

SARAH E CLARK



Appointment(s):

American Missionary Association (AMA)
Mitchelville – Hilton Head, SC
1864

New England Freedmen's Relief Association
(NEFRA)
Richmond, VA
Mar. 1864

New England Freedmen's Aid Society
(NEFAS)
Norfolk, VA
Dec. 1865

Who Sarah's parents were and the location/dates of her birth and death are not clear. Many researchers have her born to Tertius and Electa Clark about 1838 in Easthampton, Massachusetts. They then show her as married to Rev. Samuel Howard Peckham. However, that Sarah died BEFORE the Civil War. There were several Sarah Clarks born about that time in Massachusetts, but none of them can be verified as having been a teacher with the American Missionary Association. At this point, I can only confirm that our Sarah was appointed in 1864 by the American Missionary Association as a teacher to the freedmen at Mitchellville.¹ She wrote two letters from this location on January 20 and January 24, 1865.

By March 1865, Sarah had been appointed by the New England Freedmen's Relief Association and sponsored by the Dorchester Freedmen's Aid Society as a teacher for the former slaves in Richmond, Virginia.² Sarah expressed her opinion about the ability of the Richmond freedmen and their children to learn quickly. "Every day confirms our first impressions of the superiority of the Richmond Negro over all others we have had under our observation."³ Since her days at Mitchelville, she had

¹ Clark, Sarah E. American Missionary Association Archives. New Orleans, LA: Tulane University, Amistad Research Library. [Letter 20 Jan & 24 Jan, 1865 from Mitchelville].

² New England Freedmen's Relief Association. *Freedmen's Record*, Vol I, No 3 March 1865, p47.

-New England Freedmen's Aid Society. "First Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Barnard Chapter of the NEFAS, 1865".

<https://archive.org/details/annualreportofex00barn/page/n6>.

³ Hansen, Scott Britton. Education For All: School. Freedmen's bureau Schools in Richmond and Petersburg, 1865-1870. Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University.

Thesis submitted as part of requirement for Master of Arts degree at VCU, May 2008, p 55-56.

SARAH E CLARK

also developed an understanding of the freedmen's situation and showed compassion towards them. In a letter she wrote on May 5, 1865, she clearly stated her outrage at the way some officers treated the freedmen. She noticed that black women without husbands were especially vulnerable and destitute for help. When a ragged black woman found the courage to ask officials for help, she was told, "You must work for your living. Now nigger, go and take care of yourself." and cruelly sent away.⁴ Sarah displayed compassion for her students and their families, especially towards the latter part of her assignments.

The date of Sarah's death is currently unknown.

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/1400>.

⁴ Freedmen's Record, Vol 1, No 6, June 1865, p 98.