in 1915.[49]

"In the Providence of God, the State has passed from under a political system incompatible with the edification of the masses, to a system which finds its most successful development in such edification and cultivation," proudly cited an article in a Freedmen's Bureau report. A visible symbol of the gains Florida made during Reconstruction was the

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[46] Harrison Reed, 1813-1899. *Fifth Annual Message of His Excellency Governor Harrison Reed to the legislature of Florida, January 4, 1872.* January 4, 1872. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 24.

[47] Derrell Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1965): 349–60.

[48] "The Duty of the State," *The Florida Agriculturalist*, December 22, 1880, Newspapers.com.

[49] Walter S. Deffenbaugh and Ward W. Keesecker, *Compulsory School Attendance Laws And Their Administration.* United States Department of the Interior. Office of Education (United States Government Printing Office. Washington: 1935), 8-9.

establishment of the Stanton Institute.[50] The school's name was bestowed in honor of Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton. Eventually, the school was simply named Stanton High School. When the school opened in 1868, it was the first of its kind in Florida as a public high school. The school represented an important milestone in the education initiatives for black people during Reconstruction in Florida.[51] The Stanton Institute meant a great deal to the freedmen and was a notable product of the Bureau's efforts. The Bureau was proud of its modern construction and listed in detail the school buildings components. The article noted of the building that it was "undoubtedly one of the most perfect structures of its kind ever erected." Stanton Institute was two stories high with six large classrooms. It included a cloak room, private teacher rooms, a library, and an auditorium that seated 300 people. Construction and the completion of this school building also renewed people's interest in education in Florida. At the time of the Freedmen's Bureau report around 300 to 400 students enrolled.[52] An American Missionary Association testimonial by David Clark to C. L. Woodworth stated: "For the past four years I have been South and made it a point to visit the freedmen's schools in the cities and large towns. Taking all things into consideration, this school [Stanton] seems to be in the best condition, and the scholars are making more rapid progress than any other. The next best is the Howard School in Columbia S.C."[53] Another institution created to advance the education of

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[50] Florida: Miscellaneous; Oct. 1865-June 1870. Oct. 1865-June 1870. MS, Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871: Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive. The title in the report indicated it was from a *Florida Union* article: "Report of Dedication of Stanton Normal Institute Jacksonville, Florida."

[51] Stanton Institute - Jacksonville, Florida. 1870 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. The information is from the description of the photo.

[52] Florida: Miscellaneous; Oct. 1865-June 1870. Oct. 1865-June 1870. MS, Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871: Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871. National Archives (United States). Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive.

[53] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877",

black people, Cookman Institute, established in 1872, was also constructed in Jacksonville, Florida. The school eventually was renamed Bethune-Cookman and relocated its campus to Daytona Beach, Florida.[54] The original mission of the institution aimed to "prepare young men for the ministry, and to prepare teachers of both sexes."[55] For example, the Cookman Institute Catalog, 1893-1894, outlined its goal for training teachers. Several people who attended the Cookman Institute, according to the catalog, did so to train as teachers. This meant the school intended to teach the "art and principles of teaching." Also worth attention was Cookman Institute's focus on religion as part of its educational experience. Students were required to attend "devotional exercises" that took place in the Chapel every day. To this regard, the catalog expressed, "Spiritual songs, Scripture readings and prayers have made this one of the pleasantest and most profitable features of our school."[56] Now that a school system was in place in Florida the attention turned toward better training for teachers.

In 1878, the Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction complimented the progress of the common school system. The report placed education at high focus when it stated, "The South owes it to her Christian civilization" to elevate the freedmen. Florida continued to address issues of textbooks uniformity and teacher training. Regarding teachers, the report noted, "That a want of efficient teachers is one most deeply felt in our State, is well known to every one who has ever in any way been connected with the management of our public schools." Teachers of adequate skill existed in the state; however, each county continued to experience teachers who

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https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. Correspondence is from the Appendix to the FTP Database, page 740. Date of letter is May 2, 1870.

[54] Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the State of Florida. *Manuscript Copy of "The Florida Negro" by the Florida Writers' Project, ca. 1938.* 1938 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. 16.

[55] Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (Tampa, FL: Trend House, 1965), 121.

[56] *The Catalogue of Cookman Institute, Jacksonville, 1893-1894.* 1893. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

were unable to "perform the duties of the schoolroom." In other words, some teachers lacked qualifications to complete their job properly. For this reason, teacher training institutes became of the utmost importance in Florida. The freedmen maintained a profound desire in education after their emancipation. Because of their "absorbing passion to have their children educated," it was critical they accessed qualified teachers. When the freedmen encountered skilled teachers, they excelled in their education.[57] An example of the level at which children excelled in their education during Reconstruction was conveyed in a communication from Miss Catherine R. Bent, a principal in Jacksonville, Florida, to George W. Gile, Assistant Commissioner and superintendent of education in Florida. The letter noted the ability of the children:

> In their daily recitations they have manifested a good deal of interest and enthusiasm. In my own department scholars have frequently asked permission to remain in at recess, to perform examples on the blackboard or study the outline maps. Many of them learn Arithmetic very readily. I have a young man in school who in five weeks learned the multiplication tables thoroughly, besides learning to cipher in addition, subtraction, and multiplication. In addition to that he gained considerable knowledge of Geography, and improved in reading.[58]

While the state made significant strides in its education system during Reconstruction, the nagging issue of whether all white people fully accepted the societal changes loomed.

