Thirty-Eighth
Congress of the United States
At the Second Session
BEGUN AND HELD AT THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
in the District of Columbia
on Monday the fifth day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four.

AN ACT
To establish a bureau for the relief of freedmen and refugees.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That there be established, and there be an office in the War Department, to continue during the pendency of the war, for the relief of freedmen, and refugees, and abandoned lands, to which shall be committed a bureau to be continued...
of office prescribed in an act entitled "An Act to
prescribe an oath of office and for other purposes,"
approved July second, eighteen-hundred and sixty
five, and the Commissions and the Chief Clerk shall,
before entering upon their duties, give bonds, to the
Treasurer of the United States, the former in the sum of
fifty thousand dollars, and the latter, in the sum of
ten thousand dollars, conditioned for the faithful
performance of their duties, respectively, and such bond
shall be approved as sufficient by the Attorney General,
which bonds shall be filed in the office of the first
Comptroller of the Treasury to be by him kept in suit
for the benefit of any person duly appointed to
the condition there.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary
may issue such commissions, direction, and
rules as he may deem necessary for the immediate
and temporary shelter, and supply, of destitute
suffering refugees, and freed men, and their wives
and children under such rules and regulations
as he may direct.

Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the President,
with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint an assistant Commissioner for each
of the States declared to be in insurrection, not
exceeding two in number, who shall serve in the
discretion of the Commissioner, and in the execution of the pro-
visions of this act, and he shall give a bond to
the Treasurer of the United States, in the sum of
twenty thousand dollars, in the form and manner


prescribed in the first section of this Act. Each of
said Commissioners shall receive an annual salary of
two thousand five hundred dollars, in full com-
ensation for all his services, but any military of-
giers may be detailed and assigned to duty under this act, on
success of pay or otherwise. The Commissioners shall,
before the commencement of each regular session of
Congress, make full report of their proceedings to
the state of the accounts to the President
who shall communicate the same to Congress and
shall also make the special reports, whenever required to
be do so, by the President or either house of Congress; and
the Adjutant General shall cause the quarterly re-
ports of their proceedings to the Department, and
also such other special reports as from time to
time may be required.

Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, That the Commis-
ioner, in his discretion, shall have au-
thority to set apart for the use of loyal refugees and
freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrection-
ary States as shall have been abandoned, or to which the
United States shall have acquired title by conquest or
sale, or otherwise, and to every such citizen, whether
refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be as-
signed not more than forty acres of such land, and
the persons to whom it was so assigned shall be protected
in the use and enjoyment of the same, for the term
of three years at an annual rent not exceeding
six per centum upon the value of such land, as it
was appraised by the State authorities in the year.
eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation, and in case no such appraisement can be found, then the
rental shall be based upon the estimated value of the
land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner
as the Commissioners may by regulation prescribe. At the
end of said term, or at any time during said term,
the occupant of any parcels so assigned may purchase
the land and receive such title thereto as the United
States can convey, upon paying therefor the value of
the land, as ascertained and fixed, for the purpose of
determining the amount of rent above.

Sec. 5. And be it further enacted, That all acts and part
of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby
repealed.

Jefferson, March 3, 1866

Abraham Lincoln

Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Vice President of the United States,  
and President of the Senate,  

Jefferson, March 3, 1866