



A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This compilation of historical content and artifacts documents
the emancipation of slaves in Florida.

"Emancipation in Florida" Compiled by Mary Cathrin May
for Althemese Barnes, Director of the John G. Riley Foundation,
Tallahassee, Florida

September 20, 2020

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1. BRIEF OVERVIEW

In today's world, news of a single event can be transmitted across the planet in seconds. This was not the case in April 1865 as the Civil War was coming to an end. In the war-torn South, news traveled slowly, often by word of mouth, and the details sometimes were incorrect or contradictory. Also, noted by Clifton Lewis, Historian of the Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network, is the fact that due to the refusal of slave holders to acknowledge Abraham Lincoln as their President, slaves were not released upon the signing of the Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Neither the end of the war nor the end of slavery was absolutely confirmed until Union troops arrived in each locality to receive the surrender of their Confederate counterparts. This process happened in stages, with areas farther west learning the news weeks after the folks closer to the east coast.

Union Brigadier General Edward M. McCook arrived in Tallahassee to receive the surrender of Florida's Confederate troops on May 10th. On May 20th, McCook formally announced President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation from the steps of the Knott House, effectively ending slavery in the state. As a result, many Floridians celebrate May 20th as Emancipation Day.

A month later, on June 18th, Union General Gordon Granger landed at Galveston with 2,000 soldiers to occupy Texas. The following day, June 19th, he announced the Emancipation Proclamation from the balcony of the Ashton Villa. Consequently, emancipation is generally celebrated in Texas on June 19th.

Over the next months, the Union Army gradually established control of the Confederacy in States in rebellion, thus, the precise day of emancipation varied from one state to another. Florida was one of these states. Former slaves all over the south were quick to institute an annual celebration of their freedom. Today, Tallahassee and some other cities in the state continue to honor this tradition in recognition of Emancipation in Florida.

While we advocate and support observing all history, **Emancipation Day in Florida**, to be historically correct, should be acknowledged and celebrated on May 20th.

<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/333282>

2. TIMELINE

Historical Distinction to Texas in Bold

September 22, 1862	President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation
December 31, 1862	"Watch Night" - Slaves waited in churches for the dawning of the promised Emancipation on January 1, 1863
January 1, 1863	Proclamation becomes effective
1864	Union Armies occupy Florida and other states in rebellion of the Emancipation Proclamation and still holding slaves. Florida was one of those states. Union Generals began to read the Proclamation as an enforcement order to slave holders; and to slaves in these states.
May 10, 1865	Brigadier General Ed McCook and the Union Army arrive in Leon County to receive the surrender of Florida's Confederate troops.
May 20, 1865	Union General Ed McCook reads the Emancipation Proclamation from the steps of the Knott House -Tallahassee, Florida. Slaves in Florida are freed. A celebration of freedom is held at Bull Pond in Tallahassee (now called Lake Ella).
June 18-19, 1865	Union General Gordan Granger and Union Army are in Texas; the Emancipation Proclamation is read - Galveston, Texas. Slaves in Texas are freed.
May 20, 1866	Celebrations in Tallahassee and some other parts of the state are held annually thereafter (documented references begin on page 6)
May 20, 1997	Emancipation Day, May 20th, as a statewide Celebration is inaugurated in Tallahassee sponsored by the Florida Department of State, Museum of Florida History and the John Gilmore Riley Museum. This and other commemorations and celebrations continue in parts of Florida.

****HISTORICAL NOTE:** On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures. The necessary number of states ratified it by December 6, 1865. The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." The 13th amendment ended slavery in America.

3. SELECT HISTORICAL SNAPSHOTS — 1863 to PRESENT

On **January 1, 1863**, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing enslaved people in the rebelling Southern states.

