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“SET A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE”:
TEACHERS OF FREEDMEN IN FLORIDA,
1863-1874

by

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B.S. Florida State University, 1976

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

As the Civil War closed and Reconstruction began, a small army of teachers arrived in Florida. Under the auspices of northern aid societies, churches, and educational associations, they proposed to educate the newly emancipated slaves, believing that education would prepare African Americans for citizenship. Teachers found Florida's freedmen determined to acquire literacy by whatever means they could, but they faced a white populace resistant to outsiders. Reformers, politicians, literate blacks, and Yankee businessmen intent on socially, politically, and economically transforming Florida joined educators in reconstructing Florida.

Florida's educational system transformed during Reconstruction, and an examination of the reciprocity between Reconstruction-era teachers and Florida's freedmen provides a window into how Florida's learning community changed. Teachers exerted a profound influence on Florida's freedmen and on the development of Florida's educational system. But it was not simply a matter of outsiders transforming freedmen. While previous writers have emphasized the teachers' limitations, conservatism, or sacrifice, this study examines the complex interplay, and at times mutual dependence, between northern reformers and freedmen. Teachers partnered with Florida's black community, which was determined to seize education by whatever means available; they joined with the state's white community, struggling to come to terms with radical social changes; and they worked with Yankee strangers, who saw education of freedmen as an opportunity to transform the state politically. The reciprocal process of social change created a new politically charged educational system in Florida.

In memory of
my father William Turner Wallis III
and my grandmother Margaret Phillips Wallis,
native Floridians who instilled in me
a love for and fascination with Florida and its history

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As the Civil War closed and Reconstruction began, a small army of teachers arrived in Florida. Under the auspices of northern aid societies, churches, and educational associations, they proposed to educate the newly emancipated slaves, believing that education would prepare African Americans for citizenship. Teachers found Florida's freedmen determined to acquire literacy by whatever means they could, but they faced a white populace resistant to outsiders. Reformers, politicians, literate blacks, and Yankee businessmen intent on socially, politically, and economically transforming Florida joined educators in reconstructing Florida.

Historians argue whether Reconstruction was a political, social, or economic success. This study approaches Reconstruction as a revolutionary transformation of the South. Florida, although the smallest southern state in population, was no less a part of this tumultuous era of change and continuity than the rest of the South. So, how important were northern teachers to these dramatic changes? What influence did freedmen's education have on Reconstruction politics? And what role did the freedmen themselves play in effecting educational change?

Florida's educational system transformed during Reconstruction, and an examination of the reciprocity between Reconstruction-era teachers and Florida's freedmen provides a window into how Florida's learning community changed. Teachers exerted a profound influence on Florida's freedmen and on the development of Florida's educational system. But it was not simply a matter of outsiders transforming freedmen. While previous writers have emphasized the teachers' limitations, conservatism, or sacrifice, this study examines the complex interplay, and at times mutual dependence,

between northern reformers and freedmen. Teachers partnered with Florida's black community, which was determined to seize education by whatever means available; they joined with the state's white community, struggling to come to terms with radical social changes; and they worked with Yankee strangers, who saw education of freedmen as an opportunity to transform the state politically.

Interpretations of Reconstruction-era education have changed over time. Early historians constructed strong opinions about the successes and failures of northern teachers of freedmen, dividing along racial lines with black historians lauding the teachers and white historians denigrating them. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Dubois praised the "saintly souls" who were "New England's gift to freedmen." He attributed noble motives to the teachers "not to keep Negroes in their place, but to raise them out of the places of defilement where slavery had swallowed them." The perspectives of early white historians were quite different. William Watson Davis, in his classic work on Reconstruction Florida, denounced the "proselyting, patronizing newcomer from the North" and categorized the interlopers as "generally social outcasts." In 1941, W.J. Cash depicted the northern teacher as a "dangerous fool" whose "meddlesome stupidity" sufficiently proved to southerners that northerners were "altogether mad." Henry Lee Swint's *The Northern Teacher in the South* ultimately blamed zealous teachers attempting to control the black vote, for inciting the violent reaction of white southerners.¹

Beginning in the 1960s, with the Civil Rights Movement as their backdrop, a number of revisionist historians attacked the interpretations of Davis, Cash, and Swint. Willie Lee Rose's *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* (1964), which examined the free labor

experiments undertaken by Federal troops in the wartime South, portrayed teacher-missionaries sympathetically. That same year, James M. McPherson found continuity between the teachers' fervor and the antebellum abolitionist movement in which their ideals had been forged. In *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877*(1965), Joe M. Richardson credited teachers' educational work with laying the groundwork for southern public education. In their efforts to understand social and economic problems of the 1960s and 1970s, these historians portrayed teachers of freedmen as people of high ideals whose excursions into the South ultimately benefited blacks and whites. ²

In 1980, Ronald E. Butchart reexamined that conclusion in *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*. While northern teachers were well intentioned, he argued, their efforts ultimately crippled blacks because the emphasis on education, at the expense of political and economic development, inhibited blacks from participating in white civil society. As white enemies of the freedmen took control of the educational system, chances for social change diminished. James D. Anderson's 1988 *The Education of Blacks in the South 1860-1935* took a comprehensive look at the structure of black education as part of the larger political subordination of blacks. Focusing on the ex-slaves' efforts to develop an educational system to defend their emancipation, he credited northern teachers with helping force "whites of all classes to confront the question of universal schooling." Still, he criticized them for attempting to "inculcate in the ex-slaves an acceptance of economic and racial subordination."³

In recent years, new scholarship provided fresh interpretations of northerners in Florida during Reconstruction and of the contributions of African American churches

toward education. John T. Foster Jr. and Sarah Whitmer Foster's *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* illuminates the contributions of northern transplants to Florida. They portray the white northerners, long derided as "carpetbaggers," as visionaries who came to Florida for a variety of reasons but collectively, intent on reconstructing the state. The Fosters described how northerners built churches, started schools and orphanages, and used their influence in state government to support freedmen's education. Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown Jr.'s *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895* incorporated the role of Florida's black churches in educating freedmen and how black ministers used politics to support racial uplift. Together these works describe the collaborative efforts of northern whites and blacks, as well as Florida's ex-slaves, that played a significant role in laying the foundation of universal public schools in Florida.⁴

Historians continue to examine and debate whose contributions were more influential, positive, and lasting in shaping the southern educational changes during Reconstruction. This thesis argues that teachers were co-participants within a community of learners, politicians, and reformers effecting societal change through education. Without newly discovered primary sources to shed light on the Reconstruction experience, we must depend on fresh approaches to existing sources. Accordingly, letters written by American Missionary Association teachers in Florida and school reports to the Freedmen's Bureau form the evidentiary foundation, relating firsthand accounts of the educators' experiences and providing a reference to explore the societal changes that took place. While historians have incorporated these

documents in a number of studies of teachers' work in the South and in general works on Reconstruction in Florida, none have focused primarily on the pivotal role of freedmen's education in Florida because of the limited documentation from the freedmen's viewpoint. As W.E.B. DuBois wrote in 1934, "The chief witness in Reconstruction, the emancipated slave himself, has been almost barred from court. His written Reconstruction record has been largely destroyed and nearly always neglected."⁵ Given the scarcity of material from the freedmen's perspective, the AMA letters and School Reports take on more importance. After all, teachers had frequent, if not daily, contact with freedmen, and they wrote about it. One can read more than statistics or personal experiences in these documents. They afford a glimpse of ex-slaves' struggles for schooling as well as the response of Florida's white community to the teachers, the freedmen, and their cause.

An understanding of Florida's educational development prior to and during the Civil War is necessary to determine how it changed during Reconstruction. Chapter One describes the limitations of Florida's antebellum educational system, the response of Florida's slaves to the lack of educational opportunity, the importance of slave religious activity, and the effect of the Civil War and emancipation on Florida's society. Many of Florida's slaves did all they could to become educated despite living in a society which legally and socially worked to thwart that ambition. Their efforts prepared Florida's slaves to actively seek educational opportunity following the war. The role of black churches in developing slave ministers as community leaders also began before Reconstruction, insuring that black ministers would be instrumental in moving education forward as the dominant political issue during Reconstruction. For many of Florida's

black soldiers who served in the Union Army, the war also provided educational opportunity. These men learned leadership skills as well and eventually applied them to Florida's educational system.

An understanding of Florida during Reconstruction would not be possible without examining the activities and impact of northern reformers who came to the state during and immediately after the war. Called "Yankee Strangers" or the more derogatory "carpetbaggers," they became very involved in politics and education. In Chapter Two, the stories of three prominent northern reformers, Ansel E. Kinne, Chloe Merrick Reed, and Charles H. Pearce have been chosen to represent countless other northerners whose stories are more elusive. Through the lives of these people, two white and one black, we can see how intertwined religion, politics, and education became during Reconstruction.

Chapter Three explores missionary teachers' experiences in Florida, the work of the Freedmen's Bureau in furthering education, and the response of white and black Floridians to educational changes. Through the perspective of the teachers, we can understand the complexity of the educational transformation underway in Reconstruction Florida, the difficulties wrought by societal changes, and the planting of the seeds of segregation to come.

The education of freedmen and the development of Florida's education system were integral parts of Florida's Reconstruction experience. The lives and experiences of the teachers, reformers, and politicians who focused on freedmen's education as a means for societal transformation were part of a profound human drama. Their lives exemplified sacrifice, courage, and service as much as they exhibited weaknesses and

mistakes. In the end, they created from the tensions and difficulties of the era a new concept of education in Florida - one that included freedmen.

CHAPTER TWO: SLAVES, MINISTERS AND SOLDIERS

“We wish a man who can preach as well as teach.”¹ — John Hilder, 1864

Historian Eric Foner dates the beginning of Reconstruction to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, marking Reconstruction as the beginning of an extended process of adjustment to the end of slavery.² For Florida’s slaves, preparation for the end of slavery predated the Emancipation Proclamation. It is not possible to pinpoint an exact date, but it began long before emancipation when slaves began to associate literacy with leadership. While the rise of freedmen’s education can be traced to Reconstruction, the seeds of Florida’s Reconstruction educational program were fueled by slaves’ urgent desires for education before and during the Civil War. Many black educators of the postbellum years were men and women who first became literate as slaves.

This chapter examines some of these literate slaves, Florida’s educational history (especially during the Civil War), and the experience of emancipation to illuminate how Reconstruction-era educational changes could not have occurred without the impetus ascribed to education during slavery. Education was seen by slaves as a necessary skill, if not a key element, to acquire equal status in society and was thus important to its reconstruction.

To appreciate the transformation of Florida that took place after the war it is important to know its status before Reconstruction began. At the end of the Civil War, Florida was still a backwater state in many ways. It was both the least populated and

the poorest southern state with the majority of the population living in the northern tier of the state. With formal surrender by Confederate forces in Tallahassee on May 10, 1865, Florida had about 154,000 inhabitants, 47 percent of whom were black. In six of Florida's counties, freedmen were the majority. This fact not only exposed Florida's educational needs, but did not go unnoticed by Republicans seeking majority political control.³

Traditionally, the populated part of Florida was divided into three cultural regions: East Florida, Middle Florida, and West Florida. Middle Florida (between the Apalachicola River and the Suwannee River) represented a more traditional Old South, with its slave-based, cotton-producing economy and society. By the time Florida seceded from the Union, over two-thirds of the slave population (61,000 slaves) lived in Middle Florida. East Florida (east of the Suwannee River and including the peninsula) and West Florida (the area in the far western panhandle between the Perdido River and the Apalachicola) retained some of the attitudes and traditions of the former Spanish colony, along with the state's primary ports. East Florida contained 17 percent of all slaves and West Florida only 8 percent.⁴

Due to its isolation and negligible strategic value, Florida emerged from the Civil War remarkably preserved from the kind of devastation witnessed in other Confederate states. Florida never experienced a Shermanesque march across its interior, like Georgia had, or the kind of battlefield devastation that Grant wrought in Virginia. Although the war disrupted and damaged large portions of East and West Florida; Middle Florida went virtually untouched by the conflict.⁵

In the spring of 1865, most former slaves still lived on plantations in Middle Florida. During the war, slaves apparently were well behaved, despite being left without much supervision other than by plantation women.⁶ When news of emancipation came, Ellen Call Long, the daughter of a Florida plantation owner, related how the freedmen “conducted themselves with remarkable patience and good sense.”⁷ T. Thomas Fortune, a former slave from Marianna, in Jackson County, recalled that “nobody had his bearings. The freed people had no homes and no names except such as they inherited from their owners. They were in such a frame of mind as not to know whether to rejoice because they were free or to be cast down at their new condition of freedom, responsibility and homelessness.”⁸ Both accounts corroborate historian Leon Litwack’s summary of emancipation as “uncertainty, skepticism, and fear marked the initial reaction of many slaves.”⁹

Whites’ reaction to the news of Lee’s surrender and Lincoln’s death, as recounted by a northern teacher in Florida, foreshadowed the changes to come during Reconstruction. George Greely wrote of whites’ initial despair: “They wept and groaned saying we shall never have our niggers back again.” However, when news of President Lincoln’s death reached them a few days later, he noted that “they took heart again — taunting the colored people about their dark prospect of being free.” The seeming reversal of fortune led whites to assume they would once again hold Florida’s freedmen in a subordinate position, much as they attempted to do during Presidential Reconstruction. Greely’s letter also illustrates newly freed slaves’ uncertainty about the future; in it he noted freedmen’s “talk of going north to escape enslavement again, for as Massa Lincoln was gone they feared their hope was gone too.”¹⁰ The establishment of

schools and presence of northern teachers gave freedmen hope that emancipation would not be a fleeting condition and the courage to withstand the opposition of Florida's whites.

Once the initial shock of emancipation had worn off, most slaves joined freedmen all over the South in testing their freedom by taking to the road. Former Florida slave Sarah Ross recalled that it took several months for her master to acknowledge the emancipation orders, but that eventually all the ex-slaves left the plantation.¹¹ Some sought to reunite broken families; others searched for new homes or jobs; many were just curious to experience the freedom of traveling wherever and whenever they chose. Their desires were expressed by a Leon County black minister's sermon: "You ain't, none o' you, gwinter feel rale free till you shakes de dus ob de Ole plantashun offen your feet and goes ter a new place."¹² Education would play a large role in this process.

