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"OPENING NEW FIELDS OF FREEDOM"

THE 9TH UNITED STATES COLORED INFANTRY

BY PATRICK W. NAUGHTON JR.

ENGINE OF DESEGREGATION

THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS VOLUNTARY TRANSFER PROGRAM OF 1945

BY THOMAS E. HANSON

ARMY HISTORY

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Front cover: A picket station of African American troops near Dutch Gap, Virginia, ca. November 1864
(*Library of Congress*)

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

In this Spring 2023 issue of *Army History*, I am excited to offer two outstanding articles, an excellent crop of book reviews, a look at some one-of-a-kind Army artifacts, and a trip through a new exhibit at the U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum.

The first article, by Patrick Naughton Jr., an active-duty Army officer, details the trials and exploits of the 9th United States Colored Infantry (USCI) during the American Civil War. Perhaps less well known than some of the other Black units of the period, the 9th served with distinction and their service is more emblematic of the role USCI units played during the war than some of the more heralded regiments. Naughton explores the debate surrounding the arming of freed enslaved people, the raising of the 9th, and its performance in combat, as well as the Confederate response.

The second article, by Thomas Hanson, a professor of military history at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, examines the voluntary transfer program of 1945 in the European Theater of Operations. This program saw the integration of frontline infantry units long before President Harry S. Truman's desegregation order of 1948. The author shows that even though the White and Black troops' collaboration did not result in any widespread adverse effects, the Army, and its senior leaders, were still a long way from recognizing that segregation should end.

This issue's Artifact Spotlight highlights a unique aspect of Army history. During World War I, soldiers often entertained themselves by putting on plays and musicals. The artifacts shown come from the 82d Airborne Division Museum at Fort Liberty, North Carolina, and showcase a poster, playbill, and cast photo from a musical called *Toot Sweet* staged by doughboys. Also included in this issue is a visit to a new improvised explosive device exhibit at the U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum at Fort Liberty, North Carolina.

Army History continues to strive to make up some time in our production schedule and some readers may have noticed that our Fall and Winter issues were released relatively close together. I hope that issues will be back on track within the next issue or two. I sincerely thank the small staff here for their hard work during this effort.

I also thought I would take this opportunity to give readers a little preview of the articles we intend to feature in the Summer 2023 issue. Currently, we plan articles on the battle for Mosul, Iraq in 2016–2017 and on the activities of the 175th Military Police Battalion of the Missouri Army National Guard during the 1968 riots in Kansas City, Missouri, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I hope our readers look forward to these offerings and continue to enjoy the engaging content we work to provide each quarter.

Bryan J. Hockensmith
Managing Editor



SPRING 2023

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THE CHIEF'S CORNER

CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.

THE NAMING COMMISSION AND THE PAST IN THREE DIMENSIONS

As you read this issue of *Army History*, the United States military services are in the process of implementing the recommendations of the Naming Commission, chartered in 2020 to identify and rectify the many ways the military has perpetuated the myth of the Confederacy's Lost Cause. The Lost Cause and the work of the Naming Commission offer a powerful demonstration of the existence of the past in three dimensions. Events occur in the past, and their existence is documented. Historians argue from these events to establish motivation, context, and causation in the past. Finally, all of us use memories of the past, which may or may not be informed by those works of historians, for a variety of social and political purposes in the present. These three dimensions intertwine powerfully in the Lost Cause.

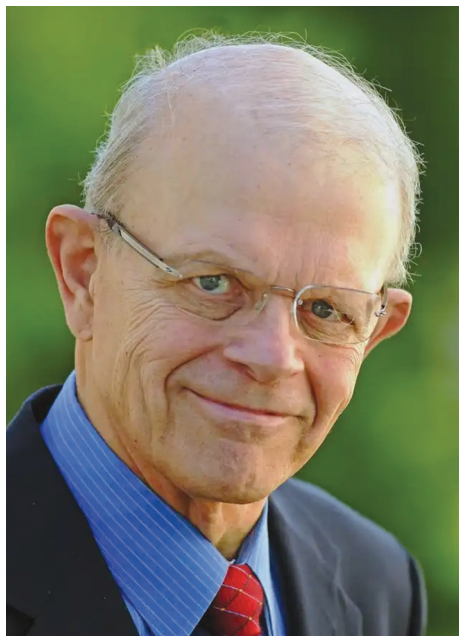
Richmond, Virginia newspaper editor Edward A. Pollard published *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (E. B. Treat) in 1867, just two years after the war formally concluded. Put simply, the Lost Cause was a way for Southerners to rationalize and cope with their defeat, and its adherents further argued that the Southern cause occupied an equal moral plane with that of the United States because it acted on the original rights and motivations of the nation's Revolutionary founders. In the mythology of the Lost Cause, the Confederacy was not defeated on the battlefield, but rather overwhelmed (as General Robert E. Lee wrote in his farewell order to his army) by superior Northern manpower and resources. Critically for American social and political history ever since, the Lost Cause also postulated that the war was *not* about slavery. In time, the Lost Cause became a powerful political movement that reinforced Southern resistance to Reconstruction and the full freedom of African Americans, and in the twentieth century, the Lost Cause became the progenitor of Jim Crow segregation and opposition to civil rights movements known as the Massive Resistance. In the United States Army, the spirit of the Lost Cause lived on in the names of nine posts built during

World War I and II mobilizations, and in hundreds of unit names, slogans, mottoes, heraldic items, and installation facilities. The Lost Cause arguably became the nation's dominant understanding of the causes and consequences of the Civil War and has been an important driver of the nation's continuing polarization.

The most prominent aspect of the Naming Commission's work is the renaming of the nine current Army posts named for Confederate leaders, many of whom never served in the United States Army. The balance of them renounced their oaths to the Constitution and took up arms against their country. In renaming these nine installations, the Army is intentionally removing artifacts of *memory* and relying instead on the full scope of its *history* to demonstrate to soldiers and to the nation what we believe is profoundly important in our past. Officers and enlisted personnel preparing to serve in the Army's logistics branches, Quartermaster, Ordnance, and Transportation, will now train at a post named for two Army leaders who embody the Army's diversity and achievements. Arthur J. Gregg was an African American doctor and officer who rose to the rank of lieutenant general after entering the Army during the era of segregation. Lt. Col. Charity E. Adams commanded the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only unit of African American women to deploy overseas during World War II, and which addressed an immense backlog of soldier mail in the theater, providing a critical element of morale support to fighting forces at a difficult time in the war. In changing Fort Lee to Fort Gregg-Adams, the U.S. Army is foregrounding aspects of its past that the Lost Cause has obscured, and offering our newest soldiers powerful examples of their forebears that celebrate our long history of mission accomplishment, service, and sacrifice. Those sacrifices have occurred on battlefields, in operational environments, and indeed here at home.



NEWSNOTES



William M. Hammond (1943–2022)

Thanksgiving weekend, just a little over one month before his eightieth birthday, Bill Hammond passed on at his home in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife Lil at his side. Few Army historians have had the wide-ranging impact that Bill had in his thirty-nine years at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH). A native of Pasadena, California, Bill considered the priesthood, receiving a bachelor's in sacred theology from Catholic University in 1967, but after studying at a seminary, he decided the life was not for him. However, he never lost the moral passion of those early years.

While obtaining his master's and PhD from Catholic University, he joined CMH in 1972. He soon found an outlet for his interests by analyzing the oft-troubled relationship between the U.S. Army and the media during the Vietnam War. Two volumes of official Army history followed in 1988 and 1996, taking the then-courageous stance for an official historian that flawed policy, rising losses, and atrocities—not negative press coverage—undermined American public support for the war. He summarized his findings in *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (University Press of Kansas,

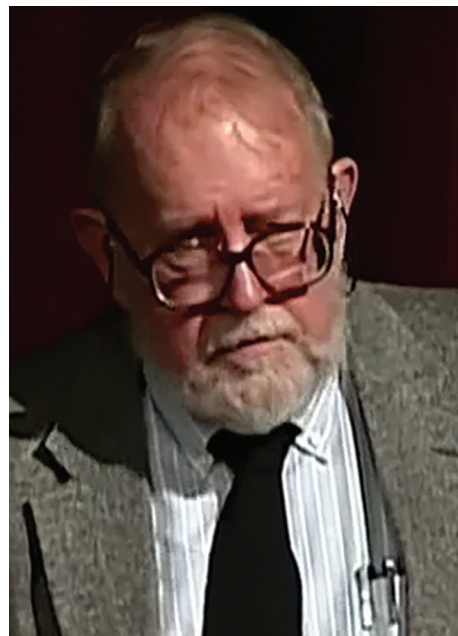
1998), which won the Leopold Prize for the best work on American foreign and/or military affairs by a government historian. Stephen E. Ambrose once called it, far and away, the best study of the military and the media he had ever seen. In 1999, he was a fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy, and he also served as a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians.

However, Bill did not shy away from other controversial topics. He was coauthor of *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (CMH, 1996), a searing indictment of racial prejudice surrounding a segregated unit in the Korean War and the impact of that prejudice on the unit's combat performance. As chief of General Histories Branch at CMH, he mentored numerous historians with his unrelenting emphasis on excellence in style, and he served as CMH's unofficial "book doctor." On the side, he taught seminars on the Vietnam War and the military and the media in the honors program at the University of Maryland, College Park, infusing students with his enthusiasm and fascination with the moral aspects of both topics.

Love and concern for humankind motivated Bill throughout his life and career. Cheerful and optimistic, quick with a laugh, he treasured his work with authors, filling the margins of chapters with comments and corrections—he was never shy with advice on any number of subjects. His Catholic faith was a huge part of his life and drove his avid involvement with his local church. No man was more devoted to his wife, two children, and four grandchildren than Bill; after his retirement in 2011, he relished his remaining time with them. He was one of a kind, and CMH will not see his like again.

William A. Dobak (1943–2022)

William A. Dobak—award winning CMH historian and widely respected scholar of African Americans in the U.S. Army and of the Army in the American West—died at his home in Hyattsville, Maryland, on



16 September 2022. A native of New York City, Willy graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor's degree in international affairs in 1966 and received his PhD from the University of Kansas in 1995. His dissertation-turned-book on the Fort Riley community from 1853 to 1895 won an award from the Kansas State Historical Society in 1999, and a second work that he coauthored with Thomas D. Phillips, *The Black Regulars, 1866–1898*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001) received the Utey Prize for best book on the military history of the frontier. After service with the National Archives, Willy came to CMH in 2002, where he wrote his capstone volume, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862–1867* (CMH, 2011), winner of the Leopold Prize for best work on American foreign and/or military affairs by a government historian. He also composed a dozen scholarly articles and served on the editorial board of the *Western Historical Quarterly*. Willy will be remembered fondly at CMH for his earthy, plain-spoken style, and resolute, intellectual honesty on controversial subjects.

Continued on page 58



COME AND JOIN US BROTHERS.

PUBLISHED BY THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE FOR RECRUITING COLORED REGIMENTS
1210 CHESTNUT ST. PHILADELPHIA.

A recruiting poster titled "Come and Join Us Brothers," issued by the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments
Library of Congress

"OPENING NEW FIELDS OF FREEDOM"

THE 9TH UNITED STATES COLORED INFANTRY

BY PATRICK W. NAUGHTON JR.

INTRODUCTION

In March 1863, when the outcome of the Civil War remained very much in doubt and the Army needed more troops, President Abraham Lincoln thought the Union should begin recruiting African Americans to fight. "The colored population is the great available, and yet unavailed of, force for restoring the Union," exclaimed Lincoln. "The bare sight of 50,000 armed and drilled black soldiers upon the banks of the Mississippi would end the rebellion at once."¹ This proposed massive mobilization of Black men to stoke

fear in the Confederacy was the catalyst for the creation of regiments known as United States Colored Troops (USCT).

These units would go on to serve with great distinction during the war. The USCT eventually would constitute 10 percent of the total U.S. Army, fighting in 39 major engagements and 400 minor ones. Because of their tenacity in combat and time in the field under harsh conditions, sixteen African American soldiers received the Medal of Honor, and the regiments suffered almost 37,000 casualties.² The most remembered African American unit is

the 54th Regiment Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteers, made especially famous by the 1989 movie *Glory*. By the war's end, the Army had created 175 USCT regiments and most served with just as much distinction.

The fascinating, heartbreaking, and awe-inspiring journey of the 9th United States Colored Infantry (USCI) is one such unit. By exploring the debate over arming freed enslaved people—as well as the unit's creation, recruitment, preparation, combat exploits, historiography, and the Confederate response—a raw American story unfolds. In seeking true diversity in the present-day U.S. Army, it is worth reflecting on the experiences of the 9th as it sought to prove itself to a fractured nation that was not convinced African Americans could fight or that they even deserved to be citizens.

Diversity, and the different perspectives it brings to an organization, is a force multiplier. Encouraging and embracing it shatters groupthink and allows leaders and staff to plan and prepare for all contingencies that they would otherwise miss if the Army prohibited dissimilar viewpoints. For the U.S. Army to survive and thrive in the demanding crucible that is large-scale ground combat operations, it will need every advantage. Most importantly, comprehending uncomfortable historical events builds empathy and the ability to appreciate other perspectives and life experiences in a more compassionate and inclusive manner. Understanding the struggle and admirable service of the 9th USCI will help present-day military professionals come to terms with our nation's past, present, and the prospects for the creation of a diverse force.

SHOVEL OR MUSKET

The Army recognized early in the conflict that African Americans could contribute to the war effort; however, the constant debate was whether this contribution was to be via the shovel and manual labor or the musket. Secretary of War Edward M. Stanton received numerous complaints about the taxing effect that manual labor was having on White soldiers. The War Department received frequent reports about unacclimated troops on campaign who were exhausted from building roads, fortifications, and entrenchments “behind which no battle has been fought;” meanwhile, there were African Americans in abundance who could “cheerfully” do it for them.³

Often, Stanton was reminded of the practicality of using free Blacks to enhance

the recruiting efforts for White soldiers. “If it were announced authoritatively that our troops will not be required hereafter to dig trenches or do any other work of the kind,” suggested Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Noah H. Swayne, “it would at once give an impulse of great vigor in the right direction.”⁴ Politicians also joined the chorus. “We do not need a single Negro in the army to fight,” Iowa Senator Samuel J. Kirkwood informed the Union General in Chief, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, “but we could use to good advantage about one hundred and fifty with a regiment as teamsters, and for making roads, chopping wood, policing camp, etc.”⁵

While the North wrestled with how to use African Americans, the Confederacy immediately realized their potential for manual labor. As the U.S. Army crept toward Richmond during the ill-fated Peninsula Campaign in 1862, Southern leaders conceded that “soldiers cannot be expected to work day and night and fight besides.” They issued an urgent proclamation for those loyal to the Confederacy to loan their enslaved people to build fortifications for the army. “Without the most liberal assistance in axes, spades, and hand/to work we cannot hope to succeed,” begged Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder defending the southern capitol.⁶ Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston also confirmed the need for their service, calling African Americans “indispensable” to his operations during the campaign.⁷ Even as early as the first Battle of Bull Run, General P. G. T. Beauregard realized that many southern soldiers “had come to fight, and not to handle the pick and shovel.”⁸

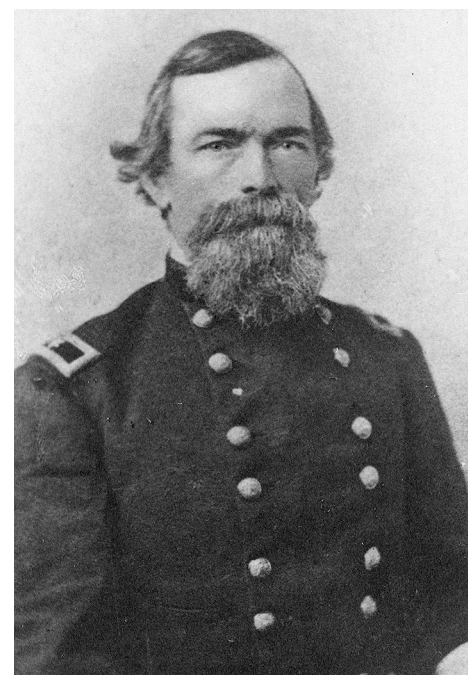
Before the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, various African American units existed in the U.S. Army. Raised at the local level under a variety of names, some saw combat, though, like the Confederacy, the Army assigned most to fatigue duty (manual labor): digging trenches, camps, and building fortifications that White troops would later occupy. Many believed these duties were the only valuable contribution such units could make to the war effort. However, as the war progressed and their successes supporting the U.S. Army multiplied, politicians, citizens, and even free Blacks bombarded Lincoln and other senior military leaders with requests to allow African Americans to fight. The formulaic reply to many of the letters received on the subject—“the present force at the disposal of the Government is deemed

quite sufficient to suppress the existing rebellion”—grew stale as the war dragged on and losses mounted.⁹

All this would change in May 1863 with General Order 143, which finally centralized and codified the recruitment of African Americans and their officers in USCT regiments under the Bureau of Colored Troops.¹⁰ This triggered the first concerted attempt by the Union to mobilize the as yet untapped African American population to support the war effort. In time, the musket would replace the shovel.

BIRTH OF THE FIGHTING 9TH

“I therefore hereby invite and entreat all men of African descent, of the military age, to offer their services to the United States for the suppression of this rebellion.” So began a proclamation issued in Maryland in the summer of 1863.¹¹ Secretary Stanton tasked Col. William Birney, former college professor and member of an ardent abolitionist family, to organize and train recruits in this region. Birney was the son of prominent southern abolitionist leader James G. Birney, editor of the weekly abolitionist newspaper, *The Philanthropist*. He was also an older brother to Maj. Gen. David Bell Birney who catapulted to fame by taking command of III Corps after its commander was wounded during the Battle of Gettysburg. Colonel Birney was more than eager



William Birney, shown here as a brigadier general

Library of Congress



Samuel C. Armstrong,
shown here as a colonel

Library of Congress

to assume this task. It was in Maryland where he began building regiments for the USCT,¹² a duty he undertook with great vigor and praise from his commander.

Through his honesty and leadership, Colonel Birney quickly acquired the confidence of the local population of runaways and former slaves.¹³ He boldly declared that all Black men, regardless of status, “will be accepted by me and protected against any person who may presume to impede their patriotic purpose of offering their services to their country for the suppression of this rebellion.”¹⁴ This was a task easier said than done.

Although Maryland had not seceded from the Union, it practiced slavery until the government abolished it in late 1864. Because of this, it had more than its fair share of southern supporters and ardent racists. “This is a horrible hole,” described Maj. Samuel C. Armstrong, an officer assigned to the 9th, referring to the type of sympathizers found in the region, “a rendezvous for blockade runners, deserters, and such trash; good for nothing but oysters.”¹⁵ It was in this challenging environment that White officers led recruitment drives for the USCT. Many in the region opposed his efforts. While recruiting for Birney, a posse chased Col. John Creager in the dark of night and local

civilian authorities arrested him under the charge of “enticing slaves to escape from their owners.”¹⁶ Luckily, after much legal wrangling, they released Creager, although Birney recognized that the arrest was a clear attempt by the local government to sabotage his recruitment efforts. Cautioning the Army Adjutant General, Birney bitterly wrote, “if Colonel Creager can be arrested and thrown into prison, every citizen now engaged in aiding me to recruit will cease his efforts at once.”¹⁷

Although inconvenient, Creager’s time in prison was much better than that which befell another of Birney’s recruiters, Lt. Eben White. While seeking recruits in Benedict, Maryland, Lieutenant White learned that slave owners were holding potential recruits against their will. He proceeded to the farm of John Sothoron, where he encountered the indignant man and his son who refused to allow Eben near the prospective enlistees. Seeing men working the field, White marched toward them, brashly asserting that he was there “to enlist all who were so disposed.” As White stomped off toward the party of workers, the livid family duo drew their pistols and gunned him down. Leaving White to bleed out and die under the midday sun, the Sothorons, with help from many like-minded individuals, fled the state and justice.¹⁸ After the incident, Birney sadly affirmed to his superior that Maryland’s “slave owners are more unscrupulous than the same class elsewhere.”¹⁹

Not only did the officers face opposition in Maryland, but so did the recently recruited men themselves. Major Armstrong explained why: “Many a master who came to get a receipt for his human property was halted by a sentinel who two days before had been his slave.” It was scenarios like this that stoked anger for many in the region.²⁰ Unfortunately, murder also extended to the rank and file. The same slave owners who helped the Sothorons abscond also supposedly poisoned men in the 9th. As Birney incredulously cried to the War Department after White’s murder, “we have strong grounds for suspecting that four of my soldiers, who have died suddenly—after an hour’s convulsions—have been poisoned by the emissaries of these men.”²¹

They targeted the families of those who enlisted as well. Birney conveyed his frustration to the Adjutant General on how “the corn fields of these poor people have been thrown open, their cows have been driven away, and some of the families have been

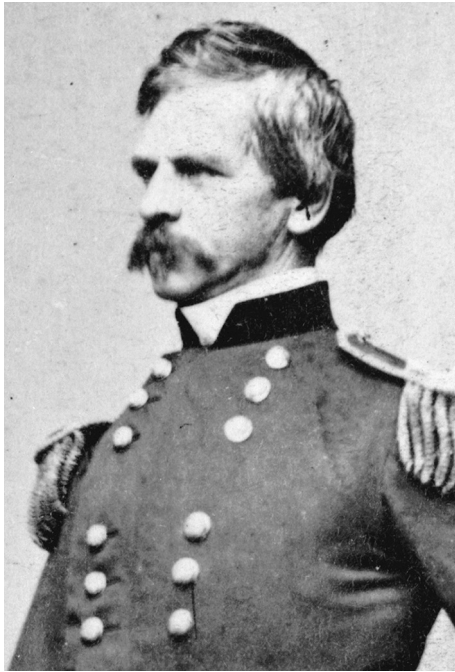
mercilessly turned out of their homes.”²² This inhumane treatment would continue as the war progressed. Once the unit left to fight, a Lincoln appointee sent to investigate Maryland slaveholder grievances reported to Birney that they found that the recruit’s families were in such great destitution that many had to beg for subsistence.²³

Despite all of these challenges, by November 1863 the 9th was fully organized and mustered at Camp Stanton near current-day Benedict. Comprised of freedmen in the region, the 9th still had far to go before the Army would send it on combat operations.²⁴ Led by its White officers, the unit now focused on breaking down racial barriers to build a cohesive fighting team.

OPPORTUNISTS, MALCONTENTS, AND NE’ER-DO-WELLS ABOUND

Minus surgeons and chaplains, only White officers could receive commissions in the USCT. By war’s end, however, the Army loosened this restriction and, because of their noteworthy performance, it commissioned eighty-seven African Americans and they led troops in combat.²⁵ During the formation of the USCT regiments, however, most senior military and political leaders believed that African Americans would make poor officers. As one U.S. Army field commander Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks noted to the Adjutant General of the U.S. Army, “the appointment of colored officers is detrimental to the service” and its existing officers were a source of “constant embarrassment and annoyance.” His belief reflected the attitude of many at the time who alleged that the appointment of Black officers demoralized both “white troops and the negroes.”²⁶

Because of the plethora of positions now becoming available, White men flocked to receive appointments in the USCT. Some were simple opportunists, bent on receiving rank and privilege, whereas others strongly believed in the abolition of slavery and the elevation of African Americans to full citizens. “They hate the negro more than they love the Union,” wrote Provost Marshall A. E. Berey upon investigating groups of applicants for Lincoln. “You would suppose that such men would not seek or accept positions in the Negro Regts,” he continued. However, from among those attempting to secure commissions “there is a regular cabal here among the very worst class of Negro hating officers.”²⁷ After the



General Banks

Library of Congress

war, Brig. Gen. Daniel Ullman, who raised and led the Corps d'Afrique, one of the first colored units formed, reflected on the cruel prejudices that numerous White officers held against African Americans, and how many suddenly and curiously "abated their highly wrought feelings when they thought they discovered an opportunity for promotion in this direction."²⁸

It was because of these opportunists, and to weed out malcontents, that the War Department insisted that USCT officer applicants be of good moral character, have a standing in the community or unit, and receive endorsements from their current commanders. Each applicant then underwent examinations to test their physical, mental, and moral fitness before being commissioned.²⁹ First Lt. Erastus Harris, who ended up in the 9th, recalled his challenging examination as a "sort of second West Point."³⁰ As pointed out in a General Order distributed among the USCT, their officers were "selected as possessing qualities which it is supposed, eminently qualify them for this duty, namely: accurate knowledge of the drill, long experience in the field, patience, diligence, and patriotism."³¹

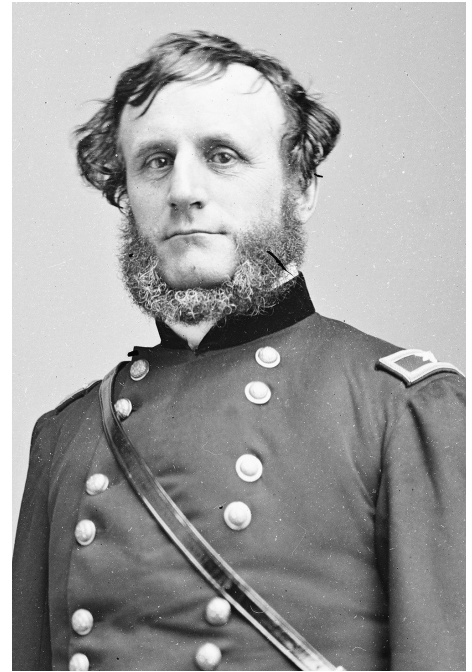
Most officers accepted into the regiments were previous enlisted soldiers with exemplary combat records. They came before the examination boards with glowing letters of recommendations from commanders who

wanted to see their best enlisted soldiers advanced. An opportunity like this was normally hard come by had it not been for the sudden availability of officer positions in the USCT. In its unit history written in 1888, the 125th New York State Volunteers praised several of its men who felt compelled to try out for the USCT, eulogizing four of them who ended up with the 9th as soldiers of "marked force and of exalted character," and deemed qualified to lead "in a service demanding not only intelligence and skill and practice, but unusual daring."³² Harris remembered his commander asking him to compile a list of men who held antislavery sentiments and were combat-proven; he noted, "I selected ten besides myself. They are some of the best men in the Regt, all well educated and men who have been tried."³³ The official numbers speak to the selectness of the post: 2,568 White soldiers between October 1863 and October 1864 interviewed for an appointment with only 1,590 accepted: a selection rate of 62 percent.³⁴

Whether an officer or a soldier, service in the USCT regiments, in addition to the normal hazards of combat, was a dangerous business. In response to the U.S. Army's increasing use of African American Soldiers, the Confederacy issued General Order 60 in 1862. This directive declared that any commissioned officers, "employed in drilling, organizing or instructing slaves, with view to their armed service in this war . . . shall not be regarded as prisoner of war, but held in close confinement for execution as a felon."³⁵ By the time the Army formed USCT in late 1863, Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon dubbed the efforts as "an abandonment of the rules of civilized warfare."³⁶

Of course, the Confederacy was not pleased with the arming and fielding of African American units. Like their White officers, Black soldiers could expect to be killed if captured or forced back into slavery. Although the Confederacy eventually rescinded the kill order on officers, they could still count on being "special marks" for enemy sharpshooters during engagements.³⁷ The South never really retreated from this extreme rhetoric as the war progressed, and massacres of captured African American soldiers continued.

