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**History Remembered, Inc.**  
*A Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial  
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## Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial Circular



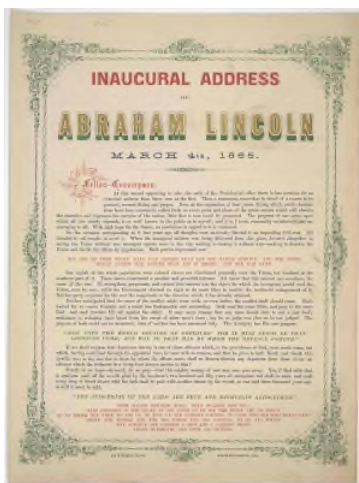
### Michigan Remembers the Civil War -

Of the Civil War years, many suggest that April of 1865 was the most pivotal month of the Civil War. Of course there were many such months during the war where a major battle was fought or some political maneuvering took place.

This issue will look at some events of March 1865.

Thank you for your support in remembering Michigan in the Civil War.

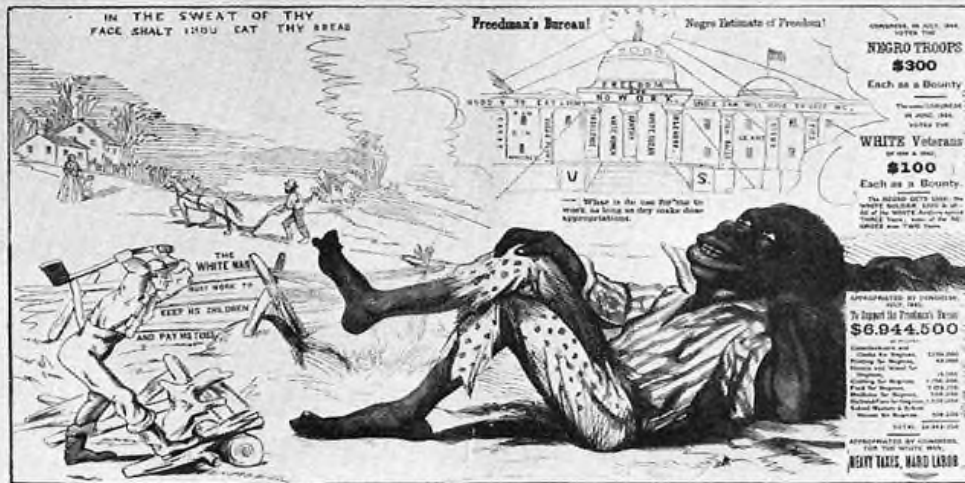
Bruce B. Butgereit,  
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# THE FREEDMAN'S BUREAU!

AN AGENCY TO KEEP THE **NEGRO** IN IDLENESS AT THE **EXPENSE** OF THE WHITE MAN.  
TWICE VETOED BY THE **PRESIDENT**, AND MADE A LAW BY **CONGRESS**.  
SUPPORT CONGRESS & YOU SUPPORT THE NEGRO. SUSTAIN THE PRESIDENT & YOU PROTECT THE WHITE MAN



For 1864 and 1865, the FREEDMAN'S BUREAU cost the Tax-payers of the Nation, at least TWENTY-FIVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS. For 1866, THE SHARE of the Tax-payers of Pennsylvania will be about ONE TEND OF DOLLARS. **GEAR!** is FOR the Freedman's Bureau. **CLYMER** is OPPOSED to it.

## The Freedman's Bureau -

The U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, popularly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was established in 1865 by Congress to help former black slaves and poor whites in the South in the aftermath of the U.S. Civil War. Some 4 million slaves gained their freedom as a result of the Union victory in the war, which left many communities in ruins and destroyed the South's plantation-based economy. The Freedmen's Bureau provided food, housing and medical aid, established schools and offered legal assistance. It also attempted to settle former slaves on Confederate lands confiscated or abandoned during the war. However, the bureau was prevented from fully carrying out its programs due to a shortage of funds and personnel, along with the politics of race and Reconstruction. In 1872, Congress, in part under pressure from white Southerners, shut the bureau.

The Freedmen's Bureau was established by an act of Congress on March 3, 1865, two months before Confederate General Robert Lee surrendered to the Union's Ulysses Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, effectively ending the Civil War. Intended as a temporary agency to last the duration of the war and one year afterward, the bureau was placed under the authority of the War Department and the majority of its original employees were Civil War soldiers.

