

North Carolina's Settlements of Freed People During the Civil War: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony and the Trent River Settlement

Overview

When North Carolina was first occupied by Union forces in 1862, the hopes of freedom grew stronger for many enslaved North Carolinians. In this lesson, students will learn about two freedmen's settlements that were formed as the Union army advanced from the coast: the Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony and the Trent River Settlement in New Bern. Through a reading and partner teaching activity, students will learn about these settlements, the people who inhabited them, and their many contributions to North Carolina and the nation during a crucial time of conflict. Students will then use what they have learned and their creativity to create a historical marker honoring the significance of these settlements and the people comprising them.

Grade

8

Essential Questions

- How did enslaved people in North Carolina respond to the advance of the Union army?
- Why would making the choice to run away be a complicated decision for an enslaved person to make?
- What challenges did enslaved people face in escaping to their freedom behind Union lines? What were they risking? What skills and emotional qualities would a person likely need to make this choice?
- What were conditions like in the Roanoke Island and Trent River settlements of freed people?
- What were the various ways enslaved and freed people contributed to the Union war effort?
- Why is it important that we know about North Carolina's settlements of freed people and study the contributions of those enslaved and freed during the Civil War era? What is the significance of this history to North Carolina and the entire nation?

Materials

- Image of enslaved people working in field, attached
- Handout Set A – Roanoke Island:
 - The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony
 - Letter from Sergeant Richard Etheridge and Wm Benson to General Howard
- Handout Set B – New Bern:
 - James City: The City of Freedmen
 - Vincent Colyer Report
- Settlement reading response chart, attached
- Historical marker template, attached

Duration

- 60 minutes

Student Preparation

- Students should have a basic understanding slavery and the events of the Civil War.
- Students also need an understanding of expectations for respectfully discussing “hard history” such as slavery. While this history brings up sensitive topics such as racism and violence, such history represents a part of our state's and nation's history that students must learn about in order to gain of comprehensive understanding of our past and its impact on the present. To ensure students are able to respectfully and

empathetically discuss such topics, teachers must ensure a foundation of considerate dialogue and tolerance is present in the classroom. For techniques on building such a classroom community, see Carolina K-12's classroom management activities in the Database of K-12 Resources under the "[Activities](#)" section and our [Tips for Tackling Sensitive History & Controversial Current Events in the Classroom](#).

- Students should specifically be prepared for the historical terminology they will encounter throughout this lesson. Let students know that they may encounter worlds such as "colored" and "Negro," which were terms commonly used and accepted during the Civil War years. Ensure students understand that such terminology is considered inappropriate to use outside of quoting historical sources today.

Procedure

Rumors of Freedom – How Would You Feel?

1. As a warm-up, handout and/or project the attached image of enslaved people working in a field and instruct students to take out paper and examine the image silently. As they study the image, tell students to imagine that the year is 1862 and to critically consider this illustrated world. Instruct them to focus on the two individuals pictured who have baskets of cotton (the woman who has a basket sitting at her feet and the man who is holding a basket on his shoulder.) Tell students that you want them to choose one of these two individuals to focus on and consider what their life was like. Students should respond to your verbal prompts in writing, noting how they think the individual is feeling, what they are thinking and doing, etc. Tell students to be realistic, empathetic, and to avoid being stereotypical. Pose questions such as:
 - Who is this person and what is their life like? What does this person do and deal with from day to day?
 - Where are they? What type of work are they doing here and what are their working conditions like? How does this work make them feel? (i.e. What is the temperature like? What toll does this work take on their body? Who else is with them day to day and how might they feel about them?)
 - What skills, intelligences, attributes, etc. does this person have to be able to survive in these circumstances?
 - How does this person feel from day to day? What frightens them? Angers? Worries? What do they hope for?
 - What keeps this person going each day?
2. Allow students to free write based on what they see and think for a few minutes then tell them to pay attention to a third individual, the man leaning over in the far right of the picture, as if he is speaking to the other two who are holding baskets of cotton. Tell students to imagine that this man is whispering a secret to them:
 - "Did you hear? Word has it that the Yankee soldiers are at the coast – they've taken Roanoke Island from the Confederates and they are headed here next. You know what that means? They are coming here to free us! Soon enough, we could be free."

