U. S. Colored Troops Research
American Public University
March 30, 2013

By
Bob O’Connor
Bureau of Colored Troops

- Established May 22, 1863 -- Order # 143
- Set up government agency to enlist black soldiers and sailors
- Designated regiments by number – 1\textsuperscript{st} USCT, 2\textsuperscript{nd} USCT, etc.
- Those already designated by another name could keep that name – 54\textsuperscript{th} Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, etc.
USCT regiments

- All had white officers
- All USCT soldiers were segregated
- All USCT sailors were integrated
USCT by the numbers

- 179,000 U.S. Army soldiers were black
- 18,000 U.S. Navy sailors were black
- One in 10 in service to the Union by 1864 were black
When captured

- Jefferson Davis originally indicated he would not treat the blacks as POWs – instead, he would sell them back into slavery
- Initially, many black soldiers did not make it to prison
- When incarcerated, they were often treated differently than white prisoners
Treatment of black prisoners

- They were not going to get exchanged
- They often did not get medical treatment
- Their white officers were held as enlisted men when they should have been in officer prisoners
- Many were assigned work detail which may have actually enhanced their chances of survival
Treatment of black prisoners

- They dug graves and worked on the Confederate railroads near Mobile, AL
- Those workers got regular exercise, rations, and water and got out of the stench of the prison environs
- A much higher percentage of black prisoners survived than one might imagine
Confederate Prisons

- There were 33 Confederate prisons
- 15 in Richmond including Libby Prison, Castle Thunder, and Belle Island
- 9 in Georgia including Andersonville Prison, Camp Lawton, and Millen
- 3 in Charleston, SC + Florence, SC
- Large prison in Salisbury, NC
- Cahaba Prison (also called Castle Morgan) near Selma, AL

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USCT in All Confederate Prisons

According to historians -- only 776 U.S. Colored soldiers and sailors made it into a Confederate prison

They were wrong
Black prisoners

- Cahaba Prison had the largest amount – over 1,000
- Salisbury Prison is believed to have had over 500
- Andersonville Prison had 105
Comparisons of Prisons – All Prisoners/Deaths

- There were 32 Union prisons
- There were 33 Confederate prisons
- 31,218 of 211,411 Union prisoners died 15.5%
- 25,956 of 462,634 Confederate prisoners died 12.9%
By War’s End

- USCT soldiers appeared in 449 engagements including 39 major battles
- One in five died of disease (compared to one in twelve white soldiers)
- 68,178 USCT soldiers died in the war, 2,751 in battles
New Information

- Remember that historians said there were 776 black POWs?
- I have found to date 2,182 – 2,078 black soldiers and 104 black sailors
- My records (though incomplete) show 324 died in prison – 14.8%
- 1,719 survived their incarceration – 78.8%
- How did I find them?
Finding the records

- Using mostly Fold3
- Have to go through every regiment of colored troops, one name at a time
- Starting with Adam Adams and going to Zachary Zuckerman
- 1,000 records per regiment – about 189 regiments of infantry, artillery and cavalry
- Plus U.S. Navy

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What to look for

- There are a huge number of USCT records
- The average soldier probably has ten-fifteen pages in his file
- All records are vertical except the POW record which is horizontal
Data retrieved

- Name, rank, regiment, home town, state, age
- When captured, where captured, & where held in prison
- Date of death and/or what happened if they survived
- Record number from their file
Files w/o POW

All files are vertical

POW files are horizontal

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File with POW card

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POW file looks like this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BANK</th>
<th>No. of Reg.</th>
<th>State.</th>
<th>Arm of Service</th>
<th>Co.</th>
<th>INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM--</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Captured at: Sept. 29, 1864, confined at Richmond, Va., 186.  

Admitted to Hospital at: where he died, 186, of:  

Passed at: April 15, and reported, 186, reported at Camp Parole, Md., within two, 186.  

Enlisted April 9, 1865.  

Sir, Clarin No. 11, 7th U.S.C.T.  

Copied by A.L.K.
Interesting info on POW card

MEMORANDUM FROM PRISONER OF WAR RECORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>US 1st</td>
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Captured at Port Royal, April 4, 1864, confined at Richmond, Va., Oct. 7, 1864.

Admitted to Hospital at Salisbury, N.C., Apr. 20, 1864; reported at Camp Parole, Md., 1864.

Record of:

- 1st N.C. Vol. 24, Page 69
- 2nd N.C. Vol. 2, Page 7

No further record.

2942 - 6, 5, 86 - Copied by 300413
MEMORANDUM FROM PRISONER OF WAR RECORDS.

