

Roanoke Island, *May 29, 1865*

Mr. Hawkins.

Dear Sir:—I noticed in the *National Freedman* that I was supposed to be in Newbern; but you will observe, by my address, that I am at Roanoke. I had, however, thought myself settled at Norfolk, and had become attached and engaged in the labors there; but I came into the department as a passive laborer; I consequently have submitted to all transfers that have been made, thinking it all for the best; and, indeed, I find that it has proved so to be. Taking the whole into consideration, I rather rejoice that I am at last stationed at Roanoke; for it is, I consider, a very healthy locality, and I find a world of work to be done here. The suffering among the colored people is very great, but this is being now relieved.

THE NEW BUILDING

The building that I occupy has been recently erected, and is pleasantly situated on Lincoln Avenue; and if you would wish to know about life in the school-room, I will just say the material is here as elsewhere; it only needs to be analyzed, and the hand of the workman to reform it.

I am teaching two sessions a day, the same as I did at the North, teaching the same hours. My school numbers at present eighty-seven. A little busy world; for all seem to take a lively interest in every subject under consideration, and seem to love their books very much. My pupils consist of both old and young, most of them alphabetarians. I think I have ample opportunity to note improvement; I have been happily disappointed in all I have been permitted to witness in the contraband department. I think the schools of Norfolk would well compare with the schools at the North, without saying that the average of intelligence among the colored children is superior to, or even as good as, that of the white children of the North. I can say, however, with safety, that I have seen scholars in the schools at Norfolk, Newbern, and Roanoke that would do credit to schools of equal grade at the North, and their singing so thrills one's heart. Their music seems to have a depth of meaning. I think we shall be obliged to yield to the negro, a peculiar gift, in this respect. I really can not say much by way of report, having so recently organized my school; but I can say, taking a general view of the field, so far as my observation extends, I think the prospects of the schools are encouraging. The foundation has been laid, and I feel that the building is being fast erected. May God help us to be faithful laborers.

Respectfully yours,

Susan Odell

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