ABSTRACT

The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in McLennan County, Texas

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The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was established by the War Department on March 3, 1865, in an effort to provide relief to the 4,000,000 slaves emancipated at the end of the Civil War. From the beginning, the Bureau recognized the importance of establishing and running schools for the freedmen who had never received any type of education and who were mostly illiterate.

The first Bureau school in the state of Texas was established in September 1865, and the first Bureau school in McLennan County, Texas, was started in April 1866. Over the next four years, the schools faced enormous challenges, including a lack of funds and hostility from the white population. Despite the defeats that the Freedmen's Bureau schools in McLennan County faced, they were successful in providing an education to hundreds of freedmen across the area.

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The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in McLennan County, Texas

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As the Civil War came to an end, the state of Texas faced social, political, and economic problems produced by the war. When slaves were emancipated, those whites who had dominated the southern economic system through plantation agriculture were forced to confront the changes in their social and economic position. One of the greatest changes across the South would be the relationship between the newly freed black population and the white population, many of whom were former slave owners.

The United States Army entered Texas in May 1865, and it took on the responsibility of ensuring loyalty to the United States government from the former Confederates and protecting the rights of blacks. Many whites across the state were opposed to and resented the presence and mandates of the army in Texas. Although the number of troops within the state plummeted within the year from 51, 000 to 3,000, some of the military commanders still worked to intercede in local politics. However, the command of military forces in Texas changed eight times from 1865 to 1870, and the greatest effect the military had was creating resentment among the white population.[1] The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was established in 1865 in the War Department as a branch of the army.[2]

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[1]W.C. Nunn, *Texas under the Carpetbaggers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 5.

[2] Claude Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* LVI, No. 1 (1952):1.

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Under the Presidential Reconstruction plan to restore the Union, a provisional governor was to be appointed for each state, and in Texas, President Andrew Johnson appointed wartime Unionist Andrew J. Hamilton. Hamilton was responsible for calling a convention in which delegates were required to nullify the act of secession, to abolish slavery, and to disclaim the state's Confederate debt. An oath of amnesty was required for each delegate and voters, and was put in place to try to exclude much of the former political leadership of the state. Only when the work of the convention was ratified could a governor, legislature and other state officials be elected.[3]

However, the Democratic Party again took control of the state government on January 8, 1866, when many were elected as delegates to the convention. During the Constitutional Convention of 1866, former Confederate general James W. Throckmorton was elected as president of the convention, and although the delegates did meet the minimum requirements for readmission to regular status in the Union, they also validated all state government laws that were not in conflict with the United States Constitution, the proclamations of the provisional governor, or the state constitution prior to secession. On June 25, 1866, the proposed constitution passed, and voters elected Throckmorton as governor over the Unionist candidate, Elisha M. Pease.[4]

When the Eleventh Legislature met in August 1866, it was dominated by former secessionists, and they elected two secessionists for seats in the U. S. Senate. The new legislature enacted "black codes" and refused to ratify the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments. Republicans and Unionists believed that the former Confederates were

[3] Randolph B. Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 9; Nunn, *Texas under the Carpetbaggers*, 3.

[4] Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction*, 10-11; Nunn, *Texas under the Carpetbaggers*, 6.

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back in control in the Texas state government, and the senators and representatives from the state were not allowed to take their seats in the U.S. Congress. Tensions in the state continued to rise between the former Confederates and the military presence in the state, the Unionists, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the state's black population.[5]

On March 2, 1867, the Republican-dominated U.S. Congress ended Presidential Reconstruction with its First Reconstruction Act in an effort to end the Democratic control of state governments. The former Confederate states were broken up into military districts under the command of the army. Texas was placed into the Fifth Military District, the existing state government was declared unconstitutional, and Throckmorton was removed from office. Because so many Unionists, blacks and Freedmen's Bureau officials complained of the failure of local officials to protect their lives and property, General Charles Griffin, the commander over Texas, began removing local officials across the state. This practice was continued by his successor, Joseph J. Reynolds.[6]

As Congressional Reconstruction began, Texas was required to elect new delegates to a new constitutional convention. In a hugely significant step, black voters were included in the elections for the first time, and many aligned with Unionists in the Republican Party. A large percentage of conservative white voters did not turn out for the election, and the Republicans were elected and assumed power in Texas.[7]

When the First Reconstruction Act terminated Presidential Reconstruction and Republicans were elected and took control in Texas, assisted by the newly enfranchised

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[5] Ibid.; Nunn, *Texas under the Carpetbaggers*, 7-8.

[6] Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction*, 12-13; Nunn, *Texas under the Carpetbaggers*, 8-9.

[7] Ibid., 15.

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black voters, the resentment of whites only grew stronger. When the Second Reconstruction Act was passed in March, white Texans recognized that "the Yankees apparently were serious about giving blacks full political equality," and violence and lawlessness with racial or political overtones increased greatly across the state. Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, largely politically motivated in their actions, terrorized black and white Republicans through violence and intimidation.[8]

As the new convention met in June 1868, it wrote a new constitution very different from the former state constitutions by establishing a more centralized system of government. The Republican Party also split over many disagreements during the convention. For a time, the moderate branch controlled the convention over the Radical Republicans. However, on January 11, 1870, the new constitution was ratified and the Radical Republican Edmund J. Davis was elected as governor, and in February of 1870 the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments were adopted and new state senators were chosen. On March 30, 1870, Congressional Reconstruction came to an end in the state when Texas was readmitted into the Union.[9]

During the period of Reconstruction in Texas, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands played a significant role in aiding and assisting the freedmen across the state. The role of the Bureau was to help meet the needs of the former slaves. After meeting immediate needs, the Bureau recognized that it could play a significant

[8] Gregg Cantrell, "Racial Violence and Reconstruction in Texas, 1867-1868," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 93, No. 3 (1990): 344-345.

[9] Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction*, 15-20.

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role in establishing schools to educate the freedmen, most of whom had spent their lives without exposure to education.[10]

In order to establish these schools, teachers were needed, and a large number of these teachers came from Freedmen's Aid Societies in the North. Groups such as the American Missionary Association were evangelical societies that desired to provide the freedmen with academic instruction as well as religious training.[11] The American Missionary Association held the view that "the country owed (the freedmen) for the wrongs it had inflicted," and that "it was the nation's Christian duty to help pay this debt to freedmen by providing agencies for moral and intellectual development."[12]

Large numbers of teachers volunteered to go south, motivated by their religious faith and a desire to help the freedmen. The American Missionary Association and many other denominational organizations sent men and women to the southern states not only to fulfill their roles as teachers, but also to fulfill roles as missionaries to the freedmen. Though a great number of religious organizations were responsible for sending teachers to teach in the Freedmen's Bureau schools, secular groups also provided teachers and supported teaching within a secular setting.[13] Both men and women took positions within the schools, and teachers were both white and black. Black preachers sometimes taught in freedmen's schools in addition to fulfilling their ministerial duties.

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[10] Alton Hornsby, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas, 1865-1870," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, No. 4 (1973): 397.

[11] Robert C. Morris, ed. *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks Volume 1: Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, by John W. Alvord, Numbers 1-10, January 1866- July 1870* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980), i-xii.

[12] Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1870* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1986), 20.

[13] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks*, i-xii.

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The missionary and other freedmen's aid societies took on the responsibility of funding their teachers because the Bureau did not initially have the funds to pay teachers. Some teachers were supported from the tuition paid by students. However, in 1867, many teachers did begin receiving salaries from the Bureau, but payments could often be sporadic and teachers continually faced difficulties in receiving payment for their work.[14]

As teachers began entering the state of Texas, they faced major challenges from whites across the state who opposed the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau to establish schools. The inability of many freedmen to pay tuition to the schools which were largely supported by tuition payments was also a continual problem for teachers. The Bureau was often disorganized and inefficient, further adding to the difficulty in maintaining schools for the freedmen.

One of the overarching goals of the Bureau's educational efforts was to maintain schools for the freedmen until they could be incorporated into a state-supported public school system.[15] In the Texas State Constitution passed and then ratified in 1870, provisions for public school funding were established. One-fourth of general revenue was set aside for public schools, a poll tax was assessed and the money received from the sale of public land became part of the school fund. Radical Republican Governor Edmund J. Davis signed a bill in 1871, officially beginning a public school system within the state.[16] As public school systems began to be established in Texas, schools for blacks, though separate from white schools and most certainly not equal,

[14] Ibid.

[15] Marjorie H. Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," *Journal of Negro Education* 23, No.1 (1954): 10.

[16] Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction*, 21.

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became a part of the public school system. The Freedmen's Bureau schools served a key role in the transition for a population that had been denied educational opportunities to schools supported through state funding.

The role of the Texas Freedmen's Bureau has become a topic of attention in historical writings on Reconstruction in recent years. While earlier writings portrayed the Bureau as having little success in the state, more recent writings portray the efforts of the Bureau in a more positive light.[17] A study of the educational efforts of the Bureau within the state was done by Alton S. Hornsby in 1973, in which he concluded that although the efforts in establishing and running schools faced challenges, they were successful in leaving behind "a large nucleus of literate blacks, the foundation for a system of higher education, and a local structure the state could build on if it so desired."[18]

Although Hornsby's article created a foundation for studying the efforts of the Bureau across the state, through a study of the establishment of schools in a specific area of Texas, the role that the teachers and the freedmen played in the establishment of schools can and should be magnified. The primary focus of this thesis will be the examination of the Freedmen's Bureau schools in McLennan County, Texas. The archives of the Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent Records for the state provide a wealth of information. These records describe the challenges and triumphs, victories and defeats, failures and successes of these schools even in this area of frontier Texas.

As a microcosm of the overall effort to educate freedmen across the South, this study of the schools in McLennan County will examine the struggles that teachers,

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[17] Barry A. Crouch, "'Unmanacling' Texas Reconstruction: A Twenty- Year Perspective," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 93, No. 3 (1990): 279-281.

[18] Barry A. Crouch, *The Dance of Freedom: Texas African Americans During Reconstruction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 7.

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students, administrators, and communities faced in the political and social chaos of the Reconstruction period in Texas. While the Freedmen's Bureau schools in this county faced countless failures and defeats, they still made a contribution to the education, advancement, and progress of the former slaves in Texas.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas

When the Civil War came to an end in April of 1865, "conditions in the South cried out for immediate action." After four years of fighting, the southern states faced a growing refugee population, starvation, abandoned lands, and the collapse of civil authority. The greatest challenge that the country faced was the sudden emancipation of almost 4,000,000 slaves. This emancipation "set in motion an unprecedented effort to define a new social, economic, and political order." Out of necessity, the North had to create a way to transition the former slaves to their new condition of freedom. If they were to take their rightful places within society, the freedmen and women needed assistance. As the leading black abolitionist Frederick Douglass perceived, "Verily, the work does not end with the abolition of slavery, but only begins."[1]

The Freedmen's Bureau

On March 3, 1865, the United States Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. Set up as a temporary agency and established in the War Department as a branch of the Army, the Freedmen's Bureau, as it was commonly called, was created to provide relief for the huge number of newly emancipated former slaves and poor whites in the southern states.[2]

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[1] Paul A. Cimbala, and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), xiv-xv.

[2] Claude Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* LVI, No. 1 (1952): 1.

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The responsibilities ascribed to the Freedmen's Bureau were "the supervision and management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to freedmen from rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced in the operations of the army." More specifically, the Secretary of War was granted the power to "direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct."[3]

Furthermore, the bill designated "that the commissioner, under the direction of the President, shall have authority to set apart, for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale." The bill went on to state that every male citizen, both refugee and free, could be assigned up to forty acres of this abandoned land, and "as so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years."[4] The abandoned lands included property from which owners were absent because they had aided in the Confederate rebellion.[5] Because legislation established the Bureau for only "the present war of rebellion and for one year thereafter," Congress originally did not appropriate funds for

[3]Freedmen's Bureau Bill, March 3, 1865 (C, 1865, Circular Order No. 2, July 24, 1865, in *House Executive Documents*, 39th Congress, 1st Session (series No. 1256), Document No. 70, p. 47-48, as quoted in Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 1.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 1.

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the Bureau because profits from the land sales were supposed to make the Bureau self-supporting.[6]

On May 12, 1865, Major General Oliver O. Howard was appointed as the chief commissioner of the Bureau. A graduate of the United States Military Academy, Oliver had spent much of his time before the Civil War commanding troops in the southern states where he viewed firsthand the relations between races. Howard "served honorably and with distinction at Gettysburg," and he served under General William T. Sherman, leading one of the Union columns in Georgia during the March to the Sea.[7]

Upon Howard's appointment as commissioner, and considering the extent of his influence in such a position, General Sherman pronounced that he could not "imagine that matters that may involve the future of four million souls could have been put in more charitable or more benevolent hands."[8] In a letter written to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Christian minister Henry Ward Beecher described Howard as "one who would command the entire confidence of [the] Christian public… pleasant to work with, a gentleman, courteous, faithful, & cooperative." He went on to describe Howard as a Christian man who "would give his whole strength to his duties disinterestedly without second thought either for himself-or any section, party or sect."[9]

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[6] Freedmen's Bureau Bill, *House Executive Documents*, 47-48, as quoted in Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 1,

[7] Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 1-2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] H.W. Beecher, letter to E.M. Stanton, May 3, 1865, in Howard Papers, as reprinted in John Cox and LaWanda Cox, "General O.O. Howard and the Misrepresented Bureau," *Journal of Southern History* 19, No. 4 (1953): 432.

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The Bureau in Texas

The jurisdiction of the Freedmen's Bureau comprised Indian Territory, the District of Columbia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. The territories were divided into ten districts, and within each district there was a varying number of sub-districts. Each district was assigned an assistant commissioner, and General E.M. Gregory was originally appointed as assistant commissioner for Texas in September 1865.[10] Gregory had served in the V Corps of the Army of the Potomac and was present at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg. Howard described Gregory as "fearless of opposition or danger," and "well reputed for the stand he always took in the army in favor of clear-cut uprighteous [sic] of conduct." Gregory was a committed abolitionist and Howard chose to assign him to Texas because he considered the state "the post of greatest peril."[11]

Gregory served as assistant commissioner from September 1865 until May 1866. In eight months, Gregory established branches of the Bureau in thirty Texas counties. Gregory was replaced by General Joseph Kiddoo who served for an even shorter time. Kiddoo was replaced by General Charles Griffin in January 1867, and upon Griffin's death on September 15, 1867, he was replaced by General Joseph J. Reynolds. Throughout their tenures in Texas, the Bureau's commissioners would be challenged by

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[10] Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 2.

[11] William L. Richter, *Overreached on All Sides: The Freedmen's Bureau Administrators in Texas, 1865-1868*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 7.

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the size of Texas, the hostility of most white Texans to the Bureau's efforts, and its poor transportation and communication systems.[12]

Reporting to each district's commissioner were numerous sub-assistant commissioners who took on the role of agents who dealt directly with the freedmen in local settings. Under guidelines set by Howard in order to institute the Bureau's plan of action, assistant commissioners were sent into the South and directed to establish headquarters in the most advantageous areas and then to begin working to administer relief to the refugees and freedmen.[13]

In accord with Congress' original directives in the Freedmen's Bureau Bill, Howard's guidelines directed agents to help the destitute in finding employment. Freedmen could choose their own employment, but agents were directed to assist the employees and employers in drawing up labor contracts, and all contracts required approval by the Bureau in order to avoid any type of "substitute for slavery." Agents were also encouraged to help freedmen and refugees obtain titles to land in order to promote independent agriculture.[14] Howard viewed "the end of slavery as an opportunity to plant a free-labor society and a new moral order in the South," but many of the army officers who worked in the Bureau were more concerned with the management of Reconstruction. They regarded the written contract, which they believed would help return workers to the fields as quickly as possible, as the best way "to protect the freed

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[12] Alton Hornsby, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas, 1865-1870," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, No. 4 (1973): 402-406.

[13] Richter, *Overreached on All Sides*, 3-4.

[14] Ibid., 5.