Jacksonville, which had been a base for Federal troops during the war, became a magnet for freedmen. According to Charles Wilson, who abandoned Dexter's plantation in Lake City, the town was full of black soldiers who, armed with muskets, appeared to rule Jacksonville. He described a noisy community where horns and drums could be heard every morning and evening.¹³ Jacksonville had grown from a town with a population of 2,118 in 1860 (which ranked third in Florida behind Pensacola and Key West) to a city that had become, temporarily, the state's largest urban center. Like other east coast towns that had been under Union control, Jacksonville burst at the seams with refugees, northerners, and Union sympathizers as well as freedmen. One northern teacher wrote that black refugees flocked in "at the rate of one hundred per day."¹⁴ Jacksonville's location on the east coast and position at the head of the St.

John's River made it not only a magnet for freedmen but for curious northerners for whom it became the "most frequented resort, and the entrance gate to over two-thirds of the State."¹⁵

Florida's Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn described the freedmen's migratory behavior in his first official report: "When the first announcement was made that the Negroes were free they exhibited a strong tendency to leave their homes and wander about the country. Unfortunately, transportation was freely given on the railroads, and thus many of them were taken so far from their homes, they have not returned. This migratory spirit lasted from four to eight weeks when they began to return to their homes and remain quiet."¹⁶ The movement of thousands of freedmen would challenge schoolteachers dealing with wide fluctuations in student numbers. Even after the initial migrations subsided, teachers reported seasonal movement as workers left cities in the spring to work on plantations.¹⁷

If mobility was the first intuition of many slaves upon emancipation, an urge for education was their first desire. A Florida Freedmen's Bureau official noted how "black people show a great interest in learning."¹⁸ Recalling the impetus for schooling, Florida resident Harriet Beecher Stowe, was more effusive. "They rushed not to the grog-shop but to the schoolroom," she recalled, "they cried for the spelling book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life."¹⁹ Most slaves viewed reading and writing as liberating. The laws forbidding literacy under slavery indelibly defined it as the one skill with the potential to elevate them above bondage.²⁰

Freedmen eager to learn faced a daunting task in Florida, however. The minimal educational system that existed before the Civil War was nearly extinct by the end of the

war.²¹ Before 1845, while Florida was still a territory, it had made little provision for public education, even for white children. Tutors usually taught upper-class children on their parents' farms or plantations because of the geographic dispersion of the planter population. Small farmers had to band together to hire teachers and found the recruitment of teachers often problematic. It was only in towns like Tallahassee, Pensacola, and St. Augustine that white children attended private schools, academies, or seminaries.²²

Between statehood and before the Civil War, Florida's government campaigned to provide public schooling for its white children. Growth in public schools was attributable to the aggressive actions of State Superintendent of Schools David S. Walker, who served from 1851 to 1859. For the first time, the state tried to educate less privileged white children by authorizing counties to raise taxes for public schools. Only two counties chose to do so; nevertheless, the number of public schools in the state increased from sixty-nine in 1850 to ninety-seven ten years later, with enrollment nearly doubling to 8,494. Simultaneously, the number of academies rose from thirty-four in 1850 to forty in 1860. Evidently, according to historians, money received from public funds was used in many counties to subsidize favored private schools.²³

Sparse population and widespread poverty were other significant problems. Combined with a general apathy on the part of local administrators and parents who severely limited the development of schools, the larger class of poor whites remained mostly unschooled and illiterate.

There were more formidable obstacles in the way of educating Florida's slaves. During territorial days, laws prevented the establishment of schools for blacks. An 1832

law prohibited blacks from congregating for any purpose other than work or worship attended by white persons.²⁴ A more stringent Slave Code passed in 1846, one year after statehood, which included “pass laws” requiring slaves to carry written permission before leaving their masters’ properties. Additionally laws forbade anyone from instructing slaves to read, write, or possess any reading material. Collectively, these laws prevented slaves from gaining access to potentially seditious literature.²⁵

Officially, there was no educational system for the more than 60,000 slaves living in Florida just prior to the Civil War.²⁶ However, anecdotal evidence and documentation from wills, letters, journals, and newspapers suggests that many slaves were literate to some degree. Dr. Esther Hill Hawkes, a teacher with the National Freedmen’s Relief Association in Jacksonville, claimed in May 1864, “Florida slaves are certainly far superior to those of the Sea Islands. They are intelligent and active — and many of them have picked up a little book learning. It is not uncommon to find a fair reader among those who have always been slaves.”²⁷ Clearly, some “native” schools, common schools founded and maintained exclusively by ex-slaves, existed in Florida as they did across the South, although little is known about them. John W. Alvord, national superintendent of schools for the Freedmen’s Bureau, traveled throughout the Confederate states and filed a report in December 1865 which noted the practice of “self-teaching” and “native schools” among freed men and women. He reported finding in Florida five black schools gathered together and taught by black preachers, and a school of “interesting girls” taught by a “mulatto woman of education” who said to him, “I intend to make ladies of these girls.” Alvord summarized, “Throughout the entire South, an effort is being made by the colored people to educate themselves.”²⁸

In some places, education was even less formal than a native school. Often to the chagrin of their owners, black children on plantations learned to read, write, and count from white playmates who passed on their own schooling.²⁹ Despite the lack of an educational system for Florida's blacks, it is likely that more than 15 percent of slaves learned to read and write contrary to the law. Clearly, recognition of the value of education was present among Florida blacks prior to the war and emancipation.

Not surprisingly, after the war, many leading black educators emerged from among those slaves who had defied authority to obtain their own learning.³⁰ Robert Meacham, a mulatto slave born in 1835 in Gadsden County, recounted how his master and father, Dr. Banks Meacham, taught him to read and write and even sent him to school until he was forced to quit because "some of the parents sent word to the teacher that if he was going to teach a nigger they would keep their children at home."³¹ Henceforth, he drove a carriage for his father and "carried his education to the other slaves secretly and by night, using the dim glare of a candle for light."³² Meacham later founded an African Methodist Episcopal church in Tallahassee and, upon emancipation, became a prominent AME minister and politician who served in the State Senate and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

Henry W. Call, who learned to read and write growing up as a slave in Jackson County, found his calling as a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church South before the war. When conflict erupted, he accompanied his master to battle for the Confederacy. It was while searching for his master's body on the battlefield that Call discovered a dead black soldier with a copy of a newspaper relating the movement of the African Methodist Episcopal Church into the South. Upon his return to Florida, he

secretly formed the first unofficial AME Church in Florida. Like any pioneer, Call's life and calling evolved into folklore; rumors claimed that he walked 240 miles from Marianna to Jacksonville to persuade a church leader to officially incorporate his church. His leadership as an AME minister led him to become politically active as well.³³

Post-war opportunities were the direct result of black's enthusiasm for and embrace of educational opportunities while still enslaved. Emanuel Fortune was born a slave in Marianna, Florida, in 1832. He attributed his learning to read before the war to perseverance on his part. For him literacy was just the beginning. He learned to write after the war and ultimately served five terms in the Florida legislature.³⁴

It was not uncommon to find education, religion and politics among African—Americans to be intertwined during Reconstruction. While still a slave in Leon County before the war, James Page was ordained as a Baptist minister and is credited with forming the first all-black church in Florida — Bethlehem Baptist. During Reconstruction, Page also became politically active in Leon County.³⁵ One black commentator attributed the reason for ministers' political activity to the fact that they “were looked upon as the leading colored men of each community, and fitted for politics as well as religion.”³⁶ Even more significantly, Page's Baptists joined Call's AME Church in forming Sabbath Schools and public schools to serve freedmen's needs during Reconstruction.³⁷

The importance of religion for blacks was not new after the war. To the contrary, in the antebellum years, many masters required slave attendance at white churches where ministers preached obedience to earthly masters. On her father's Middle Florida

plantation, for example, Susan Bradford Eppes argued that “negroes were preached to every other Sunday by a white preacher.”³⁸ Former slave Mary Biddis recalled that all the white preacher would “preach about was to serve de white boss, not God.”³⁹ Some white churches held racially segregated meetings. Oliver Otis Howard, who later headed the Freedmen’s Bureau, examined church attendance during a pre-war visit to Tampa and explained: “We have services in the morning for white people, in the afternoon for blacks.”⁴⁰ When congregations included both races, blacks were usually restricted to a certain portion of the sanctuary.⁴¹

Historian Larry Rivers noted that hundreds of Florida churches owe their origins to founding members who were slaves. Some slaveholders, especially in East Florida, even allowed bond servants to build their own places of worship. In the 1820s, Thomas Randall of Jefferson County in East Florida observed that his slaves, newly arrived from the North, built a church before constructing places to live. Other slaves, resenting the religious indoctrination of their masters, created “invisible churches” out of sight of white supervision.⁴² Before and during the war years, such churches were often led by literate slave preachers like Henry Call and Robert Meacham, men who applied their experience at leading their flock in spiritual matters before the war to guiding them in educational and political matters after the war.

Invisible slave churches also provided fellowship and an opportunity for slaves to act upon their own unique religious expression, often a more emotional one with participants clapping their hands, beating drums, praying loudly, and shouting praise. “Their singing is peculiar and very hearty,” noted Oliver O. Howard after attending Methodist services at Tampa in 1857.⁴³ To many whites, the religious exuberance of

blacks was frightening or appeared sacrilegious, a perception common even to many northern teachers who came to Florida after the war. While some shared the religious zeal of their students, most had little appreciation for what they termed a “heathenish” method of Christian expression.⁴⁴

Although among the most well known former slaves, Meacham, Fortune, Call, and Page were just a few of the hundreds of freedmen who embraced education and came to play a significant role in the state’s reconstruction. During the Civil War, numerous African American troops served in the Union Army or Navy. In Florida, men joined the military to fight for freedom and to earn a little money for themselves or their families. For many educationally starved slaves, the army provided an opportunity for instruction. In 1866, a Florida teacher described how, among students who had been in the army, she could “not find one who has been a soldier unable to read.” As early as 1863, soldiers operated informal schools in East Florida, portions of which were under Union occupation throughout much of the war. These schools were organized for the 1,044 black Floridians who had enlisted.⁴⁵

The Union Army’s efforts to educate freedmen gave soldiers an advantage over slaves who lacked the same opportunity for advancement. Although whites served as officers, blacks occupied important noncommissioned officer positions. The combination of education and military experience profoundly influenced black soldiers, broadening their knowledge of the world and countering the debasement of slavery. The legacy of military service, then, was its empowerment of black men to the rights and privileges of full citizenship. Essentially, it paved the way for many soldiers to become post- war political and educational leaders. It also benefited Florida because

many of the black soldiers who were not natives of Florida found they enjoyed the climate, recognized the state's potential, and decided to make it their new home after the conflict. Accustomed to leading men, former soldiers found that other soldiers still looked to them for guidance. After settling in the state, many chose to use the esteem with which they were viewed to begin a career in politics.⁴⁶

John Wallace, a North Carolina-born veteran serving in the Second Colored Infantry, was one of them. Although illiterate upon entering the army, he learned to read and write by 1865. His education served him well during Reconstruction. After his unit arrived in Tallahassee in August 1865, he was hired by William D. Bloxham, a former Confederate officer and Leon County planter (and later Florida's governor), to teach freedmen at his plantation school. By 1867, Wallace was being praised in the Tallahassee newspaper as "one of the best qualified, most thorough and untiring of our colored teachers." In time, he served in the Florida House of Representatives and Senate, and, published a book on Reconstruction in Florida.⁴⁷

Another former black soldier especially worthy of note was Josiah T. Walls, a soldier in the Third and Thirty-fifth Colored Infantry. Originally from Virginia, he is believed to have been a slave there until his 1863 enlistment in the Union Army. While stationed in Florida in 1864, he married a woman from Alachua County where he settled after mustering out a year later. With schoolteachers, especially black men in plantation and rural schools, in great demand he soon became an educator in Archer. Although few details are known about Walls's teaching experiences, he benefited apparently in cultivating relationships with and earning the respect of both the white and black community. Teaching led Walls to state politics and to a lengthy political career, the

zenith of which was his election to the United States House of Representatives three times in the 1870s.⁴⁸ Walls and Wallace were just two veterans who parlayed their knowledge acquired in the Army to educational and political careers serving both black and white Floridians.

The Army's involvement in the educating of Florida's freedmen began almost as soon as the war itself. Federal troops had coastal fortifications at Hampton, Virginia, and quickly added other possessions along the coasts of South Carolina and northern Florida. As these areas came under northern control, the prospect of freedom attracted thousands of runaway slaves. While most African American men were organized into army units, their displaced families were often left destitute. Frequently, women and children arrived in Union camps seeking clothing, food, and shelter. They also sought literacy for themselves and schooling for their children. This large influx of slaves, officially referred to as "contrabands," soon became overwhelming for Union military officers.⁴⁹ By 1862, Brigadier General Rufus Saxton, commander of the region, asked Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton for assistance. Stanton, in turn, issued General Order No. 9 on February 6, 1862, calling for the "immediate action" of a "philanthropic people." In appealing to northern abolitionists for help, the army requested teachers to address basic needs and sought relief from the care of former slaves.⁵⁰

Missionary and benevolent associations from the North quickly responded. The Freedmen's Aid Society of Syracuse, New York, was organized in February 1862; from it emerged the National Freedmen's Relief Association and a series of guidelines. Freedmen were to "earn their livelihood," according to the NFRA, but until this became possible, "they would be aided with food, clothing, and shelter." Teachers' duties

included the establishment of schools and churches while encouraging work, not idleness. The first NFRA teachers founded schools in Fernandina and St. Augustine later that year.⁵¹ They were the first of an army of teachers to come to Florida, not just from the NFRA, but from other northern benevolent societies as well.

