

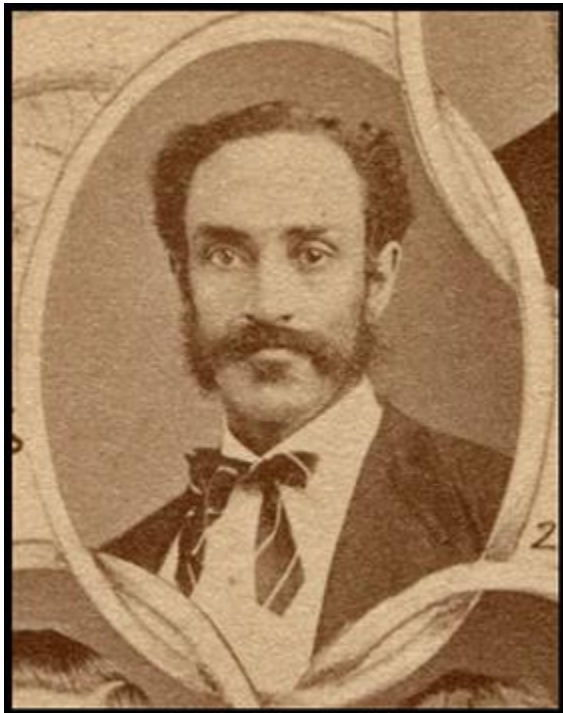
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The Republican Party of Texas

- Black History -

George Thompson Ruby (1841 – 1882)