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people while also ensuring a peaceable transition from slavery to a wage-based labor system."[15]

Although the role of the Bureau was to assist, Howard warned that the "Negro should understand that he is already free, but on no account, if able to work, should he harbor the thought that the government will support him in his idleness."[16] Part of the Bureau's responsibility was "to correct the erroneous belief, common among former slaves, that they could live without labor."[17]

The Bureau was also to assist in judicial matters in order to ensure fair treatment by officials, many of which were prejudiced against the equality of the freedmen. Assistant commissioners were to "supervise justice" through provost courts, military commissions, or arbitration efforts. Assistant commissioners were also directed to set up a department to provide medical attention and to promote sanitary conditions for refugees and freedmen.[18] They also provided records of marriages between black men and women, something that there was no authorization for in most local laws.[19]

Educating the Freedmen

Ultimately the Bureau took on the responsibility of meeting the needs of freedmen and assisting them in order that they might "survive and ultimately assume their rightful

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[15] Paul A. Cimbala, and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), xxiii.

[16] Circular Letter, May 15, 1865, Ms. Orders, C. as quoted in Richter, *Overreached on All Sides*, 5.

[17] Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 3.

[18] Richter, *Overreached On All Sides*, 6.

[19] Marjorie H. Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," *Journal of Negro Education* 23, No. 1 (1954): 9.

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role among other Americans."[20] The Bureau recognized that once immediate needs were met, one of the most important ways that former slaves could assume their "rightful role" was through education. One of the most significant roles of the Freedmen's Bureau was their work in establishing and running schools for the freedmen.

In his very first circular issued as commissioner, General Howard reminded agents that the education and moral development of the freedmen was of great importance. Howard directed agents "that the utmost facility be afforded benevolent and religious organizations and state authorities in maintenance of good schools for refugees and freedmen."[21]

Benevolent and religious organizations had established schools for freedmen even before the creation of the Bureau. As early as 1861, the American Missionary Association (A.M.A) began employing teachers to teach schools in Virginia for "contrabands."[22] By October 1864, there were already 250 missionaries and teachers employed by the A.M.A. working with the freedmen. Thousands of students were receiving instruction in their schools before the war ended.[23] Many other religious groups and freedmen's aid societies from across the North contributed to starting freedmen's schools, and by 1865, there were schools in all eleven Confederate states, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Kentucky, Kansas, and Missouri.[24] As the Bureau began

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[20] Hornsby., "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas," 397.

[21] Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," 10.

[22] Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1986), 4.

[23] Ibid., 32.

[24] Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of the Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 12.

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its work, Howard cooperated with these organizations and arranged "for a system of general superintendence" over the schools. The northern benevolent and religious organizations continued to send teachers and support to the freedmen's schools under the Bureau. However, from the beginning, the Bureau stated that these arrangements were intended to be in place only until governments could reorganize and support their own system of free schools.[25]

Because no provisions were originally made for the Bureau to be involved directly in educational activities, the Bureau did not seek to support and establish its own schools. Rather, the Bureau provided supervision, buildings, transportation for teachers, and the allowance that teachers could purchase rations from the government.[26]

John W. Alvord, a veteran abolitionist, was made the Bureau superintendent of schools. Alvord, who spent time as a student at Oneida Institute, Lane Theological Seminary, and Oberlin College, taught in a school for black students in Cincinnati in the 1830's. He also spent time as an American Anti-Slavery Society agent, and under the influence of Charles Grandison Finney, a leading figure in the religious revival that took place in the western states after 1824, Alvord became convinced "that abolitionist efforts should be imbued with more of the spirit of God and of prayer." Alvord later worked as a pastor in Congregational churches in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and during the Civil War he became a missionary to Union troops for the American Tract Society.

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[25] Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," 9.

[26] Ibid., 10.

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However, it was Alvord's efforts in helping freedmen establish a school system in Savannah, Georgia that attracted the attention of General O.O. Howard.[27]

Under Alvord, one agent within each state was delegated to act as the general superintendent of schools within his district. This district superintendent was responsible for helping the benevolent societies and the government officials to work together cooperatively.[28] When Alvord toured the South at the end of 1865, he reported finding 740 schools in which 90,589 pupils were enrolled. Because most of the schools were established by northern benevolent and religious societies, most of the 1,314 teachers were northerners, but a few southern whites had accepted positions to teach in the schools.[29]

Although the educational effort of freedmen in the South had clearly begun prior to July 1866, in that month Congress passed an additional act to provide a legal basis for the educational efforts. The Second Freedmen's Bill stated:

> that the commissioner shall have the power to seize, hold, use, lease, or sell all building and tenements, and any lands appertaining to the same or otherwise, formerly held under color of title by the late so-called confederate states, and not heretofore disposed of by the United States, and any buildings or lands held in trust for the same by any person… and to use the same or appropriate the proceeds derived therefrom to the education of the freed people.[30]

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[27] Robert C. Morris, ed., *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks Volume : Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, by John W. Alvord, Numbers 1-10, January, 1866- July 1870,* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980), iv.

[28] Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," 10.

[29] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks*, v.

[30] George P. Sanger, ed. *The Statutes at Large, Treaties and Proclamations, of the United States of America from December, 1865, to March, 1867*, Vol. XIV (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1868), 176.

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As a result of this statute, the Bureau was able to obtain income through the sale and lease of property formerly held by the Confederacy. From this income and from the direct appropriation of $521,000 by the government, the Bureau was able to provide much greater financial assistance to the schools.[31]

Also helping in the establishment of freedmen's schools was assistance that came from the northern states. Many northerners contributed millions of dollars toward establishing schools and many men and women left the North to come to the southern states to teach in the schools. The Freedmen's Bureau helped to coordinate the efforts of countless organizations that sought to contribute to the education of the former slaves.[32]

At least seventy-nine different organizations helped contribute to the educational activities of the freedmen, including The Presbyterian Commission of Home Missions, the Pennsylvania and New York branches of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, the Friends Freedmen's Association of Philadelphia, The Committee of Home Missions to Colored People, and the United Freedmen's Aid Commission. One of the best known of these organizations was the American Missionary Association, a nonsectarian group which was formed in 1846. The American Missionary Association (A.M.A.) held "an ethical belief in the injustice of human slavery and a desire to pursue missionary work on anti-slavery principles." Because of the A.M.A.'s work in the education of the freedmen, the Bureau sanctioned $243,753.22 for the work of the A.M.A. between 1867-1870.[33]

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[31] Parker, "Some Educational Activities of the Freedmen's Bureau," 11.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 12.

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Education in Texas

Educating the freedmen was no small undertaking. Across the South, slaves had rarely received any type of education and they were mostly illiterate. Only eleven free blacks, of more than 180,000 African Americans in the state of Texas, had attended any school in 1860. Texas there was no real public school system, and more than 18,000 white adults were also illiterate. Most white Texans were not dissimilar to whites across the southern states in their opposition to educating the freedmen. Because they viewed the African American race as inferior, many were afraid that education would make the freedmen "arrogant, stubborn, and resentful of what they thought his rightful place of social and political inferiority" was in their society.[34]

Opposition was further fueled by whites' fear that Radical Republicans would control the schools and their influence over the freedmen would help to keep the Radical Republicans in power. Others were fearful that their own white children would be forced to attend school with their former slaves. Many held onto the deathly fear that educating blacks would lead to insurrection. The lack of resources in Texas to educate any person caused many people to resist efforts to educate a race of people that whites viewed as inferior to their own. If freedmen were to receive any education, many whites felt that it should be strictly a vocational education, "equipping them only for further labor and not for leadership." [35]

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[34] Hornsby, "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas," 398.

[35] Prentis W. Chunn, Jr., "Education and Politics: A Study of the Negro in Reconstruction Texas," (M.A. Thesis, Southwest Texas State Teacher's College, 1957), 75-77.

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Lieutenant Edwin M. Wheelock, a northerner, author, lecturer, and chaplain, was appointed education director of the Bureau in Texas in 1865.[36] Wheelock worked to begin establishing schools, and in September 1865 a "colored" school was started in Galveston and quickly became successful. Although Alvord did not visit Texas on his 1865 tour of schools in the South, he reported on January 1, 1866, that there were six night schools and ten day schools in Texas. By the end of January 1866, Wheelock reported that the number of night schools had expanded to fourteen and the number of day schools to twelve.[37]

However, it quickly became clear to Wheelock that great challenges were going to arise during the effort to establish freedmen's schools. Large numbers of freedmen were unable to pay tuition or pay for their books. Therefore, the number of freedmen who could actually attend the schools was restricted because of insufficient funds. The Bureau did not initially have funding to pay teachers, and they were supported by a combination of tuition and any funding that was given by benevolent organizations. One of the greatest challenges was finding suitable buildings in which to hold the schools. Officials were often unable to rent or buy buildings in areas where local white opposition to the establishment of education for freedmen was strong. The black churches in which most schools were held had little equipment for teaching and were overall inadequate.[38]

Wheelock urged the Bureau to contribute to the support of teachers and the payment of tuition for students who were unable to pay. This suggestion was not heeded

[36] Hornsby, "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas," 399.

[37] Elliott, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," 7.

[38] Ibid., 9.

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by many officials, however, and those working for the establishment of freedmen's schools in Texas often faced much discouragement. Many teachers did not receive any payment from the Freedmen's Bureau in the initial years of their teaching. Wheelock expressed some of this discouragement when he wrote, "Those who attempt to impart the elements of knowledge and religion to the recently liberated slave are made to drink unsparingly of the cup of social reproach, and most blameless conduct insures no immunity from scurrilous and scandalous attack."[39]

Despite the disappointments, by July of 1866, the total number of schools in Texas had increased by nearly four times. There were ninety schools reported in which forty-three teachers taught 4,590 students. In the *Second Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances of Freedmen*, Alvord remarked about Texas that "no other state can show so rapid an increase." He also commented that the schools were generally prosperous even with little assistance from the North, and "though the standard of instruction needs elevating, yet, thrown thus upon their own resources, they have become nearly self-supporting."[40]

Whether true or not, Alvord also remarked that "the colored population passed quietly from slavery to freedom" in Texas and that they continued to work on their old plantations, being "generally well treated" and helping the economy of Texas to prosper. Yet, within the same report, Alvord observed that a large portion of Texas' population "is uncultivated, and has been disloyal and turbulent… [and] while there are many warm friends of the government and of the freedmen in Texas, it is the opinion of the State

[39] Ibid.

[40] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 9-10.

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commissioner that their schools could not go on at all without the presence of military authority." This was especially true in the rural districts.[41]

Alvord also emphasized that the former slaves were eager to become educated, "schools being the very summit of their ambition," and that "they submit very cheerfully to being taxed for their support." It was also observed that a large number of adults were attending schools and they were receiving moral and Christian training because of a large number of night and Sabbath schools in the state. Wheelock was recognized as a "thorough man" who had been managing the schools well, and many of the teachers were described as experienced because they had come to Texas from Louisiana where they had been teaching previously.[42]

However, by January 1867 Alvord wrote that the educational efforts for the freedmen were changing and that society in Texas was very unsettled. He remarked that the "schools, being a new institution, are no sooner even partially systematized than some untoward event throws them again into embarrassment." He described how white opposition to educating the freedmen was very strong within the state and the prejudice of many white people in Texas extended to teachers from the North. General Kiddoo advocated that as many black teachers as possible be found in order to provide "the double effect of emulation among the freedmen, and disarming the white population of one cause of prejudice against the efforts of the bureau."[43]

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 28.

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Alvord also reported that the freedmen were so desirous of education that they had been ambitious and had worked out the self-sustaining plan that had allowed the previous ninety schools to be developed. Nevertheless, "the freedmen for some reason were dissatisfied" and the numbers attending schools began to decline. Also observing that there were problems with organization and a lack of efficient management, Alvord described the loss of students as "a disastrous failure."[44]

At this point, General Kiddoo, who had taken over the Texas branch of the Bureau in May 1866, enlisted the help of the American Missionary Association to pay for all the teachers required in the state. It was hoped that the contribution of the American Missionary Association, along with the amount of money that the freedmen could contribute, would "make many of the schools-especially in the cities- 'free schools'." Alvord was very positive about the free schools because the state began to quickly see results. He emphasized that the "free schools" were "not designed to relieve the negroes from doing all they can themselves," but rather by adding the benevolent contributions to what the freedmen were already giving, they were able to "greatly enlarge as well as perfect the general plan for their education."[45]

In this report, the number of schools had decreased to twenty-nine day schools and five night schools. One thousand three hundred and sixty-six pupils were enrolled in the day and night schools, and 1,096 pupils were enrolled in eleven Sabbath schools. Because apparently there were many schools scattered around Texas in which black people with elementary knowledge were teaching but not reporting to the Bureau, Alvord

[44] Ibid., 27.

[45] Ibid.

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speculated “that at least ten thousand colored persons, old and young, have learned to spell and read in Texas within the year.”[46]

By July of 1867, General Kiddoo had been replaced by General Griffin as the assistant commissioner of the Bureau for the state, and Lieutenant J.T. Kirkman had taken over as superintendent of Texas schools. The number of reported day schools in Texas had increased to forty-four and the number of night schools to eleven. The number of pupils had more than doubled, reaching a total of 2,975 enrolled in day and nights schools and 2,182 students enrolled in twenty-three Sabbath schools. Though the Bureau had been unable to support teachers with compensation in its initial years, the number of teachers paid by the Bureau increased from a total of only fourteen in the previous report to forty white and eleven black teachers. This was a significant change for the teachers and the funding of the schools. Many had been relying solely on support from benevolent organizations and tuition which the freedmen were often unable to pay. The report on the state of the schools was encouraging, with Alvord stating, “Previous embarrassment will soon be overcome, and arrangements perfected in which it is hoped all can cordially unite.”[47]

The report was also hopeful that “the tone and temper of the people… has been moderating with revolutionary rapidity,” and that the time would not be far away when Texas would be able to establish a common school system. It was also reported that there were some towns where white people had donated land for schoolhouses, and a number of planters had applied for teachers and offered to furnish school buildings. The personal

[46] Ibid., 28.

[47] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 53-54.

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conduct of the teachers was reported as exceptional and they served with "zeal and devotion." The seventeen teachers sent by the American Missionary Association were "excellent" and there was hope that their number would increase.[48]

However, although some teachers were able to board with loyal German families, in most instances it was very difficult to find places for teachers to board where they were not treated poorly. In Hempstead, a teacher was ordered out of a home she was staying in after a rebel son returned home. Also, in areas where "ruffians and desperadoes" were in control, people remained very antagonistic to work of improvement for the freedmen.[49]

The report at the beginning of 1868 brought news that an epidemic of yellow fever in early June of the previous year had killed at least three teachers, hundreds of pupils, and the assistant commissioner of Texas, General Charles Griffin. Griffin was replaced by General J.J. Reynolds. The epidemic swept through the seaboard and the larger towns, and Alvord expressed a hope that the "liberal patronage from abroad" would return because of sympathy felt for the state.[50]

There were thirty-two teachers serving in thirty-four regularly reported day or night schools with a total of 1,133 students. Five regularly reported Sabbath schools served 394 students. Of the schools that were not regularly reported but "within the knowledge of the superintendent" there were twenty-six day or night schools with 689 students and thirty teachers and seven Sabbath schools with 515 students and thirteen teachers.[51]

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 39.

[51] Ibid., 38.

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By July of 1868, Joseph Welch had become the superintendent of education in Texas and his report on the freedmen's schools' growth was hopeful. Though the money for the schools had been exhausted the past summer followed by the failure of crops and the yellow fever epidemic, the schools had steadily begun to increase in attendance after hitting their lowest attendance in the month of December. There were forty-one regularly reported day and night schools and twenty-six regularly reported Sabbath schools. The number of teachers in both schools totaled thirty-seven and the number of students totaled 3,712. There were forty-eight irregularly reported schools in which 1,761 students attended. The grand total of all students attending freedmen's schools in Texas was 5,473.[52]

While the report on the growth of schools was positive, the reports on the treatment of teachers were discouraging. The teachers were described as "competent and faithful" in the face of attacks by "both the disloyal press and the community at large, with the vilest falsehoods and slanders." Even those who professed to be loyal to the government and desirous of education for the freedmen were "among the traducers of the fair fame of those engaged in the work," and they would not allow their families to associate with the teachers sent by the missionary societies. Welch was doubtful that any improvement in public opinion toward the white teachers from the North had happened. Julia O'Connor, a teacher sent to Georgetown, received insulting letters from some of the towns' citizens and was expelled from her boarding house. In Circleville, the school house was burned down and the teacher was forced to leave.[53]

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[52] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 42-43.

