Florida’s Freedmen’s Bureau during Reconstruction, 1865-1872

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Introduction:

The Further from the Conflict the Country Went, the More Its Authority Weakened

As the dust of the Civil War settled atop blood-stained Southern soil in the spring of 1865, the Union Army could claim that it captured every Confederate state capital east of the Mississippi, except one: Tallahassee, Florida.¹ Not until May 10, 1865 – the same day President Andrew Johnson proclaimed that armed resistance “may be regarded as virtually at an end” – did Confederate Major General Samuel Jones surrender Tallahassee to Union Brigadier General Edwin M. McCook.² For the war’s duration, Florida’s plantocracy governed with an iron grip the Middle Florida region, where the state’s most prosperous counties resided between the Suwannee and Apalachicola rivers. This region included Leon County, home of Tallahassee.

As the Union and Confederacy engaged in what Lincoln mistakenly anticipated would be a relatively brief civil conflict, not the nation’s deadliest war, Florida largely remained on the periphery. The peninsula acted as a major supplier of beef and salt for the Confederacy, but it lacked the major battles that dotted the Confederate landscape of Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina.³ Despite occasional forays into Confederate territory, the Union Army never succeeded in wrenching Florida’s interior from the planters’ grasp, and Union forces suffered a resounding defeat in the state’s largest battle at Olustee in February 1864. However, the United States did maintain command at the naval strongholds of Fernandina, St. Augustine, Apalachicola, Pensacola, and Key West and intermittently seized Jacksonville and Cedar Key. At the local and state level, these Union occupations, coupled with the Union’s inability to fracture the

¹ William W. Davis, The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), 314-316. The Union attempted to capture Tallahassee in early March of 1865, but the Confederates outmatched Union General John Newton and his forces during the Battle of Natural Bridge.
³ Various estimates of Union and Confederate deaths range from 500,000 upwards to 750,000. World War II experienced the second most American deaths at approximately 400,000.
plantocracy’s control over Middle Florida, yielded important consequences for Florida’s post-war future. Meanwhile, at the regional and national levels, a Northern, Republican Congress confronted the questions of how to reconstruct a dilapidated and racially divided South and how to restore harmonious relations between Southern legislatures and the U.S. government in a new era of Emancipation.

Congressional legislation of the Civil War and Reconstruction era provides a benchmark for assessing the key issues facing Reconstruction. As we consider the evolution of this legislation, it is evident that many in Congress believed the use of force was not only necessary to win the war, but also to remold the South to the North’s liking in the war’s aftermath. One of the most progressive, albeit controversial, pieces of legislation addressing these concerns was the Freedmen’s Bureau bill. Passed on March 3, 1865, and signed by Lincoln into law a little more than a month before his assassination, this bill established for “the present war of rebellion, and for one year thereafter” the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly referred to as the Freedmen’s Bureau. Acknowledging the Freedmen’s Bureau as a continuation of the war effort, Congress placed the Bureau under the direction of the War Department and outfitted its agents with significant authority and a hierarchical command structure. All matters relating to refugees, freedpeople, and the supervision and management of abandoned lands within the rebel states fell under the Bureau’s umbrella, and bureau agents could administer its policies in any territory engaged by military operations.

The five sections of the Freedmen’s Bureau bill outlined these powers in great detail. Under Section 1, the president could appoint a commissioner, and Lincoln handpicked Major

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4 I consider Florida’s “post-war future” as the period following the passage of its 1868 constitution, not the surrender of Jones to McCook at Tallahassee.
General Oliver Otis Howard, known by his contemporaries as the Christian General for his piety and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and swearing. Section 2 permitted the Bureau to request the Secretary of War for necessary food and equipment in an effort to alleviate the mass destitution, disease, and starvation throughout the South. Section 3 entitled the commissioner to appoint up to ten assistant commissioners, one for each insurrectionary state, and Howard would assign Florida five assistant commissioners between 1865 and 1869. Section 4 was the most controversial section, empowering the Bureau to set aside tracts of lands that were abandoned, confiscated, or purchased by the U.S. for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen. After three years of paying an annual rent at the rate of six percent of the land value in 1860, the refugees and freedmen were entitled to buy a title to this land. Although Section 5 affirmed that legislation conflicting with the Freedmen’s Bureau bill was void, President Andrew Johnson issued several proclamations that counteracted Section 4’s intent.6

From the foundational works on Reconstruction, such as Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (1988), to the more narrow works on Florida’s Reconstruction, such as Joe M. Richardson’s *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (1965) and Jerrell H. Shofner’s *Nor Is It over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (1974), historians have contemplated the role of the Freedmen’s Bureau during Reconstruction. Depending on the scope of their analysis, scholars of the Reconstruction era have offered different conclusions about the Bureau’s impact. Most offer three similar observations: the Bureau was understaffed and underfunded to meet their mandate; it guarded the interests of the freedpeople to some degree; and it had an impossible task in trying to alleviate white Southerners’ racial prejudices. All three were true of Florida’s Bureau, and from these observations, the most common conclusion – shared by Foner, Richardson, and Shofner – is that

6 “Freedmen’s Bureau Bill,” in *The American Nation: Primary Sources*, 159-160.
the Bureau was an institution, either far ahead of its time or out of place in its time, that failed to realize the promises of Emancipation due to a host of reasons. These barriers included conservative opposition from President Andrew Johnson and the plantocracy; Republicans’ political push for economic concerns rather than social reform; Western investment in railroad and agricultural development; and, most importantly, a general hesitancy on the part of Northerners and Southerners to grant freedpeople equality before the law. While this broader conclusion generally rings true for the Bureau’s postwar efforts in Florida, the failure associated with the Bureau at the regional and national levels sometimes unfairly trickles down to Florida’s individual agents (and agents of other states), many of whom actually exceeded expectations at the local and state levels. Of those major works covering Reconstruction as a whole, or those focusing on Florida’s Reconstruction, most never touch upon the Bureau at this smaller scale in which its largest impact was made. Unless the Freedmen’s Bureau is the specific subject of scholarship, historians tend to provide a general review of the Bureau as an institution and highlight a few significant cases to explain its relationship within a narrative of Reconstruction.

The relatively small collection of specialized works and articles, focused specifically on the Freedmen’s Bureau, provides further insight about how individual agents could have had a substantial impact on Reconstruction. In *Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Land Ownership*, Claude F. Oubre (1978) highlights the struggle freedpeople faced in acquiring land of their own and how the Bureau’s locating agents were instrumental in successfully securing homesteads on public lands for thousands of ex-slaves after the 1866 passage of the Southern Homestead Act. Of Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and

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Mississippi – the Southern states that opened public lands for homesteading under this legislation – Florida offered the greatest acreage of public land and became “the scene of the most feverish activity on the part of the freedmen in search of homestead lands.” Florida’s locating agents successfully homesteaded the greatest number of freedpeople. Central to their success was the passage of the second Freedmen’s Bureau bill, and Oubre correctly noted that congressmen “were surely cognizant of the fact that without the Bureau to help and protect the freedmen, few indeed would be able to avail themselves of the provision of the Southern Homestead Act.”

Congressional legislation granted the Freedmen’s Bureau, which was still operating under auspices of martial law, the necessary force to impose a so-called radical measure desired by the likes of Pennsylvania Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner.

In the ensuing three chapters, I seek to explain why Florida’s Freedmen’s Bureau has been misconstrued as a radical and failed institution and how four different forces – continuity, conflict, climate, and compromise – affected its agents’ impact on Florida’s Reconstruction. Two assumptions have framed the current understanding of the Bureau. First, historians of the era tend to place the Bureau within a post-war context, but Congress did not regard the years from 1865 to 1872 as post-war, evidenced by the Reconstruction Acts and Enforcement Acts. Congress intended the Freedmen’s Bureau to function as a military apparatus managing the transition from slavery to freedom. Therefore, the Bureau was not designed by Congress as a radical institution, but as a necessary military institution that should only be considered as radical as the Union Army. Therefore, Bureau agents understood and performed their duties under military authority, rather than civil authority. To manage the transition, the Bureau’s top-ranked

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9 Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, 89.
agents, primarily Union generals and colonels, adopted and issued modified versions of wartime military policies. This was an important form of continuity in wartime policy that enflamed old conflicts that had not been resolved by bloodshed (e.g. federal versus state supremacy) and inspired new conflicts (e.g. Black Codes). Florida’s diverse physical and social climates would influence how its assistant commissioners and subordinate agents dealt with these conflicts. Regional differences, including the wartime occupation of coastal areas and natural resource advantages, often determined the severity of the conflicts. This will be the subject of the first chapter, set during Military Reconstruction, 1863-1867.

The second chapter focuses on the Southern Homestead Act of 1866, which presents an example of how the Freedmen’s Bureau continued to look to wartime measures to meet one of its congressional mandates. Securing land was a prominent issue of the first and second Freedmen’s Bureau bills and always one of the ex-slaves’ greatest desires. While Florida’s physical climate was favorably suited for homesteading on public lands, its social climate was not. The contrast between freedpeople’s ambition of acquiring land and whites’ fear that blacks would colonize the southern portion of the peninsula accentuated an unrest and uncertainty within the state. By attracting and homesteading freedpeople, the Bureau’s locating agents threatened Florida’s balance of political power.

Politics and compromise are at the heart of the third chapter, set during Civil Reconstruction, 1868-1875. The Black Codes forced Congress’ hand, and the Reconstruction Acts of March 1867 then pushed Southerners to assemble constitutional conventions. Between 1868 and 1870, there would be a distinct moment for each ex-Confederate State when the Congressional Joint Committee on Reconstruction approved its constitution, forged by political compromises. After elections that afforded black male suffrage and introduced black male
candidates, the re-establishment of civil law would prompt the Union Army to relinquish its military authority in that state, ending the Bureau’s authority under martial law.\textsuperscript{10} Unfortunately, this occurred as Florida’s Regulators commenced a politically motivated onslaught against a vulnerable black population, Union loyalists, and even some Bureau agents.\textsuperscript{11} It is at this moment of compromise that a deeper understanding of the Freedmen’s Bureau can be gathered. This helps to deconstruct the second assumption that the Bureau was entrusted with Emancipation’s promise. Congress always viewed the Freedmen’s Bureau as a temporary agency and realized that the military occupation would someday end. Senator Charles Sumner’s plan to elevate the Freedmen’s Bureau to a cabinet rank never materialized, and Congress fashioned the Reconstruction Acts in such a way that the Freedmen’s Bureau would be a powerless entity when civil authority was restored. Florida’s Bureau agents were aware of this transition and no longer felt bound to Congress’ Radical agenda. Several assumed political office under the Republican banner by supporting the party’s moderate platform, though some were radicals.

In \textit{The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction}, Mark W. Summers (2014) offers a keen insight: “For the Bureau, which was meant as a temporary agency, helping along the transition between slavery and freedom, the appeal to war powers had more force than one for a permanent agency. The further from the conflict the country went, the more its authority weakened.”\textsuperscript{12} Debates concerning when the Civil War truly ended still linger, as one can argue that the war ended at Appomattox while another might claim that the Civil War continues today in some abstract manner. But there is no debate over the continuation of the Union’s military occupation of the South post-Appomattox and little debate over the supremacy

\textsuperscript{10} See Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, 316-333.
\textsuperscript{11} See Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over Yet}, 177-197.
of martial law, only merited by Johnson’s proclamations that universally favored state authority on legal matters. The state constitutional conventions ended that occupation by lessening a major conflict over federal versus state supremacy. When Bureau agents realized that states’ constitutions would restore civil authority, their perceptions of their mandates changed from military to civilian. By tracing the correspondence of Florida’s Bureau agents within the extensive Freedmen’s Bureau records, I seek to frame a picture of military men who shaped Florida and vice versa. As social, economic, and political realities evolved in Washington and Tallahassee, Bureau agents adapted to reconstruct Florida. They did so with bravery and ingenuity, and other times with deception and greed.\footnote{Florida’s Bureau records are compiled within the Records of the Assistant Commissioner and Subordinate field Offices for the State of Florida, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, M1869, Rolls 1-15. All documents cited from this source will be titled FLBR (Florida Bureau Records). These records can be located in microfilm form at the University of Florida’s George A. Smathers Library, Gainesville. The originals are located at the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.}
Military Reconstruction, 1865-1867:
To Treat the Freedmen Well and To Make a Fair Trial of Free Labor

When Colonel Thomas W. Osborn arrived at Tallahassee on September 1, 1865, he officially took command as Florida’s assistant commissioner for the Freedmen’s Bureau. Commissioner Oliver O. Howard had decided in August that Major General Rufus Saxton could not effectively manage South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida as an assistant commissioner, so Howard retained Saxton in South Carolina and assigned Osborn to Florida and Brigadier-General Davis Tillson to Georgia. Osborn epitomized what Southerners deemed a carpetbagger. He was born in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, and while serving under Major General Howard in the Union’s XI Corps, Osborn commanded an artillery brigade that defended Cemetery Hill during the Battle of Gettysburg.14 What Osborn witnessed during his first two months as assistant commissioner must have made a positive impression. On November 1, 1865, the colonel forwarded a comprehensive monthly report to Howard discussing Florida’s state of affairs – past, present, and future.

