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**Records of the Superintendent  
of Education for the  
State of Louisiana,  
Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen,  
and Abandoned Lands  
1864-1869**



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*Records of the Bureau of Refugees,*

*Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands*

*Record Group 105*

RECORDS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION  
FOR THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, BUREAU OF  
REFUGEES, FREEDMEN, AND ABANDONED LANDS  
1864-1869

On the 12 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1864-69. The records consist of 18 bound volumes and nearly 2.4 metres (8 feet) of unbound documents. The bound volumes include letters, telegrams, and endorsements sent; registers of employees, accounts with freedmen schools; and other records. The unbound documents consist primarily of letters and telegrams sent and reports sent and received. The records are part of Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105.

### History and Organization

The Freedmen's Bureau, as the Bureau was commonly known, was established in the War Department by an act of March 3, 1865 (13 Stat. 507), and extended twice by acts of July 16, 1866 (14 Stat. 173), and July 6, 1868 (15 Stat. 83). Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, appointed by the President in May 1865, served as Commissioner throughout the life of the Bureau until it was terminated in accordance with an act of June 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 366).

Although the Bureau was part of the War Department, its work was primarily social and economic in nature. Bureau officials cooperated with benevolent societies in issuing supplies to destitute persons and in maintaining freedmen's schools. Bureau officials also supervised labor contracts between black employees and white employers; helped black soldiers and sailors collect bounty claims, pensions, and backpay; and attended to the disposition of confiscated or abandoned lands and other property.

The act of March 3, 1865, authorized the appointment of assistant commissioners to aid the Commissioner in supervising the work of the Bureau in the States. In Louisiana, operations began in June 1865, when Chaplain Thomas W. Conway took command as Assistant Commissioner at Louisiana Bureau headquarters in New Orleans. Other Assistant or Acting Assistant Commissioners for the State of Louisiana were Generals Absalom Baird, R. C. Buchanan, James S. Fullerton, Edward Hatch, Joseph A. Mower, and Philip H. Sheridan and Lt. Col. William H. Wood. In accordance with an act of July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193), Bureau operations within the States were terminated January 1, 1869, except for educational functions and the collection of claims.

In a circular issued by Commissioner Howard on July 12, 1865, assistant commissioners were instructed to designate an officer in each State to serve as "general Superintendent of

schools." These officials were to "take cognizance of all that is being done to educate refugees and freedmen, secure proper protection to schools and teachers, promote method and efficiency, correspond with the benevolent agencies which are supplying his field, and aid the Assistant Commissioner in making his required reports." In October 1865, some degree of centralized control was established over Bureau educational activities in the States, when Rev. John W. Alvord was appointed Inspector of Finances and Schools. In January 1867 Alvord was divested of the financial responsibilities and was redesignated General Superintendent of Education.

In the 2 years following the April 1862 occupation of New Orleans by Union troops, various civilian and military organizations established schools to educate freedmen in Louisiana. A more systematic educational program began with Gen. Nathaniel Banks' order of March 22, 1864 (Department of the Gulf General Order 38), which established a Board of Education to govern the organization of freedmen's schools in Louisiana. B. Rush Plumly was appointed head of the Board; Lt. Edwin M. Wheelock was appointed supervisor. Schools under the Board's jurisdiction were supported mainly by a tax on citizens recently disloyal to the Union.

On June 29, 1865, Assistant Commissioner Conway was authorized to take charge of the schools in Louisiana on behalf of the newly created Freedmen's Bureau. He appointed Capt. H. R. Pease Superintendent of Education on July 5, 1865. Wheelock and Plumly were dismissed, but most of the other officers and enlisted men who had served as subordinate school officials under the old Board of Education were retained. Pease's successors as Superintendent of Education for Louisiana included Bvt. Maj. A. G. Studer; Lieutenants F. R. Chase, J. M. Lee, L. O. Parker, and H. H. Pierce; and E. W. Mason.

For administrative purposes, the Superintendent divided the State into seven divisions with an assistant superintendent in charge of each. The divisions were headquartered at Alexandria, Amite City, Bragg Home Colony, Greenville Colony, New Orleans, Shreveport, and Thibadeaux. Other officials included school directors, who were normally assigned to a parish; city superintendents of schools; and teachers. Bureau officials (sub-assistant commissioners, assistant subassistant commissioners, and agents) in charge of subdistricts and parishes acted as inspectors of the schools in their areas and submitted periodic reports to the Superintendent of Education and to the Assistant Commissioner.

