

# CHARLOTTE MARY KEITH



Born: Nov. 18, 1833 in Middleboro, MA

Died: Nov. 5, 1873 in Beaufort, SC

Appointment(s):

National Freedmen's Relief Society (NFRS)  
Richmond, VA  
1864-1865

American Missionary Association (AMA)  
Seabrook Plantation – Hilton Head, SC  
1866 - 1866

Wright Intermediate School – Mitchelville, SC  
1867-1868

Beaufort, SC

Sep. 1, 1868 - May 1869

## 1833-1873

Charlotte Keith was born on November 18, 1833 in Middleboro, Massachusetts to Samuel P Keith (1801-1881) and Almeda W. Allen (1804-1866). Both of her grandfathers served in the Revolutionary War. In 1860, the Keith family moved to Oakham, Worcester County, Massachusetts where Charlotte and two of her sisters, Adelaide and Elizabeth became schoolteachers.

According to a letter written by R.M. Manly on December 22, 1866 to AMA Secretary Hannah E. Stevenson, Charlotte's first appointment as a teacher to the freedmen was from the Freedmen's Relief Society of Middleboro to Richmond, Virginia in 1865.<sup>1</sup> Charlotte had applied by that point to the American Missionary Association and Manly was worried that he would lose a good teacher for Richmond students. Mr. Ralza Morse Manly, born in Vermont in 1822, was the Superintendent of Education in Virginia, and believed in education of recent freedmen after the civil war. Manly had a reputation for retaining educators deemed competent and dismissing those who did not meet his standards, regardless of race. For instance, he pleaded with another missionary organization in Richmond (AMA) to find a position for Charlotte Keith rather than have her leave the Richmond school system.<sup>2</sup> He pleaded with the Secretary of the AMA to find a position for Charlotte in Richmond, rather than sending her to Hilton Head:

I think Ms. Keith merits as a teacher and the strong

<sup>1</sup> Green, Hilary, Nicole. Educational Reconstruction-African American Schools in the Urban South 1865-1890. New York: Fordham University Press 2016, p 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp 138-139.

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attachment of the people worshipping at that church for their Teacher are reasons for returning her and send some others in the service of your own society.

Charlotte accepted the appointment by the American Missionary Association who transferred her to Hilton Head Island for the 1866-67 school year. She was assigned to Seabrook Plantation where she shared accommodations in the Plantation Main House with Annie R. Wilkins.<sup>3</sup> In 1867 the American Missionary Association transferred Charlotte to the Wright Intermediate School at Mitchelville.<sup>4</sup> Finally, on September 1, 1868, she was transferred to Beaufort where her 'salary' was paid by the US Senate Act of 1866 Fund and continued there until May 1869.<sup>5</sup> The principle of the Act of 1866 required that schools should be maintained in the parishes of St. Helena and St. Luke. Superintendent J.W. Alvord selected four teachers to be paid by the 1866 Act fund: "I have selected Miss Charlotte M. Keith teaching in Beaufort, Miss Mary F. Putnam teaching at Edgerly Plantation, five miles from Beaufort in St Helena's parish and Miss Annie M. Bishop teaching at Hilton Head in St. Luke's parish, whose salaries are to be paid from the fund created by the Act of 1866. As soon as a fourth teacher can be designated at Hilton Head Island...I will pay his or her salary as such."<sup>6</sup>

In 1869, Charlotte married Reuben G. Holmes (1820-1906) whose first wife, Rebecca had just died. Charlotte died in Beaufort, South Carolina in 1873 and is buried in Beaufort Baptist churchyard cemetery in Beaufort, SC.<sup>7</sup> After Charlotte died in 1873, her husband Reuben married her youngest sister, Sarah Jane Keith (1844-1920). The "Keith family papers, 1710-1979/Series M, Part 6" are held by Fauquier County, Virginia in microfilm form Rolls 3-4.

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<sup>3</sup> American Missionary Association. *American Missionary*, Vol XI, No 4, "Teacher's List 1866-67". New York: April 1867.

- Chicora Foundation. Research Series #34. "Chicora: The Plantation Landscape, Slaves and Freedmen at Seabrook Plantation, Hilton Head Island, SC". Columbia, SC, September 1998, p 33.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, Janel Janiczek, [From A Northern Home to a Southern School: Cultural Imperialists or Just Stubborn Yankees](#), p 362. Statesboro, GA: Georgia Southern University, Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies, electronic theses and dissertations 2013, accessed Sep 12, 2018

<sup>5</sup> American Missionary Association. *American Missionary*, Vol XIII, No 5, May 1869, p 100. <https://www.catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012370656/cite>.

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

<sup>6</sup> Alvord, J.W. US Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. (Freedmen's Bureau). *Second Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1, 1867, p 21. [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pf?id=njp.3210196747\\_p\\_135.9475&view=1up&seq=7](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pf?id=njp.3210196747_p_135.9475&view=1up&seq=7).

<sup>7</sup> Findagrave.com Memorial ID # 83548470 created Jan 16, 2012 by Candy Wieckhardt Pethe and photo of tombstone added same date. <https://findagrave.com/memorial/83548470/charlotte-mary-holmes>.