When the first two NFRA teachers arrived in Fernandina, they discovered that most of the island's black men had enlisted in the Union army, leaving their families with little support. The teachers, Chloe Merrick and Cornelia Smith, found a native school of "seventy or eighty pupils" of all ages operating out of an abandoned Episcopal church. The school had had a succession of teachers over the previous five months, including a freedwoman. Despite the upheaval, Merrick found that the students had "learned the alphabet and some were able to read quite understandingly."⁵²

Extraordinary efforts by Florida's slaves and freedmen to acquire the blessings of literacy stemmed from desires to transform and control their lives. Successful examples set by Robert Meacham and Henry W. Call as well as the work of Florida's black soldiers provided the grass roots impetus for educational efforts of northern missionary societies and the Freedmen's Bureau. Unquestionably, freedmen's determination to achieve an education at all costs was clearly evident prior to the war. With emancipation, their efforts to embrace equality through education took on the character of a crusade. The zealous enthusiasm of freedmen, veterans, and black religious leaders for education was significant. However, despite their eagerness, there was little framework or precedent for education in Florida. Consequently, blacks welcomed and actively pursued the support of the Union Army, Republican politicians, the Freedmen's Bureau, and northern missionary societies. It was not until after 1863 that they were

able to enlist the support of reformers from the North to realize their aims. During Reconstruction, this cooperative effort would lay the foundation for universal public education in Florida.

CHAPTER THREE: NORTHERN REFORMERS

“Hope that you will still do what you can to aid us in this dark and much forgotten part of our country.”¹ - Emmanuel Smith, 1867

To meet the challenge of postwar education, a fascinating group of individuals became actors in Florida’s Reconstruction drama. Former slaves, experiencing the radical changes associated with freedmen, were just one part of the assemblage. There were native white Floridians, including unrepentant rebels, hoping to restore the old political and social order; and white Unionists who, having supported the Federal Government through the war, were now eager to realize the fruits of their faithfulness. Added to the mix were black and white northerners, “carpetbaggers” to many southerners who saw them as meddlesome outsiders, bent on profit. Some were businessmen who saw the state as a new frontier for investment. Others were politicians, like governmental agents for the newly created Freedmen’s Bureau, for whom Florida was fertile soil for power and influence at the ballot box. Significantly most also considered themselves reformers, men and women intent on transforming the state by educating and uplifting its people, especially the newly freed slaves. Despite their different backgrounds and motivations, Florida’s Reconstruction leaders influenced Florida’s educational future.

This chapter explores the perspectives of three northerners in Florida: reformer Chloe Merrick and her educator brother-in-law Ansel Kinne, and African Methodist Episcopal minister and politician Charles H. Pearce. Their experiences relate the public nature of their contributions to the development of Florida’s education system, but also

represent countless other northerners who came to Florida with similar interests and motivations. Each was a player in Florida's Reconstruction drama in part because the network of northern benevolent societies, the Freedmen's Bureau, and churches enabled their own political aspirations. By examining the motivations and educational activities of these three northern transplants, one can see the complex social, political, and religious underpinnings of educational efforts in Reconstruction Florida. While they may have moved southward intent on "saving" Florida's freedmen through education and religion, they became participants *with* Floridians - black and white, northern transplant and native born - in the transformation of Florida's educational system.

Chloe Merrick was the first to arrive in Florida. She, like many teachers after her, came to teach freed slaves under the auspices of a northern benevolent association, the Freedmen's Aid Society of Syracuse. The Freedmen's Aid Society of Syracuse, affiliated with the National Freedmen's Relief Association, was among the first to educate Florida's freedmen beginning in 1862. By 1865, the NFRA supported twenty-four teachers in Florida. Although the work of the NFRA was short-lived, its activities were significant if for no other reason than for its bringing to Florida Chloe Merrick, the northern school teacher who would become the wife of one of Florida's Reconstruction governors.

Under the leadership of Chloe Merrick, the NFRA organized its first schools in St. Augustine and Fernandina. It was Merrick whom John Hay, while on a mission in Florida for President Lincoln in 1863, noticed "as one of those in charge of the high school in the little Florida town, leading light mulatto and white children together in a song."² She was only one of many teachers who came from the North to teach

freedmen in Florida. However, while little information is available about many of Florida's freedmen teachers, more is known about Merrick because of her ultimate role and prominence as one of Florida's first ladies. Described as talented and persuasive, Merrick had grown up in Syracuse, the youngest of four children in an abolitionist home. She was considered beautiful and could easily have chosen to marry instead of pursuing a career. But Chloe possessed an independent spirit. As she matured, her idealism and close ties with older sister Emma Merrick Kinne and brother-in-law Ansel E. Kinne, both educators, led Merrick into the profession. Under their tutelage, she began a teaching career in local schools. The abolitionist ideology and fervor for teaching that the three shared put them on a path that was destined to affect Florida's educational future.³

When the National Freedmen's Relief Association determined to send teachers to Florida to establish schools, Chloe Merrick, then a thirty year-old single woman, joined with her friend Cornelia Smith in volunteering for service. On their way south, the two women visited Port Royal, South Carolina where some of the first freedmen schools were operated. Charlotte Forten, an African American teachers serving there, later described Merrick as "an earnest worker." Arriving in Fernandina on Amelia Island in late November 1862, Merrick and Smith took over the native school that had been operating for about five months in an abandoned church. Despite the turmoil of three different teachers over the previous five months, the two women found students progressing in their studies. By March 1863, enrollment had grown to 330, requiring the teachers to open a second school and divide the students into advanced and beginner classes.⁴

In keeping with the guidelines of the freedmen's aid movement, the NFRA directed teachers to "interest themselves in the moral, religious and social improvement of the families of their pupils, to visit them in their homes."⁵ Accordingly, the two teachers visited their student's homes to encourage parental support. In the process, they discovered that education was reciprocal; they too were being taught "some things that will be very useful."⁶ They learned firsthand of the tragedies experienced in slavery and marveled at the spirit of determination and cooperation within families. Strong parental support was useful to the teachers, but the challenges of the poverty remained. Much of Merrick and Smith's time was spent attending to the material needs of students, lacking warm clothing, and to the problems of destitute and orphaned children.

Still, the teachers also celebrated success. At the end of the school year, in May 1863, they held a graduation ceremony "for the encouragement of the rest of the school," an opportunity to display students' talents to a curious and skeptical public with the goal of impressing those invited with the progress of the student's education.⁷ Such displays became commonplace in freedmen schools, providing showcases to acknowledge students' effort and reinforce northern reformers' faith in the ability of blacks to learn.⁸

The local community, including officers from a nearby fort and a number of governmental officials, attended the event. Federal Tax Commissioner Harrison Reed was one attendee, and Chloe Merrick's educational efforts favorably impressed him. Reed, a widowed fifty-year-old former Wisconsin newspaper editor, had been appointed to his position through his brother-in-law's influence with Andrew Johnson and the Democratic Party. The meeting between Reed and Merrick began a friendship and

collaboration that eventually led to their marriage in 1869, after he was elected governor of the State of Florida. It was Reed who helped Merrick purchase at a tax sale the large Fernandina home of Confederate General Joseph Finegan to be used as an orphanage for abused and destitute children on the island. He also supported her public campaign to raise funds for the orphanage by writing letters on her behalf.⁹

Unfortunately by the end of 1863, Harrison Reed was forced to resign his position as a Federal Tax Commissioner after a dispute with fellow commissioners. It is probable that he was thinking of Merrick when he wrote to influential associates regarding his desire for another political appointment in Florida: "I have embarked in schemes for the benefit of the freedmen and I want to live in Florida to assist in bringing it in as a free state and in regenerating the slavery cursed territory." His efforts were rewarded with an assignment as President Andrew Johnson's postal agent for Florida in 1865.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Merrick was thrust into public life in order to acquire necessary financial and personal support for the orphanage to which she was so committed. Numerous references document the success of the orphanage that soon housed as many as fifty children. As the number of orphaned children grew, Merrick traveled through the North giving public presentations describing her labors in Florida. She also recruited new teachers, most notably her mentor family, the Kinnes.¹¹

By the end of 1863, Chloe Merrick had persuaded her brother-in-law to resign from the New York public school system and relocate to Florida. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton offered him a position as superintendent of Florida's freedmen's schools, probably at the urging of Merrick.¹² In this capacity, he took responsibility for

the welfare of Florida's blacks, even beyond education, and encouraged their active political participation.

Kinne was sympathetic to black suffrage and supported Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase's belief in the enfranchisement of freedmen.¹³ To this end, in the spring of 1865, Kinne wrote concerning the formation of a town government for Fernandina: "The only unresolved issue was whether or not the vote should be extended to black men."¹⁴ When a local committee rejected freedmen suffrage, Kinne introduced the topic to a larger group. Since African Americans outnumbered whites, the issue was soon resolved in favor of suffrage. "The first vote went one hundred twenty-three to twenty-seven," Kinne observed; "Seeing the inevitable, twenty-five traditional southerners left the meeting. A final vote followed, giving unanimous support to black suffrage."¹⁵ On May 1, 1865, nine whites joined 151 African Americans to elect a mayor, a marshal, and eight councilmen. Kinne happily declared the election of "the first mayor ever elected in the South by universal suffrage."¹⁶ His victory proved to be an accurate indicator of future black behavior. Given the franchise, African Americans would exercise political power. His euphoria was short-lived, however. A few months later, President Johnson chose to pardon Confederate veterans, but not to enfranchise blacks.

Disappointment did not deter Kinne from pursuing his ideals in education. He was a supporter of "romantic racialism" which historian James McPherson defined as "a belief in racial differences but not necessarily in black inferiority."¹⁷ Romantic realists admired the artistic, warm, emotional, Christian nature of blacks. In lauding these qualities, romantic realism implied that blacks were inferior only because of the deprivations of slavery. Romantic racialists believed that slavery's harmful effects could

be reformed by education, which would prepare blacks to participate as equal citizens.¹⁸ Further, Kinne supported the romantic racialist belief in the integration of the races.¹⁹ As he established common schools in Florida, Kinne promoted integration and the Fernandina orphanage and school operated by Chloe Merrick were integrated. Jacksonville teachers also worked to establish integrated schools. As a result, Kinne found white public opinion to be “set against any and all efforts on the part of northern individuals and associations.”²⁰ Kinne’s views on integration were also opposed by Colonel Thomas Osborn of the Freedmen’s Bureau who advised that “there is no probability of poor white children attending the Negro school.” As Osborn reasoned, “There is some feeling against introducing northern teachers under auspices of northern societies. I do not think the enmity would be removed by emphasizing that white children would also be welcome.”²¹

Colonel Osborn’s opposition made Kinne’s position difficult. He needed the cooperation and support of the government to successfully support existing schools and open additional ones. At the same time, the administrative responsibilities of a system that included thirteen schools and nearly two thousand students by 1866 required extensive travel on his part to oversee the details of school operations.²² These demands challenged his ability to help blacks in “pushing aside that prejudice that jeopardizes their rights.”²³ As Florida’s white opposition increased, his sponsoring organization, the NFRA, was becoming more secular; its denominational leaders had lost a power struggle and left to accept positions in religious aid societies.²⁴ Disheartened by southern hostility, Kinne persevered, continuing to support and visit

new NFRA teachers in order to build an effective system of freedmen's education in Florida.

Despite the efforts of northerners like Kinne, not until the Freedmen's Bureau joined with the labor of northern aid societies did educational work among freedmen expand. The Freedmen's Bureau, created by act of Congress on March 3, 1865, was destined to have a great influence on freedmen's education. However, this impact was not immediately apparent, as the Bureau law made no provisions for freedmen's education. Instead, at the urging of President Johnson, the Bureau placed priority on the return of property that had been abandoned during the war, stripping aid societies of buildings they were using as schools, including many of the NFRA schools in Florida and the orphanage that Merrick had established at Fernandina. Ansel Kinne pleaded with the Bureau to prevent the loss of the properties, but his efforts were to no avail. The buildings returned to their previous owners, and the NFRA sought new locations for schools and for the orphanage. This marked the beginning of the end for the NFRA's official activities in Florida. By July 1866, the National Freedmen's Relief Association merged with numerous other regional relief organizations under the umbrella of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC), an organization less committed to integrated education because its philosophy situated blacks as unprepared for the responsibilities of citizenship.²⁵

The combination of white opposition, philosophical changes within the sponsoring organization, the undercutting of his efforts in Florida by the Freedmen's Bureau, and a growing skepticism about the prospects for freedmen's education without a supportive government inspired Kinne to resign his post by the end of 1866. He

returned to Syracuse where he was reappointed as a school principal. Although his time in Florida was short, Kinne's desire to effect dramatic change in the status of freedmen and his efforts to organize and expand Florida's system of education were significant. His brief success at extending suffrage to the freedmen and to integrate the schools demonstrated the difficulty of sustaining radical political and social change in the face of white opposition. His challenges also foreshadowed how important government support became to education in Florida. Kinne, like many of the northern reformers who migrated to Florida with high ideals, eventually departed the state during Presidential Reconstruction, frustrated by the difficulty of transforming dreams into reality. Like Kinne, the National Freeman's Relief Association had only a brief presence in Florida. After 1866, the NFRA/AFUC fractured as denominational societies and secular societies bickered over philosophical differences, resulting in a decline in financial support.²⁶ However, the fruits of its early planting in Florida continued through the people it brought together and the network of relationships they formed.

After the closing of the orphanage in Fernandina Chloe Merrick was taken ill. She returned to Syracuse to recuperate. Upon her recovery, Merrick returned to the South, continuing her commitment to the education of freedmen by taking assignments in the Carolinas.²⁷ Her determination and dedication to that cause were shown through the words she wrote to the abolitionist Gerrit Smith in November 1868: "The time has not come for the old heroes of the anti-slavery revolution to lay their armor by," she declared. "The longer I remain in the South... the more I see remains to be done."²⁸

Even after their departure, Ansel Kinne and Chloe Merrick maintained their link with Florida through Harrison Reed. Reed employed Charles Kinne, Ansel's son, as his

personal secretary, perhaps as a way to retain a personal relationship with the family, especially Merrick. Little is known about the contact between Merrick and Reed over the years after she left Florida except that it resulted in his proposal of marriage after he was elected governor in 1868. Three years after she left Florida, Merrick and Reed married in the Kinne's garden in Syracuse.²⁹

As First Lady, Chloe Merrick Reed worked to advance education in Florida once again.³⁰ Prior to his marriage, Governor Reed had catered to conservative social beliefs. Under her influence, he soon proposed or supported legislation to address social problems, primarily in education and relief for the poor. Although the state's public school system already had been created by the legislature, Reed urged a system that "would reach every portion of the state" and oversaw a doubling of student enrollment over the next two years. The First Lady encouraged the appointment of Charles Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, as Superintendent of Education in 1871 and worked with him to recommend appointment of competent men as county school officers.³¹ Her presence became a source of strength as Governor Reed weathered repeated attempts to remove him from office, often with the votes of black legislators aware of her goodwill toward their race. When Reed's term ended, she retired with him to Jacksonville where she remained active in civic and social affairs until her death in 1897.