The schools maintained by the Bureau in Louisiana included day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sabbath (Sunday) schools for both groups. Reading, writing, and arithmetic received the greatest emphasis in most Bureau schools.

Teachers were recruited from the local white population, from among freedmen, and from the North. Among the more active national societies recruiting teachers from Northern States and otherwise aiding the freedmen in Louisiana were the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the American Free Mission Baptist Society, and the American Missionary Association.

The Bureau's responsibility for education included establishing and maintaining schools and examining and appointing teachers. Bureau funds were used to pay for constructing and repairing school buildings, for renting properties used for educational purposes, and for providing teachers with transportation. Whenever possible, the Bureau also provided protection to teachers, pupils, and school property. Teachers' salaries were normally paid by northern aid societies, from taxes levied against the Southern populace, or from contributions by freedmen. Bureau policy dictated that, whenever possible, subscriptions were to be solicited from freedmen for the establishment of schools and that tuition was to be charged for each student attending. At various times, the Bureau in Louisiana raised money for schools through a 5-percent tax levied against all people in the State, a 5-percent tax levied against all freedmen or against freedmen using the schools, and from a tuition collected from the students. The first plan failed because whites opposed it; the other two plans failed because freedmen were unable to pay a tax or tuition. Many schools in Louisiana failed because teachers did not receive funds to meet monthly expenses.

The correspondence received and sent by the Office of the Superintendent of Education is generally addressed to or signed by the Superintendent, the Acting Assistant Adjutant General, or the secretary to the Superintendent. The correspondents represented in the series include the Assistant Commissioner; teachers, school officials, subassistant commissioners, and other subordinate officials; Army officers attached to military commands in the State; State and local political officials; and white citizens and freedmen of the State. Many items of correspondence are addressed to the Superintendent of Education as the "General Superintendent of Education," the more formal title of his office. The shorter title is used in these introductory remarks.

Several series of records dated before July 1, 1865, are of the Board of Education, the predecessor of the Office of the Superintendent of Education in Louisiana.

The volumes reproduced in this microfilm publication were arbitrarily assigned numbers by the Adjutant General's Office (AGO) of the War Department after the records came into its custody. The AGO numbers are shown in parentheses only in the

table of contents of this publication to aid in identifying the volumes on whose spines the numbers appear. The volume numbers without parentheses (throughout this publication) were assigned by the staff of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS). Sometimes a volume was used to record more than one type of information; e.g., the volume containing registers of weekly and monthly statistical reports of schools also contains the register of employees. The contents of these volumes have been filmed as if they were separate items.

Numbered blank pages have not been filmed. All indexes are filmed immediately preceding the records to which they pertain.

## Series Listings and Remarks

### GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

#### *Letters and Telegrams Sent*

The records are comprised of three volumes of press copies (vols. 1, 2, and 4) and one volume of fair copies (vol. 3) of letters and telegrams sent. Press copies were obtained by wetting a piece of thin paper and pressing it on the original letter through the use of a press-copying machine that caused the image to be transferred to the moistened paper. Because of the relative crudeness of this method, many of the press copies are difficult to read and some are virtually impossible. Fair copies are handwritten duplicates of the originals, usually clear and legible.

The four volumes of letters and telegrams sent, April 1, 1864-February 28, 1867, are arranged by time period. Entries in each volume are arranged generally chronologically. Entries in volume 3 are numbered chronologically within each year. The date spans of all four volumes overlap, but none of the correspondence is duplicated.

Although the volumes consist of copies primarily of letters and telegrams, they also contain copies of orders, instructions, circulars, and reports. Most of the correspondence relates to the acquisition and maintenance of school property, the assignment or dismissal of teachers and other officials, the inspection of schools, the investigation of complaints against schools or teachers, and the organization of new schools. Correspondence concerning specific schools frequently includes detailed descriptions of the curriculum, disciplinary problems, and community reactions to the school. Copies of general reports in the series contain statistics on the total number of schools, teachers, and pupils in the State.

Volumes 1, 2, and 4 contain name indexes that are arranged alphabetically by initial letter of correspondent's surname.

The number following each name is the page number on which a copy of a communication to that person may be found. Circulars are listed in the index under the letter "C"; general orders and general instructions, under "G"; and telegrams, under "T." Some of the indexes have sections labeled "Names Not Deciphered," a result of practically illegible press copies. The name index for volume 3, prepared by the NARS staff, is arranged alphabetically by correspondent's surname. The number following each name refers to the page on which a copy of a communication to that person may be found.

