

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

*Inside the Vault:
Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection*

July 15, 2021

The session will start shortly. Please note:

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email collectionprograms@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.

Our Team

- Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
- Jermain Corbin - Educator at the Condon K-8 School in South Boston
- Zoya Siddiqui - Curatorial Intern
- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator

During the Session



- If you would like to ask a question, you can **use the Q&A feature.**
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
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Today's Documents

- Response of the Confederates
 - *Black Phalanx* by James T. Wilson
- Pay inequities
 - *Black Phalanx* by James T. Wilson
 - Letter by Sergeant Francis Fletcher
- Newspaper accounts of the charge against Battery Wagner
 - *Charleston Mercury*
 - *Harper's Weekly*
- Prints depicting the charge against Battery Wagner
 - Currier & Ives
 - Kurz & Allison



Gilder Lehrman Collection

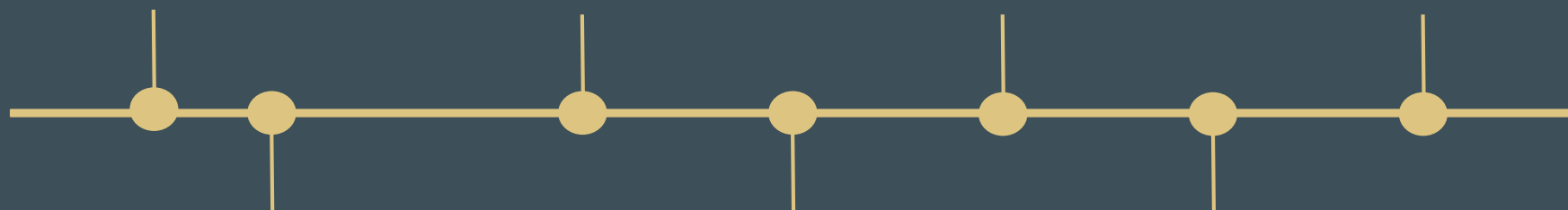
Recruitment of Black Soldiers

July 2, 1862: Lincoln shows the preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet.

Fall 1862: The 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Louisiana Native Guard (Corps d'Afrique) raised in Louisiana.

January 1863: 1st South Carolina Infantry (African Descent) is raised

May 22, 1863: General Order No. 143 establishes the Bureau of Colored Troops.



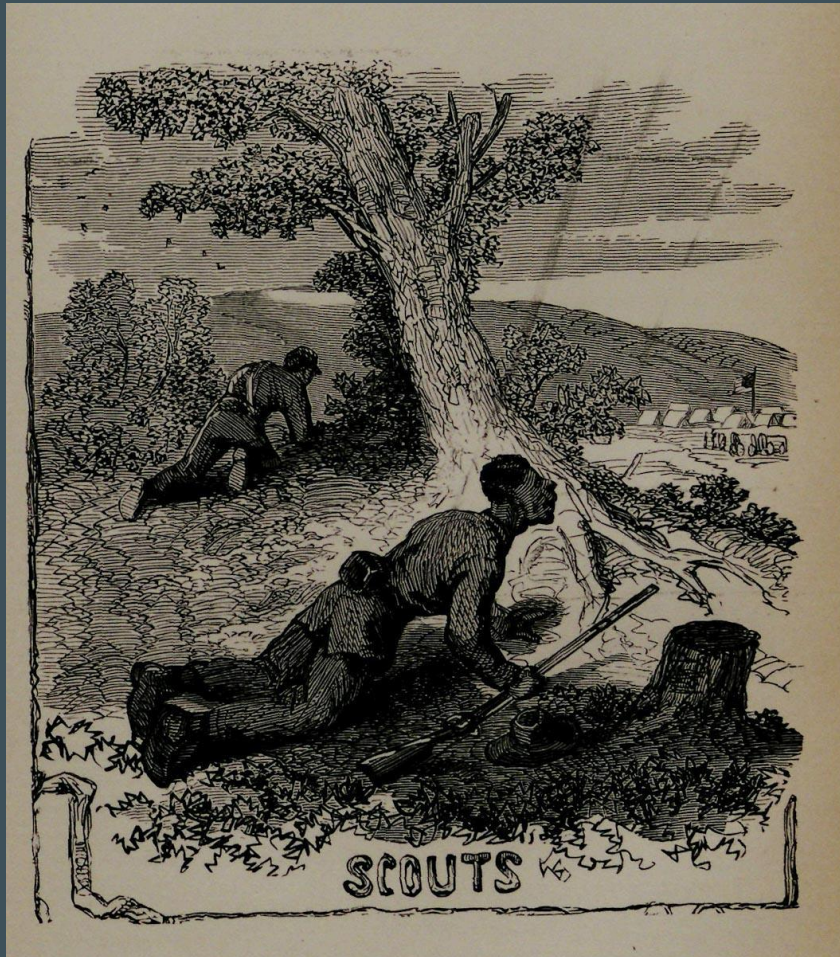
July 17, 1862: The Militia Act of 1862 allows for the recruitment of Black soldiers when a state could not meet its quota.