His eight-page report was overwhelmingly optimistic. Osborn commended the military policies of Generals Israel Vodges, John Newton, and John G. Foster, which established the groundwork for a free labor system within the peninsula. These generals ordered military officials to oversee contracts between planters and their employees and set up a system of patrolling the state in an effort to ensure order. In less than two weeks at his post, Osborn adopted these measures through his own circular. By doing so, the assistant commissioner believed the continuity of military authority was in Florida’s best interest. To Osborn, Florida’s

best interests included the reinvigoration of Florida’s agricultural economy and peaceful relations between the planters and the ex-slaves. The report went on to discuss the migration of Florida’s ex-slaves, desegregated public schools, rations for the destitute, rumors of a freedmen’s insurrection, and land re-distribution. Osborn hinted that each issue hinged upon an underlying notion that military authority was paramount. As he concluded, “The moral code of the State has improved rapidly for the last four weeks, under military rule.” And as long as the planters worked “to treat the freedmen well and to make a fair trial of free labor,” Osborn was confident these improvements would continue. Unfortunately, Osborn’s optimism rested upon an assumption that his military authority would go unchallenged. That would not be the case.

When Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau on March 3, 1865, the House and Senate understood that the conflicts at the heart of the Civil War would not come to an abrupt end. Although, by creating the Bureau as a temporary institution, Congress admitted that military oversight of the South would conclude at some point. In the meantime, ex-Confederate States would contest federal oversight on social, economic, and political issues post-Appomattox, and Florida’s plantocracy would neither embrace free labor with an open mind, nor an open checkbook. The Bureau’s task was smoothing the upcoming transition. But Emancipation made certain that this transition would be rocky as slave labor gave way to free labor in Florida and throughout the South. Congress anticipated these tensions, which was why the House and Senate placed the Bureau under the direction of the War Department. In this fashion, Colonel Osborn and his subordinates invoked military authority to achieve their aims.

Roughly a month after passing the Bureau bill, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated at Ford’s Theatre. Congress believed Lincoln’s successor, Andrew Johnson, would

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15 T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 1 November 1865, Roll 1 [FLBR].
support the Bureau and its Reconstruction agenda. Radicals in Congress were dissatisfied with Lincoln, who had issued a merciful Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction in December 1863 and vetoed Congress’ retributive Wade-Davis bill in July 1864. Although a Democrat, Johnson was known as a vociferous opponent of the plantocracy, which Congress hoped would make him more amenable than Lincoln. Congress was mistaken and soon found itself in a legislative war with Johnson, who followed Lincoln’s lead and issued an amnesty and land restoration proclamation in May 1865. Johnson transformed into the planters’ strongest ally and proved so lenient between 1865 and 1867 that he blurred the line between military and civil authority in the South.

During the Bureau’s initial years in operation, the executive and legislative branches battled to control Reconstruction while the plantocracy sought to retain as much power over freedpeople as possible. These were the two trends that most affected Florida’s Bureau. Therefore, Florida’s Bureau agents had to adapt to ever-changing circumstances at the national, regional, state, and local levels in an effort to follow their orders. Historians of Reconstruction have labeled this period Presidential Reconstruction due to Johnson’s strong influence. At the state and local levels, Floridians and Bureau agents experienced these years as a military occupation – or the early stages of Military Reconstruction. While conditions would make Military Reconstruction an erratic period for the agents, one important factor remained constant. Florida’s Bureau agents relied upon military authority. Without it, the agents lacked influence over daily affairs. Osborn’s letter alluded to this fact, and as long as Florida’s assistant commissioners and their subordinates operated under military authority, these men looked to

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military orders and policies for guidance. By doing so, these men shaped Florida’s Reconstruction.

Under Osborn’s command, Florida’s Bureau cooperated with the Union Army to a greater degree than in other ex-Confederate States. This helped Florida’s understaffed Bureau enforce a military occupation during a period in which policymakers and civilians debated the supremacy of military or civil authority. Although Florida Bureau’s primary concern was protecting refugees and ex-slaves, to Southerners, the Bureau’s free labor reforms infringed upon a state’s right to regulate finances and a planter’s right to determine just compensation for employees. In this respect, Florida’s Bureau agents elongated and amplified several Civil War conflicts. Unfortunately, by the time Osborn arrived in Tallahassee, the Union had mustered out the vast majority of its army and navy. Less than 2,500 men served the Freedmen’s Bureau during its eight-year lifespan, and no more than 900 served in any single year. With limited manpower and limited funding from Congress, Florida’s Bureau continuously struggled to enforce its policies. Violence and discrimination most often occurred where supervision was lacking. It would be in Florida’s remote plantations and state legislature where Bureau agents were needed most but absent during Military Reconstruction.

Before Osborn arrived at Tallahassee in September 1865, there was a small window of opportunity for land re-distribution in the South. Radical Republicans and freedpeople felt hundreds of years of unpaid labor deserved redress, and ex-slaves desired land of their own. Commissioner Howard shared this viewpoint and skirmished with President Johnson between July and September over the Bureau’s claim to abandoned, confiscated, and government-purchased lands. Howard’s Circular 13 and Circular 14 outlined two programs that would have

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divided these lands amongst the ex-slaves, which would have provided an avenue of economic independence for thousands of freedpeople. The only problem was that Howard’s orders contradicted Johnson’s amnesty and land restoration proclamations issued in May. Therefore, the president, as commander-in-chief, ordered Howard to rescind both circulars and submit Circular 15, which Johnson constructed himself. Johnson’s circular made the Bureau’s claims to land so uncertain that Howard instructed his subordinates to refrain from homesteading freedpeople.21

While Florida’s Bureau only controlled a few hundred acres of land within the peninsula, the rights to this land was contested during and after Military Reconstruction in East and West Florida. In coastal cities, such as Pensacola and Fernandina, where Union officials blockaded major ports and forts, soldiers had commandeered properties under the First Confiscation Act of August 1861 and Second Confiscation Act of July 1862 to institute schools, orphan asylums, and hospitals for refugees and freedpeople. Moreover, Major General William T. Sherman’s Special Field Order No. 15 set aside reserve lands for freedpeople along the St. Johns River. Howard, Osborn, and their subordinates argued on multiple occasions for the retention of this property for educational and health benefits.22 According to Osborn, by February 1866, the majority of Florida’s Bureau lands in East Florida, Cedar Keys, Apalachicola, and Key West were returned to the original owners. Only a few exceptions existed in Pensacola, where Special Treasury Agent J. H. Ricks refused to transfer land to the Bureau, and Fernandina, where Civil War tax sales led to disputes between planters and freedpeople that escalated to deadly violence.23

Without lands to provide for the freedpeople, Osborn had little choice but to adopt the Union generals’ free labor contract policies. Commissioner Howard and his subordinates already contemplated alternatives to the contract system, such as employing freedmen to construct dikes

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21 Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, 38, 49, 51; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 159-161; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 62.
23 T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 12 February 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR].
along the Mississippi River. But the Bureau ultimately favored the contract system because a contract afforded freedpeople relatively stable employment on plantations and protected the rights of an employer and his employees.\textsuperscript{24} Osborn concurred with their reasoning and urged planters and freedpeople to negotiate contracts under Bureau supervision. The Union had already spent billions of dollars on a Civil War, and Osborn shared the popular sentiment in the North that dissuaded Bureau officials from supporting freedpeople who they believed to be idle and indolent. Therefore, on September 13, 1865, Osborn issued a circular adopting an order issued by General Newton in July that stipulated one-fourth of the crop as the standard payment for sharecropping contracts.\textsuperscript{25} Eventually, the Bureau would tack on provisions making employers responsible for employees’ food, medical treatment, and housing.\textsuperscript{26} These were the Bureau’s minimum standards for a meaningful Emancipation, but to many planters, this was unpalatable. Until the year’s end, Osborn’s reports to Howard insisted that most freedpeople worked diligently on the plantations, and few acts of violence occurred within the peninsula. Groups of freedpeople also collected about towns like Fernandina and Jacksonville, prompting Osborn to discontinue the distribution of rations in hopes of weeding out professional paupers.\textsuperscript{27} This policy continued the early months of 1866, but Osborn’s focus shifted as Florida’s 1865-1866 state convention got underway.

When Provisional Governor William Marvin sanctioned a constitutional convention in December 1865, Florida’s plantocracy took full advantage of a chance to reshape civil law to their liking. Although the majority of Florida’s delegates were Unionists, these men shared Confederates’ beliefs that freedpeople were inherently inferior and the government had no

\textsuperscript{24} New York Times, 20 August 1865.  
\textsuperscript{25} T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 1 November 1865, Roll 1 [FLBR].  
\textsuperscript{26} T. W. Osborn, Circular No. 9, 15 November 1865, Roll 8 [FLBR].  
\textsuperscript{27} S. L. McHenry to Commanding Officers at St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Fernandina, Apalachicola, & Pensacola, 13 November 1865, Roll 1 [FLBR].
business interfering with civil law and procedure. As Mark W. Summers put it, Florida’s delegates followed a Southern trend of doing “nothing more and, where possible, just a little bit less” than what was expected of them. All President Johnson required of these conventions were the repeal or nullification of the state’s secession ordinance and the abolishment of slavery under the 13th Amendment. All beyond that – including voting rights and equal protection under the law – was fair game. Provisional Governor Marvin appointed a three-man committee to construct race-based laws in accordance with this framework: Charles H. Dupont of Gadsden County, a former supreme court judge, Anderson J. Peeler of Leon County, an unyielding supporter of slavery, and Mariano D. Papy of Leon County, a less enthusiastic ex-Confederate than his counterparts. The three penned Florida’s Black Codes.  

Florida’s Black Codes absorbed Osborn’s attention until his resignation as assistant commissioner in June 1866. What Osborn found particularly disturbing about the codes were the application of corporal punishment and an inequality of punishment between whites and blacks. In a letter to the provisional governor, Osborn described Florida’s Black Codes as a “method of punishment repugnant to the finer sensibilities of the better class of the law making people of the State.” Even Mariano Papy did not endorse his own committee’s proposals. Nevertheless, Black Codes were gradually enacted in Florida and other ex-Confederate states, touching upon everything from contracts to marriage to crime and punishment. Meanwhile, Floridians elected a government under their new constitution with Democrat David Walker as Florida’s Governor, ex-Confederate Wilkinson Call and former Provisional Governor William Marvin as U.S. Senators, and Ferdinand McLeod as U.S. Representative. Congress’ Joint Committee on

29 T. W. Osborn to W. Marvin, 30 December 1865, Roll 1 [FLBR].
Reconstruction neither recognized Florida’s 1865 constitution as legitimate, nor seated Floridian representatives in the House or Senate. Call, Marvin, and McLeod remained in Washington lobbying on Florida’s behalf.\(^{31}\)

Florida’s convention muddied the relationship between military and civil authority, and further complicated Osborn’s push for free labor reforms. By the end of January 1866, Osborn felt the contract system was succeeding, despite a labor shortage and planters’ attempts to skirt payments to their employees. According to Osborn’s February 1866 report, field hands’ wages ranged between one-fourth to one-third of the crop or from $120 to $150 per year, and the assistant commissioner approximated that three out of every four planters wanted more laborers on their plantations. Wages were even higher for freedpeople working for East and West Florida’s lumber companies. According to Osborn, a respectable planter even “offered to take the negroes, confined in the jail at Tallahassee, pay any charges that may be against them, regardless of the offences they had committed, and work them on his plantation, and pay good wages.” On the other hand, Osborn noted that competing planters had coaxed freedmen into unknowingly breaking their contracts by offering higher wages. Osborn had to inform these freedmen that the original contracts were binding and that taking the higher pay would result in civil or criminal punishment and loss of wages.\(^{32}\)

In the civil court system, Osborn’s ability to protect the freedpeople diminished substantially. A lack of manpower, funding, and popular support hindered Osborn’s ability to curb injustices occurring under his jurisdiction. Osborn solicited Howard’s aid on this front, and Osborn forwarded Howard’s instructions to Governor Walker to limit inequalities under the law,

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\(^{31}\) Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 51-57.

