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**COMPILED MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS OF VOLUNTEER UNION SOLDIERS WHO
SERVED WITH THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS:**

**1st United States Colored Infantry
1st South Carolina Volunteers (Colored)
Company A, 1st United States Colored Infantry (1 Year)**

Introduction

On the 19 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the compiled military service records of volunteer Union soldiers belonging to the 1st United States Colored Infantry, 1st South Carolina Volunteers (Colored), and Company A, 1st United States Colored Infantry (1 Year). These units were part of the United States Colored Troops (USCT). The USCT included 7 numbered cavalry regiments; 14 numbered artillery regiments; 144 numbered infantry regiments; plus Brigade Bands Nos. 1 & 2 (Corps d'Afrique and US Col'd Troops); Powell's Regiment Colored Infantry; Southard's Company Colored Infantry; Quartermaster Detachment; Pioneer Corps, 1st Division, 16th Army Corps; Unassigned Company A Colored Infantry; and Unassigned USCT. There are also miscellaneous service cards arranged alphabetically by surname at the end of the unit records. The records reproduced are part of the Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Record Group (RG) 94.

Background

United States Colored Troops

Since the time of the American Revolution, African Americans have volunteered to serve their country in time of war. The Civil War was no exception. Official sanction was the difficulty. In the fall of 1862 there were four Union regiments of African Americans raised in New Orleans, LA: the 1st, 2d, and 3d Native Guard, and the 1st Heavy Artillery (African Descent). The 1st South Carolina Infantry (African Descent) was not officially organized until January 1863; however, three companies of the regiment were on coastal expeditions as early as November 1862. Similarly, the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry was not mustered into Federal service until January 1863, even though the regiment had already participated in the action at Island Mound, MO, on October 27, 1862. These early unofficial regiments received little Federal support, but they showed the strength of the African American soldier's desire to fight for freedom.

The first official authorization to employ African Americans in Federal service was the Second Confiscation and Militia Act of July 17, 1862. The language in this act provided President Abraham Lincoln the means to receive into the military or naval service persons of African descent for the purpose of constructing entrenchments, performing camp duty, or doing any labor for which they were found competent. Lincoln did not authorize the use of African Americans in combat until the Emancipation Proclamation was issued as General Order No. 1 on January 2, 1863.

In late January 1863, Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts received permission to raise a regiment of African American soldiers. The pace of organizing additional regiments was very slow. In March Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton sent Gen. Lorenzo Thomas to the lower Mississippi Valley to recruit free and contraband African Americans. Thomas was given broad authority. He was to explain the administration's policy regarding African American soldiers and recruit volunteers to raise and command them. Stanton wanted all officers of such units to be white, but that policy was softened to allow African American surgeons and chaplains. By the end of the war, in addition to the chaplains and surgeons, there were 87 African American officers. Thomas's endeavor was very successful, and on May 22, 1863, the Bureau of Colored Troops was established to coordinate and organize regiments from all parts of the country. Created under War Department General Order No. 143, the bureau was responsible for handling "all matters relating to the organization of Colored Troops." The bureau was directly under the Adjutant General's Office and its procedures and rules were specific and strict. All African American regiments were now to be designated United States Colored Troops (USCT). At this time there were some African American regiments with state names and a few regiments in the Department of the Gulf designated as Corps d'Afrique. All these were ultimately assimilated into the USCT, even though some of the regiments retained their state designations.

To facilitate recruiting in the states of Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and eventually Kentucky, the War Department issued General Order No. 329 on October 3, 1863. Section 6 of the order stated that if any citizen should offer his or her slave for enlistment into the military service, that person would, "if such slave be accepted, receive from the recruiting officer a certificate thereof, and become entitled to compensation for the service or labor of said slave, not exceeding the sum of three hundred dollars, upon filing a valid deed of manumission and of release, and making satisfactory proof of title." For this reason, some records of manumission are contained in the compiled service records reproduced in this publication.

The USCT fought in 39 major engagements and more than 400 lesser ones. Sixteen African American soldiers received the Congressional Medal of Honor. As it was in other units, the death toll from disease was very high in the USCT. Deaths from disease and battle totaled 37,000. The last regiment of the USCT was mustered out of Federal service in December 1867.

Important sources for information about African American units in the Civil War are the War Department's *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC, 1880-1901; reprinted Harrisburg, PA, 1971 and 1985) and the Navy Department's *The War of the Rebellion; A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* (Washington, 1874-1922; reprinted Harrisburg, 1971 and 1985). These multivolume works contain reports of operations and other official correspondence.

1st United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized on Mason's Island, District of Columbia, from May 19 to June 30, 1863. The 1st Infantry consisted of both freeborn African Americans and ex-slaves. Henry N. Turner, the regimental chaplain, was one of 14 African American chaplains who served with the USCT.

In July the regiment was attached to United States Forces, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Department of Virginia and North Carolina. From October 1863 to April 1864, the regiment was attached to United States Forces, Yorktown, Department of Virginia and North Carolina. The 1st Infantry took part in the expedition from Norfolk to South Mills and Camden Court House, North Carolina, in December 1863.

In April of 1864 the regiment was attached to the 1st Brigade, Hinck's Colored Division, 18th Corps,

Army of the James. In June they were assigned to the 1st Brigade, 3d Division, 18th Army Corp. During May and June 1864, the 1st Infantry participated in Gen. Benjamin F. Butler=s operations south of the James River and against Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. They took part in the assaults on Wilson=s Wharf and Petersburg, the explosion of the mine at Petersburg in July 1864, and the siege of Petersburg and Richmond from June until December 1864. The regiment fought at the battle of New Market Heights, September 28-30, including the fighting at Fort Harrison (Chaffin=s Farm) on September 29. In October they participated in the battle at Fair Oaks, Virginia.

