

# TENNESSEE OUTRAGES: Reports to the Freedmen's Bureau (1865-1868)

## Part II

Abstracted by James Pylant

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The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau) was created in the War Department by the Act of 3 March 1865. Until its termination by the Act of 10 June 1872, the Bureau's purpose was to oversee and aid the distribution of supplies to the destitute, maintain freedmen's schools, help black soldiers and sailors collect bounty claims or pensions, distribute confiscated or abandoned property, and supervise labor contracts between black employees and white employers. This act authorized the appointment of assistant commissioners to aid the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in supervising the work of the Bureau in the States.

In Tennessee, the Bureau began on 1 July 1865, with Brig. Gen. Clinton B. Fisk as Assistant Commissioner at Nashville. Fisk was succeeded by Brig. Gen. John R. Lewis (September - December, 1866), Maj. Gen. William P. Carlin (January, 1867 - October, 1868), and Lt. Col. James Thompson (October, 1868 - May, 1869). During General Fisk's term, until June 1866, the Assistant Commissioner of Tennessee also had jurisdiction over Kentucky and northern Alabama. Fisk divided the Tennessee Bureau into three subdistricts, with headquarters in Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga. Pulaski and Knoxville were later added as headquarters for two more subdistricts. Then, subdistricts were subdivided into agencies with boundaries usually following county lines.

From NARS Microfilm No. M999-34, *Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869*, are abstracted agency reports to the Assistant Commissioner of "outrages" committed by whites against blacks. An "outrage" meant any offense, but it was almost always a violent crime.

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List of Outrages,  
perpetuated by the Whites, upon the  
Freedmen, in the State of Tennessee, from April, 1865,  
to March, 1866

[Page 1]

In April 1865, while **Gilbert McGee** (Colored) was plowing in the field, he was assaulted by two white men, named **Thomas Berry**, and **James Morton**, taken from his work, tied to a tree, whipped, shot, and finally beheaded. This on the plantation of **Rogan and Brannon**, eight miles from Gallatin, on the Hartsville pike.

About the 8th of Jany. 1866, **Samuel McMurray** shot twice, with intent to kill, **George Gammond** (Colored) the balls taking effect in his person, and Gammond had to flee for his life. McMurray afterward returned with others and searched for him, so that he had to remain out, exposed to cold and is now suffering from frosted feet. His life is still threatened by these men. This occurred on the farm and in the presence of **William Wilcox**, two miles from Dixon Springs, Smith Co. Tenn.

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**Mr. J. M. Ament**, Columbia Tenn. July 27, [18]65 states that an old colored woman, 80 years of age, was driven from home, in want, by her former owner, whom she had served for years, and who had sold all her children for money.

**John Seage**, Supt. R. F. and A. L., Rutherford Co. reports the following:

On the 29th of June. 1865, **Beverly Randolph** beat the wife of 'Ben' (colored) with his fists - caught her by the chin, threw back her head, drew his knife and swore he would cut her throat - was stopped by his brother-in-law, he then went to his house and got a pistol swearing he would kill some d = d nigger.

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II. - 'Egbert' (colored) staid with the family of **J. Irwin** while he was absent in the Rebel Army. about the 1st of August 1865 Irwin returned from the army and found that Egbert had a crop growing of which he was to have one third - when Egbert began to gather the crop he was driven off - with his family - by Irwin who said he didn't care a d--d for the Bureau.

III. - **Andrew B. Payne** hired **Sam Neal** (Col.<sup>d</sup>) and family, ten in all to work for him for the season. after they had performed the labor Neal was ordered off with his family without pay or any share of the Crop, he did not go and was threatened with death by Paine [sic], who afterward with the assistance of one **Miles Ferguson** beat him badly.

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IV. - About the 4th of August 1865, one **Bill Murray** beat the wife and daughter of 'Anthony' (colored) very severly with a stick because they were singing a Union Song.

V. - About August 30. [18]65, **Wm. Jones** tied up a colored boy and gave him five hundred lashes.

VI. - **Isaac Rucker** hired **Bee Whitney** and wife (colored) to work the season for one third of the crops they raised.

In June Rucker attempted to drive them off without pay, and because they did not go beat Whitney's wife on the head and side, badly, with a piece of board, knocking her down, and this only six days before the birth of her child.

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VII. - **Lina** (colored) lives with **Widow Brothers** in Fall Creek 3 miles from Murfreesboro.

Lina says that 'Mr. May the overseer tied me up because I would not consent to him, tied my clothes around my neck and beat me very badly, & then drove me off without pay or a morsel to eat.'

Said 'Lina' is 19 years old, and was welted all over shamefully.

VIII. - Peter Goodwin hired laborers who worked the year: he then called in Due Bills he had given them, paid 20 per ct of their wages, promising to meet them at the office of the Bureau and pay the rest, but let the same day for Arkansas, defrauding them of the remainder of their pay.

