



# National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20408-0001

## ***Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for the District of Columbia, 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.

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

### **Administrative Records**

\_\_\_M1055, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the District of Columbia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 21 rolls. DP. In addition to correspondence (letters sent and received), records include reports relating to operations (rolls 13–14), issuance of rations (rolls 15–16), relief of destitute freedmen (rolls 16–17), transportation of freedmen migrating to the North (rolls 17–19), and personnel records (rolls 19–20).

### **Educational 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. Rolls 16–18 include monthly, building, and teacher reports for schools in the District of Columbia.

\_\_\_M1056, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the District of Columbia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872*. 24 rolls. DP. The Bureau offered advice, protection, and financial assistance to local citizens interested in sponsoring schools for freedmen, and also examined and appointed teachers. Records include correspondence; school reports giving the name of the teacher, name and location of the school, number of students, and name of the sponsoring aid society; and records relating to school buildings, grounds, and supplies.

## **Marriage Records**

\_\_\_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 records for the District of Columbia.

## **Field Office Records**

\_\_\_M1902, *Records of the Field Offices for the District of Columbia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870*. 21 rolls. This publication contains records from lower-level administrators and superintendents. The records document the major duties of the field offices in the District of Columbia such as providing relief, resettlement transportation, employment, establishing schools, legalizing marriages, and obtaining veterans benefits for black soldiers and sailors. Also included are records of Barry Farm, a government-sponsored program to enable freedmen to purchase land south of the Anacostia River, and Freedmen's Village, an asylum for destitute freedmen located in Arlington on the former estate of Robert E. Lee. The records include correspondence, endorsements, reports, employment registers and rosters, marriage registers, registers of contraband camps, labor contracts, transportation orders, and ministers' reports relating to marriages. The records are generally arranged alphabetically by administrative office, then chronologically by type of record. Consult the roll list on the microfilm for specific descriptions of the records available for each office.

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