Not only was it hazardous serving in the USCT, but many facets of White society were also unsupportive of those who volunteered. On overhearing soldiers react to the USCT,



General Ullman

Library of Congress

Harriet Wiswall, sister to 2d Lt. Austin Wiswall of the 9th, wrote about how many "talk treason, denouncing Lincoln and his cabinet." Scared for her brother, she noted how they complained that "they never enlisted to fight for the [n---rs] and they wouldn't sacrifice their lives for all the slaves in the country."³⁸ Another observed how White soldiers "talked flippantly, and sneeringly of the Negroes," and, when viewing African American troops, used "an epithet more offensive than gentlemanly."³⁹

Family members themselves sometimes applied societal pressure on volunteers, some outright critical of their choice. "I want to correct an impression that you seem to be laboring under in regard to the colored troops," wrote Wiswall defensively to his mother. "You caution me not to expect too much of them, that you believe they will not fight but that they have been taught to lie and steal," he chided, before defending the men in his regiment, "if their officers treat them right they will follow wherever they are led and that is all that ought to be required of any troops."⁴⁰

Confederate threats against White officers, combined with the strict commissioning process and societal pressures, soon separated the ne'er-do-wells from quality leaders. Despite the danger and lack of support in some cases, the 9th suffered no shortage of accomplished and experienced

soldiers to lead its companies. Each had his own reason for joining. Wiswall, nephew to the twin abolitionist titans Elijah Lovejoy and U.S. Senator Owen Lovejoy, served in Company G.⁴¹ While serving as private with the 8th Illinois Cavalry before the battle of Brandy Station, Wiswall had encountered enslaved people on a regular basis. “For miles in every direction beyond our lines the slaves have left their masters,” he informed his family, “many of them leave more comfortable homes than they can hope to secure for many years. Yet they are willing to work and to suffer if they can only be free.”⁴² Impressed by the grit and intelligence of the African Americans he encountered during combat operations, Wiswall competed for a commission and found himself in the 9th.⁴³ Once with the unit, he further wrote to his mother on the quality of his peers, “our officers are mostly men of principle and take a great interest in their men and will do the best for them that they can.”⁴⁴

Sergeant Harris of the famed 44th New York Volunteers, relayed to his wife “a striking illustration of the accursed institution of slavery” that he witnessed after the Battle of Hanover Courthouse; there he encountered an escaped former enslaved person “with his shirt all cut into ribbons and his back bleeding in a score of places from wounds inflicted by the lash.”⁴⁵ Inspired by the desire to wipe slavery from the land, newly promoted 1st Lt. Harris volunteered for the USCT and served in Company D. “I should like very much to see every slave made a free man by this genius of war which the slave masters have let loose upon the land,” Harris emphatically informed his wife: “who wouldn’t be a soldier in the grand army of emancipation?”⁴⁶

First Lt. Solomon Forgeus, adjutant in the 9th, later became a renowned Baptist minister, and dedicated his life to helping inmates and others in need.⁴⁷ The unit surgeon, Edmund Peace, subsequently served as a medical missionary to the Marshall Islands, translating medical textbooks into the local language.⁴⁸ Capt. John Morrison Hamilton of Company K made a career out of the Army, serving until his death in combat in 1898. It was alongside Theodore Roosevelt’s famed Rough Riders that he would take a bullet to the throat while charging San Juan Hill at the head of his new unit, the African American 9th U.S. Cavalry.⁴⁹

After the war, three officers who served in the 9th went on to affect specifically

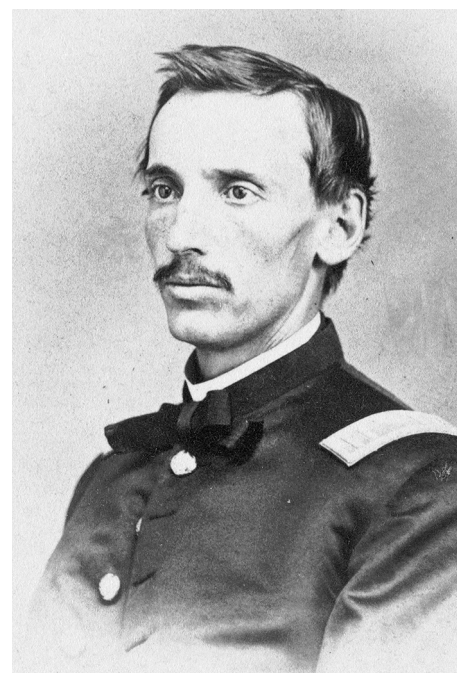
African American communities long after the conflict had ended. Maj. Ira Hobart Evans, who received a Medal of Honor during his time with the USCT, served on the Board of Trustees for Huston-Tillotson College. There, he was instrumental in securing funds to support the African American institution for both education and construction.⁵⁰ Sgt. Douglas Risley of the 9th Indiana Infantry received a commission as a captain with E Company, where he was wounded gravely. After the war, he championed African American public schools in Georgia, one of which still bears his name today.⁵¹ Newly promoted Lt. Col. Samuel C. Armstrong, formerly of the 125th New York Infantry and Gettysburg veteran, and a citizen of the Kingdom of Hawai’i, led the 9th as a regimental commander through some of its heaviest combat. His service inspired him to become a U.S. citizen, and for the rest of his life he advocated for African American rights, becoming a founding member of Hampton University. There, Armstrong influenced generations of leaders, including civil rights archetype Booker T. Washington, who considered Armstrong an integral part of his early development.⁵²

These examples just scratch the surface of the caliber of leaders whom the Army tasked with preparing the Fighting 9th for combat service.

A WALKING FORTRESS WITH GUNS

“Good order and discipline render an army a walking battery—a moving fortress.” So said Frederick the Great, as noted in an early attempt by the U.S. Army to professionalize its force, the 1821 *General Regulations for the Army*.⁵³ How does one make an army a moving citadel on legs? Drill, drill, and more drill. The capacity to mass fire on a decisive point relied completely on a commander’s ability to maneuver his troops quickly and efficiently on the battlefield. Drill, consistently rehearsed and refined, directly affected discipline, which in turn made the successful tactical maneuvering of troops possible. Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott codified this belief in his three-volume masterpiece *Infantry Tactics*. Published in the 1830s, his drill manuals influenced an entire generation of Civil War leaders.

Both Scott’s writings and the Army’s experience in the Mexican American War fed later doctrinal guides. At the start of the Civil War, Lt. Col. William J. Hardee’s *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* dominated the



Captain Risley

Library of Congress

instruction of drill. Upon Hardee resigning his commission and joining the Confederacy, the U.S. Army reexamined its doctrine and soon published a three-volume manual titled the *System of Infantry Tactics*, by Maj. Gen. Silas Casey. These updated drill manuals largely mirrored Hardee’s earlier work, though they simplified certain concepts to make them more understandable.

With the creation of the USCT, the Army tasked Casey with creating a manual specifically for them; this resulted in the 1863 publication *U.S. Infantry Tactics, for the Instruction, Exercise, and Maneuvers, of the Soldier, a Company, Line of Skirmishers, and Battalion; for the use of the Colored Troops of the United States Infantry*. Many senior White officers believed that even with the Army’s recently simplified three-volume drill manual, the maneuvers would be too complicated for African American troops to master. This new work by Casey further abridged the exercises and included detailed illustrations to assist with understanding the concepts: something the drill manuals for White troops did not have.⁵⁴

Many senior officers, none of whom had ever actually commanded African American soldiers, felt that these lean drill manuals were necessary for the USCT. Officers like Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman went further than that; he opined that they were reluctant to drill or labor, “and

will evidently not work to our satisfaction without those aids to which they have ever been accustomed, viz: the driver and the lash." Sherman concluded, "a sudden change of condition from servitude to apparent freedom is more than their intellects can stand."⁵⁵

Although some officers fell in line with Sherman, those that actually worked with Black troops felt quite differently. Ullman, of Corps d'Afrique fame, concluded that African American soldiers were far more earnest than their White counterparts during training and preparation. "They know the deep stake they have in the issue that, if we are unsuccessful, they will be remanded to worse slavery than before," he explained to Stanton as the Army was forming the USCT regiments, "they also have a settled conviction that if they are taken, they will be tortured and hung." As such, they were much more diligent and disciplined in their drill practice. In contrast to Sherman, Ullman also bluntly stated, "these impressions will make them daring and desperate fighters."⁵⁶

The officers of the 9th could not agree more with Ullman's assessment. "Their aptitude for the drill is really wonderful," noted Wiswall to his family on how rapidly the soldiers in the 9th learned, "they seem to take to it instinctively."⁵⁷ The grizzled combat veteran was astonished by their performance, "a more tractable lot of men or those who wish to do right I never saw."⁵⁸ Once the regiment deployed to the Department of the South on combat duty, others also commented on the superb performance of the USCT. "An officer told us that the men went through the drill remarkably well," recorded one newspaper reporter who witnessed a demonstration. Calling it a strange miracle to observe a Black regiment, "doing itself honor in the sight of the officers of other regiments, many of whom, doubtless, 'came to scoff.'"⁵⁹ After inspecting numerous USCT himself, Casey, the author of the simplified manuals, "was highly pleased with the knowledge of the manual of arms and the soldier-like drill of the colored troops," eventually pronouncing them equal to their White counterparts.⁶⁰

Not only did the soldiers of the 9th take to drill more rapidly than White soldiers, but the conditions of their camp and decorum were also superior. "In going through their quarters you do not hear the profanity nor obscene talk that you would in going through the camp of a white regiment,"

noted Wiswall, "everything is quiet & orderly, the men attentive to their duties & respectful to their officers."⁶¹ He continued, "there is no drinking no gambling, and for cleanliness in camp and their persons they cannot be excelled."⁶² Col. Thomas Bayley, the regiment's commander, concurred, reporting that little to no profanity or vulgarity were heard ever or demonstrated in camp.⁶³ As with their ability in drill, others noticed the difference in cleanliness between the camps and also commented on the virtue of those in the USCT. "In many other camps," described one officer to a newspaper correspondent, "the colonel and the rest of us would find it necessary to place a guard before our tents. We never do it here. They are left entirely unguarded;" yet, in contrast to White camps, "nothing has ever been touched."⁶⁴

Adequately trained and now adept in fieldcraft, the soldiers of the 9th ached to join the war. "We are all getting impatient to be off and try the mettle of our sable lads in pursuit of the enemy," fumed Wiswall in his diary.⁶⁵ With the unit now sufficiently drilled and ready for combat operations, he finally got his wish in March 1864. The regiment received orders sending it to the Department of the South in Hilton Head, South Carolina. "It takes other things than drilling to make a good command," prophetically noted Bayley about their departure, a prediction that would soon happen for the 9th.⁶⁶

Birney, the regiment's patriarch, later remembered as the "emancipator of Maryland" by the Maryland veterans, had preceded them in February.⁶⁷ Now a brigadier general and relieved of recruiting duty, Birney found himself in command of the 7th and 9th USCI regiments for combat operations.⁶⁸ Of all the regiments he raised, the fighting 9th would forever remain his favorite.

THE STEAMING HEART OF THE CONFEDERACY

The four-day voyage on a troop barge in the Atlantic was rough on the regiment. Being landsmen, many spent most of the time sick over the side or laid up in the unhygienic stink that was the hold of the ship. Two men from the 9th died; their bodies were sewn into blankets and ceremoniously committed to the deep.⁶⁹ A welcome but desolate view greeted the weary 9th as they neared Hilton Head. "A long, low, sandy point, stretching out into the sea, with no visible dwellings upon it, except the rows of small, white-

roofed houses which have lately been built for the freed people" presented a gloomy contrast to the rolling farm fields and settled communities in Maryland to which the men were accustomed.⁷⁰

Being March, South Carolina had not yet begun to suffer the torrid humidity that so often crippled and debilitated troops. It was for this very reason that the Army sent the 9th and other USCT to the Department of the South, in the belief that they could weather the environment better than White soldiers. "Nearly all the white troops are leaving," remarked Harris to his wife, "and I think what troops are left here will be merely an army of occupation."⁷¹ His prediction rang true as the USCT at Hilton Head spent the next two months on fatigue duty in the region, the only action being numerous men finding wives from among the recently freed slave population. Some days, a dozen weddings were officiated by the officers, "under the folds of the starry flag."⁷²

Birney, temporarily reassigned for an assignment in Florida during this period, returned to his regiments at the end of May. Livid at the conditions and state of readiness he found his soldiers, he quickly mustered the unit and prepared it for offensive operations. Rooting out a cabal of officers who had congregated in a harem of idleness and easy-living at Hilton Head, he prepped the men for battle—or, as Harris noted to his wife, "he is just making things howl around here!"⁷³

From 24–27 May 1864, the 9th participated in a debacle which became known as the Ashepoo Expedition. "Day before yesterday morning we started on an expedition," somberly wrote Harris to his family, "which I am sorry to say proved a failure and somewhat of a disaster."⁷⁴ The Ashepoo River is a waterway that winds its way into the depths of South Carolina. Under the cover of darkness, the objective of the expedition was to use the river as access to Mosquito Creek, a small tributary where steamboats loaded with U.S. Army soldiers could deposit troops. These troops would then sneak inland to destroy rail lines and bridges between Charleston and Savannah, thereby disrupting the enemy's interior lines. The USCT regiments would serve as a blocking and reserve force while a White cavalry element conducted the raid. Unfortunately, the plan fell apart soon after the amphibious force entered the Ashepoo.⁷⁵

"The Pilot that we had on board did not seem to know his business," later reported

Wiswall, “and in the darkness, we passed the mouth of the creek where the orders were to disembark and proceeded up the river some 12 or 15 miles passing the Rebel pickets.”⁷⁶ Despite being challenged by the Confederate sentries numerous times, which should have alerted them to how far behind the enemy’s lines they actually were, Colonel Bayley, in command of the 9th, pressed on until one of his boats ran aground. As the officers attempted to dislodge the boat and discern what had happened, another ship became stranded at low tide in the mud banks of the Ashepoo. With two boats trapped, Bayley decided to wait until morning and better visibility before deciding what to do next.⁷⁷

Morning broke and shed light on the quagmire that the expedition had become. It also illuminated a Confederate battery which, now aware of the Army’s presence because of its pickets, had maneuvered into firing range of the immobile ships. A great roar and wall of smoke erupted as the artillery opened fire on the steamboat *Boston*, which still was trapped in the mud. The defenseless vessel was quickly torn to shreds by shot and shell. With nowhere to go and no way to defend themselves, men from the other regiments still on the *Boston* abandoned their muskets and gear, dropped overboard, and swam toward the opposite shore. The Confederates soon rounded up those that did not drown and took them prisoner.⁷⁸ By now, Birney had arrived and assumed command from Bayley; disgusted with the situation, he ordered the *Boston* set ablaze and, with what was left of his force, fled back to Hilton Head. He left behind approximately 20 dead and 100 writhing cavalry horses in the hold of the ship, whose screams at being burnt alive echoed in the ears of the retreating 9th.⁷⁹

Amid the expedition, Maj. Gen. John G. Foster assumed command of the Department of the South. This being the first crisis he encountered on his first day of command, Foster sought to place blame for the operations failure. Possibly influenced by other officers who wanted to shift the culpability from their own shortcomings, Foster was critical of the USCT during the expedition. “Many of the regiments, especially the new colored ones, are sadly deficient in drill,” he informed General Halleck after the fiasco, leveling the worst criticism possible at the USCT: “I have ordered a school of instruction for those colored regiments that required drill and discipline to be established at Hilton head, where they will

receive constant instruction in regimental and brigade drill and in the firings.”⁸⁰ He further claimed it would take months of hard training before they would ever be ready for action. In the meantime, he would scrape together a White regiment in case of emergencies.⁸¹ Foster brusquely concluded, “I will soon make something of them.”⁸²

As tempers subsided and the facts became clear, it was soon determined that the Ashepoo Expedition’s failure was because of poor leadership as opposed to the performance of the USCT, so much so that the 9th’s commander, Colonel Bayley, was brought before court martial and removed from the regiment.⁸³ As this played out, Foster realized that he did not have the luxury of holding any troops in camp to train; therefore, ready or not, the 9th found itself again on an operation several weeks later—in the height of the summer heat. This time, organized and led by Foster, the 9th took part in another amphibious offensive operation in the coastal waterways and islands surrounding Charleston, South Carolina. The eleven-day action, meant to apply pressure to the Confederate-held city and possibly achieve a breach in its coastal defenses, achieved little military value. The engagements fought on Johns and James Islands finally gave the 9th its first taste of combat, however.

Marching, countermarching, and digging constituted most of the activity for the regiment in the wicked heat, humidity, and bug-infested marshes that make up the terrain over much of the islands. “I never saw such awful marching,” recalled Harris, an experienced veteran, “the water was poor and scarce and the heat terrible . . . you can form no idea how the heat does take hold of a fellow down here in the swamps and pine barrens.”⁸⁴ On 9 July, the 9th briefly forgot the oppressive weather when it experienced its first direct combat against the Confederates. A sister unit, the 26th USCI, had fought a desperate action at the Battle of Bloody Bridge against a rebel position two days prior. Initially successful, they eventually retreated after receiving heavy casualties; the 9th now found itself as the only fresh troops able to plug the hole left by the 26th. Emboldened by their success in punching a gap in the Federal line, the enemy sought to press their advantage and rout the Army troops.

Dug in behind hastily dug breastworks and rifle pits anchored on a swamp overlooking a corduroy road, the 9th waited



General Foster

Library of Congress

patiently for the enemy to advance. As retrograding Army troops passed, on order, their muskets tipped with bayonets glinting in the sun, the 9th raised in unison above their parapets and leveled their weapons at the howling gray mass that advanced toward their position. Supported by artillery which spouted grape and canister, the 9th, as trained, poured withering fire repeatedly into the enemy ranks, stopping them cold and thus protecting the U.S. Army line. “Well delivered rifle fire tore through the ranks of the enemy,” noted the 144th New York Volunteer Infantry who witnessed the defense. Combined with the artillery, the 9th “literally mowed them down.” The rebel attack broke, reformed, and “yelling like fiends” tried a second time only to smash themselves on the 9th again. The rebels attempted one last attack which only resulted in adding “more bodies to those already dead and dying in the narrow roadway,” effectively ending their advance.⁸⁵

Because of the discipline of the soldiers who stayed behind cover, losses in the 9th were light and they suffered only wounds. Harris remembered the fortitude of a soldier carried to the rear on a stretcher, “I gave them as good as they gave me Lieutenant,” wounded Pvt. George H. Wallace stated through clenched teeth just before medics amputated his leg.⁸⁶ According to local legend, Wallace was one of the lucky ones.

Hatred for the colored troops ran deep in the area. So much so that residents of the island today still remember a tale of old men and young boys who came out after the fighting and bayoneted any wounded left behind before tossing them into unmarked mass graves.⁸⁷

Despite the horrendous conditions, the officers of the 9th were extremely pleased with the performance of the troops during the latest expedition. "Of the soldierly qualities of our men I cannot speak in too high praise," sang Harris to his wife, "their patience and endurance on the march in the broiling sun, their intrepidity in posts of danger, their coolness under fire I have never seen equaled by white troops." Of their performance on Johns and James Islands, the veteran of Gettysburg declared, "it is a notorious fact that they have performed their part of expedition both in marching and fighting better than the white Reg'ts along with them."⁸⁸ Despite only weeks earlier definitively concluding that it would take months for the USCT to be ready for combat, Foster concurred with the assessment of the officers in the 9th. In a communique to General Halleck on the recent engagements, Foster noted how the USCT "improved every day that they were out, and, I am happy to say, toward the last evinced a considerable degree of pluck and good fighting qualities." He comfortably concluded, "I am now relieved of apprehension as to this class of troops."⁸⁹

Having seen the 9th come through its initial engagements, some were eager for more combat, especially with the Army of the Potomac currently hammering one nail at a time into General Robert E. Lee's coffin around Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. "I wish I was with them," decried Wiswall, "they are acquiring honors and glory while we are doing nothing."⁹⁰ Armstrong was not as eloquent with his gripe, "I would rather grind a hand-organ for the edification of the mule-teams of the Army of the Potomac than review a dress parade of a regiment down here."⁹¹

Birney, the patriarch of the 9th, also longed for the same and missed the regiment. Just before the operations commenced around Charleston, the Army sent him again to command in Florida. While there, he asked respectfully for two USCT to be assigned to him, including his favorite, the fighting 9th, "a regiment organized and mustered in by me." He desired them so much that he offered up what many White officers, still doubtful of Black troops, would

have considered an unprecedented bargain: "I will send in exchange any two white regiments now in this district."⁹²

On the 24 and 25 July, Foster received two communiques from General Ulysses S. Grant and General Halleck. All available troops must go to Virginia to force the siege of the enemy's capital to conclusion. All received their wish—the 7th, 8th, and 9th, commanded by Birney—were to report immediately to Virginia. Foster thought it best to assign the regiments raised by Birney to his brigade. With a final word of praise, Foster acknowledged the directive and informed Halleck, "the Regiments are good, and only require a little more drill and service to make them first-rate."⁹³

Harris made a candid assessment to his wife about their time with the Department of the South as being that of the "merest boy's play." The horrific trenches around Petersburg would soon change his view.⁹⁴ With Foster's order, the 9th was on its way to the scene of the heaviest fighting of the war. "If Gen. Birney were away, we should be alright" wrote Harris to his wife on the General's temperament for combat, "but there is no peace where he is."⁹⁵

INTO THE DEEP BOTTOM

By 8 August, all of the 9th had arrived in Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, and reported to the X Corps in the Army of the James under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler. The Army named it after the James River, where Grant sent the force to advance on Richmond and Petersburg from the east as the Army of the Potomac attacked south toward the capital. It was meant to draw enemy forces away from Grant as he maneuvered via the Overland Campaign. Brilliant on paper, the plan may have worked; however, like its counterpart the Army of the Potomac, Butler's force become bogged down in trench warfare around Bermuda Hundred.⁹⁶

The X Corps was a mix of White regiments and USCT; interestingly, Maj. Gen. David Bell Birney, younger brother to William, commanded it. There, the 9th found themselves in the "Colored Brigade," commanded by its creator and the Corps commander's older brother.⁹⁷ Despite the Army not assigning them to the Army of the Potomac, the officers in the 9th rejoiced at being back in the decisive operation of the war: "may our record be a glorious one" declared Wiswall in his diary.⁹⁸

Within a week of their arrival, the 9th found itself embroiled in heavy fighting



General Butler

(Library of Congress)

over seven days in the Second Battle of Deep Bottom in Henrico County, Virginia. On 14 August, in an attempt to draw the enemy away from Petersburg and the Shenandoah Valley, U.S. Army forces crossed the James River. The X Corps participated in these maneuvers, which would give the 9th its first real test in battle. For the first few days, the Colored Brigades did little except man fighting positions as the reserve force dodged constant indirect fire. This would change on the 19th when the White 1st Division, X Corps, under Maj. Gen. Alfred H. Terry found itself in a tight spot. "We have had very exciting times hereabouts lately," enthusiastically relayed Harris to his family regarding this time, "and have been under fire more or less every day since."⁹⁹

Assaulting the Confederate breastworks, the 1st Division was initially successful in capturing the fortifications; however, the enemy forces' determined counterattack soon repelled it. Watching his units crumble around him, Terry sent a runner back to the X Corps commander begging for reinforcements. His older brother, Birney, without hesitation offered up his favorite regiment to help stem the tide. Shoulders hunched, with bayonet-tipped muskets at the ready, the 9th ventured into the heart of the hurricane.¹⁰⁰

"We advanced to the position in line of battle through the thicket and [abatis] to the works under a withering fire," recalled



General Birney
Library of Congress

Armstrong, who eventually took command after Bailey was removed because of the Ashpoo debacle. "I don't think a man turned back after the line started." Plugged into the right flank of the collapsing White regiments, leadership ordered the 9th to hold the line until Army forces could reorganize or conduct an orderly withdrawal. They were unaware that the White regiments had disintegrated already. "The enemy had driven our men back from the left and were swarming down upon the line," noted a sister White regiment, describing the frenzied horde that was about to slam into the 9th.¹⁰¹ Under heavy fire from the front and flanks, Armstrong recollected that the 9th "never turned their backs, but walked steadily into the mouth of hell" before they occupied hastily dug rifle pits abandoned by the retrograding White units.¹⁰² For the next fifteen minutes, the regiment fought hand-to-hand with the seasoned Confederate forces that descended upon them.