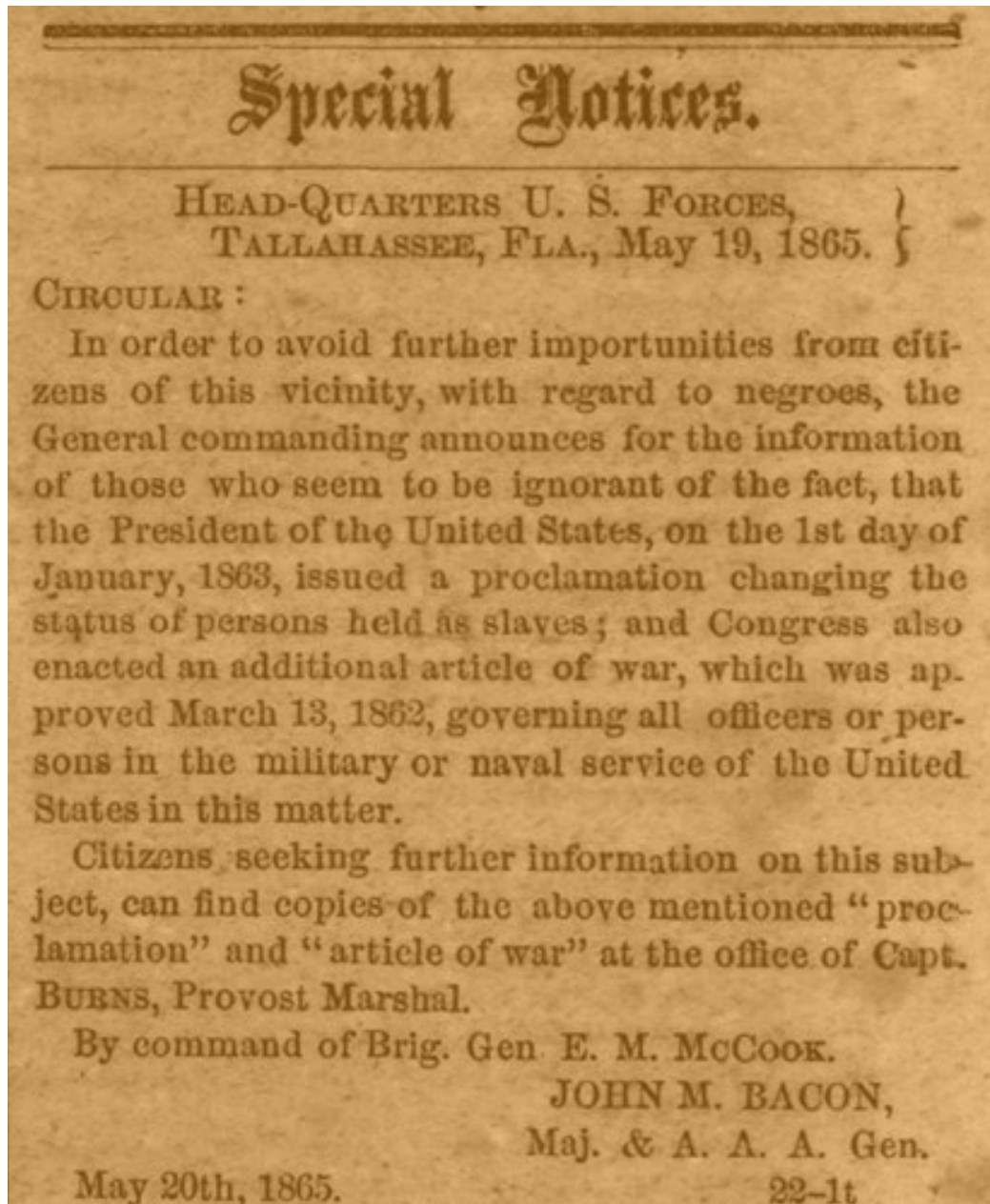
“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free....” —Emancipation Proclamation

It was more than two years later at the end of the Civil War, on May 10, 1865, that Union General Edward M. McCook arrived in the state capital of Florida, Tallahassee, to take possession of the city from Southern forces. General McCook established his headquarters at the Hagner House, now known as the Knott House, located four blocks from the State Capitol. On May 20, after official control of the region was transferred to Union forces, he read and declared the Emancipation Proclamation in effect. That same day an announcement arrived in Tallahassee sent by Major General Quincy A. Gillmore via train from Jacksonville. General Gillmore’s Special Order Number 63 noted that “the people of the black race are free citizens of the United States.”