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[57] *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*. December 31, 1878. The Florida Senate. 10-20.

[58] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. Correspondence is from the Appendix to the FTP Database, page 39. Date of letter is July 13, 1869.

Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina all had instances of integrated schools during Reconstruction, but none of the experiments lasted after the 1870s.[59] Segregated schools emerged in the South almost by neglect because in the beginning those assisting the education efforts of slaves intended the schools for black people. Esther Hill Hawkes was known for teaching a "combined school," but faced opposition from some white Floridians. Most all of the white children left the school because their parents did not want black children in the same classroom.[60] According to Mrs. Hawkes, a student who attended her school received severe backlash from the parent who threatened to "break his bones" for attending the school without permission.[61] A northern journalist, Edward King, wrote about the substantial prejudice in Florida about public schools during 1873. He recognized the apprehension held by some whites came from the notion "that someday mixed schools may be insisted upon by the black masters of the situation." Even though "de facto segregation" existed in Florida, the state moved to create a "constitutional basis for legal separation" in 1877.[62] The state passed a Civil Rights Act in the 1873, which banned racial discrimination, but that it did not make a difference because Florida previously operated as a segregated society.[63] This act was known as the "Acts and Resolution of the General Assembly of the State of Florida" and included a provision for the Civil Rights of the citizens of the State of Florida.[64]

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[59] Daniel E. Sutherland, *Expansion of Everyday Life* (United States: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 103.

[60] Michael T. Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2018), 68-69.

[61] Gerald Schwartz, Ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War. Esther Hill Hawks' Diary* (University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 80.

[62] William Preston Vaughn, *Schools for All: The Blacks and Public Education in the South, 1865-1877.* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021), 54-60.

[63] Gengler, *We Can Do It,* 68-69.

[64] "Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of Florida, 1873" (Tallahassee, Florida), UF George A. Smathers Libraries, https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00078712/00051, 26.

The plan for "de jure segregation" was the goal, but segregation because of the law did not unfold instantly in Florida following Reconstruction. The tipping point happened when the U.S. Supreme Court took the position the Civil Rights Acts of 1875 were unconstitutional. The decision aided Florida legislators' efforts to overturn Civil Rights measures Florida previously passed in 1873. Eventually segregation existed in every place possible in Florida, such as schools, colleges, street cars, and railroads. The black community rallied together at their churches, schools, and social halls and once again demonstrated their resilience in the face of resistance to their rights. Black people in Florida disputed the discrimination they faced in the public space with counter suites, protests, and boycotts. Some black people decided to leave the state; however, many black Floridians continued to live in the state and deal with their situation the best way they knew how. Black churches served as one outlet for black Floridians to find faith and optimism in the face of their opposition.[65]

The damaging turning point concerning the education gains Florida made during Reconstruction occurred because of the 1885 state constitution. With this constitution the state implemented the policy that "white and colored children shall not be taught in the same school, but impartial provision shall be made for both." The decision brought racial discrimination into full strength in the state and resulted in unequal educational experiences for black children as compared to white children.[66] After Reconstruction, schools in Florida faced another setback that related to funding. At the 1885 constitutional convention there were Democrats who did not like funding allocated to black education. They felt it hurt the white students. Even though the measure to halt public schools was struck down by Republicans and moderate Democrats, the

[65] Wali R. Kharif, "Black Reaction to Segregation and Discrimination in Post-Reconstruction Florida." *The Florida Historical Quarterly 64, no. 2* (1985): 161-168.

[66] Gengler, *We Can Do It,* 68-69.

debate revealed the hostility from Democrats about equal education opportunities for black and white students.[67] The reduction policies of the Florida Democrats regarding educational expenses hurt Florida's academic system because the state took measures after Reconstruction to save money on education expenses, which also occurred to the detriment of black people.[68] Governor George F. Drew, a Democrat, took Florida in a different direction after Reconstruction when he instructed the Florida legislature to avoid education spending "unless absolutely necessary."[69] Remarkably, Florida maintained its Reconstruction era education system progress despite the actions taken by Florida's Democrats to reduce spending. The Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and the freedmen created a strong foundation for education in the state that withstood the opposition for a time.[70]

With the 1868 constitution, Florida separated from its Old South tradition and implemented public schools for all residents only to retreat from this trajectory shortly after Reconstruction. Then Florida, shortly after Reconstruction, returned to its former ways. The federal government recognized segregation in the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson* of 1896. For Tallahassee, Florida, the unfair treatment of black people dated before its 1885 state constitution. The segregation that resulted from Florida's reversal of the gains made during Reconstruction harmed its black residents. Black people endured interference from white Floridians who hindered their equal access to education well into the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.[71] Aside from the major infringement on civil rights, segregated schools

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[67] Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," 353.

[68] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 122-123.

[69] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 201.

[70] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 122-123.

