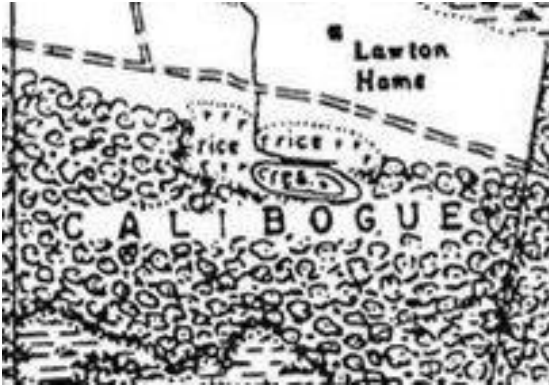


# SARAH ELIZABETH LAKEMAN



Born: Jan. 25, 1836 in Salem, Essex Co., MA

Died: Jul. 30, 1865 in Salem, Essex Co., MA

Appointment(s):

New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS)

Lawton Plantation – Hilton Head, SC

Apr. – Jun. 1865

## Map of Hilton Head Island

Before 1861

Compiled from deeds by

Fred Hack, Sr.

Sarah was born January 25, 1836 in Salem, Essex Co., Massachusetts to Eben Knowlton Lakeman (1799-1857) and Jane Shillaber (1802-1888).<sup>1</sup> She was living in Salem in 1850 with both parents and siblings and her father was a jeweler. In the 1860 US Census, Sarah was still in Salem with her widowed mother and two brothers. Even in the 1865 Massachusetts state census, Sarah was living with her widowed mother, two sisters, including sister Lucy, her husband and three children.<sup>2</sup> Sarah died July 30, 1865 in Salem, Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup> Because of her very short life (29 years), we know much more about Sarah's death than we do about her life. Her time as a teacher to the freedmen was less than 3 months, so she left no record of correspondence, Teacher's Monthly Reports or other records of her service.

Sarah Elizabeth was appointed as a teacher by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS) and left Salem for Hilton Head, South Carolina on April 6, 1865 as a teacher to the freedmen there on Lawton Plantation.<sup>4</sup> Although she set off enthusiastic and excited about her teaching position at Lawton Plantation, she soon began to feel sick and became weak. By the end of May, she could hardly get out of bed. She only lasted until June 8th when she finally consented to return home and

<sup>1</sup> ancestry.com *Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988*. [database on-line]. Provo, UT; Ancestry.com Operations, Inc 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ancestry.com. *Massachusetts, State Census, 1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> New England Historic Genealogical Society: Boston, Mass; *Massachusetts Vital Records, 1840-1911*. Ancestry.com. *Massachusetts, Death Records, 1841-1915* [database on-line]. Provo, UT; Ancestry.com Operations, Inc 2013.

<sup>4</sup> New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record, Vol I, no 6 (June 1865)*. "List of Teachers of NEFAS by Branch Societies.", p 102. <https://books.google.com>.

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resigned her position.<sup>5</sup> She arrived home in Salem, Massachusetts on Sunday, July 9th, but it was too late. What had caused her to be so weak and ill was diagnosed as tuberculosis and her health deteriorated rapidly. She only lasted for three weeks, dying in her bed on July 30<sup>th</sup>.<sup>6</sup> Greenwood, in her book First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts, calls Sarah Lakeman one of the teachers who were remembered as 'martyrs for freedom'. *The Freedmen's Record* referred to the teachers who had succumbed to malaria, yellow fever, consumption and dysentery as 'soldiers in the army of the Lord'.<sup>7</sup> The *Gazette* reporter wrote a touching memorial to their town's good servant.

Scarcely waiting for the reluctant consent of friends, she left home for Hilton Head on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, having been appointed a teacher by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. The post of service to which she was assigned was Lawton's Plantation, eight or ten miles distant from Hilton Head. She remained there till the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. A friend returning from that neighborhood about the last of May writes that, being able to see her before leaving, he made 'careful inquiries about her and they all told him that she was doing admirably and appeared very joyful in her work. She was not however so strong as she had seemed. Laborious teaching had overcome her strength. Before the end of May she was ill. An attempt to recruit at Hilton Head proved unavailing. Growing weaker and suffering more, she at last unwillingly consented to come home [Salem, Massachusetts]. Consumption of the lungs had already begun. Her work was done. She reached home on Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of July; went to her bed; sank rapidly till the morning of Sunday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, three weeks from the day of her arrival home, when she slept into the rest which always remains for the overworked and understrong of God's children'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record*, Vol I, No 5, May 1865, p 87; Vol I, No 6, June 1865, p 102.

<sup>6</sup> Salem *Gazette* newspaper, August 11, 1865, Sarah E. Lakeman obituary. <https://newspapers.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Greenwood, Janette Thomas. First Fruits of Freedom: The Migration of Former Slaves and Their Search for Equality in Worcester, Massachusetts 1862-1900. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, March 1, 2010, pp 70-71.

<sup>8</sup> Opcit.

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The New England Freedmen's Aid Society issued a statement about Ms. Lakeman's death:

Miss Sarah E. Lakeman was the nominee of the Society in Salem, and although rather younger and less experienced than we could have wished, yet she was so very highly recommended by friends in whom we had confidence, as possessing noble qualities of heart and soul, which would develop under the responsibilities of her position, that we ventured to send her. Her conduct as a teacher was unexceptional; and we had no intimation of failing health before her return. She was taken sick and almost immediately afterward, died in a short time.<sup>9</sup>

The Board of Managers of the Salem Freedmen's Aid Society passed the following resolution on August 9, 1865 in honor of Sarah Elizabeth Lakeman:

Resolved, that we have heard of the death of Miss Sarah E. Lakeman, lately sent out by this society as a teacher to South Carolina, with real sorrow; that we sympathize most sincerely with her family in their grief; that we shall hold in grateful and honored memory their sacrifices and hers; that we shall ever connect her name and her death with the sacred cause of human freedom and philanthropic service.<sup>10</sup>

They further voted to present the above resolution to Sarah Ann's family in person and also to send a memorial copy to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society headquarters in Boston.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record*, Vol I, no 8 (Aug 1865),

<sup>10</sup> Salem Freedmen's Aid Society, Board of Managers. Salem, Essex, Massachusetts. *Resolution*, August 9, 1865.

<sup>11</sup> New England Freedmen's Aid Society. *The Freedmen's Record*, Vol I, no 9 (Sep 1865).