Ask students to continue writing:

- How do you imagine this person would feel hearing this rumor for the first time, that Union soldiers are defeating Confederates in North Carolina and why?
 - What might they believe/assume is going to happen? What could this mean for them? For their family? For life as they know it? What conflicting thoughts/emotions might they have?
3. After students have had a few minutes to write, ask students to share their thoughts and further discuss:
 - What similarities and differences did you hear in your inferences?
 - What types of attitudes did you assume enslaved people would have when hearing rumors of the Union army advancing in North Carolina and the pending freedom that would possibly come with them? Why might an enslaved person be excited by this? On the other hand, why might an enslaved person be skeptical or even nervous or distrustful upon hearing such news?

Rumblings of War Brings Hope for Freedom

4. Explain to students that enslaved people living in North Carolina in 1862, upon hearing of the beginning of the Civil War and the advance of the Union Army in North Carolina, likely experienced many emotions. While we can't possibly know exactly how those enslaved felt, we do know that their emotions would have been varied and complicated from individual to individual.
5. Explain to students that an invasion of North Carolina by Union troops actually began in January 1862. Led by General Ambrose Burnside, Union forces landed on Roanoke Island and fought their way through most of the state's northern coastal region. By February 1862, "Northern forces under the command of Major General Ambrose Burnside overran the Southern fortifications on Roanoke Island, gaining control of northeastern North Carolina's strategically valuable waterways. With occupation, the Union Army was faced with the question of what to do with the slaves who had been sent by their owners to help the Confederates build fortifications on Roanoke Island. Labeling the slaves as 'Contraband of War,' the Union Army emancipated them, offering a new start on the island." Union forces, under General Burnside's command, next made their way from Roanoke Island to New Bern and slaves inland gained hope that they too would be freed. (Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4590>) As the number of enslaved people seeking freedom behind Union lines grew, several settlements of freed people sprang up in 1862 North Carolina. Tell students they will be learning about two such prominent sites: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony and the Trent River Settlement of New Bern, later renamed James City.

The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony and the Trent River Settlement

6. Divide students into partners and instruct each member of the partnership to choose to be either A or B. Next, pass out the attached Reading A, Primary Source A, Reading B, and Primary Source B, to each student that chose the corresponding letter. Also handout the attached reading response worksheet. Tell students that they are to carefully read both the reading and the primary source provided to them, filling out the worksheet in detail as they go through the material. Let students know that after completing their reading and worksheet, they will be teaching their partner about the settlement assigned to them by sharing a summary of the settlement, as well as highlighting the most important notes they took on their worksheet. Tell students it is very important to not only offer a comprehensive summary of the settlement they read about, but to also listen to and take notes on their partner's summary, since they will need information about both settlements for the lesson's culminating activity, which will be explained later.
7. Teachers should use their discretion regarding how much time to provide students to work on reading and filling out their worksheet individually; at least 15 minutes is recommended. Once each member of the partnership has finished, students should each take a turn teaching their partner about the settlement they read about. Partners should be encouraged to ask clarifying questions during one another's presentations as needed. After all partners have finished sharing with one another, review and discuss further as a class:
 - What did you find most interesting about the Roanoke Island and/or Trent River settlement and why?
 - Why would making the choice to run away be a complicated decision for an enslaved person to make? Why do you think some enslaved people chose to run, whereas others did not?
 - What challenges do you think enslaved people faced in escaping to their freedom behind Union lines? What were they risking? What skills and emotional qualities would a person likely need to make this choice?
 - What challenges do you think escaped slaves faced after arriving behind Union lines? What challenges might the Union soldiers have experienced?
 - What were the various ways formerly enslaved people contributed to the Union war effort? Are there other contributions they likely made that aren't discussed in these readings but that you can infer were made?

- As enslaved people crossed Union lines, how do you think the Confederate war effort was impacted? How do you think Confederate soldiers and supporters reacted when they learned formerly enslaved people were fighting with the Union?
- What do you think living conditions would have been like in these settlements? (Encourage students to consider the weather in North Carolina during various seasons; the state's landscape and geography in these coastal regions; the types of wildlife present; etc.) What skills, qualities, traits, etc. would it have taken to survive and build a life in these settlements?
- What happened to these settlements once the War was over? What happened to those enslaved who had not escaped before the end of the War? In what ways did the Union provide, and/or *not* provide, for freed people during Reconstruction?
- Why is it important that we know about these settlements and study the contributions of those enslaved and freed during Civil War times? What is the significance of this history to North Carolina and the entire nation?