[71] Irvin D. S.Winsboro and Abel A. Bartley, "Race, Education, and Regionalism: The Long and Troubling History of School Desegregation in the Sunshine State," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (2014): 714–45.

attended by black people were normally in worse condition compared to what school systems offered white people in the South. The misconception of *Plessy v. Ferguson's* outcome was that the schools for black people were purportedly equal in the educational experience to the white schools, but that was not the case. The ramifications of this for the young black male were harmful. Historian Robert A. Margo viewed the issue of segregation in schools from an economic perspective. He argued the following, "The combination of low educational attainment and poor educational quality made it extremely difficult for black men to compete successfully for better jobs and higher pay." A quality education was linked to a person's potential income, so it was essential black students accessed the same educational options as white students.[72]

Florida experienced a tumultuous history regarding the relationship between the white and black races. At certain points during Reconstruction, it seemed the state made progress. Included in a report from John W. Alvord was the indication that prejudices were decreasing as white people started to see the importance of education.[73] Aside from legislative and political reasons, why were the gains made during Reconstruction in Florida challenged beyond 1877? *The Freedmen's Record* included an excerpt written by Freedmen teacher S. Fannie Wood. She commented on the opposition she experienced from white people regarding the education of ex-slaves: "They [whites] cannot bear to see these people whom they have treated like brutes—incapable of any higher attainments than the brute, as they say—having equal advantages with themselves, What cruelty!"[74] This reaction coincides with Mrs. Hawkes' observation in Florida that the Confederates maintained their identity of "rebels…at heart."[75] In the case of

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[72] Robert A. Margo, *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880-1950: An Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 11.

[73] John Watson Alvord, Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1867-1869.

[74] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1866. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

[75] *The Freedmen's Record*, 1868. Slavery, Abolition & Social Justice.

Jacksonville, Florida, where Esther Hawkes taught during Reconstruction, the school system "would not be integrated—or more accurately re-integrated—" until the 1970-1971 school year.[76]

The violent reactions toward black voters and political leaders in Florida preceded the controversial presidential elections of 1876. In 1868, six or seven black Republicans were killed in Columbia County, Florida and this naturally increased fear among other black people. Thomas Jacob, a black Republican, one night was beckoned to his door "and shot dead." Events similar to what happened to Thomas Jacob were tragically common.[77] The threatening tactics impacted the outcome of the elections. During the election of 1870, Democrats made considerable effort to scare black voters to lessen the Republican power in the state. Several black people, out of fear of the situation, did not cast their vote and left town instead. As a result, the Democrats demonstrated that they had regained the political influence lost after the Civil War. Because of the tactics employed, the Democrats revealed that it was possible to hinder the black voter and limit the Republican's power in the state. As many gains as black people made during Reconstruction in areas of education, voting, and political office, they were unable, at least for this time, to "breach the caste barriers created by slavery."[78] As far as who committed the violence against black people in Florida, evidence pointed to either the Ku Klux Klan or similarly minded groups in the South. Jonathan Gibbs issued a report where he discussed a "body of men" who visited Taylor County, Florida, and terrorized the people with violence. Emanuel Fortune, father of T. Thomas Fortune, testified that he had not encountered KKK, but he

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[76] Gerald Schwartz, "An Integrated Free School in Civil War Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1982): 155.

[77] Ralph L. Peek, "Lawlessness in Florida, 1868-1871," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1961): 166.

[78] Ralph L. Peek, "Election of 1870 and the End of Reconstruction in Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1967): 355-357, 367.

believed they were in Florida.[79] John W. Alvord in his report on the situation of the freedmen referenced "ku-klux outrages" in the South. He noted an incident of a hanging.[80] *The Florida Peninsular* included a report in a July 15, 1871 article that claimed the state was "in better condition" regarding issues with violence and credited the improvements "partly to the passage of the Ku Klux law." The report explained that "ruffians" were aware that the United States Marshall and District Attorney of Florida were "men who are not afraid to do their duty under any circumstances."[81] However, the January 4, 1872, record in the *Florida Senate Journal* referenced the "Democratic Clubs." These "clubs" were actually "secret societies designed to seize the government by violence in the event of the assurance of the election…became afterwards known as Ku Klux of infamous notoriety for blood and cruelty."[82]

The mistreatment of black Floridians by some whites was not always violent but still vengeful. Jonathan Gibbs received a letter when he was the Secretary of State of Florida that detailed the unjust treatment of an "old collard [colored] man." The man, probably 60 or 65, was charged with theft and sentenced to the state prison. The controversy surrounded the fair purchase of a cow, and the man was given a bill of sale for his purchase from the white man. However, when the white man who sold the cow died, his father "pretended that he knew nothing of his son selling any cattle." The father refused to identify his son's signature on the bill of sale.[83] Justice-related problems consisted of the most problematic aspect of Reconstruction in

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[79] William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), 558.

[80] Alvord, John Watson. *Letters from the South, relating to the condition of freedmen addressed to Major General O.O. Howard, Commissioner Bureau R., F., and A.L. by J.W. Alvord, Gen. Sup't. Education, Bureau R., F., & A.L.* Washington, District Of Columbia: Washington, D.C. Howard University Press, 1870. Readex: African Americans and Reconstruction: Hope and Struggle, 1865-1883.

[81] "The Florida Ku Klux Quiet," *The Florida Peninsular*, July 15, 1871. The report was from the *New York Tribune* that quoted Senator Osborne of Florida.

[82] *Florida Senate Journal*, January 4, 1872, The Florida Senate Journal.