[53] Ibid.

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General Reynolds stated that the Bureau in Texas had adopted the idea of making the schools self-supporting, but the Bureau was still funding some schools when needed, expending $4,100.56 over the previous six months on rents, repairs, or materials for school buildings. The total cost to the Bureau for schools over that period was $5,729.98. Alvord also drew attention to the lack of means of freedmen to purchase books, and "the great difficulty in obtaining teachers, owing to the uncertainty of support." The report for the month ended with the statement that support from the government or benevolent agencies was needed in order to continue providing for the freedmen.[54]

Six months later, at the beginning of December 1868, the outlook on Bureau schools in Texas was again encouraging, despite negative reports throughout the state. The number of day and night schools had increased to fifty-seven regularly reported and twenty-four irregularly reported. The number of regularly reported Sabbath schools was thirty-seven, with fourteen irregularly reported Sabbath schools. The total number of students had increased to 5,764.[55]

General Reynolds reported that the accounts received from throughout the state were "an accumulation of oft-repeated horrors." He expressed that neither whites nor blacks seemed to show much interest in education, and that the black people did not always appreciate the efforts of people of their own race working to educate them. There was also great difficulty in securing moral teachers. Welch reported that "terrorism exercised by disorderly parties" had caused many of the schools to be closed, and a lack of continuity in support and attendance had hurt the schools. Both men emphasized that

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 37.

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the only way for freedmen's schools to be successful in the long-term in Texas was through a free-school system. Because most schools were unable to be self-supporting, support from the Bureau or northern benevolent societies was necessary to continue the educational efforts in Texas.[56]

In July of 1869, it was reported that there had been great improvement in educational interests. Even though the work to establish schools was "attended with hardship and sacrifice, even personal peril," and "rough habits of thought and conduct in many parts" was still "the general rule," people in the state were beginning to recognize "their necessities, and the inevitable march of progressive ideas." The schools were reported as being in a "more stable and promising condition" than ever before in Texas. [57]

Welch also recognized the more positive attitude of the press toward the freedmen's schools as an important gain for the educational cause. An excerpt from a newspaper in Waco reporting on the school of Julia and Mary O'Connor stated:

> We are not only willing, but anxious, to give our sanction and assistance to every effort properly made for the improvement of the colored people, and we love to see them enjoying themselves, if without injury and reproach to themselves or annoyance to the white citizens. We are decidedly in favor of the black people educating their children when able to do so and not neglect their duties.

Although clearly not supporting any type of equality between whites and blacks, the example from the newspaper illustrated a positive change of tone among the public about the education of the freedmen.[58]

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[56] Ibid., 36.

[57] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 53-54.

[58] Ibid.

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Still difficult at the time, however, was the obtainment of good teachers, the securing of support for teachers within the state, and the general public attitude toward the teachers. Although the praise of the missionary teachers did not waver, instances of "imposition by incompetent and dishonest teachers" were reported. One example was a teacher who obtained tuition a month in advance, and then left with the money, owing his students a month worth of teaching. Inspector General C.H. Howard attributed the problem with obtaining good teachers within the state to "the insecurity of life and the great expense of sending them." An agent of the American Tract Society spoke of the public sentiment toward the missionary teachers: "Scarcely any of the white citizens cultivate their acquaintance…Not a single minister of the gospel of any denomination has condescended to make their acquaintance, or in any way to recognize them as Christians."[59]

As Texas' government was becoming organized around black suffrage and legislatures were working toward the readmission of Texas into the Union, the Bureau began to withdraw most of its operations within the state, but not its continued support for the freedmen's schools. There were still gains in the number of students within the freedmen's schools. Seventy regularly reported day and night schools and forty-nine regularly reported Sabbath schools were operating. Of the irregularly reported schools, there were twenty-five day and night schools and twenty-five Sabbath schools. The freedmen were able to support at least partly sixty-nine of the schools, but the Bureau still expended $3,718.62 over a period of six months. The total number of students in the

[59] Ibid., 55.

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state had reached 8,516, and the overall tone of the report was positive about the future of the schools.[60]

In the report of January 1870, the number of students had decreased by over 2,000 to 6,499 total students in all schools. The number of regularly reported day and night schools dropped to forty-six, and regularly reported Sabbath schools dropped to forty-one. Irregularly reported schools also declined in number, with twenty day and night schools and twenty Sabbath schools. Freedmen were reported as able to only support fifteen schools wholly and thirty schools in part.[61]

Joseph Welch, Texas' Bureau Superintendent of Education, attributed the decrease in the number of schools and attendance to the "demand for labor in picking cotton" because many students were working in the fields rather than attending school, and other losses had occurred because of a disastrous flood the previous summer. Many schools were also closed from the beginning of July to mid-September, but there was hope that attendance would soon rise because the freedmen were working to increase the number of schools through the building of schools and the attainment of teachers and books.[62]

There were positive reports of improvements in school buildings and the supply of organs to schools in some of the major cities. Also, Welch was hopeful that Texas would soon be able to establish a free-school system. However, he also wrote of his

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[60] Ibid., 53.

[61] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 45.

[62] Ibid., 43.

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concerns about the control of the schools being given over wholly to the state government:

> I am convinced that it will be a tedious and difficult undertaking in this State to harmonize the conflicting prejudices of the people, so as to have a school system equal and uniform in its operation toward the two races. This renders it imperative that Congress, with special care, provide some means for aiding and protecting those whom it has made the wards of the nation until they shall be in a condition to help themselves.[63]

Bureau Superintendent of Schools John W. Alvord's final collective report on schools for freedmen was published in July of 1870. L.W. Stevenson reported as superintendent of schools for the state at that time. The reported numbers reflected the fact that the region north of the 32nd parallel had been taken from Texas' district and attached to Northern Louisiana. The total number of schools was 150 with 296 teachers and a grand total of 9,086 students. Freedmen were able to support wholly or in part sixty-one of the schools. Although officials worried that Texas would not be able to establish a school system because of difficulty in uniting "any effort which concerns the social condition" within the state, the report expressed hope that the state would work toward improvement and eventually prosper.[64]

Stevenson included within his report many of the concerns that had plagued the Bureau throughout its tenure. He maintained that the most fundamental problem in the way of complete success within the Bureau schools in Texas had been the attainment of good teachers, owing in large part to the lack of support, the remoteness of the state and the expense in traveling to such a far-off place, as well as the state's bad reputation. There was still a great prejudice against teachers and schools in many parts of Texas, but

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[63] Ibid., 44.

[64] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 36.

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there were also examples of changes in sentiment, such as the newspaper editor in Houston who had previously given a violent public speech against the schools but had since asked permission to visit the schools.[65]

In conclusion, Stevenson was positive about the overall condition of Texas. His outlook on the possibility of establishing public schools in Texas had changed, and he saw great prospects for having public school funds from which could be paid good salaries to teachers once the school system was established.[66] The Texas State Constitution, passed and then ratified in March 1870, established provisions for public school funding, and the next year the public school system would officially begin in the state.[67]

The Freedmen's Bureau's educational efforts in the state of Texas were characterized by great challenges, exciting victories, and disheartening defeats. Despite the challenges, the Bureau officials, freedmen, and teachers were able to establish hundreds of schools and thousands of formerly illiterate freedmen learned to read and write. In reflecting on the five years of educational work in Texas by the Bureau Stevenson stated that with "the extent of the field, with the small means at command to do with, we are satisfied that the general results will compare favorably with any State in the South." In summary, Stevenson believed that, "The Bureau [had] allayed prejudice,

[65] Ibid., 37.

[66] Ibid., 38.

[67] Randolph B. Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 21.

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confronted and combatted all difficulties, and paved the way for the quiet and peaceful establishment of a free school system by the State."[68]

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[68] Morris, *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks,* 38.

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CHAPTER THREE

McLennan County Freedmen's Schools, 1866-1868

McLennan County, Texas, was first established on January 22, 1850, as "a 1,035-square mile county with Waco Village at its center." Five years before, in 1845, Neil McLennan, built a house on the South Bosque. Shortly afterward, others began to settle in the area. By 1847, as the Texas frontier continued to expand northward, the Texas Rangers stationed a company "near the remains of the deserted Waco Indian Village." The Waco Indians had originally inhabited the area, but were driven out by Cherokee Indians around 1830.[1]

Settlers continued to come into the area, reassured by the presence of the Texas Ranger camp. Under the employment of Texas land impresario Jacob de Cordova, land surveyor George Bernard Erath laid out Waco Village on March 1, 1849. At the time of the creation of McLennan County, Waco Village had seventy-two residents, and there were eighty-four residents in the surrounding area.[2]

Five years later, in 1855, the county, though "still a clearing in the wilderness," had 1,190 houses and 15,003 cattle. However, the greatest source of wealth for county was the 1,048 slaves within its limits, which were valued at $539, 320.[3] By 1860, the number of slaves had increased to 2,404, and they were valued at over a million dollars.

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[1] Patricia Ward Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives: A Pictoral History of McLennan County, Texas* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Co., 1986), 16.

[2] Ibid., 16-17.

[3] Ibid., 18-19.

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The slaves produced 2,320 bales of cotton during the year. [4] From its founding, slave owners in McLennan County planted the Brazos River Valley with cotton. James Edward Harrison's 6,000 acre plantation, Tehuacana Retreat, was one of the largest in Texas.[5]

With the outbreak of the Civil War, the "county's economy rested on slave-produced cotton" and the slaveholders realized "that not only their livelihood but also their lifestyle was under threat." McLennan County raised an estimated seventeen military units to fight for the Confederacy.[6] While the county did not experience invasion during the war, the Union blockade of the county's main supply route through the Gulf of Mexico caused shortages of necessary items, and many people within the county became destitute.[7]

During the war, while most of the county's men were away fighting, cotton production slowed. Plantation agriculture came to an end after the Confederacy's defeat and the emancipation of the slaves. Tenant farming soon became the new model of agricultural production within the county.[8] Plantation land was broken up and leased in small plots, and much of the land was leased to the former slaves.[9]

As the Civil War ended and Reconstruction began in Texas, social conditions became difficult. While the war had "unquestionably wrought a significant change in the

[4] Ibid., 30.

[5] Ibid., 94.

[6] Sharon Bracken, ed., *Historic McLennan County: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2010), 25.

[7] Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives*, 30.

[8] Ibid., 94.

[9] Bracken, *Historic McLennan County*, 11.

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status of the former slaves… and the nation's constitutional structure, Southerners were determined that any alteration would be minimal."[10] With the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau and its entrance into the state, white resentment toward the Bureau stiffened because it was a symbol of the Confederacy's defeat and it was a barrier to the slave-like authority that the planters hoped to impose upon the freedmen.[11] The attitude of many white Texans was summarized by a writer in the *Houston Daily Telegraph* in June, 1865: "The relationship between master and servant is one rendered sacred in the hearts of the people of the South, by long-maintained political conviction, by domestic philosophies, sentiments and associations."[12]

The white attitude toward the freedmen was strong and sometimes violent throughout the state. During the Reconstruction period, branches of the Ku Klux Klan were organized to terrorize the freedmen.[13] As the freedmen received citizenship and the right to vote during Reconstruction, racial relations only became worse. In 1867, black voters in McLennan County were able to elect Shepard Mullins, a former slave, to the Texas Legislature, causing even greater resentment among many whites. In the period between 1866 and 1868, forty-two acts of mob violence were reported in McLennan County.[14]

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[10] Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 3.

[11] Ibid., 3.

[12] Ibid., 15.

[13] John Ramsey Gordon, "The Negro in McLennan County, Texas" (M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 1932), 5.

[14] Bracken, *Historic McLennan County*, 10.

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It was against such a backdrop of hostility that the Freedmen's Bureau entered McLennan County in 1866. One of the primary goals of the Bureau was to establish schools for the freedmen who had been denied an education as slaves. Schools for whites had existed in McLennan County since the first year of its existence, and by 1854, the county had fourteen school districts for white students. Some of the settlers in the county were college educated, and they desired a good education for their children. After the Civil War, both Waco University and Waco Female College operated in Waco.[15] While many of the white residents of McLennan County may have valued education, an article in a Waco newspaper may have best summed up the prevailing attitude toward black education:

> We are decidedly in favor of the black people educating their children when able to do so and not neglect their duties. But we do not approve their sending children to school from a mere 'hifalutin' idea of making them 'smart like white folks' while the parents are living in squalor and filth… Everything in order and each in its place.[16]

Despite the challenges that the Bureau faced in establishing freedmen's schools, between the years 1866 and 1868 a number of successful schools were established. In the "Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Texas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands," records of the schools and correspondence between the teachers in McLennan County and the Bureau are available. The records are often incomplete, and information about the teachers and schools is not always easy to surmise from the correspondence. Still, through the examination of these records, a picture of some of the first schools for freedmen in the county can be pieced together. Beginning in

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[15] Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives*, 64.

[16] Ira C. Colby, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas and Its Impact on the Emerging Social Welfare System and Black-White Social Relations, 1865-1885" (D.S.W. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1984), 93.

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1866, the Freedmen's Bureau schools in McLennan County offered the former slaves something they had never had before: an education.

The Bureau Enters McLennan County

On January 26, 1866, Lieutenant Eugene Smith, the appointed Sub-Assistant Commissioner for the 36th Sub-District of the Freedmen's Bureau in Texas, informed his superior of his arrival at his post. Within the 36th Sub-District were McLennan County, Falls County, and Bell County. After riding the railroad to the end of the line in Milican, he waited for the stagecoach which took him to Waco.[17] Milican was the terminus of the Central Railway and was more than a hundred miles from Waco.[18] Upon his arrival Smith was "very well pleased with the place," and he acknowledged that "from appearance there will be some work to do- As they have been anxious by waiting for the Bureau to come along."[19] Clearly viewing the establishment of the school as a fundamental aspect of his new duties, Smith concluded his letter by asking his superior to "tell Lt. Wheelock that from some little talk I have had with two or three citizens we shall be able to raise a school."[20]

Within the next month, Smith wrote to Lt. Edwin M. Wheelock, the education director for the Bureau in Texas, in response to a circular that had been sent out to each

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[17] Eugene Smith letter, January 26, 1866, State Records of the Superintendents of Education, Texas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M822).

[18] John Sleeper and J.C. Hutchins, *Waco and McLennan County, Texas: Containing a City Directory of Waco, Historical Sketches of the City and County; Biographical Sketches and Notices of a Few Prominent Citizens, Information with Regard to Our Various Institutions, Organizations, etc.* (Waco: Texian Press, 1966- Reprint of 1876 ed.), 20.

[19] Eugene Smith letter, January 26, 1866, State Records.

[20] Ibid.

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Freedmen's Bureau district on February 9, 1866. On February 23 he reported that he did not know of any schools for freedmen in Waco or anywhere around the area. Smith was unsure of the number of schools that could be organized, and was attempting to establish one, but he had been unsuccessful because of the difficulty in securing a room in which to meet. However, he discussed the situation with some of the freedmen and they "concluded to try and see if they could find a big house that would do." Smith attested to their willingness to help find a house by stating that if "they conclude to do so, they will make a frolick [sic] and all turn in an [sic] soon finish the job." Smith was anxious to see a school succeed in the area.[21] From the beginning, the freedmen took on a central role in the establishment of schools.

Smith also reported on the views of the planters in the area whom he described as "far from being converted yet 'to the new state of things.'" Through his conversations with them he found that they would agree with him while he was talking to them, but as soon as his back was turned they would "damn the Yankies [sic] for interfering with their slaves." The planters did not want or intend to give the former slaves any type of political or intellectual rights. Rather, they wanted the freedmen to be reduced again to some form of slavery.[22]

When Smith wrote to Wheelock again at the end of March, there was still not a school established in the Waco area because of the continued difficulty in finding a place to meet due to a great demand for housing in the area. He also reported that a group of freedmen from Bosqueville, a town six miles away, had come to speak with him about

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[21] Eugene Smith, letter to E.M. Wheelock, Feb. 23, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[22] Ibid.