Newly freed slaves celebrated this announcement with a picnic at Bull’s Pond, which is located in Tallahassee and today called Lake Ella. Since that first celebration in 1865, communities in Tallahassee and some across the state have annually celebrated May 20th as **Emancipation Day**.



EMANCIPATION NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS



Notice in the **Tallahassee Floridian and Journal** newspaper
regarding the Emancipation Proclamation
May 20, 1865

Semi-Weekly Floridian, (SWF) Sept. 26, 1865: THE FIRST EDITION AFTER THE WAR (also see Jax Florida Union, Sept. 16, 1865)

Semi-Weekly Floridian, May 22, 1866

Freedmen's Benevolent Society; Saturday; war-like music of drum & fife; celebrate anniversary of universal freedom.

"Celebration of Emancipation," SWF, May 21, 1867

Mary Cathrin May, From Freedmen to Free Men: Black Political Leaders in Tallahassee and Leon County, Florida, 1865 - 1971

Tallahassee's colored residents celebrated the second anniversary of their emancipation with a grand parade. The streets were crowded, music played, and the Stars and Stripes flew overhead. Led by members of the Benevolent Society and the "Independent Blues," a great crowd of freedmen joined the procession as it made its way through town. Parade leaders told women they could not join the male marchers because it was "jubilee day," and women would be allowed to participate "at the proper time." Unwilling to let the men have "all the fun," the women ignored the orders and made their way into the lines of cheering marchers.

"Emancipation," Weekly Floridian (WF), May 22, 1877

May 20, 1865, from Hagner House, McCook announced Pres. Lincoln's proclamation. Guns are fired; shouts went up.

"Emancipation Celebration," WF, May 20, 1879

Colored children celebrate by decorating graves of Union soldiers at cemetery today; speeches & singing

WF, May 17, 1888

Emancipation Day will be celebrated on Saturday. Excursion train from Jax, large crowd from East Fla to participate in festival

"Colored People's Day at Capitol" WF, May 28, 1889

Leon Co. colored celebrate 24th anniversary of emancipation on May 20. Day was clear and bright; just enough breeze blowing to make marching through streets almost unbearable, unless to a people on pleasure bent. The procession formed on Monroe St. near capitol, headed by Tall Brass Band. Next came Perry Guards, under command of Captain William H. Ford, and presented a fine and soldierly appearance. Were followed by piece of artillery in charge of Corporal (William?) Franklin, late of 3rd USCT, and drawn by a pair of stylish horses.

Prof. T. DeSalle Tucker, orator of day, is principal of Colored State Normal School, a finished scholar and gentleman, and an easy, fluent talker. His speech was

reasoning and logical, contains much sound advice, and but for limited space we would give it entire. He said among other things:

“Against his will the Negro was brought to this country to be connected with this race in the development of the special mission assigned to them.”

“The survival of the Negro of every form of oppression, his progress under most trying difficulties, his wonderful assimilative powers, indicate that he is possessed of the attributes by which he is enabled to give his share to the discharge of the duty allotted to the American people. But he cannot perform his part without the previous and necessary training of heart and mind in which the whites have the start of him by hundreds of years. Freedom to come and go at will is the first boon of God to man; but the possession of this liberty carries with it weighty duties and responsibilities which no freeman can discard without proclaiming himself unworthy of freedom.”

“The Negro therefore, to add his share to the discharge of the trust confided to the American people, must assume his duties and responsibilities as a freeman. To this end, he must apply himself to secure the means by which he can do this work. He must educate, become moral, and acquire property. It is the duty of every freeman to participate in the affairs of Govt. But politics is not a panacea for all the ills under which the Negro labors. If he finds that his vote is inoperative he should study to remove the cause of the weakness by acquiring all the needed elements of citizenship.”

1865 and thereafter:

Blacks in Tallahassee/Leon County and some other cities in Florida hold Emancipation Celebrations.

