

MISSIONARIES AND THE ROANOKE ISLAND FREEDMEN'S COLONY

The American Missionary Association (AMA) sent the first missionaries, including Horace James's cousin, Elizabeth James, to Roanoke Island. These missionaries were later joined by missionaries from the New York branch of the National Freedman's Relief Association (NFRA). The AMA sustained a strong evangelical religious focus in all its work, while the NFRA was more interested in practical ways to help the former slaves sustain themselves. Thus, the AMA missionaries emphasized religious conversions, while the NFRA missionaries stressed industrial education.

At least twenty-seven men and women conducted missionary work in the Roanoke Island freedmen's colony. Most of these missionaries came from New England, from areas where abolitionist sentiments were well developed. Most were women, who had been teachers in the North. The missionaries firmly believed that education could transform the former slaves and Southern society.

Projects:

1. Read chapters 4 and 5 and Appendix D of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*. Describe the missionaries who worked on Roanoke Island; what did they believe and how did it inspire their work? Choose one of the missionaries and discuss his or her work, as well as how it typified the missionary work in the colony.
2. Read the "Qualifications of American Missionary Association Teachers" and chapters 4 and 5 of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*. Discuss the various ways that the AMA missionaries on Roanoke Island embodied the AMA's standards.
3. Read the "Beliefs of the National Freedman's Relief Association" and chapters 4 and 5 of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*. Discuss how the NFRA missionaries on Roanoke Island reflected the beliefs of the organization.
4. Read the letters from the Roanoke Island missionary teachers that are included on this Web site, chapters 4 and 5 of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*, the "Qualifications of American Missionary Association Teachers," and the "Beliefs of the National Freedman's Relief Association." What were the missionaries' goals? What did the missionaries emphasize in their letters? How did they portray the freedpeople? What insights did the missionaries offer about the missionary work, especially teaching, on Roanoke Island? How would you characterize the missionaries' relationship to the freedpeople?