"My men fell fast, but never flinched," proudly relayed Armstrong to his family, "they fired coolly and won great praise." He further somberly described how he walked the line, stepping over his own dead and wounded, and encouraged the troops as they fought with bullets, bayonets, and clubbed musket.¹⁰³ In addition to the enemy, Harris recalled the awful heat and how many succumbed to sun stroke.¹⁰⁴ Despite this brave stand, the enemy's overwhelming numbers

soon threatened to consume the courageous 9th and their determined defense.

Above the din and smoke of battle, the leaders of the 9th, in contrast to their sister White regiments, organized and led an orderly withdrawal. "It was impossible to hold the position", described Armstrong, a veteran of numerous engagements, "I ordered them to walk, and they did so the whole distance, shot at by the unseen enemy as they went, and having to climb over fallen trees and go through rough ground." Never breaking into a rout for the entire retrograde, "they got back panting with fatigue and lay down exhausted."¹⁰⁵ The final tally was ten killed and around seventy wounded. "No men were ever braver than the slaves of Maryland," humbly evoked their commander after the fight.¹⁰⁶

After the war, the men of the 9th proudly remembered for the rest of their lives how they were "the last regiment to yield up its position and fall back under galling crossfire of the enemy."¹⁰⁷ Their delaying action allowed the retreating Army forces to reorganize and reestablish a defensive position, thereby avoiding a complete rout. Of course, not all gave them their due; as it was a retreat, many were critical of the Federal withdrawal. "The enemy of the black troops try to lay the blame on to them," bitterly recorded Harris, "but disinterested observers assert that the blacks did as well as the others."¹⁰⁸ In his after-action report, General Terry did not credit the 9th, noting the "controversy" usual in such cases. He declared that he believed all the regiments (White and Black) pulled back from the line simultaneously and intact.¹⁰⁹ Birney, however, contradicted this report, citing how, despite the sheer strength of the enemy's counterattack and how all others crumbled before it, counted eighty-two dead enemy bodies in front of the 9th's position. Evidence to the tenacity of their defense.¹¹⁰

Defeated and repulsed by the enemy, the entire Army force pulled back over the James River at midnight. Before this occurred, though, the 9th made one more sacrifice. Terry, the same man who later downplayed their contribution, galloped upon the unit as it moved wearily down a road toward the river where he "begged us for God's sake to help support his line," recollected Armstrong before they withdrew. "We went back in line into the works with a yell that scared the rebels so they don't bother us anymore that night," he modestly remembered.¹¹¹ Once more they shored the U.S.



General Terry
Library of Congress

Army defenses, saving Terry's force and now allowing the entire Army of the James to safely cross the river.

"You have no doubt seen the Colored Troops in the Army of the James spoken of highly in the newspaper," gushed Harris to his family after the fight, confidently concluding, "the fact is they are about as good soldiers as any in service at present."¹¹² Agreeing with the assessment of the leaders in the 9th, higher officers also sung their praise. "The colored troops behaved handsomely and are in fine spirits," reported Birney excitedly to a fellow Corps commander after Deep Bottom.¹¹³ Butler, commander of the Army of the James, concurred, congratulating the X Corps and the USCT within on their recent action. "Much fatigue, patience, and heroism may still be demanded of it," continued Butler, "but the Major-General commanding is confident of the response."¹¹⁴ Grant himself extended his praise, admittedly surprised by their performance. "All honor to the brave Tenth Army Corps," he issued in an order, "you have done more than was expected of you by the Lieutenant-General."¹¹⁵

In addition to their fighting qualities, praise for the 9th extended to their activities in camp and especially their discipline in fieldcraft. Armstrong remembered how his troops dug trenches and bunkers when directed with no complaints, in contrast to White troops whose leadership had to cajole

and browbeat them to do the same; “last night we were heavily shelled, my men were as safe and comfortable as they could have been,” he recalled, “while the other regiments around us were crawling into holes and dodging about, well scared.”¹¹⁶

Constant bombardment was something the 9th now contended with every day until the end of the war. “It is a splendid sight to see shelling at night, to watch a huge 13-inch mortar shell shoot far up into the heavens and then seem to glide awhile among the stars,” enthralingly described Armstrong on this daily occurrence. The mesmerizing spell broke when, as one observed, the shell would “slowly descend in terror and vengeance” as men shuddered and hugged the ground.¹¹⁷

After proving their mettle, but suffering the first deaths from actual combat, the 9th took time to reflect and bury their fallen. “It was a strange thing to see a man who had . . . lived the life of a slave under the lash like a dog carried to the grave with the Stars and Stripes shrouding his coffin,” reverently recalled the regimental commander. The dead of the 9th were laid to rest honorably “In a procession headed by a brass band playing a funeral dirge, escorted by a body of soldiers with arms reversed, and followed by a procession of comrades in the uniform of United States soldiers,” with the full respect due to those who had perished for their nation.¹¹⁸

THE SOUTH TAKES NOTICE

As the war dragged on into the winter of 1865 and the South became ever more desperate for manpower, some urged the Confederate government to train and field African American soldiers. “We must decide whether slavery shall be extinguished by our enemies and the slaves be used against us,” opined Lee to a trusted advisor, “or use them ourselves.”¹¹⁹ To the government itself, Lee pronounced, “the Negroes, under proper circumstances will make efficient soldiers. . . . I think we could at least do as well with them as the enemy.” Subtly conceding to the success the Union has had with the USCT, he noted, “he attaches great importance to their assistance.”¹²⁰

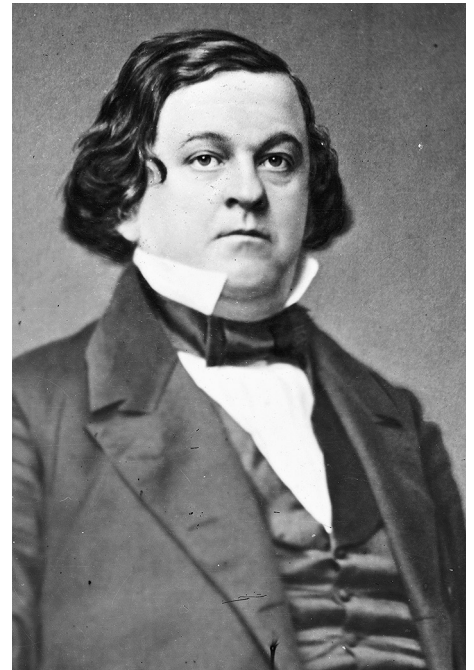
Despite their exalted commander advocating for their militarization, not all agreed with the plan to arm the Southern enslaved population. “You cannot make soldiers of slaves, nor slaves of soldiers,” Confederate Maj. Gen. Howell Cobb vehemently professed to his Secretary of War. “The day

you make soldiers of them is the beginning of the end of the revolution.” Cobb, like others, realized the conundrum facing the South. “If slaves will make good soldiers our whole theory of slavery is wrong,” he informed the Secretary, before begging him to not resort to the “suicidal policy” of arming them.¹²¹

In addition to senior military leaders, politicians joined the debate, dueling with impassioned speeches on the subject in the Confederate Congress. Some representatives agreed with Lee; John Dewitt Atkins, the delegate from Tennessee, introduced one resolution: “We should at once put one hundred thousand slaves between the ages of 17 and forty five in the field.”¹²² Others did not concur. “The use of Negroes as soldiers in the Confederate Army would be wrong in principle, disastrous in practice, an infringement upon states’ rights,” heatedly declared James M. Leach the delegate from North Carolina, before labelling the proposal as “an insult to our brave soldiers and an outrage upon humanity.”¹²³ Some political figures took the middle road. Joseph E. Brown, the Governor of Georgia, conceded that using enslaved people for fatigue duty to free up White laborers to fight was acceptable; however, he strongly felt that “any attempt to arm the slaves will be a great error.”¹²⁴

This same deliberation filtered down to Confederate units in the field, many of whom let Lee know their thoughts. The 15th Alabama Infantry Regiment noted, in a petition to their commander, that the General “might like to get all the information he could as to the feeling in the army on this subject.” Calling their political leaders “tender-hearted,” they confirmed their desire to achieve independence at any price, even if that meant arming enslaved men.¹²⁵ Their brigade concurred, with one officer writing to Lee that “we will willingly give up our slaves and fight by their side.”¹²⁶ Units under the 6th Virginia joined the chorus, urging their commander to support the proposal as it would “add strength to our thinned, though determined ranks.”¹²⁷

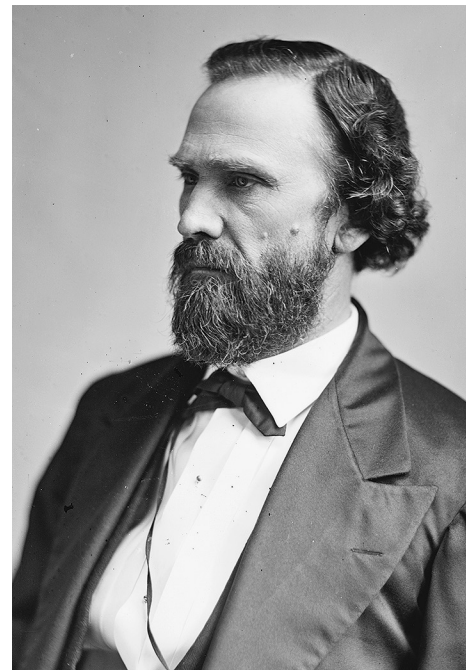
Leaders in the 61st Virginia cried that armed slaves on their side were the desire of many soldiers and that it would best serve to secure their independence.¹²⁸ Some went as far as claiming that this was what Southern Blacks themselves wished. One officer curiously wrote to Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell claiming that of the enslaved people he asked, 60 out of 72 had emphatically



Howell Cobb, shown here in civilian dress

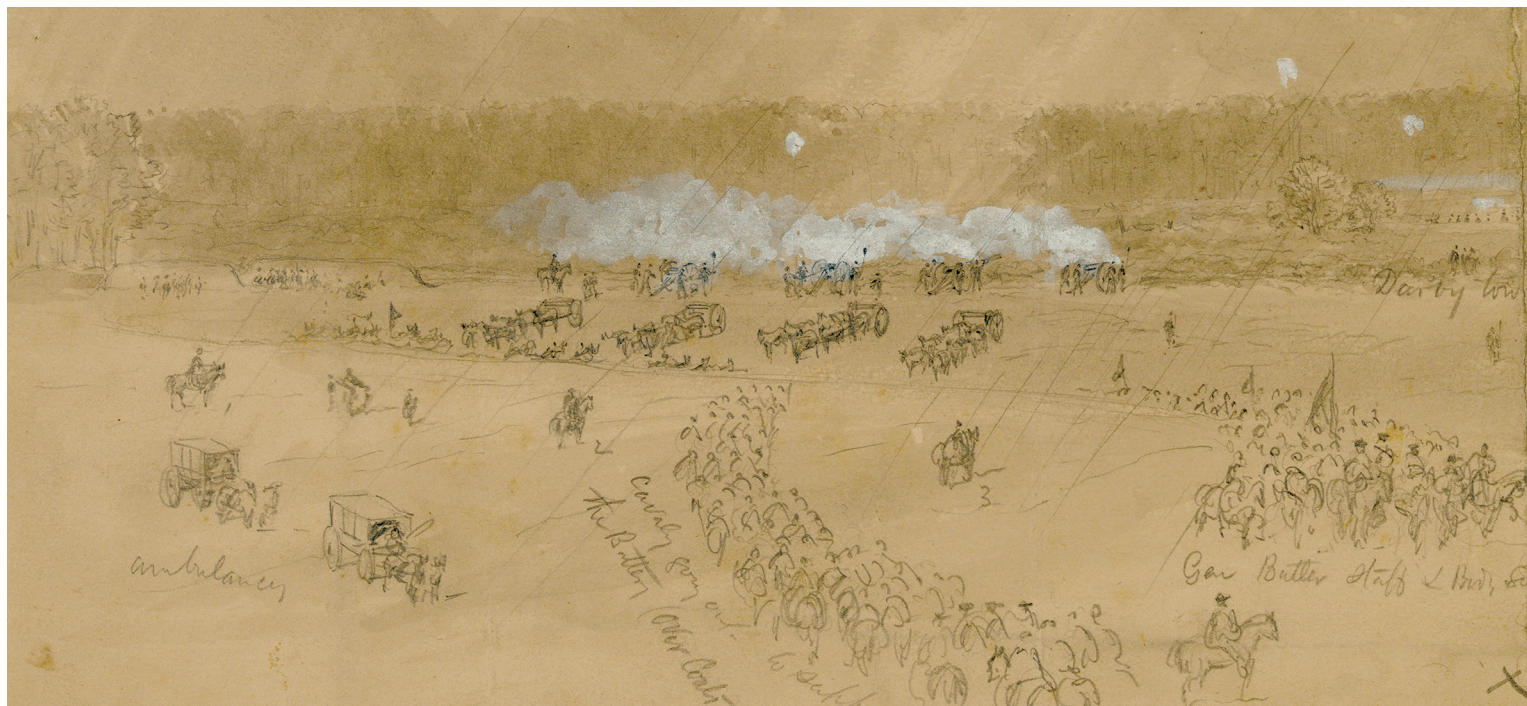
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declared, “they would volunteer to go to the trenches, and fight the enemy to the bitter end.”¹²⁹ Of course, just as with the senior military leaders and politicians, not all in the Army agreed with the proposed course



John Dewitt Atkins

Library of Congress



Sketch of the Battle of Darbytown Road by Alfred Waud

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of action. One unit simply relayed, “the 41st Virginia is decidedly opposed to it.”¹³⁰

“It is a strange phenomenon in history; the leaders of an insurrection calling upon the cause of that insurrection to save it,” noted Richard Yates, the Governor of Illinois, on the recent debate in the Confederacy, accurately acknowledging that “driven to madness and

despair, they themselves commence putting down their ‘divine institution’ for which they commenced the war.”¹³¹

ON TO RICHMOND AND THE RIO GRANDE

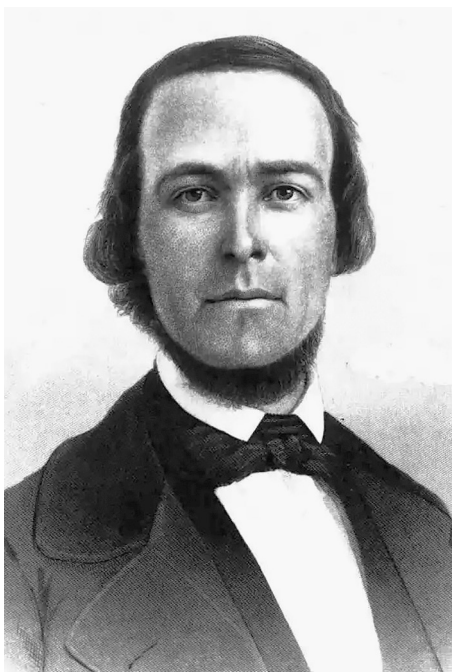
Not long after Deep Bottom, the Army transferred the 9th to the XXV Corps in

the Army of the James—the first corps entirely made up of African Americans. The regiment went on to fight heroically at the battles of Chaffin’s Farm, New Market Heights, Fort Gilmer, Darbytown Road, and Fair Oaks while operating the entire time in the trenches surrounding Petersburg. A total of 315 soldiers paid



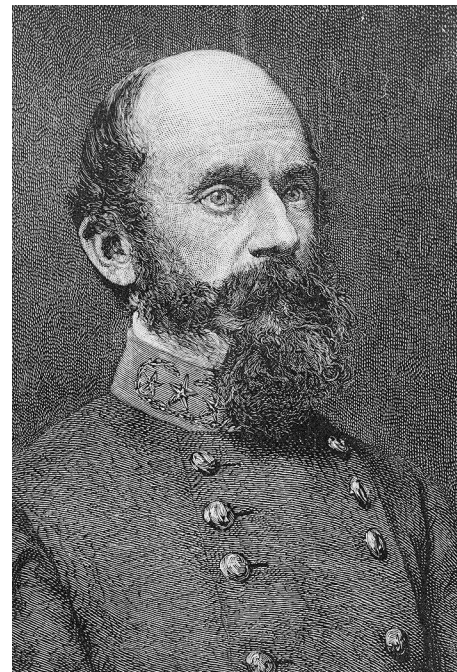
James M. Leach

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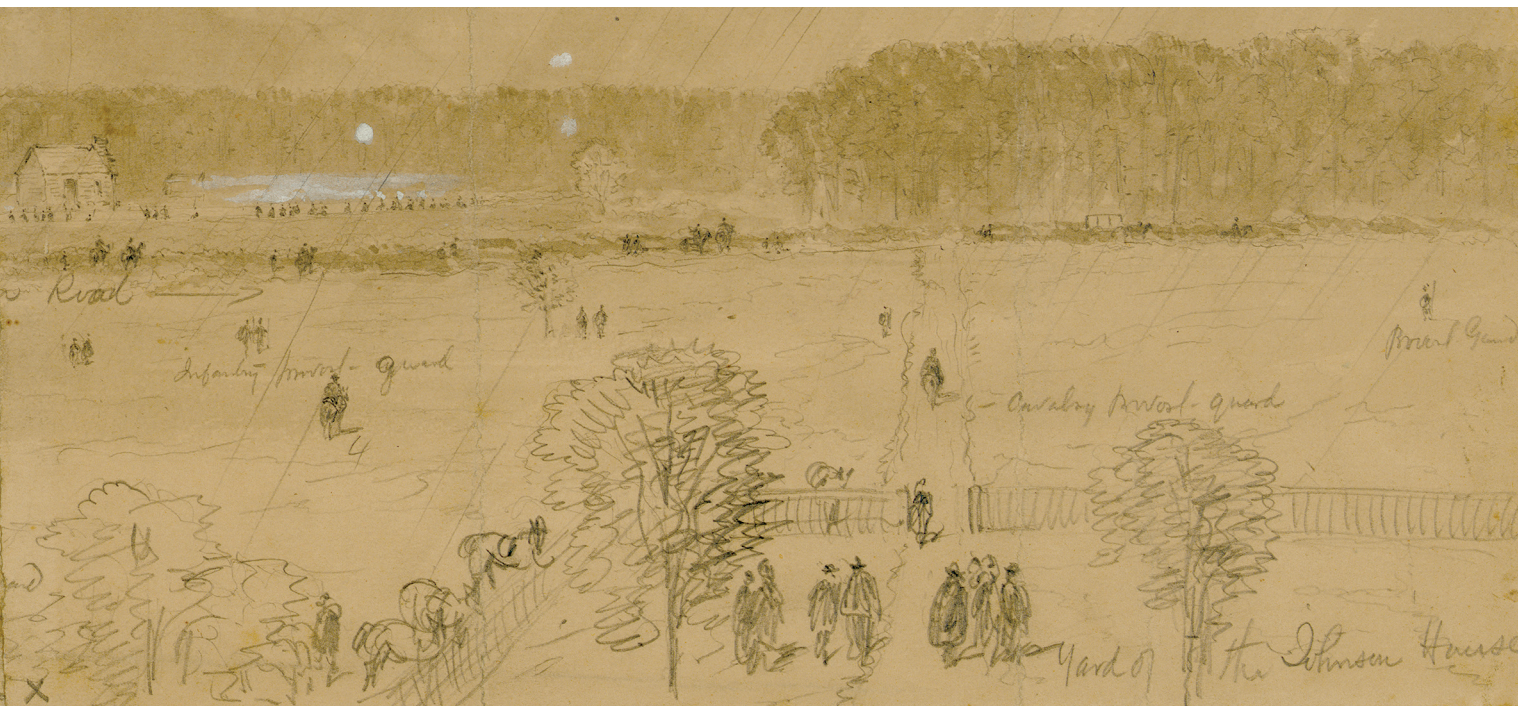
Governor Brown

University of Georgia Libraries



General Ewell

Library of Congress



the ultimate price during the war. Over a two-day period alone, during the Battles of Chaffin's Farm and New Market Heights, the 9th suffered a shocking 113 casualties.¹³²

Much to the chagrin of its defeated foe, and "with drums beating, colors flying, and men singing the John Brown Hymn—Gloria in Excelsis," the 9th triumphantly



Governor Yates
Library of Congress

entered Richmond on 3 April 1865. With the Confederate retreat the day before, the U.S. Army rushed to enter the capitol. "The troops were in motion soon after and racing to see who would get into the city first," recalled Harris, thereby being one of the earliest to document this contentious debate; he continued, "the white and colored troops both claim the honor."¹³³ As with many of the accolades attributed to the USCT, contemporaries and later historians heavily debated this controversy. Regardless of who was first, we can be certain that the soldiers of the 9th were among them.

With the war over, the soldiers on both sides could now begin their lives afresh. As the 9th waited for orders, they witnessed the White units around them successively mustered out of service and wondered what was to become of them.¹³⁴ "No one knows what the powers that be propose to do with us," bitterly speculated Harris to his wife, "but there are indications that now the tug of war is over we are to be kicked and cuffed around in something of the old plantation style."¹³⁵ This was an accurate forecast for what came next. During the war, Maryland issued cash bonuses for former enslaved men that served in its colored regiments, money which lawfully was due to the men of the 9th.¹³⁶ "There are parties here who want

the State to avoid the payment of this money to the Colored Troops, and who throw all the obstacles in the way they can," desperately relayed a lawyer to the commander of the 9th on the issue.¹³⁷ As they fought this injustice, they also learned that they would not be mustered out; rather, as part of the U.S. Government's reconstruction plan and desire to counter French ambitions in Mexico, the 9th was sent to Brownsville, Texas.¹³⁸

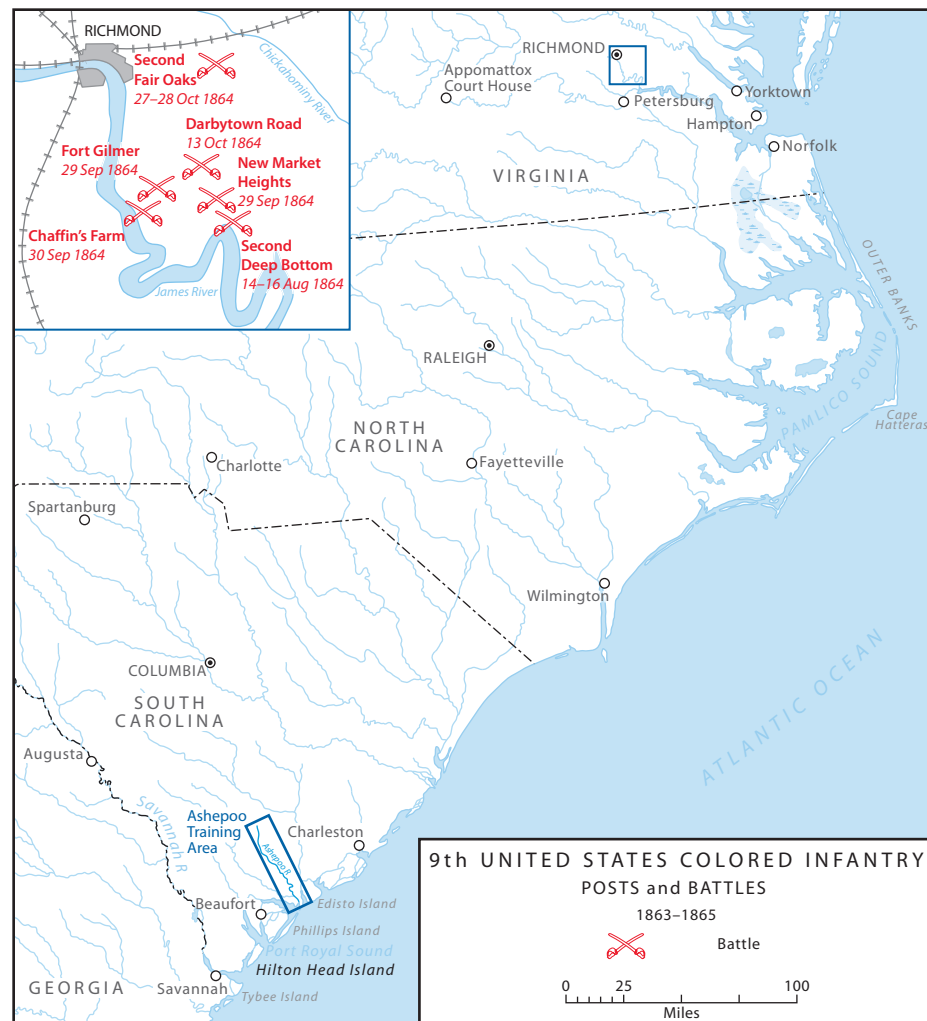
The regiment started in Norfolk, Virginia, and traveled by sea, briefly stopping in Alabama and Louisiana before arriving at the mouth of the Rio Grande River on the Gulf of Mexico.¹³⁹ Along the way, they passed former enslaved people still working several large plantations. At each site, the men and women dropped their tools and ran to "wave kerchiefs and hats to our boys" as the 9th passed by.¹⁴⁰ In contrast to this positive reception, the White officers witnessed the living conditions of African Americans on plantations up close for the first time. Some grew sick to their stomach or swallowed lumps in their throats as they passed by rows of huts built of ramshackle boards without chimneys for heat or cooking.¹⁴¹

This culture shock would continue for the 9th once they entered Texas. Dust everywhere "coming in faster than they can clean it up," coating every meal they

ate, become the new norm.¹⁴² Dirt, heat, and bugs drove the men insane. “Fleas in Spring, and mosquitoes in Summer and Fall,” was the only thing Solomon F. Forgeus remembered about his time in Texas.¹⁴³ In addition to this change in environment, the regiment digressed from a fighting unit to one whose only mission, day in and day out, was to chop wood and make hay for the Army.¹⁴⁴ This was a combination of events that would demoralize any unit, but not the 9th. “By drinking and quarreling,” reported Forgeus, “the white troops make the greatest part of the trouble here . . . their officers are afraid of them, and do not have any discipline, and they do just about as they wish.” As demonstrated throughout their service, “there is no such difficulty with us,” he proudly continued, “it is very seldom that we have any trouble.”¹⁴⁵

Even though the war was over, the battle against racism was not. Citizens blamed any issues in the area on the soldiers of the 9th. For example, after a murder of four civilians near Brownsville, law enforcement arrested innocent soldiers of the unit and freed them only after their officers intervened.¹⁴⁶ This constant harassment extended to all ranks. On a deserted country road three officers of the 9th were on a routine visit to a work detail. A group of heavily armed White men on horseback overtook the trio. Weaponless except for one revolver between them, the three dismounted and turned over any money they had, along with their blue officer blouses. With his hands raised, one man begged them to take the cash and leave; a bandit answered the request by pumping a bullet into the defenseless officer. Calling them all “sons of bitches,” another robber then proceeded to hack at the other two with a saber as they fled into the chaparral.¹⁴⁷

This robbery and wounding were minor compared to what befell several enlisted soldiers of the regiment. Although details of the incidents no longer survive, at least two men were killed while in Texas. Pvt. Samuel Parker and Sgt. Isaac Wales deaths were recorded in the unit’s ledger. Respectively, “murdered by the Mexicans,” and “killed by a rebel in Brownsville,” were their fates.¹⁴⁸ Most likely former Confederates, the culprits were upset not only by the U.S. Army’s presence, but, as



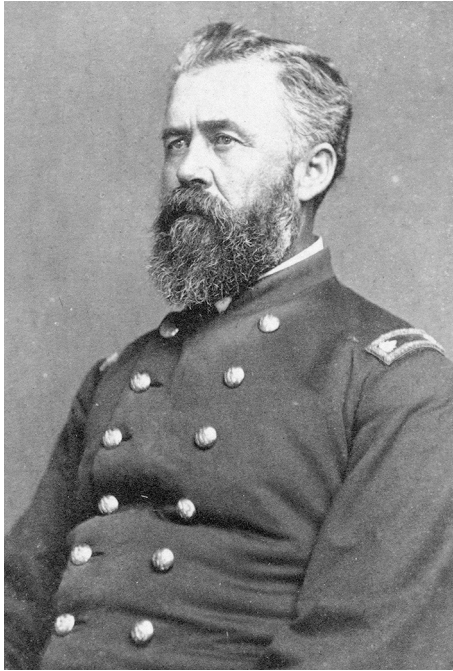
demonstrated by the violence inflicted, by the fact that USCT were in the area—the only Federal force now present.

