

REV. JAMES F. SISSON

Monroe and then proceeding to Hampton, VA.³ He wrote a letter to “Dear Bro” from Hampton dated July 16, 1863⁴ telling him how on the first Sunday after his arrival in Hampton, he went to church and a white, well-dressed teenager spit on him.⁵ In 1863, as the Agent for the AMA, James opened an orphanage with two female colleagues at Ferry Point, Virginia⁶. At Hampton and Portsmouth, Virginia, James did whatever was necessary to meet the needs of the freedmen. He was their preacher, teacher, a policeman punishing white boys who threw stones at black boys, an attorney who settled disputes between black and white men, a ‘doctor’ administering to the sick and giving vaccinations for smallpox, the government agent distributing food rations, AMA field agent distributing clothing, food, medical supplies and even an undertaker.⁷

At some point in 1864, it appears that James was transferred as a teacher to Seabrook Plantation on Hilton Head Island, because he filed a ‘Teacher’s Monthly Report’ from there and sent a letter to George Whipple on February 24, 1864 from Hilton Head.⁸ He continued in that position until at least 1867 as he wrote a letter on March 7, 1867 to George Whipple of the AMA. (p 266, n28) It is likely that his younger sister also joined him there later as a teacher, and her given name may have been Lois. However, there was also a George W. Sisson (1837-1925) who was appointed by the AMA to teach at Seabrook Plantation from 1864-1866.⁹ George Sisson wrote a letter on February 24, 1864 from Seabrook Plantation to George Whipple of the AMA about the freedmen’s anxiety over the sale of plantation lands and the unfulfilled promise of 40 acres and a mule.¹⁰ This George may have been Rev. James F. Sisson’s younger brother. In the 1870 U.S. Census, James was living in Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia working as a teacher in a ‘colored’ school. On March 11, 1870, James withdrew his funds from the US Freedmen’s Bank in Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia. That record shows his occupation as church minister.¹¹

³ American Missionary Association. *The American Missionary*, June 7, 1863, p 135.

⁴ Richardson, p 286, n27.

⁵ Ibid, p135.

⁶ Ibid, p 64.

⁷ Richardson, p 12.

⁸ New England Aid Society. Extracts from letters of teachers and Superintendents of the New England Educational Commission for Freedmen, 4th series, Jan 1, 1864, p 15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230903528447>

- New England Freedmen’s Aid Society. “Second Annual Report”, Apr 21, 1864, p 80.

⁹ Rose, Willie Lee. Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, reprint 1999, c 1964, p 297.

¹⁰ Session, James F. American Missionary Association Archives. New Orleans, LA: Tulane University, Amistad Research Center. [letter Feb 24, 1864 from George Sisson at Seabrook Plantation, HH to George Whipple],

¹¹ *U.S. Freedmen’s Bank Records 1865-1871, 2005*. DeKalb County, Georgia. James F Sisson, March 11, 1870..

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At the Georgia Conference of the African Methodist Church held on January 14, 1871, James was ordained as an Elder of the Conference and then elected as Conference Secretary the next year in Savannah on January 5, 1872.¹² He was elected as the Recording Secretary of the General Conference in Nashville.¹³ In May 1872, he was elected as a Georgia delegate to the next National Conference of the African Methodist Church. However, at that conference on January 11, 1873, he announced his transfer to Arkansas.¹⁴ Rev. Sisson died as a single man on March 18, 1888.

¹² Richardson, p 184.

¹³ Handy, Rev James A. Scraps of AME History. Philadelphia:: AME Book Concern, 1902
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/handy/handy.html?iframe=true&width=90%25&height=90%25>.

- Gaines, Wesley John (1840-1912), African Methodism in the South; or Twenty-Five Years Freedom, electronic ed US Library of Congress, pp 41,43, 45. Original published 1890 by the Franklin Publishing House in Atlanta, Georgia, pp 31-32.

¹⁴Wright, Richard Jr. Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1816-1916.Philadelphia: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1916
www.seeking4truth.com/centennial_encyclopaedia.htm.