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establishing a school. After Smith explained to them what would be necessary to start a school "they left with the intention on raising sufficient money to establish one there." Regarding their hopes for a school he stated, "I cannot think the people generally would be favorable to such a school. I know that some would but others would not and [because] it is a very busy time with hands, they have not really time to allow to it." The opposition to schools and the desire that freedmen remain in the fields continued to be the dominant view among planters.[23]

David F. Davis

Almost three months after Smith's arrival in McLennan County, on April 16, 1866, a white male teacher, David F. Davis, wrote to Wheelock from Waco, informing him of his arrival in the area.[24] Davis, a graduate of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, was in his early thirties, and he had been sent by the Bureau to McLennan County to establish a school.[25] He had "followed teaching in the North as a profession," and he came to Texas with a true belief in the greatness of the cause for educating freedmen.[26] He did not travel from the North to McLennan County simply for a job. Davis intended to "kindle the fires of knowledge…in the centre of Texas, which (would) spread like a prairie fire in every direction." Davis' excitement over the establishment of

[23] Eugene Smith, letter to E.M. Wheelock, March 27, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[24] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, April 16, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[25] United States Census Report, McLennan County, Texas, 1870.

[26] D.F. Davis, letter to Joseph Welch, November 5, 1868, Waco, State Records.

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a freedmen's school was evident when he informed Wheelock, "I thank you a thousand times for calling my attention to the grandness of this cause."[27]

Davis clearly viewed himself as the best person for the job of establishing a school for the freed people in Waco. He held strong views on the role of male schoolteachers and of his ability to be an effective educator. He insisted that although female teachers could do well as assistants, a male teacher as the head of a school was much more advantageous because he would better enforce discipline. He believed that "the presence of a man (was) required to infuse life and energy into a school & give a… color to the knowledge communicated." [28]

Upon Davis' initial arrival in Waco, there was no place available for a school to meet, and a church could not be used because the freedmen met on the Sabbath in the white people's church. [29] Difficulty in finding places to hold schools was a continual problem for the Bureau throughout its duration. The people who owned property to rent, the whites in the area, were generally unwilling to rent to freedmen's schools or schoolteachers. Though schools could often be held in black churches, it was not possible in cases such as the one Davis encountered where the black church did not have its own building.

However, Davis maintained a positive attitude and believed that everything seemed indicative of success in establishing a school. Finally he was able to secure a

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[27] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, April 16, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[28] Ibid.

[29] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, April 16, 1866, Waco, State Records.

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house to rent for his school which was owned by James Harris, a man who was "very friendly to the school." Speaking about Harris, Davis said,

> I really wish you would exert all the influence you have in your power over Gen. Kidd to secure the appointment of this gentlemen as the Sub Agent of the Freedmen's Bureau for this county. I have no words with which to describe the vast importance of there being one here. If one is not here soon the greatest imaginable difficulties will arise relative to the division of crops.

He had heard reports of a commissioner in a neighboring county being in "perfect leagues with the whites" and he was worried that the same could happen in McLennan County.[30]

Davis' statements about Harris are indicative of two problems the Bureau faced: Bureau agents who were not honest in their efforts to assist freedmen, and the antagonism of the whites toward the former slaves. Harris' friendliness toward the freedmen was highly unusual. In McLennan County, as across the rest of Texas and the southern states, many whites resisted, often violently, the efforts of the Bureau and teachers to help the freedmen. Davis seemed to believe that if the Bureau appointed an agent like Harris, it would be greatly beneficial for the county. If there was no agent, or an agent who was not honest, the whites would most likely take advantage of the freedmen.

Davis was determined to set his school up quickly, because on the 28th of April, 1866, less than two weeks after his arrival, he opened a school for freedmen in Waco. The school opened with twenty-five students in attendance and quickly grew to forty "with prospects of improving"[31] In his April "Report of Schools for Freedmen," which was a report sent to the Bureau at the end of each month for each freedmen's school, Davis stated that forty-nine students had been admitted. While the number of girls

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[30] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, July 5, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[31] Eugene Smith, letter to E.M. Wheelock, April 27, 1866, Waco, State Records.

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admitted was greater than boys admitted with a ratio of 29:20, the average attendance ratio was closer; eighteen boys and twenty-two girls attended on average.[32] The freedmen obviously desired an education for all their children, both male and female.

All of Davis' students were in the beginning stages of learning the alphabet and spelling.[33] Despite their age, it is highly unlikely that any of the freedmen at his school had ever been given the opportunity to learn to read. No slave in the state of Texas was ever recorded as attending school.[34] Teachers, like Davis, who initially started freedmen's schools, often had to begin their teaching with the very basics of reading instruction, but there were a small percentage of slaves who had learned to read on their own or who had been taught by their master or mistresses.

A month later, in May, Davis reported that average attendance for his school had increased to forty-eight students and admitted students had increased from forty-nine to fifty-three. Within the first month, ten students had begun reading, and six were working on menial arithmetic. The increased attendance at his school and the quick progress in the student's learning indicates Davis' hard work with his students and their desire to learn. Davis also established a Sunday School with five adults and thirty children in attendance. Most Sunday Schools offered a mix of teaching reading and writing skills and teaching about Christian faith.[35]

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[32] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, April 30, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Alton Hornsby, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas, 1865-1870," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, No. 4 (1973): 398.

[35] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, May 31, 1866, Waco, State Records.

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In June, Davis faced one of the greatest challenges of teaching in a freedmen's school, or likely any school in which the majority of students lived with their families on farms. While the desire to learn among freedmen was evident, making a living was also necessary. During the month, thirteen students left Davis' school to help their families work in the fields harvesting the crops.[36]

Despite the challenge of a significant drop in the number of students, some pupils in the school made progress. One student moved to written arithmetic, six moved to writing in a copy book, and eight were writing on a slate or black board. Presumably, writing on a slate or chalk board meant they were able to write words on their own. While the day school shrank, the Sunday School grew to fifteen adults and fifteen children in attendance. Perhaps the students who were not able to attend during the week because of their work in the fields, could attend on Sundays. Despite the difficulty in losing students, Davis retained a positive attitude and felt his school was progressing "very finely indeed." [37]

During July, the size of the school began to increase once more, and the average attendance of students during the month was forty-one. Within the first few months of the school's existence, all of the students mastered the alphabet and thirty were reading. Twenty-five were able to write on the slate or chalk board, and Davis began teaching grammar orally to one of the classes. To students who had never been exposed to learning these skills before, their quick mastery was impressive. Davis' Sunday School proved to be very popular and grew larger than the day school, with an attendance of

[36] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, June 30, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[37] Ibid.

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twenty adults and forty children.[38] Whether there was a crossover in the population of the day school and the Sunday School is not evident from the report. However, it is clear that many adults attending the Sunday School who might never have the opportunity to learn otherwise. Although the Sunday School only met one day a week as opposed to five days a week, it was still advantageous for a population that was largely illiterate.

While the Sunday School continued to grow with an attendance of twenty-five adults and forty children during August, average attendance at the day school again declined to an average attendance of thirty-five students. The greatest loss in August appeared to be students who had progressed in their ability and were able to write on the slate or chalk board. While twenty-five were reported in July, only thirteen were noted on the August report. While fifteen students had left the school, the total number of students admitted had risen to fifty-six.[39]

New students continued to join even as others left, as can be surmised from the four students in the alphabet stage when all students in the previous month's report had moved on to higher stages of learning. The "coming and going" of students would be a continual problem in the freedmen's schools. As students enrolled for the first time while others left to work on crops, moved to other schools, or simply chose not to attend, teachers had to adjust to the changing student population. One teacher was responsible for teaching a variety of students at varying levels of ability. [40]

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[38] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, July 31, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[39] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, August 31, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[40] Ibid.

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Davis closed his school for the month of September 1866 because the house in which the school had been meeting had been torn down by the owner, James Harris. Davis included no explanation for Harris' retaking of the building, and he did not express anger toward Harris, the man he had previously praised for his friendliness toward the freedmen. Rather, he expressed happiness that the building was taken from them. It had inspired the freedmen to "complete the building which was undertaken by them soon after [Davis] came" to the area.[41] Despite his positive attitude about the loss of his school building and his gladness that the freedmen were working to build their own schoolhouse, he was still left with the problem of having nowhere to hold his school. This surely was no small problem, owing to the shortage of available property and the unwillingness of most whites to rent to him.

Davis did begin to show signs of discouragement when his school remained closed again during October. He felt that during the school's closure "so much (had) been lost." Yet, the school was to open again on November 1 in the completed schoolhouse built by the freedmen. In speaking of what was lost, Davis may have been referring to the rented schoolhouse, the time that students did not spend learning, or the knowledge that may have been forgotten while students were away from school. However, he also may have been referring to the loss of tuition payments for those months.[42]

The November report from Davis was no less discouraging. The average attendance of his day school had dropped to twenty-four students, which he explained

[41] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M Wheelock, October 4, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[42] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1866, Waco, State Records.

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was "in consequence of the inability to pay tuition." The number of students in the Sunday School dropped as well, with an attendance of only fifteen adults and twenty-five students. Sixty-one students had been admitted to the school, but he was sending many away because they were not able to pay. Davis "refused to admit where they asked to be trusted knowing from experience" that many would not be able to pay despite promises to the contrary.[43]

Davis was facing a problem that would plague Bureau teachers everywhere- students who could not afford to pay tuition. Though his actions of turning students away may have appeared unsympathetic, Davis was not receiving compensation from the Bureau for his teaching because the Bureau had not begun giving teachers salaries. His pay most likely came solely from the student's tuition payments. If they did not pay him, he had no way of making a living. Many students, however, simply could not make the payments. In 1866 the freedmen were still in the beginning stages of learning to make their own livings and many lived in poverty, working as sharecroppers or not able to find work at all. Though the desire for education was strong for many, they simply could not afford to pay to attend school.

On November 20, 1866 Sheppard Mullens, a former slave and future politician, Stephen Cobb and William Hay, both black preachers, and Jeff Walker purchased a fourteen acre tract of land for $75. The area purchased sits at present day North Sixth Street and Waco Drive. A freedmen's school was reportedly held on the property, though it is not clear if this was Davis' school or not.[44]

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[43] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[44] Regina Dennis, "Historical Waco deed to be placed on display," Waco Tribune-Herald, February 3, 2010.

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Despite setbacks, Davis continued to show great pride in his school and his teaching ability. He praised his school when he wrote, "What I have cannot be surpassed I think in point of scholarship by any colord [sic] school in the South." He expressed the wish that the Bureau would send him a woman to assist him in his teaching duties, because he believed that his attendance would again increase after Christmas.[45] When he admitted two students who had been in another school previously (in another state), he commented that they had "not been drilled in the elementary sounds of the letters single and combined as they should have been" and he felt that they were far behind his own students. [46]

Perhaps one reason that Davis praised his teaching and his school so readily was that he had heard that two women were being sent to Waco to teach by the Bureau. Davis was concerned because he wanted to secure the position as the only teacher to be supported by the Bureau in the area. Though the Bureau was not paying him, he probably hoped that they would in the near future. If other teachers came to the area, he would not only be competing for the support of the Bureau, but he would also have to compete for students as well. Acquiring students who were able to pay tuition had already proved a problem, and he clearly viewed other teachers coming to the area as a threat rather than as a positive step in educating the freedmen.[47]

In late December, Davis requested that the Bureau assist the freedmen by helping put a floor, seats, and windows in the schoolhouse. Davis believed that the freedmen had

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[45] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, December 9, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[46] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[47] Ibid.

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“done very well in purchasing the lot and building the house,” and some white people had “acted nobly” by assisting in buying supplies. Davis also asked for reimbursement for the April through August rent he had paid himself. It would seem that the freed men and women, and even a few white people, had done an admirable job constructing a schoolhouse. Thus far, it appeared that they had done it all with little help from the Bureau, but Davis hoped that the Bureau would be willing to help them complete it.[48]

In the end of December 1866, Davis’ school did begin to increase its attendance from twenty-four to thirty-four again as he had predicted. However, only twenty-nine were paying tuition, and Davis had obviously begun allowing some of his former students back into school whether they paid tuition or not. All of his students were reading and twenty-two students had progressed to learning geography. Twenty adults and thirty-five children were attending Sunday School during the month. At the end of 1866, things were beginning to look better for Davis. Students were returning to school, he hoped the Bureau would help furnish the schoolhouse, and his students were progressing academically.[49] If he were allowed to remain the sole Bureau teacher in the county, Davis believed his school would be successful.

However, by January of 1867 Davis had still not officially secured a position as a Bureau teacher, but he had heard that an order had been sent out for the establishment of schools, most probably indicating that the Bureau was able to begin helping support the schools by paying teachers. Presumably, Davis hoped that with an official position as teacher for the Bureau, he would begin receiving payment. He wrote to Wheelock on

[48] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, December 25, 1866, Waco, State Records.

[49] D.F. Davis, Report on Schools for Freedmen, December 31, 1866, Waco, State Records.

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January 31, 1867, expressing the desire that he be informed when the order for the establishment of schools was to go into effect, and requesting that he should be informed about how to secure his position as teacher. He requested knowledge of the highest amount he could be paid, and stated that if he were able to secure a large enough salary, he would be able to continue to "educate scholars who will reflect credit upon the colored race."[50]

Also in January 1867 A.T. Manning replaced Eugene Smith as the Sub Assistant Commissioner for the 36th District. Davis described Manning as a man who commanded "the respect and confidence of both races." Manning quickly addressed the issue of establishing new schools within the District, and he met with a group of planters to discuss establishing schools on their plantations. The names of the planters were not revealed, but he believed they were "willing an [sic] anxious to have schools on their places and say as soon as possible they will build houses for schools." However, they were too busy at that time to begin building the schools because they were "overrun with business getting the crops" and would have to commence with the building when they were not so busy.[51] Whether or not the planters were being truthful about their intentions, Manning was able to speak with them and he commanded enough respect that they listened.

While Manning met with planters about new schools, Davis continued teaching in his Waco school, and his hopes that things would improve after Christmas came true. He reported an average attendance of forty-seven with forty-nine students paying tuition,

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[50] D.F. Davis, letter to E.M. Wheelock, January 31, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[51] A.T. Manning, letter to E.M. Wheelock, January 1, 1867, Waco, State Records.

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both significant increases from the month before. Four students advanced to the higher branches and thirty-four students were in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd readers. Davis continued to promote his ability as an exceptional teacher, as he attributed the "great promise" of the school to his own "patience and unwearied energy." Some of the freedmen must have been doing somewhat better financially because a greater number were able to pay tuition and Davis requested that the Bureau allow him to ask for an increase in tuition to fifty cents a month. He believed that all of his students could easily pay, quite a contrast from a few months before when he struggled to get many students to pay any tuition at all.[52]

By the end of February, the Bureau allowed Davis to raise his tuition price, but he still had not received reimbursement for his rental expenditures. The Bureau continually lacked funds, and teachers often waited in vain for reimbursement. Because of the growth of his school, Davis also insisted that he needed two assistants. He had two pupils in his own school who were willing to become assistants provided they could be "remunerated for it."[53] If these two students had truly progressed well enough in less than a year to become teaching assistants, it was a testament to the progress Davis was making in his school. However, most likely because of a lack of funds, the Bureau did not approve the payment of the assistants, and he again requested they be appointed the next month.[54]

While the average attendance for the school remained the same in February, it began rising again in March. Davis was teaching fifty-one students on average, a large

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[52] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, January 31, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[53] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, February 28, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[54] D.F. Davis, Report of School for Freedmen, March 31, 1867, Waco, State Records.

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number for one teacher to handle. His students were also at varying levels of advancement, adding to the difficulty of teaching such a large number at once. While ten students were reported as learning the alphabet, presumably mostly new students, thirty-five could read, do menial arithmetic and were learning geography. The Sunday School was attended by twenty adults and thirty children. Despite the difficulties of teaching large numbers, Davis continued to help his students advance in their learning and the school appeared to be thriving.[55]

Students continued to enroll in Davis' school, and he had fifty-nine students attending on average by April 1867. However, the school once again faced the challenge of a lack of students paying tuition. During April only twenty-five students paid Davis.[56] It is not evident why Davis continued to allow them to attend, except that he did have a desire that the freedmen be educated and he had expressed his belief in the cause. Perhaps he did not feel right about turning them away.