Participation in Florida's reconstruction was not limited to white northerners like Merrick and Kinne. Some northerners were black soldiers who had served in the state during the war and chose to make it their home. Soon after the end of hostilities they were joined by educated black men from other states intent on organizing churches.

Charles H. Pearce was one who responded to the need for leaders to form black churches in Florida. A free black originally from Maryland, Pearce was a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church of America. Building on traditions established before and during the Civil War by free blacks and slaves, the AME Church emerged during Reconstruction as a significant force in the religious, social, cultural, and political lives of black Floridians. Blacks' strong desire to have their own churches and preachers, separate from whites was one of the most significant impulses of Reconstruction.³² Besides changing personal names, changing their religious affiliation became a symbolic act which freedmen used to signify their new status.³³ By choosing a black church, the former slave expressed independence.

The AME Church traced its history to 1816 when several black Methodist congregations unified to create a centralized organization. In its formative years, the AME Church supported a southern ministry, although a majority of its membership lived in the North.³⁴ However, after Denmark Vesey's attempted slave revolt in South Carolina in 1822, its work in the South abruptly halted.³⁵ Instead, the church concentrated on the North and border States like Maryland. Although a rise in anti-slavery sentiment in the 1840s nearly doubled membership to over 17,000, growth stagnated at around 20,000 by the eve of the Civil War.³⁶ The war and the end of slavery began a new era of outreach for the AME Church into the South.

In 1865 the AME Church sent former slave William G. Stewart, back to Florida. During the war, Stewart had escaped bondage in Florida and fled to South Carolina where he joined the AME ministry. True to his charge, Stewart established churches wherever he found existing groups of black Methodists wanting to join the AME

organization, including men like Henry W. Call in Tallahassee. Stewart's limited schooling and status as a deacon, however, prevented him from ordaining ministers in the churches that he organized. After six months, AME church leaders appointed Pearce, an AME elder, as pastor to Jacksonville, Florida with a call to officially build and expand churches, open and operate Sunday schools, and spur development of public schools. Pearce was "a remarkably fine-looking, middle-age, yellow-colored man, a good Christian minister, who could claim respect in any community."³⁷

In February 1866, Pearce arrived in Florida aiming to work a revolution: "We are hunting for education, that will give us a name and position in the nation," he explained; "We have a right to aspire to and claim position with education."³⁸ Accordingly, he stressed education in the form of Sunday Schools and commenced classes as soon as he had a congregation, which was not long after his arrival. By the end of his first month in Florida, Pearce had established a permanent AME presence in Jacksonville and formally organized seven churches, receiving into membership 1,373 individuals.³⁹ There a young freedwoman, Mary E. Miller, who had received a basic education, helped him in the task of opening schools. She quickly opened a Sunday School even though the congregation had no building. This was a pattern Pearce followed as he formed new AME churches from Jacksonville to Pensacola; as soon as he organized a new congregation, he worked urgently to open schools. Because there were few teachers like Miller in Florida, Pearce eventually traveled to New York to recruit at least three women to serve as Sabbath and public school teachers in Middle Florida.⁴⁰

Under Pearce's leadership, the AME church in Florida flourished despite a backdrop of violence toward freedmen by white southerners. Federal authorities

declared martial law in many Florida counties because of increased violence and lawlessness. Things did not begin to change until the fall of 1866 when Radical Republicans, who demanded a Reconstruction policy that would offer protection and the vote to freedmen, won convincingly throughout Florida. Beginning in March 1867, Congress passed a series of laws — the Military Reconstruction Acts — to divide the greater part of the Confederacy into five military districts whose officers would oversee a process of rewriting state constitutions to guarantee suffrage to adult male blacks.⁴¹ It was then, having laid the foundation of church and school, that Pearce expressed determination to plunge into state and local politics: “A man in this state cannot do his whole duty as a minister except he looks out for the political interests of his people.”⁴² He joined ministers from all denominations who spoke to thousands of blacks attending rallies around the state demanding their rights as citizens. These activities inaugurated a new wave of growth for the AME Church. By June 1867, Pearce boasted that the total church membership was 5,242, with twenty-five hundred children attending Sunday Schools.⁴³

With the church growing by leaps and bounds, AME preachers led by Pearce joined the Republican Party in its effort to take control of Florida government. In time, at least five ministers would become a member of the Florida Legislature: William Bradwell, Robert Meacham, Charles Pearce, H.S. Harman, and Thomas W. Long.⁴⁴ According to historian Eric Foner, the election of Florida’s ministers evidenced a pattern repeated throughout the South where more than one hundred black ministers were elected to state legislatures. Most capitalized on the esteem with which they were held in black communities for their education, speaking ability, and good judgment.⁴⁵ In a

short time, the militant role of the AME church and its ministers helped mold the political lives of thousands of Floridians.⁴⁶ Although Pearce's foray into politics spurred church growth within the population of grateful freedmen, it was to be a temporary victory.

By July 1867, the Republican Party began to splinter. Pearce and many AME Church leaders allied with a radical republican group called the "Mule Team." Although initially successful in electing Pearce as president of Florida's 1868 state constitutional convention, most of the Mule Team was ultimately expelled from the convention by more conservative white Republicans led by the former Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, Thomas W. Osborn. Osborn and his followers argued that Pearce and the Mule Team had not lived in Florida long enough to qualify as residents. However, before this setback, Pearce achieved one of his major goals – incorporating language into the constitution for a legitimate public school system: "It is the paramount duty of the State to make ample provision for the education of all the children residing in its borders without distinction or preference."⁴⁷

Despite his first failed attempt at elective office, Pearce remained politically engaged and allied the AME Church with Governor Harrison Reed, whom he saw as a lesser evil than the Osborn faction. Reed responded by appointing him to the office of Leon County School Superintendent, giving the AME Church direct control over school systems enrolling approximately one-third of all black Floridians by 1869.⁴⁸

Although their alliance was an uneasy pact, Pearce and the AME Church supported Governor Reed when the Osborn faction attempted to impeach him. According to John Wallace, a black politician at the time, Pearce used his "great influence with the colored people throughout the State" on the governor's behalf.⁴⁹ In

January 1869, Pearce and the AME leaders were rewarded when the legislature finally passed a bill to fully implement the constitutional mandate of a uniform system of free public schools. At the AME Church's insistence, the new law contained no restrictions on racially integrated classrooms.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, politics produced mixed results for Pearce. Political differences fractured the church; politics distracted members from church building; and whites pressured congregants, often violently. These difficulties did not deter Pearce, who had grown adept at political maneuvering. Despite a resurgence in violence toward blacks in Florida, he participated in the final ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 which protected African American males' right to vote and was seen by most blacks as the constitutional key to political equality. Pearce continued his political career, serving in the Florida Senate from 1868 to 1874.⁵¹ Those responsibilities did not prevent him from continued dedication to his church and educational obligations. In 1870, at his urging, Pearce's AME Church endowed Brown Theological Institute (later changed to Brown's University at Live Oak, Florida) under a legislative charter. He traveled the state making speeches and collecting money for its construction. Unfortunately, a series of disasters including fire, hurricane, and the Panic of 1873 prevented the institution from opening.⁵²

In a few short years, Pearce catapulted the AME Church into much more than a religious, social, and educational institution. The church's buildings became more than houses of worship; they were political meeting halls. The Church's spiritual leaders became more than black ministers; they were politicians who could deliver votes. And their votes supported a new system of education in Florida. Through his efforts, the

Christian gospel of salvation was combined with a social gospel that insured black participation in the struggle for advancement.

The intersection of religion and education during this period was such a politically charged issue that education, in a sense, became politics. The contributions of northern educators exemplify how both blacks and whites dedicated skills and knowledge to Florida's educational improvement. Moreover, their motives and struggles provide a window into the conflict and links between religious, secular, and political interests during reconstruction. Florida's freed slaves demanded education, a key part of the reconstruction puzzle. The efforts of white northern reformers like Chloe Merrick and Ansel Kinne, who worked tirelessly to build schools and influence governmental leaders, helped lay the political framework to sustain an equitable system of education. No less significant was the work of African American ministers like Charles Pearce who channeled the freedmen's desire for religious expression into a united and powerful political voice. Together, freedmen, their teachers and their ministers helped to secure education's place at the center of political debate in Reconstruction Florida.

CHAPTER FOUR: MISSIONARY TEACHERS AND FREEDMEN

“When you set a light in a dark place it is seen and felt and what could have been more dark than the system of slavery?”¹ - E. B. Eveleth, 1871

Given the collective importance of religion, education, and politics to blacks, these issues were not ignored by teachers of freedmen working to influence and support social change within Florida's communities. During Reconstruction, each school became a microcosm of the community it served. Community concerns and hopes reflected in the challenges that teachers faced in the classroom. This chapter examines the experiences of the teachers who organized schools and taught freedmen. The teachers written letters to organizations like the American Missionary Association and governmental documentation concerning schools provide the clearest record of the challenges and triumphs of teaching freedmen in Florida, affording us a glimpse into their students' struggles to acquire education.

Freedmen who seized the opportunity to learn were as much agents of change as the many northern teachers sent to Florida by benevolent organizations to teach them. The freedmen sustained teachers before government help was available, and it was freedmen who continued teacher sustenance when such efforts fell short. This reciprocal relationship between student and teacher implies that education was not just something imposed from the North upon the community. Rather, the creation of Florida's new educational system involved a mutual process of change that included

freedmen, their families, black and white teachers, and the religious and political communities.

The development of a tax-supported system of public education would not take place until Radical Reconstruction. Before 1865, the work of educating newly freed slaves depended on numerous white and black teachers who came to Florida beginning as soon as the Union occupation. Initially, most were sponsored by one of many northern benevolent organizations. The first to send teachers to Florida, the National Freedmen's Relief Association (the same organization which had sponsored Chloe Merrick) was neither the only northern benevolent society nor the most influential. The Freedmen's Aid Society, the American Missionary Association, the Boston Educational Commission, the New England Freedmen's Union Commission, and others joined the NFRA in Florida. Together these societies laid the educational groundwork for Florida's education system and paved the way for the future work of the Freedmen's Bureau.²

Of the many educational associations fueled by emancipation, the American Missionary Association became the most important.³ It had several advantages over the NFRA and other northern societies founded primarily by abolitionists. First, it was an older organization with more established sources of income. As a missionary society, the AMA depended on the support of churches while other societies looked to northerners' short-lived philanthropic enthusiasm for education of the freedmen.⁴ Originally formed in 1846 by prominent abolitionist Lewis Tappan to protest the relative silence of other missionary societies on slavery, the association advocated political activity and dedicated the work of its missionaries to convince all of the evils of slavery. AMA officials considered themselves Christian abolitionists who intended to free the

bodies, souls, and minds of black men. In their view the Civil War was a punishment by God for the sin of slavery.⁵ Second, the AMA enjoyed a greater support and cooperation from the Freedmen's Bureau than the secular societies received. Freedmen's Bureau head General O.O. Howard and the Bureau's school superintendent John W. Alvord were devoted Congregationalists who sympathized with the AMA's philosophy of religious education. Finally, teachers for the AMA often established better rapport with the freedmen because their evangelical nature was more like the blacks' own approach to religion than the attitudes of more secular teachers.⁶

When the Civil War erupted, the AMA's experience, organization, and fund-raising capability enabled it to lead the way in providing relief and education for slaves escaping from Confederate lines. The military could not properly care for contraband slaves, and the North generally wanted them to remain in the South. Northern concern for the plight of slaves resulted in the formation of scores of relief agencies that sent clothing and food to refugee camps. The AMA was in the forefront with a public appeal for clothes, bedding, Bibles, food, missionaries and teachers. Its agents arrived in Fortress Monroe, Virginia, as early as September 1861. From there the AMA followed the Union army and established schools as soon as the military situation permitted. Fortunately for historians, AMA teachers in Florida and elsewhere were prolific writers, and the association kept records. The archives of the AMA include hundreds of letters from Florida teachers as well as statistics on students, curriculum, and schools.

Further documentation of Florida's educational effort is provided by the records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau. For historians, one of the Bureau's greatest legacies is the body of

records – letters, monthly statistical school reports by Bureau officers, and teacher's monthly school reports – it created during the course of its operations. The Bureau, while not designed specifically to further blacks' education, ultimately made education one of its most important duties. The impetus came not from congressional act but from the efforts of Bureau Commissioner Oliver Otis Howard who believed that education was the only way to build a free society in the South. He made the creation of a free common school system for all southern children his goal and looked for allies among the benevolent societies operating in Florida.

The Freedmen's Bureau in Florida organized under its first Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn by June 1865, just three months after the congressional act authorizing the establishment of the bureau.⁷ Its educational activity officially began with the appointment of E. B. Duncan as inspector and superintendent of schools in November 1866. Under his tenure and that of subsequent superintendents, the bureau maintained day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sabbath schools in Florida. They recruited teachers from the local white population, from among the freedmen themselves, and from the North by freedmen's aid societies. Finally, the bureau supplied buildings for schools and transportation for teachers and relied on the aid societies and freedmen to pay for textbooks and teachers' salaries, although at times teachers were paid from bureau funds.⁸ Thus, it was through the cooperation of the bureau and the benevolent societies, especially the AMA, that the nucleus of Florida's official public school system was formed.

