

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF COLORED SOLDIERS IN
THE CIVIL WAR**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This study reviews the history and accomplishments of Black soldiers during the Civil War. Black soldiers played a pivotal role in the strategy, prosecution, and ultimate conclusion of the War. Their introduction into the United States Armed Forces became possible after the Militia Act of 1862 and the Emancipation Proclamation. The Militia Act of 1862 authorized the enlistment of Negroes as laborers in the North. The Emancipation Proclamation authorized arming Negroes for combat. The more than 181,000 blacks that served with the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War helped turn the tide in favor of the Union. However, this study focuses on the service and accomplishments of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored).

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THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF COLORED SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

United States citizens of African descent trace their roots in the United States military to the American Revolutionary War period. While the United States of America gained its independence during that war, Blacks did not gain their personal freedom as a result of the Revolution. However, these individuals of African ancestry did not allow this injustice to stop their contributions to the new country. They continued to serve the United States of America proudly and honorably.

After the American Revolution Negroes served creditably during the War of 1812. Individuals of African ancestry served as sailors in the United States Navy and soldiers in State Militias. At the beginning of the War of 1812 the United States Navy could not recruit enough white citizens to operate its ships, and recruited or pressed blacks into service aboard ships. The Army initially barred blacks from service. As the war waged on, though, the states enlisted blacks out of necessity to man their militias. However, it was not until the Civil War that blacks experienced large-scale participation in the United States Armed Forces. It was also during the Civil War that Blacks made some of their most significant contributions.

DISCLAIMER

For the purposes of this paper black soldiers will be used instead of the terms Negro and Colored. Black is the accepted term used today to refer to Americans of African descent. While the terms Negro and Colored are historically correct, they can be deemed as offensive in the 21st century. These terms will only be used when part of a direct quote or unit designation.

BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL WAR

On 6 November 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. This was an event that outraged the southern states. The Republican Party had run on an anti-slavery platform, and many southerners felt that there was no longer a place for them in the Union. On 20 December 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union. By 1 February 1861, six more states -- Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas -- had broken away from the United States of America. The seceding states created the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis, a Mississippi Senator, as their Provisional President.

In his inaugural address on 4 March 1861, President Lincoln proclaimed that it was his duty to maintain the Union. He also declared that he had no intention of ending slavery where it existed, or of repealing the Fugitive Slave Law. This was a position that horrified African Americans and their white allies. Lincoln's statement, however, did not satisfy the Confederacy

either. On 12 April 1861 the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter, a Federal stronghold at Charleston, South Carolina.¹ Federal troops returned fire. The Civil War had begun.

Following the attack on Fort Sumter, Virginia (17 April), Tennessee (16 May), Arkansas (18 May), and North Carolina (20 May), seceded from the Union. The North perceived the attack and secessions as an act of rebellion. President Lincoln proclaimed restoration of the Union as the primary aim of the war. The purpose of this statement was to retain the loyalty of the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri.

Policies for the recruitment and service of blacks did not change initially at the beginning of the Civil War. Army regulations did not allow blacks to serve in the military. Despite government practices and regulations that were discriminatory toward blacks they still responded to calls to defend the nation. Continually rejected, free blacks in the North continued to volunteer to serve in the Union Army. They were encouraged by the abolitionist movement in the Northern states, particularly those in the New England states.²

When the Civil War began, many blacks dreamed of the chance to strike a blow for the liberation of Americans of African ancestry. They were ready and prepared to fight for the abolition of slavery. They did not realize their dream until conditions in the North led to the sanctioning of the recruitment of free Negroes, and the formation of all black units. By the end of the Civil War over 181,000 Negro men had enlisted and served in the Union Army. Of these, approximately 37,300 gave their lives fighting during the Civil War.³

THE WAR BEGINS IN EARNEST

In the beginning both the North and the South fully expected the war to be short in duration. As a result President Lincoln initially requested 75,000 soldiers for a duration of ninety days.⁴ At first, men in both the North and South were eager to join the cause and fight for their beliefs. Southerners flocked to join the Confederate Army while men in the North enlisted in the Union Army. By the end of 1862, though, these beliefs began to unravel and enlistments decrease under the stress of war. As maimed and dead soldiers returned from the battlefields, the number of volunteers on both sides decreased appreciably.

As strategies for prosecution of the war were developed in the North and the South, President Lincoln and the War Department realized they had underestimated the resolve and determination of the South. In 1861 and 1862 both sides experienced heavy losses as a result of the war. However, the Confederates were the victors in most battles. In July 1861 the Union forces were defeated at Manassas, Virginia in the First Battle of Bull Run. Three weeks later on 10 August 1861 the South gained another victory at Wilson's Creek, Missouri.

On 21 February 1862 the South claimed another victory in the West by defeating the Union forces at Valverde, New Mexico.⁵ This continued a pattern of Confederate victories over the Union.

In April 1862 the South initiated the unprecedented step of drafting men into the Confederate Army. The North, however, was not ready to commit to a draft and continued with its volunteer force. As the war progressed, though, it became more and more difficult for the North to continue this policy as the number of volunteers slowed to a trickle. It became increasingly clear that the North would not be able to man the Union Army because not enough white men were volunteering. This decrease in manpower influenced President Lincoln and other officials to reverse the government position on the possible use of black men in the Armed Forces.

MILITIA ACT OF 1862

The formation of black regiments during the Civil War was a multi-faceted process. There were two acts that led directly to the formation of these regiments. On 17 July Congress passed the Militia Act of 1862 which authorized the enlistment of blacks to serve as laborers in support of the Union Army.⁶ This act did not give blacks the right to fight as soldiers. It served as a means to enable blacks to serve as laborers and for construction duties in support of Union forces to meet critical manpower shortages.⁷ The second act in this process was the Emancipation Proclamation.

EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

On 1 January 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation authorized the use of blacks as soldiers.⁸ Twenty five days later, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton signed a War Department Order expanding the use and roles of blacks by the North. This order authorized the recruitment of blacks for combat roles in support of the North's Civil War effort.⁹

The Governor of Massachusetts, John A. Andrew, immediately began recruiting blacks under the War Department Order before the government could reconsider. The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment became the first black regiment organized in the North after the Emancipation Proclamation. The regiment, however, "had to convince the white race that colored troops would fight, and not only that they would fight, but that they could be made, in every sense of the word, soldiers."¹⁰

FIRST NEGRO UNITS

Although Secretary of War Stanton's order authorizing the recruitment of black soldiers for special combat units¹¹ was a pivotal point for the service of blacks in the Civil War, three colored regiments had been formed in 1862.

In 1862 "Big Jim" Lane was a senator from the state of Kansas. He resigned from his seat in the senate to accept a commission as a brigadier general and recruit units in Kansas. Later in 1862 he worked with Colonel James Williams to organize the First Kansas Colored Regiment without authorization from the War Department. Brigadier General Lane was not one to be bothered or encumbered by War Department rules. He thought that the very existence of the First Kansas Colored would result in governmental approval. The War Department did not see things that way. The War Department notified Brigadier General Lane twice that he did not have authority to raise a black unit. However, in the true spirit of frontier independence, Lane ignored their notifications and protestations. In January of 1863 the Federal Government accepted and authorized the services of the First Kansas. By then, many of the troops of the First Kansas had already experienced combat.¹²

In September of 1862 Union Major General Benjamin Butler began organizing the Louisiana Native Guards from free Negroes. The following month General Rufus B. Saxton, formed the First South Carolina Regiment from contrabands.¹³ Contrabands were defined as escaped slaves or blacks behind Union lines.