1997 -- Emancipation Day, May 20th, as a statewide Celebration was inaugurated in Tallahassee sponsored by Florida Department of State, Museum of Florida History and the Riley House Museum.



The Museum of Florida History and John G. Riley Museum present

EMANCIPATION DAY CELEBRATION

at the Knott House Museum
(located at 301 East Park Ave.)

Monday, May 20, 2014



- 10:30 a.m.** John G. Riley Museum Civil War Commemorative Service
Grave decorating and ceremony at the Old City Cemetery
- 11:30 a.m.** Dramatic reading of the Emancipation Proclamation
The reading and music take place on the front steps of the Knott House Museum, with a tribute to Frederick Douglass and the abolitionists. After the program, free lunch is available in Lewis Park across from the historic site.
- 2:00–5:00 p.m.** Free admission is offered at these African American history sites.
Ash Gallery
Florida A&M University, Black Archives at the
Florida A&M University, Meek-Eaton Archives
Florida Historic Capitol Museum
John G. Riley Museum
Knott House Museum
Museum of Florida History
Taylor House Museum of Historic Frenchtown

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 850-438-1234

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MUSEUM of *History*

JOHN G. RILEY HOUSE & MUSEUM
419 EAST JEFFERSON STREET - TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32301
EST. 1994

(above) Flyer from the statewide celebration inaugurated in 1997.

(right) Tallahassee Democrat, May 16, 1997, page 27

EMANCIPATION DAY

May 20, 1865, ushered in a big change that now can be celebrated by everyone

Tallahassee plans its biggest celebration ever of Emancipation Day.

By Gerald Enslley
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Once it was the great holiday of the black community in Florida. Now it is often overlooked. But one can argue that Emancipation Day ranks behind only the Fourth of July in the pantheon of American observances.

For it was on May 20, 1865, that the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery, was read in Florida for the first time — providing freedom to all citizens.

The document was read at other times in other states. In each place, the day was to be forever commemorated as Emancipation Day. And Tallahassee is celebrating Florida's 132nd anniversary of Emancipation Day with fervor.

"It brought about a big change in the social context of this nation," said Althea Barnes, director of the John G. Riley House Museum. "It needs to be remembered."

Barnes is one of the leaders of a civic celebration on Tuesday. But a variety of festivities are planned all over the community.

Several groups have banded together to present an array of programs at the Walker-Ford Community Center and Williams-Smith Service Center. The events started Thursday with a basketball tournament at Walker-Ford, continue today with a program at Smith-Williams and blossom into a Saturday of games, entertainment and ceremonies at Walker-Ford.

On Saturday and Sunday, several black organizations will host traditional celebrations of Emancipation Day. The day was a formal holiday in Florida's black community until the mid-1960s. Children attending black-only schools were given the day off, and there were community-wide picnics.

Though the day lost some of its emphasis after schools were integrated, many rural communities continue to host celebrations. One of the more striking locally will be a Saturday celebration at the Clifford Hill community on Lonnie

Road. There, a group of black senior-citizen drummers will demonstrate the traditional drum cadence of Emancipation Day.

"One of the first things I said when we met to plan Tuesday's civic ceremony is that we need to recognize the people who have been celebrating this day all their lives," said Barnes, who grew up in Clifford Hill. "I wouldn't have felt comfortable if we made it appear that this celebration was just starting."

Downtown on Tuesday will see the most extensive official observance of Emancipation Day ever in Tallahassee. Events include placing flowers on the 37 graves of black Union soldiers in the Old City Cemetery, planting a tree in memory of John G. Riley, an early black educator in Tallahassee, and reenacting the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation at the Knott House.

President Lincoln issued the proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863. But it was not until May 20, 1865, that Union Gen. Edward McCook read the proclamation from the Knott House steps, thus officially freeing Florida slaves. A month later, on June 19, the proclamation was read to slaves in Texas, marking the official notification of all states and giving rise to a celebration known as "Juneteenth."

