Bureau Refugees, Freedmen & Abandoned Lands
Office of Assistant Commissioner
for the State of Mississippi
Vicksburg, Miss March 27th 1866

Major Gen. C. H. Howard
Commissioner Bureau of A. & R.
General,

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a letter addressed by me to Major Gen. Howard at the request of Geo. Thomas & W. Wood that they might have some facts as to the misrepresentations of a correspondent of the Cincinnati Commercial with reference to the character of the Freedmen's Bureau.

I am sure I have the entire confidence of both Generals, and have been assured by them, that they will take steps to vindicate the character of the Bureau and its officers.
I forward you a copy of the letter, as it contains statements with reference to the condition of the Freedmen and the results of the labors of the Bureau.

Perfect harmony & cordiality exist between the Bureau and the regular military organization. General T. J. Wood takes great interest in all that is done, supervises, approves, and in fact makes himself completely responsible for all my acts. Copies of all my reports, orders etc. are forwarded to Division Head Quarters, at the same time they are forwarded to you.

I have reorganized the State, assigned new officers to the positions of Sub Commissioners, and issued a Digest of orders & instructions for the government of Sub Commissioners. This pamphlet has been forwarded for your examination and approval. It has been approved by the Dept. Commander.

General Sewall is now and will be given every opportunity to make a rigid examination of the Bureau in this State.
The General has spoken to me about the charges made by Mr. Nauhly, the colored man whom he has induced to write letters to you or Mr. Alford, about the Freedmen's Savings Bank of this place.

I could not, by charging Mr. Nauhly with many things of which I know him to be guilty, that make him unfit for the position of Cashier of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. It would look too much like childish spite for me to take any such course at this time.

I have informed Mr. Alford, the President of the Bank, of my feelings, and have told him, if he is not removed, I cannot assist the Bank.

When he was appointed Cashier, he made an undue use of my name and character, for the purpose of furthering his own financial operations, which he is conducting in connection with the bank. This I would not allow. As soon as he found he could not use the Bureau, he devoted himself to its abuse. I would not pick a dollar myself in
the Bank, and, as it is now managed, of course would not advise the Frennaw to deposit their money there.

General J. Beck told Gen. Small that he held the same opinion of Mr. Hamby and his conduct of business.

If the Committee that has charge of the Frennaw Savings Bank do not think it proper to make a change, I can say no more...

The objects of the enterprise are good: properly managed the Bank would do well.

My object in addressing you personally is to have the matters treated of in these letters, directly before you for consideration.

I have the honor to be, General,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Don Thomas

Colonel & Adjutant Commissary

State of Miss.
March 24th, 1863

Thomas James, Col. & Adm.

Concerning article in Cincinnati Commercial reflecting upon the Bureau.

Enclosed copy of letter to Mr. J.R. Woods.

Recd. April 5th, 1863
Major Gen. P. H. Nedd
Commanding Dept. of Mississippi
General

I beg leave to say

before your as letter published in the Cincinnati Commercial on the 17th inst., such attacks as this are easily met and refuted when opportunity is afforded to; but if unnoticed by my superior officer and the public may get the impression that I cannot deny the charges, and perhaps at a distance may take up opinions damaging not only to my character, but also to the Freedmen's Bureau at large, which is of far greater consequence than my personal reputation. I therefore take the liberty to offer the explanations and denials which I beg you will use as you may think most conducive to the public interest.

You will see that the correspondent of the Commercial says that he has personal knowledge of the character and operations of the Bureau officers of whom he speaks. This cannot be true. I never saw him so far as I know. No one about my office has ever known such a man as come...
about here. We are certain that he has had no other opportu-
tunity to examine my operations than can be got by picking up
rumors "of inventions among the Southern people whose animosity
to the Bureau leads them to receive eagerly, exaggerate freely and
communicate joyfully anything that may be said against the
Bureau or its individual officers.

He accuses me of keeping a fleet span of horses
and a carriage to correspond." His mention of the span
and his speaking of an officer at Jackson, lead me to guess
that probably he was at that place last year, about the time
that the former Surgeon in Chief on my staff and myself put
each his horse to a buggy and drove to Jackson on business.

This is the only time when, for a few weeks, I drove
occasionally a coach. I mention this minute circumstance
that it may be seen that a very narrow foundation the charge
against me is built. Sometimes the best way to meet
a gross charge is to expose its trivial source.