\(^{32}\) T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, n.d. February 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR].
especially corporal punishment.\textsuperscript{33} For a short period, the Osborn and Walker arrived at an agreement. By way of proclamation, Walker agreed to substitute a day’s labor for every stripe or every two minutes in the pillory administered by the court.\textsuperscript{34} That agreement fell apart between April 1866 and March 1867, as President Johnson and Congress clashed over civil and military authority.

Governor Walker agreed with Johnson that civil authority should supersede military authority. Florida’s Bureau sided with Congress and felt that military authority should remain in force until the Joint Committee on Reconstruction decided Florida was fully reconstructed. Floridians did not appreciate the Bureau interfering with civil law, and freedpeople still suffered corporal punishment occasionally at the hands of local officials.\textsuperscript{35} Although military tribunals were at the assistant commissioner’s disposal, Osborn and Florida’s District Commander, Major General John G. Foster, handed most legal cases over to civil courts after April 2, 1866, when President Johnson issued Proclamation 153 – declaring that the Southern insurrection was at an end.\textsuperscript{36} By June, Osborn would step down as assistant commissioner in light of the Steedman-Fullerton report, which recommended the integration of military and Bureau operations. Johnson ordered this report in an effort to uncover Bureau corruption and waste, yet Osborn received the only positive review of an assistant commissioner.\textsuperscript{37} General Foster, Florida’s District Commander, assumed Osborn’s role. Foster, a carpetbagger like Osborn, was born in New Hampshire, served as an engineer for the Union Army, and eventually headed the North Carolina, Ohio, and Florida Departments. The major general served the Bureau as an assistant commander.

\textsuperscript{33} T. W. Osborn to D. S. Walker, 25 January 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR]. Enclosed in this letter was O. O. Howard’s letter to T. W. Osborn, dated 12 January 1866.
\textsuperscript{34} Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 83; Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, 46.
\textsuperscript{35} T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, n.d. February 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR]; Richardson, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{37} *New York Times*, 13 June 1866; *New York Times*, 10 August 1866.
commissioner for only six months. During this time, Foster valiantly attempted to protect Florida’s freedpeople from injustice, but he turned disheartened as President Johnson, Governor Walker, and local judges and officials undermined his efforts.\(^\text{38}\)

In July 1866, Congress passed a second Freedmen’s Bureau bill and Civil Rights Act, both over presidential vetoes. The Bureau bill extended the institution for another two years and empowered Bureau agents to better protect freedpeople’s civil rights, safety, and health, distribute public lands, build schools, and resume military courts. Congress also funded the Bureau with approximately $12 million to meet these aims.\(^\text{39}\) Foster attempted to take advantage of these provisions, but the following month, Johnson retaliated with Proclamation 157, which stated that civil authority existed throughout the “whole of the United States.” Commissioner Howard clearly did not agree with Johnson’s assessment and, in September, reestablished Bureau courts consisting of a three-man panel: one Bureau agent, and one representative for each party. Foster again appealed to his military authority, but Johnson succeeded in countermanding Howard’s order in December. Feeling unable to institute any meaningful reforms, Foster resigned later that December.\(^\text{40}\)

On the ground, both Osborn and Foster were ill equipped to handle the caseloads before Florida’s civil courts. Military courts saw very few cases, and their outcomes would not serve as precedent once martial law was replaced by civil law. What both assistant commissioners wanted was equality before the law, and the best way to achieve that aim was to keep freedpeople out of the civil court system. To do so, Osborn and Foster needed Bureau agents in the plantation counties protecting freedpeople from conniving whites.

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\(^{38}\) Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 60-61.


Between his arrival and the end of 1865, Osborn commanded only seven full-time Bureau agents – most of whom toured the peninsula to report back on local conditions. That meant whenever major problems – such as a small pox outbreaks along the coast – merited intervention, Osborn was forced to call upon the Union Army for assistance.\(^{41}\) Since mid-November 1865, Osborn also had been largely dependent upon the Union Army and civilian agents, even though he notified Howard a couple months earlier that he wished to “defer placing any control of contracts in the hands of the Floridians.”\(^{42}\) So when four Veterans Reserve Corps officers reported to Osborn for duty in mid-to-late February, the assistant commissioner was relieved. Osborn communicated to Howard that he expected “good results from the assistance these officers will give me in enforcing the regulations prescribed from this office for protecting the rights of the freedpeople.” Each officer was assigned as a sub-assistant commissioner, and Osborn looked to open four head quarters at Jacksonville – Duval County, Gainesville – Alachua County, Lake City – Columbia County, and Marianna – Jackson County.\(^{43}\)

Up to this point, Osborn and his military Bureau agents lacked a permanent presence within Florida’s plantation counties. If planters and ex-slaves had brokered a contract, it was most likely under the eyes of civilian agents, who in many cases identified with the plantocracy. While the plantocracy did not appreciate Osborn’s presence, Floridians must have realized Osborn was fighting with circulars, orders, and public opinion – not manpower. Now that Osborn had men in the field, the assistant commissioner could better enforce Bureau policies. Florida’s sub-assistant commissioners impacted Florida’s Reconstruction at the local level, and Florida’s field offices would inspire hostile reactions from the white populations in their home


\(^{42}\) T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 20 September 1865, Roll 1 [FLBR]. Osborn’s Circular No. 9, issued November 15, 1865, assigned Florida’s Judges of Probate and Clerks of the Court as civilian Bureau agents.

\(^{43}\) T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, n.d. February 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR].
county and neighboring counties. A pattern emerged. In those Florida counties where the Union Army did not have a significant presence or fought a small battle during the Civil War, Bureau agents encountered the most violent forms of resistance, including murder. In those counties that witnessed a permanent or semi-permanent Union occupation, the native populations received the Bureau agents and federal oversight with less hostility and more subtle forms of resistance.

A demographic shift during the war accounted for this pattern. Most pro-Union families lived west of the Apalachicola River, east of the Suwannee River, or in Key West. The Union’s blockade of Florida’s major ports occurred in these regions, and those pro-Union families welcomed the occupation. On the other hand, pro-Confederate planters living in these regions and worrying about runaway slaves often relocated their families between the two rivers in Middle Florida. In fact, planters’ families from across the South migrated to Middle Florida and southwest Georgia to protect their property interests in slaves. Middle Florida’s plantations went largely untouched by the Civil War and acted as a safe haven for the state’s plantocracy. How this demographic shift affected Florida’s field offices was evident in the experiences of Captain Thomas Leddy at Fernandina and Lieutenant Charles M. Hamilton at Marianna. Florida’s field offices would remain active under Osborn and Foster, as well as Foster’s successor, Colonel John T. Sprague, until December 1868.

Captain Leddy reported for duty as Fernandina’s sub-assistant commissioner on February 20, 1866. In his first report, Leddy complained of the poor relations between planters and freedpeople. Freedmen were only willing to work if secured in their pay. The ex-slaves rightly distrusted those planters who had signed contracts but refused to pay their employees. As a result, freedpeople loitered about town, and crop prospects were dim. By the end of March, Leddy seemed more optimistic. His field office supervised new contracts between the parties,

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44 Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 1-4.
and nearly all freedmen were working for about $25 per month with rations. Lieutenant Hamilton shared many of the same experiences in his first months at Marianna. The lieutenant found that many planters had not contracted with their laborers. Yet, Hamilton learned that many of the planters who did forge contracts placed “a laborer in a condition worse than slavery.” Therefore, Leddy and Hamilton spent a great deal of time cancelling inadequate contracts and drafting more suitable ones, as well as issuing rations to the destitute.

Although planters from Nassau and Jackson County would have agreed that Leddy and Hamilton were an intrusion, the manner in which they interacted and dealt with the sub-assistant commissioners differed. Marianna suffered one of Florida’s bloodiest battles in September 1864, in which more than 10 percent of Marianna’s men were killed, wounded, or imprisoned. Fernandina witnessed almost no violence during the Union’s occupation of the town from March 1862 until the end of the war. These Civil War experiences shaped public sentiment in those regions and affected Leddy and Hamilton’s receptions.

In Fernandina, Leddy faired quite well amongst the white and black populations. Between his arrival and October 1866, the captain adamantly pursued various forms of justice, regardless of race. When a freedman, Adam Young, complained to Leddy that Frank McDonald of Alachua County kept Young’s 14 and 12-year-old sons, Adam Vaughn and Plato, as slaves, Leddy informed Osborn’s office about the matter. The captain aided Fernandina’s orphan asylum, informing Florida’s assistant quartermaster in July 1866 that orphans were “suffering” without rations because Jacksonville’s Captain Frank W. Webster was slow to respond to his

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45 T. Leddy to T. W. Osborn, 28 February 1866, 31 March 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
46 C. M. Hamilton to T. W. Osborn 10 February 1866, Roll 9 [FLBR].
47 For more information on the Battle of Marianna, see Dale Cox’s The Battle of Marianna, Florida. Fort Smith, AR: Dale A. Cox Publisher, 2007. Marianna was the farthest point the Union Army reached in Florida’s Confederate territory during the Civil War.
48 T. Leddy to S. L. McHenry, 22 March 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
Cases of freedpeople killing cattle also caught Leddy’s attention, and the captain made certain the “perpetrators were arrested and compelled to pay for the damage they had done,” or inflicted upon them some other punishment.  

Perhaps the most egregious crime committed under Leddy’s watch was the murder of a black child in Starke, Bradford County. Leddy informed several parties between July and August that John Cort – a member of ex-Confederate Captain John J. Dickison’s Cut Throats – murdered multiple citizens on his trek from St. Augustine to Liberty County, Georgia. Leddy highlighted these cases as exceptional, although he thought the cattle killing would worsen during the winter.

What would ultimately end Leddy’s career in Fernandina was a claim that he used his stature as a Bureau agent to concoct unfair property transactions under the Southern Homestead Act. When Leddy began homesteading freedpeople in Fernandina, a Doctor Gifford claimed he overcharged freedpeople for his services. Before Leddy’s arrival, the Civil War’s direct tax sales in Fernandina had caused a major property question. Although President Johnson had restored the vast majority of the Bureau’s abandoned and confiscated lands to their previous owners, Union General Ulysses S. Grant defended these government-purchased lands from tax sales. This angered Fernandina residents who believed Florida’s Direct Tax Commissioner sold lands for less than their value, and even worse, purchased lands at those unfair prices. Furthermore, Florida’s railroad baron David Yulee invested in Fernandina lands, where freedpeople squatted and raised crops. This led to a situation in Fernandina where titles to lands became hotly contested. Ultimately, the Bureau removed Leddy, but his successor, Captain A. A. Cole, found

49 T. Leddy to F. W. Webster, 28 June 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR]; T. Leddy to Major Sommerton, 6 July 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
50 T. Leddy to S. L. McHenry, 1 May 1866, 1 August 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
51 T. Leddy to J. W. Barlow, 31 July 1866, 7 August 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR]; T. Leddy to S. L. McHenry, 1 August 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR]; T. Leddy to H. C. Brandt 30 August 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
52 New York Times, 29 July 1866; Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet, 99.
53 T. Leddy to S. L. McHenry, 1 May 1866, 26 May 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
no wrongdoing in the case. Cole even purported that Gifford had “made these charges against Capt. Leddy…with the selfish view of transacting all business in that line himself.”54 Even after Fernandina’s field office closed, the property question plagued the community.