All of this weekend's and Tuesday's events are open to the public.

EMANCIPATION DAY CELEBRATIONS TODAY

- Senior Citizens "Legacies of Time," with discussion, gospel choir and storytelling, Smith-Williams Service Center, 2295 Pasco St., 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

SATURDAY

(All the following at Walker-Ford Community Center, 2301 Pasco St.)

- Garden show, bazaar, 8 a.m.
- Opening ceremony, art exhibit, library program, Southside Science Expo, 10 a.m.
- Youth Carnival, pool opens, noon
- Talent show, 12:15 p.m.
- Live entertainment, 1 p.m.
- Young Adult All-Star basketball game, 1:30 p.m.
- Bus departs for black-heritage tour, 2:15 p.m.
- Slam dunk/3-point shooting contest, 2:30 p.m.
- Body-building contest, 3:30 p.m.
- Live entertainment, 4 p.m.

SUNDAY

- Faith Celebration at Lake Hall (Macy's Gardens), 3 p.m.
- Gospel Extravaganza at St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, 2125 Keith St., 4 p.m.

TUESDAY

- Opening prayer at Bethel Baptist Church, 224 N. Martin Luther King Blvd. Walk to City Cemetery, 10 a.m.
- Ceremony at City Cemetery, with oral histories, comments and placing of flowers on graves of Union soldiers, 10:30 a.m.
- Re-enactment of Emancipation Proclamation reading, Knott House, 301 E. Park Ave., 11:45 a.m.
- Planting of "Emancipation Tree" in memory of John G. Riley, Lewis Park, East Park Avenue, 12:35 p.m.
- Picnic and celebration in Lewis Park, 12:40 p.m.

4. STATEWIDE RESOLUTIONS AND THE LEGISLATIVE RECORD

Since 1991, Florida leaders and legislators have celebrated and acknowledged, through declaration, resolution, designation and memorial, the emancipation of slaves in Florida following the Civil War. A resolution (Chapter 91-252/House Bill No. 243) presented in the Florida Legislature declaring June 19th as "Freedom Day" - Juneteenth, passed the Florida House and Senate in March 1991. Thus, Florida statute 683.21 was enacted creating and designating Juneteenth to officially commemorate the freeing of slaves in Florida and providing an effective date. May 20, 1865 is not in statute.

BY THE WAY...

Good news on the way

The House has decided to add a special observance to Florida's list. It's one that not all Floridians are even aware of — Juneteenth, a spring celebration that has its roots in African-American history.

That's good news about some really good news from a different time: word of freedom.

Though Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, it was not until June 19, 1865, that most slaves learned they were no longer in human bondage. (In this area, May 20 is the most recognized date).

A bill designed to officially commemorate the freeing of the slaves in Florida has unanimously passed the House, where it was sponsored by Rep. Alzo Reddick, D-Orlando. Now, it's headed for the Senate, where it is sponsored by Sen. Carrie Meek.



Reddick

"I didn't want all of African-American history to be compiled in Black History Month (February)," said Reddick, chairman of the Tourism Committee and an African-American history instructor. "This was a good way to commemorate this event and a way to speak to modern Florida about history and culture. . . . I'm trying

to say to people that I'm interested in Olustee and St. Augustine and in our history."

And, that, too, is good news, Rep. Reddick.

(above) Tallahassee Democrat, April 5, 1991, page 8

CHAPTER 91-252

House Bill No. 243

An act relating to special observances; creating s. 683.21, F.S.; designating "Juneteenth Day" to officially commemorate the freeing of the slaves in Florida; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which ended slavery, and

WHEREAS, the slaves in Florida, as in other parts of the South, learned of their emancipation on or about June 19, 1865, when federal authorities arrived to enforce the proclamation, and

WHEREAS, following emancipation, the ex-slaves celebrated June 19th as a freedom day, and the tradition became known as "Juneteenth Day," and

WHEREAS, with the northern and western migration of the ex-slaves and their descendants, the observance of Juneteenth Day spread to many parts of the country, and

WHEREAS, the time has come for the State of Florida to recognize this traditional celebration of freedom and designate a day of official commemoration, NOW, THEREFORE,

be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 683.21, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

Ch. 91-252

LAWS OF FLORIDA

Ch. 91-253

683.21 Juneteenth Day.—

(1) June 19th of each year is hereby designated "Juneteenth Day" to commemorate the traditional observance of the day the slaves in Florida were notified of the Emancipation Proclamation.

