

Voices of Reconstruction: African American and Women's Perspectives



Essential Questions:

1. In what ways do individuals impact a society?
2. How did African Americans influence events and issues in Texas during the period of Reconstruction?
3. How did women influence events and issues in Texas during the period of Reconstruction?

Organize Your Notes and Key Points

Political Influencers & Contributions	Economic Influencers & Contributions	Social Influencers & Contributions

African American Legislators in Texas

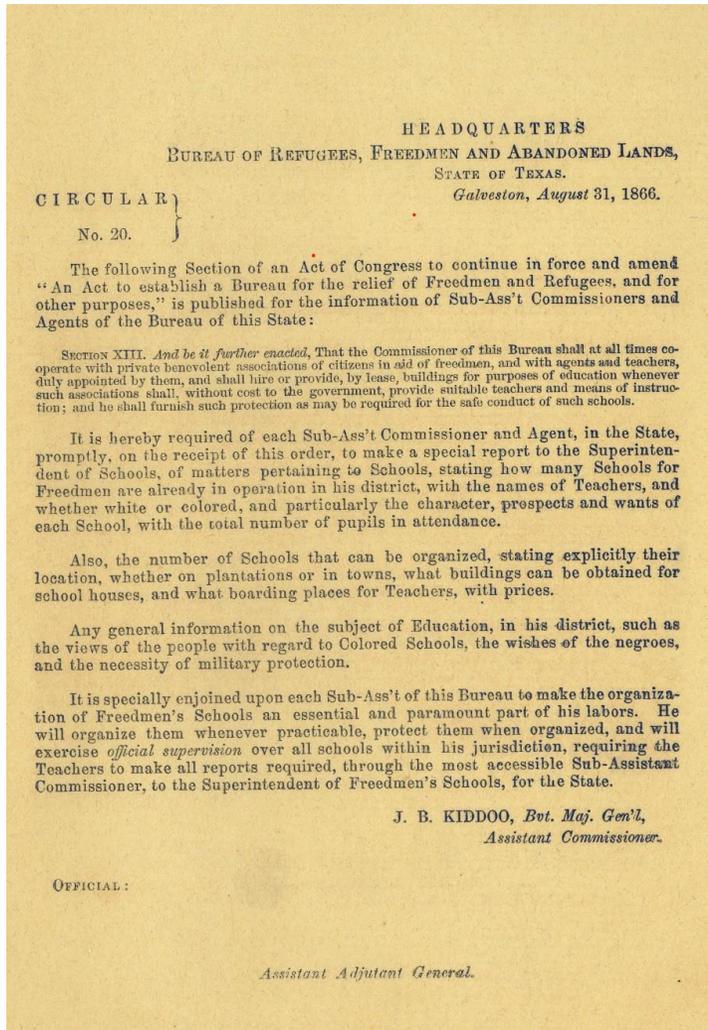
Reconstruction marked the first time in American history that many African Americans would be allowed to vote and take seats in office. During this period three African Americans were elected to the Texas Senate and thirty-two others were elected to serve in the Texas House of Representatives.

These legislators worked to advance education, secure voting rights, and to secure full liberties for African Americans.



Three African American legislators elected in 1869.

George Ruby elected Senator (left), Matt Gaines elected Senator (middle), Walter Moses Burton elected Sheriff (right).



Think-Pair-Share

Using the guided questions, analyze the primary source images to answer the document analysis questions.

Support your claims using evidence.

Document Analysis Questions:

1. Based on Section XIII of the document, what is the Commissioner of the Bureau responsible for?
2. What information must the Superintendent provide upon request?
3. Why might the government need to order these kinds of updates on the status of schooling for African Americans in Texas?

<https://education.texashistory.unt.edu>



Martha Goodwin Tunstall was a leading woman's suffrage supporter in Texas during the period of Reconstruction.