Lieutenant Hamilton’s experiences at Marianna’s field office showed a darker side to Florida’s Reconstruction.55 For nearly two years, Hamilton resided amongst white Floridians who endured the brutal losses of life and property that were experienced elsewhere throughout the South. This was plantocracy territory, and Hamilton acted as a constant reminder to Marianna’s citizens of their pain and realities of Emancipation. Making matters worse, Hamilton took a bolder stance on racial issues than Leddy and Leddy’s successors. The lieutenant applied his Bureau authority not only to protect freedpeople from injustice, but also to assist the former slaves in exercising their newfound rights. Along with William J. Purman, a longtime friend and fellow Bureau agent, Hamilton tested Marianna’s status quo between 1866 and 1868. Gradually, derisive remarks aimed at Hamilton and Purman escalated into death threats.56

In June 1866, freedmen wanted to host an Independence Day parade in Marianna, boasting a Union flag and portraits of Washington and Lincoln. Hamilton persuaded the freedpeople to not carry the portraits but assured them that he would “take pleasure to assist them in every proper way.”57 The parade went on without a hitch, although rumors circulated that Hamilton instructed freedmen to arm themselves during the affair. During the following year’s parade, freedpeople finally carried portraits of Washington and Lincoln down the streets of Marianna. The next strike against Hamilton came in May 1867. Hamilton reprimanded two white

54 A. A. Cole to J. H. Lyman, 29 October 1866, Roll 14 [FLBR].
57 C. M. Hamilton to C. Mundee, 24 June 1866, Roll 9 [FLBR].
women for desecrating the grave of a Union soldier who died at the Battle of Marianna. The women removed flowers that black children placed upon the grave and stomped upon them in a public street. The fact that two black women had identified the white women as the culprits was what most bothered Marianna whites.\textsuperscript{58} A third incident in January 1868 left white planters jailed in “a filthy old smokehouse,” according to the Marianna \textit{Courier}. The planters forced a family of freedpeople off their plantation and refused to honor their contract. Hamilton sent soldiers to resolve the issue, but when the planters stood their ground, the soldiers arrested the employers.\textsuperscript{59} By the time the Union Army relieved Hamilton of his command on January 1, 1868, the lieutenant and his associates in Jackson County had targets on their backs.

As Florida’s Bureau agents – like Leddy and Hamilton – conducted affairs at the local level between early 1866 and early 1868, the jostling between President Johnson and Congress during 1866 prompted the House and Senate to pass the Reconstruction Acts of March 1867. In these acts, Congress made it clear that military authority was supreme, and an ex-Confederate State could not resume relations with Congress until a state’s constitutional convention presented an acceptable draft to the Joint Committee on Reconstruction. Until that happened, the South was divided into five districts placed under a general’s command. Major General John Pope, a Kentucky-born liberal, would preside over the Third District of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.\textsuperscript{60} In terms of Florida’s Reconstruction, the Reconstruction Acts marked the new period of Congressional Reconstruction, or what will be deemed Civil Reconstruction. President Johnson had failed in replacing martial law with civil law, and for the rest of Walker’s term, the

\textsuperscript{58} Weinfeld, “Charles M. Hamilton in Reconstruction-Era Florida,” 487-489.
governor’s decisions would have to be presented to the District’s commanding general for approval. In terms of Florida’s Bureau, the Reconstruction Acts marked the beginning of the end. Florida’s Bureau agents realized that the Reconstruction Acts laid out a plan that would replace military authority with civil law. Congress realized this fact as well and drastically cut the Bureau’s oversight by January 1868. However, Florida’s locating agents were one sub-section of the Bureau that retained their authority after this date, and these men had a great impact upon both Florida’s Military and Civil Reconstructions.
Southern Homestead Act of 1866: Florida is Admirably Suited to Be the Home of the Freedman

On June 21, 1866, President Andrew Johnson signed the Southern Homestead Act (SHA), opening 46 million acres of public lands for homesteading in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida Louisiana, and Mississippi. Although most of its public lands were swamp— and as such, held little to no monetary value— Florida offered the most area for homesteading at 19 million acres. Historian Joe M. Richardson stated it simply that, for the freedpeople, Florida “became something of a Mecca.” Florida’s land may have been lacking in monetary terms, but it certainly made up for that in its symbolic value, offering ex-slaves a degree of autonomy impossible to procure under the peculiar institution. According to General Land Office records, dated June 1866 to December 1868, 3,648 homesteads were located in the peninsula, and ex-slaves accounted for most of those homestead applications. By 1873, Tallahassee’s Land Office saw this number swell to 6,492. This figure did not just represent Florida’s freedpeople. Ex-slaves from Georgia and South Carolina journeyed along the South Atlantic to settle Floridian homesteads, where freedpeople believed they would see higher profits as farm operators. Homesteads offered individuals, families, or cooperatives of ex-slaves an escape from a system of contractual wage labor under white employers. Many of these planters, as ex-slaves realized, sought to re-create a system of slavery in all but name.

Three main issues surround how Florida’s Freedmen’s Bureau responded to the SHA. First, without the ingenuity or persistence of the Freedmen’s Bureau to secure land on behalf of the freedpeople, the SHA may have never materialized in the first place. Through an

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62 Jerrel H. Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet: Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974), 70-71; Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, 156.
interpretation of wartime legislation and their own military authority, Virginia and Florida’s assistant commissioners devised a sophisticated land use policy unofficially labeled as the Florida plan. However, Commissioner Oliver O. Howard could not enforce this policy more broadly because the Bureau lacked authority over public lands. Therefore, the commissioner forwarded the Florida plan to Congress, where the SHA was conceived. At the local level, Florida’s locating agents would champion the act, however, their experiences are largely untold.

The fascinating story of the locating agents constitutes the second issue. Locating agents are the men who physically brought one of the ex-slaves’ greatest desires to fruition despite organized, conservative efforts to undermine its success. These agents also braved environmental obstacles, such as floods and yellow fever, to secure a foothold in Florida for Emancipation’s promise: the rise of the free black landowner. Unfortunately, Southern whites chipped away at this foothold until the SHA was repealed in 1876. Of the nearly 6,500 homestead entries made at Tallahassee’s Land Office, only 577 received a patent to their land—less than a nine percent success rate. The remaining 92 percent failed and had to return their lands to the government. At least 356 of those 577 homestead patents—or roughly 62 percent of the total—were issued to freedmen. According to Claude F. Oubre’s calculations, more freedpeople received patents to their homesteads in Florida than in the four other states under the act.

While it is almost miraculous that 356 freedpeople saw Floridian homesteads to completion—considering the conservative opposition, physical obstacles, and monetary constraints facing the settlers—a question must be asked: What happened to almost six thousand homesteaders who failed their homesteads? The third issue illustrating the relationship between the Freedmen’s Bureau and the SHA concerns those thousands of freedpeople who migrated to Florida, failed to meet the obligations of their homesteading terms, and yet stayed put. This
influx altered Florida’s social and political fabric by condensing large populations of freedpeople into the counties that provided agricultural work on plantations (e.g. Alachua and Marion).

In Florida, land re-distribution would have had a relatively minor effect. Within the peninsula, the Bureau retained a very small amount of abandoned and confiscated land – primarily located in East and West Florida. At any time, the most abandoned and confiscated land the Florida’s Bureau controlled was 300 acres. The only caveat was that those lands in East and West Florida were of a better quality than that of the SHA’s public lands, and for a time, furnished buildings that supported much-needed schools, orphan asylums, and hospitals for refugees and freedpeople. To put this into a broader perspective, the Freedmen’s Bureau, at its peak, controlled within South Carolina and Georgia approximately 435,000 acres. When the Bureau’s Land Division concluded its records in August 1868, the Bureau still retained more than 74,000 acres in South Carolina and 650 acres in Georgia. In fact, Texas was the only state in which the Freedmen’s Bureau controlled less abandoned and confiscated land than Florida.⁶⁴

As 1865 neared its end with Johnson’s policy firmly in place, the Freedmen’s Bureau and Union Army witnessed both the increasing restlessness of planters anxious about a purported freedpeople’s uprising and the ongoing excitement of ex-slaves optimistic for forty acres and a mule come Christmas or New Years. Neither would come to pass. On January 1, 1866, Bureau agents found themselves in a difficult position, unsure of how to manage the South’s accumulation of unemployed freedpeople in its cities and its labor shortage on the rural plantations. Lacking the funds to transport such a vast number of people to rural areas, the Bureau needed another solution. As military personnel overseeing a military occupation, it was logical that Bureau agents would offer solutions derived from wartime legislation. When Howard

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⁶⁴ Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, 37. The Bureau never held any abandoned or confiscated property in Texas. These numbers also highlight a correlation between the Union Army’s presence in a state during the war and the amount of land abandoned and confiscated as well as restored during Presidential Reconstruction.
proposed a solution by issuing his Circulars 13 and 14, he was empowered to do so under the
Freedmen’s Bureau bill and supported by the Confiscation Acts of August 1861 and July 1862.
The only problem was that Howard pursued a policy of re-distribution that met bitter opposition
from the president. From this turn of events, Howard’s assistant commissioners followed another
wartime path of land use policy, incorporating features from the Homestead Act of 1862, which
opened tracts of Western land with five-year settlement plans, and Sherman’s Field Order 15.65

On January 16, 1865, Major General William T. Sherman declared that the “islands from
Charleston south, the abandoned rice-fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea,
and the country bordering the St. John’s River, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the
settlement of the negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President
of the United States.” On these lands, Sherman afforded cooperatives of at least three freed
families the opportunity to settle upon “a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground” per
family. Sherman assigned Brigadier-General Rufus Saxton as the Inspector of Settlements and
Plantations, who was tasked with supervising the reserve. According to Reconstruction historian
Eric Foner, Saxton was the “most dedicated of all to the idea of black landownership,” and a
pewar abolitionist assigned as the first assistant commissioner of Florida, Georgia, and South
Carolina.66 What the Sherman’s Reserve amounted to was a large-scale colonization effort on
abandoned and confiscated property along the eastern seaboard. Howard’s assistant
commissioners from Virginia and Florida – Colonels Orlando Brown and Thomas W. Osborn –
spent the latter days of 1865 and opening months of 1866 pushing for another colonization plan,
but focusing on the South’s public lands.

Fund, 2008), 316-318.
Brown oversaw Virginia, which had one of the largest black populations in one of the most populated states. Virginia, which is roughly 8,000 square miles smaller than Florida, had a black population nearly three times the size of Florida’s total population. With over 500,000 blacks under his jurisdiction, Brown faced a serious problem between 1865 and 1866 when Virginia’s ex-slaves either failed to find work or refused to contract with white planters.\textsuperscript{67} To solve this problem, Virginia’s assistant commissioner argued for the extensive confiscation of Southern lands for the agricultural use of ex-slaves. He then backed Howard’s plan to locate freedmen on the abandoned and confiscated lands controlled by the Bureau. By January 31, 1866, Virginia’s Bureau still retained nearly 50,000 acres. However, when those lands were systematically returned to their previous owners under Johnson’s policies, Brown recommended the government allow the surplus freedpeople population to take advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862.\textsuperscript{68} He realized that without the use of abandoned and confiscated lands at its disposal, Virginia offered little opportunity for freedpeople to become independent black farmers. The only acres left in the South for Virginia’s ex-slaves rested within its ample public lands. The two states that held the most public lands were Texas and Florida.