Oliver Otis Howard, a Union general, was appointed commissioner of the bureau in May 1865. Howard, a Maine native who attended Bowdoin College and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, reportedly had been planning to become a minister when the Civil War broke out. During the war, Howard, nicknamed the "Christian General," fought in major battles, including Antietam and Gettysburg, and lost an arm in the Battle of Fair Oaks in 1862.

### **Opposition to the Freedmen's Bureau**

America's Reconstruction era (1865-77) was a turbulent time, as the nation struggled with how to rebuild the South and transition the 4 million newly freed blacks from slavery to a free-labor society. "There was no tradition of government responsibility for a huge refugee population and no bureaucracy to administer a large welfare, employment and land reform program," according to *"The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction,"* edited by Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller. "Congress and the army and the Freedmen's Bureau were groping in the dark. They created the precedents."

From the start, the Bureau faced resistance from a variety of sources, including many white Southerners. Another leading opponent was President Andrew Johnson, who assumed office in April 1865 following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. When Congress introduced a bill in February 1866 to extend the bureau's tenure and give it new legal powers, Johnson vetoed the proposed legislation on the grounds that it interfered with states' rights, gave preference to one group of citizens over another and would impose a huge financial burden on the federal government, among other issues. In July of that same year, Congress overrode the president's veto and passed a revised version of the bill. However, Johnson became embroiled in a bitter fight with the Radical Republicans in Congress, who viewed the president's Reconstruction policies as too lenient, and the Freedmen's Bureau suffered as a result. Johnson's actions, which included pardoning many former Confederates and restoring their land, as well as removing bureau employees he thought were too sympathetic to blacks, served to undermine the bureau's authority.

The bureau's mission was further muddled by the fact that even among the agency's supporters in Congress and its own personnel, there was disagreement over what type of assistance the government should provide and for how long.

### **The Freedmen's Bureau's Successes and Failures**

The Freedmen's Bureau was organized into districts covering the 11 former rebel states, the border states of Maryland, Kentucky and West Virginia and Washington, D.C. Each district was headed by an assistant commissioner. The bureau's achievements varied from one location to another and from one agent to the next. Over its course of existence, the bureau was underfunded and understaffed, with just 900 agents at its peak. Bureau agents, who acted essentially as social workers and were frequently the only federal

representatives in Southern communities, were subjected to ridicule and violence from whites (including terror organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan) who viewed the agents as interfering in local affairs by trying to assist blacks. While some agents were corrupt or incompetent, others were hardworking and brave and made significant contributions.

During its years of operation, the Freedmen's Bureau fed millions of people, built hospitals and provided medical aid, negotiated labor contracts for ex-slaves and settled labor disputes. It also helped former slaves legalize marriages and locate lost relatives, and assisted black veterans. The bureau also was instrumental in building thousands of schools for blacks, and helped to found such colleges as Howard University in Washington, D.C., Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. The bureau frequently worked in conjunction with the American Missionary Association and other private charity organizations.

Additionally, the bureau tried, with little success, to promote land redistribution. However, most of the confiscated or abandoned Confederate land was eventually restored to the original owners, so there was little opportunity for black land ownership, which was seen as a means to success in society.

## The Freedmen's Bureau's Demise

In the summer of 1872, Congress, responding in part to pressure from white Southerners, dismantled the Freedmen's Bureau. Since that time, historians have debated the agency's effectiveness. A lack of funding, coupled with the politics of race and Reconstruction, meant that the bureau was not able to carry out all of its initiatives, and it failed to provide long-term protection for blacks or ensure any real measure of racial equality. However, the bureau's efforts did signal the introduction of the federal government into issues of social welfare and labor relations. As noted in *"The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction,"* "The Bureau helped awaken Americans to the promise of freedom, and for a time, the Bureau's physical presence in the South made palpable to many citizens the abstract principles of equal access to the law and free labor."

**From *History.com***



### **Oliver Otis Howard -**

Oliver Otis Howard was born November 8, 1830 in Leeds, Maine. He entered Bowdoin College in 1846 and that summer, at age 16, met Elizabeth Ann Waite. She was 15. She would be his only sweetheart. They married right after Howard graduated from West Point in 1855. Howard's first tour of duty was fighting Seminoles in Fort Brooke, Florida. While in Florida, he underwent an intense religious awakening, triggered by a combination of exposure to a

conversion account in Hedley Vicar's Diary Notes, and a robust Methodist tent meeting. Returning to West Point, Howard threw himself into evangelical work. He was seriously considering joining the ministry when the Civil War broke out.