October 29, 1862: 1st Kansas Colored Infantry fights in the Battle of Island Mound (Missouri).

February 1863: Massachusetts Governor John Andrew issues a call for Black soldiers.

Black US Troops in the Civil War

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From *The Black Phalanx*
Gilder Lehrman Collection

- Approximately 179,000 Black men served in the Union Army. (one-tenth of the army)
 - 175 USCT regiments
 - 5th Massachusetts Cavalry
 - 54th Massachusetts Infantry
 - 55th Massachusetts Infantry
 - 29th Connecticut Infantry
 - 30th Connecticut Infantry
 - 31st Infantry Regiment
- About 19,000 served in the Union Navy.
- Roughly 20% of Black soldiers died, a rate about 35% higher than that of White Union troops.
- 16 Black soldiers received the Medal of Honor.

Massachusetts 54th

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- Recruitment for the 54th Massachusetts Regiment began in February 1863.
- Many of the troops came from places other than Massachusetts, such as New York, Indiana, Ohio, Canada and the Caribbean.
- On May 14, 1863, the regiment had its full complement of 1007 enlisted men and 39 White officers.
- On May 28, 1863, the regiment departed Boston.
- On July 18, 1863, it experienced its first major engagement at Fort Wagner, South Carolina.

The Black Phalanx

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JOSEPH T. WILSON,
Of 2d Reg't. La. N. G. Vols., also 54th Mass. Vols.

THE
BLACK PHALANX;

A HISTORY OF THE
NEGRO SOLDIERS OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE WARS OF
1775—1812, 1861-'65.

BY

JOSEPH T. WILSON,
LATE OF THE 2ND. REG'T. LA. NATIVE GUARD VOLS. 54TH MASS. VOLS.
AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF G. A. R.
AUTHOR OF
"EMANCIPATION," "VOICE OF A NEW RACE," "TWENTY-TWO YEARS OF
FREEDOM," ETC., ETC.

56 ILLUSTRATIONS.

HARTFORD, CONN. :
AMERICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY.
1888.

Jefferson Davis' Proclamation

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negroes, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate Government, issued the following proclamation:

"FIRST.—That all commissioned officers in the command of said Benjamin F. Butler be declared *not entitled* to be considered as soldiers engaged in honorable warfare, but as robbers and criminals, deserving death; and that they, and each of them, be, whenever captured, reserved for execution.

"SECOND.—That the private soldiers and non-commissioned officers in the army of said Benj. F. Butler, be considered as only instruments used for the commission of crimes, perpetrated by his orders, and *not as free agents*; that they, therefore, be treated when captured as prisoners of war, with kindness and humanity, and be sent home on the usual parole; that they will in no manner aid or serve the United States in any capacity during the continuance of war, unless duly exchanged.

"THIRD.—That all negro slaves captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities, of the respective States to which they belong, and to be dealt with according to the laws of said States.

"FOURTH.—That the like orders be executed in all cases with respect to all commissioned officers of the United States when found serving in company with said slaves in insurrection against the authorities of the different States of this Confederacy.

Signed and sealed at Richmond, Dec. 23, 1862.

JEFFERSON DAVIS."

Confederate Resolution

“SEC. 4.—That every white person, being a commissioned officer, or acting as such, who during the present war shall command negroes or mulattoes in arms against the Confederate States, or who shall arm, train, organize or prepare negroes or mulattoes for military service against the Confederate States, or who shall voluntarily use negroes or mulattoes in any military enterprise, attack or conflict, in such service, shall be deemed as inciting servile insurrection, and shall, if captured, be put to death, or to be otherwise punished at the discretion of the court.

