4678 [redacted] F B265. 1863

Memphis Tenn
23d April 1863

Fiske a. Severance
Supt Contrabands

Transmits result of his inquiries in regard to plantations of disloyal citizens, sufficiently near his camp to be available for agricultural purposes

Citizens

Recd. H.Q. 16th army corps 17th May 1863

A. Severance Fiske Supt. Contrabands. Memphis Tenn.

States result of his inquiries in regard to plantations of disloyal owners, sufficiently near his camp to be available for agricultural purposes.

Office Gen. Supt. Contrabands
Department of the Tennessee,
Memphis 23 Apl. 1863.

Respectfully submitted to Maj. General Hurlbut, Comdg. 16th. Army Corps.

I need not suggest the weighty considerations rendering desirable alike for the interest of the Govt. and these people, an order to Supt. Fisk to occupy and cultivate, the part or whole, of one or both plantations, — the Mitchell, as nearest, if only one. The safety of laborers could be increased, if necessary, by black guards, adding, so much, to the security of the town. Through the generosity of the public, I can furnish the Supt. over 30 plows, at once, if the land can be occupied

for the benefit of Government.

Very respectfully
yours &c.

John Eaton

Gen. Supt. Contrabands

Col Bruce
A.A.G.

Memphis Tenn

Rec'd H. D 16. Annys Corps 17th May 1863

Post Contraband Office
Memphis April 23. 1863.

To Chaplain Eaton
Gen. Supt. Contrabands

Sir

In accordance with your suggestion I have taken pains to ascertain facts concerning plantations suitably situated for cultivation by the Blacks under My charge, with a view also to the useful employment of the Blacks lying in filth, and disease, and out of all controll, in this City; I find

1st The plantation of Wm. P. Mitchell, lying two Miles and a half from this Office, outside the Infantry picketts, constantly patrolled by our Cavalry, this side of Nonconna Creek, and West of the Grenada R. Road - it is uncultivated, but the fences are in very tolerable condition. The owner has been until recently a Commissary in the Rebel army, with the rank of Captain I believe, and is now said by some to be residing upon a plantation owned by himself near Holly Springs - by others to be still in the Rebel Army. Of his treason there is no doubt. A Mr. Grant is living in

his house, pays no rental, only takes what care he can of the estate; has two blacks only and cultivates nothing but a small garden; the plantation has probably a thousand acres of arable land tolerably well fenced.

2nd Adjoining this plantation upon the west, and across the Grenada R. Road lies the plantation of Wm. Persons, an uncle of Mr. Mitchell. This has been deserted for months until within the last few days. Wm. Persons is at present on the estate. He is notoriously a bitter Rebel, has but few negroes left, intends to cultivate some small portion of his farm; owns two large estates the other side of the Moncona Creek. He has no family, never having married, and could very well spare this plantation. The Hernando road crosses it, and the Cavalry Picketts are near, and beyond this house. Of these two plantations there are in all some fifteen hundred acres of excellent corn, and cotton land ready for the plow.

These farms are so situated, and the property of such persons that, finding them, I was convinced we should find none other so entirely suitable to our purpose, and so offer this report as the result of the investigation I have given the Matter.

Whether it be best to cultivate such land as is available near the Hospitals, and present Camp, with the force at My command in that camp, and to remove the Contrabands from the City for the cultivation of these plantations, I lean to the decision of the proper authorities - Not, for Myself, doubting the usefulness of such a Measure to the Government, and to the Blacks themselves.

Very Respectfully
A Gouvernor Fish
Asst Supt of Contrabands