

MR. GILBERT PILLSBURY



1813-1893

Born: Feb. 23, 1813 in Hamilton, Essex Co., MA

Died: Jan. 3, 1893 in Abington, MA

Appointment(s):

New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS)
Commissioner of Education
Mitchelville School – Hilton Head, SC
1862 - 1864

American Union
Mitchelville – Hilton Head, SC
1864 - 1865

Freedmen's Bureau
Freedmen's Bureau, Special Agent
Education Superintendent
Shaw Orphanage, Administrator
Charleston, SC
1865 -1871

Source: State Library of Massachusetts.
Collection: Legislators' Photographs 1855.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2452/203393>.

Gilbert Pillsbury was born February 23, 1813 in Hamilton, Essex Co., Massachusetts, one of eleven children of Oliver Pillsbury (1783-1857) and Anna Smith (1785-1879). He attended Andover Theological Seminary to become a pastor but transferred to Dartmouth College where he graduated with high honors in 1840.¹ He became a teacher at the Ellington Academy in Connecticut where he met his future wife, Ann Ray. On November 12, 1841, in Ludlow, Hampden County, Massachusetts, he married Ann Frances Ray (1819-1889) who later signed documents as Antoinette F. Pillsbury. The couple founded a seminary for young women in Ludlow, Massachusetts. The 1850 and 1860 US Census show them residing in Ludlow, Massachusetts. Mr. Pillsbury served in the Massachusetts State Senate in 1854. In the 1860s and early '70s, the couple served the freedmen in South Carolina side by side.

¹ *The Daily Advertiser*, Boston, Massachusetts, Jan 5, 1893. Obituary, p 2.

MR. GILBERT PILLSBURY

Mr. and Mrs. Pillsbury were appointed as teachers by the New England Freedman's Aid Society shortly after it was established in 1862.² In 1863, Gilbert Pillsbury was appointed as Commissioner of Education on Hilton Head Island.³ His wife, Antoinette, became a teacher in Mitchelville. The American Union offered both new contracts by mid-1864.

After the city of Charleston fell to Union troops and was evacuated February 17, 1865, Mr. Pillsbury was appointed as an Agent of the Freedmen's Bureau in that city.⁴ His wife, Antoinette, did not immediately go with him. In a letter to Miss Stevenson, the Secretary of the Education Committee of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society dated March 10, 1865, Mr. Pillsbury said he was expecting Mr. James Blake to return from his trip North soon bringing much needed clothing for the destitute 'contraband'. He also wrote that in one week they will have classes of colored freedmen mixed with poor white students.⁵

He let Miss Stevenson know that he had already informed Mr. Redpath that he was transferring his wife, Antoinette, Elizabeth Breck and Sarah P. Lillie from the school at Mitchellville to become much needed teachers in Charleston. In January 1866, Mr. Pillsbury reported that they have just 2 teachers on Hilton Head Island, 3 at Mitchellville, 3 at St Helena's Island, 3 in Beaufort and 10 now assigned or already transferred to Edisto Island.⁶ Gilbert Pillsbury and his wife, Antoinette, managed the Colonel Shaw Orphan Asylum in Charleston which had been opened by Dr. Elizabeth Hill Hawks and her husband, Dr. John Milton Hawks.

Gilbert Pillsbury was elected Mayor of Charleston on November 10, 1868 but did not take office until May 1869 due to legal challenges to his election.⁷ He served in that position until 1871 when he was defeated in his re-election bid. Mr. Pillsbury also was a member of the committee that framed the new state constitution of South Carolina. The 1870 Census shows them residing in Charleston, South Carolina in a home valued at \$5,000. A document from the Freedmen's Bank in South Carolina dated September 7, 1869 shows a request for a transfer of \$1,211.39 from account # 4919 to a bank in New York.⁸

² New England Freedman's Association, "Teachers Sent to South Carolina 1862-63".
<http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsonnorthamptonsschoolatMitchelljan1865.html>.

³ [Letter written by G Pillsbury on Sep 13, 1863 from Hilton Head].

<http://www.drbronsontours.com/bronsongpillsburyhiltonheadsept131863.htm>

⁴ *The Freedmen's Record* (formerly *Freedmen's Journal*), Vol I, pp 61-62.

Boston:New England Freedmen's Aid Society..

⁵ Ibid. Vol I, No 3 March 1865.

⁶ Ibid. Vol I, No 1 January 1866, p 55.

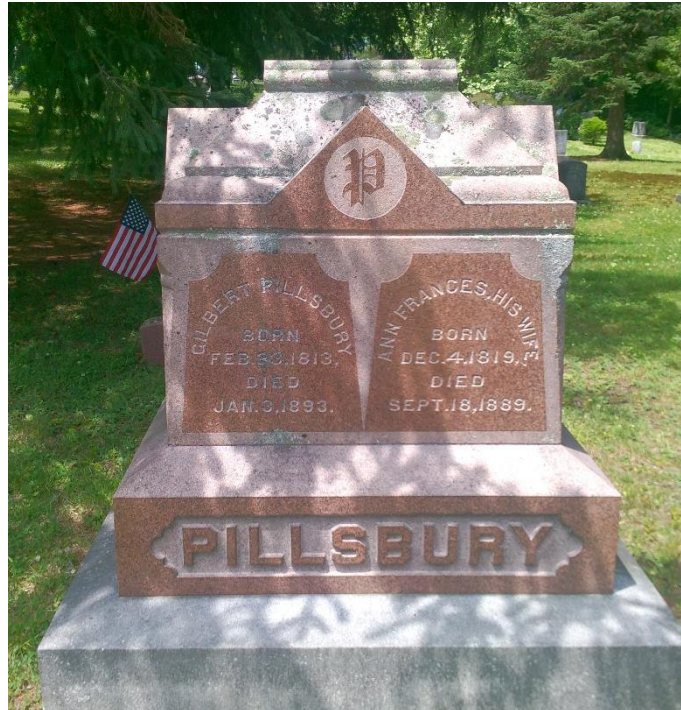
⁷ Fraser, Walter J., Jr. Charleston! Charleston! The History of a Southern City.
Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

⁸ Ancestry.com U.S. Freedmen's Bank. Record #4919, Sep 7, 1869.

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Mr. and Mrs. Pillsbury returned to Ludlow, Massachusetts in 1872 after almost 10 years service to the cause of abolition and education of the freedmen.⁹ The Pillsburys were living in Abington, Plymouth County, Massachusetts in 1880.

Mr. Pillsbury died January 3, 1893 in Abington, Massachusetts and was buried in Henniker Cemetery in Henniker, Merrimack Co., New Hampshire.¹⁰ His obituary was published in the *Boston Transcript* on January 4, 1893 and the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and the *New York Times* on January 5, 1893.¹¹



Henniker Cemetery in Henniker, NH
Findagrave.com Memorial ID # 147777343
Created 12 Jun 2015 by Rick Weaver;
tombstone photo by Sue Fetzer 1 Jul 2015.

⁹ *Daily Advertiser*, p 2.

¹⁰ Findagrave.com Memorial # 147777343 created 12 June 2015 by Rick Weaver.
The site also has a photo of his tombstone added by Sue Fetzer on 1 July 2015

¹¹ "Gilbert Pillsbury". *New York Times* newspaper, January 5, 1893 [obituary].
<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1893/01/05/106859219.pdf>.