The first AMA teacher in Florida, Carrie E. Jocelyn, arrived in St. Augustine, which was under Union Army control in 1863.⁹ She was soon followed by the Reverend

and Mrs. George Greely who found St. Augustine's freedmen living in a "most wretched manner" with every house, hut, or hovel overflowing.¹⁰ For the AMA teachers, relief efforts were the precursor to, and in some cases as essential as, education. When a Union raiding party brought seventy former slaves to Jacksonville in March 1864, Mrs. Greely, who was trying to locate food and clothing for them, described them as "the most destitute objects I ever saw, many of them almost entirely naked."¹¹ Another AMA teacher, Emma Eveleth, wrote in early February 1865 that she was forced to dismiss school because her students had only thin clothing and no coats or shoes.¹²

Nevertheless, the teachers' major purpose was instruction, not relief, and they found Florida's freedmen to be exceptionally receptive to instruction. One observer wrote, "It is astonishing how apt the little Negroes are to learn ... I may safely say that the freed people, as a general thing, manifest greater interest in education than do the whites."¹³ A Freedmen's Bureau official reported how the "black people show a great interest in learning. Most of them have books, and are trying to work up. The spelling book is quite a matter of trade and every shop and store have them as a matter of traffic." One woman, who had been a teacher for twenty years, reported after observing lessons in Jacksonville, "I would not have believed it possible that these people have made such progress in this time."¹⁴ While it is true that low expectations on the part of many whites about the ability of former slaves to learn may have accounted for the often superlative reports of their abilities, it is also clear that the freedmen's earnest desire for education translated into exceptional performance.

For many black Floridians, a hunger for education drew them to any opportunity for schooling, regardless of the quality of the teacher. Near Tallahassee, a black child

“but thirteen years of age” taught a dozen adults in night classes.¹⁵ The freedmen willingly paid for the opportunity, in some cases at great personal cost financially. Black families even compensated individuals whom northern teachers believed were inadequate teachers. One letter written by Reverend Greely referred to two private schools in Tallahassee taught by “incompetent colored men, who can only begin to teach.” Despite the poor quality of instruction, he said, “The colored people would pay from 300 to 400 dollars toward the cost of the school.”¹⁶

School growth was so rapid that the biggest problem was finding teachers. Given a shortage of white teachers, many areas used black teachers even though criticisms of their qualifications were rampant. Before the end of the war, a military official stationed at Ft. Taylor in Key West wrote to the AMA to complain about a “colored teacher” who charged one dollar a month to instruct each pupil and asking for a “man who can preach as well as teach.” He concluded his letter by begging for “the right sort of man” to be sent.¹⁷ From Key West to Apalachicola, pleas came to northern benevolent societies for qualified teachers. Expressing the isolation that many of Florida’s freedmen felt in rural areas lacking educational support, one man begged the American Missionary Association to “do what you can to aid us in this dark and much forgotten part of our country.”¹⁸

In response to the great need, the AMA had, by 1865, opened schools at Key West, Jacksonville, St. Augustine, on a deserted plantation on the St. Johns River, and at Strawberry Mills. Other schools were located at Tallahassee, Ocala, Monticello, Gainesville, and Magnolia. All were quickly filled with enthusiastic freedmen. The same year, Esther Hawks, a teacher for the Freedmen’s Aid Society wrote of conducting a

school in Jacksonville with average attendance of 160 freedmen.¹⁹ The Freedmen's Bureau, too, did not waste any time. It opened five schools in 1865 for black children by requesting that army officers stationed in Florida detail educated soldiers to serve as teachers. By the end of the year, the Bureau's Superintendent reported ten schools serving 1,981 students.²⁰

Age seemed to be no deterrent to freedmen's quests for education. Harriet Greely, working in St. Augustine in 1865, reported sixty-one students ranging from twenty to seventy-five years of age. Teacher J.E. Breadbane taught in a deserted plantation on the St. Johns River to freedmen of "all ages - eight years to fifty" as well as one old man, 96 years old.²¹ Greely reported that older students tended to have more difficulty tackling the educational challenges before them. "About a dozen of these are considerably advanced in life," she wrote, "and owing to the dullness of their comprehension and lacking the power of retention, the labor for the first few weeks seemed to produce the only effect of the answering echo to the voice, but presently the faculties began to awake, the seed to germinate, and now they feel proud to be able to read and spell in monosyllables of three and four letters." Since many of her students were motivated to learn to read the Bible, Greely latched onto it "as a more precious idea to them than the possession of silver and gold" and motivated them by promising to provide individual copies of the New Testament once her students could read it.²²

Most of the northern teachers' enthusiasm for the work arose from fervent religious convictions, strong anti-slavery beliefs, and generous humanitarian impulses. Harriet Greely and her missionary husband exemplified this spirit. To her there was no earthly authority that needed to be consulted. She and her husband had only "to give

ourselves wholly to the work our lives even, if God wills it, that we may have it to say we have done what we could.”²³ Strong abolitionist backgrounds were common among the teachers who saw themselves as instruments in transforming southern society.²⁴ Like Jacksonville teacher Esther Hawks, many had been avid anti-slavery agitators since the 1850s, and they conceptualized their efforts through the religious fervor that characterized abolitionism. As Emma B. Eveleth explained, “the great influence that is working in the South will be felt at the North; for when you set a light in a dark place it is seen and felt.”²⁵ This evangelical motivation strengthened teachers’ resolve when they encountered difficulties and may have helped them relate to their students, many of whom were deeply religious.

There were other, less lofty reasons that motivated northern teachers as well. Some came to Florida for their health, believing that the warmer climate would be beneficial.²⁶ The American Missionary Association received so many applications inquiring about the benefits of Florida living that it published a disclaimer that it was not a hygienic society. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a northern transplant, was one who promoted Florida as a healthful place to northerners with her writing.

Contrary to the publicity, however, Florida was not always a healthful place. Many teachers contracted and died from malaria, yellow fever, or tuberculosis during their service. Sarah Slocum, a colleague of Chloe Merrick, died at Fernandina in the fall of 1864. And Ansel Kinne’s wife, Emma, who also taught with Merrick had “a long and dangerous illness.”²⁷ Fears of contracting malaria compelled many northern teachers to spend summers outside the state. Diseases were common among teachers and their students, and hindered educational developments, especially in the interior which

seemed to harbor more sickness.²⁸ In some areas, schools closed because of local epidemics. Still, for many teachers, the discomforts associated with the climate paled in comparison to their gratitude for the opportunity to teach in Florida. “The climate is delightful, and bouquets of flowers come into me fresh from my gardens almost every day,” wrote Harriet Greely; “My health is very good and I find my strength equal to my work.”²⁹

While it is probable that many of the northern teachers who came to Florida had a sense of curiosity about new and strange places, the loneliness and discomforts they faced in Florida were sufficient to tax the most adventurous spirit. This is clear from the letters of Northern teachers Emma Eveleth and Maggie Gardner. If Maggie Gardner’s arrival in Jacksonville was typical, teachers frequently came without knowing a soul in Florida. She wrote, “I reached Baldwin about noon and must wait there till midnight, reaching Jacksonville at two o’clock, alone at night, in a strange place with no one to meet me. I believe in those two days I passed the longest and loneliest hours my life ever knew.”³⁰ Although teachers expected to give up the comforts and luxuries of their northern homes, they were unprepared for their initial southern experiences. Like Emma Eveleth, they often found it difficult to find a suitable place to live, and when found, the housing was seldom comfortable and often expensive. “We were obliged to stay twenty-four hours in the most miserable hotel I was ever in, “ explained Eveleth, “if they charge according to the accommodations I should not complain, but they charged a dollar for each and a dollar for lodging in a hard soiled bed where we could look through the cracks outdoors. We thought it too bad to pay four dollars to such a house as that, so we went to bed without our supper and saved a dollar.”³¹ Upon the arrival of

the two teachers in Gainesville, they found that their cottage had no furniture. Rather than remain in a hotel, “we borrowed a mattress of a colored family and last night we slept in our home on the floor.”³² By refusing to board teachers or rent buildings for schools, white Floridians rebelled against the Yankee intruders who sought to empower their black neighbors. In Gainesville, the Freedmen’s Bureau noted that no private family would board teachers, and only “with the greatest difficulty” was an arrangement made to accommodate them in a public house at thirty dollars per month.³³

The discomforts of travel and poor living conditions did not prevent teachers from participating in social events, when given the opportunity. In fact, there is evidence that northern white teachers were socially active in East Florida during the years of Union Army occupation. In and around Jacksonville, there was a constant arrival of teachers from the North before they departed to their assignments throughout Florida. As Reverend Greely expressed in an 1865 letter to the American Missionary Association: “Fernandina is occupied by teachers.”³⁴ Many of the northern teachers were single women who, during the war years, became friends with Union Army officers occupying the Jacksonville area. Even those who were married, like Dr. Esther Hill Hawks, a teacher for the National Freedmen’s Relief Association, enjoyed an active social life. Her diary provides ample accounts of teachers attending balls at military headquarters, enjoying card games, horseback rides, dinner parties, and picnics at old plantations with young officers and other northerners in the area.³⁵ However, for teachers teaching in rural communities or the interior of the state, life was lonelier. For those teachers outside of Jacksonville, participation in white society was limited or non-existent. As teachers Catherine Bent and Harriet Barnes understatedly described their situation in

Gainesville to the Freedmen's Bureau: "The citizens are not in love with us or our employment but we do not mind that."³⁶

American teachers from earliest times have been subject to community pressures and prejudices, and expected to conform to the mores and social standards of the communities where they worked. For those teaching freedmen in Florida, especially transplanted "Yankees," it was quite difficult to fit into the southern white community beyond the classroom. The teachers' abolitionist tendencies and limited understanding of the southern social order made them appear removed, arrogant, and haughty, especially to poor white southerners. For their own part, northern women who volunteered to teach southern blacks frequently were disinclined to be friendly with people they perceived as traitors to the United States. Also, some white teachers were not very tactful in expressing their opinions. The perceived slovenly ways of both whites and blacks often offended Yankee teachers, who were well versed in cleanliness. Revealing the Yankee ideal that cleanliness is next to godliness, Emma Eveleth described going to visit blacks in their homes and advising them to clean and whitewash "to show that they are something above the beasts."³⁷ While some white northerners were willing to excuse the poor habits of freedmen as a consequence of slavery, many were less tolerant of poor whites' lack of cleanliness. Greely described whites in Jacksonville as "miserably poor and ignorant and dirty and in many instances needing as much sympathy and help as the fugitive Negro." To some teachers, white poverty and ignorance was blamed on a poor work ethic. Eveleth described whites as "more degraded and in need than the colored people, for the latter are not afraid to work. The others have always thought work degrading; and even now it seems as if they would

starve rather than work. There is a hope that when slavery is really dead, and the spirit of caste is banished, they may arise and be equal to the colored people.”³⁸ These negative feelings on the part of the teachers incurred the enmity of many white Floridians. Moreover, the feeling persisted among poor whites that freedmen’s elevation through education would degrade their own status, that education would make it possible for blacks to avoid performing menial tasks.

Sadly, many northern white teachers faced disapproval and condemnation, not only by local southerners but by some of the newly transplanted Yankees as well. “The teachers are mostly a tabooed class,” reported H.H. Moore of the Freedmen’s Bureau, and were shown “intended contempt.”³⁹ They were insulted, sneered at, and occasionally threatened by mobs. Teachers were ostracized by locals as well as northern transplants for working closely with blacks. Harriet Greely reported how “Northern gentlemen and ladies of professed piety and intelligence extend cold civilities in a patronizing form, or pass by on the other side because we are associated with the Colored people.” However, her reaction to their contempt was sanctimonious. She wrote, “Could they see the importance of our mission in the light of the Gospel, they would no doubt, think and feel differently, but the scales of a stubborn prejudice is not yet fallen from their eyes.”⁴⁰

Marginalized by southern white society, teachers became absorbed in the work at hand. Teaching in Florida was physically demanding. Most teachers taught both day and night classes to accommodate their pupil’s work schedules. Additionally, they taught Sabbath schools and attended Sunday worship services.⁴¹ In their spare time, they issued clothing to the needy, visited the sick, and wrote and read letters for the

freedmen. Harriet Greely described riding sidesaddle for twenty-five miles over a four-day period in order to visit students.⁴² Monticello teacher Carrie M. Blood, yearning for the companionship of another educator, requested an assistant to help her with her ninety-five pupils.⁴³ For teachers in rural areas, a lack of mail or news for long periods compounded their social isolation. Gainesville teachers pleaded with the American Missionary Association for “something to read” because they had “not received a paper or magazine since we came.”⁴⁴

Besides teaching and providing relief to the needy, teachers also spent time securing classroom space. Often the first schools were in churches. Later, when white Floridians reclaimed many of the churches, teachers were forced into less desirable circumstances. Statistics in teachers’ monthly school reports illustrate the widespread problems of overcrowding and primitive facilities. In Gainesville, the first school was an unfinished, dilapidated church “without door or windows.”⁴⁵ In Clay County, ten schools accommodated 266 students, but as the County Superintendent of Education described, only “three of the schoolhouses have each a water bucket; two each a Bible, drinking cup and teacher’s desk; one a broom and blackboard; five have good seats and desks for the pupils. All have good water convenient.”⁴⁶ In Taylor County, not one of the eight schools serving 230 students was equipped with an outhouse.⁴⁷

Salaries were not high but, when paid consistently, were sufficient for most teachers to live in Florida. The American Missionary Association, for example, paid its female teachers twenty dollars a month to help cover room and board; male teachers made a slightly higher wage. This was often supplemented by whatever amount of money the freedmen could pay to the teacher. Teaching was seen as an acceptable

alternative for many women, northern and southern, who had little means of support.⁴⁸ However, for teachers in many of the state's plantation schools, or in more rural areas, pay was less than consistent.