[83] Letter From "A Republican" to Secretary of State Jonathan C. Gibbs, November 17, 1869. 1869-11-17. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

Florida. White society viewed black people as subservient, creating an impediment to taking their word over that of a white man.[84] It was instances such as the one described to Jonathan Gibbs that led W. E. B. DuBois to feel the black person was not really free. In the "backwoods of the Gulf States, for miles and miles, he may not leave the plantation of his birth; in well-nigh the whole rural South the black farmers are peons, bound by laws and custom to an economic slavery," DuBois declared.[85]

Violence against newly enfranchised black voters largely contributed to the reputation of Reconstruction as a failure. The white supremacist groups targeted black voters and undermined the substantial advancements that the slaves strove for after their emancipation. Seventeen black Americans served in the United States Congress and over 600 served in the state legislatures during Reconstruction. And, hundreds of black Americans served in their local offices across the South. In Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina black political leaders won a national office. Nonetheless, the violence won for the moment and it took "almost 100 years after Reconstruction ended" for black Americans to win Senate seats. The long wait ended when Edward Brooke, Massachusetts, won his election to the U.S. Senate in 1967.[86]

In Florida, Governor Ossian B. Hart, Republican Governor from 1873 to 1874, "skillfully managed to navigate between Florida's Republican factions and its unredeemed white Democrats." However, when he died in March 1874, Florida's Democrats regained control of state legislatures in 1875. Louisiana and South Carolina, in the spring of 1876, managed to keep

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[84] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction*, 41.

[85] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic Monthly*. (1901): In The American Mosaic: The African American Experience, ABC-CLIO.

[86] Daniel Byman, "White Supremacy, Terrorism, and the Failure of Reconstruction in the United States," *International Security 46, no. 1* (2021): 53-103.

their Republican governments.[87] The presidential election of 1876 between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel J. Tilden initiated the conclusion of Reconstruction in the South. Furthermore, the gains made by black political leaders began the downward spiral in 1876. National and state elections faced scrutiny and dispute. The threatening tactics that prevented black people from the polls were successful. The 1877 Florida race for governor between Democrat George F. Drew and Republican Marcellus Stearns resulted in a Democrat victory.[88] Florida included "armed rifle clubs" composed of Democrats whose aim was either to "disrupt Republican meetings" or use violence to keep black voters from the polls. The Democrats were not hesitant to implore extreme measures. For example, a Democrat publication the *New Orleans Picayune*, wrote, "All will admit that it is the colored vote of Louisiana that has ruined this state."[89]

After Democrat George F. Drew won the 1877 election as governor of Florida, the time of federal troops ended in the state.[90] Republican Reconstruction concluded in Florida on January 2, 1877. It was the next to last state where Reconstruction ended. South Carolina on April 11, 1877 was the last. On April 10, 1877 Daniel Chamberlain of South Carolina "surrendered" his governor position to Wade Hampton. Historian Allen C. Guelzo contended his words seemed like an "epitaph of Reconstruction," which were, "Today…by order of the President whom your votes alone rescued from overwhelming defeat, the Government of the United States abandons you." Even though Rutherford B. Hayes promised to continue to uphold the Republican ideology of protection for all people, his words seemed in vain. The Democratic Party succeeded in its

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[87] Allen C. Guelzo, *Reconstruction: A Concise History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 106.

[88] Young, "Henry S. Harmon," 192.

[89] Michael F. Holt, "The Elections Of 1876." In By One Vote: *The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876,* 152–74 (University Press of Kansas, 2008), 163-164.

[90] Gannon, *Florida: A Short History,* 89-90.

"redemption of the Old Confederacy." The Compromise of 1877 officially denoted the end of Reconstruction in the South, and the ramifications of this for the black voter meant that it took several decades later for their rights to be fully enforced again in the South.[91] On September 7, 1880, *The Weekly Floridian* published an article titled, "Why Democrats Should Retain Power." It referred to the public debt incurred because of Reconstruction as "evil." The complicated nature of politics during Reconstruction Florida was evidenced through the article's assessment: "I said a moment ago the greatest curse that ever befell Florida was the inauguration of carpet-bag government under the reconstruction acts and I submit that the financial results of carpet-bag rule…amply justifies this assertion."[92] By 1887, Jim Crow laws were passed and by 1890, poll taxes were implemented in Florida. The infringements of the black vote were not removed until the 1950s and 1960s. Essentially, at this point of history, Florida's finest political moment was its passage of the 1868 state constitution. Michael Gannon in his history of Florida called the constitution an "enlightened document…the best that Florida would have in the century."[93]

During Reconstruction, black people managed their circumstances in the face of their challenges perhaps as well as they could, given their economic standing in society.[94] Black people were the agents behind the push for the "education crusade in the South" during Reconstruction. Their efforts were deeply supported by northern aid societies and teachers. The Freedmen's Bureau equally played a role in advancing the education system in the South. Yet, as southern whites once again controlled state governments the predominant policy returned to

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[91] Guelzo, *Reconstruction,* 106, 114. For context, the dates Republican Reconstruction ended in states other than FL and SC: Virginia, October 5, 1869; North Carolina, November 28, 1870; Georgia, November 1, 1871; Texas, January 14, 1873; Arkansas, November 10, 1874; Alabama, November 16, 1874; Mississippi, January 4, 1876, Louisiana, January 2, 1877. Regarding the governor race in South Carolina, the Chamberlain and Hampton race, Chamberlain believed he won the governor race.

[92] "Why Democrats Should Retain Power," *The Weekly Floridian*, Newspapers.com.

[93] Gannon, *Florida: A Short History,* 90-92.