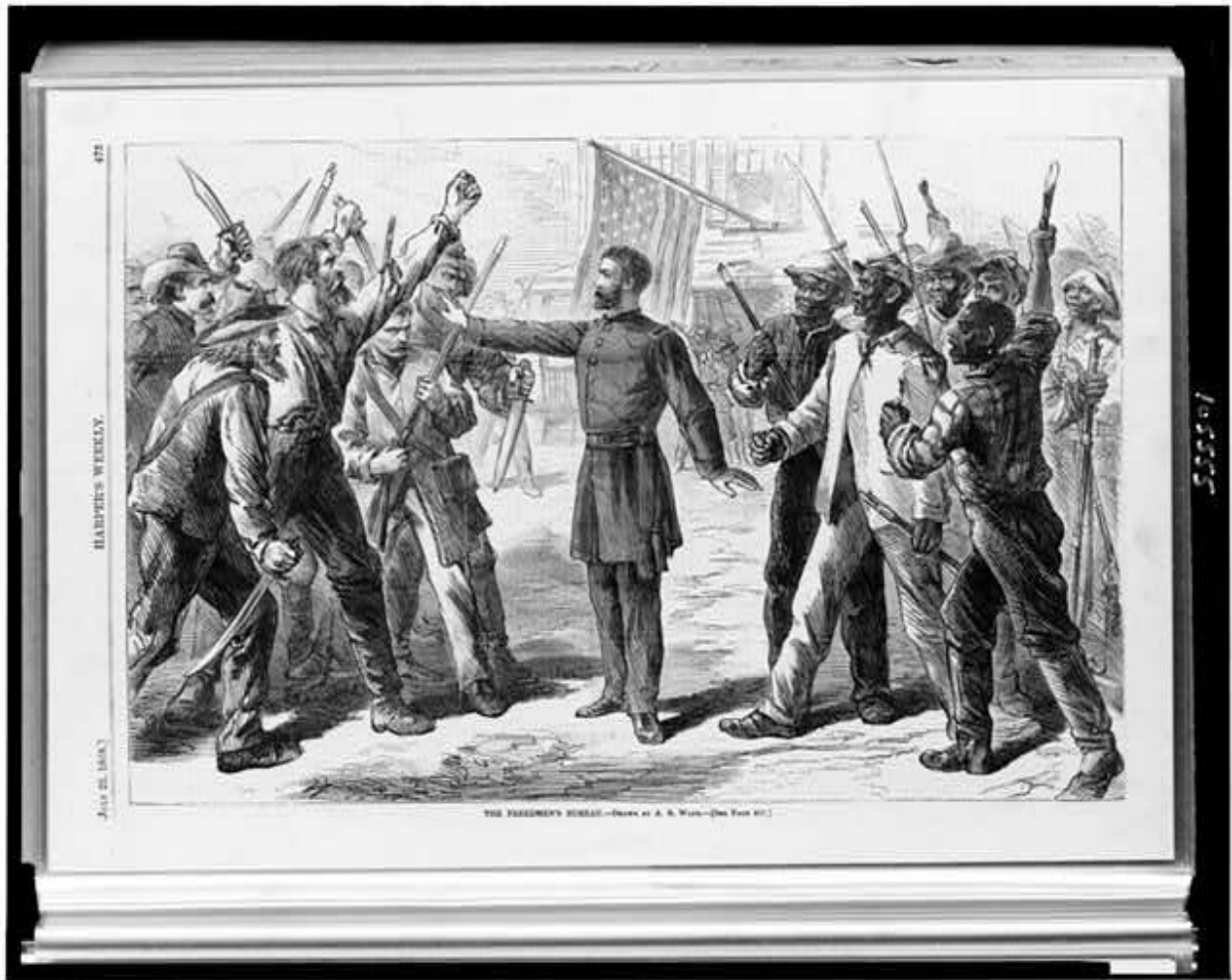


George T. Ruby

The Republican Party of Texas owes a lot to its trailblazers and one of the greatest was George T. Ruby (aka - G.T. Ruby). Although he was born in New York, he made a lasting impact on the great state of Texas. He was a traveled man, as he journeyed to Haiti where he worked as a correspondent for the Pine and Palm (a New England newspaper). While there, he was on the frontlines providing information for Black Americans in the United States seeking freedom from slavery and racial discord.¹

In 1864, he made his way to Louisiana where he taught school. He left in September, 1866, after taking a beating from a white mob because he was trying to establish a common school in Jacksboro. Determined to make a difference, G.T. Ruby kept pressing forward!

His journeys would lead him to Galveston, Texas, whereby he joined the Freedman's Bureau and became an administrator with their schools, while still serving as a correspondent for the New Orleans Tribute. Not one to slack, he also taught school through the Methodist Episcopal Church.



The Freedmen's Bureau, Photo from Library of Congress.

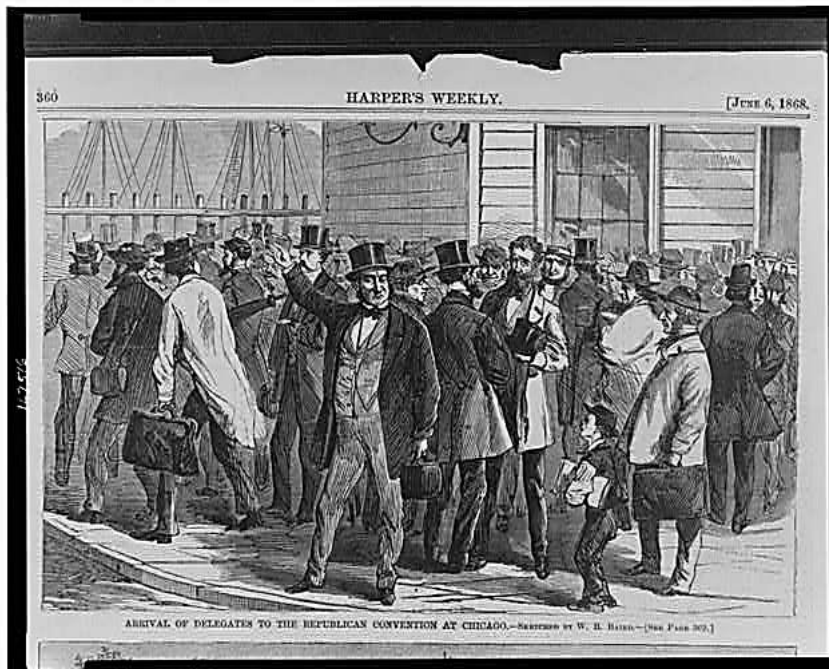
The Freedmen's Bureau, in which Ruby was involved, helped provide relief for thousands of refugees, both Black and white, who were left homeless after the Civil War. They also supervised affairs of newly freed slaves, monitored legal cases involving Blacks, and took control of the legal process when needed, to ensure justice was served. Further, they supervised labor contracts and voided those the freedmen signed under duress. Additionally, they protected Black lives and property while aiding in the apprehension of those who committed crimes against freedmen. As an educator, Ruby was instrumental with the Bureau's schools and much more!