Create a North Carolina Historical Marker

8. Ask students how many of them previously knew about these groundbreaking settlements from our state's history. Likely, most of them will not having been unfamiliar with this information. Tell students that to ensure tribute is paid to this important history, they are going to create a historical marker for the NC freedmen's settlement that their partner taught them about (not the settlement they read about themselves.) Before explaining the requirements of the markers, ask a student volunteer to explain what a historical marker is. (For more information, go to <http://www.ncmarkers.com>.) Teachers may also want to display an example of a historical marker (two images are attached.) Further discuss:
 - Has anyone seen any of NC's historical markers? What do they look like and where have you seen them?
 - What types of events are commemorated on these markers and why? What types of information do they typically contain?
 - What is the purpose of these markers?
9. Explain to students that to ensure the freemen's settlements they have read about are remembered, and to ensure the contributions of the freedmen who lived there are recognized, they will each create a historical marker that includes:
 - a concise summary of the history of the settlement and the people living there, as well as why this settlement is significant to North Carolina and American history
 - a sketch of how you envision the settlement (this might be of a person/people, a landscape, a particular aspect of the settlement (such as a home or structure), etc.
 - your marker can be created on the template provided, or you can create your own design on art paper

Tell students that they can swap readings with their partners, as well as rely on one another for assistance. However, each member of the partnership must create his/her own marker for the settlement their partner was initially assigned to read about.

Let students know when their historical marker is due. It is recommended teachers display these around the room on the due date, allowing students a few minutes of time to circulate and view one another's work, which can serve as a review of the material. These also make an excellent hall display.

Additional Activities

- For related content, see [Carolina K-12's lesson plans](#):
 - African American Troops in the Civil War
 - Against All Odds: The African American Founding of Princeville, North Carolina (This lesson begins in the year 1865, where newly freed slaves began to build their own lives on a piece of unwanted

swampland along NC's Tar River. "Freedom Hill," as it was then named, was eventually incorporated as Princeville.)

Image of Enslaved People Working in a Field



Name: _____

Name & Location of NC Settlement: _____

| | |
|--|--|
| Skills of Freed People | Contributions of Freed People |
| Challenges Faced | Significance to History |
| From whose perspective is the primary source document provided? What is the purpose of the primary source document? | What information does the primary source document provide regarding settlements of freedpeople? |

As you listen to your partner's presentation, take detailed notes on the back of this sheet.

Reading A

The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony

Roanoke Island was the setting for an historic experiment during the Civil War. Following the island's occupation by Union forces in 1862, it became a haven for African-American families from throughout the region. Their presence prompted the Union Army to establish a Freedmen's Colony on the northern end of Roanoke Island. This colony, similar to others established by the Union Army, gave African Americans their first tastes of independence and freedom. However, like other sites, it was short-lived and soon faded from the pages of history.

In February 1862, Northern forces under the command of Major General Ambrose Burnside overran the Southern fortifications on Roanoke Island, gaining control of northeastern North Carolina's strategically valuable waterways. With occupation, the Union Army was faced with the question of what to do with the slaves who had been sent by their owners to help the Confederates build fortifications on Roanoke Island.

Labeling the slaves as "Contraband of War," the Union Army emancipated them, offering a new start on the island. Runaways started appearing shortly after the battle ended. Soon, hundreds of slaves from the interior of the state made the journey to the island. They assisted the Union troops in rebuilding forts on Roanoke and Hatteras Islands as well as New Bern and other strategic areas in North Carolina. They also served as cooks, woodcutters, teamsters, longshoremen, carpenters, and blacksmiths. Women were employed in doing mundane, menial tasks such as cooking and cleaning for Union officers. Other African Americans, more courageous than most, were employed as spies, scouts, and guides and completed many invaluable missions for the Union.

By May 1863, the population situation was so acute that the Federal government seized many local lands and established a formal colony on the island. Major General John G. Foster, commander of the Department of North Carolina, instructed Army chaplain Reverend Horace James as "Superintendent of Blacks in North Carolina" to "settle the colored people on the unoccupied lands and give them agricultural implements and mechanical tools... and to train and educate them for a free and independent community." According to Assistant Superintendent George O. Sanderson, a sergeant with the 43rd Massachusetts Infantry, the Freedmen's Colony was laid out on the north end of the island using "compass, chart and chain, and a gang of choppers" among "the old groves of pine, gum and cypress."