[94] Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction*, 39.

white supremacy.[95] Racist policies revealed their effects in early twentieth-century Florida. During that period the relationship between races in Florida were troubled. The race situation in Florida posed more complications than in southern states such as Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama. Some white Floridians had not changed their thinking and still held to notions of their superiority of the races. This mindset undoubtedly contributed to the corruption and violence that unfolded, which resulted in several actions of "lynching and mob violence, residential segregation, black codes, and discrimination" in the state. During the period from 1880 to 1930 black people were "more likely to be lynched in Florida than in any other state." The statistics revealed that "for every 100,000 blacks, 79.8 were lynched." In 1920, Florida held the grim record as the state with eleven lynchings.[96]

When the nation returned to its post-Civil War days of emphasizing black citizens as equal in the context of education through the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, Florida stood on the wrong side of history. Leadership in Florida worked to "denounce the decision." In 1965, Florida U.S. Representatives and Senators (all except one) created a pledge, the "Southern Manifesto," with the intention to reverse the ruling.[97] The segregationists feared the Supreme Court ruling, which overturned the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, opened the door to end all segregation beyond public education. An excerpt from the Florida Response to the Brown v. Board decision stated:

> That the Legislature of Florida asserts that whenever the General Government attempts to engage in the deliberate, palpable and dangerous exercise of powers

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[95] David Tyack and Robert Lowe, "The Constitutional Moment: Reconstruction and Black Education in the South." *American Journal of Education* 94, no. 2 (1986): 236–56.

[96] David H Jackson, "Booker T. Washington's Tour of the Sunshine State, March 1912," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2003): 255-256.

[97] Gengler, *We Can Do It,* 72.

> not granted to it, the States who are parties to the compact have the right, and are in duty bound, to interpose for arresting the progress of the evil, and for maintaining, within their respective limits, the authorities, rights, and liberties appertaining to them.

The phrase "progress of the evil" in the excerpt demonstrated the extent of the disdain the Florida legislators felt about the new movement for black equal rights. Although written almost 100 years later, it reflected a similar point of view legislators held during the days of the Confederate South to which Florida belonged. The issue of states' rights resurfaced in Florida not that it went away.[98]

Generations later black people in Florida assembled for their rights, not that their fight ceased when Reconstruction ended in the South. When the sit-in protest strategy started in the 1960s, a gathering of around 100 students "marched upon nine lunch counters in Tampa, Florida, and demanded service." The sit-in protest initiative to recognize black rights involved "some 70,000 students in twenty states across the nation" who joined the movement.[99]

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[98] Florida. Legislature. House of Representatives. *Interposition Resolution in Response to Brown v. Board of Education, 1957.* 1957-05-02. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory.

[99] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South,* 271.

Figure 1.14. *Sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter - Tallahassee, Florida.* 1960-03-13. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. This work is a Public Domain.

When attempting to measure the gains of Reconstruction versus its losses that calculation proves complicated. Politically, economically, and socially the South underwent improvements during the period. However, the progress begun during Reconstruction halted before it was fully completed, especially regarding black social equality. For this reason, Alfred B. Grunwell, a Freedmen's Bureau agent in Jefferson County, Florida during Reconstruction contemplated that he might not live long enough to see the full equality of black citizens.[100] For all its challenges, Reconstruction represented a remarkable time when the freedmen fulfilled their aspiration for

[100] Alva T. Stone, "Diary of a Freedmen's Bureau Agent: Alfred B. Grunwell in Jefferson County, Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2017): 1–38.

education because of their enthusiasm and the support of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and teachers. Many freedmen believed in the possibilities learning offered them. The freedmen's determination, at any age, to pursue what plantation owners denied them during slavery was nothing short of inspiring, and Catherine R. Bent, a principal in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1869, shared an example of this enthusiasm:

> The desire to learn doesn't seem to be confined to the children…In Gainesville, one of my most attentive scholars was a woman fifty years old. She, with four of her children, came to school regularly, for three years.... I asked her one day, why she was so anxious to learn. She replied, "so that the Rebs can't cheat me"—and I don't think they ever did, for she was a marked specimen of shrewdness."[101]

[101] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. Correspondence is from the Appendix to the FTP Database, page 39. Date of letter is July 13, 1869.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

"Thanking the Lord that his promise is sure…They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Freedmen Teacher Miss C. M. Blood, Monticello, Florida, 1869

History makes an impression when it conveys a story. Respected Florida historian and published author Andrew T. Huse explained the significance of storytelling when writing history. He wrote, "As a firm believer in the power of stories, I feel that one of the historian's most vital functions is to salvage and/or synthesize compelling stories that tell a larger historic truth."[1] My Reconstruction story begins with the life of the Florida slaves and their hardships, including slave laws. Florida was not any different from its fellow southern states in how white people viewed the practice of slavery. Freedom for slaves was a process and did not result in immediate progress, such as illustrated in the way sharecropping trapped slaves in an economic limiting system in Florida. Slaves eventually experienced their freedom in Florida; however, it seemed at the same time that white people hopefully waited for the time they could regain their old way of life. Control was what white Floridians lost after the Civil War, and control was what they wanted back. Changing the minds of white Floridians posed a tremendous challenge during Reconstruction. Black people had to fight to fit into a society that had ignored them their entire lives as slaves. That was the underlying theme of every part of my research: how blacks asserted themselves by striving for education. By showing the plight of the slaves and the demeaning treatment experienced under slavery in the South and Florida, I demonstrate the triumph that came with emancipation and the willpower of the former slaves and their fight to learn.

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[1] Andrew T. Huse, *From Saloons to Steak Houses: A History of Tampa* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2020), xi.