CORPS D'AFRIQUE

Several other black regiments were formed with runaway slaves from Louisiana and South Carolina. These regiments became known as the Corps d'Afrique—the African troops.¹⁴ In the fall of 1862 three Union regiments of African-Americans were raised in New Orleans, LA. These regiments were the First, Second, and Third Louisiana Native Guard. The First South Carolina Infantry was later officially organized as part of the Corps d'Afrique in January of 1863. Three companies of the First South Carolina, though, had participated in coastal expeditions as early as November of 1862.

The First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry was organized in the Department of the South by General David Hunter at Hilton Head, South Carolina, in May of 1862. This first effort to form a black regiment met with failure, due to two significant causes: Hunter had not received authorization from the War Department in Washington allowing the formation of black units and, the recruits were involuntarily inducted into the regiment in a manner reminiscent of their days as slaves. As a result, the Regiment was ordered to disband.

Later, the First South Carolina was reorganized under General Saxon. Attempts to recruit troops from Hilton Head's African-American population were difficult at first due to memories of the failed "Hunter Experiment." These obstacles were overcome and the first company was formed under the command of Captain C.T. Trowbridge.

The first engagement of the First South Carolina occurred during an expedition along the Georgia-Florida coast. General Saxton had established military objectives for the expedition, but his primary goal was to prove the fighting ability of his black troops. The expedition was under the command of Colonel Oliver T. Beard of the Forty-Eighth New York Volunteer Infantry and included Company A, First South Carolina, numbering 62 men under Captain Trowbridge. From 3-18 November 1862, Company A raided Confederate picket posts, salt works, and sawmills along the Georgia-Florida coast. Large quantities of rice and lumber were captured in addition to the liberation of 155 slaves. Ninety-four of the liberated African-Americans joined the First South Carolina. As for their fighting ability, Colonel Beard wrote, "The colored men fought with astonishing coolness and bravery. For alacrity in effecting landing, for determination, and for bush fighting, I found them all I could desire - more than I had hoped. They behaved bravely, gloriously, and deserve all praise."¹⁵

Abolitionists did not believe the formation of these troops was sufficient. They continued to fight for the widespread use of blacks as soldiers in the War effort.

THE WAR WORSENS IN THE NORTH

"Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service, and formed into a liberation army!" urged Frederick Douglass.¹⁶ Douglass was a black abolitionist who had escaped from slavery. President Lincoln knew that blacks wanted to fight side by side with whites in Union Army units. He also knew they wanted to fight to end slavery. However, early in the war the President was determined to keep the slavery issue out of the war. He still hoped the South would rejoin the Union. The Second Battle of Bull Run had a chilling effect on that train of thought.

The Second Battle of Bull Run was fought near Manassas, Virginia on 29-30 August 1862. The battle was a crushing defeat for the North. "The defeat was so bad that it all but dried up the trickle of northern volunteers that had been joining the Union Army."¹⁷ By this time, President Lincoln had prepared a statement that would change the meaning of the war. The President's advisors suggested that he wait until the North won a battle before he made this momentous announcement, the Emancipation Proclamation.

In the aftermath of the Second Battle of Bull Run, Confederate General Robert E. Lee made a bold maneuver and led his Army out of Virginia and invaded the North. Soldiers from the North and South collided in Maryland on 17 September along the banks of Antietam Creek. In a ferocious battle (the bloodiest single day in American military history), the North forced Lee back into Virginia. Although the North suffered a large amount of casualties and displayed questionable generalship, President Lincoln was encouraged. Although a tactical draw, Antietam was portrayed as a Northern victory because Lee was forced to retreat leaving the Union in possession of the battlefield. As a result, President Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation which declared that after 1 January 1863 all slaves held in territory by the Confederates would be "forever free."¹⁸ President Lincoln hoped that the Proclamation would ultimately force the South to cease hostilities. This changed the objective of the war from preservation of the Union to the complete reordering of the social and economic structure of the South. By taking the moral high ground, Lincoln made a political statement that completely crushed Confederate hopes for European intervention.

ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

Abolitionists and a majority of whites in the North hailed the Proclamation. Of keen importance and significance in the North was one particular sentence from the Emancipation Proclamation that authorized the Union Army to use black men in the armed services of the United States.

The Emancipation Proclamation took effect on 1 January 1863. Immediately the North began to look at not only recruiting blacks, but at arming them for combat. John A. Andrew, the War Governor of Massachusetts, was an early advocate of enlisting blacks to aid in suppressing the rebellion. Early in 1863 Governor Andrew visited Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and received permission to enlist persons of African descent into the Army. As a result of his visit Secretary Stanton issued the following order:

WAR DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON CITY
JAN 26, 1863.

Ordered: That Governor Andrew of Massachusetts is authorized, until further orders, to raise such numbers of volunteers, companies of artillery for duty in the forts of Massachusetts and elsewhere, and such corps of infantry for the volunteer military service as he may find convenient, such volunteers to be enlisted for three years, or until sooner discharged, and may include persons of African descent, organized into special corps. He will make the usual needful requisitions on the appropriate staff bureaus and officers, for the proper

transportation, organization, supplies, subsistence, arms and equipments of such volunteers.

—EDWIN M. STANTON
Secretary of War¹⁹

With this order in hand, Governor Andrew returned to Massachusetts and immediately set about the task of raising a Negro regiment. Governor Andrew was the first Northern governor to raise units of black troops after the Emancipation Proclamation became policy. As previously mentioned, the first unit organized with free black volunteers was the Fifty-Fourth Regiment Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored).

FIFTY-FOURTH MASSACHUSETTS INFANTRY VOLUNTEERS (COLORED)

According to The War Department order, officers of the Fifty-Fourth had to be white. Noncommissioned officers of the regiment could be black. Governor Andrew protested this policy of having only white officers. The War Department remained firm and insisted that all officers in the regiment must be white. Governor Andrew and anyone else wishing to form a regiment of black soldiers would have to adhere to this policy or the regiment would not be inducted into Federal service. Eventually Governor Andrew muted his opposition in order to form the first officially sanctioned regiment of blacks in the North.

Governor Andrew knew that this regiment would be scrutinized unlike any other regiment that had ever been formed. Therefore, he wanted to insure that it had the finest leadership available. In "Memoirs of Governor Andrew" the Honorable Peleg W. Chandler, a contemporary of Governor Andrew wrote: "When the first colored regiment was formed, he [Governor Andrew] remarked to a friend that in regard to other regiments, he accepted men as officers who were sometimes rough and uncultivated, 'but these men' he said, 'shall be commanded by officers who are eminently gentlemen.'"²⁰

Governor Andrew realized that he had to pick carefully when choosing officers to lead this black regiment. He wanted officers who had proven themselves in combat, and more importantly, he wanted officers that had shown respect for blacks through their words and deeds.²¹ To lead the regiment he selected Captain Robert Gould Shaw of the Second Massachusetts Infantry. As he offered the position to Captain Shaw, he also sent a letter to Shaw's father seeking his consent. He wanted the father's consent due to the sensitivity and importance of the matter. The elder Shaw was also an abolitionist. Governor Andrew sought his support in convincing the younger Shaw to accept his offer of command of the Fifty-Fourth.