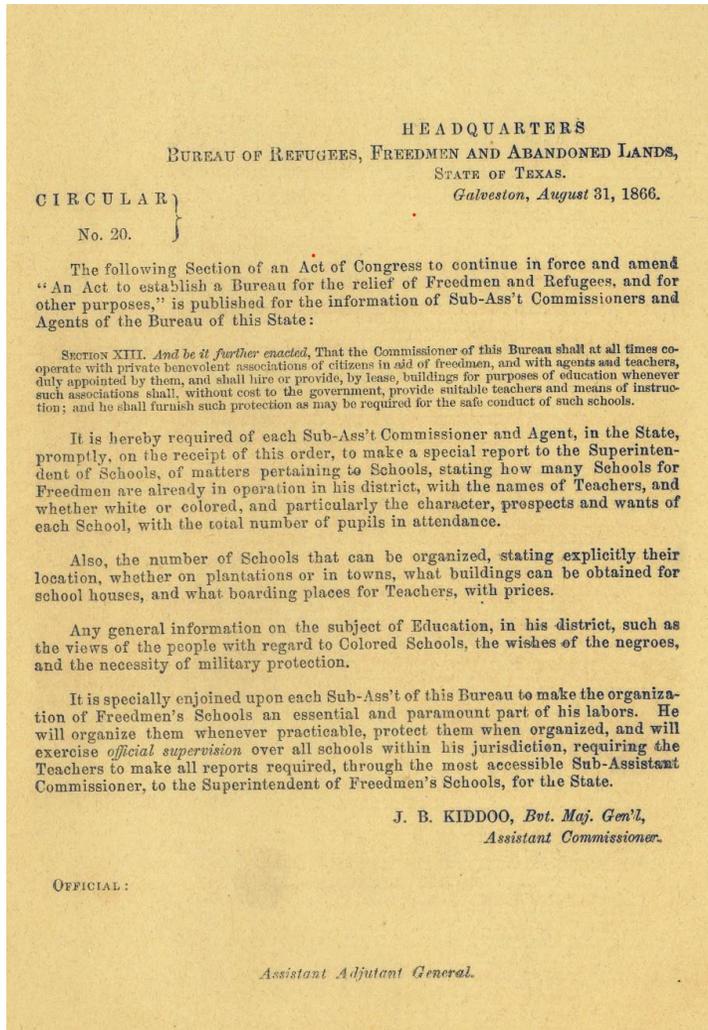
Prior to the Civil War, women across the nation, including Texas, were politically activated around the issue of abolition. Many women abolitionists would later develop ambitions to expand basic liberties to women.

Texas women played a role in the women's suffrage movement that began during the period of Reconstruction. Women sought to fight back against discrimination and abuse based on sex.

The goal of women's suffrage was to obtain equal rights and protection under the law for women, including the right to vote.

It was through the work of early Texas suffragists like Mariana Thompson Folsom and Martha Goodwin Tunstall in the 1870s and 1880s, that Texas women would later have a role in the national women's suffrage movement.

Advancing Education in Texas



Following the Civil War, the Freedman's Bureau established schools and taught both children and adults. These schools were protected by government orders and the military was often used to ensure that the schools operated.

During Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau succeeded in establishing 66 schools throughout Texas, of which 43 were owned by African Americans.

During Reconstruction, many women, both white and African American, began to teach in schools for African Americans.

By the end of Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau employed 63 teachers and enrolled 3,248 African American students in Texas.

Higher Education in Texas



"Junior Class, Texas Normal School for Negroes." Prints and Photographs Collection, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

During the time of Radical Republican leadership, many African-Americans were elected or appointed into political positions. A major focus for many African American officials took steps to increase access to higher education for African Americans:

- **Representative Meshack Roberts** - established Wiley College, the first college-level school for African Americans west of the Mississippi.
- **Senator Matthew Gaines** - Supported the Free School Bill that helped finance an agricultural and mechanical college (now Texas A&M University), the first publicly supported state institution of higher education.
- **Representative William Holland** – “Father of Prairie View A&M University” introduced the bill to convert Alta Vista Institute into Alta Vista Agricultural College and a year later into Prairie View Normal College (a school for teachers).
- **Representative Thomas Beck** – fought to protect funding for Prairie View University in 1880 when threatened by the state.



Churches



[African-American Church, Harrison County], photograph, Date Unknown; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph18164/>; accessed May 4, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Marshall Public Library.

The church was the center of the community for many African Americans during and after Reconstruction.

The church was a place of worship and often served as a school, meeting house, and place to host social events, and political gatherings.

Men of the church would often organize and sponsor benevolent and fraternal societies. Black ministers played a major role in their communities, often advocated for political rights and the advancement of their communities. In many cases ministers ran for public office and churches hosted political events.

Women were also key in the development of churches in Texas, as they often hosted fundraising events and social gatherings.

Women in Business



Lizzie Johnson was one of the most successful cattle dealers and real estate investors in Texas following the Civil War and during Reconstruction.



Sarah Cockrell built the first iron bridge across the Trinity River in Dallas.

Women played a major role in rebuilding the economy of Texas following the Civil War. With many men off to war, women had the responsibility to take care of things on the “home front” such as tending to farms, maintaining homes, and finding ways to bring income to their families. Some women became prosperous land and business owners during this period.

Apply your knowledge:

Use notes and activities from this lesson to support your thinking process.

Think - Pair - Share

Using the lesson essential questions discussed at the beginning of the lesson and your newly gained perspective about the key contributors of Reconstruction, answer the following questions using text evidence.

Essential Questions - Exit Ticket

1. In what ways can individuals or groups impact a society?
2. How did African Americans influence events and issues in Texas during the period of Reconstruction?
3. How did women influence events and issues in Texas during the period of Reconstruction?