In Chapter 2, a significant point I establish deals with how Florida was a part of the Confederacy and the South during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. Another prominent feature of this chapter emphasizes the undeveloped or rough nature of the state geographically and economically. All of my research points to the unique opportunity of Florida for freedmen's education, especially for a teacher coming from the North to teach freedmen. A key conclusion reached in this chapter related to the discussion on how education impacted the lives of former slaves in the state as well as white people in the state. While education marked a triumphant change for black people, white people in the state did not always respond with the same enthusiasm, a theme I pursue in every chapter. I support a significant amount of my arguments with primary source records such as those given by the Florida governor's office, freedmen teachers' correspondence, Education Superintendent reports, and Freedmen's Bureau records. These records all showed the progress and obstacles of Florida's Reconstruction—politically, socially, and economically. In all three areas, I conclude Florida remained turbulent throughout Reconstruction; however, despite the hardships, the state made progress in freedmen's education and schools.

In Chapter 3, I explain that while the Freedmen's Bureau was not perfect in every service for the freed slave, it still accomplished an enormous amount for Florida's freedmen, especially in the context of education. A main feature of the chapter involved how the freed slave adjusted from a life of degradation to one of freedom. The Freedmen's Bureau represented the government solution established to help the freed slaves become independent. As illustrated in the chapter, dependency on the Bureau was not the aim. That is why all involved in the education of the freedmen intended to help the freedmen elevate their current status. However, reversing the years of abuse under the system of slavery did not come without obstacles. Even at the

national level, the Bureau faced opposition in the way of an investigation by President Andrew Johnson's administration. In this chapter, I concluded that while the Bureau did not live up to all it set out to do for the freedmen, it left an important legacy in establishing and protecting the right to education for black people in Florida. Nonetheless, for Floridians who felt they had lost their way of life, the Bureau's presence in the state did not come without pushback from some white Floridians. That was why a connection existed between Florida's readmission to the Union and the state's demise of the Freedmen's Bureau. In Chapter 3, I largely use primary sources, such as government reports and the numerous Florida Freedmen's Bureau records available, to substantiate my research findings.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that while the freed slaves undoubtedly contributed to the advancement of their education, it remains true that they did not accomplish this feat entirely alone. Chapter 4's focal points include discussions on religion, abolitionism, women, coordination of the northern aid societies with the Freedmen's Bureau, and the significant northern aid societies represented in Florida, all in the context of freedmen's education in Florida. I establish through the numerous northern aid society records, such as provided by the American Missionary Association, that without the northern aid societies' support, establishing black education in Florida was impossible. This chapter concludes that the involvement of the northern aid societies represented the turning point in the story of the slaves, who struggled to leave their restricted lives behind and look forward to what education offered them in their new life as freedmen. The establishment of black education and schools best exhibited the successful completion of the mission of the northern aid societies in the South and Florida.

In Chapter 5, I place sole emphasis on the freedmen teachers who marked a memorable part of Reconstruction history when analyzed in the context of education. And, the establishment

of black freedmen teachers revealed one of the most significant outcomes of freedmen education in the South and Florida because of how it served to illustrate the autonomy of black people. Now black people were fully free to encourage each other through instruction. Another key aspect of this chapter I highlighted is the motivation of freedmen teachers. Because teaching was a challenging profession in Florida, I strove to convey in this chapter how particularly brave it was for northern teachers to travel all the way to Florida. That is why I spotlight the numerous diary entries of Esther Hill Hawkes and Harriet B. Greely in this chapter, which testify to their joys and hardships of teaching in Florida. By doing so I recognize that teachers faced the typical challenges of teaching and added stresses because of Florida's physical environment or agricultural seasons that impacted student attendance. While some freedmen teachers held certain biases toward the students or practiced harsh discipline methods at times against the students they claimed to love and help. Additionally, teachers dealt with white Floridians who detested their presence, especially if they were from the North. The documentation in this chapter of Ku Klux Klan serves to further illustrate the challenges of the period. The critical conclusion reached in this chapter addresses the teachers' sacrifices and how their contribution to freedmen's education remains a vital part of the success of Florida's Reconstruction history.

In Chapter 6, I paint the picture of the experience of the freedmen student in the classroom. The chapter details the schoolhouse structure and the typical school day, including the type of curriculum a freedman student encountered in the South and Florida. For example, I share details about how the schoolhouses built in Florida followed a traditional format. And I explain how the teacher led the class from the front of the room while the students sat in structured rows and received information. A key point I argue is that the appropriate classroom tools and facilities enrich the educational experience for the students and make the teacher a

better teacher for eager students. The autobiography of Timothy Thomas Fortune, one of Florida's freedmen students during Reconstruction, is a unique feature of the chapter and an integral piece of primary source evidence. Over and over, during my study of freedmen's education in the South and Florida, testimonies appeared regarding the deep devotion of freedmen to education. Nothing illustrates this more than the older slaves wanting to attend school. Education meant the possibility for the freedmen to pursue a different path. The intelligence of the freedmen exhibited exceled beyond what caring freedmen teachers expected. One of the most vital conclusions of Chapter 6 pertains to the reaction of black people to obtaining their educational experience. For instance, a teacher in Florida reported: "the long, long years of law against slaves learning to read, has created in them a deep determination to master all the difficulties that lie in the way of gaining knowledge now that a way is opened." And, a different communication expressed: "they [black students] take their books out into the field, or wherever they go, and some of them study more than they work."[2] While freedmen were motivated to learn, the improvement of the schoolhouse and classroom environment signified a vital part of the history of freedmen's education in Florida.