Despite these challenges, the leaders of the 9th had nothing but positive memories of their time with the regiment. “There would be scarcely a word said now against the enlistment of colored soldiers,” declared Lieutenant Wiswall to his congressman uncle after the formation of the USCT, “where six months ago there would have been open mutiny.”¹⁴⁹ This same officer had a change of heart after serving with the 9th: “I have never been an admirer of the Negro, in fact I have always disliked and been than prejudiced against them,” Wiswall candidly admitted to his mother, but after leading the 9th in combat, his stance changed. Now he concluded, “I shall have no objection to seeing them admitted to an equality with the whites whenever their abilities will warrant it.”¹⁵⁰

“U.S. Colored Troops convinced me of the excellent qualities and capacities of the freedmen,” also noted Armstrong

during the time that he commanded the 9th regarding the African Americans. “Their quick response to good treatment and to discipline was a constant surprise. Their tidiness, devotion to their duty and their leaders, their dash and daring in battle, and ambition to improve—often studying their spelling books under fire,” convinced him that slavery was a false institution. Armstrong’s time with the 9th ultimately led him to believe that they deserved the chance as a people to succeed.¹⁵¹ Twenty years after the war, he reflected, “there was, as there has been ever since, more in [them] than we expected to find, and more than [their] old masters ever dreamed of.”¹⁵² Other leaders even conceded that the men had taught them how to lead. “The example of the practical men around him,” reflected an officer on a substandard company commander, “soon taught its commanding officer some of those axioms never gained from books.”¹⁵³

Inspired by his time leading soldiers in the 9th, George Dennett, an officer with the



George Dennett, shown here as a lieutenant colonel

Library of Congress

regiment, published a history of the unit in 1866. Not for public consumption—as he realized there would be little interest in it from those outside the regiment—it was simply his way to memorialize the service and sacrifice of all.¹⁵⁴ “It was by their energy that the fire of military zeal and pride was infused into the officers and men of the regiment,” he eulogized on the performance of the troops, “which has never abated its glow and brightness, either in the dusty march, the wearisome routine of camp duty or smoke and din of battle and skirmish.”¹⁵⁵ Despite his relief, Bayley, the unit’s original commander echoed this sentiment. “Its courage has been too often tried to be questioned,” he stated during his trial, “it has shown with others that black soldiers will fight and ask no odds from anyone.”¹⁵⁶ Grant grew to believe the same. He reported to Halleck as early as summer of 1863 on their performance, noting that “all that have been tried have fought bravely.”¹⁵⁷

Like memories of the war, the men of the 9th faded back into society and history. Equal to their White counterparts, sometimes those unfortunates whose battered bodies were scarred forever by the conflict were the only visible reminders of their service. For some, the wounds of war remained unseen but affected them

for the rest of their lives. The records of the unit speak to this, with several men held in confinement at various times until transported to the “insane asylum.”¹⁵⁸ Another veteran of the 9th spent his time after discharge with a green corn stalk as a musket rehearsing his drill, running “up and down the street shouting . . . imagining that he was in the army.”¹⁵⁹ This was a sight now quite familiar to all in cities, towns, and homes across the newly reunified nation.

The Fighting 9th completed its final service in New Orleans, where the Army released it in November 1866.¹⁶⁰ “I will be at your camp at 11 A.M. today,” simply noted the brigade adjutant to the commander, “to muster your command out of service.”¹⁶¹ Thus ended the captivating, tragic, and tremendous journey of the little remembered 9th USCI.

MARCHING INTO HISTORY

“With the bayonet you have unlocked the iron-barred gates of prejudice,” naively declared Butler, the Army of the James commander to the USCT under him, “opening new fields of freedom, liberty and equality, of right to yourselves and your race forever.”¹⁶² Despite the negative comments streaming from the Confederacy on the service of the USCT, one thing they did get correct was their treatment after the war. Toward the end of the conflict, Thomas S. Gholson, the Virginia delegate to the Confederate House of Representatives, commented on the promises made to the USCT; on how the Union gave them “glowing accounts of the freedom they were fighting to confer upon them—of the land of ‘milk and honey’ into which they would carry them” and how these promises most assuredly would be broken.¹⁶³

With the end of the conflict, soldiers on both sides reentered the civilian world, and the war-weary populace wanted nothing but to put the events behind them. The USCT found themselves either disbanded or sent to far flung destinations such as the Texas border or other frontier locations, where they remained out of sight and out of mind. With a fragile peace in place, the U.S. military and civilians now reflected on the overall war and lessons learned, including the USCT’s service. Unfortunately, instead of positive memories, naysayers seized the narrative.

For example, in an official study conducted just after the war on the type

and causes of nonbattle casualties, the U.S. was critical of the USCT, claiming that they had not been exposed to the hardships of field service and thus should not have suffered so severely. “It is merely suggested that it is moral rather than physical,” stated the report: “that the greater susceptibility of the colored man to disease arose from a lack of heart, hope, and mental activity, and that a higher moral and intellectual culture would diminish the defect.”¹⁶⁴ Never mind that the majority of the USCT served in the deep South and in the trenches around Richmond and Petersburg, both featuring horrid field conditions that broke numerous White regiments.

The White officers of the 9th, who saw steady and sustained combat and field service themselves before joining the unit, felt the need to comment on this. As the unit’s history documented, “this regiment has been exposed and suffered to an unusual degree from all the worst and most frightful diseases that flesh is heir to.” Ailments such as congestive fever, measles, smallpox, scurvy, and cholera were the norm.¹⁶⁵ Curiously, the U.S. report itself unknowingly contradicted its own claim of the “lack of heart” among the troops. It pointed out that the rate of discharges for disability in the USCT was less than half that of White units. Oddly, it reported that “their diseases were usually of an acute and mortal rather than of a chronic and merely enfeebling nature,” meaning the USCT did not find any excuse to leave the Army.¹⁶⁶ Rather, despite suffering diseases that would have felled their White counterparts, most soldiers in the USCT only left the service if they were about to die from their malady.

As the war faded away, some civilians further downplayed, discarded, ridiculed, and then codified into historiography the service of the USCT. Published in 1866, the two-volume Civil War behemoth by Horace Greeley credited them with contributing to victory, though he claimed they partook in no major actions of significance. “No wise General would have counted a corps of them equal, man for man, in a great, protracted battle, to a like number of our Whites,” Greeley posited, thereby inaugurating the decline of the USCT’s impact on the conflict: “to exalt them to the disparagement of our White Soldiers would be as unwise as unjust.”¹⁶⁷

In Theodore Ayrault Dodge’s 1897 seminal *A Birds-Eye View of our Civil*



United States Colored Infantry troops at Port Hudson, Louisiana, ca. 1865

National Archives

War, the entire contribution of the USCT's service was simply boiled down to one sentence which stated that, much to their credit, they served.¹⁶⁸ "Most of the officers of high rank were not favorably impressed by the negro troops," contributed author and self-styled debunking expert W. E. Woodard in 1928, "Sherman considered them a joke, and Grant usually kept them in the rear, guarding his wagon trains."¹⁶⁹ Woodward also promoted the stereotype on how many came to view African Americans during the conflict. "They had not started the war nor ended it," he derisively stated, "they twanged banjos around the railroad stations, sang melodious spirituals, and believed that some Yankee would soon come along and give each of them forty acres of land and a mule."¹⁷⁰

Despite unequivocally demonstrating their mettle in combat during the U.S. Civil War, African Americans would have to prove themselves again in both World Wars. It would not be until 1948 that President Harry S. Truman would desegregate the U.S. Armed Forces.¹⁷¹ Studying the experience of the Fighting 9th allows one to reflect on the nation's sometimes troubling history with race and diversity.

This exercise can build empathy and strengthen the ability to appreciate other viewpoints and life experiences in a more compassionate and inclusive manner. This is important as theorists have proven diversity to be a force multiplier and will give the U.S. military an edge in combat over its adversaries. Understanding the historical struggle and commendable service of the 9th USCI will help present-day military professionals come to terms with our nation's past, present, and the prospects for the creation of a diverse force. Remember the 9th.

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MUSEUM FEATURE

NEW IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE EXHIBIT AT THE U.S. ARMY AIRBORNE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS MUSEUM

By James Bartlinski and Derek L. Gunn

The U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum has unveiled an exhibit focusing on improvised explosive devices (IEDs), in collaboration with the 28th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) (Airborne) and is currently designing a diorama to tell the story of this secretive company headquartered at Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg), North Carolina.

The 28th Ordnance Company is the Army's sole Airborne explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) company that provides direct support to the 75th Ranger Regiment and U.S. Army Special Operations Command. The 28th has been exclusively supporting special operations since 2008, deploying just 100 members during this time. Although they maintain an incredibly small footprint overseas, unit members have participated in approximately 5,500 combat operations across Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Africa. For their efforts, these soldiers have earned thirty-two valorous awards, including two Distinguished Service Crosses, and nineteen Purple Hearts.

The diorama, although still in development, will explain the treacherous origins of EOD and then transition to the current mission of the 28th as being the Army's preeminent technical and tactical explosives experts, highlighting its role in support of special operations forces. The exhibit will contain a mannequin outfitted in a bomb suit; a robot used for investigating IEDs; artifacts from the Global War on Terrorism; and an interview recounting a daring nighttime mission that led to numerous valorous awards including three Distinguished Service Crosses.

The thought-provoking exhibit examines the development of EOD and the role of the 28th during the Global War on Terrorism, when the use of IEDs was at an all-time high. Furthermore, the exhibit focuses on the mechanisms of terror EOD units across the

globe have encountered. Likewise, the exhibit explores the history of IEDs, which have been in use for centuries.

Although the term IED first became popular during the Iraq War in 2003, insurgents have been using IEDs globally since at least the 1500s. For instance, Dutch rebels converted merchant ships into floating IEDs, known as "hellburners," to break the Spanish siege of Antwerp, and insurgents attempted to assassinate Napoleon with a cart-turned-vehicle bomb as the leader was making his way to an opera. Bomb-making technology has advanced significantly since those events, and these insidious instruments of terror have become more sophisticated and are now the weapon of choice for insurgents worldwide.

Although IEDs can be simple, homemade bombs, they can also be high-tech, complex explosive devices. The term IED is broad and is limited only by the creator's imagination. Categories of IEDs include victim-operated; command; timed; and suicide IEDs. The exhibit identifies these various devices as well as the innovative counter-IED methods used by units like the 28th to detect and neutralize IEDs. The interactive exhibit puts visitors in the boots of an EOD technician as they walk through the exhibit's "IED Awareness Lane," searching for the devices. As visitors exit the exhibit, they get to see all the IEDs they should have located. Anything less than 100 percent is mission failure.

James Bartlinski is the director of the Fort Liberty Museums. **Capt. Derek L. Gunn** is the operations officer for the 28th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) (Airborne)



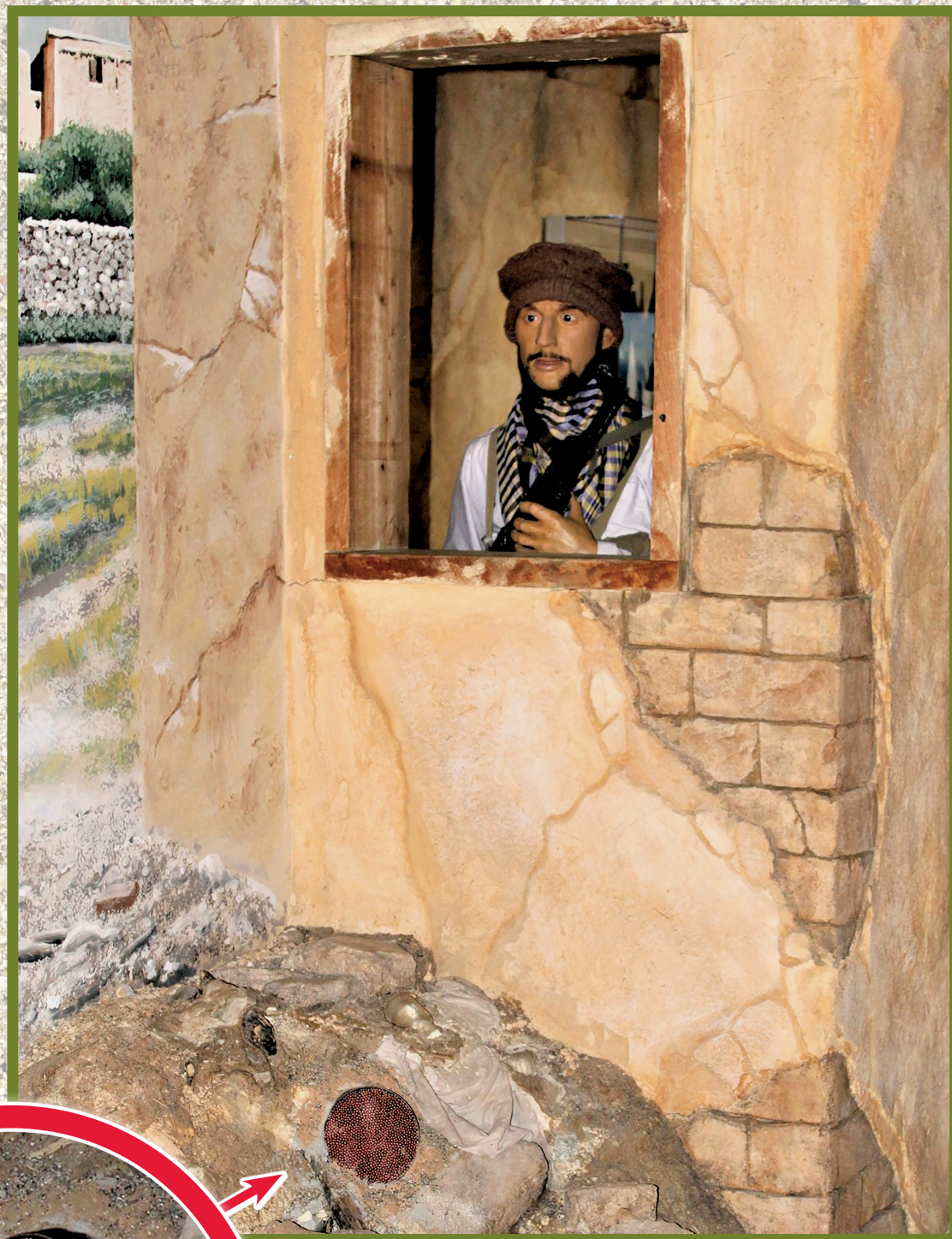
TIMED IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE

Insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan used timed IEDs such as the improvised rocket launcher (IRL) shown here. They could emplace the rocket, set a timer, leave the area, and be away from the point of origin as the IRLs fired toward coalition and Afghan forces.



WEAPONS CACHE

A weapons cache is an assemblage of weapons that have been hidden or securely stored for easy access and resupply. Items routinely found in weapons caches during the Global War on Terrorism include rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, IED components, ammunition, and explosives. It was also common to find booby traps (concealed explosive devices) within weapons caches. The cache shown here is typical of what was found in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.



ANTIPERSONNEL DIRECTIONAL FRAGMENTATION CHARGE

Insurgents in Afghanistan used antipersonnel directional fragmentation charges (DFCs) to target personnel on the ground or gunners in the turrets of vehicles. The DFC main charge is essentially a large shotgun shell. The DFC is initiated in the rear of the device and expels thousands of small fragmentation pieces toward its target. The fragmentation generally consists of small pieces of metal spread out in a cone pattern. Insurgents would pack DFCs with ball bearings, nails, small pieces of rebar, nuts, bolts, rocks, and the like.



ANTITANK MINE

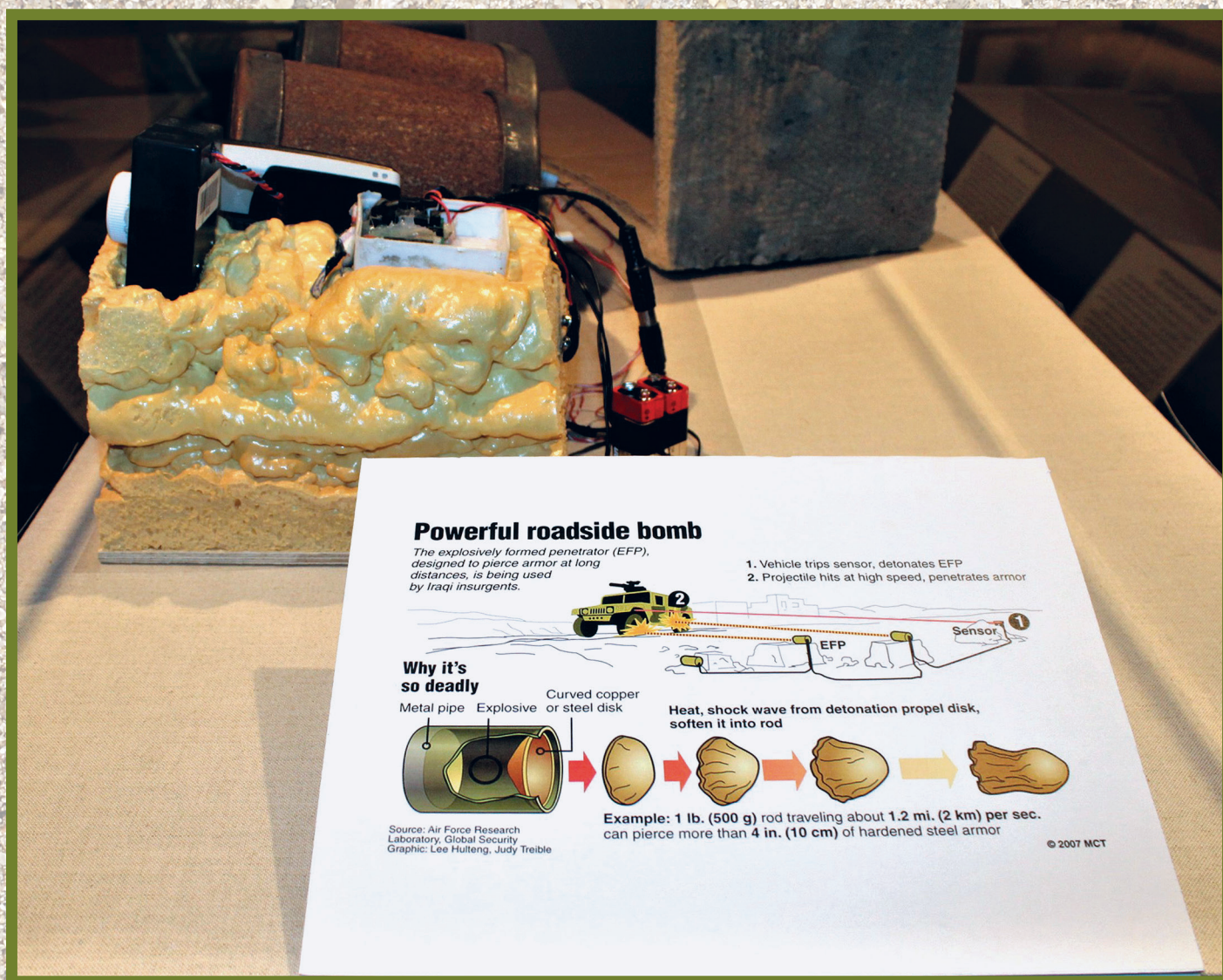
Commonly found by coalition forces in Afghanistan during the Global War on Terrorism, antitank mines generally were made from conventional ordnance items left behind by Afghan and Soviet forces during the Soviet invasion of the 1980s. EOD technicians had to be cognizant of the possibility of these being booby-trapped with antitamper devices.



VICTIM-OPERATED IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE

The victim-operated IED shown here is a pressure plate with a yellow palm oil container (YPOC) main charge. This configuration was one of the most common types of IEDs found in Afghanistan and has been used with numerous emplacement techniques. This example demonstrates an offset emplacement. The insurgent would bury the pressure plate and YPOC in different locations. As the front, driver-side wheel of a vehicle triggered the pressure plate, the main charge would explode under the center of the vehicle. This type of emplacement was used with devastating effect to flat-bottomed vehicles such as Humvees. To counteract this emplacement, the United States developed V-Hull undercarriages to deflect the blast from the most vulnerable point of the vehicle, thus increasing the survivability of the soldiers inside.





EXPLOSIVELY FORMED PENETRATOR

The explosively formed penetrator was designed to pierce armor at long distances and was common to Iraq.

TOOT SWEET

THREE DIFFERENT PIECES CONVERGE TO TELL ONE STORY

By Christopher M. Ruff

Museums preserve objects and documents. Historians and curators use them to write history. A notable example of this includes a rare World War I-era poster, a donated collection, and an old paper file used to reveal a fun and fascinating story of soldiers at ease.

The World War I history of the 82d Division contains numerous accounts of the soldiers getting together to sing after a hard day's training. Singing was a part of road marches, and it helped build esprit de corps. After the Armistice, soldiers were eager to forget their hardships via distractions and pastimes. Throughout the American Expeditionary Forces, commanders sanctioned performances and games with support from organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association.

It is unclear when the poster shown here arrived at the 82d Airborne Division Museum at Fort Liberty, North Carolina, but the museum accessioned it in 2017 as an integral part of the history of the 82d Division. The poster is for a performance on Tuesday, 21 January 1919, at the Theatre Municipal in Dijon, France.

Toot Sweet was a three-act musical comedy designed and performed by at least thirty-two 82d doughboys. Color Sgt. James F. Hanley of the 320th Field Artillery compiled and wrote the music and lyrics, Capt. Edgar B. Dunlap, headquarters commandant, directed, and the All-American Jazz Orchestra performed the music for the show. Men of the division portrayed all characters, including female roles.

The term "toot sweet" arose during World War I, when American soldiers went overseas mingled with Allied troops for the first time. Toot sweet is a mangled version of the French phrase, *tout de suite*, which means literally "all in a row" but its real meaning is closer to "immediately" or "right away." Few American soldiers could speak

French, but it was only natural that they would learn key phrases. Toot sweet was a phrase that they found useful, even if they only knew it from verbal exposure and were not aware of how to spell it.

In 2016, the family of Pvt. Michael "Tony" Mandracchia, of Field Hospital, No. 326, donated his collection to the museum. It included his uniform, papers, and a photograph of the Toot Sweet cast. Tony was one of them. His diary notes that they performed the musical from 13 December 1918–21 February 1919, putting on a total of forty-one shows at several different locations.