“SEC. 5.—Every person, being a commissioned officer, or acting as such in the service of the enemy, who shall during the present war, excite, attempt to excite, or cause to be excited a servile insurrection, or who shall incite, or cause to be incited a slave to rebel, shall, if captured, be put to death, or otherwise punished at the discretion of the court.

“SEC. 6.—Every person charged with an offence punishable under the preceeding resolutions shall, during the present war, be tried before the military court, attached to the army or corps by the troops of which he shall have been captured, or by such other military court as the President may direct, and in such manner and under such regulations as the President shall prescribe; and after conviction, the President may commute the punishment in such manner and on such terms as he may deem proper.

SEC. 7.—All negroes and mulattoes who shall be engaged in war, or be taken in arms against the Confederate States, or shall give aid or comfort to the enemies of the Confederate States, shall, where captured in the Confederate States, be delivered to authorities of the State or States in which they shall be captured, to be dealt with according to such present or future laws of such State or States.”

J. M. 1862, this same Confederate Congress en-

Inequity Black Soldiers Faced

- Received \$10 per month from which was deducted a uniform charge of \$3 - net pay \$7 per month
- White soldiers received \$13 per month.
- To protest this, the entire regiment (officers and enlisted men) refused to accept their pay.

MEN OF COLOR TO ARMS! TO ARMS! NOW OR NEVER

This is our golden moment! The Government of the United States calls for every Able-bodied Colored Man to enter the Army for the

Three Years' Service!

And join in Fighting the Battles of Liberty and the Union. A new era is open to us. For generations we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, outrage and wrong; our manhood has been denied, our citizenship blotted out, our souls seared and burned, our spirits cowed and crushed, and the hopes of the future of our race involved in doubt and darkness. But now our relations to the white race are changed. Now, therefore, is our most precious moment. Let us rush to arms!

FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED

Outlive the soil of our birth. We must now awake, arise, or be forever fallen. If we value liberty, if we wish to be free in this land, if we love our country, if we love our families, our children, our home, we must strike now while the country calls; we must rise up in the dignity of our manhood, and show by our own right arms that we are worthy to be freemen. Our enemies have made the country believe that we are craven cowards, without soul, without manhood, without the spirit of soldiers. Shall we die with this stigma resting upon our graves! Shall we leave this inheritance of Shame to our Children? No! a thousand times NO! We WILL Rise! The alternative is upon us. Let us rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Want is life without liberty? We say that we have manhood; now is the time to prove it. A nation or a people that cannot fight may be pitied, but cannot be respected. If we would forever silence the tongue of Custom, of Prejudice and Hate, let us Rise Now and Fly to Arms! We have seen what Valor and Heroism our Brothers displayed at Fort Hudson and Milliken's Bend, though they are just from the galling, poisoning grasp of Slavery, they have startled the World by the most exalted heroism. If they have proved themselves heroes, cannot WE PROVE OURSELVES MEN?

ARE FREEMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES

More than a Million White Men have left Comfortable Homes and joined the Armies of the Union to save their Country. Cannot we leave ours, and swell the Hosts of the Union, to save our liberties, vindicate our manhood, and deserve well of our Country. MEN OF COLOR! the Englishman, the Irishman, the Frenchman, the German, the American, have been called to assert their claim to freedom and a manly character, by an appeal to the sword. The day that has seen an enslaved race in arms has, in all history, seen their last trial. We now see that our last opportunity has come. If we are not lower in the scale of humanity than Englishmen, Irishmen, White Americans and other Races, we can show it now. Men of Color, Brothers and Fathers, we appeal to you, by all your concerns for yourselves and your liberties, by all your regard for God and humanity, by all your desire for Citizenship and Equality before the law, by all your love for the Country, to step at once into the ranks, and you are henceforth and forever FREEMEN. Come Forward, and at once Enroll your Names for the Three Years' Service. Strike now, and you are henceforth and forever FREEMEN.

