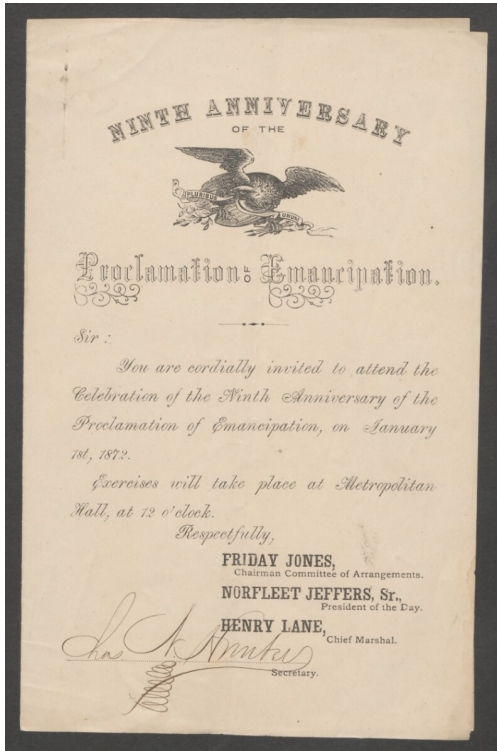


Celebrating Freedom in Raleigh, North Carolina



source: *Invitation, Ninth Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, 1872, Charles N. Hunter Papers, David M. Rubenstein rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.*

This is a formal invitation to the ninth annual Celebration of Emancipation, which was held on January 1, 1872 at Metropolitan Hall in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. A multipurpose building, Metropolitan Hall was the city's political, economic, and cultural center, housing City Hall, the City Market, as well as an auditorium. The 1872 event was planned by a Committee of Arrangements, led by Friday Jones (co-founder of the First Colored Baptist Church of Raleigh), Henry Lane, Norfleet Jeffers, Sr., and Charles Hunter (an educator, and co-founder of the North Carolina Industrial Association). All

Commented [1]: I'm inserting an image of the primary source that is the focus of this framing document, including bibliographic information.

Commented [2]: a brief visual analysis of the document helps me to answer the question, "What happened?": the event is a celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Commented [3]: again, a brief visual analysis of the invitation reveals the date and location of the event...but a quick Google search reveals that the building itself is no longer standing. The community is going to want to know what Metropolitan Hall was and where exactly it was located. Secondary historical research helps to provide this information. The fact the Metropolitan Hall housed City Hall is an important one--the building was the center of city government and economic activity.

Commented [4]: I know that there was a Committee of Arrangements responsible for the event, but I need to do more research to find out who these men were. I located Friday Jones's biography (which is linked to his autobiography) on the Documenting the American South website, and corroborated it with information from the North Carolina State Encyclopedia. Charles Hunter's biography was also available via the state encyclopedia, as well as in the book, "Charles Hunter and Race Relations in North Carolina".

four men were born enslaved; nine years after the Emancipation Proclamation, they were free men, civic leaders in Raleigh's African American community.

This invitation would have been delivered to both African American and white political and civic leaders in Raleigh, including local judges and principals from nearby educational institutions, such as Shaw Collegiate Institute (now University). Additional invitations were also extended to Washington, D.C.—the Committee of Arrangements extended an invitation to Charles Sumner, the Radical Republican senator from Massachusetts. African American public celebrations in the years following the Civil War were carefully planned events, designed to showcase the progress of the race after Lincoln's Emancipation, complete with prayers, hymns, speeches, and resolutions.

This 1872 celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation is part of a tradition which began in 1808, with the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Celebrations of freedom in the South in the 1860s and 1870s hit a high point; representing both a geographic and cultural expansion, as millions of freedpeople introduce their own celebratory traditions. While African American public commemorations focused on freedom, they also functioned to create and develop a distinctly African American identity and history. The rhetoric of this developing, evolving African American identity was controlled by a small yet powerful group of people—ministers, educators, journalists, and businessmen—who were mostly male.

There exists little argument among scholars of African American history and memory regarding the form and function of public celebrations of freedom. Genevieve Fabre notes that the African American public commemorative calendar has always been flexible and open to local and regional variations; African American communities around the country continue to commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation, by way of religious services, parades, and community festivals. In detailing these variations, Mitch Kachun argues that the celebrations are conscious and public acts, designed to

Commented [5]: This part of the framing document answers the question "How does this relate to other events/figures?" By noting who would have received this invitation, we're placing this event within multiple contexts: that of a growing and prospering African American community (the connection to Shaw University), as well as that of the larger American political landscape, in which the Radical Republicans in DC were guiding the Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War.

Commented [6]: This part of the framing document is the main thrust of my secondary research with the texts cited in the Bibliography into the regional and national context of a public celebration of freedom created and led by African Americans. It answers the question "How does this fit in with trends?" by providing a brief history of African American celebrations of freedom, both highlighting the special nature of the event, and also acknowledging that this was not a new phenomenon. In crafting this section, I took notes for myself (after having completed my research) noting the broader historical periods (Reconstruction, the development of the modern American middle class, expansion of state power).

Commented [7]: Here, I considered the positions different scholars took on African American public commemorations; I took notes on their thesis/position. There was no disagreement among the scholars I read as I drafted this document.

interpret and make use of the past for distinctly African American purposes. While Kathleen Clark agrees with this general assertion, she adds that as a component of African American public culture, these events also function with political aims.

How does this invitation help us to understand the African American community of Raleigh post-Reconstruction? It is evidence of an existing African American civic culture in North Carolina's capital city. It suggests that, even if only for one day in Jim Crow North Carolina, African Americans were staking their claim—in public—as citizens of the city, the state, and the nation.

Commented [8]: I added this section to connect the primary source back to my guiding question .

Bibliography

Clark, Kathleen Ann. *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Fabre, Genevieve. and Robert O'Meally, eds. *History and Memory in African American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Kachun, Mitch. *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

Commented [9]: While I used both primary and secondary sources to corroborate information within this primary source, the only sources I'm including here in the framing document are the secondary sources used for the second half of the document.

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