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IX. - On the night of December [-?] 1865 T. Mahoney went to the house of Lewis Drennon (colored) after all were in bed, broke in the door, and presented a pistol to Drennon's head and demanded his arms. . . .

X. On December 20th Rolla White . . . shot a colored man, named Bill Stover. . .

[See "Tennessee Outrages," Part I (September, 1998), p. 53, for transcripts of the Mahoney-Drennon and White-Stover cases.]

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Jno R Henry, Special Agent at Knoxville reports as follows.

I An old Colored man named Lewis Rose, 60 years of age, was assaulted by five white men, and badly beaten with a hickory stick - his arm was fractured and his head lacerated, and without any cause.

II. - A colored man by the name of Nathan Yarwood of Monroe Co. Tenn. while working in his shop, was shot [page 8] with a pistol, by a white man named Saml. Wilson, without provocation; the ball entering his right side and lodging in the left side near the heart, whence it was extracted by Dr Bogard of Swat Water.

III. - Wm. Ballard (colored) was robbed of his gun powder and lead &c by six white men who forcibly entered his house.

W. G. Bond Supt. Montgomery County reports the following:

I. About Decr. 15, 1865, one Peter Farthing beat Cha' Trigg (colored) severely with a club.

II. - Lewe Johnson, beat Dinah Johnson (col'd) with a club and swore he would kill her.

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III. - About Decr. 19, 1865, Mr. Bond gave Catherine Riley (colored) an order to James Riley, Logan Co. KY for her child. She got the child and was returning when she was followed by said Riley - overtaken - and beaten with a club until she was senseless on the ground. Riley carried the child off, and, as he said, "put it out of the reach of the d - d Yankees."

Said Catherine Riley was so horribly beaten that when giving this testimony the next day she was unable to stand, was scarcely able to speak, and was covered with blood.

IV. A Negro Soldier was shot not long before this by this same man Riley. Similar cases occur daily.

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V. - **Jacob Ranney**, about 4 miles from Clarksville, beat **Gus Laughlin** (colo) with a club and threatened to kill him.

**S. B. F. Barr**, Agt. Wilson Co. Tenn. Nov. 23, [18]65 states that a man named **Clint Holt** living 15 miles from Lewisville, on the Line of L&W R. R. stole a colored boy named **Dick**, 8 years old and carried him to Kentucky.

**Rev. John W Jones** Supt &c Gibson Co. on Jany 24, 1866 reports the following case. About the 1st of Jany, **Daniel Wood** a freed man aged sixty years of quiet peaceable character, while staying with his wife 5 miles from Tenton was taken from his bed, by some white men carried some [page 11] distance; was shot several times & severely wounded, and left by them as dead, has but partially recovered.

Also an old colored man, most inoffensive and harmless, was shot & mortally wounded, without any provocation - while driving his team quietly along the public road. He lived but 3 days.

Also some freedmen who had rented houses for the year had them burned.

**Mr Geo. M. Stewart** of Dover Tenn. 18th Jany, 1866, reports a number of Freedmen at the Rough and Ready Furnace in Montgomery Co. were attacked & robbed of their Arms and one of them of \$15.00 in money.

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**Thomas Hendricks** (colored) worked for **William Cole**, Bedford Co Tenn. five or six months in 1865, during the year Cole murdered a white man named **Sims**. Hendricks then left him & rec'd but five dollars for his work.

At the beginning of the year he made a contract at the office of the Freedmens Bureau, to work a year for **Mr. Whit Ransom** - Marshall Co. Tenn.

The latter part of Febry. the said Cole came to the plantation where he (Hendricks) was at work, and took him forcibly away to his house six miles distance, & forced him to work four days, when he escaped and returned to his employer. Said Cole then returned with one **Henry Pope**, entered the cookhouse on Ransome's farm, flourishing their pistols, and dragged him [page 13] (Hendricks) out; after taking him some miles, they made him get down on his knees & there threatened to shoot him.

He was taken to Cole's house & put under guard & his life threatened if he attempted to escape.

He was rescued by a company of his fellows & taken back to Ransom's.

Cole threatend, repeatedly, to shoot Ransom and every Nigger on his place.

said Hendricks and others have been driven from their homes, and flee to this city for protection.

(see Affidavit of Witness Ransome & others)

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**Capt. Chas. A. Beckert**, 110th N.S.C.I. Sept. 8, 1865, states that **Martha Hargrave**, the wife of a faithful soldier of his Co. was severely beaten, and driven from home with her child - by **Abner L. Hargrave**, four miles from Elk River Bridge.

**Capt James C. Babbitt**, Agent Benton Co. reports that on the 19th of October, two col'd men named **Robert Johnson** and **Donaldson Whitesides**, were attacked on the public highway, by three or four horsemen armed with revolvers.