In \textit{Forty Acres and a Mule}, Claude F. Oubre provides a valuable chronicle of how Texas and Florida’s public lands shaped Brown’s proposals, producing a framework for the SHA. His analysis summarizes why Texas’ bounty lands were too small to present a viable solution, and how Florida provided the greatest opportunity for colonization or homesteading on its southern frontier. When Secretary of the Interior James Harlan warned Howard that the Bureau lacked the

\textsuperscript{67} US Census Bureau, \textit{Ninth Population Census of the United States}, “Population of the United States (By States and Territories,) in the Aggregate, and as White, Colored, Free Colored, Slave, Chinese, and Indian, at Each Census,” Table I. Virginia had the largest black population in 1860 with 548,907 persons of color and was second only to Georgia in 1870 with 512,841 persons of color. Virginia was also the 5\textsuperscript{th} most populated state in 1860 and 10\textsuperscript{th} most populated in 1870, making Virginia the most populated Southern state in 1860 and 3\textsuperscript{rd} most populated in 1870, only trumped by the border states of Kentucky and Tennessee.

\textsuperscript{68} Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, 158-159; Oubre, \textit{Forty Acres and a Mule}, 25.
authority to promote policies regarding public lands, Howard forwarded Brown’s Florida plan to Congress. Meanwhile, the commissioner also instructed Assistant Commissioner Osborn to inspect Florida and determine appropriate areas for settlement. In his report of January 1, 1866, Osborn recommended to Howard that the government purchase all of Florida’s public lands south of the 28th parallel of latitude – i.e. all public lands from Tampa southward. Florida’s assistant commissioner further advised that the government “give [the land] a territorial organization & government. The lands shall then be held exclusively for homesteads for freedpeople.” Under the Homestead Act of 1862, Osborn wanted to allow each head of family to secure eighty acres of land, opening a township for settlement only when another had been fully entered. This system, he predicted, would offer 115,200 families, or 595,000 freedpeople, “a home of 80 acres.” At the time, Florida’s total population was less than 200,000. Osborn’s plan was ambitious, and it would have provided a home for the South’s surplus laborers, such as those in Brown’s Virginia. However, it would also need to be protected. As Osborn noted, “[Florida] has an abhorrence of the idea of a colony of negroes within its limits.”

Within two weeks of sending his letter, Osborn expected a response from Captain George F. Thompson and William Gleason, a Wisconsin businessman, whom Osborn sent to inspect Florida’s southernmost counties and report on the social and physical climates. Although Thompson responded favorably to Osborn’s plan of colonizing southern Florida, Congress took the Florida plan into consideration but proposed the SHA in its stead. Osborn’s plan reduced freedpeople’s initial costs by providing government-purchased lands for settlement. But the SHA

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69 Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, 82-83.
70 T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 1 January 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR]. On January 2, 1866, Osborn sent another letter to Howard, recommending a smaller selection for settlement – approximately 1.4 million acres bordering the Gulf of Mexico. The 1.4 million acres could also be cut into a tract of about 800,000 acres. Osborn offered this new recommendation because “nearly or quite all the east coast has been ceded by the U.S. to the state as swampland.”
71 T. W. Osborn to O. O. Howard, 2 January 1866, Roll 1 [FLBR].
conferred no favors, forcing the ex-slaves to finance forty to eighty-acre plots for five years before they could purchase a title to the land at a pre-determined price. Due to the poor quality of the land, Osborn’s successor, Major General John G. Foster, believed that Bureau aid was essential to the success of this legislation. Nevertheless, as soon as Tallahassee’s Land Office opened its doors on August 25, 1866, freedpeople began applying to Florida’s locating agents for homesteads.

A little more than a year later, Solomon F. Halliday – locating agent at Newnansville, Alachua County – wrote to his superior, “Florida is admirably suited to be the home of the freedman. The Climate of Africa is not more congenial to him and what is necessary for mere subsistence grows almost spontaneously and both climate and soil are adapted to the most valuable productions for the market, as sugar, cotton, tobacco & rice.” During his tenure as a locating agent, Halliday supervised Alachua, Marion, Baker, and Bradford Counties, and was one of Florida’s most prolific agents in terms of homesteading freedpeople. Oubre refers to his successes on several occasions in *Forty Acres and a Mule*. Moreover, both Joe M. Richardson and Jerrel H. Shofner briefly note Halliday’s triumphs in their works on Florida’s Reconstruction. As Shofner states, “With assistance from several energetic locating agents such as Solomon F. Halliday…many freedmen took up eighty-acre homesteads under the 1866 law while the bureau was active in Florida.” However, the colorful history of Florida’s locating agents, other than Halliday’s, has been shortened to a sentence of praise and buried within Bureau records that collect dust in select libraries across the country. Their correspondence from 1867 to 1869 serves as an example of how Florida’s regional diversity – i.e. its physical and social climates – affected individual agents’ impact on Reconstruction at the local level.

72 Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule*, 138-139.
73 S. F. Halliday to A. H. Jackson, 21 October 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR].
74 Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 70-71.
By January 11, 1868, William L. Apthorp had settled only 36 homesteads from his Tampa office in Hillsborough County. To contrast, Halliday had settled over 400. As a lieutenant colonel in the 34th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry, his inability to homestead freedpeople certainly was not due to Confederate sympathies. On September 6, 1867, Apthorp wrote to his superior:

Politically the majority of the white inhabitants of this section of the State are intensely rebel. And the intensity of their attachment to the idea and ends of the late rebellion, and of this hatred of “Yankees and Niggers,” seems to be in direct proportion to the depth of their ignorance, and the length of time that has elapsed since they last saw a newspaper.

Florida’s summer rains were to blame. In July and August, Apthorp complained that it “rained almost incessantly, so that the whole country, is, as it were, inundated.” This made travel difficult, even dangerous, and the standing water attracted mosquitos inciting a yellow fever scare. As a result, very few freedpeople visited Apthorp’s office and only four applications were sent to the Land Office in July and August. By January 1868, Apthorp would see an uptick in homestead applications that he predicted.

A. A. Knight, a 1st lieutenant of the 3rd U.S. Colored Infantry, also found water to be a nuisance as he attempted to survey lots in Jefferson County. Unfortunately, most of Jefferson’s public lands were located in a high watermarked region known as the “Gum Swamp.” In October 1867, twenty-five freedmen filed at Knight’s Monticello office, but none had been located on homesteads. By December 2, Knight found only five tracts that had “land good for anything and these five have more than half their land under water.” The struggles to survey lands only continued when Knight traveled one hundred miles to Taylor County. Knight also mentioned that

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75 W. L. Apthorp to A. H. Jackson, 6 September 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR].
seventeen more freedmen were still waiting for him to secure homesteads in neighboring Madison County.\textsuperscript{76}

West of the Apalachicola River, George E. Wentworth received his orders on November 14, 1867, which was about two months later than most locating agents. However, the delay may not have affected his duties to a large degree because Pensacola’s timber industry afforded freedpeople the economic security of high wage jobs. Escambia County’s freedpeople, as Wentworth accurately described, were “not wholly dependent upon the success or failure of the cotton crop, as they are in the interior of the state.” As a result, Wentworth predicted hardly any suffering come wintertime. Be that as it may, by the end of January 1868, fifteen freedpeople applied to Wentworth for homesteads, but “the applicants did not have money enough to pay the fees required at the Land Office, ($2.00).” By July 1868, Wentworth reported an increase in homestead applications, which he attributed to “the uncertainties of appropriations.” He felt that the freedpeople finally “came to the conclusion that it is time they began to get Houses for themselves instead of staying in the cities being dependent upon labor there.”\textsuperscript{77}

Fees were a problem for most freedpeople seeking homesteads, but locating agents throughout Florida frequently cited problems with the Land Office and the shady practices of its register, Dr. A. B. Stonelake. The Bureau alleged that Stonelake overcharged freedmen, knowingly settled freedmen on private property, and refused to issue patents on purchased lands. During his questioning, Stonelake denied the claims and promised the return of any money charged in excess of the fee.\textsuperscript{78} Ultimately, no punishment was administered, and until his

\textsuperscript{76} A. A. Knight to A. H. Jackson, 8 October 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR]; A. A. Knight to A. H. Jackson, 2 December 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR]; A. A. Knight to A. H. Jackson, 12 December 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR].
\textsuperscript{77} G. E. Wentworth to A. H. Jackson, 31 December 1867, Roll 10 [FLBR]; G. E. Wentworth to A. H. Jackson, 31 January 1868, Roll 10 [FLBR]; G. E. Wentworth to A. H. Jackson, 10 July 1868, Roll 10 [FLBR].
\textsuperscript{78} Oubre, \textit{Forty Acres and a Mule}, 150-152; Richardson, \textit{The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida}, 74-75; Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over Yet}, 71.
resignation, it seems that Stonelake successfully argued in ex-Confederates’ favor when land disputes arose. Certain ex-Confederates could not obtain their former lands because they could not take a loyalty oath, but Stonelake found a loophole that would return the land to the ex-Confederates’ wives. Stonelake also represented Florida Governor David Walker’s Southern Land and Immigration Company. Walker hoped to attract European laborers to either replace or offer an alternative to ex-slaves.\textsuperscript{79} When Stonelake finally did resign, his absence even caused an issue for locating agents and the freedpeople. The U.S. Land Office at Washington deemed all homestead receipts issued between September 1867 and February 26, 1868, invalid because Florida did not have an acting register at Tallahassee’s Land Office. To resolve the matter, the government required freedpeople to obtain new receipts at the cost of 66 cents each. Most opposed the payment.\textsuperscript{80}

Even without the interference of white Floridians, and the aid of a loyal register, freedpeople still would have faced an uphill battle in their efforts to homestead Florida’s public lands. Florida’s environment presented an almost insurmountable obstacle. The economic resources necessary to undertake the task of improving the land were not at the freedpeople’s disposal. Most or all of the homesteads would have failed without Bureau aid. Unfortunately, one of the worst abusers of the SHA was a former Bureau agent from South Carolina. In December 1867, General Ralph Ely concocted a colonization plan, where over one thousand freedpeople traveled with him from Charleston, South Carolina to New Symrna, Volusia County. Ely charged each head of family or freedman of age ten dollars and a seventy-cent to seventy-five-cent clerk fee. However, the trip from Charleston took an abnormally long thirty-days. When the colony arrived at New Symrna with no food, Ely sold essential government rations

\textsuperscript{79} Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over}, 131, 135.
\textsuperscript{80} G. F. Sipfert to A. H. Jackson, 29 October 1868, Roll 10 [FLBR].
intended for the settlers to the settlers themselves and to Dr. John Milton Hawks’ store in Port Orange. This left the colony on the brink of starvation. Marianna Agent William Purman investigated the matter and discovered that Ely was one of the few Bureau agents who committed fraud. Within a month, only 200 settlers remained at the colony. The rest signed contracts primarily with Alachua and Marion County planters who were facing a labor shortage in 1867. Meanwhile, Ely arranged an agreement with Stonelake and escaped punishment.81

The eight hundred or more New Symrna colonists that contracted with Alachua and Marion planters represented just a fraction of freedpeople who failed at homesteading and remained within the peninsula. This influx altered Florida’s demographics, which would be important when black males received the vote in the 1868 elections. U.S. census data helps puts this information into perspective. In 1860, blacks represented just 45 percent of Florida’s population. By 1870, that number rose to 49 percent. Between 1860 and 1870, Alachua County’s total population increase from 8,232 to 17,328, and its black population rose from 4,465 to 12,393. This amounted to a hike from 54.2 percent to 71.5 percent of the total population. Marion County saw a similar growth in total population from 8609 to 10804 as well as black population from 5315 to 7878 – 61.2 percent to 72.9 percent of the total population, respectively. In 1870, eight of Florida’s thirty-nine counties had a black population that accounted for more than half of its total population – Alachua, Duval, Gadsden, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Madison, and Marion. Eight others had a black population that accounted for more than a third of its total population – Columbia, Escambia, Franklin, Hamilton, Nassau, Putnam, Suwannee, and Wakulla. In 1860, only seven counties had a black population that accounted for more than half of its total population, but twelve other counties in 1860 had black populations that accounted for

81 Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet, 71-72; Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 75; Oubre, Forty Acres and a Mule, 142-147.
a third of the total. Furthermore, between 1860 and 1870, nineteen counties saw the percentage of its black population increase with regards to its total population. Seven saw an increase of over ten percent – Alachua, Dade, Duval, Franklin, Hernando, Jackson, and Marion. Taken together, these numbers show how Florida’s black population not only increased but also concentrated, primarily within the major planting counties between the Apalachicola and Suwannee Rivers.\footnote{US Census Bureau, \textit{Ninth Population Census of the United States}, “Population of Each State and Territory (By Counties,) in the Aggregate, and as White, Colored, Free Colored, Slave, Chinese, and Indian, at All Censuses,” Table II. See appendix.}