The person picked to command this regiment would be closely scrutinized. It would also be beneficial if his family was supportive of the individual given this difficult leadership position.

At first Captain Shaw refused the offer. However, after much soul-searching and deep thought, he changed his mind. He informed Governor Andrew that he would be pleased to accept the command. Upon receiving Captain Shaw's response, Governor Andrew immediately petitioned the War Department for a temporary commission for Captain Shaw in the rank of Colonel in the United States Volunteers.

When other officers heard that Colonel Shaw had accepted command of the Fifty-Fourth they rushed to join. By March of 1863 twenty-nine officers had been appointed to positions in the regiment. Officers were commissioned from persons nominated by regimental commanders in the field, tried friends of the abolitionist movement, staff officers, and individuals that Governor Andrew personally desired to appoint.²² The officers were young, with an average age of twenty-three. Fourteen of the officers had already experienced combat. The majority of them were abolitionists or had antislavery feelings and were eager to serve in a black regiment. Having recruited the officers, Governor Andrew now set about the task of filling the ranks.

RECRUITMENT OF SOLDIERS

The recruitment of soldiers for black regiments was a challenge unto itself. Governor Andrew's challenges were probably not unlike those experienced in Kansas or Louisiana. After evaluating the free black male population in Massachusetts it became clearly evident that a regiment could not be formed consisting of Massachusetts citizens alone. Boston was capable of raising one company while New Bedford could possibly raise a second.²³ The neighboring New England states did not have a large enough free population to sufficiently fill the regiment. To assist in recruiting, Governor Andrew called on a friend and fellow abolitionist, George Stearns.

Upon receiving the call to assist from Governor Andrew, Stearns immediately set about the task of recruiting black men for the regiment. Governor Andrew had established a committee to raise recruits for the regiment. This committee became known as the "Black Committee." Members of the committee included Stearns as the leader, Amos A. Lawrence, John M. Forbes, William I. Bowditch, Le Baron Russell, Richard P. Hallowell, Gerrit Smith, James P. Congdon, Willard P. Phillips, and Francis G. Shaw (Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's father). Membership in this committee was ultimately increased to a total of 100 members. One of the first actions of the committee was to publicize the establishment of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of United States Volunteers. Notices and leaflets were put up in all parts of the

region. In Massachusetts, daily newspapers ran ads similar to the following call to arms published in the Boston Journal on 16 February:

TO COLORED MEN

Wanted. Good men for the Fifty Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers of African descent, Col. Robert G. Shaw. \$100 bounty at expiration of term of service. Pay \$13 per month, and State Aid for families. All necessary information can be obtained at the office, corner Cambridge and North Russell Streets.

—Lieut. J.W.M. Appleton
Recruiting Officer²⁴

The "Black Committee" did not stop with just newspaper ads. As an abolitionist, Stearns knew most of the free blacks that were in favor of, and willing to fight for, black equality. Stearns enlisted the service of their leaders in recruiting for the regiment. The most prominent of black leader was Frederick Douglass. Stearns felt that Douglass' participation in the cause would be pivotal. He knew that Douglass believed participation by blacks in the war would force whites to treat blacks with fairness. The war could be used as a means of blacks fighting first for emancipation, and then ultimately for citizenship.

Frederick Douglass traveled throughout the North speaking to blacks in an effort to enlist them in the war effort. On one occasion he said, "We can get at the throat of treason and slavery through Massachusetts. She was first in the War for Independence; first to break the chains of her slaves; first to make the black man equal before the law; and first to admit colored children to her common schools. Massachusetts now welcomes you as her soldiers."²⁵

By April 1863 enough soldiers had been recruited to fill the regiment. Only a small proportion of the men recruited were slaves that had escaped from the South. The large majority of recruits were free educated blacks in the North. Frederick Douglass' two sons were recruited into the regiment, with one (Lewis H. Douglass), becoming the regiment's Sergeant Major. The Fifty-Fourth Regiment became the standard that all black units and black soldiers would be compared to. The regiment could not be satisfied with just being good; it had to be better than good. It had to be better than good because of the national implications and ramifications, and how closely the regiment would be watched. By the end of April 1863, nine hundred men had passed the medical test required for entrance into the regiment.²⁶ Recruitment was now complete. The first black regiment of the North that was comprised of free black volunteers was ready to move to the next phase and begin training.

The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts trained at Camp Meigs, Massachusetts from 21 February 1863 until its graduation on 18 May 1863. On its graduation date the regiment became an officially sanctioned fighting unit for the Union.²⁷

DEPARTURE FOR WAR

On 18 May 1863, Governor Andrew received an order from the Secretary of War ordering the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) to report to the Commander of the Department of the South, General Hunter, for combat duty in South Carolina.²⁸ Before departing for South Carolina the regiment assembled for the last time at Camp Meigs and marched to the railroad station. They loaded a special train for Boston's North Station. When the train arrived in Boston, the streets were lined with thousands of well-wishers. From North Station the regiment marched to the State House and Boston Common. At the State House there was much pomp and ceremony celebrating the regiment. However, none spoke more eloquently and passionately than Frederick Douglass:

My brothers, you are going off to fight the slave masters. When you are in battle remember the shame, the disgrace, and the degradation of slavery! Remember that in your hands is held the salvation of the black people of America. For once you have spent your blood, no black man will ever again be enslaved. I am too old to go with you. But my sons are in your ranks. Go into battle boldly, my brothers: Smash the chains of slavery! Smash them!²⁹

After completion of the speeches there were good-byes and well wishes for the members of the regiment. Afterwards the unit marched to Battery Wharf to await the transport vessel the De Molay. At approximately four o'clock on the afternoon of 18 May 1863, the

De Molay departed Boston Harbor enroute to South Carolina and the regiment's baptism under fire in the Civil War.³⁰

MAJOR CAMPAIGNS

THE SEA ISLANDS

On 3 June 1863 the De Molay dropped anchor outside of Charleston Harbor in Port Royal, South Carolina. Colonel Shaw reported to General Hunter and was told to proceed with his regiment to Beaufort, South Carolina and disembark there.³¹ At approximately 1600 hours the De Molay set sail for Beaufort. On 4 June the regiment disembarked at Beaufort and marched to an abandoned plantation where they camped. From 4-7 June they remained camped at the plantation with no rations or tents amidst a constant drizzle. To make matters worse, the unit was camped in a mosquito-infested area. To Colonel Shaw's surprise and outrage he

discovered white troops stationed nearby in an area there were no mosquitoes or swamp-land. Colonel Shaw protested to the officer-in-charge of positioning units, but "no attention was paid to his complaint."³² Additionally, Colonel Shaw's frustration grew as a result of the duties the regiment was assigned.

The regiment's first mission was working on fortifications on a shell road.³³ (A shell road is a road topped with crushed sea shells instead of crushed gravel). This angered Colonel Shaw. He felt that the regiment must be sent to the front to engage in combat. To live in a mosquito infested camp and build fortifications was an insult. Colonel Shaw decided to contact Governor Andrew and seek his help in the matter. After hearing of the living conditions and the way the regiment was being used, Governor Andrew immediately contacted the War Department.

Governor Andrew informed the Secretary of War of the regiment's situation. He told the Secretary of War that he would recall the regiment if the situation was not corrected at once. Secretary of War Stanton knew that this was not an idle threat. Since the Fifty-Fourth had not yet been formally federalized, they were still under state control. Governor Andrew could recall the regiment if he desired. The Secretary did not want to lose the services of the regiment and moved swiftly to correct the situation. The regiment began to receive tents, cots, rations, and other supplies. Remarkably, the quartermaster had these supplies but had withheld them until the Secretary intervened.³⁴ As a result of these actions, the regiment's respect for and trust of Colonel Shaw grew immensely.