#### *Endorsements Sent*

Endorsements sent are a characteristic of 19th-century recordkeeping practices. A reply to an incoming letter was frequently written on the letter itself or on a specially prepared wrapper. The reply (known as an endorsement) was then copied into an endorsement book, and the endorsed letter was returned to the sender or forwarded to another office. Endorsement books usually contain summaries of incoming letters and sometimes include the text of previous endorsements that were written on the letter.

The records of the Superintendent of Education include one volume of endorsements sent, August 26, 1865-June 16, 1868, arranged and numbered by date of endorsement. The number sequence begins anew for each year except 1867. Names of correspondents and persons mentioned in the correspondence are listed in the margins. Also in the margins of some pages are numbers written as fractions. The numerator is the volume page number on which the preceding endorsement to the same addressee appears; the denominator is the page number on which a subsequent endorsement to the same addressee appears.

Some entries in the endorsement book include a synopsis of the letter received on which the endorsement was written, others only a file citation to a letter that is no longer extant.

The name index (part of the volume) to addressees and to persons mentioned in the endorsements, compiled from the names in the margins of each page of the endorsement book, is arranged alphabetically by initial letter of surname and thereunder by year. For the years 1865 and 1866, the number after the name in the index refers to the number of the endorsement; for the years 1867 and 1868, the number after the name refers to the page on which the endorsement is copied.

#### *Unregistered Letters and Telegrams Received*

Records of the Superintendent of Education include a series of letters and telegrams received, March 28, 1864-August 30, 1868,

with most of the correspondence dated before 1866. Arranged chronologically, the series includes receipts for school supplies, requests for school accommodations, general statements of school conditions or public opinion concerning schools, and reports of damage done to schools by vandals or anti-Bureau groups. A name index to this correspondence, prepared by the NARS staff, is arranged alphabetically by correspondent's surname.

#### REPORTS AND OTHER RECORDS

The Superintendent of Education received several types of reports from school officials and from other Bureau personnel relating to the general operations of Bureau schools in Louisiana. These reports include weekly inspection reports, narrative reports, monthly statistical reports, monthly questionnaires completed by subordinate school officials, and teachers' school reports.

The two earliest series of reports, weekly inspection reports and two registers of weekly and monthly statistical reports, are, in fact, records of the Board of Education. The reports of school inspections in the various parishes (counties), April 13, 1864-March 17, 1865, were received by the Board of Education from school agents. Arranged chronologically, the reports include the names of the schools and teachers, the number of pupils in attendance, the type and physical condition of each school building, the types of instruction being given, the special problems of pupil behavior or instruction, the methods of financing, and some general remarks. Some of the reports give the time spent by the inspector at each school and list the classes observed.

The registers of weekly and monthly statistical reports of schools, September 16-December 23, 1864, and January 6-August 4, 1865, maintained by the Board of Education and briefly by the Superintendent of Education, were compiled from reports received from teachers, agents, and other officials in the State. Each entry includes the date and name of the author of the report; the name and opening date of the school; the name, number, and position (whether principal or assistant) of each teacher; the number of students, often indicating the number of boys and the number of girls; the subjects taught and the number of students studying each subject; and attendance statistics. The first register is arranged chronologically by week and thereunder by location of school; the second register is arranged by name or location of school and thereunder the monthly reports precede the weekly reports.

The four remaining series of reports are records of the Superintendent of Education. The series of narrative reports from subordinates is arranged by type of Bureau official submitting the report and thereunder chronologically. Reports in this series were submitted by assistant superintendents, September 26, 1865-February 11, 1866, and September 30, 1866; by school



directors, August and October 1865-September 1866; by city superintendents of schools, October 4, 1865-February 8, 1866; by agents, June 12, 1865-September 30, 1866; and by special committees to examine freedmen's schools, November 11 and December 28, 1865. The records include both regular periodic reports and reports made in response to special requests from the Superintendent. Although most reports are narrative in form, some contain tabular statistical summaries and maps showing the locations of Bureau schools. Most of the reports contain such information as the names of schools, principals, and teachers in each parish; the locations of the school and of buildings available for school use; the number of pupils; quantity of supplies needed; and the amount and nature of local anti-Bureau activities.