G.T. Ruby would make many powerful connections as he journeyed through different professional ventures. He would enjoy travels to various places such as Austin, TX, to Washington, DC, and many Texas counties in-between as he continued work with the Bureau. He became friends with the likes of Texas

Governor Edmund J. Davis, Galveston banker Victor McMahan, businessmen, judges, etc., all relationships which undoubtedly enhanced him and his eventual journey into Texas politics.² His friendship with Gov. Davis would pay off greatly when Ruby became a Texas State Senator. Ruby was known to be quite influential in the Republican ranks both in his community and throughout the state. With such influence, most Blacks in the Republican Party of Texas followed his lead.

In 1868, nevertheless, Ruby would eventually become president of an extremely important organization called the Loyal Union League which organized

and mobilized Black voters.³ Further they pushed to end racial violence. Other points of interest in G.T. Ruby are as follows:



Arrival of the delegates to the Republican convention in Chicago, 1868
Photo from Library of Congress

- Elected as a delegate to the National Republican Convention in 1868.

- It's believed that he was the only Black Delegate from Texas at the time.⁴

- During a time of division with Radical and Conservative Republicans in Texas. Ruby was made President of the 1869 Radical Republican Convention in Galveston.
 - Ruby was the choice for Lieutenant-Governor for Texas during the convention and would have been nominated, but he was too young to hold the office at twenty-eight years of age.⁵
- Elected in 1869 as Texas State Senator (R)
 - Committee appointments: Judiciary, militia, education, and state affairs.

- Standing committees: Judiciary No. 2 and Accounts, Public Debts, Engrossed Bills, and Constitutional Amendments.
- Bills successfully introduced to incorporated: Galveston and El Paso, multiple railroads such as the El Paso Railroad, the Horticultural Society, insurance companies, etc.
- Organized first Labor Union of Colored Men at Galveston, to level the playing field for Blacks on the docks!
- Elected delegate to the national Republican convention in 1868; he was the only Black member of the Texas delegation.

Senator Ruby had such great influence, he would merely pen letters to Gov. Davis to help people gain appointments. He would recommend certain white Radical Republicans for offices favorable to the Governor during his quest for office and members of the Loyal Union League. Such recommendations were for judges, commissioners, mayors, aldermen, county clerks, district clerks, etc. If a recommendation from Sen. Ruby did not work out, Gov. Davis would reply with his reasons. Interestingly, Sen. Ruby had enough clout with Gov. Davis, he was able to write him and request certain officers be removed. In one instance, he wrote to have the Galveston Chief of Police removed.⁶

G.T. Ruby saw a decline in the control and power of the Radical Republicans and a rise of Democrats in the Senate and chose not to seek reelection. Instead, he moved back to Louisiana and worked as a clerk and with the Internal Revenue Department. His work to help Blacks, nonetheless, never stopped as he strongly supported the Exoduster movement, which was popular in the late 1870s. The goal of this movement was to help move thousands of Blacks from Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas to the Kansas frontier.⁷

Ruby is one of many Black Republicans who were foundational trailblazers in the great state of Texas. He was a part of the 150 Black Men and 20 Anglos who started the Republican Party of Texas on July 4, 1867, in Galveston, Texas. No doubt, from that point forward, in just a few short years, he left a lasting impact on Texas politics. Today as we look back in history, we can still see the value of his many contributions!

As always, there is so much more which can be learned from the rich history of Texas Republican politics. Therefore, it is paramount that the lessons of the past be sought, thus ensuring a more prosperous and sound future for generations to

come. Thank you for taking the time to take embark upon this journey through history. Remember, *history matters!*

Endnotes

¹ Pitre, Merline. Republican Party. Texas State Historical Association. Handbook of Texas.

² Ibid.

³ Casdorff, Paul (1965). A History of The Republican Party in Texas 1865-1965. p.6

⁴ Ibid. p.8

⁵ Brewer, Mason J. (1935). Negro Legislators of Texas, p. 30

⁶ Ibid, p. 55-56.

⁷ Pitre, Merline. Republican Party. Texas State Historical Association. Handbook of Texas