Another difficulty that the school faced in April was the breaking of the schoolhouse roof. It was "for want of means a carpenter was not employed when the house was created," and the freedmen were inexperienced with building. They had fastened the plates with nails that were too heavy and the pressure had caused the plates on the roof to break. The freedmen took up a collection to pay for the repairs.[57] James Jay Emerson, who replaced Manning as Sub-Assistant Commissioner, wrote that the

[55] Ibid.

[56] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[57] Ibid.

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school was in a "dilapidated condition having been blown down." The school was being repaired as quickly as possible, but it still had no floor or desks. [58]

The freedmen were doing the best they could to take care of the schoolhouse, but a lack of experience in building construction and a lack of money caused the building to be in bad shape.[59] Still, the freed people were "making every effort to educate their children," and in East Waco, across the river from the city, the people told Emerson they could give $150 to $200 toward the erection of a schoolhouse.[60] Though the Bureau sent the teachers to the schools, the freedmen were taking responsibility for erecting the houses. Without the freedmen's efforts, there would not be a place for the school to meet. On August 21 Emerson reported that because of the efforts of the freedmen, there was again a very good school. However, he felt that a larger schoolhouse was needed and he began to make efforts toward building one.[61]

Little was reported about the school during September, but at the beginning of October Emerson reported that he believed "there was a good feeling by the whites towards the free school." A group called The Loyal Union League had donated $75 to the school, and the freedpeople were "making some effort to build a large school house having been encouraged… that the U.S. Govt would assist them to some extent."[62] A unit of the Union League was located in Marlin, a town in neighboring Falls County.[63]

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[58] James Jay Emerson, letter to J.F. Kirkman, May 21, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[59] James Jay Emerson, letter to J.F. Kirkman, July 1, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[60] James Jay Emerson, letter to J.F. Kirkman, May 21, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[61] James Jay Emerson, letter to J.F. Kirkman, August 21, 1867, Waco, State Records..

[62] James Jay Emerson, letter to Charles Garritson, October 1, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[63] Colby, *The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas*, 196.

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The Loyal Union League was originally organized in the North in 1863 in support of the policies of President Lincoln. Soon, local Union Leagues began to spring up among blacks and Unionist whites across the South, and by 1867, the Union League had emerged as the "political voice of the impoverished freedmen." The main function of the League was political education, and by the end of 1867 it seemed that "virtually every black voter in the South had enrolled in the Union League or some equivalent political organization." However, as they did in McLennan County, the League also contributed toward and worked to promote the building of schools and churches.[64]

In late October, Emerson reported that the Union League had once again given the school $90 for repairs, but the Bureau had still not given assistance to fix the floors, which apparently had been applied for at some time previously. If it was not fixed, the schoolhouse would not be in a "fit condition to use" during the winter.[65] At the end of November, Emerson reported that the Union League had contributed a great deal toward the school house in Waco, but the white people showed little desire to help the freedmen. Emerson advised the freedmen that they needed to repair the school house themselves, and they did so.[66] Even with minimal assistance, the freedmen continued to work to support their school.

During the final months of 1867 and for the first five months of 1868, little was reported on Davis' school. However, in June 1868, Davis reported an average attendance of forty-seven students at his school, even though fifty-five were paying tuition. His

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[64] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution. 1863*-1877 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 283-285.

[65] James Jay Emerson, letter to Bureau, October 31, 1867, Waco, State Records.

[66] James Jay Emerson, letter to Lieutenant Richardson, November 30, 1867, Waco, State Records.

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school appeared to have recovered from any problems with the schoolhouse and many of his students had advanced to higher levels of learning. Thirty-five were able to write on the slate and chalk board, which most likely meant that they were able to spell words on their own. Twenty-six studied geography, and sixteen were in the "higher branches." Davis was again leading a Sunday School that twenty adults and thirty children attended.[67]

During the first fifteen days of September, Davis' school averaged fifty students, a slight increase from earlier in the summer.[68] However, on September 16th, 1868, Davis discharged his school for the remainder of the month so that his students could work in the fields to pick cotton.[69] Upon reconvening his school in October, Davis had an average attendance of forty-five students. Fifty-five students were continuing to pay tuition.[70] A number of tuition paying students may have been absent as they continued to work in the fields.

On November 5, Davis wrote to Welch requesting that Stephen Cobb be appointed as an assistant teacher in his school. Cobb, a freedman, was the first pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, which was formed in 1866.[71] Davis requested that Cobb be paid fifteen dollars per month because he had heard that was what teachers were entitled to. Davis was not receiving any payment from the government, even though he had been

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[67] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, June 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[68] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, September 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[69] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, September 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[70] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[71] Garry H. Radford, *African-American Heritage in Waco, Texas: Life Stories of Those Who Believed They Could Overcome Impediments* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2000), 9.

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appointed as a teacher by the Bureau, so he considered it only fair that Cobb be compensated. Davis also bragged that his school had the most disciplined scholars in the state. Although he insisted that he was entitled to compensation for his teaching services, he had been "urged so strongly to remain" that he planned to stay for at least a little longer.[72]

However, Charles Hughes, the appointed Sub-Commissioner for the Sub-District at that time, was most likely not one who was urging Davis to stay. At the end of September, Hughes wrote a letter to Lieutenant Morse, the Secretary of Civil Affairs for the State of Texas, concerning the appointment of D.F. Davis as the Registrar of Voters for the city. It was possible Davis wanted this job because he would have a salary, considering that he was not receiving compensation for his teaching from the Bureau.

Although Hughes believed that Davis was a man of "good intellect and education" he remarked Davis was not a man of good morals. Davis had been seen often in the company of freedwomen, and there was a freedwoman in town with a child. Apparently, Hughes was convinced that the evidence against Davis was so strong that he had no doubt that the child was Davis'. It was known publicly, and Hughes had given Davis opportunity to clear his name, but he had not done so. Because he felt that appointment of Davis as the Registrar of Voters "would give the rebels too good a chance to cry 'Scalawag' and that justly too," he urged that Davis not receive the appointment.[73]

However, Davis remained in Waco through November, and he had forty-one students attending on average and forty-nine students paying tuition. Twenty-two of his

[72] D.F. Davis, letter to Joseph Welch, November 5, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[73] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant E. Morse, September 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

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students had advanced to writing and he described his school as "well organized" and "different from a newly established one."[74] Although he still had a large school, Davis most likely felt threatened by some of the newly established schools in the area. He had desired to operate the only school for freedmen in the area in order to ensure the Bureau's support.

There was no report for Davis' school in December 1868, and by the next year, he was no longer teaching in Waco. However, Davis quickly became involved in politics in McLennan County. Davis had served as the president of the Radical Republican state convention in 1868 and he was a great supporter of Edmund J. Davis. D.F. Davis won the position of District Clerk in 1869, and in mid-January of 1870 Davis sought and received an appointment to the position of county judge. During his time in Waco, Davis had, with the support of the freedmen, established a school that averaged over forty pupils that remained in existence for almost three years. Davis not only greatly impacted the freedmen he educated and the future of the Freedmen's Bureau educational efforts in McLennan County, but he also earned the title of "McLennan County's most important carpetbagger."[75]

Hughes' Reports

Throughout 1868, the number of freedmen's schools in McLennan County began to grow. While Davis continued his school, several other teachers began schools in Waco and other parts of the county. While many of the schools only lasted a short time, they

[74] D.F. Davis, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[75] Randolph B. Campbell, *Grass-roots Reconstruction in Texas, 1865-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 171-181.

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are still important as examples of the strong effort to provide education for the freedmen of McLennan County. Because their correspondence with the Bureau was limited, it is difficult to piece together knowledge of the teachers and schools. However, a record of these schools was kept by the Sub Assistant Commissioner for the District, Charles Hughes, who replaced James Jay Emerson in April of 1868. His reports reveal not only the particular schools formed during the time period, but also the attitude of the white community toward the establishment of those freedmen's schools.

Upon his appointment as Sub-Commissioner, Hughes wrote to Welch to ask that books be sent to the freed children within the 36th Sub-District. He believed they were in great need of books, and he presumed that Welch knew of a benevolent organization that would help obtain them. Hughes was likely referring to one of the many benevolent organizations from the North which helped provide aid and teachers for the freedmen's schools. He also wrote that there were few schools in his Sub District at the time, but he could "start many more in due time by proper exertion."[76] Hughes' intention to focus on the educational responsibility of his position was apparent. For the remainder of 1868 he worked diligently to foster an environment where freedmen's schools would flourish. It was only later that month that Hughes reported five schools in his Sub District. He reported that one school, taught by E. Morton, was located in Waco and had 130 students in day school and 300 students in Sunday School. Although Hughes described Morton as a religious fanatic, he wrote that he was "doing good things."[77]

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[76] Charles Hughes, letter to Joseph Welch, April 11, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[77] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Richardson, April 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

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At the end of May, Hughes reported that the whites, including the teacher of the white school, were "doing all in their power to discontinue or break up the school" in the town.[78] By the end of June, however, he reported that there was not "anything particular against the education of freedmen" and they were spending everything possible to educate their children.[79] There was little explanation for the change in the white hostility, but even so, the lack of opposition did not last long.

Hughes' "Sub Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report" for June of 1868, listed D.F. Davis, E. Morton, and Green Bynum as the teachers of the three schools in McLennan County, all located in Waco. He also suggested that schools could be organized and supported in Spring Hill, Bosqueville, and Gatesville. In reporting "the public sentiment as to the education of the Freedmen and poor Whites," Hughes reported that wealthy whites favored educating the freedmen while the poorer class opposed it.[80] The rich, who were most likely more educated than the poor whites, probably did not feel as threatened. The poor whites, whom were as uneducated as many of the freedmen, resisted anything that they viewed would make the freedmen superior to them.

During July, Hughes reported that there were five places in which he could organize schools and two hundred students could attend such schools. Public opinion had improved toward the education of freedmen, and Hughes believed that a majority of people were in favor of it.[81] By August, Hughes continued to see improvement in the

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[78] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, May 31, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[79] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, June 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[80] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, June 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

[81] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, July 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

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public sentiment toward educating freedmen. Opposition had calmed down and the people were "more quiet" at that time "than at any past time."[82] However, Hughes believed that the sentiment was in favor of education because of the political advantage that could be seen if freedmen could be persuaded to vote for the Democratic ticket. When the freedmen gained the right to vote, they gained a great advantage. They were allowed a role in political elections, and the whites wanted to use that role to their advantage. The whites, most of whom were Democrats, hoped to persuade the freedmen to support the Democratic ticket in order to end Republican Reconstruction. Hughes also reported that Davis and Morton continued their schools and a Mr. King was also teaching a school in Waco at White Rock Creek. Hughes continued to make arrangements to establish schools in other areas of Waco and his sub-district.[83]

On September 26, Hughes responded to a letter written to him by Captain Roberts in the State Bureau Office in which he was asked to "call a meeting of the influential few and have a board of trustees appointed." Hughes wrote that he had called the meeting and a board of six members had been formed. The trustees had found a lot "in the best situation in the city" and it had been deeded to them for school purposes and they intended to build a schoolhouse on it. Hughes recommended building a two-story house for two hundred students. He also recommended that it have a room for older students and a room for younger students which could be divided into several smaller rooms "after

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[82] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, August 31, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[83] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, August 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

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the style of the some of the Union schoolhouses in the North."[84] This style would be most conducive to teaching students at varying levels.

At the end of the month, Hughes wrote that most of the schools had been closed so the children could pick cotton. For an unexplained reason, Morton had left his school to teach in Bosque County. Hughes had rented school houses for the freedmen and he felt they were doing everything they could to pay their teachers. The Bureau could help the freedmen by "sending them good teachers, [since] very few men (could) be found who (would) teach freedmen's schools."[85] The inability to secure teachers who would travel to Texas and endure the challenges of teaching in a Bureau school was a continual problem throughout the Bureau's duration.

In his October report, Hughes wrote that Davis and Bynum continued their schools in Waco, but Alban Hobin, S.W. McCain, Mrs. M.E. Burns, W.W. Hay, Charles King, John J.H. Dozier, Miss Hattie Massey, and J.T. Williamson were also listed as teaching freedmen's schools in Waco.[86] By mid- November, Hughes wrote to Welch recommending Mrs. M.E. Burns, Miss Hattie Massey, Green Bynum, S.W. McCain, J.T. Williamson, Charles King, and Alban Hobin be appointed as teachers by the Bureau.[87]

Even with the increase in teachers, Hughes wrote that five more teachers were needed. Despite the rise in the number of schools and teachers, there was still only one schoolhouse in the Sub-District, Davis' schoolhouse, and it was owned by the freedmen.

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[84] Charles Hughes, letter to Captain Roberts, September 26, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[85] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, September 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[86] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, October 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

[87] Charles Hughes, letter to Joseph Welch, November 15, 1868, Waco, State Records.

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The other schools were most likely being held in rented spaces. He estimated that thirty more schoolhouses were wanted within the Sub-District. Although this was an admirable expansion plan, it appears that, given the difficulty in establishing and maintaining schools up to that date, such a plan was not truly feasible.

Hughes encouraged the freedmen to appoint boards or trustees within each neighborhood. He still believed that educated white people were in favor of educating freedmen, but the "poor 'white trash'" were very much against it. Hughes also said that nothing could be done by the Bureau to help the poor whites because trying to assist them was "like trying to pet a rattlesnake."[88]

Hughes' November report listed nine day schools and four Sunday Schools within his Sub-District. Public sentiment continued to be against the education of freedmen and the poor whites were still "antagonistic in spirit" toward the Bureau. Although he had reported previously that he believed Northern charitable aid would probably only be needed for a couple of more years, in this report he wrote that it would needed "until the present generation of Southerners die."[89]

On December 7, Hughes wrote of the challenges that the schools were facing. He wrote that the freedpeople were working to do everything in their power to organize and support the schools, but it was "almost impossible to get competent teachers of good moral character." The interference of whites was also a major hindrance to the success of the freedmen's schools. He noted that "the people have broken up by threats of violence,

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[88] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, October 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

[89] Charles Hughes, Sub-Assistant Commissioner's Monthly Report, November 1868, No. 36, Waco, State Records.

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three schools, during the month, and have prevented the organization of three others."[90] By the end of 1868, the white public sentiment against the schools seemed to have reached a new height. As a number of new schools were organized, white resistance grew stronger.

Though Hughes' records reveal a great deal about the sentiment of the white population, reports from the individual schools, which are described below, reveal what was happening within the schools. Even though some of the schools only existed for a short time, the teachers faced huge challenges.

William W. Hay

William W. Hay first reported teaching a school in McLennan County during the month of October 1868. Hay, a black preacher originally from Tennessee, was around fifty years old.[91] He only had two students paying tuition, but he had an average attendance of twenty students. All of his students had received little to no education previously because they were all still learning the alphabet or were reading in the Primer or 1st Reader.[92]

By November, his school had increased slightly with an average attendance of twenty-two students, most of whom were still learning the alphabet or were in the beginning stages of reading. However, Hay was forced to suspend his school because of "interferences on the part of the whites." He felt that his life was at risk teaching in his school, and although he did not specify what the "interferences" were, it can be assumed

[90] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Vernon, December 7, 1868, Waco.

[91] United States Census Report, McLennan County, Texas, 1870.

[92] W.W. Hay, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

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that the whites in his area were using violent intimidation to get him to quit teaching the freedmen. Hay hoped that "time (would) assuage the passions of the lawless."[93] In his short time teaching in McLennan County, Hay faced one of the greatest challenges of the freedmen's schoolteachers in his experience with white hostility toward his efforts.