As to my driving with the "gay ladies of Vicksburg," I
depend upon your own knowledge of my habits, and to the universal
testimony of the town, whether this charge has any foundation at
all. I have driven my widows with any ladies, and it is
a cruel slander of them to utter the innocent statement in
the ten "gay ladies."

The officer whom he mentions as a
[Handwritten text not legible]
A friend at Jackson, and whose conduct he professes to have seen, was dismissed from the Bureau the moment his misconduct was made known, by an order dated Sept. 29, 1865. His reference to this affair last summer induces me to believe that his letter was written from impressions received while in the State about that time, without inquiry as to changes, progress, etc. This is certainly very injudicious, and indicates anything but fairness of mind in the correspondent.

I am charged with having made $60,000 dollars out of my office. I can oppose to this nothing but a simple denial and a call for investigation before a military tribunal, of how it is probable cause for suspicion.

This correspondent attempts to account for the possibility of my making so much money, by saying that the Bureau has approved 75,000 contracts at a dollar fee for each since last Christmas. Now you, General, and every one at all conversant with the affairs of my office, know that I have approved comparatively few contracts, since the Civil officers of the State began operations, they taking nearly all this work under the State law. The Bureau has not ratified one contract since Christmas. Whatever fee the magistrates may charge does not pass through the hands of any Bureau officer. All the fees ever collected for registering contracts, that this correspondent so scurrilously alludes to, would not amount to $5,000.
First the Correspondent does not hesitate to say that the fines collected in this State during the past year amounted to $200,000 dollars. Since the establishment of civil tribunals and the abolition of Medicine Courts last October, there have been absolutely no fines inflicted; and before that time all that were ever collected would not amount to $5,000 dollars. So the "drug little income of $275,000" which he mentions "fades away" like the basest fabric of a vision."

The condition of both classes of the people has steadily improved since last November. I do not believe there are 300,000 colored men any where with less friction than in this State.

This correspondent may hear of individual cases of abuse and I do not deny that they occur; but he loses sight of the great change of the feeling of the white people towards the Freedmen.

My dear Citizens make such remarks as: "If we had been told one year ago, that a Judge in the State of Mississippi would ever have rendered such a decision, we would not have believed it."

I am working with you, General, to obtain from the Executive and Judiciary the admission of principles, and of the rights of the Freedman that will be his safeguard.

He charges the Bureau Officers with inefficiency; this is the gist of his talk about not securing the negroes justice and the like.

In answer to this, I may appeal to the facts concerning our influence in getting similar contracts made between employers and employees; to the influence we have exerted in securing to the colored people the rights to
buy and leave lands, which the new laws of the State has forbidden, to the regulation of the matter of apprenticeship, by which we have failed to color parents their right of guardianship; in our care of orphan children; in our hospitals for the insane, especially in the growing asylums at Sandersville, to the schools, strictly adhering to all parts of the State, and still growing, not one tenth of which could stand without our presence, or would have been granted the Freedmen without our assistance.

General, do not wish to weary you with a long statement, but to submit my defense briefly. I court investigation. Such letters as this are doing injury to the Freedmen, and the citizens of the State, and are plundering upon the officers of the Army. I am laboring to bring about a feeling of harmony between all classes, and secure such a recognition of the Freedmen's rights before the civil tribunals of the State as will be most conducive to such harmony. In furtherance of these object, I take care not to harass the white citizens with Bureau officers, when I can obtain pledges that the Freedmen will receive justice. I am proceeding in doing this. We are making progress. To many portions of the State the best feeling exists between the officers of the Bureau and the civil officers, and in some cases the best and most influential of the white citizens have expressed regret at the withdrawal of my officers.

The Commissioners on duty in this State have made reports that have been published over the Country as evidence that
the Freedmen are much afraid. These reports are exaggerated
accounts of outrages that do occur; nothing is said of the
thousands of contented laborers who are at work on plantations.
Capt. J. M. Matthews has made such a report, that
has done the State great injustice. This Captain was on duty
at Magnolia for four months before he was relieved in December
last; yet he failed to report a single outrage till he was re-
lieved from duty, when he wrote the celebrated report that caused
an order to be issued calling him to Washington.
He either failed to discharge his duty as a Bureau Officer,
or his report & statements, made since being relieved, are
intrue.