Arriving in October of 1863, Miss Elizabeth James, "a lady sent out by the American Missionary Association," became the first teacher in the community. She worked alone for three months, living in log cabin and working in another until other teachers followed her to the colony.

The colony continued to grow as more freedmen sought "safe haven." A local census in 1864 reported that 2,212 black freedmen resided on the island. A church and several schools with seven teachers were established, as well as a sawmill operation. The next year, the Superintendent reported 561 houses had been built and the population had increased to 3,901. This jump occurred even after African American men were allowed to join the Union Army. Of nearly 4,000 North Carolina enlistees, over 150 men were recruited from the Roanoke Island community alone.

At the end of the war, a government order restored all lands that were confiscated by the Union Army back to the original owners. The black residents on Roanoke Island failed to receive the rights and privileges to their homesteads promised by the government when they established the colony. Further government orders that reduced food rations and other necessities of life ushered the beginning of the end. The colony's population declined by half from 1865 to 1866 as residents left to seek a new life elsewhere. In November of 1866, Major

General John C. Robinson, Assistant Commissioner for Freedmen's Affairs in North Carolina, feared that a "great destitution" would befall the occupants of the colony, due to the poor quality of the soil. Robinson "made arrangements for the transportation of these people from the island," as he believed that great numbers of Freedmen would be forced to leave. By late 1866, the Freedmen's population had dwindled to a few families and, by 1867, the colony was officially decommissioned.

The Freedmen's Colony on Roanoke Island never became the self-sufficient community its planners envisioned. Its isolation and the transfer into the army of most of the working men made the residents more and more dependent on the government for support. It did, however, provide homes for the families of soldiers, brought education for the first time to the colony's residents, and gave them renewed sense of hope. Furthermore, while most of the freemen returned to the mainland, many descendants still live, work and raise their families on Roanoke Island today. While the Freedmen's Colony is not as well known as another unsuccessful colony on these same shores, its contribution to the betterment of the African American community in particular and American society in general should not be overlooked.

(Source: <https://www.ncpedia.org/freedmens-colony-roanoke-island>)

Primary Source A:

Letter from Sergent Richard Etheridge and Wm Benson to General Howard {May or June 1865}

Genl We the soldiers of the 36 U.S. Col[ored] Regt Humbly petition to you to alter the Affairs at Roanoke Island. We have served in the US Army faithfully and don our duty to our Country, for which we thank God (that we had the opportunity) but at the same time our family's are suffering at Roanoke Island, N.C.

1 When we were enlisted in the service we were prommised that our wives and family's should receive rations from government. The rations for our wives and family's have been (and are now cut down) to one half the regular ration. Consequently three or fours days out of every ten days, thee have nothing to eat. At the same time our ration's are stolen from the ration house by Mr Streeter the Asst Supt at the Island (and others) and sold while our family's are suffering for some thing to eat.

2nd Mr [Holland] S[r]teeter the Asst Supt of Negro aff's at Roanoke Island is a througher Cooper head a man who says that he is no part of a Abolitionist. takes no care of the colored people and has no Simpathy with the colored people. A man who kicks our wives and children out of the ration house or commissary, he takes no notice of their actual suffering and sells the rations and allows it to be sold, and our family's suffer for something to eat.

3rd Captn [Horace] James the Suptn in Charge has been told of these facts and has taken no notice of them. so has Coln Lahaman [Theodore Lehman of the 103d Pennsylvania] the Commander in Charge of Roanoke, but no notice is taken of it, because it comes from Contrabands or Freedmen the cause of much suffering is that Captn James has not paid the Colored people for their work for near a year and at the same time cuts the ration's off to one half so the people have neither provisions or money to buy it with. There are men on the Island that have been wounded at Dutch Gap Canal, working there, and some discharged soldiers, men that were wounded in the service of the U.S. Army, and returned home to Roanoke that Cannot get any rations and are not able to work, some soldiers are sick in Hospitals that have never been paid a cent and their familys are suffering and their children going crying without anything to eat.

4th our familys have no protection the white soldiers break into our houses act as they please steal our chickens rob our gardens and if any one defends their-Selves against them they are taken to the gard house for it. So our familys have no protection when Mr Streeter is here to protect them and will not do it.