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<tr>
<td>Boyle, Archibald</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>U.S. C.T.</td>
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Captured at Lake City, Fla., Feb. 20, 1864, confined at Richmond, Va., 1864.

Admitted to Hospital at Andersonville, Ga., 1864, where he died 1864, of Scurvy, Jul. 18, 1864.

Paroled at W. C. Gentry, W. C. M., Mar. 1, 1865; reported at Camp Parole, Md., date not given, 1865.

Sent to Regt. May 5, 1865.

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**MEMORANDUM FROM PRISONER OF WAR RECORDS.**

- **NAME:** Banks, Robert
- **RANK:** Capt.
- **No. of Reg't.:** 23
- **State:** D. C.
- **Arm of Service:** U.S.C.T. Inf. 4

**Captured at Petersburg, Va.** July 20, 1864, confined at Richmond, Va., Aug. 13, 1864.

**Delivered to Messrs. Dickson & Hicks, Oct. 2, 1864.**

**Admitted to Hospital.** Name of owner: Wm. H. P. Bland, residence: Petersburg, Va.

**To: Richard Oglesby, No. 15, East Market St., Petersburg, Va.** In order to be transferred.

**Paroled at:** To Libby Prison, thus: negro, returning to be enlisted in South Army.

**1885.** Reported at Camp Parole, Md., No further record.

Copied by: [Signature]

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Unusual POW records

- 1\textsuperscript{st} LT. George W. Fitch, 12\textsuperscript{th} USCT – LT. D. G. Cooke, 12\textsuperscript{th} USCT and CAPT. Charles Penfield, 44\textsuperscript{th} USCT – captured at Murphreesboro, TN on December 20, 1864

- Priv. Robert Banks, 23\textsuperscript{rd} USCT from Petersburg – captured 7/30/1864 at the Crater
An unlucky USCT soldier

Capt. James Walter Elliott – 44th USCT from South Hanover, MD – Captured at Dalton, GA 10/13/1864 and exchanged 10/15/1864 – he was then captured again at Blockhouse #2 in TN on 10/13/1864 and taken to Andersonville Prison – he was released when the prison closed and put on board The Sultana

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Results of my research

- I have the names of many POWs sold back into slavery
- Others are listed as having been wounded and were convalescing at the plantation where they had been a slave
- 46 black prisoners at Salisbury, NC died on the same day -- 1/15/1865
Mobile Advertiser list

- Mobile Advertiser newspaper published a prisoner list from Athens, AL 9/24/1864 -- listing names of 594 black prisoners, their home towns and the names of their former owners.
- Intent was to have the former slaves reclaimed by their owners.
- List included only first names of the men.
By matching up my list of POW with the newspaper’s list, I have been able to identify 298 of the 594 names – most of the former slaves enlisted under the same name or a similar name as their owner.
Other Prisons besides Andersonville

- Salisbury Prison (NC) had over 500 black prisoners but no names - I have 171 names

- Florence Prison (SC) claimed to have had no black prisoners – I have names of 13 from the 54th Mass. – all survived Andersonville Prison but died with 30 days after being transferred to Florence
Statistical information

- Highest number of USCT POWs by regiment – 111\textsuperscript{th} USCT 518/1,000 & 110\textsuperscript{th} USCT 398/1,000 – captured by Nathan Bedford Forest near Athens, AL -- 9/1865

- Most USCT POWS from the same county – Giles County, TN – 326
Statistical Information

- Capture places of significant black prisoners – The Crater, VA; Olustee, FL; Fort Pillow, TN; Dalton, GA; Athens, AL

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WV POWs

- John Mackey – 45th USCT – Held in Andersonville Prison – survived
- George Lowery – 23rd USCT – 22/Jeff. Co./VA – Captured at the Crater 7/30/1864 – Held in Richmond, VA – survived
WV POWs

Amazing other findings

- 11 year old USCT soldier – Nathan Davis – 84th USCT
- 60 year old USCT soldier – Cuffy Giles – 89th USCT
- 10 Women USCT soldiers with enlistment papers and pay stubs – first known women Civil War soldiers who enlisted as women

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Further Research

- I have looked at 114,000 service records
- There were almost 200,000 USCT soldiers and sailors
- My work is not finished
Database

- Will eventually be on line
- Will be searchable by regiment, prison, where captured, etc.
- Will eventually be in a published book

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US Colored Troops Today
Thank you for your attentiveness to my program

I would be happy to answer any questions for you.
Contact information

Bob O’Connor

[website link]

[author email]