On 6 June 1863 Colonel Shaw received orders to depart Beaufort and report to Colonel James Montgomery at Simon's Island. The regiment arrived at the small island off the coast of Georgia on 8 June. They were quartered on Simon's Island under much better conditions than before. On 9 June 1863 the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) was sworn into Federal Service. The Fifty-Fourth was assigned to a brigade that included the First and Second South Carolina. The brigade was commanded by Colonel James Montgomery.

On 10 June Colonel Montgomery went to Colonel Shaw and asked, "How soon can you be ready to start on an expedition?" Colonel Shaw replied, "In half an hour."³⁵ Excitement was in the air as the regiment was about to embark on a combat mission. Eight companies of the Fifty-Fourth along with five companies of the Second South Carolina were called upon to execute a raid on Darien, Georgia.

DARIEN, GEORGIA

Colonel Montgomery believed there was a small Confederate force in Darien and wanted to see the Fifty-Fourth in action. Therefore, he accompanied the regiment on the raid. On 11 June the regiment arrived at Darien and faced no resistance. A house to house search found no evidence of Confederate soldiers. Colonel Montgomery was furious and told Colonel Shaw, "I shall burn this town."³⁶ Colonel Shaw was shocked and told Colonel Montgomery that he did not want this responsibility. Colonel Montgomery stated that he would gladly take responsibility for burning the town. He explained to Colonel Shaw, "The Southerners must be made to feel that this was a real war, and that they were to be swept away by the hand of God like the Jews of old."³⁷ Colonel Shaw had no choice but to follow orders.

Reluctantly, Colonel Shaw followed the order. One company of the Fifty-Fourth participated in burning the town along with the Second South Carolina. Everything in the town was burned except for a church, a few houses, and some lumber works owned by northerners. Colonel Shaw was very uneasy about the actions he witnessed at Darien. Colonel Montgomery, himself, applied the torch to the last buildings.³⁸ At the completion of the expedition Colonel Shaw wrote to Governor Andrew concerning this expedition.³⁹ Before he received a reply, the regiment was ordered to report to Hilton Head, South Carolina.

PAY PROBLEMS

On 24 June 1863 the Fifty-Fourth reported to Hilton Head. The regiment marched on foot for approximately a mile and camped in an old cotton field. Several other regiments were also camped in the area awaiting future training. The unit made use of this time by practicing drilling and other operations. The encampment was commanded by Brigadier General George C. Strong, a staunch abolitionist. On 30 June 1863 the Fifty-Fourth was mustered for pay.

Until 30 June the Fifty-Fourth was paid by the state of Massachusetts. The regiment would receive current and future wages from the Federal Government. From the beginning it was rumored that terms of the enlistment would not be honored by the government.⁴⁰ As the first soldiers reported for pay they learned they would receive \$10 per month. The regiment was classified with contraband regiments and therefore only entitled to \$10 per month. This was three dollars per month less than white privates received from the same paymaster.⁴¹ This was not the decision of the pay officer, but of the War Department. The War Department decided that soldiers of African descent would be paid \$10 per month and not the \$13 per month paid to white soldiers. This decision was based on Sections 12, 13, and 15 of the Militia Act of 17 July 1862, which authorized the employment of Negro soldiers at a rate \$3 a month below the

amount granted white privates in the Union Armies.⁴² To make matters worse the Union practiced withholding the \$3 uniform allowance instead of paying it in cash as was the practice with white soldiers.⁴³ In effect, the regiment was being paid \$6 a month less than their white counterparts.

Colonel Shaw was outraged by these events. After consulting with the paymaster he attempted to explain the situation to the regiment. He told the regiment that there was no good reason or justification to explain the difference in pay. He further stated that that he would attempt to get the difference in pay fixed immediately. The soldiers of the Fifty-Fourth took a vote and agreed that every soldier in the regiment would refuse to accept his pay until they were paid equally.⁴⁴ The soldiers felt that the government was treating them unfairly and not acting in good faith. When they enlisted they were told that the pay was \$13 a month and it included state aid for their families.⁴⁵ The soldiers told Colonel Shaw that they had not volunteered merely for money and would continue to serve under his command until the Federal Government paid them the same as white soldiers. Colonel Shaw was proud of the regiment's response and sought to rectify the situation.

Colonel Shaw wired Governor Andrew and informed him of the pay problem. The governor was equally outraged. He immediately traveled to Washington to find out why the Fifty-Fourth was getting paid less than white regiments. The governor did not get the answer he sought. In an attempt to remedy the situation, Governor Andrew asked the Massachusetts legislature to vote to pay the regiment the difference in pay, which he did. However, the regiment again refused to accept any pay until the Federal Government abolished the "degrading distinction between white and colored troops."⁴⁶ Money was not an overriding issue; the members of the regiment were more interested in the principle of justice.

To show their support for the black soldiers in the regiment Colonel Shaw and his officers also refused to accept any salary until their men received the proper pay. It was uncommon at the time for officers and soldiers to stand together like this. What made this event all the more surprising was the fact that the officers were white and the soldiers black.⁴⁷ As a result of the officers and soldiers standing firm on the pay problem, abolitionists began pressuring Congress for a change in the policy and an equal pay bill.

MORRIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

The Fifty-Fourth had been encamped on Hilton Head Island approximately three weeks when they received orders to report to Folly Island. On 8 July 1863 the regiment embarked on the steamer Chasseur with seven companies and the regimental headquarters. The other three