The plantocracy definitely understood how this growth would magnify the black vote in Florida’s 1868 elections. As Florida’s constitutional convention began in late-1867, Florida’s locating agents plotted homesteads and submitted applications to Tallahassee’s Land Office. This work symbolized Emancipation’s promise. Meanwhile, Florida’s plantocracy looked to Dr. Stonelake to hinder the homesteading process and welcomed General Ely’s misconduct. Counties eventually offered their delegates to the convention, and one of these delegates was former Assistant Commissioner Osborn, who was central to the construction of the SHA. However, Osborn’s participation proved that he was no longer a champion of colonization or homesteading. He had his sights on a railroad deal, and public lands offered to the freedmen equaled lost profits.
Civil Reconstruction, 1868-1872: Another and Yet Another Murder

On December 30, 1867, Tallahassee’s Floridian ran a scathing column against the Freedmen’s Bureau. The realities of black male suffrage and political participation had set in – as a result of Congress’ Reconstruction Acts. In about three weeks, Florida’s second constitutional convention in three years would commence, and white Floridians believed Radical Republicans gerrymandered the November election to ensure a Republican majority at the convention. There was a hint of truth in this claim. As stipulated in the Reconstruction Acts, Republican military officials and Bureau agents controlled the registration process throughout the South and enforced the disenfranchisement of those ex-Confederates barred from taking a loyalty oath. Although a majority of Floridians were Democrats, disenfranchisement dubbed just enough political pariahs to grant Republicans a slight majority. Therefore, at the November polls, Democrats lacked the numbers to prevent a convention through abstention. This failed strategy allowed Republicans to elect 44 of the 46 delegates, a handful of which were Bureau agents and eighteen of which were black.83

Democrats’ ensuing frustrations were fixed on Bureau carpetbaggery, and the Floridian captured their sentiments. The Bureau had “done more to breed an irradicable alienation of the people of the Southern States from the people of the Northern States than the war itself,” the editors claimed. In their opinion, it was the Bureau that “indoctrinated the negro with the idea that to take the white man’s land is their right, and to kill him is a righteous duty,” and freedpeople’s criminal behavior was “traceable directly to the incendiary teachings of some of the agents of this Bureau.” Worst of all, it was Bureau agents who were “the instruments of the

Radical party to Africanize the South, and to put the white man under the negro." Floridian Democrats feared Bureau agents would promote more of the same radical policies at the state convention. In fact, it was Florida’s Radical Republicans who were blindsided.

Bureau agents were instrumental in the process of drafting Florida’s 1868 constitution, but they proved more moderate than radical to achieve their political aims and aspirations. For Florida’s Bureau, the constitutional convention heralded a shift from military to civil authority. This pushed those agents selected as delegates towards political compromises with conservatives that ultimately betrayed Emancipation’s promise within the peninsula. When the Joint Committee on Reconstruction accepted the convention’s moderate constitutional draft, Florida’s military occupation, which lasted since January 1861, was finally nearing its end.

As Florida’s Military Reconstruction bled into its Civil Reconstruction, Bureau agents secured national and state offices during the November 1868 elections. Once in office, those who had worked together at the convention separated into radical and moderate Republicans, competing over the course of Florida’s Reconstruction. Their divisiveness mirrored that of the Republican Party, which passed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments but stopped short of enforcing the measures with federal muscle. As a result of Republicans’ moderation, Bureau agents saw their authority diminish as Congress passed a third Freedmen’s Bureau bill in July 1868, relegating the Bureau to education and bounty claims of black veterans. This occurred just as Florida’s Regulators, such as the Ku Klux Klan and Young Men’s Democratic Club, commenced a politically motivated crusade against freedpeople and Unionists. Local Bureau agents watched helplessly as civil authorities labeled the victims of hundreds of murders as “shot by persons unknown.” In 1872, Congress finally terminated the Freedmen’s Bureau. While most

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84 Tallahassee Semi-Weekly Floridian, 30 December 1867.
of Florida’s top-ranked Bureau agents left for the North, a few remained in Florida, helping to shape the state and their local communities.

Each ex-Confederate State had to present an acceptable constitutional draft to the Joint Committee on Reconstruction before it could be readmitted into the Union. From Florida’s constitutional convention of January and February 1868, a unique situation arose in which two constitutional drafts – one radical and one moderate – were submitted to the joint committee. They presented two very different futures for Florida’s Civil Reconstruction, and three Bureau agents, acting as Republican delegates, played a decisive role in the joint committee’s adoption of the moderate draft in April. These men were former Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn and Sub-Assistant Commissioners William J. Purman and Marcellus L. Stearns.

During the convention’s first two weeks, Osborn, Purman, and Harrison Reed, a Jacksonville newspaper editor, led the moderates against Florida’s Radical Republicans – championed by Liberty Billings, William Saunders, and Daniel Richards. Radicals initially controlled the convention and the majority of freedpeople’s support throughout the state. After heated debates, the moderate opposition left for Monticello. With a quorum of twenty-two members, the radicals constructed a liberal constitution within two days. It afforded proportional representation in Florida’s House based on county population, elective state and local offices, and voting restrictions on federal officials who later aided the Confederacy. The radicals signed their constitutional draft and shipped it to General George G. Meade.

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86 Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 178-182. Shofner provides a detailed account of Florida’s 1868 constitutional convention. For more information on the convention’s proceedings, see *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Florida* (1868). This journal can be found in free e-book format at books.google.com. In December 1867, President Johnson replaced Major General John Pope with Meade as commanding general of the South’s Third District just before Florida’s convention. Johnson felt Pope supported too radical of a position, and Meade was more conservative and viewed his military authority more narrowly.
While at Monticello, the moderates drafted their own constitution with suggestions from Democrats Charles E. Dyke, editor of Tallahassee’s *Floridian*, and McQueen McIntosh. According to Jerrell Shofner, moderates’ inclusion of Dyke and McIntosh signified an effort to “win [Democrats] support or at least mitigate their opposition to the Reconstruction laws.” The Osborn-Reed faction then hatched a plan to upend radical control of the convention. On February 10, in the dead of night, the moderates commandeered the convention hall with two delegates who had not participated up to this point – John L. Campbell and Washington Rogers. Requiring two more delegates to make a quorum, Purman enlisted the help of his friend and former Bureau agent, Charles M. Hamilton, who roused two black delegates from their beds and directed them into the hall. These freedmen voted consistently with the radicals, but they were powerless to obstruct the moderates’ sweeping reforms. Hamilton was a friend to the freedpeople and staunch radical, which was why the freedmen followed the former agent’s orders. Apparently, Hamilton’s foremost allegiances rested with Purman and the Bureau.87

First on the moderates’ docket was the removal of four radicals from the convention. Moderates argued that Billings, Saunders, Richards, and Reverend Charles H. Peace were not Florida residents, and therefore, were not allowed to act as delegates. They were replaced with Marcellus L. Stearns, J. E. A. Davidson of Gadsden, Richard Wells of Leon, and Ossian B. Hart of Duval. When these radicals attempted to storm back into the convention hall, Democratic Governor David Walker successfully lobbied General Meade for local soldiers to bar the radicals’ reentry. By February 17, General Meade received the radicals’ resignations. With Florida’s Assistant Commissioner Colonel John T. Sprague presiding over the convention, the moderates next passed a resolution that nullified the radicals’ work between February 4 and 17. Lastly, on February 25, by a vote of twenty-eight to sixteen, the moderates passed their

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87 Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 183-185
Monticello constitution, which diverged from its radical counterpart on the subject of representation.\textsuperscript{88}

Compared to the radical constitutional draft, the Monticello constitution gutted the freedman’s vote. Instead of proportional representation, the moderates lobbied for equal numerical representation, permitting a county at least one representative, but no more than four. According to the U.S. Census of 1870, freedpeople constituted about 49 percent of Florida’s total population. Of Florida’s thirty-nine counties, its eight most populated had majority black populations (Alachua, Duval, Gadsden, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Madison, and Marion). Accounting for almost 53 percent of the total population, or 99,138 of 187,748 residents, proportional representation would have afforded these counties about twenty-eight seats in Florida’s House. Instead, the Monticello constitution granted only twenty. In Florida’s eight least populated counties (Baker, Brevard, Calhoun, Dade, Franklin, Holmes, Liberty, and Taylor), freedmen represented less than 18 percent of 8,955 residents. For these eight counties, the Monticello constitution granted eight seats, whereas proportional representation would have merited only two or three.\textsuperscript{89}

Instead of elective state and local offices, the moderates placed vast electoral powers in the hands of Florida’s governor. This was an even greater blow to the freedman’s vote than disproportional representation. The future governor could nominate state and local positions ranging from Florida Supreme Court justices to counties’ justices of the peace. The only elective position was local constable, and freedmen overwhelmingly elected black candidates during the

\textsuperscript{88} Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over Yet}, 183-185; \textit{Constitution of the State of Florida} (1868) – a full-text version of Florida’s 1868 constitution can be found at archive.law.fsu.edu.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Constitution of the State of Florida} (1868); US Census Bureau, \textit{Ninth Population Census of the United States}, “Population of Each State and Territory (By Counties,) in the Aggregate, and as White, Colored, Free Colored, Slave, Chinese, and Indian, at All Censuses,” Table II. See appendix; Richardson, \textit{The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida}, 158; Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over Yet}, 185-186.
1868 elections. With Florida’s governor wielding the power to appoint almost every state and local office, freedpeople were at the mercy of gubernatorial and senatorial appointees enforcing civil law, especially circuit judges and justices of the peace. The radical constitution, which proposed making those offices elective, would have offered freedpeople a greater stake in their local government. Furthermore, there would be no voting restrictions placed on ex-Confederates of any kind. With regards to freedpeople’s equality under the law, the Monticello constitution set an ominous tone for Florida’s Civil Reconstruction.⁹⁰

Florida’s Bureau proposed and supported some of the most radical measures of Reconstruction, such as Osborn’s plan for the freedpeople’s colonization of South Florida, yet four of its agents – Osborn, Purman, Hamilton, and Stearns – retracted from this progressive stance. While their moderation at the convention may seem antithetical to Bureau policies on Reconstruction, the fact that the convention was the first time these men were no longer bound by military constraints was a factor. For Hamilton, a longtime radical, his support of a moderate position was surprising.⁹¹ Osborn, on the other hand, was more moderate than Hamilton. As an assistant commissioner, he worked closely with and even befriended Floridian conservatives; and as de facto leader of the moderates, Osborn would enjoy the support of Bureau agents like Purman and Hamilton during the convention despite political differences. Standing alongside Harrison Reed and General Meade, Osborn and Florida’s Bureau supported the Monticello constitution. These endorsements ultimately prompted the Joint Committee to accept the moderates’ constitution in April. Between May 14 and 16, Florida was scheduled to hold elections.⁹²

⁹⁰ Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet, 187, 193-194.
Florida and Louisiana were the only ex-Confederate States to cast a divided Republican ticket. Running on Florida’s moderate ticket were Harrison Reed for governor, and two Bureau agents, William H. Gleason for lieutenant governor, and Charles M. Hamilton for U.S. Representative. To build conservative support, moderate candidates across throughout the South stumped on an economics platform. Reed centered his campaign upon Florida’s 1855 internal improvements program. Gleason, a Wisconsin businessman, toured South Florida in 1865 with fellow Bureau agent George F. Thompson. Like Reed, Gleason desired public funding for railroad construction. Florida’s radicals felt moderates sacrificed party ideals for votes as Reed’s campaign veered away from issues surrounding necessary social reforms. Although radicals nominated their own candidates, many switched their support to the Reed-Gleason ticket, including William Saunders. Trying to take advantage of a divided Republican Party, Democrats put forth a ticket with an ex-Confederate officer, George W. Scott, running for governor.93

Despite Democrats and radicals’ claims that Bureau agents and military officials were guilty of voting fraud, when the ballots were counted, moderate Republicans carried a contested, but relatively peaceful, election. The Reed-Gleason ticket triumphed by over six thousand votes, and by a count of 14,520 to 9,491, Floridians approved the Monticello constitution. Bureau agents’ support during the convention correlated with political success. Purman was elected to Florida’s Senate, and Stearns was chosen as Speaker of the House. When Florida’s legislature nominated its long-term and short-term U.S. Senate seats, the executive and legislative branches promoted Osborn for the long-term appointment, ending March 1873.94 From July 2 to July 9, 1868, Assistant Commissioner Sprague and General Meade saddled Florida upon the Reed Administration’s back; Congress passed the third Freedmen’s Bureau bill; and the Union ratified

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the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. On paper, Reconstruction appeared a success, but in the South, paper offered little assistance to loyal freedpeople and whites.