The 1st Infantry was transferred to the 1st Brigade, 3d Division, 25th Corps in December 1864 and participated in the expedition to Fort Fisher, North Carolina. They took part in the second expedition in January 1865, and in the capture of Fort Fisher on January 15. During the next month the regiment fought at Sugar Loaf Hill, Sugar Loaf Battery, and Fort Anderson. These campaigns along the Cape Fear River against Forts Fisher and Anderson and Sugar Loaf Hill were part of the Federal march toward Wilmington, North Carolina. Wilmington fell on February 22, the last major port in the South to come under Union control.

In March 1865 the regiment became part of the 1st Brigade, 3d Division, 10th Corps, Department of North Carolina. During the last months of the Civil War, the 1st Infantry advanced and occupied Goldsboro and Raleigh. On April 26 at the Bennett=s House near Durham Station, the regiment was present at the surrender of Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston. They remained with the Department of North Carolina until mustered out of service on September 29, 1865. The unit reported the loss of 1 officer and 113 enlisted men by disease, and 4 officers and 67 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded.

1st South Carolina Volunteers (Colored)

This regiment was organized by Gen. David Hunter between May and June 1862. The War Department never authorized its formation so Hunter disbanded the unit in August 1862. The designation as shown on the records is 1st South Carolina Volunteers, but it has no connection with the 1st South Carolina Volunteers that later became the 33d Infantry USCT.

Company A, 1st United States Colored Infantry (1 Year)

This unit was mustered in from November 4 to December 31, 1864, at New Orleans, LA, originally to serve for one year. However, some of the members were transferred to the 96th and the 62d Infantries, USCT, in accordance with instructions contained in Special Order No. 48, Department of the Gulf, February 20, 1865.

Records Description

Compiled service records consist of a jacket-envelope for each soldier, labeled with his name, rank, unit, and card numbers. The compilation of service records of Union soldiers began in 1890 under the direction of Col. Fred C. Ainsworth, head of the Record and Pension Office of the Adjutant General's Office, Department of War. Information from muster rolls, regimental returns, descriptive books, and other records was copied verbatim onto cards. A separate card was prepared each time an individual name appeared on a document. These cards were numbered on the back, and these numbers were entered onto the outside jacket containing the cards. The carded information was verified by a separated operation of comparison; great care was taken to ensure that the cards were accurate.

A typical jacket contains card abstracts of entries found in original records relating to the soldier and original documents relating solely to that soldier. Examples of the latter include enlistment papers,

substitute certificates, casualty sheets, death reports, prisoner-of-war memorandums, and correspondence. Unique to the records of the USCT are deeds of manumission, oaths of allegiance, proof of ownership, certificates of monetary award, and bills of sale. These items appear most frequently in units recruited in the border states of Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland. These states remained in the Union but were slave states. Jackets and cards include a section labeled "bookmark" which was reserved for cross-references to other records relating to the individual. The service records are arranged by arm of service, thereunder numerically by regiment or independent battalion or company, and thereunder alphabetically by name of the soldier.

The unjacketed miscellaneous cards were accumulated by the War Department with the expectation that they would be incorporated in individual compiled service records. However, this expectation was never fulfilled, because either insufficient or contradictory information made it impossible to associate the cards or papers with a particular soldier's service record.

Related Records

Among the records of the Adjutant General's Office in the National Archives are many of the original records that were abstracted or "carded" by the Record and Pension Office. These include the individual unit's muster rolls, returns, and descriptive books. Other series in RG 94 that contain information relating to volunteer Union soldiers who served with the USCT include carded records relating to Union staff officers, carded medical records of volunteer Union soldiers, unbound and bound regimental records, and "record of events" cards. The regimental records of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment (Colored) have been reproduced as Microfilm Publication M1659, *Records of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment (Colored), 1863-1865*.

The "record of events" cards include information copied from the unit's muster rolls and returns. They show the stations of the field and staff and the companies of the regiment at the time the muster roll or return was prepared and sometimes mention battles or skirmishes in which the regiment participated. The cards have been reproduced as Microfilm Publication M594 *Compiled Records Showing Service of Military Units in Volunteer Union Organizations*.

Record Group 94 also includes a card index for the USCT, reproduced as Microfilm Publication M589, *Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with U.S. Colored Troops*, which may be used to locate the regiment of a USCT soldier. An index card gives the name of the soldier and his rank, as well as the unit in which he served; sometimes there is a cross-reference to his service in other units or organizations. This index does not cover the miscellaneous card abstracts included in this microfilm publication. The National Archives is continually producing microfilm publications of Volunteer Union compiled military service records. A complete listing of finished publications can be found in the National Archives' *Microfilm Resources for Research: A Comprehensive Catalog* which is available on-line.

The records of the Colored Troops Division, within RG 94, include division correspondence and records relating to recruiting, the appointment of officers, slave or free status of individuals, and a compilation of historical extracts and official papers concerning the military service of African Americans from the colonial period through the Civil War entitled *The Negro in the Military Service of the United States 1639-1886*. This compilation is reproduced as Microfilm Publication M858. The records of the Bounty and Claims Division, also in RG 94, include correspondence of the division and records relating to bounties and claims paid to loyal owners of slaves by the Slave Claims Commissions of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Other record groups having information pertaining to the USCT include RG 105, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands; RG 110, Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War); RG 393, Records of the U. S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920; RG 217, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury; and RG 15, Records of the Veterans Administration.

Holdings of the National Archives relating to the Civil War are outlined in Kenneth W. Munden and Henry Putnam Beers' *Guide to Federal Archives Relating to the Civil War* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1962) and Henry Putnam Beers' *Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America* (Washington: National Archives, 1968), which were reprinted, respectively, as *The Union* (1986) and *The Confederacy* (1986).

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