Robert Johnson was shot by **Thomas Thornton** & mortally wounded, and beaten on the head with a revolver, so that he lived but a few minutes.

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also reports that **Albert Allgee** - a freed man in Huntington Carroll Co., was shot dead in a bar room by **T. Freeman**, the Barkeeper.

also, that freedmen are daily driven from their homes without a cent after having been induced to work the year with a promise of a share of the crop.

husbands are not permitted to claim their wives or parents their children. women have been struck to the ground and choked.

**Mr. H. Stevens**, McMinnville Tenn. Dec. 11, 1865, states that during divine services, a colored woman entered the church, a **Mr Pennibarker** asked the preacher to stop - and ordered all colored folks to leave - No one left - at close of the service said Mr Pennibarker stopped

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**S. H. Melcher**, supt. &c, LaGrange, Tenn. Dec. 18, 1865, states as follows: Complaints come in daily from the adjoining counties of Miss. of robbery, assaults, &c, on the persons of Freedmen. Not less than one hundred & fifty have left Tippah and Marshall Co's, Miss. within the past week and come into Tenn. & all with their story.

A freedman living twelve miles south came in last night, covered with blood, with severe cuts on his head - his former master had beaten him with a heavy stick - while his son-in-law stood by with a pistol, because the freedman had said that he intended to go & hunt up his children, whom he had not seem in four years.

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also, Febry 3d 1866, reports that an attempt was made to force **Jas. Moore**, colored, assistant in his office, into a fight with an ex-rebel soldier. some forty or fifty persons were present, principally rebel officers & soldiers. Mr. Milcher interfered and Moore was finally rescued. An ex rebel Capt. drew a knife on Mr. Milcher & threatened his life.

At the same time an old freedman was attacked in his own yard & badly beaten by two of the same crowd.

Disloyal, lawless men from the border of Miss. commit many outrages & with impunity - as there is no protection.

Also Jany 7th 1866 reports as follows:

I During the insurrection excitement in Tippah Co. Miss, one "**Porter**" shot twice at & killed a freed man who did not stop when ordered to do so.

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II. Dec. 11 - **Stephen Lane** was robbed of his gun & ammunition by **Capt Bonner** Marshall Co. (Miss) Militia, about the same time there were twenty similar cases.

III. **Edmund McNeil** - a freedman was arrested and put in Jail in Bolivar, and hired to a man in Miss. because he went to supt. at Bolivar to learn about his contract. He escaped.

IV. **Julia Wilson** (a freedwoman) was assaulted by two white men --- **Stone & Jerry Ball** & cut with a knife.

V. Jany. 6; **Jane Simmons**, freedwoman was assaulted by one **Pinkney Stafford**, and badly beaten on the head.

VI. The outrage most frequently recurring is the refusal by the employer to settle with the

freedmen, for their [page 19] last year's work, or taking the advantage of them and securing a settlement before witnesses for a mere trifle.

VII. In many cases the children of colored persons which are able to work have been taken and bound out, leaving the younger & more helpless to be cared for by their parents.

**J. N. Puckett**, supt &c, Hickman Co. Jany 15th, '66 reports many outrages committed against Freedmen - up to June last they were kept in Bondage through fear of death - if one is escaped, he was shot down, where ever found. Many are kept from getting pay for work performed through fear of maltreatment. knows of five or six freedmen who have been killed for above reasons.

A freedman had done work for a bar-keeper in Vernon, said co. and [page 20] applied for settlement. He was attacked by there of the desperadoes who still infest the county, who first abused him, he started to get away, when they attempted to shoot him, but the pistol missed fire. he was assaulted again with a knife & an axe - but escaped - again he was attacked the 3rd time with bricks &c - & severely bruised.

**James M. Shoemaker**, Supt. &c. Smith Co. Tenn. Jany. 13th, 1866, reports a case where the former master refuses to give two children to their parents, when claimed by them.

**Mr. R. Caldwell**, supt Pulaski, Tenn. reports Jany. 19, that in several instances he has secured considerably amounts to colored laborers - which they would have lost but for his efforts.

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**Andrew Neeley** supt &c Carroll Co. Tenn Febry. 3, 1866, - says I. a freedwoman was taken from her house, cruelly beaten, and afterward, shot.

II. About Christmas two freedmen were killed in the Western part of the County, by two white men named **Brant** and **Smith**.

III. Another some time previous was badly beaten & shot at but escaped. many other cases of minor importance have occurred.

**Thomas C. Trimble** - Supt &c - Sumner County, Tenn. reports a band of lawless men in his Co. who have taken upon themselves the high prerogative of settling all questions in their locality regardless of civil or Military [page 22] authority.

From the best information, nine to fifteen freedmen have been shot and killed in that part of the County.

Three were killed Christmas week and remained unburied three days.

The outlaws have informed the freedmen that they shall not lease or rent any lands, nor shall they cultivate any lands, in consequencnes no leases or rentals can be farmed in that part of the country.