Often the teachers at these schools were hired by plantation owners eager to satisfy both the desires of his labor force for education and the need for workers to tend his crops. Most plantation owners preferred black teachers in these positions for two reasons. First, it was easier to provide lodging for them with the blacks they taught. Second, it was a way to take control of freedmen's education from the Yankee teachers. In such rural areas, there was less emphasis on finding qualified teachers. The Freedmen's Bureau was aware of this. In an 1868 letter, one Bureau official referred to the fact that "the rough accommodations and the small pay would offer small inducements for competent teachers."⁴⁹ In his report to the Freedmen's Bureau, Education Superintendent E.B. Duncan reported that the Bureau's teachers "can scarcely get enough to live while their patrons are not able to afford them the keep that is due."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Freedmen's Bureau Assistant Commissioner J.T. Sprague noted the practicality of plantation schools. Instead of building expensive schools in towns, he felt it would be far preferable to "dot the state with cheap log cabins in the vicinity of large plantations" because it would permit parents to send their children to nearby schools with little expense. He believed such a plan would place Florida "among the finest of the southern states to establish and sustain a public school system."⁵¹ Because "planters had engaged teachers on their plantations, paying half their salaries themselves," Sprague pronounced these schools to be quite successful.⁵²

Besides the ostracism of southern whites and northern migrants, teachers also dealt with being called epithets such as “nigger teacher” and “snowball,” not to mention the scare tactics of the Ku Klux Klan and other night-riding groups.⁵³ Before the passage of the Reconstruction Act in 1867, when political power still rested with southern whites, a kind of organized warfare was carried out against Florida’s blacks.⁵⁴ One such attack in which blacks in a field were shot at by a white man was described as “murderous malice” on the part of whites by AMA teacher Reverend Greely.⁵⁵ Harriet Barnet and Catherine Bent, two northern teachers in Gainesville, reported that the bitter hatred of whites for blacks often manifested in cruel treatment of freedmen. They cited incidents in which a drunken white man gouged out the eye of a freedman who got in his way and the stabbing of two freedmen at Archer because they had served in the Union Army. The two women complained of personally being targets of white boys who threw missiles into the schoolroom, sometimes hitting the teachers.⁵⁶ Most teachers felt, as Reverend Greely did, that “all of us who labor for the benefit of the freedmen owe the preservation of our lives under God to the presence of the troops.”⁵⁷

In March 1867, Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts over the President’s veto and inaugurated military rule throughout Florida.⁵⁸ Military authorities were to ensure that adult freedmen were given the franchise in elections. With martial law in place until a new state constitution was adopted and approved by Congress, the Republican Party began an intensive campaign to inform the freedmen of their rights and to enlist them in the ranks of the organization.

One of the most effective devices in enlisting freedmen was the organization of secret societies, including the Loyal League, the Union League, and the Lincoln

Brotherhood. Each represented a faction of the Republican Party and used secret oaths and awe-inspiring rituals to elicit the patriotism of Florida's blacks.⁵⁹ The growth of these organizations increased white fears of black domination in Florida, which led to persistent rumors and complaints of armed blacks plotting mischief. Even though violence against freedmen took place before black suffrage, it became worse and better organized afterwards in a desperate attempt to break Republican control of politics.⁶⁰

There were other factors influencing white reactions. Often, the entrance of Union troops into a community set into motion efforts among black residents to collect sufficient funds to build a school and hire a teacher.⁶¹ Southern whites accused the Bureau's educational program of soliciting freedmen's votes for the Republican Party. The vital role that schools played in training blacks to identify with Republicans is evidenced in teachers' letters: "They say they wish to know themselves, what name they put into the ballot box," Harriet Greely remembered in 1867. Whether she meant that they wanted her to tell them for whom to vote or they wanted to learn to choose for themselves, Greely's statement reveals the partisan role that teachers assumed. Few held their tongues when the issue of politics arose. Alluding to the 1872 election, Emma Eveleth let her loyalties be known: "We tremble when we think what it will be, if the Democrats get into power, which I hope the Lord will prevent. We know what they have done when in power and we have no reason to think they are any better now."⁶²

In the early years of Radical Reconstruction, black delegates to the Constitutional Conventions like Charles Pearce argued vigorously to outlaw racial distinctions in the schools. This likely exacerbated white fears and led to more violence directed at freedmen. Clearly, the lawlessness in their communities alarmed teachers. One

teacher wrote the AMA concerning the inequity: "We know there is great injustice. If a colored person commits a murder he is brought to justice just as he should be. But a white murderer cannot be arrested, because he is protected and secreted by Southerners."⁶³ Political issues were obviously a matter of discussion between teachers, students, and families. The efforts of blacks to educate themselves, the political power flexed by the AME Church and black men in general, plus the growing impetus for black teachers all reflected increased sense of community and racial pride of the black community.

To many Floridians, white women, because of their feminine weaknesses, were incapable of running black schools. Due to "high and fiery" public sentiment against white northern teachers, state and local officials rescinded the invitations they had written to the Freedmen's Bureau and to benevolent associations asking for teachers. As time passed and more communities requested only black teachers, the Freedmen's Bureau appeared ready to comply. As the Bureau's Superintendent of Education Charles H. Foster explained, "The feeling seems to prevail to a considerable extent that the schools of the freed people should be taught by teachers of their own color, when white teachers would be liable to abuse and insult." Foster quoted another Bureau official about southern fears of white northern teachers furnishing freedmen "with ideas inimical to the southern sentiment."⁶⁴ Between 1867 and 1870, the American Missionary Association's proportion of teachers and missionaries who were black jumped from 6 to 20 percent.⁶⁵ Where black teachers were not available, Bureau officials sought men to serve in the classrooms, believing that a man "could stand the opposition." As the assistant education commissioner for Florida proclaimed, "I am

certain that only male teachers would be able to hold their own in Houston and Live Oak.”⁶⁶ The preferences and demands of the freedmen to be taught by black teachers illustrate how the black community exercised its agency and influenced public policy.

Realizing the need for more black teachers, experienced teachers taught with an eye to preparing future teachers. To this end, more advanced black students were frequently given opportunity to work as teacher-assistants or to take over the primary school part of the day for the white teacher.⁶⁷ In many cases, native blacks taught beginning classes until white northern teachers were hired. Gainesville AMA teacher, Maggie Gardner, a white AMA teacher newly arrived from the North, related that a black man had been teaching in Gainesville for two months prior to her arrival and had been charging twenty-five cents a month per student. She viewed his efforts as preparing the way for her arrival.⁶⁸

With increasing demands for more black teachers, the old accusations that freedmen lacked experience and education resurfaced as did the problem of limited financial support for teacher training. The lack of government funding particularly hurt black teachers in rural areas because it made them dependent on payments from their students to keep schools open. Without outside support, many such schools failed.⁶⁹ This problem was foreseen by the Freedmen’s Bureau Superintendent Charles H. Foster. As early as 1868, he wrote of his concern that northern organizations might withdraw support for the “cause of education,” noting that “the freed people are not yet prepared to go on and take charge of the education of their own class.” He continued, “No normal schools have yet been started in this state for their benefit, and the colored persons who are laboring as teachers are generally but poorly fitted for the work and

some of them are utterly incompetent.”⁷⁰ Shortly after, the Freedmen’s Bureau began construction of Stanton Normal Institute in Jacksonville, an institution for training teachers. By 1869, it boasted 348 students taught by six instructors.⁷¹

Teachers did not limit the scope of their influence to the classroom but tried to influence their communities as well by instilling values such as industry, thrift, and temperance. In cooperation with the Freedmen’s Bureau, the AMA established temperance societies (the Lincoln Temperance Society being the most common) with thousands of members. Old and young alike were pressured to take a pledge not to use liquor. Many teachers organized temperance societies at school and used their students to help spread the message to their elders. Emma Eveleth wrote of her success with teaching temperance: “Our temperance society is still prosperous; we get new names every time we meet. The children are very much interested in it. We teach them temperance songs, and select pieces for them to speak, which they take hold of with a great deal of zeal. Eveleth encouraged children to report on those who had broken the pledge “so we can visit them and bring them back.”⁷²

School conditions served as a metaphor for the social conditions that the teachers and their students faced. The teachers’ letters illustrate concern over the difficulty that blacks had in transitioning to a free labor system. As Eveleth wrote, “Some of the parents of our children have told us how they have been employed by Southerners, to work on their farms and they would not pay them in money, but told them to go to the store and get what they wanted on their account. The freedmen, not realizing the price of articles, would draw all their wages.”⁷³ Tempered by the realization that change would be gradual, teacher’s discouraged economic dependency among

freedmen. However, most teachers held little aspiration for a dramatic difference in the near future. Harriet Greely believed that changes in freedmen's character would not be seen until the fourth generation.⁷⁴ As Eveleth put it, "If people are crushed down all their lives by the heel of oppression, can we expect them to rise all of a sudden and be a bright intelligent class of community, without even the dust of their past conditions clinging to them?"⁷⁵

Consequently, teachers emphasized vocational training to facilitate gradual change. As early as 1865, Esther Hawks "organized a sewing school — the children bringing such work as they have, and we teach them to mend, and patch, and the older ones to cut by patterns."⁷⁶ Harriet Beecher Stowe, after struggling with little success to train a former field hand to housework, noted the importance of training: "The untrained plantation hands and their children are and will be just what education makes them." She trusted that "Negro children can be taught anything." The teachers' rhetoric reveals that they did not see themselves as equals to freedmen, rather as benefactors imparting wisdom so that blacks could fulfill a role suited to their station in American society. For example, Stowe thought black vocational education was necessary because whites, incapable of bearing "tropical suns and fierce extremes," would prove ineffective laborers in Florida. Instead, she preferred black workers who she described as "a docile race, who both can and will bear it for them."⁷⁷ Regardless, Florida's teachers, whether employed by northern benevolent societies or the Freedmen's Bureau, acknowledged the value of education in preparing blacks for practical life and drew no distinction between teaching freedmen to read and write and making productive laborers of them.

Besides vocational education, Florida's school curriculum for freedmen was similar to that found in northern schools. They were taught reading, spelling, writing, grammar, diction, history, geography, arithmetic, and singing. Northern schools sent used *McGuffey's Readers* and *Webster's Spellers*. The American Tract Society published a "Freedmen's Library" which included primers, spellers, and readers designed for a black audience.⁷⁸ Emphasis was placed on piety, with students instructed on the virtues of hard work and thrift. Readings reinforced the importance of accepting roles in life, being content with lowly station, and behaving in a docile manner. At the same time, many teachers also dwelt on dignity and the sinfulness of slavery, encouraging freedmen to discard all remnants of slavery like tipping the hat and giving the inside of the sidewalk to white men. White southerners highly disapproved of such lessons.⁷⁹

In January 1866, as part of a series of laws comprising a new "black code," Florida's legislative session reorganized the state government and passed "An Act Concerning Schools for Freedmen." Florida leaders boasted that it was the only "rebel" state to make provisions for blacks' education, but the law was discriminatory. It assessed fifty cents per month from each pupil and one dollar per year from "all male persons of color between the age of 21 and 45." Although the law was solely concerned with educational funding for freedmen, many whites began to attend black schools provided by the Freedmen's Bureau and northern organizations in clear defiance of the law's provision that black education exist "separate from any which might exist for the white." While seemingly interested in improving the educational status of blacks, the state legislature also wanted to "prevent northerners from teaching

in the colored school” by requiring all instructors to purchase annually a teaching certificate for five dollars. The law’s licensing clause granted power of certification to the Superintendent of Common Schools for Freedmen. Fortunately, few northern teachers were turned away because the superintendent knew of the need for teachers and admired their enthusiasm and skills.⁸⁰ Despite the inequities of the 1866 School Law, it helped initiate the successful development of a system of freedmen’s schools and demonstrated to white Floridians that a state school system could work.

Two years later, at the urging of black politicians like Charles Pearce, Florida’s 1868 State Constitution made it “the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all the children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference.”⁸¹ Mandating a system of common schools and a university in which instruction would be free, the Constitution provided for state taxation to support public education. The only previous statewide education tax had been the 1866 one-dollar levy on black males for the education of black children. By 1874, provided with constitutional directive and financial support, Florida’s public school system grew to five hundred tax-supported schools with a total enrollment of 18,000 students.⁸² This record growth would have been unlikely without the educational efforts of teachers, benevolent associations, and the black community during Reconstruction.

With each passing year, more native whites came to the view that the education of blacks had become an unavoidable consequence of emancipation, and the white South had best accommodate itself to the new reality.⁸³ By the late 1860s, outright hostility against freedmen education shifted to indifference and, among some white Floridians, even cooperation. As Bureau Assistant Superintendent E.B. Duncan saw it,

“The intelligent and better class of our citizens are the decided friends of the freedmen alive to their present condition, and are decidedly in favor of their elevation and improvement. They endeavor to instill in their minds the love of character, necessary to make them the proper subjects of law and government.”⁸⁴

As “the intelligent and better class” of white Floridians accepted the need for freedmen’s education, the number of schools increased. In 1867, Superintendent J.W. Alvord reported thirty-four day schools and twenty-two night schools with a combined student population of 1,878, and twenty-nine Sabbath Schools. Of forty-nine teachers, thirty were white and nineteen were black. He also knew of an additional fifteen schools and fifteen teachers with 350 students.⁸⁵ When, in 1868, benevolent organizations curtailed their financial support due to a shortage of northern contributions, the Bureau filled the gap. By 1869, the Bureau provided three times more money for the education of both black and white children than did the state.⁸⁶ It continued to supervise, encourage, and provide all possible funds for construction and rental of buildings. In many instances, the freedmen constructed schoolhouses at their own expense. Unfortunately, Congress curtailed the Bureau’s educational efforts, and by July 1870, the last Bureau officials left Florida. Thereafter, textbooks provided by the Peabody Fund filtered into the state, and benevolent societies like the American Missionary Association, rendered what assistance they could. Overall, though, northern support for freedmen’s education dwindled.⁸⁷ According to historian John Hope Franklin, diminished support for the education of freedmen was because northern industrialists, who controlled the Republican Party and sought to capture southern markets, lost patience with the slow pace of southern Reconstruction.⁸⁸

Regardless, freedmen continued to progress academically through the 1870s, due in part to increasingly competent teachers. White Floridians began accepting teaching positions in black schools, and many blacks became capable teachers. Mary Still, a well-respected northern black who taught for the American Missionary Association in Florida from 1866 until 1872, gained renown.⁸⁹ Susan L. Waterman, a black woman born and educated in New Jersey, was considered well trained.⁹⁰ Two of the black teachers whom Charles Pearce brought to teach for the AME Church, Martha Sickles and Mrs. M.E. Smith, were quite successful.⁹¹ Bureau officials also praised Mrs. William B. Jones who started a school near Jacksonville, even though the tuition her students promised to pay was not enough to support her and her seven children.⁹² Additionally, regional attitudes toward northern teachers were beginning to change. By November 1873, six northern ladies teaching in black schools outside of Madison secured rooms with the “best of families.”⁹³

By 1870, 16 percent of Florida blacks (age ten years and higher) were literate, a significant increase considering the challenges they faced in gaining education.⁹⁴ Pursuant to the school law of 1869, boards of public instruction were organized and schools opened in twenty-six counties.⁹⁵ The diminished support on the part of the northern societies and the defunct Freedmen’s Bureau was offset by the state’s expenditures in the 1870s. In August 1873, Florida’s black Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jonathan C. Gibbs, said in a speech to the National Education Association that Florida had 18,000 pupils in school at a cost of \$101, 820. By 1875, the number of students had increased to over 32,000 pupils at a cost in excess of \$188,000, which was more than the total expenditures of the Florida government in 1867.⁹⁶ While the

organization of public schools probably benefited whites more than blacks (who already had schools operated by the Bureau and northern societies) the freedmen continued to make progress in education.

