

JULIA ELVIRA ELIZABETH BENEDICT



1844 - 1924

Born: Sep. 1844 in CT

Died: 1924 in Woodbury, CT

Appointment(s):

New England Freedmen's Relief Association
(NFRA)

Alexandria, VA

Oct. 1865

American Missionary Association (AMA)

Lawton Plantation – Hilton Head, SC

Jan. 1867 – 1869

Fisk University – Nashville, TN

Model C School Principal

1869 - 1871

Julia was born September 1844 in Connecticut to Abel Benedict (Dec. 1800 - Sep. 1871) and Eunice Strong (Dec. 1804 – Nov. 189). She was baptized on September 5, 1850 in Woodbury, Litchfield County, Connecticut.¹ Julia moved frequently with the 1850 Census showing her living in Woodbury, Connecticut with her parents; in the 1860 census in Huntington, Fairfield County, CT in the household of Herman age 27 and Louise Bump age 26 (perhaps her sister and husband?), and in Nashville, Davidson Co., Tennessee in 1870 as a teacher at Fisk University. Julia married Charles K. Smith (1843-1916) in September 1874.² The couple had 2 children, Ruth B. and Lincoln C. and they began living back in Woodbury, Connecticut from 1880-1910 where Julia remained in 1920 as a widow.

Just six months after the Civil War ended in 1865, the New England Freedmen's Relief Association appointed Julia as one of their teachers and she was sent to their school for freedmen in Alexandria, VA.³ When she returned home to Woodbury, she and her friend Eliza Ann Summers applied to the American Missionary Association to be teachers for the freedmen in South Carolina. In January 1867, they were appointed by the AMA to teach the freedmen on Hilton Head Island and assigned to the Lawton

¹ Ancestry.com. "Connecticut, Church record Abstracts, 1630-1920: Woodbury".

² Ibid..

³ Butchart, Ronald E. Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1863-1876. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010. p 79.

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Plantation where they held classes for the first six months in the Praise House.⁴ They held day classes for children, a sewing school for women, an evening school for adults and a Sunday School. Julia was sponsored by her church in Woburn, Massachusetts. Eliza and Julia were also responsible for the freedmen at Point Comfort and Braddock's Point.⁵

On March 19, 1867, Julia went on a beach excursion led by Mr. Wright, according to an entry in the diary of her friend, Eliza Ann Summers.⁶ Mr. Wright also took Julia and another teacher, Charlotte Keith from Seabrook Plantation, to visit Mrs. Ellen Seymour, the Matron of the Teachers' Home at Mitchelville.⁷ Charlotte returned with Julia to Lawton Plantation to visit the Sabbath School that Eliza Ann and Julia had started. Both women were upset by the dictates issued by the new Superintendent of the schools on Hilton Head for the American Missionary Association, Mr. Judkins. He had made new strict rules about gentlemen visitors, lights out at 9 pm, breakfast at 6 am and even tested the two of them on their reading ability.⁸ She and Eliza decided not to extend their contract, but only Eliza left for home in June 1867. After Eliza returned home to Woodbury, CT on June 20, 1867, Julia felt lonely and also needed more financial support. She found out that the National Freedmen's Relief Association paid better salaries than the AMA and accepted an appointment from them to Nashville, Tennessee in 1869 where she became a teacher at historically black Fisk University established in August 1867.⁹ She taught classes of 135 girls and 69 boys there for two years and served as the Principal of Department C Model School before returning home.¹⁰ Julia finally returned home to Woodbury, Connecticut in 1871 where she died in 1924 and was buried in the Old North Cemetery.¹¹

⁴ Martin, Josephine W, ed. "Dear Sister": Letters Written on Hilton Head Island 1867. Beaufort, SC: Beaufort Book Co, Inc, 1977. [letters by teacher, Eliza Ann Summers]., pp xx,1,10.

- American Missionary Association. *American Missionary*, Vol XI, No 4, "Teacher's List 1866-67. New York: April 1867", p79.

⁵ Martin, p 17.

⁶ Martin, pp 42,48-49.

⁷ Martin, p 49

⁸ Martin, pp 62-63.

⁹ Dougherty, Kevin and Robert Pauly, Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Co, Oct 2017. p 135

- American Missionary Association. Wednesday, Nov 9, 1870. "Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting". Lawrence Street Congregational Church, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

https://archives.org/stream/AMA%20Annual%20Reports%201870-1891_djvu.txt

¹⁰ American Missionary Association. "Annual Reports 1870-1891". *25th Annual Report 1871*,

p 53. https://archive.org/stream/AMAAnnualReorts18701891/AMA%20Annual%20Reports%2018701891_djvu.tst.

¹¹ Findagrave.com Memorial ID #45776259 created 25 Dec 2009.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45776259>

-Ancestry.com Connecticut Hale Collection of Cemeteries, Inscriptions & Newspaper Notices, 1629-1934.