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COMPILED MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS OF VOLUNTEER UNION SOLDIERS  
WHO SERVED WITH THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS:  
INFANTRY ORGANIZATIONS, 8TH THROUGH 13TH, INCLUDING THE 11TH (NEW)

Introduction

On the 109 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1821, are reproduced the compiled military service records of volunteer Union soldiers belongs to the 8th through the 13th infantry units, including the 11th (new) organized for service with 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 U.S. 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

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, 2nd, and 3rd Louisiana Native Guard, and the 1st Louisiana Heavy Artillery (African Descent). The 1st South Carolina Infantry (African Descent) was not official 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 Mount, 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 (12 Stat. 592). This act allowed President Abraham Lincoln "to employ as many persons of African descent as he may deem necessary and proper for the suppression of this rebellion, and for this purpose he may organize and use them in such manner as he may judge best for the public welfare." The use of African Americans met with varying reactions and treatment. In the trans-Mississippi West, they saw some combat, while in the Department of Tennessee and in the South they were frequently assigned fatigue work. In the East, they drew both combat and fatigue duty. 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, Gov. John Andrew of Massachusetts received permission to raise a regiment of African American soldiers. Because the pace of organizing additional regiments was slow, Secretary of

War Edwin M. Stanton sent Gen. Lorenzo Thomas to the lower Mississippi Valley in March 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 19th Connecticut Infantry (Colored), the 6th and 7th Louisiana Infantries (African Descent), the 3rd Tennessee Volunteer Infantry (African Descent), and the 1st South Carolina Volunteers (Colored) retained their numbers and state designations, but served under the Bureau of Colored Troops.

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 to 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 of labor or 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 Medals 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.

### 8th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized from November to December 31, 1863, at Camp William Penn, PA. In February 1864 the regiment was ordered to Jacksonville, FL, where it joined General Gilmore's ill-fated Florida expedition. The 8th USCT was engaged heavily at Olustee on February 20, 1864, and sustained heavy casualties. The regiment fought with great distinction despite never having fired its weapons before this battle. From February to August the regiment continued to serve in Florida on fatigue and fortification duty, as well as reconnaissance duty. In August the regiment was ordered to the trenches outside of Petersburg where it served until September 28. On September 29, 1864, the 8th USCT fought near Chaffin's Farm, Fort Gilmore, and in October, the Darby Town Road. Following these engagements, the regiment returned to the trenches around Petersburg until the city fell in April 1865. Following the fall of Petersburg, the 8th USCT was ordered to Texas, where they were mustered out in December 1865.

### 9th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Camp Stanton, Benedict, Maryland, from November 11 to December 31, 1863, for 3 years service. In March of 1864 the regiment was ordered to Hilton Head, South Carolina, for fatigue duty and reconnaissance on John Island. The regiment joined the 3rd Division, 10th Army Corps, at Deep Bottom, Virginia, and was stationed in the trenches at Petersburg from July to September. On September 29 and 30, 1864, the 9th USCT fought at Fort Gilmore near Chaffin's Farm. In 2 days of fighting the regiment suffered 113 men and officers killed or wounded. The regiment was engaged in skirmishes at Darby Town Road on October 10 and at New Mark Road on October 27. From November 1864 until April 1865 the regiment was posted in the trenches before Fort Harrison. The 9th USCT marched into Richmond on April 3, 1865, with "Drums beating colors flying [and] men singing the John Brown Hymn--Gloria in Excelsis." In July the regiment was moved to Brownsville, TX, where it remained until September 1866. The 9th was ordered to Louisiana in October and mustered out at New Orleans, November 26, 1866.

### 10th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was formed between November and December 1863 at Camp Craney Island, Virginia for 3 years service. In May the 10th USCT moved to Fort Powhatan aboard the famous steamer *Planter*. On May 24, 1864, the 10th USCT skirmished with Fitzhugh Lee's force at Wilson's Wharf. The regiment was posted to picket duty on the right of Federal lines before Petersburg in June 1864. From August 1864 to March 1865 the regiment provided guard duty at City Point, Virginia. On April 3, 1865, the 10th USCT marched into Richmond, Virginia. Beginning in July 1865, the regiment was stationed in Corpus Christi, TX, where it remained until it was mustered out in May 1866.