Unfortunately, segregation and violence began to turn back the progress that freedmen made in Florida by the end of Reconstruction. This chapter relates to the previous chapters in that while freedmen made educational progress in Florida, underlying racism resisted permanent change in the state. However great the difficulties, education still enlightened black people's experiences following their emancipation from slavery during Reconstruction in Florida, a

[2] Butchart, Ronald E.; Pavich, Melanie; Engel, Mary Ella; Davis, Christina; Rolleri, Amy F., 2022, "The Freedmen's Teacher Project: Teachers among the Freed People in the U.S. South, 1861-1877", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HBDZD, Harvard Dataverse, V3. From the FTP Database Appendix: Source 1 from NFRA, NY, "Monthly Paper for May, 1863," No. 1, p. 2. Source 2 from New England Education Commission, First Annual Report..., p. 26.

crucial conclusion I reach in this chapter and the dissertation. And the way black men rose to political leadership and women took teaching positions in Florida showed the freedmen's achievement of their goals during Florida's Reconstruction. Even though challenges came to black education in the South and in Florida after Reconstruction, future generations had a courageous model to follow regarding the importance of education in their lives for bringing about change.

Dr. Robert W. Saunders, a Tampa, Florida, Civil Rights leader, remembered that his grandmother filed a suit to stop school segregation. Her activism took place long before the Civil Rights activism of the 1950s and 1960s.[3] Even though black people faced opposition well into the twentieth century, they did not stop fighting. Still, they found themselves waiting again to practice their fundamental freedoms protected under the U.S. Constitution. The wait was the reason Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his August 1963 "Letter from the Birmingham Jail": "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed…We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our God-given and constitutional rights."[4] The heroism of the black political leaders and teachers who emerged during Reconstruction in Florida paved the way for the later generations of black Floridians who fought for their rights.

Historian Eric Foner explained during one of his lectures that Reconstruction represented a "historical process." Looking at the era in that light implied, according to Foner,

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[3] Saunders, Robert W. Sr, "Dr. Robert W. Saunders, Sr" (2002). Florida Civil Rights Oral History Project. 4. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/fl_civil_rights_ohp/4. "Robert W. Saunders, Sr. was born on June 9, 1921, in the area of West Tampa…He attended Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach…In January of 1952 he suspended his legal studies to accept a position as Florida field director for the NAACP after the state's first field director, Harry T. Moore, was killed in a Ku Klux Klan bombing of his home." Information on Dr. Saunders from HCPLC: https://hcplc.org/thpl/history/saunders.

[4] "Letter from Birmingham Jail", The University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections http://archives.lib.ua.edu/repositories/3/resources/2169.

Reconstruction "never ended."[5] Therefore, Reconstruction provides an expansive opportunity to uncover new interpretations and observations about this difficult period of American History. With this in mind, I have a fascinating opportunity for future research because of an oral interview I completed in conjunction with this study. As established in my research, the majority of the men and women who participated in freedmen's education were ordinary people. The backgrounds of these individuals ranged from freedmen recently emancipated from the status of slave to women who sought an alternate way to make a difference in society aside from the role of wife and mother. Often, everyday men and women make an incredible impact on society. With that in mind my interview involves the account of Ruby Warren, who grew up in rural Florida during the 1930s. Ruby loved learning and helping others learn, even during her youth. One day, Ruby encountered two young black girls who did not know how to read because they could not attend school. Because Ruby valued education more than anything else, this was terrible to her that these girls did not know how to read. This instance occurred during the dark days of Jim Crow in Florida, so it was out of the question for Ruby to go to the home of girls. During that time in Florida, it was an understood custom that white people did not go to the homes of black people. So, in secret, Ruby met in the woods and taught the girls how to read. Ruby approached teaching the girls with caution because the thought of whites mingling with black people in Florida at that time was unaccepted. But these societal rules did not matter to Ruby. She did not consider skin color and felt the girls deserved the opportunity to learn like she had.[6]

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[5] Eric Foner, "Reconstruction: "A Revolution That Went Backwards," Library of America. February 20, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT4tXyx27fk&t=1s.

[6] Allan Warren and Judy Warren, interview by Jessica Damron, June 11, 2023, Ruby Warren Oral History Project.

Was the account about Ruby Warren an isolated case in Florida? Were there other kindhearted people who followed a similar manner of intervention as Ruby did when she taught the two black girls how to read? An incredible opportunity exists for future research. Creating an oral history project that recognizes the individuals who crossed racial barriers during Jim Crow Florida to help their fellow man represents a powerful way to preserve a piece of history that people do not know exists. Ordinary people defied the South's racial barriers during Reconstruction to bring instruction to freedmen, and that parallels a later period where Ruby similarly crossed societal rules in Florida and taught the two black girls how to read. The efforts of Ruby Warren serve as a small example of how, in the case of the two girls she knew, she bridged the gap until the state restored full civil rights for black people.

The way Reconstruction relates to present-day issues presents a valuable educational opportunity. Georgetown University professor, Daniel Byman, expressed the following about Reconstruction education in classrooms: "Reconstruction is poorly taught in most U.S. history classes, even though its lessons and impact reverberate throughout U.S. society today."[7] Yet, the manner in which the freedmen relentlessly pursued education serves as an excellent model of heroism for students to know today. Dr. Saunders, in his Civil Rights oral interview, explained that people today have "no sense of what Florida and the South was like." Life was a battle, and he said it took bravery for people to make change happen in the state and the South. Florida's conditions improved because black people fought for change.[8] In classrooms sit students who are the future generation of the country. The story of freedmen who pursued learning despite all of the obstacles they faced is something students need to know today and should be taught well in

[7] Daniel Byman, "White Supremacy, Terrorism, and the Failure of Reconstruction in the United States." *International Security 46, no. 1* (2021): 53-103.