Also in the museum's collection are the papers of Pvt. Otis L. Woods, 307th Sanitary Train. His documents contained a play program from three showings of Toot Sweet, 6–8 February 1919, at the Théâtre Des Champs-Élysées, 16 Montaigne Avenue, Paris.

The poster and program give us the facts and the Mandracchia photograph puts a personality to it. In an interview with ninety-year-old Mandracchia during a 25 May 1981 Memorial Day Parade in Pelham, New York, he described himself as a ham. That is how he ended up entertaining troops in France and the United States. However, he said, "war is war." It was not something he wanted to remember, but not something he possibly could forget, either. It was "just something that had to be done."¹

Christopher M. Ruff has been a curator for the U.S. Army Museum Enterprise for almost fifteen years.

NOTE

1. Mary-Ann Ulwick, "Veteran Still Serves in His Own Way," *Pelham Sun* (NY), 25 May 1981.



THE 82nd AMERICAN DIVISION
PRESENTS
THE ALL AMERICAN PLAYERS

IN AN
Original 3act Musical Comedy
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New Pretty New
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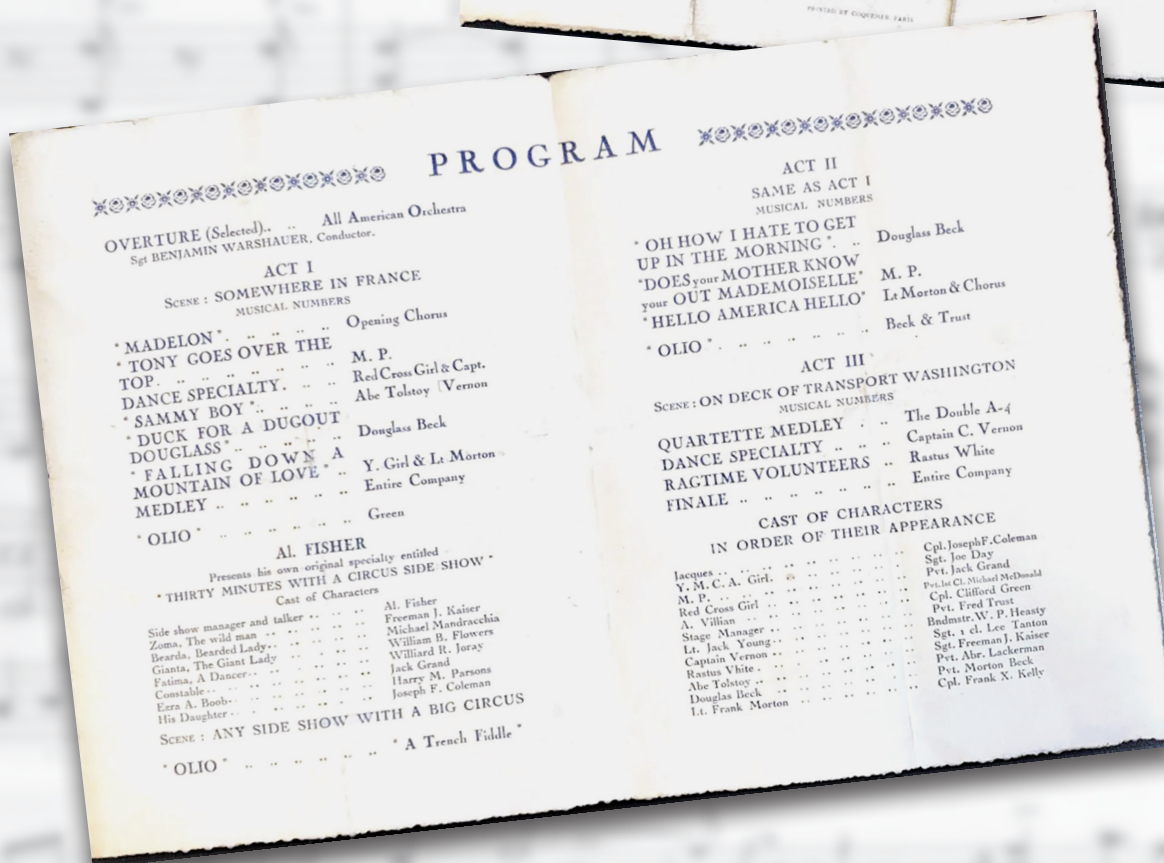
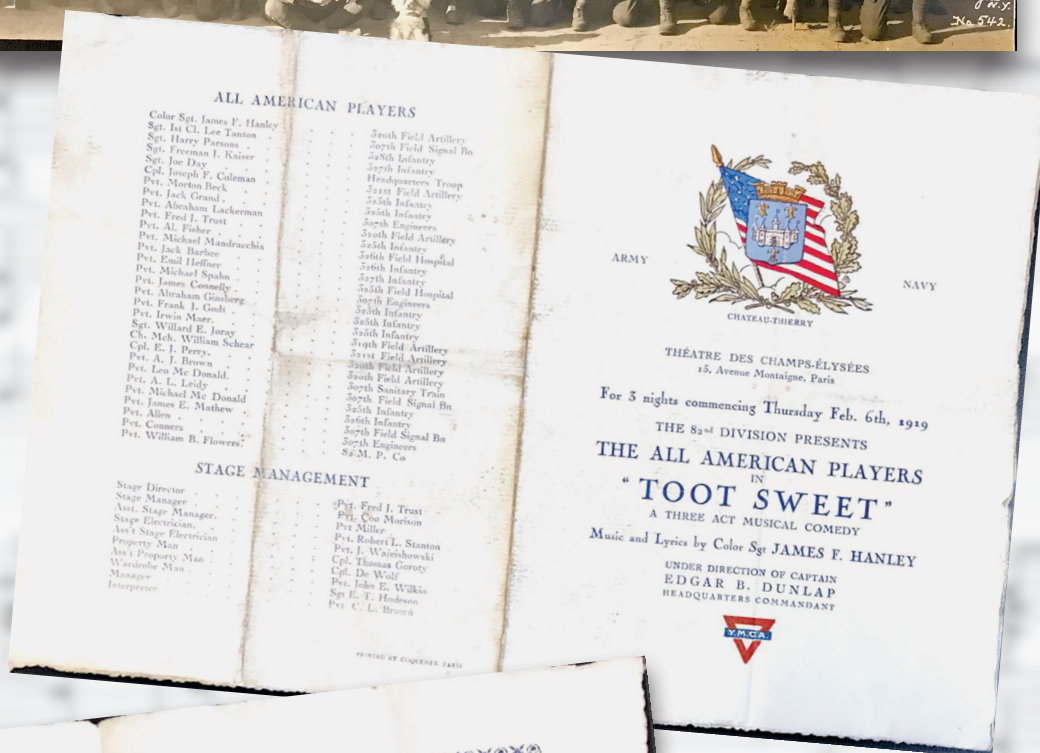
Admission : 5 francs

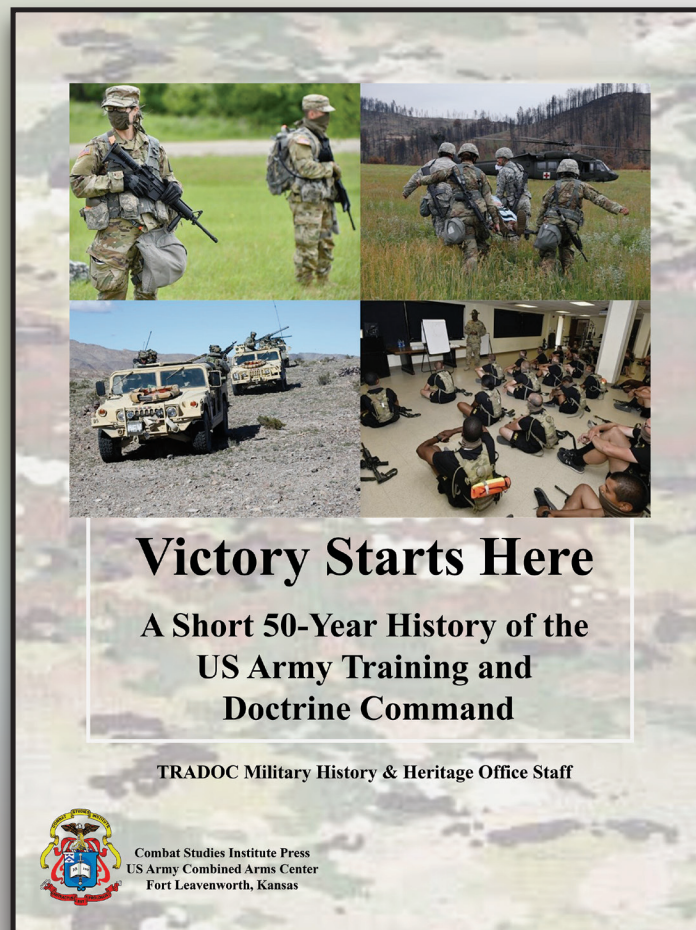
Imprimerie R. DE TROEY, Dijon



Picture of the Troupe at Camp Mills, New York, 5 May 1919.

Pages from the "Toot Sweet" program





The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) reaches its fiftieth anniversary on 1 July 2023. On that date in 1973, the U.S. Army completed its Operation STEADFAST reform effort with the simultaneous establishment of TRADOC and the U.S. Army Forces Command from the former U.S. Army Continental Army Command and the U.S. Army Combat Developments Command. Every five years, beginning with TRADOC's twentieth anniversary in 1993, the command's Military History and Heritage Office (MHHO) has published a short history of TRADOC.

In June 2023, in time for TRADOC's Golden Jubilee, the MHHO, in conjunction with TRADOC's Army University Press/Combat Studies Institute Press, will publish *Victory Starts Here: A Short 50-Year History of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command*, which will appear in both a limited-release hard copy and online in PDF. This fiftieth-year edition will update TRADOC's history through the COVID-19 experience, the emergence of Multi-Domain Operations, and other current topics.

ENGINE OF DESEGREGATION

The European Theater of Operations Voluntary Transfer Program of 1945



By Thomas E. Hanson

African American troops of a field artillery battery emplace a 155-mm. howitzer in France, 28 June 1944.

National Archives

Late on the afternoon of 7 March 1945, a handful of American soldiers belonging to Company A, 27th Armored Infantry Battalion, captured the Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen, Germany. In response, the Germans hastily assembled a force of some 10,000 soldiers and 60 tanks, supported by significant artillery, to halt the Americans and push them back across the river. For the next week, American and German infantry fought day and night on the hills above the river. The German attacks became increasingly desperate after the Americans pushed significant numbers of tanks and artillery across the bridge.¹

On the night of 13 March, the commander of Company K, 394th Infantry Regiment, 99th Infantry Division, called artillery fire onto his own position to prevent German troops from overrunning his soldiers. The barrage succeeded in driving the Germans back; they left several dead and wounded comrades on the field in front of the

GIs. Their withdrawal did not herald the end of the battle, however; sunrise would bring renewed artillery, mortar, and sniper fire, the prelude to another night of close quarters fighting. Sleep-deprived, hungry, thirsty, low on ammunition, and with their ranks depleted by combat, the members of Company K dug their foxholes a little deeper and hoped for relief. Late that afternoon, they heard a short but violent firefight break out below and behind them. Fearing that the enemy had surrounded them, K Company shifted positions to meet the new threat. As if on cue, a group of about fifty soldiers broke out of the forest and walked toward the dug-in Americans, who were relieved to see that the advancing soldiers wore olive-drab uniforms and “steel pot” helmets. Still, something about them struck the watching Americans as odd. When the approaching troops were close enough for Company K to see clearly, they were shocked to realize that the new arrivals were, in the parlance of the day,

“colored soldiers.” Even more surprising to them was the news that these soldiers weren’t a relief force, they were replacements. For the first time since the American Revolution, Black and White soldiers were assigned to the same company and would serve together on the front lines.² On that ridge above the Rhine River, American soldiers held one line and breached another, an event that would have far-reaching implications for American society. The combat record compiled by this platoon and more than fifty just like it provided advocates of full integration of the military with irrefutable proof regarding African Americans’ fighting ability. It also demonstrated that integration of frontline units would not result in any degradation of morale or unit cohesion. In the end, however, no amount of evidence could persuade the U.S. Army that segregation should end.

A Legacy of Denied Opportunities

Black Americans have fought for America since before the founding of the United States. During the American Revolution, some 5,000 African Americans served in the Continental Army. Although that number may seem small, however, George Washington’s force seldom numbered more than a few thousand at any one time; by 1779, Black soldiers comprised as much as one-seventh of Washington’s self-described “mixed multitude.”³ As historian Thomas Fleming describes it, the Continental Army was the most racially integrated American Army until the Vietnam War.⁴

Although most colonies had accepted free Black people into their militia ranks before 1775, General George Washington asked Congress to forbid their enlistment into the Continental Army shortly after he assumed command. Congress abandoned this policy just a few months later, when manpower shortages compelled it to urge the colonial assemblies to fill quotas without regard to race.⁵ For the remainder of the war, African Americans served alongside White soldiers in fully integrated formations. The only exception to this was the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, a semisegregated infantry unit commanded by Col. Christopher Greene, a White officer. The regiment acquitted itself well in battle, especially on home ground during the August 1778 retreat from Rhode Island.⁶

In the interwar period from 1783 to 1812, opportunities for African American



Colonel Greene
Brown University Library

military service disappeared. Fearing a standing army in peacetime, on 2 June 1784, the Continental Congress voted to disband the last remaining Continental regiment on active service, save for eighty privates and a few officers to safeguard military stores at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania, and West Point, New York.⁷ Three years later, the new nation’s profound military weakness spurred the framers to craft a new national constitution that, in theory, allowed for the creation of a standing army. In reality, the new nation continued the “dual-army” tradition employed against the British in the Revolutionary War. The two so-called “Militia Acts” of 1792, which defined American military policy until the early twentieth century, required “the enrollment of all able-bodied white men between eighteen and forty-five” in the several states’ militias, upon which the country would depend for defense in time of war.⁸ With this wording, integrated units became an impossibility. Throughout the nineteenth century, service in the militia constituted a form of civic responsibility, the equivalent of voting or holding public office. Because Black Americans could do neither in most jurisdictions before or after 1865, their exclusion from militia service solidified their status as subjects rather than full citizens.⁹

Despite African Americans’ impressive battlefield record during the Revolutionary War and again in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, Congress in 1820 officially prohibited the induction

of any “Negro or mulatto . . . as a recruit of the Army.”¹⁰ White Americans’ fear of both racial and political revolution, already inflamed by the example of the Haitian Revolution, used it and other attempted insurrections by enslaved people to justify legal structures that perpetuated the noncitizen status of Black Americans.¹¹ After free Black people attempted to incite a revolt among enslaved people in Charleston in 1822, a city leader urged his fellow White citizens to “let it never be forgotten that our Negroes are the JACOBINS of the country.”¹² From then until 1950, segregation of the races and an assumption of inferiority would govern the U.S. Army’s official policy regarding African Americans.

This did not mean an end to African American participation in military operations, however. During the Civil War, nearly 180,000 Black people wore U.S. Army blue, serving in segregated regiments under White officers. It was not until mid-1862, after more than a year of war, however, that President Abraham Lincoln finally agreed to ask Congress for the authority to enlist Black Americans to fight. Many of these units, such as the 54th Regiment Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteers, earned high praise for their battlefield courage. As Lincoln’s adjutant general, Brig. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas, reported after the war, these soldiers “by their coolness and determination in battle fought themselves into their present high standing as soldiers.”¹³ Indeed, their reputation gained for them a permanent place within the peacetime military establishment. On 27 July 1866, Congress authorized two cavalry and four infantry regiments to be “composed of colored men.”¹⁴ Later reduced to two regiments of each arm, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry regiments earned fame as the “Buffalo Soldiers” during the campaigns to subdue American Indian tribes between 1866 and 1890.¹⁵ In an era when White Americans viewed military service with a disdain bordering on disgust, Black Americans routinely sought it out as a pathway to economic improvement. Generally excluded from Gilded Age prosperity, Black applicants for military vacancies always outnumbered available positions. Once accepted into service, Black soldiers behaved better and deserted at lower rates than their White counterparts.¹⁶

For a brief time on the battlefields of Cuba in 1898, integration reappeared. Lt. John J. Pershing, who commanded soldiers

of the segregated 10th Cavalry at San Juan Hill recalled, “White regiments, Black regiments, regulars and Rough Riders . . . fought shoulder to shoulder, unmindful of race or color.”¹⁷ Though laudable, the situation resulted from confusion and casualties rather than design. Subsequent incidents between Black soldiers and White Southerners rendered the Regular Army’s Black regiments untrustworthy in the eyes of the War Department, and resulted in the decision to keep those units on the Mexican border rather than send them to France in 1917.¹⁸ Moreover, of the more than 367,000 Black people drafted for service in the National Army, an overwhelming 89 percent served in labor, quartermaster, or other service units rather than as frontline combat troops.¹⁹ The War Department authorized the creation of just two segregated infantry divisions, the 92d and 93d. The 92d consisted of 26,000 of the “best” Black draftees; several northern states’ Black National Guard regiments found themselves brigaded together in the 93d. In organization, the 92d was identical to a typical White division, but the 93d never received the functional support units that would make it complete and thus never overcame its “provisional” designation.²⁰ Despite this, the 93d Division’s infantry regiments excelled as frontline fighters for the French Army, earning high praise from numerous French officers and civilian leaders. Its 369th Infantry Regiment, the former 15th Infantry Regiment, New York National Guard, became the most decorated American unit of the war.²¹ It spent 191 continuous days in combat, during which it never gave up a position and did not lose a single soldier as a prisoner to the Germans.²² In contrast, the 92d Division served under American command and suffered from the U.S. Army’s institutional prejudice against African American combatants. The division’s chief of staff, Col. Allen J. Greer, no fan of Black soldiers, wrote after the war that members of the 92d posed a danger “to no one but themselves and women.”²³ After poor performance by the division’s 368th Infantry Regiment during the opening days of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, the division relieved thirty Black officers and returned them to the United States. Five underwent courts-martial for cowardice, and four received death sentences. Though ultimately exonerated, “the stigma of cowardice [was] removed but never forgotten.”²⁴ Two of the 368th’s three White battalion commanders, Maj. Max A.



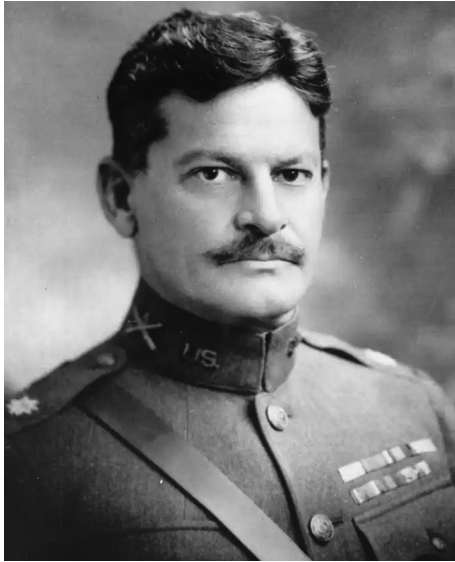
General Thomas
Library of Congress

Elsner and Maj. B. F. Norris, later admitted to having run away from the battle; true cowards, they never received punishment.²⁵ For the next thirty years, the U.S. Army would invoke the 368th’s performance and not the 369th’s when the question of African American military service arose.²⁶

Between the World Wars

In the interwar period, American military planners sought to solve the questions

of whether and how to employ African Americans in a future war. They acknowledged that such planning was necessary, recognizing that political pressure to include Black soldiers in any future expansion of the U.S. Army would be irresistible. To that end, the fundamental issue revolved around segregation. The legal segregation of American society convinced senior officers of the infeasibility of planning for an Army organized without reference to race. As a



Allen J. Greer, shown here as a lieutenant colonel

Congressional Medal of Honor Society

result, the most important factors affecting mobilization planning became, “How could the Negro portion of the nation’s manpower best be employed in time of war?” and “How could Negro manpower be used with the least stress on military effectiveness and on social customs?”²⁷ On one hand, the persistence of negative attitudes toward Black Americans as soldiers had, by 1923, become almost a mantra among senior American officers. On the other hand, the War Department foresaw civil unrest if, in a future war, White youth died in great numbers in foreign lands while Black youth remained safely at home. This view, incorporated as one of four principal assumptions on which the first postwar mobilization plans rested, held that “exempting the Negro population of this country from combat service means that the white population, upon which the future of the country depends, would suffer the brunt of loss.”²⁸ Unfortunately, the political resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the early twentieth century made any open discussion of large-scale employment of Black soldiers problematic.²⁹ By the late 1920s, the War Department deliberately hid its mobilization plans for African Americans out of fear of political repercussions.³⁰ Only in 1938 did such plans again enjoy open discussion, a result of renewed focus on mobilization requirements. Under a plan originally adopted in 1923, the War Department would conscript Black people in proportion to their share of the population as a whole, and it would make no attempt

to restrict their induction to avoid creating conditions unfavorable to efficient mobilization. To do so, however, there needed to be sufficient spaces to assign conscripted Black Americans at the outset of any mobilization, which meant that the War Department needed to have segregated units already designated and activated.³¹ Thus, interwar planning perpetuated segregation and reinforced incorrect stereotypes regarding Black people’s ability to withstand the rigors of modern combat.

As flawed as it was, the 1938 mobilization plan at least accounted for the domestic political realities affecting considerations of Black military participation. As executed, however, the 1940 Protective Mobilization Plan attempted to turn the clock back to 1917. Instead of inducting Blacks Americans so they comprised 10 percent of the Army, they would constitute just 5.81 percent, most of whom would have engineer, quartermaster, or infantry functions

once again. Inductions for field and coast artillery positions amounted to a single battalion of each for African Americans. Compromises between the War Department and Congress eventually increased overall African American participation to slightly more than 8 percent, but only presidential direction forced the opening of technical specialties and the U.S. Army Air Forces to Black soldiers.³² Furthermore, as signed into law, the 1940 Selective Service and Training Act remained passive on segregation.

From the perspective of leading Black community leaders such as Walter F. White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, this failure rendered much of the other pledges moot. Although prohibiting “discrimination against any person based on race or color,” no part of the Act prohibited segregation.³³ Reinforcing Black leaders’ sense of failure, President



Walter F. White

National Portrait Gallery

Franklin D. Roosevelt's press office issued a policy statement justifying segregation, saying it had provided a workable solution to the issue of race relations "over a long period of years"; any change to such a settled policy would be "detrimental to national defense."³⁴ The president thereby signaled that neither he personally nor the War Department would undertake any social engineering "experiments . . . at this critical time."³⁵ The U.S. Army would fight Germany, Italy, and Japan, all three governed by ideologies promoting racial or ethnic superiority, with a racially segregated military.

Black Soldiers in World War II

Ultimately, the U.S. Army created ninety-one divisions of all types for World War II. Of these, eighty-nine were employed overseas; the remaining two were inactivated and their personnel diverted elsewhere.³⁶ This number represented the maximum possible expansion of the Army, given the plethora of competing requirements in the other services, the domestic industrial and agricultural sectors, and domestic civil society.³⁷ In fact, by the end of the war in Europe, not only had all eighty-nine divisions been shipped overseas, no strategic reserve existed within the United States except the replacement training base. Moreover, by early 1945, virtually every Army division was employed in active combat against the enemy, requiring a constant flow of replacements to keep them effective. By the Army's own postwar estimate, "during periods of intensive combat an infantry division suffered about 100 percent losses in its infantry regiments every three months."³⁸ Unfortunately, War Department planners had underestimated significantly the number of casualties the U.S. Army would incur following the Normandy invasion. In developing the "troop basis"—the document by which the U.S. Army justified its budget and organization to the Congress—in January 1944, Army Ground Forces programmed just 293,000 infantry replacements for all of calendar year 1944. By July, all observers recognized that number to be woefully insufficient. New calculations based on casualty reports in June resulted in an upward revision of requirements, forecasting a need for 257,000 infantry replacements for the second half of 1944 alone.³⁹ This resulted in a scramble for warm bodies by the War Department. Army Ground Forces directed the immediate overseas movement of several

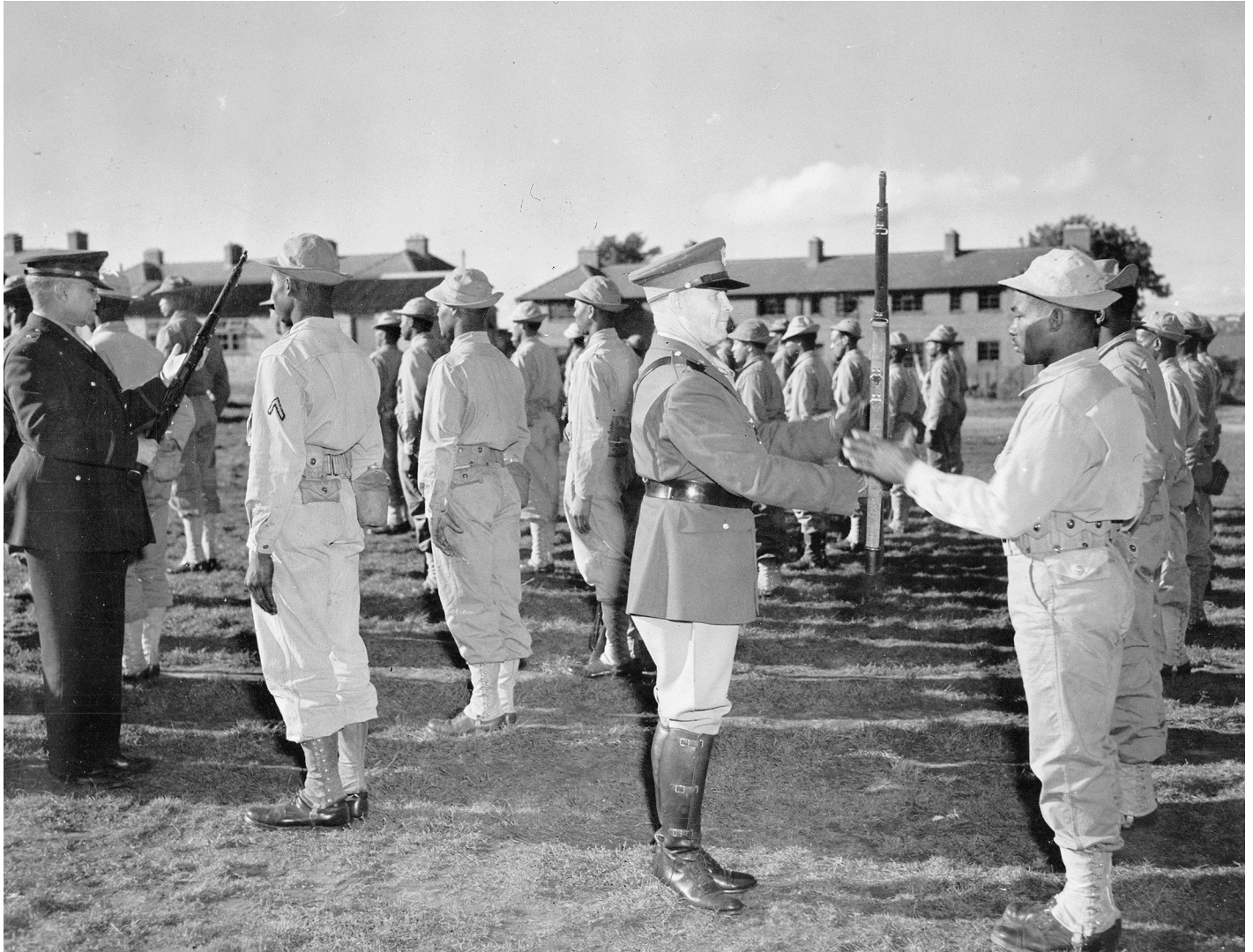


An African American engineer unit building a road in the European Theater.