Their numbers are so formidable that they over awe the peaceable, quiet citizens, and they have things their own way.

**Henry Bugg**, an old colored man, honest, industrious and peaceable was shot and killed, and robbed of his money by these outlaws.

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**Joel B. Smith**, supt. Coffee Co. reports a freedman by the name of **Pinkney Brannon**, who was driven from home his life being threatened.

On the night of Dec. 11. the Freedmen's school house was burned by incendiaries.

Numerous instances occur in which unprincipled white men have taken advantage of the

ignorance & confidence of the freedmen & swindled them out of all hard earned wages.

W. G. Bond, supt. Clarksville, reports Jan'y 23, 1866, the following, which occurred in Stewart Co Tenn.: On the night of the 17th inst. the colored laborers of Johnson & co's iron works, were attacked by six armed white men and robbed of all monies and valuables.

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Spencer Swathe - Co "M" - 1st U.S.C.H.A. while on his way from Greenville Tenn., where he had been left sick, to rejoin his Regt. at Chattanooga, went to see his wife who lives with Mr Bridges Union County, Tenn. and while there was attacked by two white men Bill McFarlin and Preston Swathe, who knocked him down with an axe, and robbed him of a U.S. Colts Revolver, a Rifle, overcoat, books and fifty dollars in money, and robbed his wife of six dollars. On Oct. 7th the said soldier went with a detail of soldiers of the 12th O.V.C. to arrest the perpetrators of the deed. They were overpowered by friends of the white men, and the negro soldier taken from them and shot.

(see affidavit in possession of Jno B Henry, Knoxville.)

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II A white man named James Copeland entered the house of York Turner (colo) near McMillen's station, Knox Co. Tenn. and made an assault upon his wife, also threatened his life with such indications of violence, that said Turner dare not go home.

also gives two instances where colored men were robbed of their arms by irresponsible parties.

(see same affidavit)

Lt. Col. Ben P. Kunkle, Memphis, TN, 23 May 1866, to Maj. Gen. P. B. Fisk

I have the honor to submit the following report concerning the late riots in the City of Memphis. In so doing I do not propose to enter into details, but to give a general statement of what I believe to be the causes of the riot remote and immediate. A general statement of the progress of the same, the action of the Civil and military authorities and of the Freedmen's Bureau during the continuance of the riot, and since the termination of the same.

Remote causes.

1st. Among the remote causes which led to the Memphis riots may be ranked the tone and spirit of the articles, published in certain of the newspapers in this City. For a time previous to the beginning of the disturbances the Memphis "Avalanche" and "Argus," more particularly the Avalanche, published articles that cannot be considered as anything else than incendiary. These articles were directed against those whom they termed radicals against northern or "imported people" as they have been termed, against the colored population and could not otherwise than tend to stir up the evil passions and bitter prejudices of the lower classes, against the "niggers" and "yankees[.]"

These teachings produced their legitimate result. By these papers the poor miserable vagabonds and tools who carried on the riots were made to believe that a negro had no right to compete with them, in fact no right which they were bound to respect; and that a northern preacher school teacher or "radical Yank" was no better than a negro; hence that negroes [page 3] should be Killed and driven away, negro school houses and churches burned down, negro teachers, preachers and "radical yanks" threatened, intimidated, and a reign of terror inaugurated, which would cause them to depart from the "sacred soil."

Be it understood that there is a larger class of men, citizens of this City many of whom

have served in the Rebel army who neither believed or countenanced these riots, nor do they believe in or contenance the teachings of these papers. Yet there is as if I believe a class of men, many of them called respectable who have countenanced and supported the teachings of these papers and have encouraged, backed-up & supported the low rowdies, or to put it moderately, the misguided men who carried on these riots and were the too willing tools in the hands of the designing demagogues.

Is it strange that when the leading organ, made personal attacks [page 4] upon leading business men, when it advocated that small pox should be smitten over the doors of all those who differed from it in political opinion, is it strange. I say, that the readers of this paper, many of them ignorant and prejudiced men should think themselves warranted in burning schoolhouses & churches, Killing negroes and driving away preachers & school teachers and these friends of the black man, these same Radical Yankees.

For proof that these papers, at least one of them, the Avalanche, see the files of the papers published since the riot which far from condemning it seem rather to rejoice that, as they say, "the nigger has been taught his place and that these riots are but they result of the teachings of northern "school Marm's" in the nigger schools."

Of the attacks made by these papers upon the Freedmens Bureau and the administration thereof I have nothing to say. As an officer of the [page 5] United States army I am accountable to only those above me.

There are other causes which led to these riots. A regiment of colored troops had been stationed in this City for a long time previous, doing Provost and other duty. A feud had grown up between them and the Irish police of the City. This had been of long standing and was deadly in its nature. When this regiment came to be mustered out in the latter part of April and these colored soldiers came to be, in a measure released from military restraint; as well as removed from the protection of the military service, the feud naturally came to a focus between these colored soldiers and their ancient enemies, the Police.

