



National Archives and Records Administration

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Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for Florida, 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 Florida, freedmen secured more homesteads than in the other Southern public-land states. The Florida Bureau provided planters with food for their laborers and rations to those in need. The Bureau also maintained day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sabbath schools.

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

Administrative & Field Records

__M1869, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate Field Offices for the State of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 15 rolls. DP. The records provide information about issuing rations, administering justice, helping freedmen locate land, supervising labor contracts, and working with benevolent societies to establish schools. The records include monthly reports, applications of freedmen for rations, and school reports, as well as records relating to freedmen's claims and homesteads under the Southern Homestead Act of 1866.

Other Records

__M803, *Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1871*. 35 rolls. DP. This publication contains correspondence and school reports that document efforts to establish and promote schools for freedmen, including day schools, night schools for adults, industrial (vocational) schools, and Sunday schools for religious instruction. Roll 5 contains name and subject indexes. Rolls 19 and 34 specifically relate to activities in Florida.

__M1875, *Marriage Records of the Office of the Commissioner, Washington Headquarters of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1861–1869*. 5 rolls. DP. These records consist of marriage certificates, licenses, monthly reports of marriages, and other proofs of wedlock submitted by freedmen who wanted to legitimize marriages entered into during slavery. The records are arranged alphabetically by state, then alphabetically by the initial letter of the bridegroom's surname. Roll 1 contains Florida marriage records.

__M869, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 44 rolls. DP. On June 10, 1865, Howard appointed an Assistant Commissioner to oversee South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. By September 1865, separate Assistant Commissioners had been appointed for each state. Early Bureau records for Florida are included in this publication, although there are no separate rolls for Florida. The records generally consist of applications for the restoration of property and reports about murders, outrages, conditions, and operations. Other records contain information about the issuance of rations, contracts, legal actions, transportation, and personnel.

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