(2) The Governor may issue annually a proclamation designating June 19th as Juneteenth Day and calling on public officials, schools, private organizations, and all citizens to honor the historic significance of the day.

Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 1991.

Approved by the Governor May 30, 1991.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 30, 1991.

"House Bill 243," General Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials Adopted by the Twelfth Legislature of Florida, March, 1991 (Courtesy of Matt Lutz, Director, Records Dept., Tallahassee City Hall)

In August 2020, Senator Pizzo and Senate Memorial 978 resolved June 19th as “Juneteenth Day” to commemorate the traditional observance of the day the slaves in Florida were notified of the Emancipation Proclamation.

(<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2020/978/BillText/Filed/HTML>)

Florida Senate - 2020 SM 978

By Senator Pizzo

38-01064-20 2020978__

1 **Senate Memorial**

2 A memorial to the Congress of the United States,
3 urging Congress to recognize June 19, 2020, as
4 “Juneteenth Independence Day.”

5

6 WHEREAS, on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln
7 issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which ended slavery, and
8 WHEREAS, despite the issuance of the Emancipation
9 Proclamation, news of the end of slavery did not travel to
10 certain regions of the United States for more than 2 years
11 afterwards, and

12 WHEREAS, on or about June 19, 1865, federal authorities had
13 arrived in Galveston, Texas, to inform slaves that the Civil War
14 had ended and that the enslaved were now free, and

15 WHEREAS, following emancipation, former slaves and their
16 descendants continued to commemorate each June 19 in recognizing
17 the emancipation of all slaves in the United States and
18 celebrating freedom, and

19 WHEREAS, in 1991, Florida officially designated June 19 of
20 each year as “Juneteenth Day” to commemorate the freeing of

Senator Pizzo, Copy, Senate Memorial 978 (August 2020)

21 slaves within the state, and

22 WHEREAS, Congress has previously demonstrated strong
23 bipartisan support in recognizing "Juneteenth Independence Day,"
24 evidenced by the introduction of Senate Resolution 253, House
25 Resolution 448, and House Resolution 450 in June 2019, NOW,
26 THEREFORE,

27

28 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

29

30 That the Congress of the United States is urged to
31 recognize June 19, 2020, as "Juneteenth Independence Day."

32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State dispatch
33 copies of this memorial to the Majority Leader of the United
34 States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and
35 each member of the Florida delegation to the United States
36 Congress.

Senator Pizzo, Copy, Senate Memorial 978 (August 2020)

Honorable Governor DeSantis, on the 19th of June, in the year 2020, issued a Juneteenth resolution, extending readings and best wishes to all observing June 19th 2020 as Juneteenth day.



These efforts, while denoting a significant part of history, do not comprehensively and accurately represent Florida's historical emancipation record. As leaders continue to make resolutions, establish statutes or pass laws that pertain to emancipation in Florida, it is important that the May 20th and June 19th distinction be made.

Governor DeSantis Resolution, (date) 2020

5. GALVESTON, TEXAS

The events at Galveston, Texas were historic. After the Civil War ended in April 1865, most slaves in Texas were still unaware of their freedom. On June 18th, Union General Gordon Granger landed at Galveston with 2,000 soldiers to occupy Texas. The following day, June 19th, he announced the Emancipation Proclamation from the balcony of the Ashton Villa.

Granger read General Order #3 stating, “the people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a proclamation from the executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves.”

Freed African Americans observed “Emancipation Day” beginning as early as 1866 as community gatherings grew across Texas, celebrations including parades, prayer, singing, and readings of the Proclamation.

MILITARY ORDERS.

HEAD-QUARTERS U. S. FORCES.

