

# Arkansas

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.

## Helena

In May of 1863, Quaker Levi Coffin visited Helena, here running into the son of an old neighbor, William Shugart.<sup>1</sup> Coffin wrote that he found 3,600 contraband in Helena working either in service of the government or as farmers. Eight hundred, he stated, had arrived the night before his visit. Many blacks were living in three large churches while others found shelter in houses and in tents. Coffin referred to other camps between Helena and Vicksburg. The three below he stated were within the army’s picket. However, shortly after Coffin’s visit, these were, according to him, destroyed by the rebels. Many blacks perished in the burning cabins in which they were housed.

☞Camp Deliverance: Coffin described this camp as being two miles outside of the city of Helena. Coffin reported that there were 480 contraband here when he visited.

☞Camp Wood: Coffin reported that there were 490 contraband here when he visited.

☞Camp Colony: Coffin reported that there were 250 contraband here when he visited.

**Pine Bluff** (referenced by Eaton)<sup>2</sup>

**Little Rock** (referenced by Eaton)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Levi Coffin, 639. The Shugart Family, Quakers, likely having been neighbor to Coffin in Wayne County, Indiana (his home prior to Cincinnati), is also known to have been active in the Underground Railroad in Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> John Eaton, Jr., *Grant, Lincoln, and the Freedmen, Reminiscences of the Civil War*, Longman, Green, and Co., New York, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.