5th Genl we the soldiers of the 36 U.S. Co Troops having familys at Roanoke Island humbly petition you to favour us by removeing Mr Streeter the present Asst Supt at Roanoke Island under Captn James.

Genl perhaps you think the Statements against Mr Streeter too strong, but we can prove them.

Genl order Chaplain Green to Washington to report the true state of things at Roanoke Island. Chaplain Green is an asst Supt at Roanoke Island, with Mr Holland Streeter and he can prove the

facts. And there are plenty of white men here that can prove them also, and many more thing's not mentioned Signed in behalf of humanity

Richard Etheridge, Wm Benson (Source: <http://www.roanokefreedmenscolony.com/freedlet.html>)

Reading B

James City: The City of Freedmen

In March of 1862, rumors were spreading throughout the slave populations living on the plantations in Eastern North Carolina. The Yankees had taken Roanoke Island and would be sailing to New Bern, NC, a major port located at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers. Although the Emancipation Proclamation was still eight months away, the Union army was already treating escaped slaves as freedmen. The thought of freedom from bondage, which was all they had ever known, was almost beyond comprehension for those enslaved.

On March 14, Union Troops broke through the Confederate lines defending New Bern and seized control of the city. As word spread that Union liberators occupied New Bern, large numbers of slaves escaped the farms and plantations throughout Eastern, NC to seek their freedom.

As the slaves continued to pour into New Bern, General Burnside was faced with the growing problem of how to feed, clothe, and house the ever-growing population. To further complicate the matter, there were many whites who were then unable to feed themselves as the war had disrupted the local economy. To address these problems General Burnside appointed Vincent Colyer as superintendent of the poor for the federally occupied areas in North Carolina.

The freed slaves were immediately put to work by General Burnside building fortifications in New Bern and other coastal areas that were under the control of Union forces. During Colyer's tour of duty, the free slaves under his care constructed Fort Totten, which was located in the center of New Bern. Fort Totten played an important part in repelling two attempts by Confederate forces to retake New Bern. Today it is still called Fort Totten and serves as a city park. Freed slaves also built forts on Roanoke Island and in Washington, North Carolina. Colyer paid the laborers \$8 a month and provided them with one meal a day. Many freed slaves also worked loading and unloading the many supply ships that came to the port city on a weekly basis. Others worked building a railroad bridge across the Trent River to replace the bridge that was destroyed by the Confederate soldiers when they retreated.

Colyer helped the freedmen establish churches, as religion had played an important role in comforting the slaves as they toiled in the fields. In New Bern, blacks established the first African Methodist Episcopal Zion church in the South. Colyer also felt it was important for the freed slaves to get at least a basic education; he started two evening schools and at one time had as many as 800 pupils.

In May, 1862, President Lincoln appointed Edward Stanly as provisional governor of North Carolina. His job was to oversee the political reconstruction of the areas under Union control with the hopes that he could create a loyal civil government. Stanly, although a Republican, had deep roots in the South and was for the most part unsympathetic to the plight of the freed slaves. After assuming office, he took measures that brought him in conflict with Colyer and others who were trying to improve the condition of blacks in the South. Although Stanly approved of Colyer's efforts to feed and clothe blacks, he opposed educating the blacks and ordered the evening schools closed down. Colyer was outraged and went to Washington, D.C. where he had an interview with President Lincoln who assured him that Stanly did not have the authority to shut down the schools. When Colyer returned to New Bern, he had a conciliatory meeting with Stanly who agreed not to interfere with the schools.

In the fall of 1862, General Burnside was transferred to the Army of the Potomac. Because of his hostilities with Stanly, Colyer decided to leave with Burnside. General John G. Foster, Burnside's successor, appointed army chaplain James Mears to replace Colyer as the superintendent of the poor.

In 1863, when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Stanly resigned in protest. Soon after the Proclamation was issued, the recruitment of black soldiers into the Union army began in New Bern. In April, 1863, Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton authorized Colonel Edward Wild to organize a brigade of black troops in the department of North Carolina. That unit came to be known as the African Brigade. The soldiers of that unit were highly motivated and willing to perform whatever duties were assigned to them. The African brigade demonstrated its courage and fighting ability during the two Confederates attempts to retake New Bern.

