

JANE HOSMER



Born: Dec. 29, 1835 in Concord, Middlesex, MA

Died: Sep. 10, 1922 in Concord, Middlesex, MA

Appointment(s):

New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS)

Hilton Head, SC

Dec. 1864 - 1866

Gordonsville, VA

Before Mar. 1868 - 1870

1835-1922

Jane Hosmer was born December 29, 1835 in Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts to Edmund Hosmer (1798-1881) and Sally Pierce 1795-1890. Jane was raised in an intellectually engaging environment with Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as neighbors and friends. In fact, her father helped build 'Walden', Thoreau's cabin.¹ She is listed in the 1850-1900 US Census as residing in Concord as a single woman. In the 1900-1920 Census, she is living with her sister Abby and at the age of 84, was still listed as a teacher in the public school system.

Jane Hosmer was sent by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society [NEFAS] in December 1864 as a teacher to the freedmen on Hilton Head Island under the sponsorship of the FAS in Roxbury, Massachusetts.² She was still on Hilton Head Island teaching in December 1865. While teaching there, she made a trip to Summerville, South Carolina where she discovered that the poor whites of Summerville

¹ Jane Hosmer", (essay about one of Concord's leading young women).
Concord, Massachusetts Library.

https://concordlibrary.org/special_collections/fin_aids/NYSL_+Hosmer_Lunt.

² New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record*, Vol I, No 5 May 1865
Hilton Head; 11 & 12 Nov-Dec 1865.

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were destitute and “quite as ignorant as the coloured population”.³ Jane and her colleague, Harriett Buttrick, wrote a letter to their supporting Roxbury chapter of the NEFAS requesting permission to conduct a class for twenty white students. She received a letter from Ednah Cheney granting permission to do so, while keeping the Society informed as to the progress of the controversial initiative.⁴ [See letters regarding this topic at.]

By March 1868, Jane was teaching in Gordonsville, Virginia’s freedmen’s school sponsored by the New England Freedmen’s Aid Society as a letter she wrote on February 1868 indicates.⁵ She wrote to Mrs. Edna Cheney about the progress of one student named William P. Lucas who rapidly progressed from being illiterate to serving as an assistant teacher for the beginners. She also submitted an essay written by a 12-year old Negro girl, Mary Ann, in a letter to escaped slave Ellen Craft in London. Jane states that the girl is not even one of her best students but submits it as a sample of what the Negro children are capable of. It was only Mary Ann’s third composition.⁶ By 1870, Jane was back living in Concord, Massachusetts and her two sisters who were also teachers were living with her. Her sister Abby continued living with her until 1920. Jane Hosmer was a teacher for almost seventy years, mostly in the public school system of Concord, Massachusetts. Jane Hosmer died September 10, 1922 in Concord, Middlesex, Massachusetts and was buried with her parents in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. Her name is on the family memorial tombstone⁷

³ Hosmer, Gladys E., “Yankees Schoolmarms in Dixie” in *Those Good Gertrudes*, 1959.

https://jhubooks.press.jhu.edu/public/books_pdfs/good_gertrudes_supplemental_material.pdf

⁴ American Antiquarian Society. *Northern Visions of Race, Region and Reform*. “Northern Approaches to Education in the South at War’s End”. Letters between teachers, Hosmer, Buttrick & Parker and Ednah Cheney] <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/intros/reconfreedednu.html>.

⁵ New England Freedmen’s Aid Society. *The Freedmen’s Record*, Vol IV, No 3 March 1868; No 4 Apr 1868, No 5, May 1868

⁶ Hosmer, Jane. *Jane Hosmer papers 1835-1922*. Harvard University Schlesinger Library . Radcliffe Institute: The History of Women collection.. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

⁷ Newspapers.com *Boston Herald* newspaper, Boston, Massachusetts. Sat, Sep 30, 1922, p 12. “Obituary”.

- Findagrave.com./memorial/66337756/edmund-hosmer.