## Howard in the Civil War and Reconstruction

Howard began the war as a colonel in command of the Third Regiment of Maine Volunteers. One year later he was major general of the volunteers. He lost an arm fighting the Battle of Fair Oaks, and received the Thanks of Congress for his role in the Battle of Gettysburg. He was transferred to the Army of the Tennessee in 1863, where, after the death of General McPherson in 1864, he was given command. He commanded the right wing of the Army of the Tennessee under Sherman for the attack on Atlanta and the historic March to the Sea. By the war's end, he was brigadier general in the regular Army with the brevet-rank of major general. He was 34.

Immediately upon the war's conclusion, Howard was appointed Commissioner of the newly created Board of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

## Freedmen's Rights -

*"The rights of the freedman, which are not yet secured to him, are the direct reverse of the wrongs committed against him. I never could conceive how a man could become a better laborer by being made to carry an over heavy and wearisome burden which in no way facilitates his work. I never could detect the shadow of a reason why the color of the skin should impair the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."*

- Oliver Otis Howard, circa 1865

Chosen for this job because of his twin credentials as hero and humanitarian, he faced the daunting task of assisting four million ex-slaves in finding jobs, homes, and health care. Social work had not yet been invented as a profession. The Bureau was a department of the Army, and the employees were officers. No sooner had President Johnson installed Howard in this post, than he began trying to dismantle the Bureau and undermine its mission. Howard understood that he did not have much time in which to work, and he prioritized education - the setting up of schools.

By the time the Bureau was completely dismantled in 1872, Howard was president of Howard University. The university was one of several schools Howard had used Bureau monies to establish, sometimes a little too creatively in the minds of his critics. The brainchild of a bible study group to which Howard belonged, Howard University was



founded specifically to train black lawyers, doctors, dentists, and teachers.

The consensus on the question of whether the Freedmen's Bureau achieved its goals is unanimous. It did not. Many ex-slaves found themselves working under contracts designed by the Bureau to give them economic freedom, but utilized by their new employers, often their old slaveholders, to rob them of the same. There are numerous theories as to who was responsible for these failures. In some analyses, Howard bears more of the guilt than in others. Everyone agrees he was not a good administrator. His decision to spend much of his time traveling around the South, inspecting Bureau offices and explaining Bureau policies, left plenty of room for things to go wrong.

Howard had critics on all sides. His open non-comprehension of racism attracted tenacious enemies who repeatedly brought the bookkeeping practices at the Freedmen's Bureau under public examination. It exposed him to public ridicule (A graduate school?! For black people?!), drained his pocket book (he had to pay for his own legal defense), and alienated him from the political mainstream. Sherman advised Howard to request transfer to the field, and in 1874 he was given command of the Department of the Columbia.

#### Howard Out West

The Howards arrived in Portland [Oregon] in 1874. By this time they were a family of nine: Howard, his wife "Lizzie," Gus, Grace, James, Chauncey, John, Bessie and Harry. The oldest son, Gus, had just graduated from Yale. Grace was still at Vassar. Their home was located at SW 10th and Morrison.

Howard found Portland to be filled with "much wickedness." He responded to this moral disarray by throwing himself into volunteer work. He transferred to Portland his Washington DC memberships in the Congregational Church and the YMCA. Howard adored the YMCA, which embodied all his values: temperance, education, evangelism, and ecumenicalism. At that time, the YMCA was organized along military lines, so for Howard, already known as the "Christian general," it was an ideal match. Primarily concerned with protecting young men from the dangers of city life in its early years, during the Civil War, the YMCA focused on providing medical care. Walt Whitman was a YMCA member when he nursed wounded soldiers. The Portland YMCA was led by a small group of elite Christian businessmen, including a founder William Ladd, and met in rooms above his bank on SW Third.

The Howard's official Fort Vancouver residence, built for their family of nine and servants, was ready after the Nez Perce campaign in 1878. Howard and his wife entertained often, but always without alcohol. President Grant and his wife, heading home from Japan at the end of a two-year-long grand tour of the world, stopped to visit the Howards at Fort Vancouver. In his memoir Howard points out that the large reception he and his wife held in Grant's honor was very enjoyable and no alcoholic beverages were served.

It was at Fort Vancouver that Howard met Lt. Charles Erskine Scott Wood, a recent West

Point graduate. Howard liked Wood, and made him his aide de camp. In Howard, Wood saw a man who held progressive beliefs and at the same time moved within the power structure of our society. Later Wood would himself do much the same thing, combining unorthodox political beliefs and self-expression - writing and painting - with a lucrative business law practice. One difference: Wood ably merged the two sides of himself with far greater social ease than Howard.