I have the honor to be, General,
Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,

[Signature]

Colonel & Adjt. Commissioner
State of Miss.
March 27, 1866

Mr. G. S. Mcllw

Dear Sir:

The Secretary of this State, George W. Longstreet, had told me that he was about going to Washington to look after his interests as a member of the Board of Managers. But I soon found out that they had met and decided to disband the organization. My personal acquaintance with Mr. R. has been limited and of comparatively recent date. But I have long known friends of his and know or less about him by common report. Mr. R. has an excellent name, without, so far as I know, any trace of dishonesty on it. I have known him particularly or otherwise since he began to rally from a wound received in battle. A ball passed through his lungs.
His recovery, if indeed he is well and strong again, as one of the rare exceptional cases that are occasionally heard.

If in any way in your interest of humanity, God should be of service to him, I think you and I could one who deserves all of this help.

Mr. B. is, I believe, a scout in the 23rd Regiment N. Y. I. Credited to (Chats) town.

Your truly,

Charles Bennett.
Dear General,

In compliance with your request I send herewith a list of members of Congress interested in our enterprise; those whose names are marked thus * worship at home with churches of our order, though not known to be otherwise especially interested with us:

* Lot W. Morrill  Maine
  James G. Blaine
  J. W. Patterson
  Solomon Foot
  Porteus Baxter
  Fred E. Woodbridge
  Justus S. Morrill

Wash. D.C.
March 27, '66
Tom B. Washburn  
L. F. S. Foster  
J. H. Hubbard  
Benton C. Cook  
Josiah B. Grinnell  
S. C. Pomeroy  
W. Windom  
Sidney Clarks (perhaps)  

Possibly there may be others, but the above comprises all the names given any evidence, to my knowledge, of interest.

Very truly yours,

L. Dean

Mother, O. Howard  
Wash., D.C.
Dear S.,

Concerning the Congregational Church

Read, Mar. 28, 186--
Baltimore, Mar.
Mar 27.

Dear Gene,

I would take it very kind if you can make it convenient to accompany Hon. Judge Bond and States atty.

Geo. M. Mann to the Pho. Gallery of Hewitt & House No. 4, 1st floor before leaving the City to bid for your Pho. Many of your friends (especially colored) deserve a copy.

I succeeded in obtaining a very good Pho. of Gen. York & Col. Whittler in Philadelphia in June last. I thought to have obtained yours at the same time, but Gen. York informs me you were obliged to leave the city on pressing business. I was therefore deprived of the privilege at that time. I was at the Convention of the Young Men's Union last year.

Resd Mar 27. 1866.

Balt. March 27/66.
the closing scenes of which were most interesting indeed to me and no doubt to all there. I saw I heard you then for the first time and since then I have not had the privilege of seeing or hearing you until on the anniversary of the Sunday School of the First Congregational Church in this City I honour you God, for your holy sakes. God bless you in all your labours in behalf of the poor despised freedmen.

P.S. Mr. Jones the Photographer on Gay St. has been a long time with the army taking scenes and here hundreds of very interesting scenes of the army & navy and is considered one of the best operators. If you could make it convenient to call at his on Gay St. before leaving the City you would confer a favour on many friends as well as myself very truly yours

J. Marshall
Piqua March 27th 1866.

Gentlemen,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 24th Inst, in the midst of my sore affliction and distress, on account of the death of my dear wife, with whom I had lived over forty years in the old Homestead. The idea of being dismissed from the position I occupied without knowing the cause, adds greatly to my distress at this particular time. If you will permit me to retain my place during the month of April I will resign the 1st of May; this will give me an opportunity of settling up my business, and of ascertaining what is the cause of my removal. If you should grant my request I will be there at the expiration of my furlough. Please inform me by return mail.

Very respectfully,

William Elliott.
Piqua Ohio
March 27 1866

Mr. Eullery

Acknowledges receipt of the Commission, and requests to be retained until April.
General

As Col. Miller's Hotel
Having a business appointment here with
a plant servant while waiting his appearance.
It perhaps would facilitate his appearance
by making the following suggestions for
your consideration.

1st. Read my report promptly as soon as you
have time. There is no haste about the
abstract it is a true compilation of the report,
it can be examined when necessary.