As northern support for freedmen's education declined, freedmen's enthusiasm for education remained strong. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in 1873 of distributing spelling books to freedmen children which "they eagerly accepted, and treasured with a sort of superstitious veneration."⁹⁷ Her experience was echoed by William Cullen Bryant who, after a visit to Florida in 1873, wrote in the *New York Post* of a St. Augustine teacher who described freedmen as "so eager to learn that she gave, last summer, lessons to washerwomen at ten o'clock in the evening, after the labors of the day were over, and found others waiting at her door for their daily lessons at six o'clock in the morning, before their work was begun."⁹⁸ The continued eagerness for education on the part of freedmen combined with the ongoing support of a cadre of dedicated missionary teachers who remained at their posts even after the Freedmen's Bureau had dissolved and ensured the growth of freedmen's education in Florida. Contrary to reports of the collapse of education after Reconstruction, teachers continued to report vigorous school growth through the 1870s.⁹⁹

During Reconstruction, the work of the northern societies and the dedication of missionary teachers in establishing schools in Florida sustained freedmen's education until Florida's Reconstruction government established a statutory system of public education. In the process, teachers, students and Florida's communities were changed. In Florida, a new order arose with Reconstruction. A system of public education was

developed with the guidance of northerners, the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau, and in response to and collaboration with the fervent desires of Florida's blacks.

CHAPTER FIVE: EPILOGUE

The teachers who came to Florida were neither the picture of perfection that W.E.B. Dubois described as “saintly souls” nor the opposite.¹ They were ordinary people in an extraordinary circumstance. While some became elected and appointed officers in the Republican government or church leaders, the majority remained simply educators. Motivated by a Christian desire to teach the emancipated slaves and to make a difference, most teachers were successful on both counts. The AMA, other societies, and the Freedmen’s Bureau also made important contributions to freedmen’s education. Together, they stimulated black Floridian’s desire for schooling and established numerous schools, but they could not have accomplished so much without the extraordinary efforts of freedmen who worked and sacrificed to educate their children. In Florida, blacks and whites formed a symbiotic relationship which found its focus in providing the education necessary to prepare the emancipated slave for life as a citizen. Although the teachers’ efforts, combined with the work of northern reformers, black ministers, and former slaves were successful in establishing Florida’s education system, freedmen’s possibilities for full citizenship did not live up to Reconstruction’s promise.

A new state constitution was written in 1885 stating that “white children and colored children shall not be taught in the same school, but equal provision shall be made for both.” This “separate but equal” policy predated the same doctrine in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision by more than a decade. The new Constitution also authorized a poll tax as a voting requirement, followed by the enactment of Jim Crow

laws guaranteeing separation of the races. By 1890, most blacks had ceased voting in Florida.²

In retrospect, it is clear that despite the desire on the part of teachers, reformers, and freedmen themselves for equality, the educational system that was forged in Florida was destined to be a dual system, one that was segregated by race. During Reconstruction, with the help of the web of relationships forged at church, through politics, and in the schoolhouses, blacks gained the courage to influence community decisions. Ironically, when the freedmen found their voice an eagerness to express their independence also led them to call for black teachers. Along with the desire to control their own destiny, an innate suspicion of whites contributed to this impetus. This was not to say that white assistance was unwelcome, just that it had limits, especially as time passed and blacks became more confident in their own abilities. Their call was echoed by whites for varying reasons. Prejudice and racist attitudes on the part of some white Floridians made it difficult, if not dangerous, for white teachers to work in freedmen schools. Additionally, there were never enough teachers, white or black, to meet the needs. Consequently, black teachers, regardless of experience, were considered better than no teacher at all and in many cases more desirable than white northern-trained teachers. It is ironic that blacks' own desire to be self-sufficient in education combined with white antipathy toward integrating the schools worked to create a segregated system.

As the Freedmen's Bureau departed Florida, there was an increased sense of disillusionment with freedmen and Reconstruction efforts along accompanied by a decline in financial support from the north. In October 1870, the *American Missionary*

printed a letter from a northern teacher who admitted, “We underestimated the benumbing, degrading effects of centuries of slavery.”³ Over the ten years following the end of bureau operations, the number of aid societies supporting teachers and schools in Florida declined. Unfortunately, with the disfranchisement of blacks at Reconstruction’s end, black schools were underfunded and consequently, for three quarters of a century, inferior to white schools.

Nevertheless, the efforts of Florida’s Reconstruction-era teachers lived on in the accomplishments of the students they taught: black children who grew to become teachers, ministers, businessmen, and community leaders. It was these leaders who guided the black communities through the difficult years of lynching, poverty, discrimination, and disfranchisement. Many of them graduated from the historically black colleges like Cookman Institute in Jacksonville (later Bethune-Cookman College), founded by a freedmen’s aid organization during Reconstruction. Historian James McPherson credits the missionary schools with generating educational capital in the two generations after emancipation and with providing black community leadership.⁴ Certainly, it was from these institutions that many of the black leaders of the Civil Rights Movement emerged. If that were the only legacy of the teachers who came to Florida and the rest of the South to teach emancipated slaves, it is a significant one. Although what southerners termed “Redemption” meant a return to a reinforcement of pre-Civil War white supremacy in society, black schools still remained as a legacy of Reconstruction. Even racist whites were willing to accommodate black education, believing accommodation demonstrated their effort to improve the lot of blacks without posing any threat to their dominant position. Together with black churches and families,

black schools formed a strong community support system that taught students that the status quo was not enough and reminded them of their potential for full citizenship.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

¹ W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (1907; reprint, New York: Vintage Books 1990), 100; William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (1913; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 385, 389; W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941); Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South 1862-1870* (1941; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), 142.

² James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 143-202; Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in Reconstruction of Florida: 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press 1965).

³ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Black's in the South 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 26, 30.

⁴ John T. and Sarah Whitmer Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999); Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown Jr., *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

⁵ W.E.B. Dubois, quoted from Dorothy Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen, Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), viii.

Chapter One

¹ Lt. Colonel John Hilder to Simeon S. Jocelyn, 10 November 1864, American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882, microform reels 8-9, University of Florida West Library, Gainesville (hereafter cited as AMA Records).

² Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction 1864-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), xvi.

³ Although General John G. Foster reported in 1866 that only six counties had black majorities in 1866, the census showed the following eight counties had black majorities in 1870: Alachua, Duval, Gadsden, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Madison, and Marion; see

Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in Reconstruction of Florida: 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1965), 1; Canter Brown Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials, 1867-1924*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 6; J.G. Foster to O.O. Howard, 1 October 1866, Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Florida 1865-1871, National Archives Record Group 105, microform in State Archives, State Library, Tallahassee, Fla. (hereafter cited as Bureau Records, Florida).

⁴ Larry Eugene Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 253.

⁵ Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr., *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida. 1865-1895* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 26.

⁶ Patricia P. Clark, "A New England Emigrant Aid Company Agent in Postwar Florida: Selected Letters of James F.B. Marshall, 1867," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (April 1977): 470.

⁷ Ellen Call Long, *Florida Breezes* (Jacksonville, Fla.: Ashmead Bros., 1882), 382, electronic resource, Florida Heritage Project, <http://susdl.fcla.edu/fh>.

⁸ T. Thomas Fortune, quoted in Dorothy Sterling, Ed. *The Trouble They Seen: Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 9-10.

⁹ Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 119.

¹⁰ G. Greely to George Whipple, 29 April 1865, AMA Records.

¹¹ Interview with Sarah Ross by Alfred Farrell, FWP, Florida Negro Collection, 5, quoted in Gary R. Mormino, "Florida Slave Narratives," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 66 (April 1988): 415-16.

¹² Quoted in Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 296.

¹³ Wilson interview, Florida Negro Collection, 2, quoted in Mormino, "Florida Slave Narratives," 416.

¹⁴ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 27.

¹⁵ Quoted in John T. and Sarah Whitmer Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 2.

¹⁶ Thomas W. Osborn to O.O. Howard, 1 November 1865, Bureau Records, Florida.

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- ¹⁷ E.B. Eveleth to Mr. Hunt, 1 March 1866, AMA Records.
- ¹⁸ E.B. Duncan to Thomas W. Osborne, 21 June 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ¹⁹ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 5.
- ²⁰ Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 281.
- ²¹ Joe M. Richardson, ed., "A Northerner Reports on Florida: 1866," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40 (April 1962): 386, 389.
- ²² Frederick Bruce Rosen, *The Development of Negro Education in Florida during Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1974), 24; George Gary Bush, *The History of Education in Florida*, Circular No. 7 (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Education, 1889), 19.
- ²³ Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of Public School Education in Florida* (Tallahassee, Fla.: State Department of Education, 1921), 25-27.
- ²⁴ *Acts of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 1832*, quoted in Cochran, *History of Public School Education*, 29.
- ²⁵ Joseph Conan Thompson, "Toward a more humane Oppression: Florida's Slave Codes, 1821-1861," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January 1993): 325.
- ²⁶ The 1860 Census reported 61,745 slaves in Florida; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1860 Census, Florida.
- ²⁷ Esther Hill Hawkes, *A Woman Doctor's Civil War Esther Hill Hawks' Diary*, ed. Gerald Schwartz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 77.
- ²⁸ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 6-7; William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (1913, reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 385.
- ²⁹ Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 150-51.
- ³⁰ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 17.
- ³¹ Robert Meacham, quoted in Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen*, 161; Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 149.

³² Robert Meacham, quoted in Canter Brown Jr., “‘Where are now the hopes I cherished?’ The Life and Times of Robert Meacham,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 69 (July 1990): 3.

³³ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 16-19.

³⁴ Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen*, 165.

³⁵ Brown, *Florida’s Black Public Officials*, 114

³⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 8, 39.

³⁸ Susan Bradford Eppes, quoted in Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 107.

³⁹ George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972)17: 252.

⁴⁰ Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 109.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 110.

⁴² *Ibid*, 113.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 115.

⁴⁴ E.B. Eveleth to E. Cravath, 25 February 1871, AMA Records.

⁴⁵ Joe M. Richardson, “Christian Abolitionism : The American Missionary Association and the Florida Negro,” *Journal of Negro Education* 40 (winter 1971): 35; *idem*, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 98.

⁴⁶ Brown, *Florida’s Black Public Officials*, 5.

⁴⁷ The book was *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* and for half a century after its publication, It was a major source for historians critical of Reconstruction. After 1947, historians began to question Wallace’s contentions. Some believe that the book may have been written by William D. Bloxham; see James C. Clark, “John Wallace and the Writing of Reconstruction History,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 67 (April 1989): 411, 424.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Florida’s Black Public Officials* 135; Peter D. Klingman., *Josiah Walls: Florida’s Black Congressman of Reconstruction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1976), 11-12.

⁴⁹ The term “contraband” used by Union officials signified that they would be protected like any other property seized by the enemy. Although the Second Confiscation Act of July 1862 freed such runaways, the name stuck.

⁵⁰ John T. Foster and Sarah Whitmore Foster, “Aid Societies were not alike: Northern Teachers in Post-Civil War Florida” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 73(January 1995): 311.

⁵¹ Idem, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 8-9.

⁵² Idem, “Chloe Merrick Reed: Freedom’s First Lady,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January, 1993): 285. The Fosters posited that the freedwoman was Susie King Taylor, who as the young wife of a Union soldier, taught other blacks to read and write; *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 9.

Chapter Two

¹ Emanuel Smith to Rev. E.P. Smith, 9 June 1867, American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882, microform reels 8-9, University of Florida West Library, Gainesville (hereafter cited as AMA Records).

² The President commissioned Hay to go to Florida to enroll 10 percent of Florida’s 1860 voters under the terms of Lincoln’s December 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction which provided recognition for a state government so organized; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 8; John Hay quoted in Joe M. Richardson, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and Negro Education in Florida,” *Journal of Negro Education* 31 (autumn 1962): 460-61.

³ John T. and Sarah Whitmer Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers: The Transformation of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 5; idem, “Chloe Merrick Reed, Freedom’s First Lady,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January 1993): 283.

⁴ Idem, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 9.

⁵ Quoted in Carol Faulkner, *Women’s Radical Reconstruction - The Freedmen’s Aid Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 133.

⁶ Quoted in Foster and Foster, “Chloe Merrick Reed,” 285.

⁷ Ibid, 286.

⁸ Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 482.

⁹ Foster and Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 12.

¹⁰ Ibid, 14, 15, 43; idem, "Chloe Merrick Reed," 293. This position proved politically valuable. Reed influenced the hiring of local postal agents, and traveled widely with free railroad passes. Also, his efficient reestablishment of postal service gained him favor with both Republicans and Democrats, leaving him in a stronger position than most of Johnson's allies when Presidential Reconstruction ended.

¹¹ Idem, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 13.

¹² Idem, "Aid Societies were not Alike," 314.

¹³ Salmon P. Chase was nominated by Lincoln to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1865 believing that he would continue his lifelong quest to further the cause of racial equality. Chase immediately devised a program for Reconstruction based upon the enfranchisement of freedmen. As part of his goal he toured the Southern coastal areas, including Fernandina where he was Kinne's guest; Ibid., 315-16.

¹⁴ Idem, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 17.

¹⁵ Ibid, 17-18.

