

HARRIET M BUSS

Born: 1826 in Sterling, Worcester, MA

Died: Oct. 10, 1895 in Raleigh, NC

Appointment(s):

National Freedmen's Relief Association
(NFRA)

Praise House, Beaufort SC
Mar. 1863

Baynard Plantation - Hilton Head, SC
Nov. 1863

Baynard Plantation - Hilton Head, SC
School Principal
Spring 1864

American Missionary Association (AMA)
Norfolk, VA

1867-1869
Baynard Plantation - Hilton Head, SC
1869-1871

American Baptist Home Mission Society
(ABHMS)

Shaw University, Raleigh, NC
1871-1895



1826-1895

Stoney Baynard Plantation
Main House North Elevation
Tabby Ruins

Harriet was born in 1826 in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts to Silas Buss (1799-1871) and Sally Moore (1801-1887). From 1847 until the US Census of 1880, she was a retired schoolteacher, living in Worcester with her widowed mother. Even though her father was a farmer with a net worth of just \$1,500 in 1850, Harriet received a strong education in a private academy which instilled confidence, independence and a love for learning in her.¹ Later, when she was twenty-four years old, she wrote to her parents that “if I were only rich, I would not do anything but study, then I shall study my lifetime...”.² In 1847, Harriet enrolled in the Charlestown Female Seminary in Massachusetts where she remained until November 1850.³ She wrote her

¹ Butchart, Ronald E. *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010, p 115.

² Ibid.

³ Smith, Janel Janiczek, [From A Northern Home to a Southern School:](#)

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parents a letter in March of 1850 declaring that “If life and health are continued, the *world* shall know that I live in it, and in *future* ages, it shall know that I have lived in it, for I will have mine impress deeply traced upon it.”⁴ Harriet accepted a teaching position in Illinois and remained there until she lost her job in 1859 to a younger teacher and moved back to Massachusetts with her parents.⁵

In March 1863, Harriet was appointed by the National Freedmen’s Relief Association as a teacher in Beaufort, South Carolina where she taught in the Praise House.⁶ In November 1863, she was transferred to Baynard Plantation on Hilton Head Island under the supervision of Brig. General Rufus Saxton, Military Governor of the Department of the South.⁷ One of the first teachers (Anna A. Carter) at Lawton Plantation in 1862 thought that the Baynard ‘mansion’ at Braddock’s Point was the only ‘gentleman’s’ house on the whole island.” This was the plantation owner’s home that Harriet eventually lived in, but it was not a mansion and it was destroyed by fire in 1867.⁸ The tabby ruins of the Stoney Baynard Plantation are accessible today to tourists in Sea Pines, Hilton Head. Harriett liked her work at Baynard Plantation, reporting that although her students were often ‘mischievous’, “I find I can train them without much trouble, and I like the work...I enjoy myself very much, both at home, and in school.”⁹

Harriet was appointed as Principal of her school at Baynard in spring of 1864, but it was not enough incentive to retain her in that position¹⁰. She did not return to South

Cultural Imperialists or Just Stubborn Yankees, p 293. Statesboro, GA:

Georgia Southern University, Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, electronic theses and dissertations 2013, p 293..

-Eaton, W.H., Rev. Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts’ Baptist Missionary Society and Convention 1802-1902. Boston: Massachusetts Baptist Convention, 1903. Colonial Press.

[http://www.forgottenbooks.com/HistoricalSketchoftheMassachusettsBaptistMissionarySocietyandConvention18011902_10533730\(1\)](http://www.forgottenbooks.com/HistoricalSketchoftheMassachusettsBaptistMissionarySocietyandConvention18011902_10533730(1)).

⁴ Buss, Harriet. Letter to “Dear Parents”, 12 March 1850. Harriet M Buss papers. University of Pennsylvania.

<http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/medren/ancillary.html?id=collections/rbm/mss/mss>.

⁵ Ibid. 14 Sept 1861

Butchart, p 116.

⁶ List of Superintendents and Teachers Under Brig General Rufus Saxton, Military Governor of the Department of the South, June 1863”. <https://www.drbronsontours.com>

-National Freedmens Relief Association. ‘Monthly Report’, Vol I, May 1863.

⁷ “National Freedmen’s Association Locations of Schools, Personnel and Teachers

Spring and Fall 1863”. <https://www.drbronsontours.com>

-Smith, Janel Janiczek, p 293.

⁸ Martin, Josephine W. ed., “Dear Sister”: Letters Written on Hilton Head Island 1867. Beaufort, SC: Beaufort Book Co, 1977, p xxii.. [letters by teacher Eliza Ann Summers].