National Archives

units still undergoing their predeployment training.⁴⁰ Army Ground Forces also reduced infantry training time from seventeen to fifteen weeks.⁴¹ Knowing that an increase of the troop basis through expanded draft calls would not be immediately forthcoming, the War Department staff directed all theater commanders to address a major portion of their 1944 manpower requirements by means of internal redistribution.⁴² Army Ground Forces undertook similar measures in the United States. Approximately 78,000 members of the Army Specialized Training Program and 24,000 surplus aviation cadets found themselves reclassified as infantry, though few of these would arrive in Europe before the spring of 1945. The

results of a 7 December 1944 conference of War Department, Army Ground Forces, and combat theater leadership revealed the inadequacy of such measures. Army Ground Forces received just 53,000 soldiers that month from replacement training centers to support all active theaters worldwide. One week before the Germans' Ardennes offensive, reports from the European Theater of Operations (ETO) indicated a daily loss rate of 3,000 per day in battle casualties alone, or more than 90,000 per month. A week later, the War Department directed that the replacement training centers would henceforth allow no more than a 5 percent attrition rate at the training centers, "even if this involved some lowering of physical



Generals Davis (left) and Lee (right) inspect Black troops in England.

Library of Congress

and training standards.” In late December, the War Department allotted first priority for infantry replacements to the European Theater, and in January 1945 gained approval to raise inductions through selective service to 100,000 per month. These latter measures would, however, take months to deliver results.⁴³ In the end, the commitment to a ninety-division Army resulted in a frenetic drive to inactivate, reclassify, or delay activation of many types of units that ultimately cost the U.S. Army its control of replacement operations. In responding to the replacement crisis, the troop basis for combat units across Army Ground Forces actually decreased by almost a quarter million from 1 January 1944 to 31 March 1945.⁴⁴

The most obvious solution was also the most distasteful from the War Department’s perspective. As of 31 December 1944, more

than 9 percent of the U.S. Army’s total enlisted manpower consisted of African Americans—more than 687,000 soldiers, the majority of them in quartermaster, transportation, and general engineering units.⁴⁵ During an April 1943 mobilization conference, however, General George C. Marshall issued definitive guidance to the War Department staff. As recorded by then-Col. Reuben E. Jenkins, Marshall ordered the Army G-1 to “quit catering to the negroes’ desire for a proportionate share of combat units. Put them where they will best serve the war effort”—i.e., in labor and service units, not in one of the combat arms.⁴⁶ As a result, although segregated combat units eventually did fight in Italy and later in northwest Europe, these were without exception independent battalions of artillery, antiaircraft artillery, tank destroyers,

and tanks. Despite drafting twice as many Black people during World War II than in 1917 and 1918, the U.S. Army provided for just two segregated infantry divisions in both conflicts—and divided them between Europe and the Pacific in the latter one.⁴⁷

In light of this, Lt. Gen. John C. H. Lee’s suggestion that Eisenhower extend the offer of voluntary reclassification as infantry to Black soldiers in service units struck many senior officers as apostasy. At Lee’s request, Brig. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Sr., the U.S. Army’s lone African American general officer, composed a memorandum for Lee’s signature.⁴⁸ In it, Lee—the commanding general of the U.S. Communications Zone, ETO—asked his African American service troops to “[join] our veteran units at the front to deliver the knockout blow.” Lee also promised to all who accepted the offer that the



General Smith
Dutch National Archives

U.S. Army would “assign you without regard to color or race to the units where assistance is most needed.”⁴⁹ As critics jumped to point out, Lee’s suggestion directly contravened War Department policy and threatened to undermine the Army’s battlefield effectiveness. Indeed, the War Department’s

1944 pamphlet *Command of Negro Troops* staunchly defended segregation as a “matter of expediency” pursuant to the worldwide emergency of the war.⁵⁰ Eisenhower’s chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, urged his boss to disavow Lee: “Two years ago I would have considered [Lee’s proposal] the most dangerous thing that I had ever seen in regard to Negro relations. . . . I have talked with Lee about it, and he can’t see this at all. He believes that it is right that colored and white soldiers should be mixed in the same company.” Though professing to protect the War Department—and Marshall—by telling Lee that the ETO could not alter government policy, Smith’s language and track record point to a personal hostility to integration.⁵¹ Even Lee’s closest friends thought he had gone too far. Lee’s 1909 West Point classmate Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, commanding the 6th Army Group, wrote that “Johnny Lee is trying to involve us in the colored question again, and apparently has. . . . I cannot understand a man of his experience creating issues which are so far-reaching.”⁵² Eisenhower, however, was in no position to oppose Lee. Having mismanaged both the materiel and replacement crises in the ETO and then allowed the Germans to surprise the Allies in mid-December, Eisenhower

could expect little help and no sympathy from Marshall. He accepted Lee’s proposal without consulting Marshall, but personally revised the announcement in hopes of keeping it aligned with official policy. Specifically, he directed those Black volunteers be trained “as members of Infantry rifle platoons.”⁵³ Because there were no segregated infantry units of any size in the European Theater, Eisenhower’s decision meant that, as historian Bernard C. Nalty observed, the fighting would be integrated even if the U.S. Army officially remained segregated.⁵⁴

Although originally limited to just 2,500 volunteers, the “voluntary transfer program” attracted more than twice that number.⁵⁵ The first 2,800 volunteers reported for six weeks’ retraining to the 16th Replacement Depot at Compiègne, France, which had been retraining support soldiers as infantry since November 1944. More than 90 percent of the volunteers came from three principal specialties: 38 percent were engineers, 29 percent were quartermasters, and 26 percent came from transportation units. Ninety percent were younger than age thirty, and the average score of the volunteers on the Army General Classification Test exceeded that of African American soldiers as a whole but fell below the average for White soldiers in the theater. Nevertheless, Col. Alexander George, the officer charged with training the volunteers, reported fewer disciplinary problems with the Black volunteers than with any group of White replacements.⁵⁶ At the conclusion of six weeks of retraining on 1 March 1945, the first graduates comprised thirty-seven infantry platoons; ultimately, fifty-three platoons completed the training program and saw combat in Europe. Thirty-seven served as replacement platoons in the divisions of Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges’s First Army; sixteen served with Seventh Army, but as consolidated companies designated “Company D,” usually in armored infantry battalions.⁵⁷ Having undergone no collective training above the platoon level, the “provisional” companies in Seventh Army performed less well than their counterparts, and suffered lower morale from being treated, in effect, as exotic experiments rather than comrades-in-arms.⁵⁸

The platoons fighting as members of White rifle companies quickly earned the trust and confidence of their new commanders. In early April, General Davis called on many of the division commanders who had received African American replacement platoons. Maj. Gen. Terry



Generals Devers (left), Eisenhower (center), and Maj. Gen. Edward C. Brook inspect a Sixth Army Group situation map.
National Archives



General Hodges
U.S. Army

de la Mesa Allen Sr. of the 104th Infantry Division reported that “they have without exception proven themselves to be good soldiers.” Maj. Gen. Edwin P. Parker Jr., commanding the 78th Infantry Division, left Davis nearly speechless by asking if he could get more. In the 99th Infantry Division’s 393d Infantry, the African Americans



General Parker, shown here as a brigadier general
National Archives



Black volunteer combat soldiers march in preparation for shipment to the front lines in Germany, 28 February 1945.
National Archives



Maj. Gen. Terry de la Mesa Allen (left) and General Bradley

National Archives



General Patch

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Maj. Gen. Roderick R. Allen

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were known as “the Colored Platoon of Easy Company—one of the best platoons in the regiment.” In the 1st Infantry Division, the other platoons “like to fight beside them because they laid a large volume of fire on the enemy positions.”⁵⁹

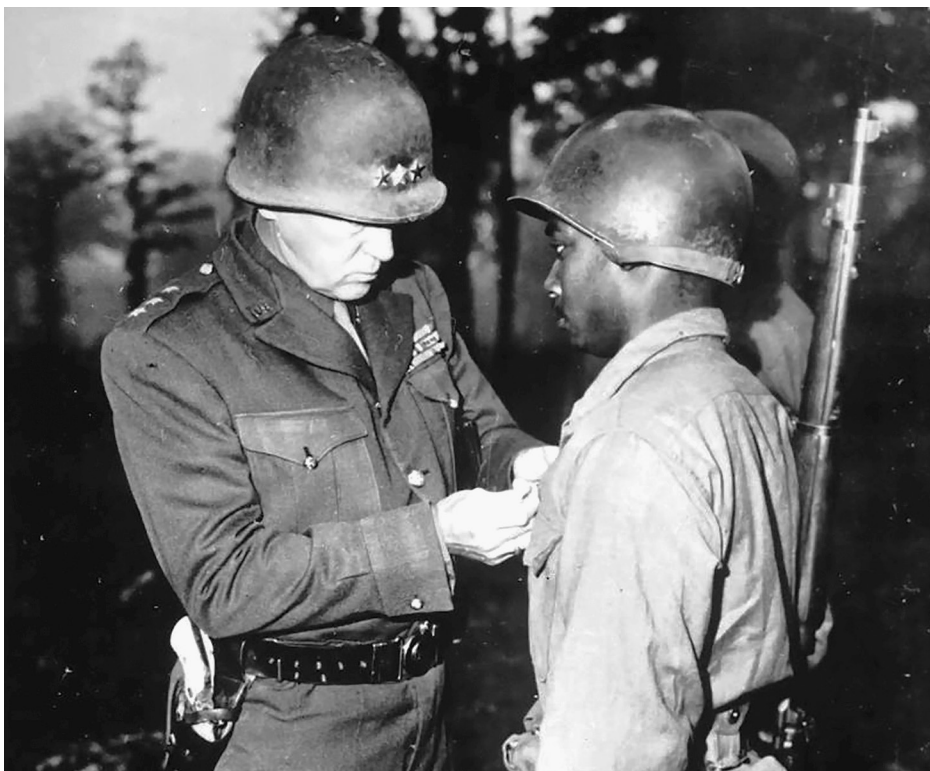
Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, commanding Seventh Army, complained to Davis that the experiment appeared to be a failure, that the Black companies failed to perform to the same level of competence as White rifle companies.⁶⁰ The commander of the 12th Armored Division, Maj. Gen. Roderick R. Allen, strenuously objected to receiving any Black soldiers at all, having only recently won Patch’s support to detach the segregated 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion from his division for alleged timidity in combat. General Davis explained to Patch that using the replacement platoons to create new organizations violated the intent of Eisenhower’s policy. Davis subsequently reported the issue to General Devers, Patch’s superior, who issued Patch a toothless admonition.⁶¹ Yet, it is indisputable that the Black replacement platoons, when employed in a manner consistent with their training, performed at least as well as platoons of White soldiers. The officers and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) who led these platoons—all White—were quick to point out to inspectors their happy surprise at having their initial expectations proved false; some even voiced concern that the Black riflemen were too aggressive and took chances that more battle-tested soldiers would avoid.⁶²

The U.S. Army did not call attention to its integration of Black and White soldiers into the same rifle companies, but the Negro press in the United States trumpeted the news with banner headlines.⁶³ Nevertheless, the War Department did study closely the results of the experiment, and even published a report for internal circulation on the topic.⁶⁴ Fifty interviewers from the ETO’s Information and Education Division compiled their report from surveys of all available White company-grade officers who had commanded Black infantry platoons or the companies in which they had served, and a representative sample of the White platoon sergeants who actually led African American soldiers in combat. The respondents represented twenty-four rifle companies in seven of the infantry divisions in General Omar N. Bradley’s 12th Army Group. In addition to these approximately 250 leaders, the interviewers circulated an anonymous survey to some 1,700 White veterans who

had not served with Black soldiers to serve as a control group. Not surprisingly, no one asked Black veterans to render an opinion.⁶⁵

Despite the doom-and-gloom predictions of senior officers such as Smith, Devers, and even Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr., the report fully vindicated Lee's "Ardennes experiment."⁶⁶ When asked, "has your feeling [about African Americans as infantry] changed since having served in the same unit with colored soldiers?", 77 percent of both officers and NCOs responded favorably, using comments such as, "I feel more respect for them" or, "I like them better." The interviewers highlighted the fact that no respondent reported that his attitude had become "less favorable." Of vital importance for advocates of full integration, 100 percent of the officers and 99 percent of NCOs who had led Black platoons reported that the Black riflemen performed "fairly well" or "very well" in combat. Eighty-seven percent of officers and 92 percent of NCOs thought that, if given the same equipment and the same level of training, African American soldiers would be "just the same" or "better than white troops." Importantly, the interviewers noted that proximity to service with the Black riflemen directly affected White soldiers' perceptions. Eight hundred ninety-nine of the anonymous survey respondents who never served anywhere near one of the "5th platoons" claimed they would "dislike it very much" if required to serve in integrated units; just six of the eighty respondents who actually served in the integrated companies agreed with them.⁶⁷ Thus, for the first time, the U.S. Army possessed empirical data showing that integrated units enjoyed high esprit de corps and combat efficiency with no loss of morale or discipline on the part of either Black or White soldiers.

Senior leaders' reactions to the report say much more about them than previously has been reported. General Brehon B. Somervell, commander of Army Service Forces, recommended quashing the report, worried that its implications would undermine popular and especially political support for the war effort. General Bradley, too, recommended suppressing the report. Despite having given General Davis the impression that he welcomed the African American volunteers, Bradley downplayed the significance of the experiment and disparaged the combat in which Black troops had engaged as "mopping up operations." Having initially blocked the inclusion of Black riflemen in his Third Army, General Patton remained



General Patton decorating a Black soldier.

National Archives



Black volunteer infantry replacements receive weapons training from a White noncommissioned officer.

National Archives



(Left to right) President Truman, John J. McCloy, and Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson

National Archives

opposed to the idea of integration. Taking his cue from the senior leaders in Europe, General Marshall, too, lost no time in dismissing the entire episode as an aberration, recommending to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy only that the integration issue be “followed up.” Thus, at the end of the war, the ETO disbanded most of the Black rifle platoons; their members returned to their previous service units for redeployment and demobilization, rather than run the risk of having Black infantry march alongside White soldiers in various parades as coequal members of “the Division with which they fought.”⁶⁸

Postwar Changes

The U.S. Army today often claims credit for having been one of the engines of desegregation for American society, and sometimes deliberately seems to obscure the uniquely dehumanizing character of its former antipathy to Black soldiers.⁶⁹ It is true that the Army eventually championed many changes in American society in the second half of the twentieth century. It is equally true that the voluntary transfer program of 1945 gained acceptance by the

U.S. Army only because no other viable solution to the infantry replacement shortage existed, and because it always viewed the program as a temporary expedient. Calls for volunteers among White service troops and even wholesale conversion of excess White anti-aircraft, engineer, and tank destroyer units could not keep pace with requirements. However, we should resist the temptation to claim that the 4,800 African American people who volunteered for infantry service provided the necessary manpower margin to ensure victory over the Germans. No one argues that the Allies would not have triumphed over Germany in 1945. We can, however, argue that the intermingling of White and Black soldiers in the same companies proved to be the final straw that undermined the U.S. Army’s many justifications for segregation. As a now-forgotten 1952 research study concluded, “the more intimately the men had participated in a mixed-company organization of Negroes and whites, the less opposition there was to it” even among southern-born White Americans. The Army’s own research in the immediate aftermath of war showed that the institutional justification of segregation as



General Somervell

U.S. Army



Secretary Royall reviews a company of Black military police officers.

National Archives

“a matter of practical military expediency and not an endorsement of belief in racial distinction” resulted from unfounded White fears of interracial strife, not from empirical data. That fear proved to be a convenient excuse to make only token adjustments to official policy for senior officers too emotionally invested in long-term culture and practice to do more.⁷⁰ After the war, an official study of the uses of African American manpower recommended that the Army offer “broader opportunities” to Black people in the service, but remained adamant that segregation must be retained.⁷¹ In the end, even President Harry S. Truman’s 1948 Executive Order 9981 proved insufficient to move the Army forward; Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall Sr. resigned in 1949 rather than implement official White House and Department of Defense policies.⁷² It required another war, and another shortage

of infantry replacements, to finally end legal segregation in the U.S. Army. As Professor Dwayne Wagner wrote recently, since 1948 “we’ve come a long ways; we have a ways to go.”⁷³

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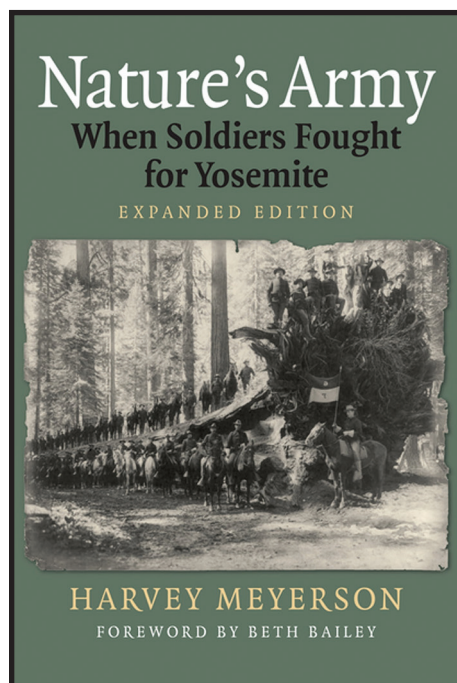
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BOOKREVIEWS



NATURE'S ARMY: WHEN SOLDIERS FOUGHT FOR YOSEMITE, EXPANDED EDITION

BY HARVEY MEYERSON

University Press of Kansas, 2020
Pp. xlii, 322. \$24.95

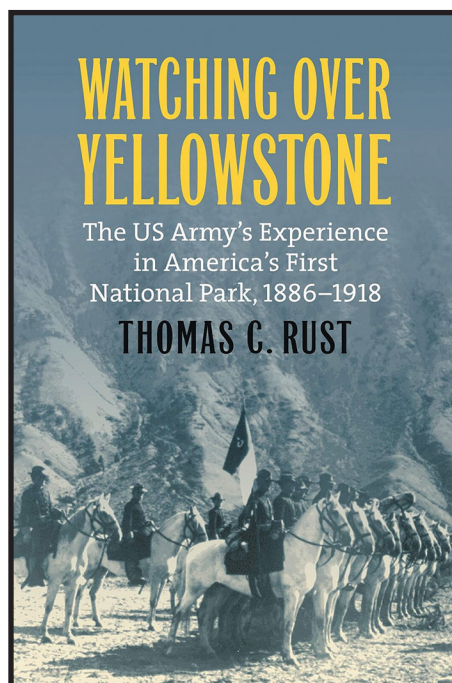
WATCHING OVER YELLOWSTONE: THE US ARMY'S EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK, 1886–1918

BY THOMAS C. RUST

University Press of Kansas, 2020
Pp. xv, 256. \$24.95

DUAL REVIEW BY JULIE I. PRIETO

Although today's visitors have inherited a National Park system that seems firmly rooted in civilian oversight and advocacy, the early history of environmental protection is tied inextricably to the United States Army. Two books, Harvey Meyerson's *Nature's Army: When Soldiers Fought for Yosemite* and Thomas C. Rust's



Watching Over Yellowstone: The US Army's Experience in America's First National Park, 1886–1918, explore this connection by telling the story of how soldiers policed and shaped the preserves before the founding of the National Park Service in 1916. *Nature's Army* originally came out in 2001. It has been expanded and reissued to commemorate its twentieth anniversary. This new version adds more background and an insightful essay by Beth Bailey. Rust's book is a new addition to the historiography. Together, these histories reveal the lasting ways the Army remade the west and served as the face of the federal government in places far removed from Washington's hand. Preservation may have had the force of law, but it took soldiers on the ground decades to build the institutions needed to safeguard the environment. This is the Army as a nation-building tool in nineteenth and early twentieth-century America.

Both Meyerson and Rust use their subject to broaden our understanding of daily life and service in the "Old Army," the force that existed before the reforms

enacted under Secretary of War Elihu Root. Meyerson argues that the Army's institutional culture was deeply ingrained with moral values and an environmental ethic. These became part of the fabric of Yosemite and spread to the broader conservation movement. The officers who served in California took a broad view of their mandate to protect nature, reaching far beyond the parks' boundaries to defend the land. Rust focuses more on the routines and rhythms of officers and enlisted soldiers to show the experience of living and working in Yellowstone. It is a smaller-scale view of the Old Army that demonstrates how the force operated in peacetime.

Rust begins his story with a short history of the establishment of Yellowstone and its first years as an isolated, largely unpoliced space. He points out that the Department of the Interior turned to the Army to provide security in the park after the railroad started bringing larger numbers of visitors and then only out of desperate necessity. Upon their arrival, soldiers performed functions that were largely constabulary in nature. They drilled, preparing to fight enemies on a traditional field of battle, but in practice, they spent most of their time managing tourists and warring against nature itself. The troops fought forest fires, chased poachers, and enforced the terms of leases on concessions. Rust devotes special attention to the intense physical difficulties involved in stopping burns in remote stretches of the park with only buckets of water and pack animals and to the monotony of patrol.

On their off-time, soldiers created routines and engaged in diversions that marked the rhythms of life in the Old Army. They visited the post exchange, ate, drank, danced, played sports, read, and sometimes socialized with civilians. Rust distinguishes between the troops and families stationed at Fort Yellowstone and the soldiers posted in small units far in the backcountry. These troops lived an even more isolated existence with less oversight.

As a result, a wealth of evidence suggests these soldiers poached wild animals for food and perhaps for sport at an alarming rate. In these places, desertion rates were unusually high. In one chapter, Rust gives a detailed account of the murder of one soldier by another after mundane interpersonal issues curdled into deep antagonism and distrust.

While presenting an account of daily life in the park, Rust repeatedly turns to the idea that service to protect nature represented a deviation from the normal missions of the Army. He argues that soldiers had not been trained to do much of the day-to-day work of maintaining the park and that at least some resented having to do these duties. Rust acknowledges that the long patrol hours hearkened back to a type of frontier service. However, he sees this type of soldiering as distinct from other kinds of constabulary-type policing the Army did in the western United States and the Philippines after 1898. In this, Rust overstates his case even when making a valid argument that the promise of military service did not always match the reality for some cavalry soldiers.

Rust also focuses a great deal of attention on class differences between officers, enlisted men, park visitors, and locals in Yellowstone. He points out that the adventurers who visited the park and stayed in its hotels were often relatively wealthy and were loath to take orders from the military, whom they considered beneath them. Officers tended to be more like these guests regarding background, but tensions between the two groups remained. The people who lived near the park and campers seemed no less reluctant to respect authority. Although it is not always clear how class affected how troops protected the park, it is worth pointing out that the people who inhabited Yellowstone's boundaries were not monolithic in encountering its splendor and exploitable resources.

Meyerson's book is the more ambitious of the two narratives. The author begins by exploring the origins of the Army and its mission, emphasizing that for much of its life, soldiers served as a sort of domestic constabulary, policing western lands before they could be sold. This often put them at odds with White settlers, who resented limits on their exploitation of the national territory. In addition to protecting the public domain,

the Army was responsible for investigating the west and mapping large swaths of the country. Explorers spent years crossing the landscape by horse, making scientific observations, and sacrificing their bodies to build a new nation. In describing this, Meyerson argues that soldiers' duties in Yosemite continued the Army's traditional role. Here, Meyerson starkly contrasts Rust, who sees the institution's presence in the parks as a significant departure from its mission and institutional identity.