### 11th United States Colored Infantry (Old)

This regiment was organized from October 31 to December 31, 1863, at Fort Smith, AR, from men recruited by Captain J.M. Steele (formerly of the 12th Kansas Volunteers). From January to July 1864 the regiment performed guard and escort duty out of Fort Smith. On August 24, 1864, a Rebel cavalry force consisting of 300-400 whites and Indians attacked the regiment, consisting of 260 men organized into companies "A" through "E." The regiment was able to repulse three cavalry charges before the enemy withdrew. On September 19, 1864, the 11th USCT skirmished against General Ganos's rebel forces. On January 24, 1865, the regiment attacked and routed Colonel Newton's rebel regiment at Bogg's Mills, AR, capturing a large amount of horses and equipment. The 11th USCT (old) was stationed at Little Rock in February, at which time it was consolidated with the 112th USCT and the 113th USCT (old) to form the 113th USCT (new).

### 11th United States Colored Infantry (New)

This regiment was organized from June through August 1863, as the 1st Regiment Alabama Siege Artillery. During its years of active service, the regiment was reorganized several times. In January 1864, the regiment was stationed at Fort Pickering, Memphis, TN, when it was consolidated into the 1st Tennessee Heavy Artillery (in accordance with Special Order 25). The regiment served on fatigue duty at Fort Pickering until early March, when it was reorganized, along with several Negro pioneer companies, into the 6th USCT Heavy Artillery. The regiment was ordered to Fort Pillow, TN, where it was attacked on March 12, 1864, by the forces of Nathan Bedford Forrest. After the fort surrendered, over half the regiment was lost in the ensuing massacre by Forrest's forces. Following the Ft. Pillow massacre, the remains of the regiment returned to Ft. Pickering where it was reorganized as the 7th USCT Heavy Artillery. On January 23, 1865, the regiment was consolidated with several Negro pioneer companies and

designated as the 11th USCT (new). The 11th USCT served on picket and fatigue duty in Memphis until it was mustered out on January 12, 1866.

#### 12TH United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Elk Bridge and Nashville, TN, in August 1863. On December 15 and 16, 1864, the regiment participated in the Battle of Nashville. The regiment participated in the pursuit of General John Bell Hood's army to Decatur, AL. Following this expedition, the 12th USCT guarded the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad against guerilla attacks until it was mustered out in January 1866.

#### 13th United States Colored Infantry

This regiment was organized at Camp Mussy, TN, in November 1863. From December 1864 until December 1865, the 13th USCT was responsible for guarding a section of the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. The regiment participated in the Battle of Nashville on December 15 and 16, 1864. On the second day, the 13th USCT participated in several attacks on rebel positions, including the assault on Overton Hill. In January 1865, the regiment joined the pursuit of the remnants of General John Bell Hood's army to Decatur, AL. The regiment was returned to picket duty along the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad for the rest of the year until it was mustered out on January 10, 1866.

#### 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 separate 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. The 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 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 (Colored) have been reproduced as M1659, *Records of the Fifth-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 of the companies of the regiment at the time the muster roll or return was prepared and sometimes mentions battles, skirmishes, or other activities in which the regiment participated. The cards have been reproduced as 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 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 USCT personnel. 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 [www.nara.gov](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 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 Commission 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, *Organization Index to Pension Files of Veterans Who Served Between 1861 and 1900*.

If a soldier 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, transcript of the 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 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).

## CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	8th United States Colored Infantry
	Adams, Edward-Benedict, Thomas
2	Bennett, Jackson-Brown, Thomas
3	Brown, William-Clafford, John S.
4	Clapp, David C.-Davis, Noah
5	Davis, William-Fields, John
6	Finch, Edmunds-Hall, Irwin
7	Hall, Jacob-Holly, William
8	Hooker, Joseph-Johnson, John
9	Johnson, Joseph-Locke, Isaac B.
10	Lockwood, Harrison-Mitchel, Ambrose
11	Mitchell, Cleo-Phelps, Daniel
12	Phelps, Joseph-Rogers, Norman
13	Roland, Spencer-Smith, Thomas B.
14	Smith, William-Timbrook, James
15	Tippitt, Samuel-Whitaker, Alexander
16	White, David-Young, John
17	8th United States Colored Infantry, Miscellaneous Service Cards
	Adams, John-Junks, James E.
18	Keith, Henry-Zinn, Alfred D.
19	9th United States Colored Infantry
	Acty, Robert-Bell, Custis
20	Bell, Franklin-Brown, Elijah
21	Brown, Franklin-Churn, Walter
22	Claggett, Franklin-Cox, William
23	Crawford, Henry-Dennis, Joshua
24	Dennis, Littleton-Elzy, George
25	Ennels, John-Gale, Francis
26	Gale, James-Hamlin, Noah
27	Harmon, George-Henry, Isaac
28	Henry, Isaiah-James, Minus
29	James, Richard-Kemer, William
30	Kett, Teagle-Mapp, Alfred
31	Mapp, Bennett-Morris, Peter P.
32	Morris, Richard-Pinckett, Robert
33	Pinckett, Sandy-Purnell, Moses H.
34	Purnell, Noah-Rutter, William
35	Ryaer, Leven-Smith, George
36	Smith, Henry-Thomas, Henry
37	Thomas, John H.-Wainwright, Alfred
38	Wales, Benjamin-White, Horace
39	White, Isaac-Young, James
	Bayley, Thomas: Board of Examination Proceedings

