

REV. THOMAS DWIGHT HOWARD



Born: Dec. 25, 1826 in Springfield, Hampden, MA

Died: Sep. 6, 1910 in Peterborough, Hillsborough, NH

Appointment(s):

National Freedmen's Relief Association
(NFRA)

Hilton Head, SC

Mar. 1862

1826-1910

Thomas Dwight Howard was born on Christmas day, December 25, 1826 in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts to Charles Howard (1794-1875) and Elizabeth Buckminster (Dwight) Howard (1801-1855). T.D. Howard received his A.B. degree from Harvard University in 1848 and was ordained in Perry, Maine on September 29, 1852 where he remained as Pastor until February 1, 1862.¹ He married Sarah Ann Eaton (1830-1898) on June 8, 1854 in Springfield. They both applied to the National Freedmen's Relief Association to be teachers and were appointed in March 1862 to serve in South Carolina.² They were supposed to be on the ship 'Atlantic' on March 3, 1862 with the original group of 64 teachers, but the Howards missed the ship due to a heavy snowstorm in Maine. They sailed a bit later on the 'Oriental' with fifteen additional teachers.³ They are on the list of teachers in Hilton Head as of July 1862 assigned by General Rufus Saxton. They were both assigned to Fairfield Plantation and resided in widow Stoney's abandoned house.⁴

In 1863, Rev. Howard was appointed as the General Superintendent of all Contraband Schools. And in December 1863, he was sent to investigate the needs of freedmen in Louisiana and reported back that schools for blacks had already been

¹ Dwight, Benjamin Woodbridge. "History of the Descendants of John Dwight of Dedham, Mass", J.F. Trow & sons, 1874. Vol 2, p 831.

² Ibid.

³ Holmgren, Virginia C. Hilton Head: A Sea Island Chronicle. Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1986 reprint. C 1959: Hilton head Publishing Co, p 99.

⁴ Ibid, p 100.

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established by the government and felt that the NFRA did not need to send any more teachers.⁵ He then became the Chaplain of the 88th and 78th US Colored Troops on January 20, 1864 where he served for about 1 ½ years until 1865.⁶

Rev. Howard did not particularly care for the men who had come to serve from Boston, especially Rev. Mansfield French, who he described as a hypocrite, “a man of rotund form, oily address and assumptive authority”.⁷ He also did not trust him because he had almost been tricked by French into hiring a friend of his, Rev. Hyde, who had already been fired by the Department for having watered down the molasses for the freedmen on Emancipation Day and other acts of fraud.⁸

The couple returned North in late 1865, first to Wisconsin and then to a series of posts in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, including a stint for Rev. Howard as the Secretary to the Commissioner of Prisons from 1874-1879. By May 1880, the couple was settled at Charlestown, New Hampshire where they remained until November 1901.⁹

In March of 1884, the Howards returned for a visit to their old home in Hilton Head. But they arrived to feelings of sadness and nostalgia. The pier that had been used for the arrival of steamers was totally gone – “washed away and never replaced” along with part of the old general hospital that had been there to care for wounded soldiers during the Civil War.¹⁰ Their steamer continued over to Skull Creek and they disembarked at the old Stoney Plantation where they had both taught. It was a bittersweet journey of memories for the Howards. They finally returned to Rev. Howard’s birthplace, Springfield, Massachusetts in 1901 where Rev. Howard retired from the ministry at age 75.

Rev. Howard died September 6, 1910 in Petersborough, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire on a visit to his sister. He is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Charlestown, Sullivan County, New Hampshire.¹¹ Upon his death, *The Christian Register* bestowed honors upon him: “Few men in our ministry have been more sane, sound, helpful and wholesome in their influence upon society. He was one of those resilient men who, without possessing talents which attract public notice and win popularity, was still useful beyond the majority of his fellows.”¹²

⁵ Howard, Thomas Dwight. *New England Freedmen’s Aid Society. Annual Report 1864.* Letter Dec 1863, p 55.

⁶ *The Christian Register.* September 29, 1891. Rev Thomas Dwight Howard. “Obituary”.
<https://www.newspapers.com>

⁷ Rose, Willie Lee. *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999, c 1964, p 221.

⁸ Howard, Charles. “Family Domestic History”. University of North Carolina Library ‘Southern Historical Collection’, [MS pp 105-106.

⁹ Dwight, p 832.

¹⁰ Holmgren, p 100.

¹¹ Findagrave. Memorial ID 138544100 created Nov 9, 2014 by Jen Snoots.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/138544100/thomas-dwight-howard>.

¹² *The Christian Register,* Ibid.