No doubt the colored soldiers had during their stay in the city committed many isolated outrages, but not on that account should colored soldiers as a body, or colored people as a community be condemned.

Again. The freedmen in the City [page 6] of Memphis, as draymen, hackmen, hotel waiters, mechanics and in every capacity as laboring men have come in competition with white laborers and many bad men among these white laborers have been led to believe by the teachings of the papers mentioned heretofore, as well as by the teachings of those to whom they have been accustomed to look for counsel & advice, that the negro was an inferior being and had no equal right to compete with them. Hence came a conflict of labor.

In the next place, the organization of the City government of the City of Memphis was of such a nature that its tendencies and workings would not only fail to keep the pace and preserve order but would be more likely to foster & encourage the very spirit which results in disorder & riots. The Mayor of the City no doubt appointed the police, not with regard to their fitness as guardians of the public peace, but with a view to preserve his [page 7] political power and no thought [t] any regard whatever to their fitness. In fact such was the utter unfitness of many of these men for the position they occupied, such their ignorance that they were not aware that the laws governing slavery had been abolished and have given as an excuse for arresting freedmen without a cause; that they were out after hours.

Many of these policemen were never so culpably ignorant as not to be fit for any position, men governed entirely by unjust prejudices among which most prominent stood, their bitter hatred for the negro race. Among these policemen, the evils of this riot have shown to be, not only loafers and drunkards, but houseburners, burglars, plunderers, robbers and murderers. The responsibility of the appointment of these men and their deeds rests upon the City Government of this City.

But this is not all. These men were urged on in their most villainous acts by one of the



offices of [page 8] the City government. Then from such teachings from the public press, from such appointments by the city government, from such guardians of the public peace, from such counsel of men in official stations, from the prejudices of the law and degraded men who did the work and who have congregated into the City of Memphis from all the country roundabout, from the feud between the bad soldiers and a worse police from a mistaken conflict between two classes of laborers in which only the worst of men participated, came the riots in this City of Memphis. And each thing will continue to occur as long as such a press continues to teach and such officials continue to act.

And yet while the immediate actors in these riots should be punished to the extent and rigor of the law, Let not the blame rest upon the poor ignorant misguided tools but upon the wicked and designing men who so taught and misguided them.

[Page 9] Immediate Causes.

On the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April a party of four police [illegible], met in the sidewalk on Causey St a party of negroes when they jostled, pushed or knocked off the pavement. Words followed negroes started to run, police pursued. One policeman struck a negro over the head with his pistol. A second negro struck the policeman over the head with his cane. The parties then separated swearing the thing was not settled.

On the evening of May 1st a crowd of colored men, some of them discharged soldiers were assembled on South St. Two policemen arrested a negro and started away with him, four other policemen covered their retreat. The crowd followed them, one drunken negro being in advance held back by his comrades. Some of the negroes fired their pistols in the air the police then turned and fired upon the negroes. Some firing took place then on both sides. The greater number [page 10] of the negroes ran away when the firing began. There were many women and children in this crowd (negroes). The crowd of colored people ran off one way and the police another, the latter went to the Station House, procured reinforcements and returned followed by a large crowd of citizens. They went near the corner of Causey & South Streets and began an indiscriminate attack upon the colored people they could see, few, if any of whom had anything to do with the previous disturbance.

They shot down colored soldiers and colored citizens among others a small boy aged some fourteen or fifteen years. During these two affrays, one white man was wounded and two killed. One, **Stephens**, according to the testimony of the Surgeon shot himself accidentally in the leg; the other **Dunn** was shot by a policeman accidentally, from the rear.

The wounded man **Slattery** was probably so wounded by the colored [page 11] men.

I shall not enter into details concerning the progress of the riots. The report of Col. Johnson your Assst Insp. Genl will probably furnish all necessary particulars and much of the information which I have is taken before Gen. Stoneman's Military Commissioner which I am sworn not to divulge. Suffice it to say, that men women & children were shot down by the rioters in cold blood, and churches and school houses were burned and for three days the rioters led by the Police ruled the City.

Action of the Civil Authorities

The Civil Authorities were utterly incompetent to suppress the riot. There is evidence going to show that the Mayor was drunk. The Recorder of the Police Court made a speech to a riotous crowd in which he made use of the following language, "I am a brave man by the God and this (producing a pistol) is the best piece of steel [page 12] in Tennessee. We are not prepared now but let us go and prepare and Kill all the niggers and burn the cradle" or words to that effect. Again he said, "I want it understood I will never fine another white man in my Court for carrying arms" or words to that effect.