40 9th United States Colored Infantry, Miscellaneous Service Cards  
 Adams, Robert-Long, Josephus

41 Maccle, Joseph-Young, Henry

42 10th United States Colored Infantry  
 Ackleboro, Jacob-Booker, Arthur

43 Booker, Henry-Carter, William

44 Casten, Abraham-Dennis, John

45 Dennison, Peter-Forman, Charles

46 Forman, Edinborough-Hitchcock, Henry M.

47 Hodges, Moses-Jones, Levi

48 Jones, Robert-McKenzie, George H.

49 Mears, George-Pleasants, Norman

50 Pleasants, Sterling-Savage, Joseph

51 Savoy, Thos.-Spady, Joseph

52 Sparrow, Edward-Van de Sande, George

53 Vaughn, George-Wilkins, Melville

54 Wilkins, Robert-Young, Levens

55 10th United States Colored Infantry, Miscellaneous Service Cards  
 Adams, Charles-Young, Laws

56 11th United States Colored Infantry (Old)  
 Adams, Amos-Falkner, Jacob

57 Falkner, James-Mayo, Isaac

58 McAfee, Daniel-Tadlock, Silas

59 Tadlock, William-Youngblood, Hayes

11th United States Colored Infantry (Old), Miscellaneous Service Cards  
 Adams, Luther-Yager, Peter G.

60 11th United States Colored Infantry (New)  
 Abbo, Sunum-Bell, Robert

61 Bell, Taylor-Buckner, Charles

62 Bufford, Jackson-Collins, Lewis

63 Collins, Robert-Dyson, Richard

64 Ebanson, Albert-Gallin, Joseph

65 Gardner, Mathew-Harris, Charles

66 Harris, Dennis-Hyman, Samuel

67 Ingram, Wesley-King, Parker

68 Kirby, George-McCauley, Albert

69 McCauley, Bergess-Moss, Edmond

70 Motley, Nathan-Patty, Henry

71 Payden, Nelson-Rogers, Aaron

72 Rogers, Barry-Smith, Lewis

73 Smith, Malcolm F.-Tolliver, Richard

74 Tonston, Alexander-Warren, Nelson

75 Washburn, Luther J.-Williams, Isaac

76 Williams, Jackson-Young, Willis

77 11th United States Colored Infantry (New), Miscellaneous Service Cards  
 Abbott, Daniel-Young, William

78 12th United States Colored Infantry  
 Abernathy, John H.-Benson, Albert

79 Benson, Edmond-Burton, Grank

80 Butler, Cooper-Cooper, Washington

81 Copelan, Moses-Eazell, James

82 Eddington, James-Gardner, Dennis  
 83 Gardner, John-Helm, Claibourne  
 84 Helm, James-Jennygin, Reuben  
 85 Jennyson, Addison-Lewis, Franklin  
 86 Lewis, George-McNerrie, William  
 87 McNorris, Robert-Parrem, Henry  
 88 Patten, David-Roads, Henry  
 89 Roads, William-Stieger, Arthur  
 90 Stiger, Arthur-Walters, Jerry  
 91 Ward, Asbury-Young, Peter  
 92 12th United States Colored Infantry, Miscellaneous Service Cards  
     Abernathy, Essic-Youngman, John  
 93 13th United States Colored Infantry  
     Abb, Peter-Batson, Edward  
 94 Batson, James-Caldwell, Isaac  
 95 Caldwell, Mack-Cornell, John  
 96 Cornell, William-Edmondson, Charles  
 97 Edwards, Emanuel-Gather, Frank  
 98 George, William-Hardin, Lewis  
 99 Hardin, Robert-Hughes, Noah  
 100 Hunter, Allen D.-Jourdan, Thomas  
 101 Joyce, John-Mathews, Hiram  
 102 Mathews, James-Monroe, Jim  
 103 Montgomery, William-Parsons, Oliver  
 104 Pate, Andrew-Robertson, Willis  
 105 Robinson, Alias-Smith, George W.  
 106 Smith, James-Thorp, John H.  
 107 Thorpe, Alonzo-Webster, Martin  
 108 Webster, Washington-Zingear, Abraham  
 109 13th United States Colored Infantry, Miscellaneous Service Cards  
     Adams, Alfred-Zelner, Josiah