

Publication Number: M-1820

Publication Title: Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with the United States Colored Troops: 2d through 7th Colored Infantry, including 3d Tennessee Volunteers (African Descent), 6th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent), and 7th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent)

Date Published: 1999

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

2d Through 7th Colored Infantry, Including 3d Tennessee Volunteers (African Descent),
6th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent), and 7th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent)

Introduction

On the 116 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1820, are reproduced the compiled military service records of volunteer Union soldiers belonging to the 2d through the 7th United States Colored Infantry units, including the 3d Tennessee Volunteers (African Descent) and the 6th and 7th Louisiana Infantries (African Descent). These units were part of the United States Colored Troops (USCT). The USCT included 7 numbered cavalry regiments; 13 numbered artillery regiments plus 1 independent battery; 144 numbered infantry regiments; Brigade Bands Nos. 1 & 2 (Corps d'Afrique and US Colored Troops); Powell's Regiment Colored Infantry; Southard's Company Colored Infantry; Quartermaster Detachment; Pioneer Corps, 1st Division, 16th Army Corps; Pioneer Corps, Cavalry 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 Louisiana Native Guard, and the 1st Louisiana 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. 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. This act allowed President Abraham Lincoln "to receive [African Americans] into the service of the United States, for the purpose of constructing entrenchments, or performing camp service, or any other labor, or any military or naval service for which they may be

found competent." The President did not authorize use of African Americans in combat, however, until issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 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. The Corps d'Afrique units ultimately became numbered regiments in the USCT. The 54th and 55th Massachusetts Infantries (Colored), the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry (Colored), the 29th Connecticut Infantry (Colored), the 6th and 7th Louisiana Infantries (African Descent), the 3d Tennessee Volunteers (African Descent), and the 1st South Carolina Volunteers (Colored) retained their number and 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 over 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, DC: 1874-1922; reprinted Harrisburg, PA, 1971 and 1985). These multivolume works contain reports of operations and other official correspondence.

2d United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Arlington, VA, from June 23 to November 11, 1863, to serve 3 years. During its existence, the regiment served in New Orleans, LA, and Ship Island, MI. In 1864 the unit

moved to Key West and participated in operations on the west coast of Florida. On February 20, 1865, Companies D and I took part in the attack on Fort Myers, FL. Subsequent service took place in the District of Florida until the regiment was mustered out on January 5, 1866.

3d United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Camp William Penn, Philadelphia, PA, from August 3 to 10, 1863, to serve 3 years. The regiment participated in the siege of Fort Wagner, SC, and operations against Charleston, SC. In 1864 the unit moved to Jacksonville, FL, and maintained duty in the area until being mustered out October 31, 1865.

3d Tennessee Volunteers (African Descent)

This regiment was organized in the spring of 1864 in Memphis, TN, for the defense of that city. Most of the men were transferred to the 7th United States Colored Heavy Artillery, which was redesignated the 11th United States Colored Infantry (New) on January 23, 1865. There are service records pertaining to the officers and men in the 3d Tennessee Volunteers as well as in the 11th United States Colored Infantry (New).

4th United States Colored Infantry

The regiment was organized at Baltimore, MD, July 15 to September 1, 1863, to serve 3 years. The unit participated in actions in Virginia at Bermuda Hundred, Petersburg, Dutch Gap, and Chaffin's Farm. In North Carolina the regiment took part in the battle and capture of Fort Fisher, Sugar Loaf Hill, and the city of Wilmington. In these actions the regiment sustained losses of 355 officers and men wounded, missing, or killed. The regiment was mustered out of service May 6, 1866.

5th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Camp Delaware, OH, from August 6, 1863, to January 15, 1864, to serve 3 years. In Virginia the regiment served at Norfolk and Portsmouth and participated in major battles at Petersburg, Chaffin's Farm, and Fair Oaks. The regiment took part in the capture of Fort Fisher and the city of Wilmington in North Carolina. Its remaining service took place in North Carolina until it was mustered out on September 20, 1865.

6th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Camp William Penn, Philadelphia, PA, from July 28 to September 12, 1863, to serve 3 years. The unit participated in battles at Chaffin's Farm, Williamsburg, and Petersburg in Virginia and at Sugar Loaf Hill, NC. During these actions the regiment sustained losses of 237 killed, wounded, or missing. The regiment was mustered out September 20, 1865.

6th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent)

This regiment was organized for 60 days in New Orleans, LA, on July 4, 1863. The unit served at New Orleans and was mustered out August 13, 1863.

7th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Baltimore, MD, from September 26 to November 12, 1863, to serve 3 years. The unit served in Virginia, Florida, and South Carolina. It was mustered out of service October 13, 1866.

7th Louisiana Infantry (African Descent)

This regiment was organized for 60 days in New Orleans, LA, on July 10, 1863. It served in New Orleans until it was mustered out on August 6, 1863.

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 or his unit. 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. Records for officers are interfiled alphabetically by name with the records of enlisted men. If an individual served in more than one unit, which was typical for USCT officers, there will be a separate service record for each unit in which he served.

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

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 (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, skirmishes, or other activities 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. 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 online at <http://www.nara.gov>.

The records of the Colored Troops Division, within RG 94, include division correspondence and records relating to recruiting, the appointment of officers, and the slave or free status of individuals, as well as 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.

If a soldier applied for a pension, the pension application case file may be among the Records of the Veterans Administration (RG 15). Indexes to the pension applications have been reproduced as Microfilm Publications T288, *General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934*, and T289, *Organizational Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*.

If a soldier or officer was tried before a general court-martial or if an individual or his unit was the subject of a court of inquiry or military commission, transcripts of those proceedings may be among the Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army) (RG 153). The registers to the proceedings have been reproduced as Microfilm Publication M1105, *Registers of the Records of the Proceedings of the U.S. Army General Courts-Martial, 1809-1890*.

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

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, DC: National Archives, 1968), which were reprinted as *The Union* (1986) and *The Confederacy* (1986).

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