The Chief of Police had no control over his men, but in justice to this officer I believe that this resulted not from any fault of his, both from the organization of the police for which the Mayor and the police committee of the Board of Aldermen are responsible. The Judge of the

County Court (**Leonard**) and the sheriff of the County (**Winters**) exerted themselves to restore order, but their measures accomplished but little.

Infact many of the men who were armed to aid in preserving the peace, when joined with the rioters or countenanced their proceedings. In this connection it may be well to say that the Fire Department of this City did nothing whatever to extinguish the flames of [page 13] the burning schoolhouses and churches, on the contrary some of the firemen are implicated in the riot.

Action of the Military Authorities. On Wednesday morning May 2<sup>d</sup> a large number of colored people, having come to my Head Qrs., asking, that protection which they had a right to expect from the Government of the United States, and several white citizens having informed me that the riot was likely to assume fearful proportions; I waited upon General Stoneman for the purpose of requesting him that a sufficient force might be place at my command to protect the innocent and arrest the guilty. Before I had spoken to him I heard him give instructions to his A. A. Genl to order Col. Kappner Codg 3 U.S.C.A. (H) to Keep him men in the Fort, to order Capt Allen Cmdg U.S. Ifnty to send a detachment of men to patrol between Beal & South Streets, and to Keep the rest of his men at the fort or guarding public property  
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At my request and for the purpose of presenting the destruction of the Public records the Gen'l sent to my Hd Qrs a Sergt & ten men.

More than this he informed me he could not do, his force was weak and he had a large amount of public property to guard and further said, in each an emmergency the troops under his command were not reliable being prejucied against the negro.

I have no opinion to offer, sure this, that with one hundred resolute men I could have at any time suppressed the riots, whether they would not have broken out again and overpowered all the military in this Garrison, I am not prepared to say. I can only aver that if I had had the troops, the rioters would have been forced to take the responsibility.

On Thursday the 3. Genl. Stoneman requested me to meet him at his H<sup>d</sup> Qs. I did so and he informed me that he was about to appoint a commission to [page 15] investigate the riots of which he desired I should become a member. I accepted the appointment and have devoted all the time to the discharge of these duties, and when I have been unable to leave my room or have been prevented from attending the Commission by the important demands of my official business as Supt.

The proceedings and evidence taken before that Commission I cannot speak of, but I will say of the members of the Commission that they are all without exception, honest, upright, truthful gentlemen and when this record is made public it will probably show that they have done their whole duty.

#### Action of the Bureau

I have endured the mortification of turning away the poor people who came to me for protection and when I was sent here to protect and I am now wondering the mortification of placing it on record that I was [page 16] powerless and did nothing. And have only to add that the Freedmens Bureau in this City during the riot was a mockery.

True I went upon the ground but might as well have been a thousand miles away, for though I did this at the peril of my life it amounted to nothing.

I trust that no officer of the army will ever be called upon to endure this humiliation again. Where the flag of the nation and the uniform of the Army will not protect the people, it is time that measures should be provided - that evil doers will fear, if they do not respect.

This nation has set the black man free with the bayonet; then let the nation if needs be, protect his life with the same weapon. God speed the day when the Bureau or armed men shall be no longer needed and when all men whether white or black shall be permitted to

enjoy, life, liberty [page 17] and the pursuit of happiness; but so long as armed me and bayonets are needed let them be strong enough to protect every American citizen from insult and injury.

Better that there should be no Bureau, than that there should be one so weak that it can scarcely defend itself. Since the riot I have done all in my power to rebuild the "waste places", to ferret out the rioters and to prepare the way that justice may be done and the law vindicated.

In obedience to given instructions, one school house forty by one hundred feet, with four recitation rooms will be finished tomorrow night May 24.

Trusting that while have done little that the responsibility of doing, I may say nothing, may not be charged to my account. . .

Fred S. Palmer, Nashville, TN, 6 Jul. 1866 to Col. J. E. Jacobs

I have the honor to submit the following report of the disturbance which took place between the Whites & Blacks at Smyrna, Tenn on the 4th day of July 1866.

The order having been received at too late an hour for me to take the evening train I proceeded to Smyrna mounted accompanied by one orderly and arrived there at half past eleven o'clock P. M. The town was very quiet, the disturbance having died out during the afternoon. I found the magistrate engaged in issuing warrants for the arrest of several colored persons, who had been engaged in the affair.

I recommended that only such parties be arrested during the night as they had reason to apprehend would leave the County. My reasons for this was that [page 2] under the excitement the colored people might be found in squads in their cabins, armed, and lives might be lost, whereas if the warrants were not served until next day the arrests could be made without any serious trouble.

This was agreed to and but one warrant placed in the hands of a white man by the name of Wm. Cain, disputed for the purpose. He was however unsuccessful as he could not find his man. Lieut Harris Comr detachment 5th Cavalry arrived at Smyrna at half after 12 o'clock am on the 5th.