-Carter, Anna A. *American Missionary*, Vol VII, Apr 1863 [letter to AMA dated 22 Jan 1863], p89.

⁹ Buss, Harriet M. Letter to “Dear Parents” 31 Mar 1863. .

-National Freedmen’s Relief Association, “Monthly Report”, Vol I, Jan 1864, p 2

¹⁰ -Butchart, p 116.

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Carolina after her summer back north, but taught instead in South Gardner, Massachusetts for the next three years.¹¹ She also served as the Secretary of the Sterling, Massachusetts branch of the National Freedmen's Relief Association in 1867.¹² Harriet told a friend that she missed the warmth and people of South Carolina, so looked for a new assignment in the south. She accepted a new position with the American Missionary Association in October 1867 in one of its schools in Norfolk, Virginia and was listed as an AMA Teacher in Norfolk until 1869¹³. In 1869, she was on Hilton Head Island again as evidenced by a letter she wrote on June 15, 1869 from Hilton Head to E.B. Smith about the need to train freedmen as teachers.

The great mass of this people are to be reached and elevated by the efforts of well-trained theologians and teachers of their own race [by] concentrating Northern efforts in thorough and systematic training schools, which shall become centers radiating a clear light, and exerting a powerful influence over vast areas.¹⁴

It is unclear if Harriet had been transferred again to Hilton Head in 1869 until 1871, or if she was just in Hilton Head in 1869 on her way to Raleigh, North Carolina. We do know that by 1871 latest, she had accepted a new position with the American Baptist Home Mission Society, first as an Assistant to the President of Raleigh Institute, Dr. Tupper and then as a teacher at the Raleigh Institute (later known as Shaw University) in Raleigh, North Carolina.¹⁵ She was listed on their staff rosters until 1895.¹⁶ Existing staff rosters list her in 1890 when she spoke at the 25th anniversary of the founding of Shaw University on December 1st, delivering her own poem entitled "Shaw University, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record*, Vol IV, No 3. Boston: March 1868.

¹³ "Missionaries and Teachers of the American Missionary Association for 1868-69". *The American Missionary*, Vol XIII, No 5, May 1869, p 99.
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012370656/cite>.

-Buss, Harriet. Letter to "Dear Parents", 15 Jan 1868.

¹⁴ American Missionary Association. Tulane University, Amistad Library Research Center. Item #H1216 3 [Letter to E.B. Smith, 15 June 1869].

¹⁵ American Baptist Home Mission Society, *Annual Report 1893*, pp 125,177,179,181.

https://books.google.com/books?id=SfleAQAAAJ&pg=RA17-PA180&dq=American+Baptist+Home+Mission+Society+%2B+Harriet+M+Buss&source=gbs_navlinks.s

¹⁶ Ibid. pp 176-179,183.

¹⁷ 72nd *Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society*. NY: ABHMS, 1904, p 149.
https://books.google.com/book?id=CC_PAAAAMAAJ&printsec=cover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=Buss&f=false.

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Harriet died in Raleigh, North Carolina on October 10, 1895 and a short obituary was published by Shaw University.¹⁸ Harriet began donating \$350 each year to the Trust Fund of the ABHMS for Shaw University as early as 1892 with contributions continuing after her death from her estate until at least 1904.¹⁹ Not only was Harriet an outspoken opponent of slavery, she was also an early feminist who cherished her independence as evidenced in a letter to her parents when she was thirty-six years old explaining why she was still not married. "I don't want to obey one of creation's lords. Never would I be told to go or stay, do this or that, and surely not could I ask. I submit to no human being as my master or dictator."²⁰

-American Baptist Home Mission Society. *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, Vol 13, No 1, Jan 1891.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=VV9EAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA16&lpg=PA16&dq=Harriette+M+Buss+%2B+Raleigh>

¹⁸Eaton, W.H., Rev. *Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and Convention 1802-1902*. Boston: Massachusetts Baptist Convention, 1903. Colonial Press, p149.
[http://www.forgottenbooks.com/HistoricalSketchoftheMassachusettsBaptistMissionarySocietyandConvention18011902_10533730\(1\)](http://www.forgottenbooks.com/HistoricalSketchoftheMassachusettsBaptistMissionarySocietyandConvention18011902_10533730(1)).

¹⁹ American Baptist Home Mission Society. *72nd Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society*, Cleveland, OH, 1904. New York: ABHMS, 1904, p 152,157,166,171,180,190, 200, 206

²⁰ Buss ,Harriet. Letter to Parents, 7 March 1860.