The monthly responses to a printed questionnaire (19 questions), arranged chronologically by month, were received from subassistant commissioners, assistant subassistant commissioners, and agents, February-December 1868. The responses relate to the number and locations of schools in the districts or parishes, the number of visits by officials to schools, the establishment of new schools, community sentiment toward education for freedmen, educational meetings held by school officials, the present and expected future aid from northern charitable societies (if any), and suggestions for additional Bureau educational activities.

The monthly statistical reports of schools, May 1866-January 1869, arranged chronologically, are labeled "District Superintendent Reports," although they were signed by subassistant commissioners. The reports, prepared on forms, include the names and locations of schools; an indication of whether each school was a night or day school; degree of literacy of students; number of students over age 16, number of each sex, and number taking each subject; number of students free before the war; amount of tuition paid by freedmen; origin of financing of school building; expenses of the school paid by the Bureau; and names of sponsoring societies (often just "freedmen"). At the end of the report, the subassistant commissioner commented on public sentiment toward the schools for blacks.

A final series of reports concerning the general operations of the Bureau schools in Louisiana are the teachers' school reports, arranged chronologically, October 1865-March 1869 and August 1869. These monthly and semimonthly reports on printed forms provide information on the number of students in the primary, intermediate, grammar, and evening divisions of the school; number of students who were members of temperance societies; conduct and academic potential of students; average attendance; hours of teaching provided; free transportation received from the Bureau; supply problems; ownership of the school building; financing of the school; public sentiment toward the school; and locations of Sabbath schools in the area.

## PERSONNEL RECORDS

Records relating to personnel include copies of reports sent by the Superintendent, correspondence received by the Superintendent, a volume of press copies of letters sent, and two registers of employees.

The reports of the Superintendent relating to personnel, November and December 1865 and July and August 1866, are arranged chronologically and include monthly reports of employees, a report about teachers required in New Orleans, reports of teachers and others, and, finally, a report about equipment rented in New Orleans. The reports contain the names, occupations, salaries, and dates of service of the employees; names of the employing offices; and other remarks.

The correspondence received by the Superintendent relating to employment, January 1864-September 1868, is arranged by the nature of the correspondence (applications, recommendations, resignations, and applicants' answers to teacher examinations) and thereunder chronologically. Most of the correspondence concerns teachers' positions, although a few applications for clerkships are included. Some letters of application contain detailed personal histories, others only a brief request for a position. Enclosed with a few of the letters of application are letters of recommendation or answers to teacher examinations. The letters of recommendation were sent to the Bureau by clergymen, former employers, and by other persons knowledgeable about the applicant's character. Most of the letters attest to an applicant's loyalty or good moral character rather than to his ability or work habits. The letters of resignation, some of which are written on the back of the employee's original letter of appointment, include letters stating only the intention of the teacher to resign and letters with extensive explanations of the reasons behind the decision. The applicants' answers to teacher examinations generally include the name, age, and address of the applicant; answers to examination questions; the percentage of correct answers; and a statement recommending or opposing the hiring of the applicant. The examination questions themselves are not included.

The volume of press copies of letters sent relating to personnel actions, April 1-August 17, 1865, is arranged chronologically and consists primarily of letters appointing teachers and other school officials. Included are a few letters with instructions concerning individual appointments and some correspondence relating to the hiring of persons other than teachers and officials. A name index in the front of the volume is arranged alphabetically by initial letter of correspondent's surname. The number after each name refers to the

page on which a copy of a communication to that person may be found. The employee's position is sometimes listed after his name in the index.

The first register of employees, April-November 1864, April 1865-January 1866, and February-June 1868, is arranged by initial letter of employee's surname. Each entry includes the employee's occupation, location of position, and date and authority of appointment. The register primarily lists teachers, although a few administrators and directors are also included. The second register, undated, is arranged by type of employee and thereunder by name of parish. It includes the same type of information as the first register but covers a wider range of occupations, including clerks, agents, directors, superintendents, teachers, janitors, and carpenters.

#### FINANCE AND PROPERTY RECORDS

Records relating to school finances and property are primarily records created by the Board of Education, including a journal and ledger of accounts, a volume of reports of school supplies, a register of the tax base of school districts, and a register of the education tax assessments in New Orleans. Records created by the Superintendent of Education include reports from school directors concerning the sale of tuition tickets as well as a few discrete reports filmed after the series mentioned above.