E. D. Bassett,	Rev. J. Underdue,	P. J. Armstrong,	Rev. J. C. Gibbs,	Elijah J. Davis,
William D. Forten,	John W. Price,	J. W. Simpson,	Daniel George,	John P. Barr,
Frederick Douglass,	Augustus Dorsey,	Rev. J. B. Trusty,	Robert M. Adger,	Robert Jones,
Wm. Whipper,	Rev. Stephen Smith,	S. Morgan Smith,	Heary M. Cropper,	O. V. Catto,
B. D. Turner,	N. W. Depee,	William E. Gipson,	Rev. J. B. Reeve,	Thos. J. Dorsey,
Jas. McCrummell,	Dr. J. H. Wilson,	Rev. J. Boulden,	Rev. J. A. Williams,	L. D. Child,
A. S. Cassey,	J. W. Cassey,	Rev. J. Asher,	Rev. A. L. Stanford,	Jacob C. White,
A. M. Green,	James Needham,	Rev. Elisha Weaver,	Thomas J. Bowers,	Morris Hall,
J. W. Page,	Ebenezer Black,	David B. Bowser,	J. C. White, Jr.,	J. P. Johnson,
L. R. Seymour,	James R. Gordon,	Henry Minton,	Rev. J. P. Campbell,	Franklin Turner,
Rev. William T. Catto,	Samuel Stewart,	Daniel Colley,	Rev. W. J. Alston,	Jesse E. Glasgow.

A Meeting in furtherance of the above named object will be held

And will be Addressed by

U. S. Steam-Power Book and Job Printing Establishment, Ledger Buildings, Third and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia.

The Black Phalanx

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It was no longer a question of doubt as to the valor of Northern negroes. The assault on Fort Wagner completely removed any prejudice that had been exhibited toward negro troops in the Department of the South. General Gillmore immediately issued an order forbidding any distinction to be made among troops in his command. So that while the black Phalanx had lost hundreds of its members, it nevertheless won equality in all things save the pay. The Government refused to place them on a footing even with their Southern brothers, who received \$7 per month and the white troops \$13. However, they were not fighting for pay, as "Stonewall" of Company C argued, but for the "*freedom of our kin.*" Nobly did they do this, not only at Wagner, as we have seen, but in the battles on James Island, Honey Hill, Olustee and at Boykin's Mill.

In the winter of 1864, the troops in the Department of

Sargent Francis Fletcher on Equal Pay

“Just one year ago to day our regt was received in Boston with almost an ovation, and at 5 P. M. it will be one year since we were safely on board transport clear of Battery Wharf and bound to this Department: in that one year no man of our regiment has received a cent of monthly pay all through the glaring perfidy of the U.S. Gov’t. I cannot any more condemn nor recite our wrongs, but console myself that One who is able has said vengeance is mine and I will repay. All the misery and degradation suffered in our regiment by its members’ families is not atoned for by the passage of the bill for equal pay.”

No. 200 Post of Morris Island S.C.
 May 25th 1864
 Mr Jacob C. Safford
 Dear Sir:
 I have received your letter
 bearing date May 5th
 I hope this may find you sister and
 the rest of your family in good health as
 it leaves me.
 There is no local news of any im-
 portance about here. There were some
 operations on James Island but amount-
 to only a raid as far as I have been
 able to learn. At the 'front' everything
 is quiet.
 I have forgotten of what you refer to
 speaking of some message I sent you by
 Mrs Lewis
 You take a far more liberal view

Fort Wagner, South Carolina

- July 18, 1863 - 5,000 Union soldiers charged Battery Wagner in Charleston Harbor; 1,800 Confederates defended the fort.
- At dusk, 600 men in the 54th Massachusetts led the assault on the fort.
- The 54th breached the fort, but were forced to draw back.
- They suffered 270 casualties (dead, missing, captured, and wounded)
- Overall, Union forces suffered 1,515 casualties and Confederates had 174.