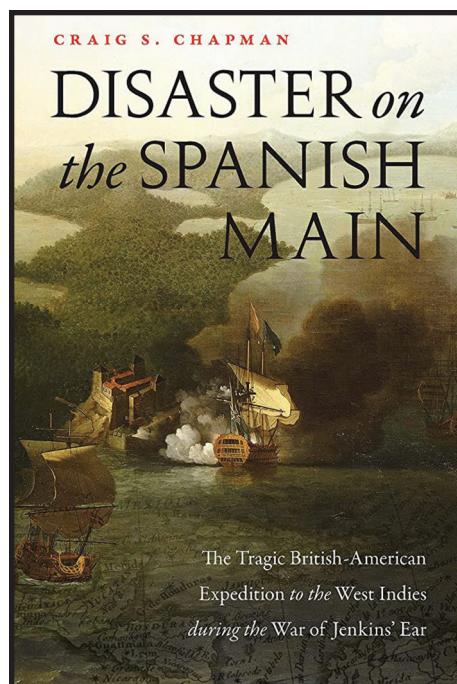
In turning to Yosemite itself, the narrative focuses much of its attention on the officers who commanded troops within the park. Capt. Abram E. "Jug" Wood, Capt. Joe Dorst, and others embodied the values of the Old Army, spending much of their lives riding long, challenging distances and performing civic duty with loyalty and leadership. Meyerson emphasizes that these men lived lives of rules, regulations, and routines. They were "hard riding bureaucrats" (46) who met nature with forms in hand, translating the west into pieces of paper that could be processed and made uniform.

These officers took a broad view of their role in protecting the environment. Like Yellowstone, they patrolled, hunted poachers, and policed tangled land claims. However, Meyerson focuses much of his attention on the longer-term project of making the park a permanent part of the nation. Army officers surveyed the land and drew maps to solidify and protect its boundaries. They convinced local White residents to accept the loss of valuable land claims for the public good. Over time, they developed relationships with John Muir and other conservationists in the Sierra Club, sharing in a sort of "ecological nationalism" (108) centered on a deep affection for wild places. Even though the Department of the Interior eventually wrested park policing back from the Army, Meyerson sees the institution's success in these areas reflected in the military trappings exhibited by the Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Nature's Army and *Watching Over Yellowstone* present a comprehensive and enlightening picture of the Army's time defending and building the national park system in its infancy. Meyerson's study provides a more comprehensive view of the force in the nineteenth century, its peacetime functions within the continental United States, its culture,

and more. The officers he profiles are towering, almost romantic figures who embodied the discipline of the trail but were driven by environmental concerns. Rust's book contrasts this by presenting a less heroic, grittier picture of the Army. By examining the daily lives of soldiers, we see a force that is less prepared to meet the challenge of policing the parks and one lacking a genuine connection to the natural environment. Both books minimize discussing the Army's interactions with indigenous people in and around the parks. Meyerson argues that officers often felt a kinship with native groups in their shared respect for the land. In the end, the Army created a park without input from local tribes to benefit mostly White visitors. Rust hardly mentions native people at all. Despite this issue, these books provide necessary and rare insight into the lives of soldiers serving in the Old Army and the state of an institution on the precipice of great change.

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DISASTER ON THE SPANISH MAIN: THE TRAGIC BRITISH-AMERICAN EXPEDITION TO THE WEST INDIES DURING THE WAR OF JENKINS' EAR

BY CRAIG S. CHAPMAN

University of Nebraska Press, 2021
Pp. xiv, 410. \$29.95

REVIEW BY WESTIN E. ROBESON

Humans find severed bits of the human body revolting, educational, and fascinating, summoning our revulsion or intrigue. However, one particular appendage belonging to English shipmaster Robert Jenkins may have been brandished in the House of Commons in 1738 to stir the people's passion for armed conflict—a *casus belli* for war with Spain. On 19 October 1739, King George II penned his name at the bottom of a declaration for that war. Craig S. Chapman's *Disaster on the Spanish Main: The Tragic British-American Expedition to the West Indies during the War of Jenkins' Ear* judiciously examines the contingencies that resulted in a Spanish victory. The text engages with strategies and tactics but moves well beyond them. Chapman focuses on the frictions of war, such as the roles of politics, communication, climate, command personalities, and even mosquitos, in determining the outcome of the War of Jenkins' Ear. He makes a strong case that the Spanish commanders outperformed their British counterparts.

From platoon leader to battalion commander, Craig S. Chapman's twenty-

eight years as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army and National Guard serve him well in assessing military operations. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Michigan State University, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. This joint civilian and military education gives him a pedigree to publish works on the American Civil War, World War II, and the War of Jenkins' Ear. His purpose is to restore the Anglo-Spanish War's principal campaign in the West Indies to the public consciousness, namely the amphibious campaign against the port of Cartagena, Colombia, and to examine the many reasons for Britain's loss and Spain's success (2).

As the War of the Spanish Succession ended, the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht granted concessions to the belligerents. Mainly, Spain permitted Britain to import enslaved Africans and 500 tons of merchandise yearly to markets in Cartagena, Porto Bello, and Vera Cruz with stipulated excise duties. Following the Anglo-Spanish War of 1726–1729, both nations sought to harken back to the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht—both crowns wanting compensation for their losses, with Spain demanding payment owed and Britain insisting on reparations for assets lost. Violence at sea escalated when Spanish King Philip V sanctioned the West Indies *guarda costas* to intercept British merchant vessels and seize the contraband. British ships were lost, cargoes seized, and crews abused by Spanish privateers. In the meantime, Spain's new alliance with Austria prompted Britain to ally with France and the Netherlands. Britain sent a fleet to the West Indies in a failed attempt to block Spanish treasure ships, which continued to reach home ports unloading their New World silver. British ships, on the contrary, returned to their home ports with accounts of Spanish marauding. Tales of kidnapping, torture, seizure, and one particularly famous de-earring circulated in print. Britons demanded militant recourse.

Petitions from planters, merchants, and the South Sea Company, poured into the House of Commons demanding their protection from “insults and depredations” and to “procure full Satisfaction for the Damages already sustained; and to secure to the British Subjects, the full and uninterrupted Exercise of their Trade and Navigation to, and from the British Colonies in America” (58). “Britain began humming with a martial spirit,” writes Chapman, “not at the behest of the king and his ministers, but from a bellicose public

spurred on by the merchant class” (60). The governments nearly avoided war through a financial agreement (the Convention of Pardo) between the two countries. Unwilling to unmoor their share of money owed to Spain, the South Sea Company refused to disclose its accounts “lest the Spanish King and its own shareholders discover the extent of their graft and embezzlement” (63). Negotiations quickly ceased, and Spain and Britain prepared for war.

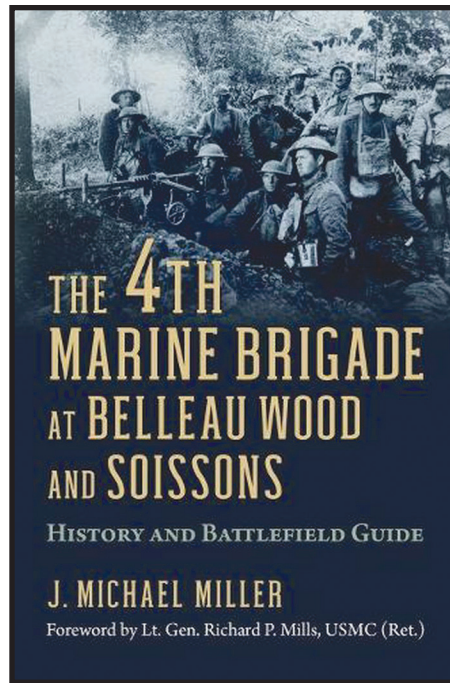
Chapman's narrative focuses on the opposing British and Spanish commands, British Admiral Edward Vernon and Maj. Gen. Thomas Wentworth and Spanish Vice Admiral Don Blas de Lezo y Olavarrieta and Viceroy Sebastián de Eslava y Lazaga. Britain failed to “establish any clear goals beyond bringing Spain to heel or suggest any military objectives that could accomplish such an amorphous agenda”—conquering Spain required the British fleet to move into the West Indies to seize the Spanish West Indies, particularly their port in Cartagena (66). The expedition was a catastrophe. Setting sail without any established grand strategy, Admiral Vernon and General Wentworth soon found themselves with competing theories on how to project their power against the Spanish. Discord deteriorated into mistrust and enmity between the commands, swamping effective joint operations as the force maneuvered into the waters and jungles around Cartagena. Chapman points to one particularly glaring event when Admiral Vernon directed that all the freshwater (recently discovered by his ships) be distributed only to navy personnel and none to Wentworth's forces slogging it out in the jungle heat.

The army would continue to endure stored water, which was so foul accounts relate that sailors would often hold their noses as they drank it. Worse still, the water was a breeding ground for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which would mete out yellow fever among the British forces (232). Here, Chapman breaks with the traditional narrative that yellow fever was the main reason for the campaign's failure. He asserts that the disease's contribution to the campaign's failure has been “misconstrued” throughout the historiography (343). The casualties sustained from yellow fever took their toll only *after* the British lifted their siege on Cartagena. The real culprit to the failed campaign was the inability of Admiral Vernon and General Wentworth to unify and execute joint operations. Chapman

demonstrates throughout the text how “the disconnect between the services forfeited the chance to combine their attributes, skills, and fire to exert combat power exceeding their separate capabilities” (346). The author puts most of the blame on Vernon’s arrogance, compounded by his ignorance of land operations. Wentworth also receives his share of culpability due to his inability to “stand up to the bullying admiral” (348). Chapman also effectively balances the narrative with the Spanish experience, arguing that their command, namely Blas de Lezo, proved to be better at adapting to strategic and tactical developments. Furthermore, the Spanish land and sea forces behaved in concert, providing mutual support, thus securing victory in the West Indies.

Disaster on the Spanish Main will appeal to many audiences, including those interested in combined arms operations, command, and eighteenth-century warfare. This book is an excellent multilevel military history that escorts readers through the politics and grand strategy into the sweltering jungles and cannon-belching redoubts. Readers unfamiliar with eighteenth-century naval warfare may need to go beyond the provided glossary and maps. This book falls short in Chapman’s attempt to balance the Spanish and English history with that of the American colonies. Though the colonial viewpoint receives attention, it amounts to a limited narrative portion. Indeed, the author successfully presents the American colonies’ overlooked contribution to the war effort. Chapman’s prose and ability to write an accessible multiperspective history that challenges the existing historiography assures academic and novice readers will come away with a thorough understanding of the war and the actual forces that determined its outcome.

Westin E. Robeson is an author and social studies teacher. His primary research and writing interests focus on the history of American armor. He is the author of *Buttoned Up: American Armor and the 781st Tank Battalion in World War II* (Texas A&M University Press, 2018). He has organized and served on panels concerning American armor history. He holds a master’s degree in American military history from Norwich University and a bachelor’s degree in secondary education from the University of Cincinnati.



THE 4TH MARINE BRIGADE AT BELLEAU WOOD AND SOISSONS: HISTORY AND BATTLEFIELD GUIDE

BY J. MICHAEL MILLER

University Press of Kansas, 2020
Pp. xviii, 470. \$27.95

REVIEW BY LISA M. BUDREAU

No discussion of U.S. Marine Corps history would be possible without mentioning the iconic Battle for Belleau Wood, where the Corps had their baptism by fire during World War I. The celebrated heroism of the 4th Brigade (Marines) among the wheat fields of France in June 1918 is the stuff of legends, and deservedly so. Authors have given far less attention to the attack, which took place weeks later on 18–19 July, for the Battle of Soissons, which most historians agree, ultimately turned the tide in favor of the Allies.

During the Second Marne Campaign, the 4th Brigade was one of four American brigades that participated in the French XX Corps’ attack—as part of the U.S. Army 2d Division, the Marines, the U.S. Army 1st Division, and a French Moroccan Division. They spearheaded the advance that forced the Imperial German Army to withdraw from the entire Marne salient. From this moment until the armistice on 11 November 1918, the Allies retained the advantage on the Western Front.

Only a few miles separate Soissons from Belleau Wood which, despite its fame, was

of limited tactical worth to both sides and a “poorly executed brigade-level operation” (363). By contrast, Miller claims that “the 2nd Division’s Battle for Soissons was arguably the Marines’ most decisive strategic contribution to the war” (363). He explains how this popular misconception occurred and substantiates his assertion with finesse, a balanced tone, and an absorbing style along with many sources.

With his ambitious new book, Michael Miller, Marine Corps historian and former archivist, has taken on the enormously challenging task of treating both battles as one campaign, providing a much-needed analysis that bridges the two key events. He has also incorporated a guidebook to the former battle sites within this narrative. The book is separated into two parts, one for each battle, with maps included for general reference and driving guidance. Miller pauses his portrayal at intervals to present suggestions for road stops marked on the maps and to relate additional historical points and personal accounts that coincide with the sights referenced. This process generally works, except that readers may find it tedious to locate the maps that are not always near the pages under discussion.

Miller’s introduction begins with the evolution of the 4th Brigade in the United States once war was declared in April 1917, followed by their eventual movement to the Marne. He explains how the Marines came to serve with the U.S. Army’s 2d Division and why American troops fought in the Marne region in the summer of 1918. Sixteen chapters follow, including the aftermath and conclusions. A useful appendix provides tables of organization for both the Allied and German units, an extensive list of notes (mostly primary sources), and a substantial bibliography.

Miller leaves it up to the reader to determine the ultimate success of the 2d Division’s efforts in the Soissons battle. They were withdrawn from the lines without having breached their primary objective, the Soissons–Château-Thierry road, because of heavy casualties. We read, “The ferocity of these two battles resulted in the loss of 6,613 men in less than two months. With an authorized strength of 8,417 men, the 4th Marine Brigade’s devastation was severe” (349).

Writing an accurate but engaging battlefield narrative is a complex undertaking that risks losing the reader to dull operational scrutiny while overlooking

the human element. Miller manages to keep the action flowing and the analysis informative, even as he drills down to the company and platoon levels while maintaining sensitivity to the individual perspective. He does this by adeptly using previously unpublished archival material in the Marine Corps History Division collections at Quantico, Virginia, and elsewhere. Firsthand accounts extracted from oral histories, diaries, and many years of extensive research are presented here richly, including French, British, and German sources. His passion for the subject is evident in the depth and detail that unfolds on the 470 pages of his book.

Some readers may find the frequent descriptions of tragic killing and ubiquitous death scenes disturbing. Miller spares none of the macabre details in his grim retelling of the horrific atrocities of warfare, a reminder of humanity's unspeakable cruelty to humans.

Unfortunately, although the narrative shines, the guidebook aspect of this study might have benefited from stronger editing. Although mistakes are likely inevitable when taking on such an ambitious endeavor, readers may become frustrated by simple errors that could impact the usefulness and accuracy of the guidance intended. Perhaps the most glaring error to this reviewer is Miller's incorrect repeated reference to an "Oise Marne" cemetery (vi, 204, 330, 464) instead of the accurate Oise-Aisne American Cemetery. This could pose some difficulty for an uninformed, first-time traveler. The author does include a welcomed and informative summary of the postwar repatriation effort by the U.S. Army's Graves Registration Service and mentions the Gold Star Mothers pilgrimages that followed from 1930–1933.

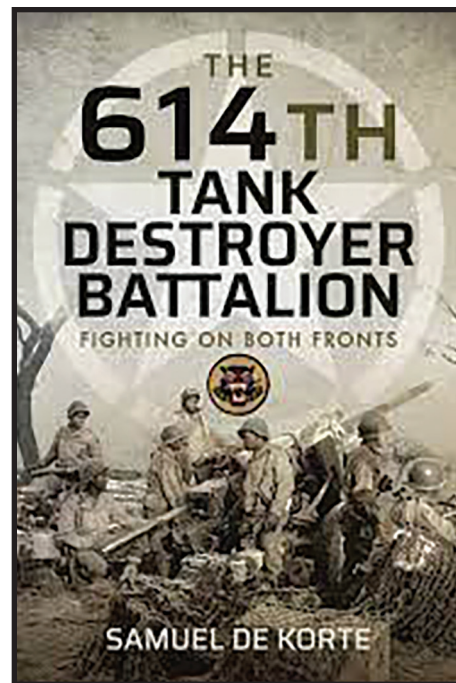
Map quality varies, with some crucial details illegible due to tiny font size, blurry print, and shaded terrain areas. There are spelling inconsistencies, particularly with town names. Vauxcastille is sometimes misspelled as "Vauxcastle" (206, 335), and even Soissons is misspelled on one map as "Soisons" (191). Proper French spellings and accents are overlooked in many cases, yet written correctly elsewhere, i.e., "Grand-Rozoy" vs. Grand Rozy (204, 205) and "Nantueil" (184, 185) instead of

Nantueil. Stop number 16E on the road tour of Soissons is not shown on the map (206), although it is referenced in the guide text (209). Lastly, an understandable faux pas for a Marine historian, perhaps, is the repeated use of the term American Expeditionary Force instead of the correct plural version, Forces, as specified by the commander himself, General John J. Pershing.

Although regrettable, these mistakes do not detract from an otherwise illuminating, generally well-cited, and highly engaging investigation packed with a gripping combat narrative. Whether a seasoned armchair traveler, a general World War I enthusiast, or a dedicated Marine historian, readers will benefit from Miller's comprehensive study and battlefield guide.

Those lucky enough to walk these battlefields for themselves would be wise to carry Miller's hefty book along. They will find it helpful and informative indeed—particularly to the Soissons battlefield sites where scant on-the-ground interpretation can be found. All credit to this formidable contribution to the Marines in the Great War historiography, filled with documented testimonials assembled to amplify the personal experience.

Dr. Lisa M. Budreau is a Marine Corps History Division historian responsible for their World War I commemorative series. She has written extensively on national World War I memory, cemeteries, battlefield travel, and the Gold Star Mothers' pilgrimages.



THE 614TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION: FIGHTING ON BOTH FRONTS

BY SAMUEL DE KORTE

Pen and Sword Military, 2022
Pp. x, 227. \$29.95

REVIEW BY WESLEY R. HAZZARD

In *The 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion: Fighting on Both Fronts*, Samuel De Korte seeks "to provide a detailed account of a battalion that fought during the Second World War: the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion. To a lesser degree, the goal is to provide insight into the experience of the segregated Tank Destroyer Battalion during the Second World War and to give insight into the black American perception of the Second World War" (1). In structuring the book, De Korte chronicles the creation, use, and inactivation of not only the 614th but other tank destroyer units created during the war, focusing on the three segregated units. The book largely can be broken down into three primary sections. The first discusses strategic thinking behind the creation of the tank destroyer units leading to the creation of the 614th. The second discusses the use of tank destroyers on battlefields in Europe and uses the 614th to demonstrate the multiple uses, many never intended, of the tank destroyers in combat. The third section follows the unit's inactivation and the experience of the soldiers once they returned home. Throughout the story,

De Korte illustrates how African American soldiers fought for equal access to the American dream and promises that the United States offered and how they found respect thousands of miles from home on the battlefield.

The story starts by following the American leadership's search for an answer to the panzer offensives that dominated the initial stages of the war in Europe. The opposing views included building more armored divisions using tanks as a foundation or creating units designed to seek and destroy the tank columns. Army leadership decided on the latter, leading to the birth of the tank destroyer units. The author points out that creating these units only led to continuing debates regarding equipment and structure design. Those debates evolved into training personnel, and this is where De Korte first introduces some of the main characters in the story. These characters provide the human experience while the author traces the 614th's trek across Europe. De Korte maintains focus on the human element by using an unofficial history, believed by the author to have been written by the 614th's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Frank S. Pritchard.¹

De Korte provides multiple experiences of African American soldiers assigned to not only the 614th but also other segregated tank destroyer units, such as the 827th and 679th stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. Using multiple battalions allows for a comprehensive analysis of African American soldiers' experience in the deep south and details the relationships and personal bonds developed during the training. An example of these bonds is a discussion regarding the illiteracy of numerous drafted African American soldiers and how other soldiers within the unit took on the added responsibility of teaching them how to read and write. Discussing the illiteracy of African American soldiers is a prime example of these soldiers' fighting on multiple fronts. More time elaborating on this aspect would have further demonstrated the difference between White and Black soldiers in the American military.

Once the 614th arrived in Europe, their experience and use in combat took center stage during the Ardennes and Central Europe campaigns. The 614th served their role with distinction, and Company A received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its role in the Battle of Climbach, France, on 14 December 1944. De Korte covers the fighting

front with immense detail because he uses unit diaries and firsthand accounts from oral histories and does not ignore the social front experienced by the 614th personnel. A primary discussion includes the evolving relationship between the soldiers of the 614th and other combat units during the European campaign. Relationship building was more difficult as tank destroyer units tended to be attached to multiple divisions, staying with one only as needed before rotating to another. However, the 614th found itself attached to the 103d Infantry Division for a protracted period, allowing the relationship between Black and White soldiers to build into one of trust and respect. The author places emphasis on the unit's perseverance and honor in battle as the reason for the changing attitudes of White soldiers from initial prejudice to lasting respect. Diaries and unit journals from the 103d Infantry Division provide much of the storytelling elements with firsthand accounts from members of the 614th as supplemental or to corroborate the interaction and story. One account that stands out is how the commander of the 103d, Maj. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, argued on multiple occasions to keep the 614th attached to the division, citing the hard-won respect from the multiple subordinate units.

While the soldiers of the 614th experienced respect in battle, those experiences did not translate into welcoming attitudes at home. De Korte provides multiple examples of how soldiers experienced discrimination upon returning home, many times while still in uniform. As those stories can demoralize the reader, they are countered by the stories of how the battlefield experiences led to the continued fight for equality. Many of the African American soldiers cite their experience in Europe as their introduction to the fight for civil rights at home. Even some of the White soldiers that served alongside them, motivated by their experience during the war, once again fought by their side for freedom.

These detailed, in-depth chapters offer emotional, tragic, and gripping firsthand accounts. While these accounts are thrilling, many of these stories belong to units other than the 614th. Although this does not take away from the experiences, it can sometimes take effort to follow which units are being discussed and the movement of those units across the battlefield. Along these lines, one chapter at the end of the book discusses the two other segregated tank destroyer units,

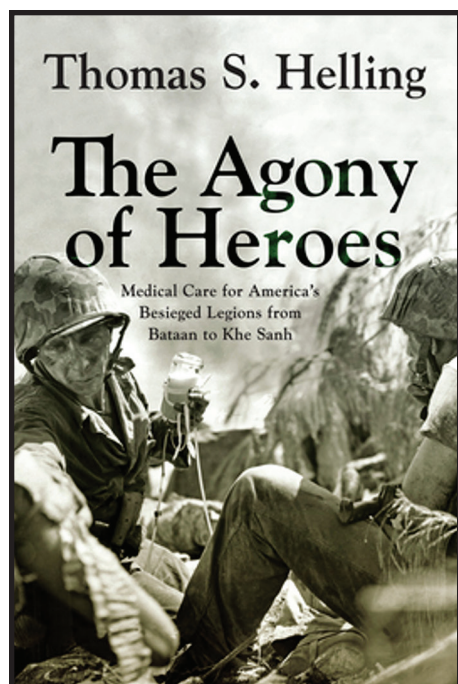
the 827th, and 679th, in broader detail. The units no doubt hold their distinct history of honorable service during the war but seem out of place in a book about the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion. However, the chapter does not take away from the overall story. Instead, it seeks to further build on the legacy of the segregated tank destroyer units that operated in a field of their own, made by forces within and outside of their control.

Samuel De Korte offers a thorough and unfiltered look at a segregated unit's World War II experience. From activation, to fighting on the battlefields of Central Europe, to returning home, the book illustrates the exemplary actions of the personnel in fighting for not only the liberty of Europe but also for liberty within their homeland. Many soldiers experienced the same racism and segregation at home while traveling overseas to fight. The story of the 614th Tank Destroyer Battalion demonstrates the resolve of those soldiers serving within the unit and their experience fighting on two fronts for a victory that would eventually lead to the emergence of a new era in the postwar world. Although success on one was achieved much earlier, that victory provided the spark that would lead to victory on the home front.

Dr. Wesley R. Hazzard received his PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2020 and currently works for the Field Programs Directorate within the U.S. Army Center of Military History. His interests include Cold War Caribbean history and World War II.

NOTE

1. "Three Inch Fury," n.d., https://tankdestroyer.net/images/stories/ArticlePDFs/614th_Unit_History_-_Complete.pdf.



THE AGONY OF HEROES: MEDICAL CARE FOR AMERICA'S BESIEGED LEGIONS FROM BATAAN TO KHE SANH

BY THOMAS S. HELLING

Westholme Publishing, 2019
Pp. xiv, 457. \$35

REVIEW BY JAVIER F. CASTROAGUDÍN

A hot, humid, and disease-ridden jungle; a small seaside resort town; a snowy city among lush forests; a narrow and bumpy road beside frozen steep slopes; and a foggy red clay plateau—what do these places, apparently so different, some in clearly hostile environments, have in common? U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps troops fought in these places—Bataan, Anzio, Bastogne, Chosin, Khe Sanh—surrounded by enemies in overwhelming numbers and in some of the most geographically and climatically terrifying combat grounds. For the most part, they prevailed against all odds. However, combat troops were not alone. U.S. Army and Marine Corps medical personnel—surgeons, nurses, surgical technicians, enlisted aides, corpsmen, litter bearers—shared their hardships and exposure to hunger, extreme cold or exhausting heat, disease, captivity, injuries, and death, while they tried, with all means at their disposal and in frightful conditions, to preserve the most valuable asset: life.