Both the journal and the ledger of accounts of the Board of Education, April 1864-June 1865, record the same accounts. Entries in the journal are arranged chronologically by month. Each entry includes the amount of cash on hand and cash expended for teachers' salaries (often including the name and salary of individual teachers), office expenses, carpentry, schoolhouses, books, and other expenses. Numbers in the left column refer to the page numbers of the same account in the ledger. The "cash book" referred to in the journal is no longer among the records of the Superintendent. The ledger of accounts is arranged by type of account (teachers' salaries, office expenses, etc.) and thereunder chronologically. The numbers in the fourth column (preceding the amount) refer to page numbers in the journal from which the figures were transferred. The ledger has a table of contents.

The volume of reports of school supplies is arranged by month of report, but the year is not listed. The tabular pages, compiled from reports submitted by teachers and school officials, show what articles (desks, slates, and books) were on hand, received, and accounted for.

The register of the tax base for school districts, undated, probably pertains to the period 1864-65. The volume is arranged

by parish and thereunder numerically by district. For each school district, the volume includes the value of real estate and personal property as assessed in 1861; number of children (5-12 years old); number of adults; number of acres of cotton, corn, and cane planted that year; number of sawmills; location and size of the district; location of school buildings; and amount of tax levied for schools.

The four-volume register of educational tax assessment in New Orleans is arranged by initial letter of surname of the property owner, with volume 1 containing letters A-E; volume 2, F-K; volume 3, L-P; and volume 4, Q-Z. The undated volumes, stamped "Board of Education," probably pertain to the period 1864-65. A few of the tax bills are listed as being paid in 1865. The entries in each register are arranged by bill number. Each entry gives the bill number, district number, name of the individual, folio and square number from the tax rolls, description of the property taxed, and occasionally the date the bill was paid. At the end of volumes 2, 3, and 4 are summaries of the total value of all property listed in the volumes. Volume 1 has a cumulative total on each page, which eliminates the necessity for a final summary page. There are name indexes for volumes 2 and 3, arranged by initial letter and first vowel of the property owner's surname, thereunder by district, and thereunder by bill number. The number to the left of the name in the index entry is the bill number; the number to the right of the name is the page number of a pertinent entry in the register.

Reports from school directors concerning the sale of tuition tickets, February 2, 1866-July 27, 1867, are arranged generally chronologically by date of transmittal. Tuition tickets were purchased by students in order to be admitted into the freedmen's schools; the money collected was then used to finance the schools. The series includes semimonthly and monthly narrative and statistical reports that list the names of the schools, the cash value of tickets received and sold, the amount of money turned over to the Superintendent, and the selling price of the tickets. The reports for 1867 are primarily from the district of New Orleans.

Included in the small collection of discrete financial reports, arranged chronologically, January 1865-February 1866, are a general financial report for July and August 1865, a report of financial advances made to the Board of Education by the Federal Government, reports of expenses of the Superintendent's office, and estimates of funds needed for salaries and operating expenses.

## MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS

Filed at the end of roll 12 are a small number of miscellaneous reports, lists, and other records, 1865-68, including four monthly statistical reports of the number of schools and pupils under the direction of the Board of Education, January and April-June 1865; a retained copy of a report from the Superintendent of Education to the Assistant Commissioner describing the required school curriculum in the State; requests for the use of school buildings during school vacations; records concerning the investigation of charges against teachers (especially those charged with inciting riots); receipts for work performed; and a few reports of the Superintendent.

### Related Records

In Record Group 105 and related to records of the Superintendent of Education are those of the Bureau headquarters in Washington, D.C. Available as NARS microfilm publications are M742, *Selected Series of Records Issued by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872*; M752, *Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872*; M803, *Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*; and M1027, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869*.

Other records in Record Group 105 pertaining to the State of Louisiana include the records of the Bounty Agent, the Commissary of Subsistence, the Provost Marshal General of Freedmen, the Surgeon-in-Chief, the Chief Quartermaster, the Plantation Department, and the subassistant commissioners, assistant superintendents, and agents who headed the various subdistricts, divisions, and field offices. The records of the Superintendents of Education in other States have been reproduced as M810, Alabama; M799, Georgia; M844, North Carolina; M1000, Tennessee; and M822, Texas.

Thomas A. Trudeau wrote these introductory remarks and arranged the records for filming. Cynthia Jackson prepared the indexes. They were edited by Harry L. Hickman.



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