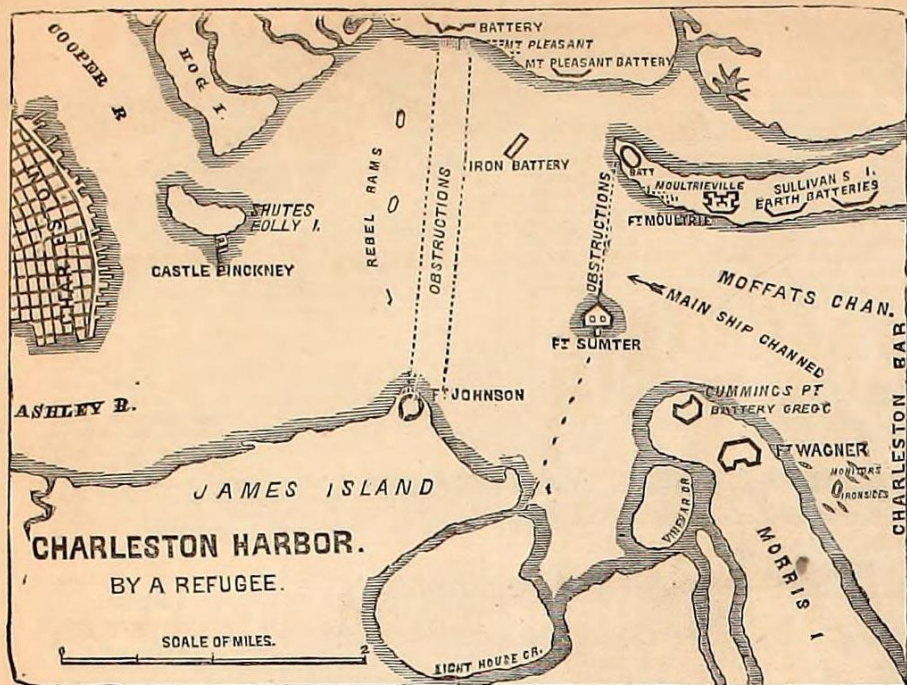


Charleston Mercury, *August 7, 1863*

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and ended with retreat. The Fifty-fourth Massachusetts (colored) found a place lower down, and charged bravely over the parapet, their officers urging them to distinguish themselves. But the rebels made a dash at them with all their bitter feelings against negro troops aroused, and neglected all else for a moment in attacking the negroes. They took some prisoners, slaughtered many; bayonets clashed and muskets rattled, and the Massachusetts blacks got bewildered. They barely saved one of their flags, and the staff of another, and then, with thinned ranks, retreated through the showers of iron hail, leaving their Colonel in the fort, many officers unaccounted for, and many black bodies, lifeless or disabled, along their track. All the other regiments got, wholly or in part, on or over the parapets, but all were finally forced to flee. The contest on their part was a short but bloody one. Had these regiments held

THE ATTACK ON FORT WAGNER.



THE HARBOR OF CHARLESTON, SHOWING THE SCENE OF GENERAL GILMORE'S OPERATIONS ON MORRIS ISLAND.

Just as darkness began to close in upon the scene of the afternoon and the evening, General Strong rode to the front and ordered his brigade, consisting of the 54th Massachusetts, Colonel Shaw (colored regiment); the 6th Connecticut, Colonel Chatfield; the 48th New York, Colonel Barton; the 3d New Hampshire, Colonel Jackson; the 76th Pennsylvania, and the 9th Maine, Colonel Emery, to advance to the assault. At the instant the line was seen slowly advancing in the dusk toward the fort, and before a double-quick had been ordered, a tremendous fire from the barbette guns on Fort Sumter, from the batteries on Cummings' Point, and from all the guns on Fort Wagner, opened upon it. The guns from Wagner swept the beach, and those from Sumter and Cummings' Point enfiladed it on the left. In the midst of this terrible shower of shot and shell they pushed their way, reached the fort, portions of the 54th Massachusetts, the 6th Connecticut, and the 48th New York, dashed through the ditches, gained the parapet, and engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the enemy, and for nearly half an hour held their ground, and did not fall back until nearly every commissioned officer was shot down. As on the morning of the assault of the 11th inst., these brave men were exposed to a most galling fire of grape and canister, from howitzers, raking the ditches from the bastions of the fort, from hand-grenades, and from almost every other modern implement of warfare. The rebels fought with the utmost desperation, and so did the larger portion of General Strong's brigade, as long as there was an officer to command it.

When the brigade made the assault General Strong gallantly rode at its head. When it fell back, broken, torn, and bleeding, Major Plimpton of the 3d New Hampshire was the highest commissioned officer to command it. General Strong, Colonel Shaw, Colonel Chatfield, Colonel Barton, Colonel Green, Colonel Jackson, all had fallen. The 54th Massachusetts (negro), whom Copperhead officers would have called cowardly if they had stormed and carried the gates of hell, went boldly into battle, for the second time, commanded by their brave Colonel, but came out of it led by no higher officer than the boy, Lieutenant Higginson.