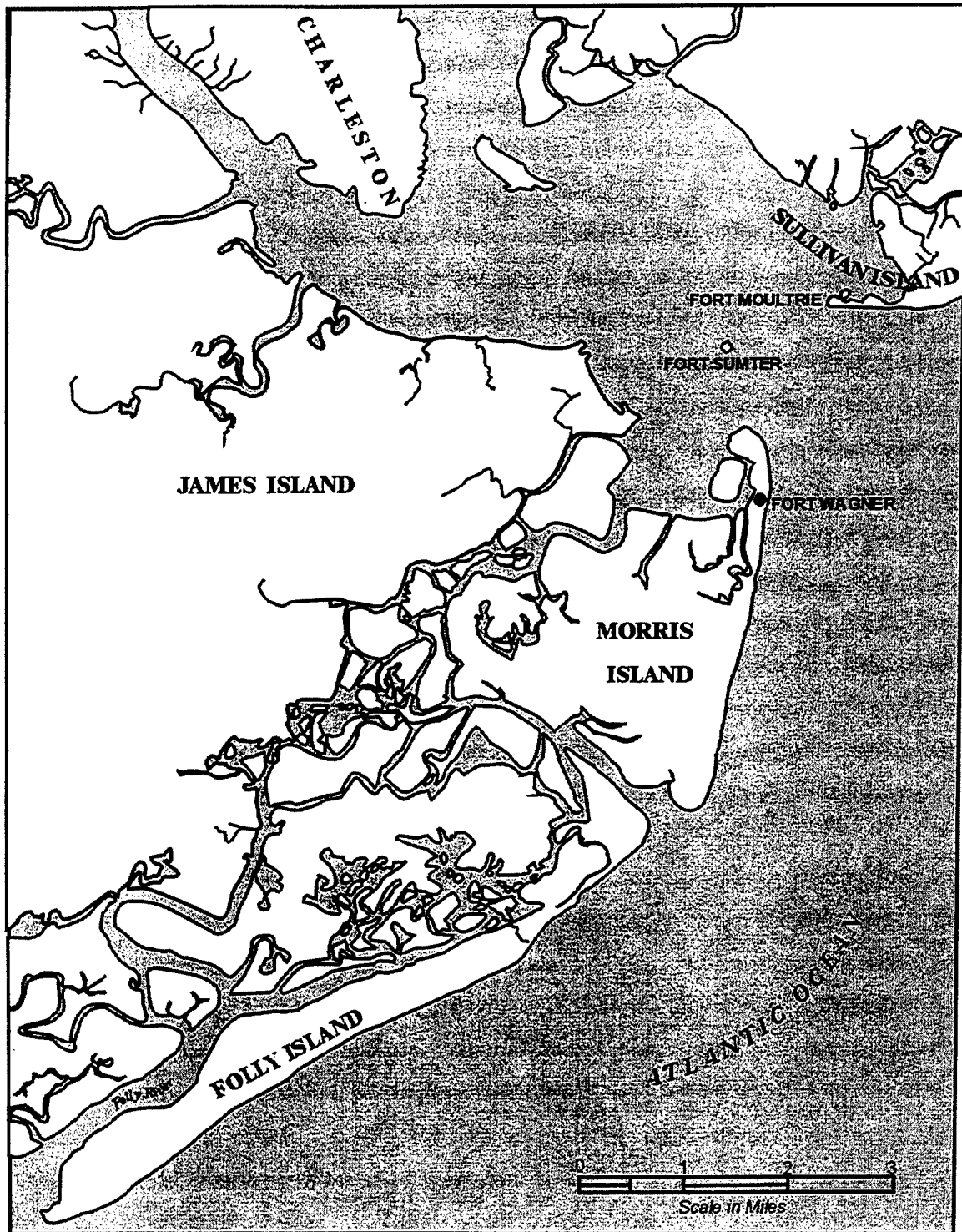


FIGURE 1 BATTERY WAGNER AND THE SEA ISLANDS

companies traveled on the steamer Cossack. Upon arrival the steamers anchored off Folly Island, a few miles south of Charleston (Figure 1), with several other vessels loaded with troops. Union forces were preparing for an attack on Charleston's outer defenses. This attack would

have as its objectives the capture of Fort Sumter, James Island, Morris Island, and the greatest Confederate stronghold of them all, Fort Wagner.⁴⁸ If the Union Army captured Fort Wagner, it would be virtually impossible for the Confederate Army to hold Charleston. Charleston was psychologically important to both the Union and the Confederates as it was the cradle of secessionism.

On 11 July the Fifty-Fourth was ordered to James Island to serve as reinforcements for General Alfred H. Terry's division. General Terry's division consisted of three brigades. The three brigades were Davis' brigade, Stevenson's brigade, and Montgomery's brigade which contained the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts and the Second South Carolina Regiments.⁴⁹

On 16 July 1863 the Fifty-Fourth and Second South Carolina received their baptism in combat together. In the early morning they were awakened by heavy firing on the picket line. The Fifty-Fourth formed a picket line on the right side of Colonel Montgomery's brigade on James Island. That night a large Confederate force struck three companies of the Fifty-Fourth. A heated exchange commenced with soldiers of the regiment holding the line long enough for soldiers of the Tenth Connecticut Infantry to retreat and to allow reinforcements to advance to the front. It was during this battle that Sergeant James H. Wilson established the motto of "I Will Never Retreat." Sergeant Wilson was one of the exceptional noncommissioned officers of the regiment. He repeatedly told his men that he would never retreat under any circumstances. During the Confederate attack Sergeant Wilson showed unusual bravery and moral courage. While the Confederates were attacking he shouted to his men to stand fast. His shouts served to attract more attention to himself as five enemy soldiers advanced on him. He killed three of the attackers while the other two passed by. Subsequently, a detachment of cavalry moved towards Sergeant Wilson. Rather than retreat, he yelled fiercely and attacked the cavalry as they attempted to surround him. He momentarily kept the cavalry at bay with just his bayonet before he was killed.⁵⁰ He had given his life rather than retreat.

After the battle the regiment was widely hailed as having saved the Tenth Connecticut Volunteers. One of the Connecticut soldiers wrote to his mother, "but for the bravery of three companies of the Fifty-Fourth our whole regiment would have been captured."⁵¹ After returning from the battle the Fifty-Fourth was cheered by white Union soldiers. They were greeted with sounds of "well done, well done" and "we heard your guns." Members of the Tenth Connecticut offered their thanks with gifts to the regiment. The regiment's official losses during the battle were listed as three killed, twelve wounded, and three missing. The regiment believed they had earned the respect of their white counterparts, although it took the blood of their comrades to accomplish this.

Later on the day of 16 July the regiment received orders to move to Morris Island and report to General Strong. That evening Sergeant Major Lewis Douglass wrote to his father, "By the time you get this letter, I will have been in battle. If I do not survive, know this, I am not afraid to die if my death will mean freedom for our people. See to it father. See to it that our sacrifice will not have been in vain."⁵² That night the regiment was given the order to advance followed by other regiments in Colonel Montgomery's brigade.

The regiment marched all through a stormy night. Fotsore, weary, hungry, and thirsty the regiment halted near the beach opposite Folly Island about 0500 on 17 July.⁵³ Upon their arrival Colonel Shaw was immediately summoned to a meeting with General Gilmore, the commander of Union forces. He had summoned his commanders to his headquarters to brief them on the upcoming battle. The next evening an attack would be made on Fort Wagner. The Fifty-Fourth would be rewarded for its bravery and courage in battle by being picked to lead the assault on Fort Wagner.

THE ASSAULT ON FORT WAGNER

"Battery Wagner," was so named by the Confederates in memory of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas M. Wagner of the First South Carolina Artillery who was killed at Fort Sumter."⁵⁴ The name was appropriate, also, because the fortification was never completed. The Union referred to the location as Fort Wagner. Fort Wagner stretched 630 feet across the northern tip of Morris Island. The fortification was built of sand, turf, and a facing of sturdy logs. It also included thick parapets and deep bomb proof dugouts that provided shelter for its garrison. On the east side of the approach to the fort was the Atlantic Ocean. The west side was bound by Vincent's Creek with its sandy marshes. There was a small strip of land that ran between these two water bodies that led to Fort Wagner. At low tide the approach afforded a good pathway to the enemy's position. At high tide, though, the approach would be through deep, loose sand, and over low sand hillocks. The approach to Fort Wagner was unobstructed until an advancing enemy reached a point approximately 200 yards from the fort. At this point the Confederates had dug a line of rifle trenches. Approximately 50 yards closer to the fort was an easterly bend in the marsh that extended to within 24 yards of the sea at high tide. This created a natural defile making the fort approachable from the south.

