

South Carolina

Contraband camps took different forms in different places. For instance, while in Memphis camps were created, often from the ground up, along or in the Mississippi River, in South Carolina many camps existed on the same plantations where blacks had been slaves. Still other camps simply consisted of a number of blacks resident at Union encampments. Especially in the case of newly-built camps, the populations were ever-changing since fugitives arrived daily, men were recruited into service, and women were often sent to work on abandoned farms or plantations. Some of what is known about these makeshift communities comes from official record while important details have been provided through the writings of various people—often associated with religious groups or benevolent organizations—who visited them. The most remarkable of these first-hand accounts is provided by Quaker Levi Coffin, who transitioned from his work on the Underground Railroad directly to fundraising for the contraband. Two other witnesses to camp life were Michigan Quaker and Underground Railroad operative Laura Haviland, and John Eaton, Jr. General Superintendent of Freedmen.

While there are no known camps, per se, that were erected in South Carolina, there were numerous plantations taken over by the Union army. The names of thousands of slaves were recorded at plantations along the Cooper, Back, and Nanda rivers near Charleston. Occupied plantations include the Cole-Ball or Bass Plantation, Grove Plantation, Flag Plantation, Hazel Head Plantation, Dr. E. Furman's Plantation, Charles M. Furman's Plantation, William Armstrong's Plantation, Richard Furman's Plantation, Red Bank Plantation, Bushy Park Plantation, Manington Plantation, Melgrove Plantation, Pine Grove Plantation, Midway Plantation, Moss Grove Plantation, Parnassus Plantation, Dean Hall Plantation, Dock Horn Plantation, James Furguson Plantation, Dr. J.R. Motte's Plantation, North Mulberry Plantation, Thomas Fritzer Plantation, Bluff's Plantation, Strawberry Plantation, Rice Hope Plantation, Comingtee Plantation, Buck Hall Plantation, Washington Plantation, and Pauley Plantation, as well as numerous plantations in Beaufort and on Hilton Head Island, Otter Island, Fort Seward.¹

¹ Slaves, Owners of Plantations, Charleston, SC, March 1865, Roll 15601, M416, Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers relating to Two or More Civilians, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington: 1962.