As the November 1868 presidential election approached, the Republican Party pursued a moderate platform. To broaden support in the South, President Ulysses S. Grant ran a centrist campaign, promising to yield authority to state governments that were either unable or unwilling to alleviate discrimination and violence. This amounted to the abandonment of Southern freedpeople and loyal whites. The effects of such a decision were readily apparent. Local Bureau agents witnessed a sample of the brutality to come at voting precincts across the South, where whites verbally and physically assaulted freedmen. Assigning its three electoral votes to Grant, Florida’s legislature spared the peninsula much of the political violence found elsewhere during the election, but this only delayed the inevitable. Republican moderation trickled down to Florida’s November campaigns, in which Reed and Osborn were forced to re-run on promises of public investments in railroad construction to aid planters.95 With the Western frontier attracting Northern investments, Southern legislatures were right to tremble at the thought of an agricultural adversary.96

Thanks to the freedman’s vote, when November’s elections concluded, Grant assumed the Presidency, Republicans controlled Congress, and the vast majority of Florida’s brief incumbents retained their seats in the state legislature. How Republicans repaid their black constituents varied. When Charles M. Hamilton delivered his first address as a U.S. Representative before the 40th Congress, the former sub-assistant commissioner argued for equal and universal male suffrage throughout the United States. As a member the 41st Congress,

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95 Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 144-152; Shofner, *Nor Is It Over Yet*, 244.
Hamilton went on to support the Fifteenth Amendment, delivering what Daniel R. Weinfeld described as “the most eloquent and impassioned speech of his congressional career.”

In the U.S. Senate, former Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Osborn pursued an economic agenda of self-interest. Osborn and his brother, Abraham C. Osborn of Brooklyn, New York, headed the Great Southern Railway Company, and the brothers enlisted the support of prominent Floridians in this venture. T. W. Osborn hoped to run a line from Georgia down the length of the Floridian peninsula, and in 1870, proposed a senate bill granting lands to his railroad company to do so. During the transition from Military to Civil Reconstruction, Osborn’s stance on Florida land use policy changed remarkably – from planning the freedpeople’s colonization of South Florida to pushing his own railroad interests in the same region. The former assistant commissioner would ask Hamilton to support his bill in the House, but Hamilton refused. A feud developed between the two, concluding later that year with Hamilton’s failed bid for re-nomination as one of Florida’s U.S. Representatives. At the Republican convention in Gainesville, the nomination went to Josiah T. Walls, a freedman, on the eleventh ballot. Walls served three consecutive terms as Florida’s first black U.S. Representative.

While Osborn and Hamilton guided Florida’s Civil Reconstruction from Washington D.C., Florida’s local Bureau agents struggled to curtail countless crimes and abuses of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Between 1869 and 1872, at the peak of Reconstruction era violence, Congress had stripped the Freedmen’s Bureau of its authority, and eventually terminated the Bureau altogether. This was the period of Reconstruction during which local agents were needed most to protect freedpeople’s lives and civil rights against a hostile Southern

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98 Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet, 253-254; Weinfeld, “Charles M. Hamilton in Reconstruction-Era Florida,” 504-506.  
response to black political activism. As Commissioner Oliver O. Howard recalled in his autobiography,

But for the presence of Bureau officers, sustained by a military force, there would have been no one to whom these victims of cruelty and wrong could have appealed for defense…No one can tell what scenes of violence and strife and insurrection the whole South might have presented without the presence of this agency of the Government to preserve order and to enforce justice. Several officers and agents have been severely wounded, and some have lost their lives in this service.  

Grant’s election in 1868 signaled the North’s general fatigue with the South’s military occupation and desire to see how the Southerners would fare under Republican government. By 1870, the 41st Congress realized the harm of drawing back federal forces. Regulator activity, carried out by entities such as the Ku Klux Klan and Young Men’s Democratic Club, produced the “scenes of violence and strife and insurrection” that Howard believed capable of a non-occupied South.

Congress responded with its Enforcement Acts, popularly known as the KKK Acts. On May 31, 1870, Congress passed its First Enforcement Act, protecting a citizen’s right to vote under the Fifteenth Amendment, regardless of race. The Second and Third Enforcement Acts, passed February and April of the next year, respectively bolstered the original act and provided a means to protect freedpeople’s citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment. While the black letter law was bold, the enforcement of the acts was weak. The Fifteenth Amendment left holes for poll taxes and literacy tests, while the Supreme Court’s rulings on the Slaughterhouse Cases (1873) limited federal power with regards to the Fourteenth Amendment, pulling the teeth out of the Third Enforcement Act. Furthermore, President Grant and the 41st and 42nd Congresses were hesitant about re-occupying the South and utilized martial law sparingly. By the time of the

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Slaughterhouse rulings, Congress had terminated the Freedmen’s Bureau, but not before its agents recorded the abuses and carnage of Reconstruction’s deadliest period.\textsuperscript{102}

Between the passages of the Reconstruction Acts and the third Freedmen’s Bureau bill, Florida’s Bureau continued its services regarding labor contracts, land disputes, rations for the ill and impoverished, education, bounty claims, homesteading, and where intervention was possible, legal cases. Military authority was still invoked, but Bureau agents faced an increasingly vocal, organized, and even, violent conservative opposition. In Marion County, for instance, lawyers and judges boycotted cases between August 1867 and October 1868 in response to Major General John Pope’s order to seat mixed or all-black juries. Consequentially, local Bureau agent J. A. Remley could not levy justice within his jurisdiction. What local agents like Remley required was more authority and manpower, but Congress realized, with state constitutional conventions underway, civil authority would soon supplant military authority in the South. Congress’ third Freedmen’s Bureau bill of July 1868 echoed this fact.\textsuperscript{103} Whether Congress actually believed the South was ready for a scaling down of federal intervention, or it was the right time to do so with upcoming national and state elections, this decision was unwise. By January 1, 1869, the deadline given Commissioner Oliver O. Howard for slashing Bureau authority, nightmarish conditions had enveloped Florida.

During 1866 and 1867, acts of violence upon Florida’s freedmen and Unionists were common, but largely personal in nature and committed by individuals or small bands of whites. By 1868, this violence erupted into systematic and politically driven forms of domestic terrorism. White Floridians, especially in the north-central counties, followed a national trend of

\textsuperscript{102} Summers, \textit{The Ordeal of the Reunion}, 368-371.
\textsuperscript{103} Shofner, \textit{Nor Is It Over Yet}, 103.
coalescing into Regulator groups that victimized Republican masses, regardless of race or sex. According to Mark W. Summers, 1868 was “the critical year,” where the message of Reconstruction’s failure “came from regular, steady reports, too constant even to rank as news in most northern newspapers, of freedpeople killed.” Throughout Florida, local Bureau agents submitted such reports to their superiors. From hundreds of cases of murder, rape, arson, and other heinous crimes, historians of Florida’s Reconstruction – William W. Davis, Joe M. Richardson, and Jerrel H. Shofner – highlight a small selection to represent the lawlessness occurring after 1868. Even Davis, a student of Columbia’s Dunning School of the 1920s who sympathized with Florida’s conservatives, admitted, “…in this contest for a very necessary supremacy many a foul crime was committed by white against black. Innocent people suffered.” Nowhere in Florida would innocent people suffer greater violence than in the Jackson County War.

Between 1869 and 1871, Jackson County suffered between one and two hundred murders, according to varying estimates. Hundreds of others were wounded. Throughout Florida, Bureau agents received death threats signed “KKK,” but in Jackson County, Regulators specifically targeted Bureau agents. On the night of February 29, 1869, Senator Purman, a former sub-assistant commissioner, and Dr. John L. Finlayson, a scalawag Bureau agent, attended a minstrel show in Marianna. As they walked home, arm in arm, a shotgun blast struck both Finlayson and Purman in the head. Purman survived with a jagged scar under his right jaw and a bullet lodged beneath his left ear. Finlayson was not so lucky. As news of the event spread,

104 Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet, 226-231; Richardson, The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 164-167.
105 Summers, The Ordeal of the Reunion, 152.
six hundred and eight freedmen prepared to avenge Finlayson’s death and Purman’s honor. It
appeared as though a race war was all but certain in Jackson County, if not for the implorations
of an enfeebled Purman. For the next weeks, Marianna’s citizens debated the incident – whether
it was personal or political. Throughout Civil Reconstruction, Florida’s Democratic-leaning
newspapers overwhelmingly denied political motives behind Reconstruction-era assassinations.
Bureau agent John Q. Dickinson, a close friend of Purman, never doubted that this attack was
political. Had he not felt ill that evening, Dickinson planned on joining Purman and Dickinson at
the minstrel show. Through Dickinson, Purman issued a statement correcting local stories that
claimed the attack was a personal vendetta; Purman was sure he and Finlayson were targeted for
their Republicanism.\footnote{Weinfeld, The Jackson County War, 72-77.} For the next two years, Dickinson would tally Jackson County’s murders
before Regulators set their sights upon the Vermont Republican.

“Another and yet another murder,” wrote John Q. Dickinson to Representative Hamilton
on September 30, 1869. Two days earlier, a group of about twenty-five freedpeople – men,
women, and children – was on its way to a picnic at Robinson Spring when a gunman fired
thirteen to fourteen shots upon them. One bullet grazed Calvin Rogers’ arm. Rogers, a freedman,
was elected as a Jackson County constable. Another bullet struck 2-year-old Stewart Livingston
in the head, passed through, and entered Wyatt Young’s breast. From what was related to
Dickinson, both were killed instantly. A group of thirty men, including Dickinson, followed
buggy-tracks until nightfall but never apprehended the culprit, although a Lawrence Armistead
was suspected. The next day, a white preacher, Columbus Sullivan, and black man, George Cox,
were on their way home hauling cotton when another gunman took aim. Sullivan’s face was
“horribly mutilated and one eye put out,” while Cox was “hit with small shot in the arm.”
Dickinson predicted both would recover, but asked Hamilton for a “first-class detective” and “a
few Henry rifles” to boost local morale. On October 11, Dickinson wrote again to Hamilton of the violence accruing since September 28. Counting nine black casualties (seven dead and two wounded) and four white casualties (two dead and two wounded), Dickinson could not help but ask, “Good God, Hamilton, isn’t this awful?”

About a year and a half later, on April 3, 1871, another shotgun blast, cloaked by the night, ripped through Dickinson’s right side. The murderer then drew a pistol and finished the deed with a shot through the Bureau agent’s heart. Marianna’s Democratic Courier claimed a freedman had settled a score with Dickinson. Republicans countered that this was another attempt by Democrats to cover up a political assassination. Dickinson’s murder, and thousands murders more throughout the South during this period, went unsolved. As Daniel R. Weinfeld notes, in the wake of Dickinson’s passing, “no politically active white Republicans remained in Jackson County.”

A year later, on June 10, 1872, the Freedmen’s Bureau was terminated by an act of Congress, and Major General Oliver O. Howard was sent West to solve the Native American crisis. Besides its crucial input into Florida’s education system, the Freedmen’s Bureau had ceased its controversial work within the peninsula per Howard’s orders of January 1, 1869.