COLUMBUS, TEXAS, June 25, 1865.

IN PURSUANCE of General Order No. 4, from District Head-Quarters, all Arms, Horses, Waggons, Cotton, Munitions of War and Public Property, of every description, belonging to the so-called Government of the Confederate States, or to the State of Texas, will henceforth be turned in to the Post Quarter Master at this place, under penalty of the arrest of all parties failing to comply with the Order.

L. H. HOUSTON, Maj. 25d Iowa.

Commanding Post.

HEAD-QUARTERS DISTRICT OF TEXAS.

GALESTON, TEXAS, June 28, 1865.

GENERAL FIELD ORDER.

Columbus, Colorado County, Texas, is designated as a point for the paroling of Prisoners of War surrendered by the Commanding Officer of the Texas-Military Department to the Forces of the United States.

Captain J. M. WALKER, 25d Iowa Vol. Inf., is appointed the Paroling Officer.

By Order of

Major General GRANGER.

WM. L. AVARY, Major and A. D. C.

HEAD-QUARTERS DISTRICT OF TEXAS.

GALESTON, TEXAS, June 19, 1865.

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 2.

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights, and rights of property between former master and slave, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that of employer and free laborer. The freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect as Military Posts, and that they will not be supported in idleness, there or elsewhere.

By Order of

G. GRANGER, Major General Commanding.

F. W. EXNER, Major and A. A. Gen'l.

HEAD-QUARTERS DISTRICT OF TEXAS.

GALESTON, TEXAS, June 19, 1865.

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 4.

All acts of the Governor and Legislature of Texas since the Ordinance of Secession are hereby declared illegitimate. All civil and military officers of the so-called Confederate States Government, and the State of Texas, will at once report for parole at the following places, or such others as may be designated hereafter, to the proper United States Officers, to be appointed: Houston, Galveston, Dallas, San Antonio, Marshall, Brownsville.

Although their long absence from their homes, and the peculiar circumstances of their State may palliate these desertions from their organizations, this Order will be strictly and promptly complied with.

The above-mentioned and all other persons having in their possession public property of any description whatever, as Arms, Horses, Munitions, etc., formerly belonging to the so-called Confederate States, or the State of Texas, will immediately deliver in to the proper United States Officer at the nearest of the above-mentioned places. When they cannot carry it, and have not the means of transporting it, they will make to the same Officer a full report of the character, quantity, location, security, etc. All persons not complying promptly with this Order will be sent North as Prisoners of War, for imprisonment, and their property forfeited. All persons committing acts of violence, such as banditti, guerrillas, Jay-lawyers, horse thieves, etc., are hereby declared outlaws, and enemies of the human race, and will be dealt with accordingly.