Alban Hobin

Like Hay, Hobin's first report for his school was in October 1868. He reported an average attendance of twenty-four students and twenty-six students paying tuition. Seven students were learning the alphabet but twelve had advanced to writing on the slate and the chalkboard, and were "for the most part very industrious and attentive to their books." Hobin also reported that he intended to open a night school as soon as the cotton picking season was over and he had reason to believe it would be largely attended.[94]

By November, many of his students had advanced quickly to higher levels, with twenty-one in advanced readers and learning arithmetic, but his school had dropped in attendance and in the number of students paying tuition. Hobin expressed what undoubtedly many teachers felt when he wrote: "the greatest difficulty experienced in conducting a school…is in collecting tuition fees yet still the scholars, themselves are to all appearances very eager to acquire knowledge." He felt that if the government would pay the teachers, "the number of scholars would be doubled, as in that case many children who are unable to attend school on account of the want of means could be taught

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[93] W.W. Hay, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

[94] Alban Hobin, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

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gratuitously."[95] It is not known how long Hobin continued his school, but even during his short time teaching, he had helped his students to advance in their learning at a fast rate.

B.H. King

B.H. King, who taught in a place called White Rock, had an average attendance of thirty students at his school, and they all paid tuition. Ten students were reading in primers and twelve were writing on slates or on the chalkboard. King also taught a Sunday School that sixteen adults attended.[96]

Like Hay, King had to leave his White Rock school in November because of the hostile actions of the whites, and he moved his school into the city of Waco. Most likely, the lawlessness was worse in the country than in town. He averaged twenty-five students and he reported thirty paying tuition. Still, he reported that the greatest troubles came from the inability of people to pay tuition. He believed, like Hobin, that if the government would pay the teachers, the schools would grow tremendously. Many parents wanted to send their children to school but they were not able to because of a "want of means."[97]

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[95] Alban Hobin, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

[96] B.H. King, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1868, White Rock Creek, State Records.

[97] B.H. King, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1868,White Rock Creek, State Records.

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Green Bynum

In April 1868, Green Bynum, a preacher, reported that he was teaching a day school with twenty-two students on the Davis Plantation.[98] By October of 1868, however, he reported beginning a new school. He only met with his school in October to estimate attendance for a report. He estimated an average attendance of twenty-six, with only one student in the 2nd or advanced reader. Bynum wrote that the people were enthusiastic and they saw no reason why the school should not prosper.[99]

By the next month, although he had only collected a dollar in tuition because the collection time had not occurred, "the people redily [sic] and chearfuly [sic]" were willing to help in anything that needed to be done. He had an average attendance of thirty students in his school, and although most students were in the early stages of learning, the school was prospering and twenty-eight scholars had learned the alphabet and some were learning to spell.[100] Bynum, unlike many of the other teachers, would continue his teaching in McLennan County into 1869.

Though not found in the Bureau Superintendent Records, there was another school for freedmen called Howard Institute located at 600 North Sixth Street, reportedly opened as early as 1865. White northerners taught at the school, but local blacks Rev. Andrew W. Jones and his wife Mrs. Nannie T. Jones were also teachers. The school closed in 1972.[101]

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[98] Charles Hughes, letter to Lieutenant Richardson, April 30, 1868, Waco, State Records.

[99] Green Bynum, Report of Schools for Freedmen, October 31, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

[100] Green Bynum, Report of Schools for Freedmen, November 30, 1868, McLennan County, State Records.

[101] Jay M. Butler, "James Harrison and the Development of Harrison Switch," (M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 1989), 77.

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The teachers of the freedmen's schools in McLennan County during 1866-1867, like other teachers across the state, faced the enormous challenges of establishing and maintaining schools in an area where people were resentful of the Bureau's efforts. As the Bureau teachers worked to expand and grow their schools, the white hostility toward them only grew stronger. The freedmen faced the continual racism and resentment of the white population, but they worked hard to support the schools that were established. Still, many of the freedmen lived in poverty, and they were often unable to pay tuition. Teachers faced the continual problem of a lack of funding for their schools. Still, even amidst the hostility, and with a lack of salaries paid by the Bureau, the teachers continued to teach. D.F. Davis and others were committed to educating the freedmen, and within the first few years of the Bureau's work in the county, hundreds learned to read and write in their schools. Because of the teachers' and freedmen's efforts in establishing schools, the Bureau educational effort continued in McLennan County during 1869 and 1870, even as the Bureau shut down most of its other operations within the state.

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CHAPTER FOUR

McLennan County Freedmen's Schools, 1869-1870

In January 1869, General Edward R.S. Canby was given the primary responsibility of closing down the Texas Freedmen's Bureau. He did not initiate or expand any programs, but rather he was in charge of the "closing of the local offices, the discharging of agency staff, and finally, the organizing and sending to Washington, D.C. all previous reports, circular orders, and communications received and sent by the Texas Bureau." The Bureau was essentially brought to an end in Texas by May 1869, except for its involvement in education.[1]

Assistant Commissioner General Joseph J. Reynolds described the condition of the state in a letter to General O.O. Howard : "The great extent of territory and difficulty of travel and correspondence in Texas have embarrassed the operation of the Bureau… The universal failure to execute criminal law is appalling. There are many law abiding good people in Texas, but it is a remarkable fact that the aggregate sentiment of the people, generally, regardless of party or politics, is adverse to punishing man for murder or other great crimes."[2] The violent racism that existed among great numbers of the white population throughout the state, confronted any person desiring to help the freedmen.

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[1] Ira C. Colby, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas and Its Impact on the Emerging Social Welfare System and Black-White Social Relations, 1865-1885" (D.S.W. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1984), 88.

[2] Ibid., 86-87.

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Like most of the state, in McClennan County, "an ugly backdrop of terror" continued to exist for the freedmen and teachers of freedmen's schools, as many whites continued to use violence and intimidation to stop their efforts. The white people within the county remained largely unhappy with the Reconstruction politics that were imposed on them. However, they formed their own methods of dealing with it. In 1870, there was controversy as Texas governor Edmund J. Davis appointed the Radical Republican John W. Oliver as a district judge for McLennan County. His plan to use a large sheriff's force to "Republicanize" the county was ended when the commissioners' court would not pay for his increased sheriff's expenses. Oliver was so angry that he put the entire court in jail and required that a fine be paid for their release. Though some men wanted to lynch Oliver, state legislator Edward S. Gurley worked out that Oliver would be declared insane by McLennan County physicians, and that the jailed commissioners would be issued a "writ of lunacy."[3]

As controversy continued to rage throughout McLennan County, the state of Texas, and the United States, a small group of people remained to help educate the freedmen. Despite the closing of almost all operations of the Freedmen's Bureau, the schools in Texas continued to operate. However, midway through 1870, the Freedmen's Bureau's role in educating the freedmen began to end. The schools were eventually handed over to northern benevolent societies and many were closed for good.[4] Yet, throughout the last year and half of the Freedmen's Bureau's school's existence in McLennan County, hundreds of freedmen were exposed to reading, writing, arithmetic,

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[3] Patricia Ward Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives: A Pictoral History of McLennan County, Texas* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Co., 1986), 31.

[4] Alton Hornsby, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Texas, 1865-1870," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, No. 4 (1973): 414.

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geography, and grammar. Former slaves who were adjusting to a life of freedom were given an opportunity they had never been given before.

The men and women who displayed the determination required to continue their work in the schools, revealed the incredible hardships they faced, their motivations for teaching, and their belief that they were making great progress in the education of the freedmen, through their letters and reports sent to the Bureau. Despite the lack of funds, lack of supplies, difficulties with transportation and correspondence, and the overwhelming white hostility displayed toward them, these teachers came to McLennan County and left a lasting impact through their contributions educating the freedmen. Several men who had taught in years previous continued their work, while different teachers started new schools in the area to carry on the work started before them.

James D. Scarlett

In November 1868, Charles King had been forced to move his school into the city of Waco because of the violence he had encountered from the white people while teaching a school at White Rock. Whether or not he expected his students to follow him was not apparent, but in January 1869 he reported that he had average attendance of thirty-two students attending his school in town.[5] However, King's report was somewhat conflicting with another report sent to the Bureau by James D. Scarlett. King had been unable to pay the rent on his schoolhouse for the month of January, and he had taken a position within Scarlett's school as assistant teacher. King's students were absorbed into

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[5] Charles King, Report of Schools for Freedmen, January 31, 1869, Waco, State Records of the Superintendents of Education, Texas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M822)

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Scarlett's school, but Scarlett had no intention of co-teaching with King. In the combined school, fifteen of the students were writing and working on arithmetic. Scarlett also reported that they had started a night school that averaged twenty-five students.[6]

It is not clear at what exact date Scarlett, a Methodist minister, began teaching in Waco, but it seems most likely that he took over Davis' former school. It is also not clear whether Scarlett had previously lived in McLennan County or if he came from another area. In his correspondence with the Bureau, Scarlett took on the role as a leader in the freedmen's schools of the area, much as Davis had previously done. He communicated all news of the school committee, trustees, and the building of a new schoolhouse. His letters were always well-written with excellent penmanship, grammar, spelling, and a strong vocabulary. Although his educational background was never revealed in his correspondence, he possessed the skills of a well-educated person.

Scarlett also clearly believed himself capable to teach well. In his assessment of the school he took over, Scarlett believed that "the school had previously been left to the couloured assistants as the highest reading classes could not read the easiest sentences without the succession of repetitions." Whether this was true or not, Scarlett believed that under his instruction he would quickly see improvement.[7]

By February, he began to see progress in his pupils, but within the same month he surmised that his school was "torn asunder by party feeling and jealousy." Scarlett was referring to a number of female students leaving his school to attend a female school in the area, and many of the younger boys were leaving to attend McCain's school.

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[6] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, January 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[7] Ibid.

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However, in his February report Scarlett reported the impressive numbers of forty-seven students in the second and advanced readers, twenty-seven in arithmetic and twenty-nine writing. He also reported an attendance of thirty at a night school, but he did not give any other information, other than that King continued to assist him.[8]

Many of Scarlett's letters were laced with indications of feelings of competition between teachers for students. Although the loss of student's paying tuition was most likely a concern for Scarlett, his letters seemed to indicate his own feelings of jealousy and discouragement that another teacher would be preferred over him. Scarlett believed the freedmen were "easily acted and addicted to change schools for the most trifling cause."[9] The disruption of fluctuating numbers of students most likely plagued every school. There were no boundaries to indicate where students were to attend school, and there was probably school switching often. The constant loss or gain in the student population most likely made consistency in teaching extremely difficult.

Despite his frustrations, Scarlett viewed his education work as the "work of God." Scarlett was committed to his work because he believed that God was using him to help the freedmen through education. Describing his role as a teacher of a freedman's school, he wrote, "Seeing the ignorance of the great majority of those colored people and the terrible hostility of the Southern people to any Northern man making any effort for Educating or Elevating them in Society I have conscientiously consecrated myself to the Lord to perform whatever work opened out before me. Providentially I think I see his

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[8] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, February 26, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[9] Ibid.

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guiding Providence."[10] Scarlett viewed God's hand as the guiding force behind the work to help the freedmen.

As a religious man, Scarlett was also very concerned with morality, and at one point he became alarmed at King's actions. Scarlett was sure that King had collected a tuition payment from a family that moved away and would not be attending the school. King claimed to Scarlett that he had not collected any such payment. However, Scarlett requested of the Bureau that in the future the government allowance be placed in his hands in order to secure a "just division of the several sums paid for tuition."[11] Because teachers were given the responsibility to handle the payments of tuition, dishonesty could have occurred in this way easily. It would seem unlikely, however, that most teachers were involved in teaching solely for the money. Tuition was often unpaid and teachers continually struggled to support themselves on what money they were receiving for their duties.

For example, in March 1869, Scarlett reported an average attendance of forty-eight and only twenty students paying tuition at his school, which he started identifying as "Barronville." He had collected only $10.90 in tuition payments for the month. Despite his earlier complaints of setbacks, his school had increased in attendance from his February report. Twelve new students came to his school during the month, and seven moved into the 1st Reader. Scarlett appeared to be equipped to handle teaching

[10] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, May 4, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[11] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, February 26, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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students at various levels of educational need. Despite losses of students, the addition of new students or lack of tuition payment, his students continued to progress.[12]

For unexplained reasons, Scarlett no longer held a night school during March, but a number of adults did attend a Bible Class and a Sunday School was organized for children during the month. Scarlett reported that "the prospect (was) brightening for (the) school," but he had great fear that he would lose most if not all of his students to work on the farms for the following three months.[13] Students were needed to help their parents harvest the crops in order for the families to make some kind of living. As students left the schools, often months at a time, they not only lost valuable instructional time, but most likely also lost some of the knowledge they had already attained in school, because they were not practicing their skills. As teachers like Scarlett worked diligently to help their pupils advance, the loss of most if not all scholars for extended periods of time surely hindered the development of their schools and their teaching.

By April, Scarlett reported an average of thirty-seven students in his day school. He lost an average of eleven students, but his school still appeared to be functioning well. Though he lost many students to their work on the farms, many new students were admitted into the alphabet class during the month. It took them only a few days to advance into the 1st Reader. Although all classes were progressing, reading and writing were the main areas of study.[14] Scarlett made adaptations to his school based on the needs of students. While some of his more advanced students were in the fields, he

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[12] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, March 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[13] Ibid.

[14] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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focused on teaching the most fundamental skills to help his students advance. In May, the school averaged twenty-nine in attendance, a drop of eight students since April. Only twelve of the students were paying tuition. Because of Scarlett's emphasis on reading and writing skills, all twenty-nine students had begun writing.[15]

While attendance at the day school suffered somewhat, thirty students were attending Scarlett's Sunday School in May when it had only been started the month previous. Sunday School was more accessible for those who were laboring for most of the week. While teaching students once a week was obviously not as advantageous as weeklong schooling, for those blacks who were illiterate, their exposure to learning on Sundays had great benefit. As Scarlett described, when starting the Sunday School, it became clear to him that "a number of Widows and crippled persons (were) not educating their families in consequence of poverty." He hoped that the Sunday School would be an opportunity to "counteract the evil." Scarlett believed that the Sunday School, which McCain, another freedmen's school teacher, was helping run, "showed encouraging indications for the success by the number present."[16]

Like other missionaries who became teachers in the Bureau schools, Scarlett viewed his role as a minister to the freedmen. He could help them by giving them the opportunity to read, write, and learn about religious faith. Scarlett expected the Sunday School to grow, but, he was short on supplies, a usual occurrence in freedmen's schools.

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[15] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 20, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[16] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, May 25, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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He requested of the Bureau that a greater number of reading primers and Bibles be sent to him.[17]

Despite his encouragements in the success of the Sunday School, Scarlett was discouraged by what he viewed as attacks from other religious denominations. He believed that the Baptists were taking every opportunity to attack the Methodist doctrines and "the leading [Baptist] characters [were] using secret influence for [his] removal." Whatever the extent of the attacks, or the reasons for them, there was some kind of controversy between the denominations, which Scarlett felt only added to the obstacles of educating the freedmen. However, he boasted that despite efforts against him, his work was the Lord's and it could not be overthrown, another example of religious motivation behind Scarlett's work with the freedmen.[18]

One of the greatest problems that the teachers of freedmen's school faced was the inability of students to pay tuition. Scarlett described the people as generally very poor. Because of "the hostile feeling raging in the country against Freedmen," the city had become "overstocked with workers" and many were unable to pay tuition on time or at all.[19] By his report at the end of April, Scarlett expected a total of $19.00 tuition payment for the month, but he had not yet received it.[20] By the end of June, he had only received $10.25 in tuition payment.[21]

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[17] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 20, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[18] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, May 25, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[19] Ibid.

[20] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[21] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, June 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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Although the teachers had begun receiving compensation from the Bureau for their teaching by 1869, rent on schoolhouses often had to be paid from tuition, and the compensation from the government was small. Still, Scarlett's motivations were not to make money in his work. He contemplated dropping the price of tuition and allowing some scholars in for free.[22] Welch told Scarlett that he should not do so, however, because "it would injure the other Bureau teachers in Waco."[23]

Other than a request for transportation submitted to the Bureau in October 1869, Scarlett's record of correspondence with the Bureau was nonexistent after the first six months of 1869, and how long Scarlett continued teaching is not known.[24] However, it is clear that Scarlett was a man motivated by his religious zeal to help the freedmen. Although he complained that he faced opposition not only from whites but also other teachers and members of other denominations, Scarlett continued his teaching and worked to establish a school because he viewed it as God's work. Though his tenure as a teacher did not last long, he was determined to work against the evils of ignorance and offer the freedmen an education.