The next morning after my arrival I had the magistrate Jno Shacklett take the testimony of two white and two colored persons, who were present during the trouble. From this testimony it appears that the Colored people had a pic-nic on the 4th, just in the edge of the [page 3] town and that during the morning they paraded with music & marched in procession around the Depot headed by a Chief Marshall by the name of Henry Cooch, who wore a sash and ribbon over his shoulder to which was attached a Sabre. The demonstration appears to have incited [incited?] four or five white men who were drinking quite freely at two saloons near the Depot.

About 11 o'clock in the morning Henry Cooch and two other colored men went to one of these saloons Kept by Stillman & Johnson, to get a drink. When they had approached to within about six steps of the door of the saloon, a white man by the name of Joseph McGee went up to Cooch & taking hold of his sword gave it a jerk, saying at the same time "What the hell are doing with this on, give it to me." Cooch asked him "if it was any of his G[-----] business," jerking away from McGee and drawing his sabre raised it as though he was going to strike. At this time other white men picked up brickbats and told him not to strike or they would break his head. Cooch put up his sabre and returned to the pic-nic grounds. The two other colored men with him going into the saloon & taking a drink.

Shortly after this Cooch came down the rail road track passing these Saloons and going to a well where they were getting their water. After remaining here a short time, he and three

or four others started for the camp or pic-nic grounds, the road leading past the saloons. Then within eight or ten steps of Stillmans saloon, Joseph McGee (white) stepped out and picking up a rock threw it all [at] Cooch, who drew his sabre & charged the party consisting of Joseph McGee, Saml. McGee, Terrel Edwards and Tuck Tune. Tune ran [page 4] into the saloon followed by Cooch who struck him with his sabre and then caught him and threw him over a chair back. At this time the firing by the whites commenced. At the first shot Cooch left Tune and started to run out, six shots were fired at him in the saloon and two fired at him as he ran up the lawn towards the pic-nic grounds. Four shots took effect, two in his arms and two in his legs. Cooch upon returning to his party at the grounds informed them that he was shot and asked them to fall in and go down and clean out his assailants[.] The Crowd fell in variously estimated at from 15 to 60 persons, ten of whom were armed with muskets, and proceeded to the vicinity of the saloons where seeing Joseph McGee going out of town, they started in pursuit and overtaking him beat him over the head and shoulders with muskets & clubs. They brought him back when he got away from them [page 5] and entering one of the saloons secreted himself.

The crowd after unsuccessful attempts to recapture him repaired to the other saloon, took a drink and dispersed. The Colored men fired three or four shots but no person was wounded. The only person injured were Cooch (Col<sup>d</sup>) shot in four places and McGee (White) bruised about the head & shoulders.

During the evening when everything was quiet a white man by the name of **McCain** (the same man who was afterwards deputized to make the arrest spoken above), and three others went to the house of a colored man by the name of **Alex Hudson** and took from him a revolver and then beat him over the head with his pistol injuring him severely. His reason for this assault and theft was, that Hudson was with [page 6] the party engaged in the riot in the afternoon.

The Magistrate informed me that he would examine during the morning Joseph McGee charged with shooting Cooch and two colored men charged with connected with the riot. I was in the Office taking testimony and informed him that I desired to hear the evidence in these cases. He said that he would like to have me hear it all. About two o'clock I stepped out of his Office to converse with some parties in regard to the trouble and was absent about fifteen minutes, upon my return he informed me that he had examined the case of Joseph McGee (white) and had acquitted him for the reason that no one had appeared against him.

At my request the Magistrate issued a warrant for the arrest of Wm Cain for taking the pistol away from Hudson (Col<sup>d</sup>) and beating him not been presented [page 7] over the head as above stated. Lt. Harris Comdg. Detachment furnished a horse for the Deputy and two men to accompany him to the Country after Cain. The Deputy returned and reported that he could not find Cain.

While we were waiting their return I went to dinner and was absent about half an hour. On my return the Magistrate informed me that he had examined the cases of the two colored persons and had bound them over to the next term of this Court in the sum of \$500.00 each. In the afternoon ten other colored men were brought in just as I was leaving on the train. The Deputies had some trouble in preventing [?] from violence at the hands of Joseph McGee who took up a rock and would undoubtedly struck them with it if he had not been prevented [page 8] The whole affair was brought about by a too free indulgence in whiskey on the part of both whites and blacks Joseph McGee (white) and Henry Cooch (col<sup>d</sup>) were the parties who were responsible for the riot and were the only ones seriously injured at the time.

The Magistrate, John Shacklett during the day (July 5) indulged rather too frequently in intoxicating liquors and when I left I do not believe he was in a fit condition to administer

justice.

I am of the opinion from what I send that had not the troops been presented serious outrages would have been committed by the whites upon the black on that day.