Fort Wagner was protected by guns of every size. Its formidable armament on 15 July 1863 was reported as follows:

On sea face, one ten-inch Columbiad, and two smooth-bore thirty-two pounders. On southeast bastion, operating on land and sea was one rifled thirty-two pound gun; on south point of bastion operating on land, one forty-two pounder

carronade; in the curtain with direct fire on land approach to embrasure, two eight-inch naval shell-guns, one eight-inch sea coast howitzer, and one thirty-two pound smooth bore cannon; on the flank defenses of the curtain, two thirty-two pound carronades in embrasures; on southwest angle, one ten-inch sea coast mortar; on bastion gorge, one thirty-two pound carronade. Four twelve pound howitzers.⁵⁵

Less than two miles away were the guns of Fort Sumter along with many shore batteries that were in range of Fort Wagner. From the Union perspective, Fort Wagner was well guarded.

Brigadier General William B. Taliaferro commanded Morris Island and also Battery Wagner. The fort's garrison included the Thirty-First and Fifty-First North Carolina regiments, the Charleston Battalion, two companies of the Sixty-Third Georgia Heavy Artillery, and two companies of the Confederate First South Carolina Infantry that were acting as artillerymen. The force totaled over 1,700 soldiers.

On 18 July 1863 the Fifty-Fourth disembarked at Pawnee Landing near Morris Island. After a foot march of approximately six miles they reached Lighthouse Inlet and rested to await transportation.⁵⁶ Later, the regiment boarded a small vessel, traveled to Morris Island, and remained near the shore to await further orders.⁵⁷ Upon his arrival, Colonel Shaw and his adjutant reported to General Strong. General Strong informed Colonel Shaw that Fort Wagner would be stormed that evening. The General knew of Colonel Shaw's desire to have his regiment fight side by side with white troops. General Strong said to Colonel Shaw, "You may lead the column, is you say 'yes.' Your men, I know, are worn out, but do as you choose."⁵⁸

Colonel Shaw immediately ordered Adjutant James to return and have Lieutenant Colonel Hallowell bring the regiment forward. General Seymour had been chosen to command the assault column. He gave the following reasons as to why the Fifty-Fourth was given the honorable, but dangerous duty of leading the assault on Fort Wagner. "It was believed that the Fifty-Fourth was in every respect as efficient as any other body of men; and as it was one the strongest and best officered, there seemed to be no good reason why it should not be selected for the advance. This point was decided by General Strong and myself."⁵⁹

At approximately 1800 hours Lieutenant Colonel Hallowell and the regiment arrived at General Strong's headquarters. The soldiers were worn-out and hungry from two consecutive days of fighting and moving. They had received no hot food and little sleep. General Strong expressed his sympathy for the soldiers and his desire that they have food. It could not be, however, for it was necessary that the regiment move on to its assigned position.⁶⁰

The attack on Fort Wagner was scheduled to begin at 1945 hours. Three red rockets fired by the warship *New Ironsides* was the signal to begin the assault. The Fifty-Fourth was to

attack with three companies abreast, in triple ranks. Company K was the color company and would carry the flag and lead the assault. Before the regiment departed on the assault, General Strong rode to the front to give an inspirational talk to the regiment consisting of the following words:

Boys, I am a Massachusetts man, and I know you will fight for the honor of the State. I am sorry that you must go into the fight tired and hungry, but the men in the fort are tired too. There are but three hundred men behind those walls, and they have been fighting all day. Don't fire a musket on the way up, but go in and bayonet them at their guns.⁶¹

Calling out the color bearer, General Strong said, "If this man should fall, who will lift the flag and carry it on?"⁶² Colonel Shaw was standing nearby and softly responded, "I will."⁶³ There was a resounding eruption of enthusiasm and support from the Fifty-Fourth as they prepared to execute their unenviable task.

As the Fifty-Fourth waited to embark on this dangerous mission, it consisted of twenty-two officers and six hundred enlisted soldiers. Colonel Shaw's last orders, before the assault, to the regimental executive officer were, "I shall go in advance with the National flag. You will keep the State flag with you. It will give the men something to rally around. We shall take the fort or die there. Good-bye!"⁶⁴

The assault on Fort Wagner did not follow the template of a typical Civil War assault. The Union Army set up a siege line approximately 1,350 yards south of Fort Wagner. The preparations usually associated with an assault were not made.

There was no provision for cutting away obstructions, filling the ditch, or spiking the guns. No special instructions were given the stormers; no line of skirmishers or covering party was thrown out; no engineers or guides accompanied the column; no artillery-men to serve captured guns; no plan of the work was shown company officers. It was understood that the fort would be assaulted with the bayonet, and that the Fifty-Fourth would be closely supported.⁶⁵

At 1945 hours three red-tailed rockets were launched from the warship *New Ironside*. This was the signal for the Fifty-Fourth to move out. Colonel Shaw gave the command of attention and said, "move at a quick time until within a hundred yards of the fort; then double quick, and charge!"⁶⁶

There was barely enough room for the regiment to maneuver through the defile. They came under intense artillery and musket fire as they progressed along the defile. At this point Colonel Shaw gave the command to move out at the double quick, rationalizing that they would close on the enemy quicker and thus expose themselves for a shorter period of time. In addition to the fire from the fort, the Fifty-Fourth had to negotiate gunfire from the coast and the

large holes the shells left. As shells from the Confederate shore battery impacted near the lead company, the color bearers noticed the flags were giving the enemy targets. They began to case the colors. Colonel Shaw saw this and ordered them to uncase the colors and charge on. The regiment forged on without firing a shot although it was taking heavy losses on its approach. These losses, however, did not stop or slow the momentum of the regiment's assault.

As the lead company approached to within 300 yards of the fort the moon came out. The attacking force had lost any element of concealment and could be clearly seen by the Confederates. Once the lead company closed within 200 yards of the fort, the regiment began to receive direct fire from the cannons in the fort. At the same time hundreds of Confederate soldiers opened fire. Several soldiers in the lead company were killed by the initial volley. While members of the regiment saw their comrades dead and sprawled on the ground, they continued on. Before the enemy could fire a second volley Colonel Shaw moved forward waving his sword overhead and ordered the regiment forward.⁶⁷

Colonel Shaw remained steadfast in his desire to lead the regiment's assault. As he and the lead members scaled the walls of the fort the only fire was from the officer's revolvers. Upon entering the fort, Colonel Shaw was shot through the heart. As the remainder of his men scaled the walls they opened fire with their muskets and engaged in furious hand-to-hand combat. The assault on Fort Wagner lasted approximately ten minutes before the Confederates finally drove the Fifty-Fourth back. The regiment's charge had been made and repulsed by the enemy before any Union troops arrived to support them.

The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) was the only Union unit to scale the walls of Fort Wagner and gain entry into the fort. They did so at a heavy cost. Soldiers bodies were strewn all along the approach. Official casualties from the assault were listed as follows for the enlisted men.