Julia and Mary O'Connor

Sisters Julia and Mary O'Connor, mostly likely from the North, had worked as teachers in Georgetown, a town about seventy-five miles south of Waco, but had closed their school in December of 1868.[25] During their time in Georgetown, they had lived at

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Joseph Welch, letter to James D. Scarlett, June 8, 1869, Austin, State Records.

[24] E. Bartholomew, letter to James D. Scarlett, October 8, 1869, Austin, State Records.

[25] In the U.S. Census of 1860, a thirty year old seamstress, Julia O'Connor, and a nineteen year old teacher, Mary O'Connor, were listed as living together in Potsdam, New York. Both were born in Ireland.

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the local boarding house, but other residents of the boarding house began to move out because of their presence. The hostility of the whites in the town toward the sisters and their role as teachers of freedmen, left them no other option but to board with a black family in the community.[26]

The deputy sheriff of Williamson County was "sweet" on Julia, but when she rejected his advances, he destroyed any chance the women had for continuing their school in the town. One night when he was drunk, he went to Julia's house and "implied that the girls had certain deficiencies of character." After his outburst, a rumor was spread that the sisters "engaged in sexual relations with almost anyone, anywhere, any time and that they particularly fancied local Negroes and Yankee soldiers, whites and blacks alike." Because of their anguish and continued hostility toward the sisters, they closed the school and left the town in December 1868.[27] Teachers of freedmen's schools were continually ostracized from white society because of their role. They became victims of the racism and ignorance of many whites, and were treated cruelly continually throughout the southern states.

Despite their experiences in Georgetown, the O'Connor sisters did not give up. Sometime in January 1869, Julia O'Connor was sent by the Bureau to teach in Waco. On February 16 she wrote to Welch to let him know that she was in Waco, and upon arriving at the schoolhouse, she found Scarlett teaching there. Scarlett refused to give up the school, and Julia requested guidance about what to do, because she was "under a great

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[26] James M. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans during Reconstruction* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1981), 80-81.

[27] Ibid.

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deal of expense" being in Waco, and she had "no money at all."[28] King, Scarlett's assistant teacher, made an offer to "partner" with Miss O'Connor but she did not accept it.[29] Julia's letters were well-written, and it was obvious she was a well-educated woman herself. Although never indicated, it is likely that she came from the North, perhaps sent by one of the benevolent organizations.

Julia's determination was evident. After being run out of Georgetown, she arrived in Waco only to find her teaching position was unavailable. She had no money, and it can be assumed that she received very little help of any kind.[30] Yet, a couple of days later she wrote to Welch to tell him she had decided to rent a schoolhouse for $15.00 a month and that she would teach only girls. She expected that at least fifty girls would attend because there were enough students in town to support two schools.[31]

Julia must have made an excellent impression on the freedwomen in the community, because several told her they would send their daughters to her school and they would pay the first month's rent.[32] Julia was able to reach out to members of the freed community and they trusted her enough to help her start a school for their children. She showed great strength in her ability to survive and not give up on educating the freedmen.

For three days in February, Julia conducted her new school for girls with eight girls in attendance. Students were quickly attracted to her school, and by the third day of

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[28] Julia O'Connor, letter to Joseph Welch, February 16, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[29] C.H. King letter, February 26, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[30] Julia O'Connor, letter to Joseph Welch, February 16, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[31] Julia O'Connor to Joseph Welch, February 18, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[32] Ibid.

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March she reported twenty-two students, and she expected "to get a good many more next month." She believed there would be sufficient scholars for two teachers, and she asked Welch to send her sister to help her soon.[33]

She found that the schoolhouse previously occupied by Mr. Hobin, owned by Mr. Lovejoy, was vacant so she planned to move into it the next month. Lovejoy had received a payment of rent from the government for the house, even though he believed that the government had discontinued payments. He had not heard anything from Welch, but Julia told him she wanted the house.[34] Communication was often a challenge with the Bureau. The size of the state and lack of a sufficient number of agents to run the Bureau in many areas surely caused correspondence to be lost and administrative tasks to be overlooked.

Upon moving into Lovejoy's schoolhouse, Julia quickly began wishing for something larger, because there was no place for her to stay within the present schoolhouse. Because it was "almost an impossibility to get a boarding house" in the area, she was desperate to have a place to stay.[35] Julia faced the same problem she had encountered in Georgetown, a problem teachers encountered across the state. As people refused to board teachers, they most probably did so in hope that they would be forced to leave, but Julia persisted on.

Perhaps she also wished for a larger schoolhouse, because her school continued to grow. During March, thirty-four girls were attending on average, an increase of twenty-

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[33] Julia O'Connor, letter to Joseph Welch, March 3, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Julia O'Connor, letter to E. Bartholomew, March 1, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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six students in her first two months of teaching. Thirty-one students were paying tuition, and she received $21.00 in tuition payment for the month of March, a larger amount than many teachers received. Twenty-three of her students were in the 2nd and Advanced Readers, were learning arithmetic, and were writing. Although many of her students had been in school previously, they were making great advances under her tutelage. Julia was also teaching needlework to twenty-four of her students, a skill that no male teachers in the area were attempting at their co-educational schools. She stated that she was doing all she could to encourage her students. [36]

Julia also desired to start a Sunday School, but she did not have any catechisms to use. She requested catechisms for several months before receiving them, and she also requested some elementary charts, which she felt would be beneficial to learning. The schoolhouse also did not have a blackboard, which would have been very advantageous to her teaching. Shortages of resources seemed to be a consistent problem within the schools, as teachers wrote regularly to the Bureau requesting supplies that were necessary for teaching.[37]

Scarlett had some catechisms at his school, but he had not allowed Julia's students to take them when they left. Scarlett claimed that he kept the books because they were only sent to his students and not Julia's.[38] Shortages of supplies and the competition for tuition paying students did not seem to foster any sort of cooperation between the two

[36] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, March 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[37] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[38] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, March 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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schools, at least on Scarlett's part.[39] Many teachers most likely felt very much "on their own" as they worked to set up their schools.

Still, by April, Julia reported an average attendance of forty-five students, an increase of eleven students within the month. The freedmen must have been impressed with her, because they also began sending their sons to her school, and eighteen boys had enrolled within the month. Twenty-eight students had progressed to the 2nd and advanced readers, arithmetic, and writing, an increase of five from the month before. Her students continued to advance in skill, and the size of her school continued to increase.[40]

By May, Julia must have finally received the catechisms, because she did begin a Sunday School that twenty-five students attended. However, her day school attendance remained about the same, and she began experiencing problems in collecting tuition. Forty-six students attended her day school on average for the month, and twelve of those students were more than sixteen years of age. The progress of the students remained about the same as well, with twenty-four in the advanced readers, writing, and performing arithmetic. Only twenty students paid tuition because most simply did not have the money to pay.[41]

On June 19th, Julia wrote that she and her sister Mary, who had arrived in Waco to teach with her, "were getting along very well with the school, only the colored people (were) poor and it (was) very hard to collect anything from some of them." She also wrote that she had never received the checks from the Bureau for the previous month, and

[39] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 26, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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they were much needed. Without help from the government, it would be almost impossible to support themselves. She also hoped for some type of compensation for travel expenses for Mary's journey to Waco as she had not received any yet.[42] Mary had spent $21.00 of her own money making the trip, and a distressed Julia asked, "She spent a great deal of money to come here... Will she never receive any in return?"[43]

The lack of funds from the Bureau was a continual frustration for many teachers, who were already struggling to keep their schools afloat when students could not pay tuition. So many of the freedmen were struggling to make a living in Waco, and although they wanted to attend or have their children attend the schools, they were not able to give any money toward their support.

Still, the sisters continued teaching through the month of June, and their attendance remained largely the same, with an average of forty-five students in the day school. The Sunday School attendance increased to thirty-five, ten more students than the month before. Like the month previous, twenty-four students continued in the 2nd and Advanced Readers, writing, and arithmetic.[44] Perhaps the sisters could not collect enough tuition, or perhaps the Bureau could not continue to pay teachers in the area, but sometime during 1870 the sisters left Waco.

Julia and Mary O'Connor were determined women who were obviously committed to teaching. Their school grew quickly and maintained its students, and the students progressed quickly. The sisters did not let a lack of friends, money, supplies,

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[42] Julia O'Connor, letter to Joseph Welch, June 19, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[43] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 26, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[44] Julia O'Connor, Report of Schools for Freedmen, June 24, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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and support keep them from establishing a school in Waco, and many freedmen learned because of their commitment to teaching.

J.T. Williamson

J.T. Williamson opened a school on Andrews' plantation in November 1868. By February 1869 his school had an average attendance of twenty-six students. Three students were in the first reader and five were in the second and advanced reader. Although none of his students had progressed to writing or geography and only one was learning arithmetic, he reported that the freedpeople were very satisfied with the progress of the school.[45]

In March, Williamson's school remained about the same size with an average attendance of twenty-five students. Like all the other teachers in Waco, he reported problems with tuition payments. Only five of his students paid tuition, and he had received only $5.25 in tuition for the month. He also reported that the attendance of many of his students was sporadic. Many "would come one day, and stop one or two days." Despite their inconsistent attendance, six of his students were in the third reader, and arithmetic and writing, a great advance from the month before when no students had begun either subject.[46]

In April, Williamson's school attendance and progress remained largely consistent with the month before. He reported an average attendance of twenty-four in his school for the month. Six of his students had advanced to the 3rd Reader and seven were doing arithmetic. Although his school may not have been progressing as quickly as

[45] J.T. Williamson, Report of Schools for Freedmen, February 1869, Waco, State Records.

[46] J.T. Williamson, Report of Schools for Freedmen, March 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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some of the other schools in the area, considering the difficulty with inconsistent attendance, Williamson was making progress.

Like the other schools, many of his students were pulled away to help with the crops. When he held a small examination on May Day, "the people seemed to be very well satisfied with their children."[47] Williamson expressed a genuine concern that his students do well and that the freedmen were happy with his school.

In May, twenty-four students were attending on average. Seven of the students were writing and doing arithmetic. Although he had only five students who paid tuition and he had received only $4.00 for the month, Williamson maintained his positive attitude when he reported that his school was doing well and the people were satisfied.[48] Even when he did not receive his payment from the Bureau, he continued operating his school and politely asked that he be sent payment as soon as possible. By December 1869 Williamson reported he had received no payment from the Bureau for four months during that year. Even though he surely struggled to support himself during that period, he only wrote that he hoped he would be given what the Bureau had promised him.[49]

Little record is found of Williamson's school until February of 1870, when he reported that he moved from his school in Waco to teach in Marlin, a town in neighboring Falls County.[50] Perhaps he believed that there was more opportunity in that area, because of the number of schools that already existed in McLennan County. However, during his time teaching at Andrews' Plantation, he maintained a positive

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[47] J.T. Williamson, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[48] J.T. Williamson, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[49] J.T. Williamson, letter to Joseph Welch, December 24, 1870, Waco, State Records.

[50] J.T. Williamson, February 21, 1870, Waco, State Records.

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attitude about the progress of his school and his pupils, despite a lack of funds or support from the Bureau. Williamson appeared to have performed his teaching "services faithfully and to the general satisfaction of all."[51]

S.W. McCain

S.W. McCain, who had begun teaching a school in Waco toward the end of 1868, continued his school for at least a few months in 1869. Scarlett had complained that some of the younger boys from his school departed to attend McCain's school, and McCain reported that his school continued to increase in attendance. McCain's letters were written with many spelling and grammatical errors and nearly illegible handwriting. His education was clearly not as advanced as Scarlett's or O'Connor's, but he worked to establish his school and help his students, and his school educated a number of freedmen.

McCain believed that if the Bureau would pay the rent for the schoolhouse and a certain amount to let some students attend the schools for free, it would benefit the schools greatly. Many of his students were unable to pay tuition because they did not have the money. James D. Scarlett reported that more than half of the people in Waco were living in poverty, and the southern whites would "never allow a cent to benefit the couloured race."[52] It was clear that without the Bureau and assistance from benevolent organizations from the North, the freedmen had little other hope for assistance.

McCain reported thirty students enrolled at his school for March of 1869 and an average attendance of twenty-six. Eight adults and ten children attended his Sunday

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[51] J.T. Williamson to Joseph Welch, December 24, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[52] James D. Scarlett, Report of Schools for Freedmen, January 29, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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School.[53] By April his average attendance had increased to thirty-two students, twenty-six of which paid tuition. Still, he requested any other assistance the Bureau could give him, even though the rent on his schoolhouse was also being paid by the Bureau.[54] McCain clearly struggled with a lack of funds like all the other freedmen's school teachers. His school was growing, but whether or not he was able to continue his school is difficult to know.

Green Bynum

Apparently Green Bynum, who had begun a school in November 1868, had never officially been appointed teacher of the Pleasant Hill School on W.W. Downs' Lower Plantation, because he wrote to Welch at the beginning of April requesting his appointment as teacher. His willingness to continue teaching despite not receiving any compensation from the Bureau is evidence of his desire to help the freedmen. At the beginning of May, Bynum again requested an appointment as teacher at Pleasant Hill School. He described his school as a "great accommodation to the neighborhood of youth," and the students were making "considerable advancement."[55] In a letter recommending Bynum as teacher on his plantation, W.W. Downs wrote that Bynum was "sober, honest, industrious and attentive to his duties as a preacher" as well as "a man more than ordinarily capable of teaching a school."[56] Whether the slowness in the appointment of Bynum as a teacher was a problem with communication or

[53] S.W. McCain, Report of Schools for Freedmen, March 31, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[54] S.W. McCain, Report of Schools for Freedmen, April, 30, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[55] Green Bynum, letter to Joseph Welch, May 8, 1869, McLennan County, State Records.

[56] W.W. Downs, letter to Joseph Welch, May 10, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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disorganization within the Bureau, regardless, the teachers often had to deal with the inefficiency of the Bureau system.

Attendance had been averaging between twenty-five and thirty students in Bynum's school, but like almost all other schools, had dropped to between fifteen to twenty students "oweing [sic] to the pressing time of the crops."[57] By the end of May he reported an increased average attendance of twenty-four students, but only one student was paying tuition. Although sixteen students were still in the primer and first reader, all thirty students were reported as writing. He believed that the children were learning "reasonably well," but he did not plan on teaching the next month, because the children would be needed in the fields to help their parents with the crops.[58]

At the beginning of April, Green Bynum moved his school to Colonel Ashley Speight's Plantation and he taught about thirty students there. He requested that he be assisted in the payment of rent, but he did not receive any reply. He had only received $13.00 in tuition and the school was supported wholly by the freedmen.[59] Bynum was admired for dedication and industry in his preaching and teaching. Like many teachers, he was most likely motivated by his faith to help the freedmen further themselves through education.

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[57] Green Bynum, letter to Joseph Welch, April 3, 1865, McLennan County, State Records.

[58] Green Bynum, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 1869, McLennan County, State Records.

[59] Green Bynum, letter to Louis Stevenson, May 7, 1870, McLennan County; Bynum School Report for May 1870, McLennan County, State Records.

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J.J.H. Dozier

In May 1869, J.J.H. Dozier, a black man in his late thirties who was born in North Carolina, sent in a report for his school, which had actually started the previous month.[60] Dozier was an African Methodist Episcopal preacher as well as teacher, and his school was about ten miles outside of Waco, at a place called Spring Hill. Dozier reported that there were already forty-four students enrolled in his day school and thirty were attending on average. However, only ten of those students were paying tuition. Dozier asked that he be sent $10.00 each month to pay the rent on the schoolhouse, or he would have to quit teaching. He did not want to stop teaching, and his students were "learning might fast." All but one of his students had mastered the alphabet and were reading. Ten had already moved up to the 2nd and Advanced Readers and twelve were writing.[61]

Dozier also held a night school that had a total enrollment of thirty-four, but only twelve attended on average. While the day school had only two students enrolled who were over sixteen years of age, seventeen of the night school students were over sixteen. Most of the night school students were still learning the alphabet or were in the beginning stages of reading. Dozier also conducted a Sunday School that twenty-five adults and fourteen children attended.[62] The number of adults attending Dozier's night school and Sunday School proved the great desire of so many freedmen to learn. Though they had to work during the day to support themselves, many wanted to learn to read and write.

