

I am a second-year graduate student in the history department at Rice. My research interests primarily center on Reconstruction in Texas after the Civil War. I began this project in Spring 2016 as a part of my Southern History Research Seminar. This project explores the relationships between black Texans residing in three Texas counties and agents from the Freedmen's Bureau charged with implementing Reconstruction policies in those counties. I believe this project offers a different understanding of that relationship than other historians have previously illustrated. A significant portion of this venture was based on resources I used at Fondren Library.

As the first step of any research project, I had to determine what historians had previously written about the topic I was interested in. Fondren Library has a large selection of books on Reconstruction, nineteenth-century Texas, the U.S. Army's role during Reconstruction, and the Freedmen's Bureau. I used these sources to learn what other historians had written about the topic which was critical in helping me formulate new questions that I felt historians had not previously explored. I was then able to focus my research on sources from the Reconstruction Era that would support my argument. Fondren Library has all 32 reels of microfilm from the records of the State Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Texas in the library service center. This is an extremely valuable resource for anyone interested in questions about Reconstruction in Texas. I spent a great deal of time examining these records using the resources available in the Kelley Center. Thanks to the guidance and instructions from staff members working in this section, I used the microfilm machine and the interface for scanning and converting microfilm images into PDFs.

These records contain a wealth of information about the Freedmen's Bureau between 1865 and 1869 with correspondence from bureau agents in the field addressing a variety of

topics including: conditions within specific counties, requests for assistance with building schools, rosters of agents serving in the bureau, and most importantly for my research questions, reports from agents about their day-to-day interactions with black Texans. I was also able to use the Social Explorer inter-university database that the library subscribes to for critical census data from 1860 and 1870. I focused my research on three counties and these records provided me critical answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and why. I am continuing to work closely with my professors in refining this project and I plan to submit to an academic journal for publication within the next six months. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the staff at Fondren Library for their assistance with this project and I will not hesitate to use the library's resources again for this project and any future research.