Killed	9
Wounded	147
<u>Missing</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	256

Among the officers, Colonel Shaw, Adjutant G. W. James, and Captain S. Wilard were killed. Eleven other officers were wounded.⁶⁸ The only positive action to come out of the Union's assault on Fort Wagner was the exemplary performance of the Fifty-Fourth. Sergeant Robert J. Simmons, Sergeant William H. Carney (the color bearer), Corporal Henry F. Peal, and Private George Wilson were recommended for the Medal of Honor. They became the first

blacks to receive the nation's highest decoration. Sergeant Carney's actions particularly stood out. He became the first black soldier to receive the Medal of Honor. The Fifty-Fourth and its members had proven their mettle in battle both individually and collectively. General Strong made the following comments concerning the heroism of the regiment after the assault. "The Fifty-Fourth did well and nobly; only the fall of Colonel Shaw prevented them from entering the fort. They moved up as gallantly as any troops could, and with their enthusiasm they deserved a better fate."⁶⁹ The one consolation for the unit after the assault of Fort Wagner was that it "had carried the courage of a race through a storm of Confederate bullets and through the terrible burden of their own fear to the very teeth of the enemy."⁷⁰

A FINAL VICTORY

Following its display of valor, the Fifty-Fourth returned to Charleston, South Carolina for siege duty. The regiment's primary duty during the occupation of Charleston was grand guard. The regiment was tasked with guarding Confederate prisoners. It was also during the siege of Charleston that the regiment was reminded of the general dislike of black soldiers. On 15 July 1864 a lieutenant and some of the soldiers from the Fifty-Second Pennsylvania refused to work with and serve under an officer from the Fifty-Fourth. Lieutenant Marcy, of the Fifty-Second Pennsylvania stated, "I will not do duty with colored troops."⁷¹ The lieutenant was subsequently arrested, court-martialed, and given a dishonorable discharge.

On 29 August 1864, word reached the regiment that Sergeant Cross and a few other men had received full pay while they were in Beaufort, South Carolina. On August 18th the War Department had issued Circular Number 60 which stated, "Officers commanding colored organizations should make an investigation to ascertain who of their men enlisted prior to January 1, 1864, and were free April 19, 1861."⁷² As a result of this circular, a sworn statement from a soldier could establish their freedom.

When Colonel Hallowell mustered the regiment for its first pay in accordance with the new regulations he administered the following oath: "You do solemnly swear that you owed no man unrequited labor on or before the 19th day of April, 1861. So help you God."⁷³

This oath became affectionately known in the regiment as the "Quaker Oath."⁷⁴ Some members of the Fifty-Fourth were not free men on 19 April 1861. Still they took the oath as free men. This seemed a small price to pay for these men to qualify for and receive full pay. Some said it was an injustice to require the members of the regiment to take the oath after all they had experienced.

28 September 1864 was a banner day for the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) and all Negro soldiers. It was the day the regiment received its full pay along with back pay for eighteen months of selfless duty and service to the Union. The regiment was ecstatic that their pay problems and travails were over. It required the grand total of \$170,000.00 to pay the regiment. An officer wrote:

We had eighteen months waiting, and the kaleidoscope was turned, nine hundred men received their money; nine hundred stories rested on the faces of those men, as they passed in at one door and out of the other. Wagner stared Readville in the face! There was use in waiting! Two days have changed the face of things, and now a pretty carnival prevails. The fiddle and other music long neglected enlivens the tents day and night. Songs burst out everywhere; dancing is incessant; boisterous shouts are heard, mimicry, burlesque, and carnival; pompous salutations are heard on all sides. Here a crowd and a preacher; there a crowd and two boxers; yonder, feasting and jubilee. In brief, they have awakened "the pert and nimble spirit of mirth, and turned melancholy forth to funerals."⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The story of the United States Colored Troops, in general, and the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) specifically, provides a legacy of accomplishment and numerous lessons learned. It is a story about the struggle for acceptance by blacks in the United States. Further, it is a story of the struggle of African-Americans to earn the respect of the white majority, and one day gain citizenship. It is a story of the black man's struggle to be a soldier in the United States Army and receive equal pay. Above all, though, this story is about the courage and valor of a group of men that served the United States under the most difficult conditions and still persevered. The soldiers of the USCT and the Fifty-Fourth paved the way for blacks to serve in the military post Civil War. Through their courage and spilled blood on the battlefield, they proved that given the opportunity, blacks would serve valiantly. They set a standard that was continued by the 9th and 10th Cavalry regiments after the War.

When the Civil War began with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, the Union believed it could quell the rebellion in a relatively short period of time. Initially President Lincoln requested 75,000 soldiers for a period of 90 days. Soon it became obvious that this level of combat force was insufficient to accomplish the goals of the Union. As Federal manpower shortages became critical, the Lincoln administration was faced with a very difficult situation. Union manning levels did not lend themselves to a victory over the Confederates. To assist in the war effort, the Union authorized the use of blacks as laborers on

17 July 1862. As Union defeats continued on the battlefields, President Lincoln knew he would have to do more. On 1 January 1863 the President issued the Emancipation Proclamation which further authorized the use of blacks in combat units. During 1863 the North raised and fielded more than 50 black regiments to assist in the War effort. By the end of the Civil War the number of black soldiers in the Union Army was approximately equal to the number of Confederate soldiers. This had to have an impact on both sides. The Confederates must have been demoralized due to the new found source of units in the North. The fact that these units fought so bravely also served to further weaken their resolve. Recruitment and fielding of black regiments may have saved the Union. They came along at a time when the Union was suffering numerous defeats at the hands of the Confederates, and recruitment had become minimal. This new source of combat power emboldened the North and caused it to go on the offense.

Blacks participated in 449 engagements during the War. Thirty-nine of those engagements were major (such as the assault on Fort Wagner). Over 181,000 blacks volunteered to serve and fight for the Union. This number is a little more than eleven percent of the approximately 2,500,000 men that served with the Union during the Civil War. Eleven percent of combat power is not a trivial number. Given the general state of units in the field, the black regiments were more than a welcome addition. They were a combat multiplier to the combat power and effectiveness of Union forces.

The authorization to serve in combat units was a major hurdle for blacks to clear. Blacks had previously proven successful as stevedores, laborers, and construction workers. Most whites, though, felt that blacks were unsuited for combat. The prevailing attitude was that blacks were cowards and undisciplined, and would turn and run rather than stand and fight. Nothing was further from the truth. Blacks fought bravely and nobly. They were usually given the most difficult of missions with minimal support. This was witnessed by the suicidal assault on Fort Wagner by the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored). After two consecutive days of fighting, a foot march of six miles, no hot food and little sleep, they fought valiantly against insurmountable odds with minimal support. Their courageous effort proved that blacks would fight (and not run) and were well-disciplined. Sergeant William H. Carney earned the Congressional Medal of Honor as a result of his actions during the assault. He was the first, but not the last, black man to receive the Medal of Honor. A list of the 29 Medal of Honor winners from the United States Colored Troops is included in Appendix B. All twenty-nine are testaments to the courage, bravery, and valor of blacks.

The most notable accomplishment of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) was sacrifice. They sacrificed and served for the Union, but theirs was a greater

sacrifice. The regiment was mustered for pay as a Federal unit on 30 June 1863. The paymaster is prepared to pay each member of the regiment \$10 per month. This was counter to the \$13 per month the members of the regiment were promised (the amount white privates were paid). The members of the regiment felt this was an insult and voted overwhelmingly to refuse the lesser amount. When the legislature of Massachusetts offered to pay the additional \$3 per month, they refused that offer also. They felt that the Federal Government had to abolish its degrading distinction between white and black service members. Rather than receive less money, or accept the difference in pay from Massachusetts, they stood by their values and accepted no pay at all. They refused the lesser amount on the grounds that they served with, ate the same food, wore the same uniform, and fought and died just like white soldiers. They received no pay during their first excursions into Georgia and South Carolina. They received no pay even though they had over 250 casualties during the assault on Fort Wagner.

The Fifty-Fourth was mustered for pay on 28 September 1864 and received pay equal to their white counterparts. There was much rejoicing amongst the members of the regiment. That rejoicing is heard, and continues in 2002. Every black and minority in the United States military should think of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) on the 1st and 15th of each month as we receive equal pay. The Fifty-Fourth Regiment Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) proved that a black soldier's life and service was worth the same as a white soldier's.