Howard once attended a dinner party where the topic of conversation was the scandalous marriage of a young rich officer to an Indian girl he had met while serving in the West. Howard's response was that he believed all Indian "wives" taken by soldiers in the West, were, in the eyes of God, legitimate wives, and when soldiers abandoned them to return East and marry white women, they all were committing bigamy. This was a conversation stopper. No one said such things.

Howard didn't think about when or where his non-racism would be socially welcome. He just expressed something that seemed natural to him, and was bewildered when it caused an uproar. People hated him for exposing their own hypocrisy. He invited black children to join the Sunday School in his Washington DC church. The resulting panic divided the congregation. In Portland, he ignored social norms and made friends with a Chinese family, the Lings. Mr. Ling was so grateful to Howard for crossing the cultural divide, he named all his children after Howard's children.

Howard began to write a weekly column for the Portland Bee. Encouraged by his success at the paper, he began a longer project, a children's book based on his own childhood. Donald's School Days and Henry In The War, both written in Portland, launched Howard's writing career. He would remain active as a writer the rest of his life. Howard liked to hold reading groups at his house in Fort Vancouver. Wood and Howard probably bonded over love of books, hatred of injustice, and disinterest in military pomp.

### **Howard - Indian Fighter**

Howard's Fort Vancouver command began under President Grant's Peace Policy. Howard was familiar with the Peace Policy. In 1872, he had taken time out from his job as a bureaucrat to travel, with one aide and three civilian guides (two of them Apache), to the remote camp of the renegade Chiricahua Apaches fighting under Cochise. Acting as Peace Commissioner, he entered the camp unarmed, and accompanied by one aide. He negotiated with Cochise for eleven days,. They reached mutually-agreed-upon terms, and the peace was lasting.



So Howard knew there was more than one way to address Indian conflicts. When complaints from white settlers reached Fort Vancouver that the Dreamer Nez Perce were stubbornly refusing to relinquish the Wallowa Valley, he commissioned a study of the

situation by his adjutant, Major Henry Clay Wood. Wood was a lawyer. His careful study of the 1855 and 1863 treaties revealed the Nez Perce claim of ownership to be legitimate. Howard's own opinion, recorded in an 1876 report, was, "I think it is a great mistake to take from Joseph and his band of Nez Perces Indians that valley...and possibly Congress can be induced to let these really peaceable Indians have this poor valley for their own." His plea was not heard. That the Nez Perce had a right to stay in the valley was not the issue. The issue was how soon they would leave.

Howard sent Major Wood to parley with the Nez Perce in 1876. A year later Howard traveled to Fort Lapwai to conduct a second parley himself. Both Howard's account and the Nez Perce oral history of the second parley tell remarkably similar stories. Howard loses his temper, and in the words of Yellow Wolf "showed the rifle." Later, when war broke out, Howard lost no time escalating his forces. He wanted a quick finish to the hostilities, and at the Battle of Clearwater his men outnumbered the Nez Perce warriors by about 6 to 1. Instead, the Nez Perce escaped through Lolo Pass, and began their epic 1,500-mile flight. Howard pursued, but never directly engaged them in battle again. The newspapers covered the story closely, detailing one near miss after another. Howard once again was the target of public ridicule. Four months after the war began, Chief Joseph surrendered to Colonel Nelson A. Miles in Bear Paw, Montana.

Howard's last Indian War took place the following year. He quickly and easily subdued the Bannock Indians, some of whom had worked for him as scouts in the Nez Perce War.

### **Howard Back East**

Howard took C.E.S. Wood along as his assistant in 1880, when he left Fort Vancouver to become Superintendent of West Point. He served there for two years, time which Wood used to go to Columbia Law School, just down the Hudson River. In New York, Wood met and became friends with Mark Twain. Wood had access to the West Point printing press and he used it to publish privately Twain's 1600: or a conversation as it was by the fireside of Queen Elizabeth, a work considered too obscene for the usual publishing outlets. It may have been at this time that the relationship between Howard and Wood chilled. In Howard's memoirs, Wood is expunged from the record, except in relation to the Nez Perce War.

Howard wrote non-fiction, primarily about his own experience with Indian fighting, and with Indians. Four of his eight books - his autobiography, his biography of Zachary Taylor, his biography of Queen Isabel of Spain, and his account of the Nez Perce War - were written for adults. The rest were written for children. Bruce J. Dinges writes in his introduction to the 1989 reprint of Famous Indians I Have Known, "It is obvious at once that Howard was a talented writer and entertaining storyteller, with a wry sense of humor. Writing from personal experience, he created engaging portraits - almost unheard of in his day - of Indians as flesh and blood human beings with a diverse range of personalities. Because of the cultural blinders he wore, Howard sometimes misjudged Indian motivations, but he left for the rest of us vivid descriptions of their physical appearance, demeanor, thoughts, and conversation." Here again we see indirect evidence of Howard's atypical non-racism. By contrast, what Howard's friend Sherman



had to say about Indians was, "The more we kill today, the fewer we have to kill tomorrow."

