DeLarge, Robert C. (1842–1874)

Born in Aiken, South Carolina, the son of a slave-
holding free black tailor and a mother of Haitian
ancestry, DeLarge attended primary school in North
Carolina and high school in Charleston. He was a
member of the Brown Fellowship Society, a fraternal
and charitable association that admitted only mulatto
members. During the Civil War, he was employed
by the Confederate navy. In 1865, DeLarge obtained
employment with the Freedmen’s Bureau. Along with
more than one hundred other Charleston free blacks,
he signed a petition to the state constitutional con-
vention of 1865 asking impartial suffrage but
acknowledging that the “ignorant” of both races could
be barred from voting. He attended the state black
convention in that year and chaired the platform
committee at the Republican state convention of
1867. He attended the South Carolina labor conven-
tion of 1869. According to the census of 1870,
DeLarge owned $6,650 in real estate.

DeLarge held numerous offices during Reconstruc-
tion. He was a delegate to the constitutional con-
vention of 1868; served in the state House of Represen-
tatives, 1868–70, where he chaired the ways and
means committee; and served as head of the state
land commission. He was also a member of the
Sinking Fund Commission, a member of the board
of regents of the state lunatic asylum, and a magistrate
in Charleston. He also worked for the Freedmen’s
Bureau. In 1870, DeLarge was nominated for the
U.S. House of Representatives as part of an effort by
black leaders to obtain more offices. If elected, he
declared, “I shall demand for my race an equal share
everywhere.” DeLarge was elected to Congress, serv-
ing 1871–73, but spent most of his term fending off
charges of electoral fraud. He was unseated in 1873.
DeLarge’s tenure on the land commission was marked
by fraud and mismanagement, in which he was im-
plicated. He died of consumption in Charleston.

See also Figure 4

Logan and Winston, Dictionary, 172–73. Holt, Black Over
Negro Conventions, 1865,” Journal of Negro History, 31 (1946),
93. Charleston Daily Republican, 30 July 1870. Koger, Slave-
owners, 198. Bleser, Promised Land, 52, 75. Reynolds, South
Carolina, 123. Foner and Lewis, Black Worker, 11, 25.