THE GALLANT CHARGE OF THE FIFTY FOURTH MASSACHUSETTS COLORED REGIMENT.
On the Rebel works at Fort Wagner, Morris Island, near Charleston, July 18th, 1863, and death of Colonel Robt G. Shaw.

Currier & Ives, *The Gallant Charge of the Fifty Fourth
Massachusetts Colored Regiment, 1863*
Gilder Lehrman Collection

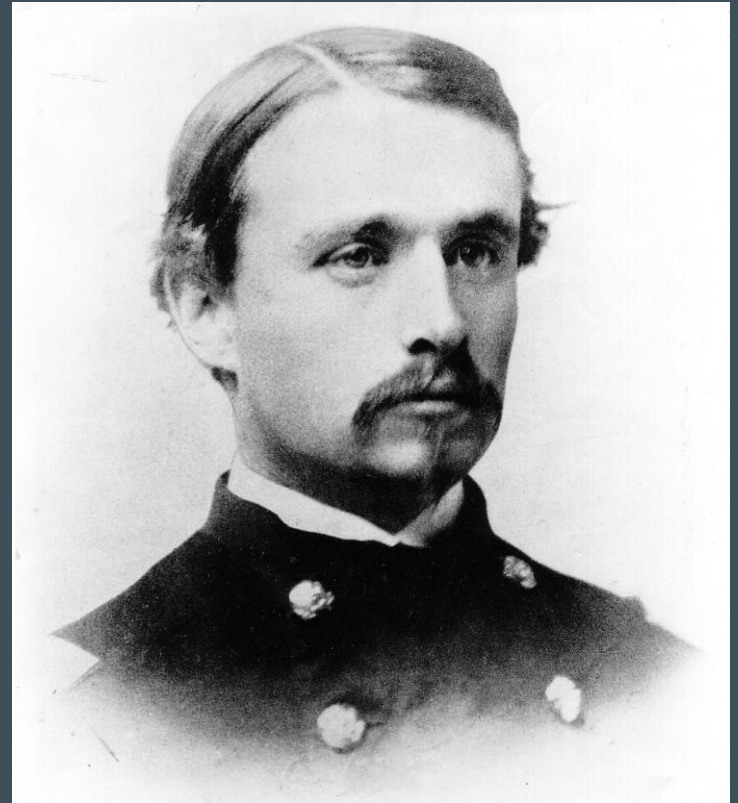


Kurz & Allison, *Storming Fort Wagner, 1890.*
Gilder Lehrman Collection

General Hagood on Shaw's Burial

“I knew Colonel Shaw before the war, and then esteemed him. Had he been in command of white troops, I should have given him an honorable burial; as it is, I shall bury him in the common trench with the negroes who fell with him”.

-Gen. Johnson Hagood



Library of Congress

The Black Phalanx

This was six days after the unsurpassed bravery of the 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers—representing the North in the black Phalanx—had planted its blood-stained banner on the ramparts of Fort Wagner. It was the Southern negroes, who, up to this time, had reddened the waters of the Mississippi. It was the freedman's blood that had moistened the soil, and if ignorance could be so intrepid still greater daring might be expected on the part of the more intelligent men of the race.

The assault on Fort Wagner, July 18, 1863, was one of the most heroic of the whole four years' war. A very graphic account of the entire movement is given in the following article:

Legacy of the Massachusetts 54th

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“The White Officers taking life and honor in their hands cast in their lot with men of a despised race unproven in war and risked death as inciters of servile insurrection if taken prisoners besides encountering all the common perils of camp march and battle. The Black rank and file volunteered when disaster clouded the Union Cause. Served without pay for eighteen months till given that of white troops. Faced threatened enslavement if captured. Were brave in action. Patient under heavy and dangerous labors. And cheerful amid hardships and privations. Together they gave to the Nation and the World undying proof that Americans of African descent possess the pride, courage and devotion of the patriot soldier. One hundred and eighty thousand such Americans enlisted under the Union Flag in MDCCCLXIII–MDCCCLXV. [1863-1865]”

Inscription on monument by Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University



Photo courtesy of Allison Kraft

Upcoming Programs

- *Inside the Vault*, Thursday, July 29 at 7 p.m. ET (4 p.m. PT)
 - We will be discussing the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.
- *Book Breaks*, Sunday, July 18 at 2 p.m. (11 a.m. PT)
 - Anna Malaika Tubbs discusses her book *The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation*.