Most Bureau agents stayed a short number of years in Florida after the Bureau’s termination before returning north. Thomas W. Osborn concluded his tenure as Florida’s U.S. Senator in 1873 and retired as an attorney in New York. Hamilton worked as a postmaster at Jacksonville and then a customs collector at Key West until 1873. An illness prompted the former U.S. Representative to head home to Pennsylvania, where he passed away in 1875. After serving in the Florida Senate, William J. Purman won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he


110 Weinfeld, The Jackson County War, 116-123.

111 Summers, The Ordeal of the Reunion, 140.
served between 1873 and 1877, before returning to the North.\textsuperscript{112} Marcellus L. Stearns was elected as Florida’s lieutenant governor on the 1872 Republican ticket. When his running mate, Governor Ossian B. Hart, passed away on March 18, 1874, Stearns became Florida’s 11\textsuperscript{th} Governor. When his gubernatorial term expired, Stearns served as a U.S. commissioner in Arkansas before between 1877 and 1880, then traveled north.\textsuperscript{113}

Not all of Florida’s former Bureau agents left. Former lieutenant governor William H. Gleason resided in Eau Gallie, Florida, where he attempted to build the Florida Agricultural College. Although the venture did not succeed, Gleason became a large developer of Brevard County.\textsuperscript{114} In Alachua and Marion County, locating agent Solomon F. Halliday remained active in local politics and education until his passing on October 11, 1888.\textsuperscript{115} His unique life is a testament to the best of what the Freedmen’s Bureau had to offer.

According to the Southern Historical Press’ \textit{Biographical Souvenir of the States of Georgia and Florida} (1889), Halliday, a reverend of the Presbyterian Church, moved from Pennsylvania to Florida in 1837, during the Second Seminole War. He “was a member of the first board of commissioners of Marion County, was the first elected clerk of the circuit court of that county, and afterward became judge of the probate court.” However, the souvenir connected Halliday’s life to the Civil War and Reconstruction era only twice. It first mentioned that Halliday “served one term under President Grant in the Consolidated Land Office at Gainesville,” an obscure reference to Halliday’s tenure as a Bureau locating agent. However, the final paragraph of his biographical sketch read:

\textsuperscript{112} Short biographical sketches of U.S. congressmen can be found at bioguide.congress.gov.
\textsuperscript{113} Short biographical sketches of U.S. governors can be found at nga.org.
\textsuperscript{114} John M. Eriksen, \textit{Brevard County, Florida: A Short History to 1955} (2008), 59.
\textsuperscript{115} Alachua County Clerk of the Court, “Will Book C,” in \textit{Ancient Records}, 143-144. Halliday’s will was transcribed by Elaine Campbell on 24 February 2003 and can be found at alachuaclerk.org.
Before the last war Mr. Halliday was an old-line Whig, but is now a Republican. He is the oldest man in the town of Gainesville, and his useful, as well as eventful life is worthy the emulation of the rising generation. He is beloved by all who know him and has not an enemy in any part of the land.\textsuperscript{116}

Halliday diligently performed some of the most controversial work of Florida’s Freedmen’s Bureau, securing hundreds of homesteads for freedpeople. Alachua and Marion Counties’ planters certainly would not have loved Halliday, especially since they suffered labor shortages throughout much of Reconstruction. Furthermore, it was from Halliday’s Alachua County that Josiah T. Walls, a former Virginian slave, ascended to the U.S. House of Representatives as Florida’s first black congressman. Unfortunately, Walls’ service in the House ended when Florida’s Democrats contested and successfully redeemed his seat in 1876. Florida would not send another African American to the U.S. House of Representatives until 1993, when Corrine Brown, Alcee Hastings, and Carrie P. Meek were elected to Congress.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{117} Biographical sketches of Walls, Brown, Hastings, and Meek can be found at bioguides.congress.gov.
Conclusion: If We Can Hold a Steady Hand for a Time

In February 1866, Freedmen’s Bureau Commissioner Oliver O. Howard delivered a dozen addresses during a tour through the North. Northerners were curious about progress in the South, or lack thereof, and there was a particular interest in the freedmen. Black Codes had recently emerged from constitutional conventions in Mississippi, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, giving an impression that the South was not going to make good faith effort at free labor. Congress retaliated by denying Southern representatives a seat in the House or Senate when they arrived at the Capitol. A bitter legislative battle over Reconstruction would result between Congress and President Andrew Johnson. At the local level, Bureau agents dealt with the repercussions. Howard beseeched his audience to contribute to the Bureau for the sake of vulnerable refugees and freedmen. In Springfield, Massachusetts, Howard assured Northerners:

If we can hold a steady hand for a time – prevent extreme and widespread suffering by timely aid – afford encouragement to every laudable enterprise – multiply examples of success in every species of free labor and do so in every county in every State, my decided impression is that, before five years, there will be no more use of an agency of the general Government in the Southern States than there is now in Ohio.

Howard’s sense of purpose was unshakeable, and the Christian General never left the helm of the Freedmen’s Bureau between his appointment in 1865 and the Bureau’s termination in 1872. Unfortunately, Howard would discover that the Bureau could never hold a steady hand.

A persistent lack of funding and manpower crippled the Bureau, especially in its first year. It was not until July 1866 that Congress passed a second Freedmen’s Bureau bill funding Howard and his agents with $12 million. Until those funds arrived, the Bureau relied upon Northern aid societies to provide relief for Southern refugees and freedmen. When manpower

118 Oliver O. Howard, Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General, United States Army, Vol. 2 (Baker & Taylor Company: 1907), 309.
119 Oliver O. Howard, Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General, United States Army, Vol. 2 (Baker & Taylor Company: 1907), 312-313.
was necessary, the Bureau called upon military assistance to safeguard its jurisdiction. As historians of Reconstruction correctly observe, regardless of monetary or military aid, the Bureau never wielded the influence to eradicate Southern prejudices of the ex-slaves. Taken together, Bureau agents were doomed from the start, if one believes the Bureau’s mission was to alleviate all Southern destitution, violence, and prejudice in the wake of the Civil War. Congress, including Radical Republicans, understood this was not achievable. What Congress needed to do was solidify the Union’s Republican form of government so that the North and South would never experience another Civil War.

Before his assassination, President Abraham Lincoln put forth a lenient 10 percent plan, and his successor, President Andrew Johnson, followed suit with his own amnesty and land restoration policies. Congress disagreed with both presidents, believing force was central to successfully reconstruct the South. With the first Freedmen’s Bureau bill, Congress cast a very wide net over Reconstruction policy. The Freedmen’s Bureau was a temporary institution placed under the War Department and at the nucleus of an ongoing military occupation of the South. All matters regarding refugees, freedpeople, and abandoned lands fell under the Bureau’s purview. Most importantly, military authority granted Bureau agents a legitimacy as a continuation of the war effort. But that came at a price. When the war effort ended, the Bureau’s temporary military authority would yield to civil authority. For Florida’s Bureau, that transition from Military Reconstruction to Civil Reconstruction occurred shortly after the Joint Committee on Reconstruction accepted the Monticello constitution of 1868.

During Military Reconstruction, the peak of Bureau involvement within the peninsula occurred between the passage of the second Freedmen’s Bureau bill in July 1866 and the start of Florida’s constitutional convention in January 1868. For this short while, Florida’s Bureau agents
supported a free labor agenda that fell short of Emancipation’s promise but improved the quality of life for most freedpeople. They negotiated contracts, provided rations, and built schools, hospitals, and orphan asylums. Under the provisions of the Southern Homestead Act of 1866, Florida’s locating agents were most successful in helping freedmen secure titles to their homesteads. Military authority legitimized this work as a continuation of the war effort. But that war effort was about to end. Throughout the South, ex-Confederate States held constitutional conventions that met the minimum standards of Congress’ Reconstruction Acts of 1867. At Florida’s convention, a handful of Bureau agents helped to draft the Monticello constitution, which symbolized a fundamental shift in how Bureau agents understood their responsibilities within the peninsula. The military occupation was over, Florida was nearly reconstructed, and soon, its state government would supersede Florida’s Bureau.

The Bureau agents who supported the Monticello constitution continued to impact Florida’s Civil Reconstruction as politicians, but those agents who remained with the Bureau lost most of their authority by January 1, 1869. Moreover, the centrist campaign of President Ulysses S. Grant in the November 1868 election suggested that Republicans had grown weary of defending a costly military occupation of the South. Without the freedman’s vote, Republicans could not have won that election, and by allowing civil authorities to enforce the law, Republicans betrayed freedpeople’s support. Between 1869 and 1872, when Congress finally terminated the Freedmen’s Bureau, Regulators assassinated thousands of freedpeople and loyal whites throughout the South. In Jackson County, Florida, violence claimed more than one hundred lives, including two Bureau agents. At the moment it was needed most, Florida’s Bureau was stripped of its military authority.
Although the Florida’s Bureau and its agents played a central role in Florida’s Reconstruction, their experiences are most valuable for the window they provide into fundamental questions that shaped and transcended the Civil War and Reconstruction era: What should be the definitions of freedom, citizenship, and equality? To what degree should the federal government protect someone’s freedom, citizenship, and equality? Should all citizens receive equal treatment under the law? When should federal power trump state power, and vice-versa? Who should have the right to vote? This was not the first time these questions were asked of the Union, but the answers underwent a remarkable transformation during Reconstruction with the ratifications of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. Between 1865 and 1872, as their perceptions of their authority changed, Florida’s Bureau agents enforced then undermined these Reconstruction Amendments. Moderation and compromise won the day.

Freedmen’s Bureau agents of Reconstruction do not receive the same glory as soldiers of the Civil War, but their service flowed in the same vein. Both determined how the war would mold the Union. As Eric Foner states, “Reconstruction was not merely a specific time period, but the beginning of an extended historical process: the adjustment of American society to the end of slavery.”120 Bureau agents influenced what Emancipation would mean in the initial years after the war, and by doing so, shaped the answers to those fundamental questions. When the Bureau left, the answers to those questions continued to change. The answers changed during Redemption, when Democrats reclaimed Southern legislatures and brought forth Jim Crow. They changed again during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s with the overturn of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). Tomorrow, we will ask the same questions, and the answers may not be the same as today.

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--- *Ninth Population Census of the United States,* “Population of Each State and Territory (By Counties,) in the Aggregate, and as White, Colored, Free Colored, Slave, Chinese, and Indian, at All Censuses,” Table II.
Secondary Sources


## Appendix

**Florida 1860, County-Level Data** (Source: [http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/index.html](http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/index.html))

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Florida Counties in 1860, Aggregate Slaves/Total Whites Persons (Percent)

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*73.5-284.56%

Retrieved from the University of Virginia Library Historical Census Browser Geospatial and Statistical Data Center

http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/

Florida 1870, County-Level Data (Source: http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/index.html)

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<td>195</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA TOTALS</td>
<td>96,057</td>
<td>91,689</td>
<td>10,241</td>
<td>44,164,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Florida Counties in 1870, Colored Persons/Whites Persons (Percent)

**Legend**

- **1.59 - 107.59**
- **107.59 - 213.59**
- **213.59 - 319.59**
- **319.59 - 426.29**
- **Missing Data**

*107.59-426.29%

Retrieved from the University of Virginia Library Historical Census Browser Geospatial and Statistical Data Center

http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/
Florida’s Freedmen’s Bureau Agents & Politicians

**Oliver O. Howard**  
Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau  
(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

**Rufus Saxton**  
First Assistant Commissioner  
(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

**Thomas W. Osborn**  
Second Assistant Commissioner  
& U.S. Senator  
(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

**John G. Foster**  
Third Assistant Commissioner  
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)
John T. Sprague
Fourth Assistant Commissioner
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)

Charles M. Hamilton
Marianna Sub-Assistant Commissioner
& U.S. Representative
(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

William J. Purman
Marianna Sub-Assistant Commissioner,
Florida Senator, & U.S. Representative
(Courtesy of Library of Congress)

John L. Finlayson
Marianna Bureau Agent & Doctor
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)
Josiah T. Walls
U.S. Representative
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)

Marcellus L. Stearns
Ocala Bureau Agent
& 11th Governor of Florida
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)

William H. Gleason
Bureau Agent
& Lieutenant Governor of Florida
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)

Harrison Reed
9th Governor of Florida
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)
David S. Walker
8th Governor of Florida
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)

William Marvin
7th Governor of Florida
(Courtesy of Florida State Archives)