



National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for North Carolina, 1865–1872

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

In 1865, the Bureau in North Carolina faced a population that was on the verge of starvation and destitution. From July through September, the Bureau issued more than 500,000 rations. A large percentage of the rations went to the families of deceased Confederate soldiers. By 1865, only 5,000 freed people out of a population of more than 300,000 had received rations. By 1866, the Bureau began refusing aid to individuals who were able to work. Between 1867 and 1868, the Bureau increased its aid relief efforts due to crop failures and other emergencies. The Bureau also started a vaccination program to combat the spread of smallpox.

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

Administrative Records

__M843, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of North Carolina Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 38 rolls. DP. Records for the "Boston Fund," a benevolent society, are among the records. There are also reports on sanitary conditions, rations issued, outrages, and arrests. Other records relate to transportation, personnel, persons and articles hired, court cases, labor contracts, freedmen available for work, indentures, and lands and property, as well as accounts and claims.

Educational Records

__M844, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of North Carolina Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 16 rolls. DP. This publication documents Bureau efforts to establish schools for freedmen in North Carolina by offering advice, protection, and financial assistance to interested local citizens, and also examining and appointing teachers. The records include school reports, personnel records, contracts, and agreements.

Field Office Records

__M1909, *Records of the Field Offices for the State of North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 78 rolls. DP. These records provide information about issuing rations, providing medical relief, supervising labor contracts, administering justice, and working with benevolent societies in the establishment of schools. **Note:** The document titled “Tax List for Persons County, 1867,” part of the records of the Hillsboro agent on roll 27, is missing.

Other Records

__M803, *Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1871*. 35 rolls. DP. This publication contains correspondence and school reports that document efforts to establish and promote schools for freedmen, including day schools, night schools for adults, industrial (vocational) schools, and Sunday schools for religious instruction. Roll 5 contains name and subject indexes. Rolls 26–28 and 34 relate specifically to activities in North Carolina.

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