[60] United States Census Report, McLennan County, Texas, 1870.

[61] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to Joseph Welch, May 25, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[62] J.J. H. Dozier, Report of Schools for Freedmen, May 1869, McLennan County, State Records.

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Dozier reported an increase in average attendance from thirty in May to thirty-seven for June. The number of tuition-paying students continued to increase with twenty students paying a total of $20.00 for the month. He was no longer holding his night school in which thirty-four students had been enrolled the previous month, and he gave no explanation why. All of his students had learned the alphabet and they had advanced in all areas. He believed that they were doing extremely well and that the people enjoyed learning. His Sunday School had grown remarkably with an attendance of twenty-eight adults and thirty-nine children.[63]

The students were unable to pay him much tuition until all the crops were gathered, and even then there was not much promise of receiving enough tuition for him to survive. The freedmen in the area were poor and in debt to the white people. Dozier felt that he was entitled to at least $15.00 because that is what J.T. Williamson was paid, and if he did not receive it, he would have to stop teaching and find another way to support his wife and four children.[64] Dozier and his wife, Sarah, had children ranging in age from one to thirteen.[65]

However, a month later, Dozier was still teaching in his school and he wrote that his school was "getting a long as well as can be expected."[66] In October he again wrote to Welch asking for the balance of the school funds that were due him as he had not been paid for part of August or September. He was closing his school for a month of vacation,

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[63]J.J.H. Dozier, Report of Schools for Freedmen, June 1869, McLennan County , State Records.

[64] J.J.H Dozier, letter to Joseph Welch, August 18, 1869, Waco.; J.J.H. Dozier, letter to Joseph Welch, August 24, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[65] United States Census Report, McLennan County, Texas, 1870.

[66] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to Joseph Welch, September 15, 1869, Waco, State Records.

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in order that the children could assist their parents in gathering the cotton crop. Dozier needed his salary in order to pay off debts and to purchase winter clothes for his family.[67]

On January 20, 1870, Dozier requested that the Bureau pay the salary of a white woman named M.A. Whitley, who he had asked to assist him in his school. He described her as a good teacher, but she wanted "to be in co. with some man because the children will not be governed by her."[68] When Julia O'Connor left Waco, Dozier questioned whether or not he should take up her school while he let his out for vacation. Dozier heard that she had left because the Bureau would only support one school in town. The other school in Waco, however, had too many students for one teacher to handle. The people had asked him to take up the school, and he intended to do so.[69]

In June, Dozier had been ordered to take charge of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Waco, but his school was ten miles away. Because he did not have a horse, he could not walk the distance to the church every Sunday. He closed his school on the 30th of the month and rented a house in Waco in which to hold a new school.[70] His Spring Hill school was averaging forty students in attendance when it was closed.[71]

After June, there were no Bureau reports on Dozier's school. He remained a Bureau teacher despite difficulties in providing for his family. Like the other preachers who took on the role of teachers, Dozier was most likely committed to his teaching

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[67] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to Joseph Welch, October 4, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[68] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to E. Bartholomew, January 20, 1870, Waco, State Records.

[69] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to E. Bartholomew, May 6, 1870, Waco, State Records.

[70] J.J.H. Dozier, letter to Louis Stevenson, June 18th, 1870, Waco, State Records.

[71] J.J.H. Dozier, Teacher's Monthly School Report, June 1870, Spring Hill, State Records.

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because of his religious faith. Dozier, Scarlett, and Bynum took on the dual roles of preacher and teacher in performing "God's work."

Building a Schoolhouse

While the teachers of the freedmen's schools were an integral and necessary part of the beginnings of education for the freedmen in McLennan County, the freedmen themselves also played a vital role in establishing the schools. Besides working to support the schools through funds, they also helped to provide places for the schools to meet. In 1869, the school trustees who had previously been appointed in Waco worked to have a new schoolhouse built in the city of Waco.

At the end of March 1869, Sheppard Mullens and Shedrick Willis, two school trustees, wrote to Joseph Welch to report that they had raised $300.00 to purchase property on which to build a schoolhouse. They were anxious to "have a schoolhouse erected immediately," but the freedmen were in dispute about the best place to build. One of the places considered was "about five hundred yards from the white people's male college" and five hundred yards from the public square. Many families of freedmen were settled in the area. The male college he described was presumably Waco University, which would later merge with Baylor University. [72] The other area was about a half mile from the public square, and it was "a high and dry place but the only chance for water (was) to dry a cistern." Because the freedmen were equally divided in choosing between

[72] Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives*, 64-65.

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two places, Mullens and Willis requested that Welch himself come and choose the best place to build.[73]

A meeting was held by the school committee on the 13th of April about the purchasing of land for the school house, and the next day, Scarlett wrote to Welch to report on the decisions made at the meeting. The school committee had voted in favor of buying four lots in the Northeast part of Waco. A majority of the freedmen had agreed that it was the best place, and six of seven committee members had voted in favor of the decision.[74]

The place was considered the most suitable considering that there could not be a school in East Waco "in consequence of the opposition of the white inhabitants" in that area. Though there was no explanation as to why, only one committee member had voted for the land west of the city. The land would cost a total of $250.00, and Scarlett believed that "the whole matter (had) been managed much quieter than could have been supposed under the circumstances."[75] A group of freedmen purchasing land to build a school was most likely not supported by the hostile white community. Through their efforts, the freedmen were proving that they could accomplish something independently of their former slave owners. Through asserting their freedom and purchasing the land, the freedmen surely felt pride in their achievement, and the inimical white community was most likely not welcoming to such an obvious example of how things had begun to change in the community.

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[73] Sheppard Mullens and Shedrick Willis, letter to Joseph Welch, March 28, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[74] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, April 14, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[75] Ibid.

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A few days later, Scarlett again wrote to Welch, requesting that he sanction the purchase as soon as possible. Scarlett learned that Shedrick Willis had purchased the land provisionally two months prior to the vote. It became necessary to purchase the land immediately in order to avoid losing it.[76] He also wrote that there had been some controversy over funds and the school building among the school committee, but the controversy was resolved by adding four members to the committee and making them School Trustees.[77] A week later, he again wrote to Welch to request information about the school building in order that "coulored mechanics… (would) be prepared to offer tenders for Brick and carpenter work."[78]

Little was reported about the building of the schoolhouse until almost a year later, when on April 9, 1870, Louis Stevenson, the new superintendent of education, wrote a letter to General Oliver O. Howard, the chief commissioner of the Bureau, in which he made an application for $1,000.00 to construct a schoolhouse in Waco on the land that had already been purchased by the trustees. Construction of the schoolhouse had been delayed because the people claimed they had been promised $5,000.00 for the building a year earlier. Stevenson insisted that the money would be used to great advantage in Waco, and "the enterprise and thrift of the people of Waco under the adverse circumstances of the place having been the centre of a lawless section, will insure the building and the school being held up the expiration of the Bureau."[79]

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[76] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, April 17, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[77] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, May 4, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[78] James D. Scarlett, letter to Joseph Welch, May 10, 1869, Waco, State Records.

[79]Louis W. Stevenson, letter to General Howard, April 9, 1870, Austin, State Records.

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By July 14, 1870, George Dulton, the man apparently in charge of constructing the schoolhouse in Waco, received a voucher from the Bureau for the first payment.[80] Dulton wrote back within the week to say that they were "getting on with the building as well as could be expected considering the disadvantages under which (they had) to labour." One of those disadvantages was having to order lumber from far away, and therefore it took a long time to arrive.[81] However, he was able to begin construction on framing and putting the walls on the schoolhouse, which was done over the summer. But by early September 1870, there was still not enough lumber to put the roof on the schoolhouse and finish it.[82]

Though there is no record of when the schoolhouse was completed, the purchase of the land by the freedmen and the contributions of the Bureau toward its construction testified to both groups' commitment to continuing education for freedmen, even after the Freedman's Bureau ceased most of its operations in Texas. Scarlett, the O'Connor sisters, McCain, Bynum, Williamson, and Dozier faced enormous difficulties during their time working as teachers in the freedmen's schools of McLennan County. They faced the hostility of whites who often used intimidation and violence to drive them away. There were continual problems with collecting tuition and Bureau payments, which the teachers needed to support themselves and survive. Students switched between schools or did not attend for months at a time because of the need for their help working in the fields. By 1869, the teachers were responsible for teaching students at varying levels of education all at the same time in one school room. Surely they became weary and

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[80] E. Bartholomew, letter to George Dulton, July 14, 1870, Austin, State Records..

[81] George Dulton, letter to E. Bartholomew, July 19, 1870, Waco, State Records.

[82] George Dulton, letter to E. Bartholomew, September 6, 1870, Waco, State Records.

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discouraged in their efforts. Yet, the men and women who chose to educate the freedmen in McLennan County during the last years of the Freedmen's Bureau's existence performed a great service for the freedmen and worked to establish a precedent for the future state-supported schools in the area.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

When the Freedmen's Bureau was established on March 3, 1865, the organization took on the responsibility of meeting the needs of the millions of newly freed slaves across the southern states. Along with the immediate needs of food, shelter, and employment, the Bureau recognized that the almost entirely illiterate freedmen population was in desperate need of education in order to ultimately better their lives. One of the most important goals of the Freedmen's Bureau was to assist in establishing schools for freedmen.

The Freedmen's Bureau faced continual opposition from whites across the South, including Texans. They resented the role that the Bureau took in their relations with their former slaves, and their opposition to efforts to educate the freedmen was no different. Fears that their own children would have to attend school with their former slaves, and the fear that the schools would be an opportunity to control and influence the freedmen fueled their hostility toward the Bureau's efforts.

Throughout the state, many freedmen were anxious to attend the schools. Though the Bureau hoped to make the schools self-sustaining through payment of tuition, many freedmen lacked the ability to pay, limiting the numbers who were able to attend. The inability to find a proper place to hold the schools was also a problem. Though some black churches served as schoolhouses, whites often refused to rent to the freedmen. The

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freedmen often took on the responsibility of building schoolhouses in order to have a place to educate their children.

The Texas Bureau also faced the difficulty of not only finding good, moral teachers who were willing to teach in freedmen's schools, but also in finding teachers who were willing to travel the long distances to Texas, much of which was still considered a remote frontier. Many teachers of freedmen's schools throughout the South were sent by northern benevolent organizations, such as the American Missionary Association. Although some teachers were sent to Texas from these organizations, the state still faced a great shortage of teachers throughout the entire duration of the Bureau. The teachers who were willing to come to Texas were often ostracized, intimidated and threatened by the white community.

Despite the problems the Bureau faced in establishing schools in Texas, by 1870 the state contained 150 schools for freedmen with 296 teachers and a total of 9,086 students. Sixty-one of the schools were supported by the freedmen themselves. The tremendous growth from only five years previous when the slaves were denied any sort of education was obvious.[1]

In McLennan County, the challenges that the freedmen and the Freedmen's Bureau faced were similar to those faced across the state. Before the war, the growth of the cotton industry brought over 2,400 slaves into the relatively young county, and more

[1] Robert C. Morris, ed., *Freedmen's Schools and Textbooks Volume : Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen, by John W. Alvord, Numbers 1-10, January, 1866- July 1870,* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980), 36.

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than 1,000 more migrated there during the war.[2] When the Freedmen's Bureau entered the county in early 1866, one of its initial goals was to establish schools for the freedmen.

By the end of April 1866, the first Freedmen's Bureau school in McLennan County was established by D.F. Davis, a Dartmouth-educated teacher from the North. Davis was committed to his role as a teacher of the freedmen and he believed strongly in the importance of establishing schools for their education. He was able to keep his school open for almost two and a half years, despite the numerous challenges he faced. Davis was never paid a salary by the Bureau, and he had to rely on the tuition paid by the freedmen to support himself. Still, even when the freedmen were unable to pay, Davis continued on teaching.

The freedmen did the best they could to support him and the school by building a schoolhouse. Even though it was poorly constructed and did not have floors or a roof, Davis continued teaching. Students were often "in and out" of school, spending time in the fields harvesting cotton in order to help support their families. While some students advanced to the higher levels of learning, others were still in the beginning stages. Still, Davis was able to help all of his students advance, and by the time he left his school in 1868, it was averaging more than forty students, and he had taught many freedmen to read and write.

When other teachers began entering the county to teach in 1868, they faced similar problems to those confronting Davis. The white hostility toward their efforts often inhibited them from keeping their schools open. Two different teachers closed their schools and moved because of the intimidating tactics used by the white people in the

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[2] Patricia Ward Wallace, *Our Land, Our Lives: A Pictoral History of McLennan County, Texas* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Co., 1986), 30.

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area. However, even when the schools were open only for a short time, hundreds of freedmen in McLennan County were given the opportunity to attend and receive an education.

Even when the Freedmen's Bureau began closing down many of its other operations around the state, the effort to educate freedmen continued. In McLennan County, a number of teachers continued to work at establishing and maintaining schools. The freedmen continued to work to support those schools and they worked to purchase land and build a better schoolhouse. James D. Scarlett, a preacher motivated by his desire to do "God's work" in helping the freedmen, began teaching in 1869. Even though the Bureau did begin paying its teachers sometime during his duration at his school, like the teachers before him, he struggled with collecting tuition, a lack of supplies, the "coming and going" of students, the antagonism of the white community, and competition for students between schools.

Julia and Mary O'Connor faced similar problems, and in particular, they dealt with severe mistreatment by the white community. They had been previously driven out of Georgetown for their role as freedmen's teachers before coming to Waco. During their time in Waco, it was impossible to find someone who would rent them a room, and they had to live in the schoolhouse, yet they continued their teaching. Other teachers encountered similar problems, but they continued their work, and at least six different schools were in operation in McLennan County during 1869-1870.

As the Freedmen's Bureau's role in Reconstruction came to a close, it is not known how many of these schools remained in existence. However, in the "County Superintendents' Annual Report," 1, 223 blacks students were listed as a part of the

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"scholastic population" for the years 1870-1871.[3] Though exactly what designated the "scholastic population" is not clear, the public school system began to grow in McLennan County, and by 1884, there were 604 black pupils enrolled in the public schools. This was only slightly less than the 716 white pupils enrolled the same year. By the next year, the three black schools had a total of 769 pupils enrolled. By 1893, the black schools in McLennan County were "rapidly growing.[4]

Also, Paul Quinn College, a black school established in 1881 in East Waco, had 225 students by 1892. The school stood on twenty acres and had an enrollment of students from five different states. It had theological, grammar, and industrial departments. Paul Quinn College stood as proof "that the determination for higher education (was) not confined to the white population alone."[5]

In less than thirty years, the number of black students receiving an education in McLennan County had increased dramatically. As slaves, black children and adults alike were rarely given the opportunity to learn to read and write. Though the education for blacks and whites was segregated and certainly not equal in the years following the Civil War, at least the opportunity to attend school existed for blacks. An important stepping stone in that process was the establishment of Freedmen's Bureau schools in the years 1866-1870. In this short time, hundreds of freedmen worked to better their lives by

[3] John Ramsey Gordon, "The Negro in McLennan County, Texas" (M.A. Thesis, Baylor University, 1932), 51.

[4] *A Memorial and Biographical History of McLennan, Falls, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas : Containing a History of this Important Section of the Great state of Texas, from the Earliest Period of its Occupancy to the Present Time, together with Glimpses of its Future Prospects* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893), 155-158.

[5] Ibid. 155.

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supporting these schools, and teachers dedicated themselves to the education of the freedmen.

The study of the Freedmen's Bureau schools established in McLennan County serves as a microcosm of the overall effort to educate freedmen across Texas and across the other southern states. Though the Bureau, the teachers, and the freedmen in McLennan County faced continual challenges in their efforts, against the backdrop of a country in the midst of political and social turmoil, they were able to establish and maintain schools for freedmen in which hundreds received an education who had never been given such an opportunity before. By learning to read and write, formerly illiterate blacks were able to better their lives. The schools established in McLennan County by the Freedmen's Bureau and the freedmen themselves should be remembered and recognized for their contribution to the advancement of the freed black slaves.

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