



National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) for Louisiana, 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 Louisiana the lack of available funds, continuous flooding, crop failure, and contagious diseases severely hampered the Bureau's relief programs. The Bureau maintained homes for refugees and orphans and established four "home colonies."

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

Administrative Records

 M1027, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869*. 36 rolls. DP. The bulk of these records consist of reports on the conditions of freedmen and refugees, confiscated and abandoned lands, murders and outrages, and personnel records. Arranged by type of records, such as issuances and endorsements sent, and reports, such as reports relating to confiscated and abandoned lands, and then chronologically.

Educational Records

 M1026, *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1864–1869*. 12 rolls. DP. The Bureau offered advice, protection, and financial assistance to local citizens interested in sponsoring schools for freedmen, and also examined and appointed teachers. Records consist of general correspondence, school reports, personnel records, as well as finance and property records. Arranged by type of record, such as inspection and personnel records, and then chronologically.

Field Office Records

__M1905, *Records of the Field Offices for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1863–1872*. 111 rolls. DP. These records provide information about issuing rations, providing medical relief, supervising labor contracts, administering justice, providing resettlement transportation, maintaining homes for refugees and orphans, and establishing schools. They contain registers of claimants, complaints, marriage certificates, monthly reports, and labor contracts.

Other Records

__M1483, *Records of the New Orleans Field Offices, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869*. 10 rolls. DP. The records include morning reports of sick and wounded (rolls 2–6) and a register of contrabands in Corps d’Afrique General Hospital; a register of patients, sick and wounded; interments at the Freedmen’s Cemetery; and a register of disabled, destitute, and sick admitted to the hospital (roll 7).

__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 22–23 and 34 specifically relate to activities in Louisiana.

__M826, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Mississippi, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1869*. 50 rolls. DP. Mississippi and the Louisiana parishes of Carroll, Concordia, Madison, and Tenas were divided into Western, Southern, and Northern Districts. The Louisiana parishes were incorporated into the Louisiana Freedmen’s Bureau in January 1866.

__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 marriage certificates for Louisiana, 1864–1867.

Rev. December 2010