

The larger of the two Freedmen's banks in Florida was at Jacksonville—the other was at Tallahassee. The Jacksonville bank opened its doors in March, 1866,^b occupying offices at the corner of Bay and Ocean Streets, in the Hoeg building. In 1870 it was moved to a new four-story brick building at the southwest corner of Pine (Main) and Forsyth Streets. This was ever afterward known as the Freedmen's Bank building, until destroyed in the fire of 1891. About the time of its removal, the name was changed to National Savings and Trust Company. N. C. Dennett was the first cashier; he swindled a colored man, James Aberdeen, out of some of his money and was removed for incompetency. W. L. Coan was bank manager. Coan was continuously active in local politics and held a number of city offices.^d This bank failed in June, 1874, with \$39,400 on deposit and 1608 depositors, nearly all negroes.^b

The Freedmen's Bureau was the clearing house through which radiated most of the activities of the radicals. The failure of the Freedmen's bank had an important bearing on the political situation here, since the unsophisticated negro then awakened to the fact that he had been swindled by an institution organized, as he supposed, for his protection and welfare.^b So increased the growing tide that came to flood in 1876, when George F. Drew was elected governor, and the State returned to home rule.^d

This record of the Freedmen's Bureau overlaps two other regimes, that, although backed by the same influences, and interwoven in a tangled maze with the activities of the Bureau, as well as with each other, were yet distinct political phases and should be considered as such; namely, the so-called "reconstruction period" (1867-8) and the "carpet-bagger" regime (1868-76).

The "Reconstruction" Period^c (1867-8)

The act known as the "Reconstruction Act" was officially entitled "An Act to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel States". Alleging that no legal State governments or adequate protection for life and property existed in ten Southern States, including Florida, it provided for the division of those States into five military districts, under the command of army officers assigned thereto by the President,