The Freedmen's Bureau papers are a unique set of materials. The papers include lists, letters, tables, notes, handwritten documents, and typed documents. Each page is different. In addition to the general Transcription Center directions, below are some additional instructions and helpful hints for transcribing the Freedmen's Bureau records.

Transcribing Tables with Markdown

Some of the Freedmen's Bureau papers include tables or columns of information. Markdown—marks or symbols inserted into the typed text — allows us to format the information you type into a table or columns later.

The two critical symbols for markdown are: pipes | and hyphens ---

Tables can be created by assembling dividing words with hyphens - (at least three and between the first group of text and the next), and separating each column with a pipe |

Table in markdown:

First Header	Second Header
Content Cell	Content Cell
Content Cell	Content Cell

*Note that the dashes at the top do not need to match the length of the header text exactly.

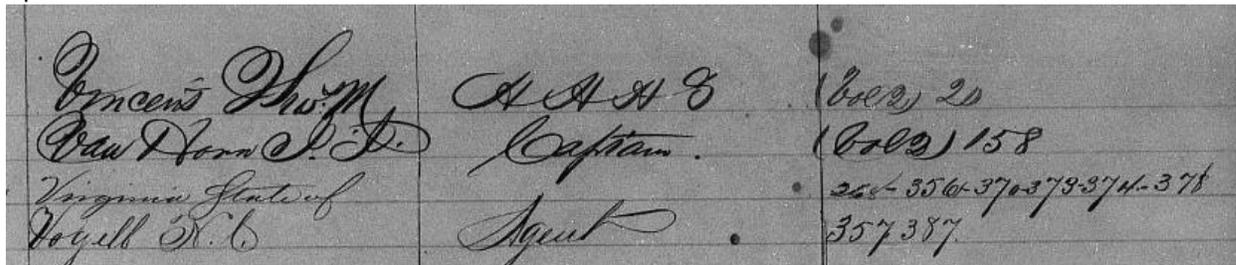Columns are created similarly, but without the outer pipes.

Columns in markdown:

Column 1	Column 2
Joe	Farmer
Sue	Cook

Including colons (:) within the header row defines the text alignment:

Left-aligned: |:-----------|
Right-aligned: |-----------:|
Center-aligned: |:----------:|

Example:

```
Vincent Thos M | A A A G | (Vol 2) 20
Van Horn J.J. | Captian | (Vol 2) 158
Virginia State of |    | 268-356-370-373-374-378
Vogell H.C. | Agent | 357 387
```

Transcribing Correspondence with Margin Notes

Some correspondence includes names, events, organizations, or dates in the margins of the letter. The following are guidelines for transcribing margin notes.

First, type the letter number.

Then, transcribe the address of the letter writer even though it is on the right hand side of the page.

Bureau of Refugees Freedmen &c
Hd. Qr. Asst. Commissioner
Raleigh N.C. July 12th 1865

Next, transcribe the address of the recipient. The last name of the recipient is always in the left margin.

Cilley Maj. Clinton A. (you may put the name in order – Maj. Clinton A. Cilley)
Asst. Adjt. Genl.

Lastly, transcribe the correspondence or letter. If a note appears in the margin, write [[footnote #]] in line with where the margin note falls. Number the footnote sequentially for each letter and transcribe the margin notes at the end of the letter using [[footnote #]] to indicate the note.

Each separate piece of correspondence should as best as possible match the following format:
Letter #
Sent from
Recipient
Letter text including [[footnote #]]
Footnotes

Example:

Bureau R.F. & A.L. Hd. Qrs. Asst Comr
Raleigh, N.C. Oct. 26" 67

Caziarc Lieut Louis V.
A.A.A.G. 2" Mil. Dist.
Charleston, S.C.
253

Lieut

I have the honor to be in receipt of your telegram of this date informing me that "No application for Military Commission of Oct 3" had been received here to which your telegram of 22" inst could relate."
Enclosed please find copy of the communication referred to in my telegram of 22" inst and which I respectfully request early attention may be given, as I have several cases requiring immediate action. [[Footnote 1]]

I am Lieut
Very Resp'y,
Your Obed't Serv't
Nelson A. Miles
Col & Bvt Maj. Genl.
Asst Commissioner

[[Footnote 1]] Copy furnished Gen. Howard Nov. 5" 67

Using Indexes to Help Transcribe Full Documents/Letters

Many of the letters, reports, and other documents in the Freedmen's Bureau records had name or subject indexes created to make it easier to find related documents that reference a particular person or subject. These indexes are part of the records being transcribed by the Freedmen's Bureau Transcription Project.

When transcribing a document that is difficult to decipher, it is often useful to use the index (if available) to see if a name or subject is easier to read or understand. Check the finding aid to determine if there is an index available for the set of records that you are working on.

Likewise it is often helpful to reference the documents being indexed when transcribing an index. In many cases the description of the indexed subject is in an incomplete sentence and sometimes difficult to understand. One important thing to note is that the short entry for an indexed subject term often leaves the subject term out of the entry.

Example transcription from M843, Series 1, 1.3: Subject Index (9) to Vol. 1, page 3, line 2:
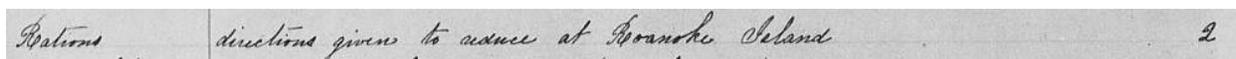
| Rations | directions given to reduce at Roanoke Island | 2 |

In this case, the subject "rations" was removed from the sentence between "reduce" and "at" and added to the first column.

The corresponding letter to this indexed subject can be found using the number in the far right column. In this case, the subject indexed refers to letter 2. Each of the letters in the corresponding volume are numbered. This number is often found above the recipient's name. Use the title of the project, the finding aid, or the information in the "Read More" section of the transcription project to determine what volume(s) correspond to which index. Based on this information, we know that the subject index corresponds to part of the first volume.
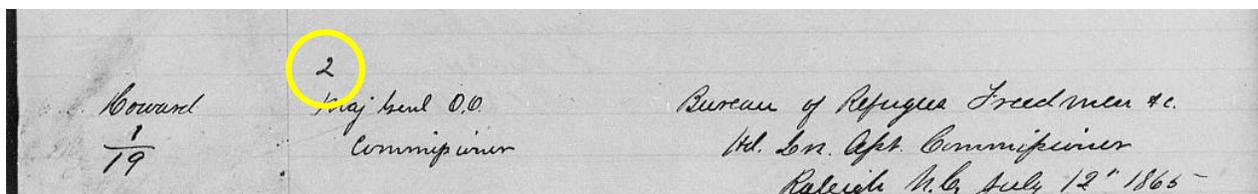
In the margin of letter 2 (Series 1, 1.4: Vol. 1 (7)), the phrase, "has given direction to reduce rations" appears next to the section of the letter where that statement is made.