In the morning I asked the magistrate if he acknowledged the recent acts of the Legislature, he replied that he had not been in the habit of taking negro testimony and that most of the [page 9] lawyers in the county did not recognize the acts of the present Legislature, but that he would take negro testimony in this case.

Report of Outrages committed by Whites on Freedmen in the  
Memphis Sub District Bureau R.F.A.L.  
for the Month of August 1866.  
as reported to Liet Col. Fred. J. Palmer Chief Superintendent.

[Page 1] County	Name of Freedmen	Nature of outrage
Shelby	Randall Cobb	Assaulted by his employer George Wasson Aug 1st and driven off plantation without pay. <sup>1</sup>
	Peter Bunting	Assaulted by his employer Samuel Gowld Aug 6th and driven off the place without pay. <sup>2</sup>
	Edward Burrell	Assaulted by his employer P. M. Black July 25th and driven off the place without pay. <sup>3</sup>
	Luke Persons	Assaulted by his employer R. A. Campbell Aug 21st and driven off the place without pay. <sup>4</sup>
Fayette	Charley Hunt A Freedman	Beaten and kicked by her employer Robt Atkins. <sup>5</sup> Beaten and Kicked by one Lloyd her employer <sup>6</sup>
Madison	A Freedman	Whipped by her employer. <sup>7</sup>
	A Freedman	Life threatened and ordere to leave the country by a party of four white men. <sup>8</sup>
Haywood	A Freedman	Shot and mortally wounded by a white man by the name of Clarke August 30th. <sup>9</sup>
Lauderdale McNairy	Three Freedmen	Whipped by their employers. <sup>10</sup>
	A Freedman	Assaulted and driven off the place by his employer Virgil Sanders, and compelled to abandon crop of 30 acres. <sup>11</sup>
	A Freedman	Assaulted with a hoe by Dr Wm. Thompson and severely wounded in head. <sup>12</sup>
Obion	A Freedman	Shot & Killed by two ex-rebel soldiers named H. A. Hurst and David Hurst. <sup>13</sup>
	Edward Pursley	Severly whipped by J. U. Williamson, Joseph Nailing and another White man respectively. <sup>14</sup>
	Thomas Curmon and another Freedman	

REMARKS

1. Referred to Civil Authorities. No action yet reported in the case.
2. Referred to Civil Authorities. No action yet reported in the case.
3. Referred to Civil Authorities. No action yet reported in the case.
4. Warrant issued for Campbell's arrest. Case compromised by Persons going back to work.

Tipton	Wm. Ware	Beaten about the head & face with a spade by <b>John D. Garrett</b> <sup>23</sup>
Shelby	Addison Mason Geo Duncan } Stephen Hill and } Jacob Thompson	Accidentally shot & wounded his brother. <sup>24</sup> Tied to the fence, partially stripped and whipped with a rawhide by a party unknown, while at work on <b>John Schweizer's</b> plantation. <sup>25</sup>

REMARKS

1. Was directed to apply to Civil Authorities. The Justice informed the woman that it would do her no good to prosecute, as all the fine the pay would go [to] the Governor of the State and not to her. Woman dropped the suit.
2. Referred to Civil Authorities. Wormbly fined five Dollars.
3. Referred to Civil Authorities. Stanley fine five Dollars.
4. Referred to Civil Authorities. Thomas fine two dollars and fifty cents.
5. Referred to Civil Authorities. Drake fined five Dollars.
6. Referred to Civil Authorities. The parties in the case compromised before trial.
7. No action taken in the case.
8. Referred to Civil Authorities. In one case there being only negro testimony, it was dismissed and in the other case, the witness was a white man and the parties were fined five dollars.
9. Referred to Civil Authorities. Before trial the Deft<sup>t</sup> raised a party of roughs and run the freedmen off. Nothing has been heard from them since.
10. Referred to Civil Authorities. Yarbrough fined two Dollars.
11. No action yet taken in the case.
12. No action taken in the case.
13. Taylor had the negro arrested for stealing and at the last term of Court he was sentenced to the Penitentiary for three years, but got a new trial granted and has brought suit against Taylor for whipping him. No decision yet.
14. Referred to Civil Authorities. Warrants issued but the case has not yet been tried.
15. The guilty party has been indicted by the Grand Jury.
16. No action taken in the case.
17. Have since compromised the case.
18. No action taken in the case.
19. No action yet taken in this case, it having but lately been brought to the attention of the Agent.
20. No action taken in the case.
21. Case referred to Civil Authorities. Warrant was issued but no further report of the case has reached this Office.
22. The freedman is afraid to prosecute his employer and [illegible] the case to rest for the present.
23. Was brought before the Recorders Court at Lagrange and fined fifty dollars for assault & Battery.
24. No action taken by Civil Authorities. As soon as the Bureau commenced to investigate the case, Garrett left the county for parts unknown.
25. Case referred to the Metropolitan Police. No report of action yet been received.

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(To Be Continued)