2nd. In regard to the present I would suggest
that a copy of Report, proper, be made for
it handed to him at once. After that if he
wishes to see me I will announce any acquire.

3rd. Gen'l. Smith wants me to have several copies
of my report, proper, handed to leading
papers at York, Cincinnati & St. Louis,
for publication viz. Tribune, Honest &
Commercial Gazette, C.N. & N.T.
Two leading papers at St. Louis a more
telephone paying extract. I think would
not give the public the true situation of Eastern Kentucky—unless followed up by report. I will have a
further interview with you anytime after 7 P.M. to tomorrow morning. I would like to leave for M.T. tomorrow night but will remain longer if necessary—You will see that General Ely has certified to my report—let that and not be published unless
required.

Saw you very truly, etc.

P. Bonesteel
Bonetick, R.

Concerning his report on Kentucky affairs.
Washington, D.C., March 28, 1866

My dear Sir:

Permit me to introduce to you the learned Rev. P. Leavitt, Missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, to organize societies among the colored people of Florida. Will you please give him such information as may be useful to him, and also a letter to the officers of your
Bureau at that Department
and oblige yours with much respect
J. Rollins
House of Reps.
Washington, D.C.
Mar. 25, 1864

Rollins, Hon. E.H.
M.C.

Introducer, Rev. J.P.
Dearitt, Missionary.
M.E. Church, N.Y.
asked a letter to the officers of
the Bureau in Fla.
Germantown 28 66

To Gent Howard

Dear Sir,

Further information puts doubt on the account given by some of the party called "Quakers" as given to Dr. C. Evans & myself. We find Jonathan Cox & family do far, the only friends, known to have arrived. And even some doubts exist whether he is the identical man who was known among friends, & known by that name.

The matter to the bottom & write the results to thee.

I am humiliated at writing the word "give" instead of "gave" in my former letter which went to

Dr. Whetstone & gave him the trouble of answering what I knew before. I only wanted to know whether Col. W. could do as other places, as the Council at Greensboro this we know. Respectfully,

Yours,

our business is very heavy and a few of us won't.
Penn College
Gettysburg, Feb. 28th, 76

My dear General,

I cherished the hope that you came here made me that expected visit before this. I knew your time was much occupied yet I supposed a day or two of rest in our quiet town would be of service to you. Can you not run away from your official duties this coming Saturday and spend Sabbath with us? It is our Communion season and I am confident you will enjoy it with us.

Thus in Washington last month at the meeting of the Christian Commission and was sorry not for we absent from the city. My recollections of the are so pleasant I want you to know you more intimately. I trust you for the
first time on the Sallset after the last battle which is now generally regarded as the turning point in the history of the Rebellion. I trust which your name will always be so closely identified. You selected the position and under God be our every thing to that fact. Populated that on the 6th of July you could spend so little of your time with me. Do not use your time under more pleasant theories. Would you not like to spend a Sabbath with us and write into God's people in this place in commemorating the dying love of our Saviour? If you find that you can make your arrangements to come send me a telegram and I will meet you at the Depot.

Occasionally hear from you better also spent a couple of weeks...
in Edinburgh after the Battle of

now become very good friends.

I write to him the other day at

as if you and I remain

I am glad to spend

my Spring vacation in visiting some

parts of the South and looking

after the interests of the Freedmen

in these States. I feel deeply

interested. I need to spend

my vacations in efforts connected

with the Christian Commission.

I am always afraid to make

myself useful. If there is any

service I could render you

Bureau 3, I am willing to

go to the South-west. or speak

on some special case.

The object comes to do good,

and to gather information. I

want to prepare an article on

the Freedman for a Quarterly,

which I now intend to


many of the facts I would
want to gather from personal
observation. Such an article I
prepared on the Christian Church
designed for reference. If you
would kindly accompany me
on such a tour. I would enjoy
eat any much. I have not yet
had a reply from your
Commissioner. Perhaps he has
written to you on the subject

With my best wishes and deep
sympathy in the important work
which has been committed to your
charge.

Yours sincerely,

W. L. Hodges
New York, Mar. 28/75

Dear General Howard:

I am making a bouquet of flowers from the hair of prominent Generals and Statesmen. Will you please be kind enough to send me a little lock of your and wives for it?

With much respect,

Your humble friend,

Mrs. S. H. Kemey