

## **MISSIONARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR WORK AMONG SOUTHERN FREEDPEOPLE**

Once the Union army had established a secure hold on a Southern area, slaves poured across the Union lines in search of freedom, setting up makeshift camps on the fringe of Union encampments. These camps were located throughout the South wherever there was a strong Union occupation--just outside the District of Columbia, at various points along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, at a number of locations in Kentucky and Tennessee, and up the Mississippi from New Orleans to Cairo, Illinois. Initially the residents of the camps, known as contrabands or freedmen, were on their own. Concerned about the potential for sanitation problems, disease, and the disruption of army discipline, federal authorities ordered the establishment of official freedmen camps, supervised by superintendents who were appointed by the general in command of the area.

Most of the superintendents had been serving as chaplains in the Union army, and many had strong connections to the Northern contraband and freedmen's relief associations that were providing substantial aid to the former slaves in various Southern locales. Prominent among these associations were the American Missionary Association, the National Freedman's Relief Association, and the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. The relief societies sponsored much of the benevolent and educational work in the camps--work that was conducted by a passionate group of Northern missionary teachers. In addition to supporting abolition, most of the teachers were deeply religious Protestant Christians, infused by the evangelicalism that had played a significant role in Northern society since the Second Great Awakening.

The American Missionary Association (AMA) and the New York branch of the National Freedman's Relief Association (NFRA), later superseded by the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, conducted most of the missionary work in the Roanoke Island freedmen's colony.

### **Projects:**

1. Read the Constitution of the American Missionary Association. Describe a potential member of the AMA. What did the organization mean by "evangelical sentiments"? Why did the organization put so much emphasis on "evangelical sentiments"? In what ways did Protestant evangelicalism and abolition intersect in the mission work of the American Missionary Association?
2. Read the Constitution of the American Missionary Association and "Qualifications of American Missionary Association Teachers." What did the AMA mean by "missionary spirit"? What do you find interesting in the "Culture and Common Sense" and "Personal Habits" qualifications? How did the AMA's expectations for its teachers reflect the association's goals?

3. Read the Constitution of the American Missionary Association and the “Beliefs of the National Freedman’s Relief Association.” In what ways were the goals of the organizations similar? In what ways did they differ?

4. Read chapters 4 and 5 of *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen’s Colony, 1862-1867* and the letters from the missionaries on Roanoke Island. Describe the missionaries who worked on Roanoke Island and their mission work. In what ways did the AMA missionaries reflect the “Qualifications of American Missionary Association Teachers”? In what ways did the work of the NFRA missionaries reflect the “Beliefs of the National Freedman’s Relief Association”?