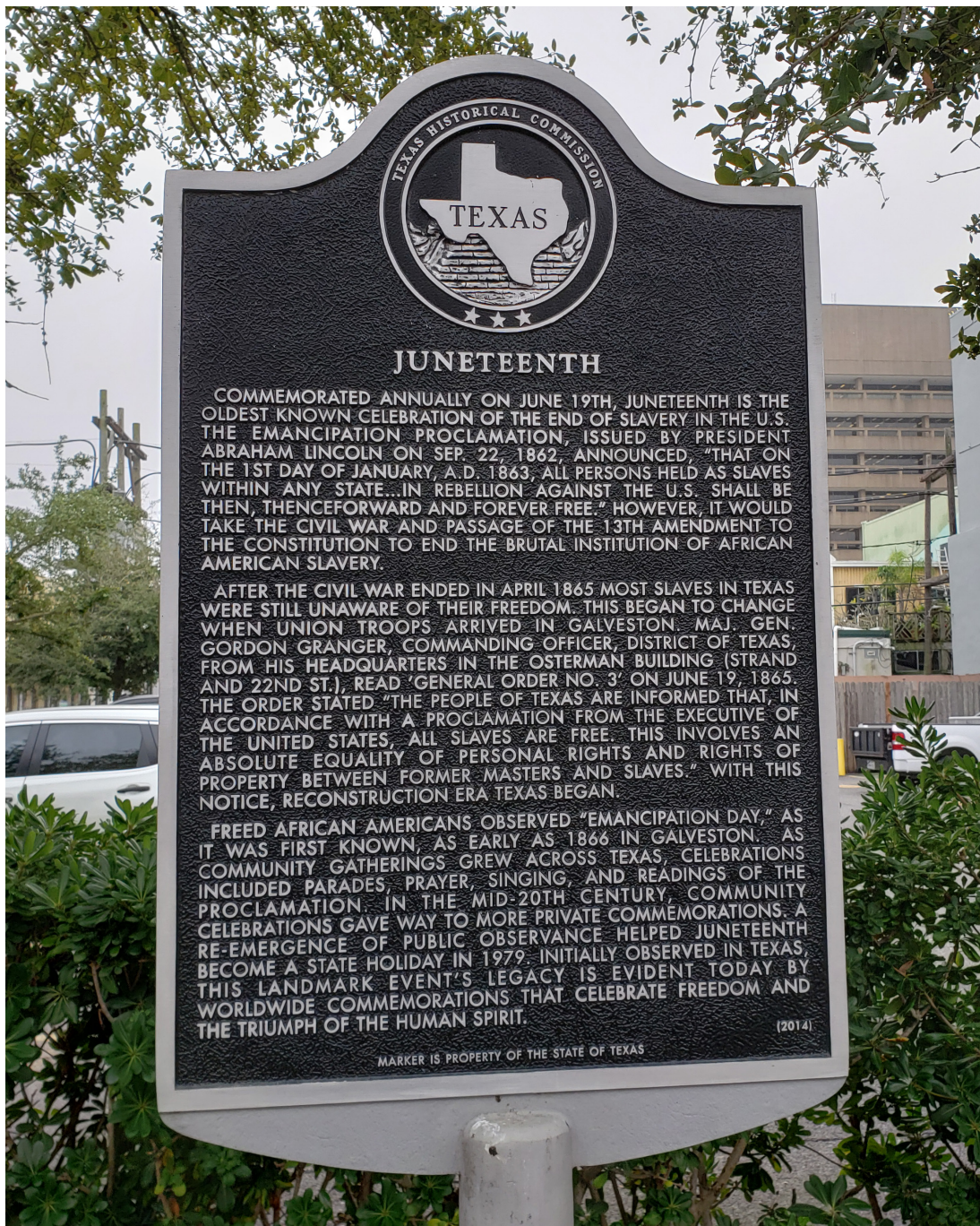
By Order of

G. GRANGER, Major General Commanding.

F. W. EXNER, Major and A. A. Gen'l.

By Order of *John S. Brown* *P. M. Emory* *Major General*

"General Order #3," June 19, 1865



Commemorative plaque at intersection of Strand Street and 22nd Street in Galveston, Texas. This plaque incorrectly identifies June 19th as “the oldest known celebration of the end of slavery.” The first annual celebration of Emancipation Day was celebrated a month prior in Florida.

6. CLOSING

Within this framework, we strongly support establishing May 20, 1865 as the historically correct Emancipation Day in Florida, to be celebrated statewide annually as it was first celebrated in Florida's capital on May 20, 1865. We also support a National Emancipation Day that is based on key historic events that ended slavery in America and the adoption of either of these dates: December 31, 1862 (watch night); January 1, 1863, the date the Emancipation went into effect (date President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation) - commonly known as the "dawning of a new day" that put in motion the end of slavery; and December 6, 1865, date of the ratification of the 13th Amendment which formally ended slavery in America.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network
John W. Franklin, son of John Hope Franklin
Althemese Barnes, Executive Director, John Gilmore Riley Center/Museum
Tallahassee Historical Society
Council on Culture and the Arts
City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox

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Florida Department of State - Florida Memory
Spady Museum-Delray Beach, Florida

Historians:

Mary Cathrin May
Clifton Lewis, Executive Director, L.B. Brown House Museum, Bartow, Florida