[8] Saunders, Robert W. Sr, "Dr. Robert W. Saunders, Sr" (2002). Florida Civil Rights Oral History Project. 4. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/fl_civil_rights_ohp/4.

American History courses. It is motivating for students to hear out of all the ways freedmen could have pursued advancement it was education that most freedmen cherished. The former slaves, young and old, despite coming out of challenging circumstances, often performed beyond the teachers' expectations. This academic performance was a testament to their eagerness and aptitude for learning. History allows students to study the experiences and motivations of people of the past and use that knowledge in their decisions. Following the story of freedmen's education in Florida provides students with an excellent model of courage. The freedmen's story shows how pursuing meaningful goals in the face of challenges changed their lives and their children's futures.

Reconstruction represented a difficult period for the United States. U.S. official John Eaton astutely captured the complications of the time when he wrote in his memoir that "Neither the South understood the North, nor the North the South; no one certainly, in those days, understood the Negro."[9] Government agents, missionaries, and teachers faced numerous obstacles during their initiative to establish freedmen education in Florida and in the South. And whites in the South challenged the continuation of educational opportunities for black people past Reconstruction. Nonetheless, one crucial legacy remains from the Reconstruction era: the inspiring pursuit of education by the emancipated slaves and the teachers who worked to fulfill their goals to learn. The establishment of the public school system in the southern states stands as a critical achievement of Reconstruction.[10] In the case of Florida the numbers demonstrate

[9] John Eaton, Mason and Ethel Osgood, *Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedmen: Reminiscences of the Civil War, with Special Reference to the Work for the Contrabands and Freedmen of the Mississippi Valley* (United Kingdom: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1907), 314. John Eaton served as "Brigadier-General; General Superintendent of Freedmen in the Department of Tennessee; Assistant Commissioner of Freedmen, Freedmen's Bureau; Commissioner of Education of the United States; U.S. Superintendent of Schools, Porto Rico," according to the title page of his book.

[10] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 162.

Reconstruction's positive impact on the development of education in the state. In 1850, Florida had ten academies and sixty-nine common schools with 3,129 students total. Ten years later that number was "only about double" the previous amount. However, in 1873 public schools increased to 400 and in 1880 the number increased to 1,131 with over 40,000 students enrolled.[11]

The positive educational outcome of Reconstruction in Florida and in the South did not happen without the dedication of the freedmen to education. Freedmen exhibited their desire for learning when they walked far from home to attend a school, sought teachers, gathered funds for schoolhouses, helped other family members access education, and encouraged future black teachers.[12] Moreover, the freedmen teachers equally played an important role in freedmen's education achievement. The good freedmen teachers left a legacy for future teachers to follow. The dedication and perseverance of many of the freedmen teachers to their students provided an inspiring model for the modern educator to follow. The following excerpts from the 1864 edition of *Home Monthly*, a magazine publication, revealed the impact of the model teacher on future generations:

> Was not the good teacher well rewarded? Is it not any wonder that a hymn of thanksgiving welled up from her full heart? Tired and lonely though she was, all unknown to the public as she must ever be…
>
> May not this encourage the faithful and warn the careless teachers of our land. Our future statesmen, heroes, poets, and sages are in the humble country schoolhouses by the dusty roadside.[13]

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[11] Edwin Grant Dexter, *A History of Education in the United States* (United States: Macmillan Company, 1904), 139.

[12] Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 203.

[13] Sarah Jane Foster, *Teacher of the Freedmen: A Diary and Letters* (United Kingdom: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 228.

A connection exists between the access to education and a "free society," a sentiment held by Commissioner Oliver Otis Howard of the Freedmen's Bureau.[14] Access to education and the full realization of Constitutional rights and privileges go hand in hand. In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln expressed in his Second Inaugural Address, "let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds."[15] Part of the healing process for the nation meant bringing almost four million slaves into a position where their new freedoms were practiced and accepted in the North and the South. Education afforded freedmen the ability to practice their new rights. With education, freedmen were able to read the Bible, participate on fairer terms in the economic system, and generally an education permitted freedmen the possibility to improve their life situation.[16] Freedmen recognized that education gave them the power to utilize their freedom. Liberty represented an excellent state to exist in as opposed to slavery; however, an education meant freedmen could experience freedom to its fullest extent.[17] Through the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau, northern aid societies, and teachers, the freedmen finally received an education free from the fear of reprisal from a master, as was the case during the days of the Old South. A free society depends upon all its citizens having the ability to practice their rights without constraints. The freedmen and their passion for education spurred the education movement during Reconstruction. Even though black people faced reversals of progress made during Reconstruction, they still lit the lamp of learning for future generations to rekindle.

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[14] Wakefield, "'Set a Light in a Dark Place,' 401.

[15] Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," *The U.S. Constitution: A Reader* (Hillsdale College Press, 2018), 614.

[16] Eric Foner, *Forever Free,* 88.

[17] Beecher, Henry Ward. American Rebellion: Report of the Speeches of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Delivered at Public Meetings in Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London: And at the Farewell Breakfasts in London, Manchester, and Liverpool. Manchester: Union and Emancipation Society; [etc., etc.], 1864.

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