Howard also had a successful speaking career. He began on the lecture circuit around 1870 when he was low on cash. He spoke to audiences about the Civil War; about specific battles, including Gettysburg; about the need for love to heal the country. An 'inspirational' speaker, he was popular enough to keep doing it all his life. Howard never wrote about spiritual matters, including his own spiritual experiences, nor about his vision of a just society, but he often spoke about them to audiences.

#### **On Education -**

*"The burden of my efforts...may be condensed into the words: Educate the children. That was the relief needed. Is it not always the relief which in time becomes a permanency?"*

- Oliver Otis Howard

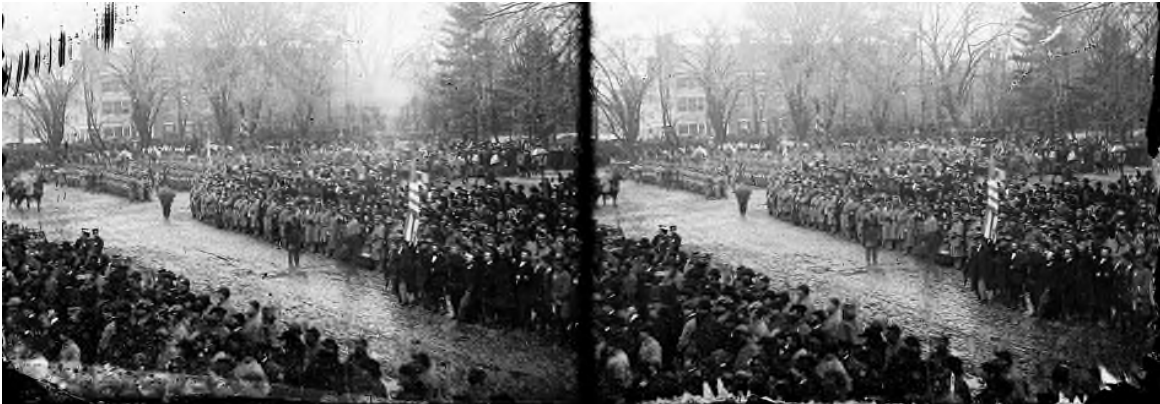
Howard was a paradox. He was a New Light evangelical Christian, a world traveler, and a teetotaler. He liked dancing, would not tolerate swearing, and made his troops attend Bible classes. He liked teaching Sunday School. When he was young, he wore a silk top hat. He married his wife on Valentine's Day. He tried all his life to be less ambitious. He gave away money as fast as he earned it. He wanted to be a team player. At the same time, he was a social reformer: he believed in temperance, racial equality, and education for women. He believed in creative bookkeeping. He could not understand the point of racism. He was the subject of one congressional investigation, one military court of inquiry, and several civil suits - exonerated of charges in each instance. He stayed in the army for the steady paycheck. He retired as a major general. His last command, the Department of the East, covered more than half the country.

After his retirement in 1894, Howard remained active as writer, lecturer, and fundraiser for the various groups and causes he supported. He had a speaking engagement just before he died, in 1909 at age 79.

Howard's biographer, John A. Carpenter, observed, "The anomaly of Howard's position as advocate of racial equality and as a high-ranking officer in the United States Army had proved so impossible of comprehension that more than one person, and often this meant a fellow officer, simply never understood him at all." This lack of

understanding, combined with the national shame still triggered by close examination of the Reconstruction and the Indian Wars - Howard's two post-Civil War arenas of action - may explain Howard's curious absence from history books. Howard, who worried that he was too motivated by glory, might be relieved to know that today he has been almost entirely forgotten.

**By Anne Richardson as published at [ochcom.org](http://ochcom.org)**



The crowd that witnessed Lincoln's Second Inaugural. There were four companies of the 45th Regiment United States Colored Troops present.



### **Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln - Saturday, March 4, 1865**

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all

sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war--seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have

borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

(The words, "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan.." would be used later by the Grand Army of the Republic as they sought pensions for financial aid and soldiers' homes for those in need of care.)

### *Interesting Websites -*

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A collection of Freedmen's Bureau websites:

#### **The Freedmen's Bureau Online**

Plotting the Last Stages of the War:

#### **Lincoln, Sherman and Grant Meet**

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