¹⁶ Idem, "Aid Societies Were Not Alike," 315-17.

¹⁷ James M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy, From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 68-9.

¹⁸ Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 49.

¹⁹ Foster and Foster, "Aid Societies were not Alike," 312.

²⁰ Ansel Kinne, quoted in Joe M. Richardson, ed., "A Northerner Reports on Florida: 1866," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40 (April 1962): 389.

²¹ Thomas Osborn, quoted from Bureau Records in Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 74.

²² Foster and Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 35.

²³ Ibid, 390.

²⁴ Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South: 1861-1870*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 13, 44.

²⁵ Ibid., 44-46.

²⁶ Foster and Foster, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸ Chloe Merrick, quoted in Foster and Foster, "Chloe Merrick Reed, Freedom's First Lady," 292.

²⁹ Richard Nelson Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 90.

³⁰ Foster and Foster, "Freedom's First Lady", 294-95.

³¹ *Idem*, *Beechers, Stowes, and Yankee Strangers*, 77-78

³² Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), 107.

³³ Robert La Bret Hall, "Do Lord, Remember Me': Religion and Cultural Change among Blacks in Florida, 1565-1906" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1984), 163.

³⁴ Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown Jr., *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 20-21.

³⁵ Denmark Vesey was a free black living in Charleston who planned a large scale slave uprising in 1822. Before the uprising he was betrayed by informers and executed along with seventy-seven of his followers. White fear led to increased restrictions on slaves throughout the South; David M. Robertson, *Denmark Vesey: The Buried Story of America's largest Slave Rebellion and the Man who led it* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

³⁶ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 21-22.

³⁷ Hall, "Do Lord, Remember Me," 196.

³⁸ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 34.

³⁹ Hall, "Do Lord, Remember Me," 199.

⁴⁰ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 35.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 34, 39.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁴ Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in Reconstruction of Florida: 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1965), 95.

⁴⁵ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction 1864-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 41.

⁴⁶ Among those influenced were Monticello's James William Randolph, who became an AME minister, and his better-known son, A. Philip Randolph; Canter Brown Jr., *Florida's Black Public Officials, 1867-1924* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 3.

⁴⁷ Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 52.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57

⁴⁹ John Wallace, *Carpetbag Rule in Florida: The Inside Workings of Civil Government in Florida After the Close of the Civil War* (1888; reprint., Kennesaw, Ga.: Continental Book Company, 1959), 88.

⁵⁰ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 113; Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 58.

⁵¹ For more information about the Mule Team and the AME Church involvement in Reconstruction political factions, see Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, 43-62.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 96; Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 122.

Chapter Three

¹ E.B. Eveleth to E. Cravath, 25 February 1871, American Missionary Association Archives, 1839-1882, microform reels 8-9, University of Florida West Library, Gainesville (hereafter cited as AMA Records).

² William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (1913; reprint, Gainesville: Fla., University of Florida Press, 1964), 386; Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in Reconstruction of Florida: 1865-1877* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1965), 98; Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Ye, Florida in the Era of Reconstruction 1863-1877*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 73.

³ Joe M. Richardson, "Christian Abolitionism: The American Missionary Association and the Florida Negro," *Journal of Negro Education* 40 (winter 1971): 35.

⁴ James G. McPherson. *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 402.

⁵ Richardson, "Christian Abolitionism," 36.

⁶ McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality*, 402.

⁷ Shoffner, *Nor is it over Yet*, 72.

⁸ John Cox and Lawanda Cox, "General O.O. Howard and the 'Misrepresented Bureau,'" *Journal of Southern History* 19 (November 1953): 454.

⁹ Jocelyn was the daughter of American Missionary Association Secretary S.S. Jocelyn. She taught in Florida until her marriage to N.C. Dennet, an official of the Freedmen's Savings Bank in Jacksonville. She died after childbirth in 1868; Esther Hill Hawkes, *A Woman Doctor's Civil War Esther Hill Hawks' Diary*, ed. Gerald Schwartz (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 112.

¹⁰ Harriet Greely to Reverend George Whipple, 18 March 1864, AMA Records.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² E.B. Eveleth to S.S. Jocelyn, 4 February 1865, AMA Records.

¹³ C.M. Hamilton to S.L. McHenry, 31 March 1866, in Records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned lands, Florida, 1865-1871, National Archives Record Group 10, microform in State Archives, State library, Tallahassee, Fla. (hereafter cited as Bureau Records, Florida); E.B. Duncan to Thomas W. Osborn, 21 June 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.

¹⁴ Harriet Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 30 September 1868, AMA Records.

¹⁵ E.B. Duncan to Charles W. Osborne, 21 June 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.

¹⁶ Reverend Greely to George Whipple, 10 September 1865, AMA Records.

¹⁷ Lt. Col. John Hilder to George Whipple, 10 November 1864, AMA Records.

¹⁸ Emanuel Smith to Rev. E.P. Smith, 9 June 1867, AMA Records.

¹⁹ Quoted in Schwartz, ed., *A Woman Doctor's Civil War*, 110.

²⁰ H.H. Moore to S.L. McHenry, 27 November 1865, Bureau Records, Florida; T.W. Osborn to O.O. Howard, 10 January 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.

²¹ J.E. Breadbane to George Whipple, 19 May 1865, AMA Records.

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- ²² Harriet B. Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 23 January 1865, AMA Records.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality*, 387.
- ²⁵ E. B. Eveleth to E.M. Cravath, 25 February 1871, AMA Records.
- ²⁶ Harriet Greely to Rev. Whipple, 8 November 1864, AMA Records.
- ²⁷ John T. Foster and Sarah Whitmer Foster, "Chloe Merrick Reed, Freedom's First Lady," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71 (January 1993): 291.
- ²⁸ Reverend Greely to J. Stuart, 1 July 1866; E. Eveleth to Mr. Hunt, 1 April 1866; Charles H. Foster to Rev. George Whipple, 16 September 1868, all in AMA Records; A.E. Kinne to M. Henry, 30 June 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ²⁹ Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South 1862-1870* (1941; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), 53; A.E. Kinne to S.L. McHenry, 30 June 1866, Bureau Records, Florida; Mr. Greely to Mr. J. Stuart, 1 July 1866; Charles H. Foster to Rev. George Whipple, 16 September 1868; Harriet B. Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 23 January 1865, all in AMA Records.
- ³⁰ Maggie Gardner to Mr. Smith, 26 November 1868, AMA Records.
- ³¹ E.B. Eveleth to Rev. Smith, 26 November 1868, AMA Records.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ H.H. Moore to Thomas W. Osborn, 25 February 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ³⁴ Reverend Greely to George Whipple, 7 August 1865, AMA Records.
- ³⁵ Ibid.; Schwartz, ed. *A Woman Doctor's Civil War*, 112-19.
- ³⁶ Harriet Barnes and Catherine Bent to Col. T.W. Osborn, 14 March 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ³⁷ E.B. Eveleth to Rev. Hunt, 2 February 1866, AMA Records.
- ³⁸ Sandra E. Small, "The Yankee Schoolmarm in Freedmen's Schools: An Analysis of Attitudes," *Journal of Southern History* 45 (August 1979): 387; Harriet B. Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 23 January 1865; E.B. Eveleth to Rev. S.S. Jocelyn, 4 February 1865, both in AMA Records.

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- ³⁹ H.H. Moore to Thomas W. Osborn, 25 February 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ⁴⁰ Harriet B. Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 23 January 1865, AMA Records.
- ⁴¹ Sabbath schools gave instruction in elementary education as well as religious subjects, and many freedmen who could not afford the time to go to school everyday did attend Sunday school. Sabbath school teachers were often black; Sallie G. McMillen, *To Raise Up the South: Sunday Schools in Black and White Churches, 1865-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 18.
- ⁴² Harriet Greely to Rev. Whipple, March 1867, AMA Records.
- ⁴³ Carrie M. Blood, School Report for the month of December 1868, AMA Records.
- ⁴⁴ E.B. Eveleth and Maggie Gardner, School Report for the month of December 1868, AMA Records.
- ⁴⁵ E.B. Eveleth to S.S. Jocelyn, 4 February 1865, AMA Records.
- ⁴⁶ H.H. Moore to T.W. Osborn, 26 February 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ⁴⁷ Frederick Bruce Rosen, *The Development of Negro Education in Florida during Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1974), 225.
- ⁴⁸ Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction, Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 122; E.B. Eveleth to Mr. Smith, 30 December 1868, AMA Records.
- ⁴⁹ Charles H. Foster to George Whipple, October 1868, AMA Records.
- ⁵⁰ E.B. Duncan to John G. Foster, 31 October 1866, Bureau Reports, Florida.
- ⁵¹ J.T. Sprague to O.O. Howard, 9 September 1867, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ⁵² E.B. Duncan to John G. Foster, 31 October 1866, Bureau Records, Florida.
- ⁵³ Small, "The Yankee Schoolmarm in Freedmen's Schools," 386-87.
- ⁵⁴ Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 161.
- ⁵⁵ Rev. Greely to George Whipple, 10 October 1865, AMA Records.
- ⁵⁶ Samuel Proctor, "Yankee Schoolmarms in Post-War Florida," *The Journal of Negro History* 44 (July 1959): 277.
- ⁵⁷ Rev. Greely to George Whipple, 3 March 1865, AMA Records.

⁵⁸ Martial law had been declared previously in June 1866 in Santa Rosa, Escambia, Levy, Madison, and Alachua Counties due to the increased violence against blacks; Larry Rivers and Canter Brown Jr., *Laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord: The Beginnings of the AME Church in Florida, 1865-1895* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 41.

⁵⁹ Ralph L. Peak, "Military Reconstruction and the Growth of Anti-Negro Sentiment in Florida, 1867," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 47 (April 1969), 380-82; Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 148-151.

⁶⁰ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 164-65.

⁶¹ Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 499.

⁶² George R. Bentley, *A History of the Freedmen's Bureau* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), 183; Harriet Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 9 May 1867, AMA Records; E.B. Eveleth to E.M. Cravath, 29 October 1872, AMA Records.

⁶³ E.B. Eveleth to Rev. E.P. Smith, 30 December 1868, AMA Records.

⁶⁴ Charles H. Foster to Colonel John Sprague, 19 September 1868, Bureau Records, Florida.

⁶⁵ Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction The Education of Freedmen in the South 1861-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 92.

⁶⁶ Charles H. Foster to Rev. George Whipple, 1 October 1868, AMA Records.

⁶⁷ Emma B. Eveleth to Rev. Hunt, 3 February 1866, AMA Records.

⁶⁸ Maggie Gardner to Rev. Smith, 26 November 1868, AMA Records.

⁶⁹ George W. Gile to Brigadier General E. Whittlesey, 21 July 1869, Bureau Records, Florida.

⁷⁰ Charles H. Foster to Rev. George Whipple, 16 July, 1868, AMA Records. Normal Schools were established for the training of common school teachers, primarily for the South's black educational system; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1988), 34.

⁷¹ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 108.

⁷² Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 241; E.B. Eveleth to E. M. Cravath, 27 March 1872, AMA Records.

⁷³ E. B. Eveleth to E.P.Smith, 30 December 1868, AMA Records.

⁷⁴ Harriet B. Greely to Rev. George Whipple, 9 May 1867, AMA Records.

⁷⁵ E.B.Eveleth to Rev. Hunt, 2 February 1866, AMA Records.

⁷⁶ Schwartz, ed., *A Woman Doctor's Civil War*, 39.

⁷⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Palmetto Leaves* (1873; reprint, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1968), 315-317.

⁷⁸ Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks*, 136-37.

⁷⁹ Richardson, "Christian Abolitionism," 38.

⁸⁰ Thurston Chase to J.W. Alvord, 8 July 1867, Bureau Records, Florida; Thomas Everette Cochran, *History of Public School Education in Florida* (Tallahassee: State Department of Education, 1921), 29-31; Willam Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*. (1913; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 420, 423; Richardson, ed., "A Northerner Reports," 389; Thomas W. Osborne to O.O. Howard, 19 January 1866, Bureau Records, Florida; Frederick Bruce Rosen, "The Development of Negro Education in Florida" (Ph.D. diss. University of Florida, 1974), 119.

⁸¹ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 113.

⁸² Derrell Roberts, "Social Legislation in Reconstruction Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 43 (April 1965): 353.

⁸³ Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 488.

⁸⁴ E. B. Duncan to John G. Foster, 31 October 1868, Bureau Records, Florida.

⁸⁵ Rosen, "Development of Negro Education," 130.

⁸⁶ G.W. Gile to E. Whittlesey, 2 July 1869, Bureau Records, Florida; Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 111.

⁸⁷ George Peabody's education fund held one million dollars in trust with the income applied to the promotion of education in the more destitute Southern states. The conditions specified that at least one hundred white children were to receive aid in any locale before two thirds of the amount spent on white children in that area could be

spent on black schools. Thus, while helping the cause of education, the fund helped develop a second-class education for blacks; F. Bruce Rosen, "The Influence of the Peabody Fund on Education in Reconstruction Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (January 1977): 310-20.

⁸⁸ John Hope Franklin and Franklin D. Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1994), 244.

⁸⁹ Clara Merritt DeBoer, *His Truth is Marching: African Americans Who Taught the Freedmen for the American Missionary Association 1861-1877* (New York City: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 216.

⁹⁰ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 103.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Rivers and Brown, *Laborers in the Vineyard*, 39.

⁹² Charles H. Foster to Rev. George Whipple, 31 July 1868, AMA Records.

⁹³ Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida*, 120.

⁹⁴ It is presumed the figure would have been higher if the census had counted the age group from six to ten years old as well; Richardson, *Negro in Reconstruction of Florida of Florida*, 111.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁹⁷ Stowe, *Palmetto Leaves*, 296-97.

⁹⁸ Charles I. Glicksberg, "Letters of William Cullen Bryant from Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 14 (April 1936): 265.

⁹⁹ Mcpherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, 144; E.B. Eveleth to E.M. Cravath, 31 January 1873; C.W. Washburn to E.M. Cravath, 20 January 1875, both in AMA Records.

Epilogue

¹ W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 100.

² Jerrell H. Shofner, *Nor is it Over Yet, Florida in the Era of Reconstruction 1863-1877* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1974), 344.

³ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 1988), 246.

⁴ James M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy, From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 393.

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