Thomas S. Helling, author of *The Agony of Heroes: Medical Care for America's Besieged*

Legions from Bataan to Khe Sanh, is a general surgeon, professor of surgery, and head of the Division of General Surgery at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. He tells the story of men and women who provided medical care to soldiers, marines, civilians, and enemies in isolated battleground environments, with only the available resources. They worked in tents, trenches, cellars, ruined buildings, and bunkers in dirt, mud, and snow. They worked with shrinking supplies, without surgical instruments, technology, or drugs, and in poor hygienic conditions. They were overwhelmed by avalanches of wounded and dying soldiers with terrible injuries. They were shot at, shelled, bombed, and suffered malaria, dysentery, combat exhaustion, frostbite, and trench foot. Some made the supreme sacrifice, paying with their life because of their devotion to caring for the sick and wounded.

To research these men and women, Helling's investigation led him to numerous military archives, official histories, after-action review reports, and above all, the written and oral memories of veterans and witnesses. He has composed a vivid, almost palpable picture of these poignant, heart-breaking, occasionally epic historical facts. Descriptions of horrible wounds, surgical procedures, and medical and nursing care dot the narrative. Sometimes, the moans and whines of the wounded, the smell of blood, dirt, and gangrene, fills the air, all in an oppressive and anguishing ambience.

Helling structures each siege in a similar fashion, starting with a brief but useful historical and geographical background, followed by a description of strategic and tactical scenarios, and afterward, a thorough narrative of the medical aspects and course of each siege. Maps are scarce and low-detailed, but their purpose is only to provide a general view of the medical operations area. Photographs are selective and valuable, but a higher resolution would be advisable. Descriptions are centered primarily on surgeons and nurses, and focus less on aides, corpsmen, and litter bearers, the indispensable first echelon of combat medical care and evacuations.

The course of sieges presents interesting common characteristics whose analysis may help plan future military operations. Although previous logistical preparations seemed reasonable and medical personnel were supplied and trained well (the author specifically remarks on the experience

and skills of military surgeons) they were overwhelmed totally by the unexpected situation. After an encirclement, the medical conditions quickly deteriorated. The basic principles of combat medicine—to stop bleeding, to prevent shock and infection, to manage pain—and life and limb-saving surgeries could not be carried out in the absence of vital medical supplies or trained and skillful surgeons. Hygienic conditions progressively worsened as the siege dragged on, and antiseptics became a luxury. The chain of evacuation broke, and injured soldiers had to stay in medical stations, out of the reach of advanced medical care and surgery. Air evacuation and resupply were the only lifelines for the trapped military units (except for the seaborne evacuation and supply at Anzio and the absence of any relief at Bataan). Parachuted supplies, the introduction of surgeons by light plane or glider, medical evacuation by the ubiquitous C-47 carriers and by helicopters made the difference between life and death for many injured soldiers. Air support prevented Khe Sanh from becoming another Dien Bien Phu.

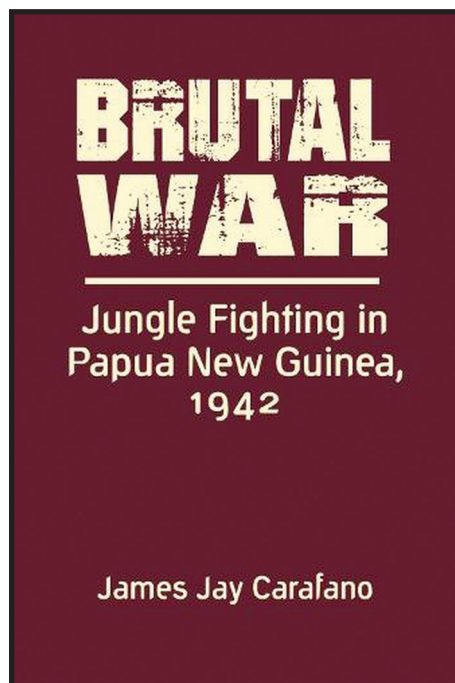
The author also contributes to the deconstruction of the figures of medical personnel that underlay in the collective memory—originated in official history and amplified by cultural products such as books or films. Abnegation, altruism, courage, and empathy were inherent to medical personnel, and reached nearly mythical proportions. This was necessary to maintain troops' morale. They knew that they would not be abandoned, and that there would be someone by their side in the worst moment of their lives. Nevertheless, although true, the related experience of medical personnel, as stated in Helling's book, was different. Inadequate medical training, insufficient means, and the endless stream of casualties made the personnel fearful and anguished of not being able to accomplish the assigned task.

Moreover, medical personnel were not invulnerable nor immune to the horrors of war: the pain, and death of friends and comrades, and shared privations and dangers. Nevertheless, they acted quickly and efficiently when necessary. This level of stress could drive to incapacitation and psychological collapse.

In conclusion, in *The Agony of Heroes*, Helling has built a story of fear, pain, horror, despair, and death, but also a story of compassion, hope, courage, resilience, and fortitude, shared equally by both combat and medical U.S. military personnel. They

were true blood brothers and sisters, rising in these ordeals as agonized but unforgettable heroes.

Dr. Javier F. Castroagudín, MD, PhD, is an associate professor of medicine at the University of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and a hepatologist at the University Hospital of Santiago. He holds a master's degree in military history from the same university. His research focuses on the history of military medicine during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and he has written about medical topics concerning Napoleonic era campaigns. Recently, Dr. Castroagudín started a research project about Spanish migrants serving in the United States armed forces during World War II.



BRUTAL WAR: JUNGLE FIGHTING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, 1942

BY JAMES JAY CARAFANO

Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2021
Pp. vii, 283. \$55

REVIEW BY IVAN A. ZASIMCZUK

When World War II came to Papua New Guinea in 1942, it came with the full ferocity of the industrial age and was contested on land, in the water around, and in the sky over this island. James

J. Carafano tells, in part, the essential story of why the war came to this part of the world and how it was waged in *Brutal War: Jungle Fighting in Papua New Guinea, 1942*. The Papua New Guinea Campaign comprised the western half of the twin drives across the Pacific. Of particular importance to the U.S. Army were the fierce jungle battles that began in 1942 and that lasted into 1945. Carafano's work focuses on four of these early battles.

Carafano offers four themes that he sees as "the foundation for a renewed appreciation of this faraway and long-ago fight" (2). First, he places "the fighting in the context of a worldwide war" (2), then he examines the terrain and the environment as a critical influence on the outcomes. Third, Carafano explains the conflict from its national perspective. Finally, he openly challenges other historical interpretations and posits that they "are mostly just . . . wrong" (4).

Organized into eleven chapters, the book follows a chronological approach with interwoven themes. He opens with the broader war and the strategic choices that the Allies confronted. Another chapter introduces Japan's war with China and the Japanese political, social, and cultural situation. The core of the work develops the fighting, and he concludes with his assessment of the legacy of the campaign and war.

Carafano is most successful in explaining his first two themes. The genuine strength of this work is that it firmly connects the fighting in Papua New Guinea to the broader war in and beyond the Pacific. Readers will walk away with a thorough understanding of the Allies' Europe-First Strategy and the friction this caused the Australians. Readers will also gain a good understanding of the complex relationship between the Australians, Americans, and native Papuans as they fought the first combined land campaign in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA). Carafano gives equal weight to the Japanese perspective. He highlights that New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were key points on the outermost perimeter of the newly conquered empire, which explains the fierce Japanese defense of these remote lands.

Readers will appreciate the significance of the ruggedness and austerity of the

terrain and the unforgiving nature and diversity of the environment. He describes the 60-mile Kokoda trail, its ends typically hot and humid jungles with impenetrable foliage, and its middle portion, at over 8,100 feet, usually freezing, foggy, and windy. It is as impressive as it is extreme. Contrast that to the Japanese coastal bases on flood-prone lowlands, swamps, and near estuaries. Carafano provides solid proof of the harsh conditions and the environment's natural threats, including debilitating diseases that degraded the combatants' health.

Another vital feature of the book is its thought-provoking and fascinating side-tracks. These interwoven subtopics add valuable contextual background. Among these are the occasionally featured leader; literature and film reviews, which the soldiers and their respective societies would have consumed; explanations of the racial tensions in the U.S. Army; and a review of postwar historical literature. Most importantly, Carafano reviewed the tactical doctrine each army used to prepare for jungle fighting and concluded that each army was terribly unprepared for what awaited them. These themes add significant value and give the work depth and nuance.

Curiously though, for a work titled *Brutal War: Jungle Fighting in Papua New Guinea 1942*, descriptions of jungle fighting are not heavily featured. Carafano chooses only four battles: the initial Japanese advance on the Kokoda Trail; the battle for the village of Isurava (on the Kokoda Trail); the coastal battle for Buna village and mission; and the U.S. Airborne drop at Nadzab. He does not explain why he selected these four battles rather than other very intense battles, such as Gona and Sanananda, which hosted the fiercest fighting in the Buna area. Nadzab was a puzzling inclusion, not least for its occurrence, in September 1943, well outside the stated window in the subtitle, but because it was not "brutal" regarding the actual jungle fighting. More soldiers were injured and killed during the uncontested drops and a later tragic plane crash on the seized airfield than in the fighting (226, 229). Carafano says, "the airborne landing facilitated capturing a key objective without a slug-out battle as in Buna" (229). Nadzab lacked major jungle fighting,

Buna featured plenty of it by comparison, but Carafano's treatment is incomplete. He describes its climax this way: "Though weeks of fighting remained, it was the beginning of the end for Buna," (195).

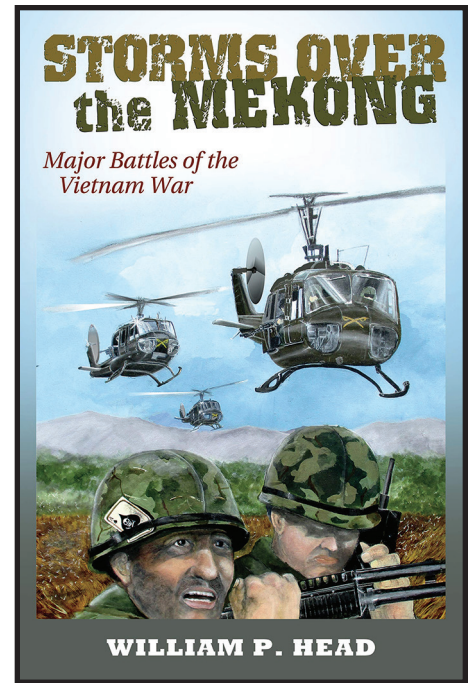
Illustrations and maps are essential for readers to understand this complex action, yet the work contains only four woefully inadequate maps. One central premise of the book is to fit this episode of fighting into the wider war, yet it has but one map to support visually these grand schemes—one depicting the Japanese seizure of its new island empire. This may be overlooked, however, but the lack of tactical maps, illustrations, or photos to support any of the four battles is less forgivable. Instead, four operational maps are provided, leaving readers to imagine the landscapes and battlefields they hosted. Landscapes represent one of the critical influences on the outcomes of these battles.

Carafano is correct that other interpretations are "mostly just . . . wrong" because "explanations of victory and defeat in this conflict are usually ascribed to either the decisions of generals on the one hand or the mettle of the armies fighting" (4). More recent publications have moved beyond those initial explanations. Carafano delivers the explanation in a general narrative arc centered around the following, admittedly simplified, progression: The Allies gained air and naval superiority, leading to dominance in sustainment. This resulted in greater survivability of the ground forces, and enabled the Allies to learn from each encounter and successfully adapt their tactics to defeat an increasingly beleaguered yet determined enemy. He might have made a more deliberate attempt to establish this as a grand explanation because it became the blueprint for success in the SWPA.

Those seeking more detailed descriptions of the early battles should read Eric Bergerud's *Touched with Fire* (Viking, 1996) and John McManus's *Fire and Fortitude* (Caliber, 2019). Lida Mayo's *Bloody Buna* (Doubleday, 1974) and Jay Luvaas' chapter on Buna in *America's First Battles 1776–1965* (University Press of Kansas, 1986) are superb for those seeking coverage of just Buna. This is certainly not entry-level work. However, neither scholars nor enthusiasts of this topic would necessarily benefit from this book.

Nonetheless, this monograph would be most beneficial to executive defense officials, policymakers, and senior military leaders who do not require an exacting tactical level of knowledge but need a general yet sophisticated understanding of this history. This audience especially would be reminded that armed forces seldom fight the wars they are prepared for and very often fight wars they are not prepared to fight, a condition that results in a brutal war.

Ivan A. Zasimczuk has been the military history instructor in the Signal History Office, Office Chief of Signal, Fort Gordon, Georgia, since June 2019. He graduated from the University of California at Davis (UCD) with a bachelor's degree in history and political science and a minor in English. He joined the Army through the UCD ROTC and entered active duty in 1997 as an Adjutant General Officer. He has served in Germany, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kuwait, Iraq, and Jordan. He attended Kansas State University, earning a master's in history with a follow-on teaching assignment at the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he taught military history and leadership. He ended his career in 2017, managing a marketing portfolio in the Army Marketing and Research Group. He then worked at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., for one year before assuming his current role.



STORMS OVER THE MEKONG: MAJOR BATTLES OF THE VIETNAM WAR

BY WILLIAM P. HEAD

Texas A&M University Press, 2020
Pp. xiv, 464. \$40

REVIEW BY JOHN M. CARLAND

The title of William Head's book, *Storms over the Mekong*, obscures more than it reveals. The subtitle—*Major Battles of the Vietnam War*—discloses more and tells us that the book's subject is the combat history of that conflict, writ large and intelligently and discursively presented.

The author tells his stories through a chaptered narrative (and analysis) of each battle he deems an "iconic" one of the war. Additionally, he frames the battles as a group through a contextual introduction and conclusion. The chapters were originally articles published here and there over the years and then brought together for this book.

Listing the battles covered in this book one by one, chapter to chapter, provides a sense of the author's selection criteria. In almost chronological order, the battles are Ap Bac (1963); Rolling Thunder (1965–1968); Ia Drang Valley (1965); Khe Sanh (1968); Saigon, Hue, and the Tet Offensive (1968); various air battles (1965–1973) including these campaigns/operations—ARC LIGHT, COMMANDO HUNT I–VII, the Easter Offensive, and LINEBACKER I and II; Hamburger Hill; the Easter Offensive (1972); and Xuan

Loc and the fall of Saigon (1975). In telling the tale of each battle, the author's narrative isolates, emphasizes, and comments on specific significant and/or consequential elements. To include air power in his book, the author defines air campaigns as battles, even if such a campaign might last for over three years, as did Rolling Thunder.

From battle to battle, Head's accounts are close to masterful. He sets the stage by including whatever factors are essential to the battle's story. Generally, these include, for each side, order of battle (including from the communist side, making use of material released in recent years by Hanoi), type of troops (infantry, artillery, etc.), battlefield geography, the strategic context, operational goals, tactical planning, logistics, the weather, weapons, and ammunition. Where he can, and it is often, he tells the reader how many artillery rounds each side expended in an engagement and to what effect; or in an air campaign, the number of sorties flown, the number of bombs dropped and their size, the number of aircraft shot down, and how they were shot down. He successfully makes his extensive statistics support the chapter's arguments.

Despite the book's authentic strengths, it is occasionally marred by errors in some of the sourcing and substance. For example, 19 of the first 22 notes in Chapter 2 come from the same source, Dennis M. Drew's paper, "Rolling Thunder 1965: Anatomy of a Failure," and not a single note contains a page number to the page where it occurred in the monograph. This makes it difficult to check the sources. In Chapter 6, Head states that the proposed tripartite National Council of Conciliation and Concord, comprised of communists, procommunist neutrals, and South Vietnamese government representatives, was North Vietnam's stalking horse for a coalition government (260). Though this was North Vietnam's intention, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger neutered this proposal during the negotiations by forcing the communist delegate to accept the Council as an advisory body and, more importantly, one that operated on the principle of unanimity. Also, during the Paris talks, Head writes that the United States "agreed to allow 100,000 PAVN [People's Army of Vietnam] troops already in South Vietnam to stay" (315). This is not so: the United States and South Vietnam had tried and failed since 1965 to force the North Vietnamese out of the South. In short, it was not in the power of the U.S. to "allow" North Vietnamese troops to

remain. They were there whether or not the United States liked it. A final example, the author misidentifies a famous, indeed iconic, photograph (355). He captioned it: "Desperate people climb to the top of the U.S. Embassy to take the last chopper out of Saigon during Operation Frequent Wind." It was not the embassy but a Central Intelligence Agency safe house in downtown Saigon.

Two overarching generalizations emerge from this book. First, most of these battles and campaigns failed, sometimes miserably, to achieve the operational and strategic goals of the United States or South Vietnam (Ab Bac; Rolling Thunder; COMMANDO HUNT, and MENU). Furthermore, even supposed victories were either so illusory (the Ia Drang) or short-term that, over the long haul, they meant little to South Vietnam's survival (Khe Sanh; Hue; the Tet Offensive; Hamburger Hill; the Easter Offensive and LINEBACKER I; LINEBACKER II; and Xuan Loc). Tactical success, as achieved in some of these instances, was meaningless unless it could be turned into strategic success, and this the United States was never able to do.

The second generalization—rarely explicit, always implicit—is that air power played a critical, role in each battle. It took two forms. One was strategic bombing by the Air Force and Naval aircraft against North Vietnam to destroy infrastructure targets (bridges, roads, railways, factories, and the like) and to interdict the flow of goods and soldiers from North Vietnam to the battlefield in South Vietnam. The other was close air support of American and South Vietnamese ground combat operations against communist forces, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Ironically, this mission—one that the air war generals and theoreticians disliked because it did not fit in with their notion that the primary function of air power was to counter a Soviet invasion of Europe—proved to be the one that air power did best. To be sure, the application of air power did not change the outcome of the war. However, in its infrastructure-interdiction bombing mission, air power did make it more difficult for North Vietnam to supply and reinforce its combat forces in the South and thus made the North's conquest of the South a more prolonged, protracted process. The close air support mission in the South often allowed American offensive operations to progress. It saved the lives of U.S. Army and Marine combat units in peril and on the defensive.

The author's conclusion is passionate but confusing. He argues that the leaders of the United States owe it to future generations to

develop a blueprint for successful interventions based on lessons learned from Vietnam. However, he never quite makes it clear or lists what they are in relation to the blueprint creation. He also laments that American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan showed that the United States had not learned those lessons. However, what about the War in Ukraine? Although one must be cautious about considering the end game of wars in progress, one can make an argument that America is creating such a blueprint in its bold approach to providing advice and support to Ukraine to help resist Russia's aggression.

Bottom line: I recommend paying little attention to the puzzling conclusion of *Storms over the Mekong*. The meat of the book is in the nine case studies in the nine chapters sandwiched between the introduction and conclusion. Those chapters are first-rate accounts of how battles begin, continue, and end. Head confidently describes the opposing sides, weighing the advantages and assets of each, ably discusses tangible factors (arms, ammunition, training, for example) and intangible ones (leadership, morale, etc.), and then tells the story in clear and precise prose. His analysis of the consequences of battle at tactical, operational, and strategic levels is superb. Each battle or campaign narrative can be read with pleasure and used with profit by the military history student, professional soldier, and instructors of military history.

Dr. John M. Carland is the author of *The Colonial Office and Nigeria, 1898–1914* (Hoover Institution Press, 1985), and holds a PhD in British Imperial History from the University of Toronto. At the U.S. Army Center of Military History (1985–2002), he wrote the official history of the Army's first eighteen months of combat in Vietnam—*Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide, May 1965–October 1966*. Later, at the Historian's Office, Department of State (2002–2011), he compiled and edited two documentary histories of America's Vietnam War policy: *Vietnam: January–October 1972 and Vietnam: October 1972–January 1973*. In retirement, he completed a third documentary history for the State Department, *Vietnam: The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho Negotiations, August 1969–December 1973*, published online in 2017. He is also the author of articles on the American military, diplomatic history, and British imperial history.



New Publication from AUSA

American soldiers have always displayed heroism on the battlefield. But only a select few earn the nation's highest military decoration: the Medal of Honor.

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) celebrates their valor with the Medal of Honor graphic novel series. A talented team of professionals from the comic book industry create these full-color digital books, and professional historians vet the details. Each eight-page issue profiles a true American hero, bringing to life the daring deeds that distinguished themselves by gallantry in action "above and beyond the call of duty."

On 28 February, AUSA released its latest entry in the Medal of Honor graphic novel series: *Medal of Honor: Edward Carter Jr.* Carter had a remarkable military experience when he was young, fighting against Japanese and Spanish fascists. As a U.S. Army infantryman in World War II, he was wounded several times in a single-handed advance on a German warehouse and still went on to kill six enemy soldiers and capture two. Carter then used his language skills to collect information from the prisoners that helped the Americans capture the nearby town.

To read *Medal of Honor: Edward Carter Jr.* online or download a free copy, please visit www.ausa.org/carter.



ARMYHISTORY

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

A *Army History* welcomes articles, essays, and commentaries of between 4,000 and 12,000 words on any topic relating to the history of the U.S. Army or to wars and conflicts in which the U.S. Army participated or by which it was substantially influenced. The Army's history extends to the present day, and *Army History* seeks accounts of the Army's actions in ongoing conflicts as well as those of earlier years. The bulletin particularly seeks writing that presents new approaches to historical issues. It encourages readers to submit responses to essays or commentaries that have appeared in its pages and to present cogent arguments on any question (controversial or otherwise) relating to the history of the Army. Such contributions need not be lengthy. Essays and commentaries should be annotated with endnotes, which should be embedded, to indicate the sources relied on to support factual assertions. A manuscript, preferably in Microsoft Word format, should be submitted as an attachment to an email sent to the managing editor at usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil.

Army History encourages authors to recommend or provide illustrations to accompany submissions. If authors wish to supply photographs, they may provide them in a digital format with a minimum resolution of 300 dots per inch or as photo prints sent by mail. Authors should provide captions and credits with all images. When furnishing photographs that they did not take, or any photos of art, authors must identify the owners of the photographs and artworks to enable *Army History* to obtain permission to reproduce the images, if necessary.

chief historian's FOOTNOTE

FIELD PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE UPDATE (PART II)



Jon T. Hoffman

In the last issue, I provided an update on the work of three of the divisions of Field Programs Directorate. This Footnote focuses on the remaining two divisions, one old and one relatively new.

The Library and Archives Division supports the work of everyone in the Center of Military History (CMH) and provides an important resource for the Army and the American public. In addition to the normal role of managing the book collection, the librarians perform a research function for other elements of the Army historical program, often quickly digging up hard-to-find sources. They played an integral part in supporting the work of the Naming Commission, providing biographical information on many of the candidates the commission reviewed for new base names. They are a proactive group, sending out weekly updates that identify new research resources, many of them online, with guides on how to access them.

Although CMH is not normally part of the formal chain that moves official records to the National Archives, by virtue of the work of the deployed field historians, the archivists have amassed a large collection of records, mainly digital, on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and recent contingency operations. They work with deployed Military History Detachments to ensure the material they collect is accessioned into the Army Historical Records Online database, which currently is only a classified repository. Those digital collections are the primary resource for the Histories Directorate authors working on the Tan Books. The archivists also continue preparing CMH materials, such as the author files for published books, under the Transition to Electronic Records M-19-21 tasker. This is an Office of Management and Budget mandate requiring all government agencies to maintain all permanent records in an electronic format. They must transfer all existing paper records to the National Archives within the next year or so, and the CMH archivists are busy identifying, indexing, and packing the remaining paper materials.

The newest addition to Field Programs is the Military Programs division (MP). Col. Craig M. Mix, who has built the program into what it is today, has retired from military service and is now running it as an Army civilian employee. His initial task was managing the Military History Detachments, providing more centralized control of that key asset and ensuring they are properly trained. That writ has expanded steadily.

A second key element is strengthening and expanding historical coverage of Army units beginning at the corps level and going

down to battalions and squadrons. A recent success in that area came with XVIII Airborne Corps, when the commanding general invited CMH to assist in capturing the history of his organization's support to the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine. Working with the command historian of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, a team from CMH spent four weeks in Germany collecting records and conducting oral history interviews with key leaders. The Center is also assisting the corps headquarters in establishing a civilian command historian and archivist positions. In the meantime, a team from CMH and other elements of the Army will assist the XVIII Airborne Corps in putting together an annual command history. CMH also will provide Unit Historical Officer (UHO) training and conduct an initial archival assessment. The UHO training is critical to ensuring historical minded individuals—junior officers or noncommissioned officers—in subordinate elements of the corps are assigned and prepared to capture, preserve, and promote their own unit history. MP hopes to repeat this success with the other corps headquarters.

To further the goal of improving unit historical coverage, CMH will obtain an additional fifteen Field Historian Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) slots in fiscal year 2023. Each IMA will be a reservist assigned to CMH but perform duty at an assigned Army service component command, corps or division. During their thirty-plus days of military duty per year, the officers (majors through colonel) will ensure that UHOs are identified and trained and compile the unit Annual Historical Report, and otherwise support the command's historical program as needed. The IMAs are not intended to be a replacement for a civilian command historian but meant to augment the command historian where there is one and provide historical support to the unit where there are no organic historical assets. There are currently no corps and only one division command historian in the Army. CMH will be conducting a recruiting push to fill the IMA vacancies with the priority going to XVIII Airborne Corps to complete the Annual Historical Summary for the Security Assistance Group-Ukraine.

The Field Programs Directorate is playing a critical role not only in raising awareness of history within the Army, but also ensuring that leaders and soldiers recognize its value to their mission.



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