In early 1863 Superintendent of the Poor James Mears died of yellow fever. By that time there were so many freed slaves coming to New Bern that General Foster decided to appoint someone as Superintendent of Negro Affairs. He chose the Reverend Horace James, a chaplain from Massachusetts. In order to provide the many freedmen with places to live and secure locations from which he could implement the programs specifically set up for them, James set up several refugee camps on land that had been abandoned because of the war or was then in control of the Union forces. In the spring of 1863 James established a settlement at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers, about ½ mile south of New Bern. The land once belonged to Richard Dobbs Speight, one of the original signers of the United States Constitution, who later served as governor of North Carolina. The site was named Trent River Camp and was about 30 acres in size. James was responsible for providing basic shelter, education, and medical care to the freed slaves. Because of the compassion exhibited by James in helping the freedmen better their lives, the settlement was renamed James City. The area is still referred to as James City and is still primarily an African-American neighborhood.

(Sources: James City: A Black Community in North Carolina, by Joe Mobley)

Primary Source B

Brief report of the services rendered by the freed people to the United States Army, in North Carolina by Vincent Colyer

I commenced my work with the freed people of color, in North Carolina, at Roanoke Island, soon after the battle of the 8th of February, 1862, which resulted so gloriously for our country.

A party of fifteen or twenty of these loyal blacks, men, women and children, arrived on a "Dingy" in front of the General's Head Quarters, where my tent was located. They came from up the Chowan River, and as they were passing they had been shot at by their rebel masters from the banks of the river, but escaped uninjured.

They were a happy party, rejoicing at their escape from slavery and danger, and at the hearty welcome which was at once extended to them, by the officers and men of the New England regiments, which chiefly made up the corps under Gen. Burnside's command.

It rained hard that night, and shelter being rather scarce on that Island, I gave up my tent to the women and children, and found quarters for myself with a neighbor.

The calm trustful faith with which these poor people came over from the enemy, to our shores; the unbounded joy which they manifested when they found themselves within our lines, and Free; made an impression on my mind not easily effaced. Many of the officers, notwithstanding the rain, gathered around the tent to hear them sing the hymn, "The precious Lamb, Christ Jesus, was crucified for me."...

Their numbers in the Department of N. Carolina, Were As Follows;

- At Newbern and vicinity, 7,500
- At Roanoke Island and parts adjacent, 1,000
- At Washington, Hatteras, Carolina and Beaufort, 1,500

In all 10,000, of whom 2,500 were men, 7,500 women and children.

The work they did.

In the four months that I had charge of them, the men built three first-class earth-work forts: Fort Totten, at Newbern — a large work; Fort Burnside, on the upper end of Roanoke Island; and Fort [?], at Washington, N. C. These three forts were our chief reliance for defence against the rebels, in case of an attack; and have since been successfully used for that purpose by our forces under Major-Generals Foster and Peck, in the two attempts which have been made by the rebels to retake Newbern.

The negroes loaded and discharged cargoes, for about three hundred vessels, served regularly as crews on about twenty steamers, and acted as permanent gangs of laborers in all the Quartermasters', Commissary and Ordinance Offices of the Department. A number of the men were

good carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, &c., and did effective work in their trades at bridge-building, ship-joining, &c. A number of the wooden cots in the hospital, and considerable of the blacksmith and wheelwright work was done by them. One shop in Hancock Street, kept by a freedman, of which the engraving on another page gives a fair picture, usually presented a busy scene of cheerful industry. The large rail road bridge across the Trent was built chiefly by them, as were also the bridges across Batchelor's and other Creeks, and the docks at Roanoke Island and elsewhere. Upwards of fifty volunteers of the best and most courageous, were kept constantly employed on the perilous but important duty of spies, scouts, and guides. In this work they were invaluable and almost indispensable. They frequently went from thirty to three hundred miles within the enemy's lines; visiting his principal camps and most important posts, and bringing us back important and reliable information. They visited within the rebel lines Kingston, Goldsboro, Trenton, Onslow, Swansboro, Tarboro and points on the Roanoke River: often on these errands barely escaping with their lives. They were pursued on several occasions by blood-hounds, two or three of them were taken prisoners; one of these was known to have been shot, and the fate of the others was not ascertained. The pay they received for this work was small but satisfactory. They seemed to think their lives were well spent, if necessary, in giving rest, security and success to the Union troops, whom they regarded as their deliverers. They usually knelt in solemn prayer before they left, and on their return from these hazardous errands, as they considered the work as a religious duty.

(Source: <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/freed-people-new-bern>)

Examples of Historical Markers