The story of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) and the United States Colored Troops is a proud one. It is a proud legacy of the indomitable American spirit. It played a vital role to the Union effort in the Civil War. They proved that blacks would not only fight, but fight valiantly, bravely, and courageously. On the night before the assault on Fort Wagner, Sergeant Major Lewis Douglass wrote his father, Frederick Douglass expressing his desire that that the story of the Fifty-Fourth be accurately told so that he and other members of the regiment would not die in vain. The more than 37,000 members of the United States Colored Troops that died during the Civil War did not die in vain. They established a proud legacy that was carried on by the 9th and 10th Cavalry (the Buffalo Soldiers), the 369th Infantry (Harlem Hellfighters during World War I), the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions, and every black person currently serving in the military.

WORD COUNT = 9811

APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

6 November 1860	Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States.
20 December 1860	South Carolina secedes from the Union.
1 February 1861	Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas have seceded from the Union.
12 April 1861	Confederates attack Fort Sumter. The Civil War begins.
21 February 1862	Confederates defeat Union forces at Valverde, New Mexico.
May 1862	General David Hunter organizes The First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry (Colored) at Hilton Head, South Carolina.
17 July 1862	Congress passes the Militia Act authorizing the enlistment of blacks as laborers and for construction duties to meet critical manpower shortages. The Act authorizes the employment of Negro soldiers at a rate \$3 a month below that granted to white privates in the Union Armies.
July – September 1862	Colonel James Williams and others recruit the First Kansas (Colored).
25 August 1862	Secretary of War Stanton issues an order that states, "Volunteers of African descent are to be entitled to and receive the same pay and rations as are allowed by law to volunteers in the service."
29-30 August 1862	Confederates give Union forces a crushing defeat near Manassas, Virginia in the Second Battle of Bull Run.
17 September 1862	Union and Confederate forces collide along the banks of the Antietam Creek in Maryland. The Union forces General Lee and his Confederate Army back into Virginia.
September 1862	Major General Benjamin Butler organizes the Louisiana Native Guards from free Negroes.
October 1862	General Rufus B. Saxton forms the First South Carolina Regiment (Colored) from contrabands.
9 December 1862	Representative John Hickman of Pennsylvania introduces a bill to authorize President Lincoln to raise 100 Negro regiments.
August–October 1862	The Corps d'Afrique is formed consisting of the First, Second, and Third Louisiana Native Guard. In January 1863 the First South Carolina Infantry (Colored) is officially organized as part of the Corps d'Afrique.

1 January 1863	President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.
26 January 1863	War Department issues order that authorizes the recruitment of blacks and formation of Negro units for combat roles in support of the Union Civil War effort.
January 1863	Federal Government authorizes the services of the First Kansas (Colored).
May 1863	The Bureau for Colored Troops is established by Secretary of War Stanton.
4 June 1863	War Department publishes General Orders No.163 which states that "Persons of African descent who enlist. . .are entitled to ten dollars per month and one ration; three dollars of which monthly pay may be in clothing."
9 June 1863	The Fifty-Fourth is sworn into Federal service.
30 June 1863	The Fifty-Fourth is mustered for pay for the first time as a Federal unit. Paymaster offers to pay members of the regiment \$10 per month rather than the \$13 they were promised. The regiment votes to refuse the pay until they are paid equally.
2 July 1863	Governor Andrew receives letter from Colonel Shaw detailing the regiment's pay reduction.
September 1863	Governor Andrew goes to Washington to seek equal pay for his black regiments. The request is denied.
16 November 1863	Massachusetts legislature passes law to pay difference to black soldiers.
23 November 1863	Members of the Fifty-Fourth refuse the pay from Massachusetts. Members of the regiment state "to pay this regiment the difference what the United States Government offers us and what they are legally bound to pay us is tantamount to advertising to the world that we are holding out for money and not for principle,-that we sink our manhood in consideration for a few more dollars."
December 1863	Secretary of War, Edward Stanton asks Congress to enact legislation equalizing the pay of black and white soldiers.
15 June 1864	Congress enacts legislation granting equal pay to black soldiers. The law is retroactive to 1 January 1864 for all Negro soldiers that were free men on 19 April 1861.
18 August 1864	War Department issues Circular No. 60 which directed commanders of Negro regiments to find out which of their men had been free on 19 April 1861.

29 August 1864	First members of the Fifty-Fourth are paid equally.
31 August 1864	Colonel Hallowell musters the Fifty-Fourth under rules of new legislation. Administers "Quaker Oath" to all members of the regiment.
28-29 September 1864	Federal paymaster arrives to pay the Fifty- Fourth Regiment Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers (Colored) from their time of enlistment (back pay). It takes \$170,000.00 to pay the regiment.

APPENDIX B
CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR WINNERS
IN THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS

The following list of Congressional Medal of Honor winners was taken from American Decorations: A List of Awards of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished-Service Cross, and the Distinguished-Service Medal, 1862—1926. Compiled by the Office of the Adjutant General of the Army. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927.

First Lt. William Appleton, Co. H, 4th USCI, at Petersburg, VA, 15 June 1864 and New Market Heights, VA, 29 September 1864. The first man of the Eighteenth Corps to enter the enemy's works and valiant service in a desperate assault, inspiring the Union troops by his example of steady courage.

Pvt. William H. Barnes, Co. C, 38th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Among the first to enter the enemy's works, although wounded.

First Lt. Charles L. Barrell, Co. C, 102nd USCI, near Camden, SC, April 1865. Hazardous service in marching through the enemy's country to bring relief to his command.
Col. Delavan Bates, 30th USCI, at Cemetery Hill, VA, 30 July 1864. Gallantry in action where he fell, shot through the face, at the head of his regiment.

First Sgt. Powhatan Beaty, Co. G, 5th USCT at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Took command of his company, all officers having been killed or wounded, and gallantly led it.
First Lt. Orson W. Bennett, Co. A, 102nd USCI, at Honey Hill, SC, 30 November 1864. After several unsuccessful efforts to recover three pieces of abandoned artillery, this officer gallantly led a small force fully one hundred yards in advance of the Union lines and brought in the guns, preventing their capture.

First Sgt. James H. Bronson, Co. D, 5th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Took command of his company, all the officers having been killed or wounded, and led it gallantly.

Lt. George W. Brush, Co. B, 34th USCI, at Ashepoo River, SC, 24 May 1864. Voluntarily commanded a boat crew, which went to the rescue of a large number of Union soldiers on board the stranded steamer Boston, and with great gallantry succeeded in conveying them to shore, being exposed during the entire time to heavy fire from a Confederate battery.

Sgt. William H. Carney, Co. C, 54th Mass. Col. Inf., at Fort Wagner, SC, 18 July 1863. When the color sergeant was shot down, this soldier grasped the flag, led the way to the parapet, and planted the colors thereon. When the troops fell back he brought off the flag, under a fierce fire in which he was twice severely wounded.

First Lt. Andrew Davidson, Co. H, 30th USCI, at the mine, Petersburg, VA, 30 July 1864. One of the first to enter the enemy's works, where, after his colonel, major, and one-third of the company officers had fallen, he gallantly assisted in rallying and saving the remnant of the command.

Sgt. Decatur Dorsey, Co. B, 39th USCI, at Petersburg, VA, 30 July 1864. Planted his colors on the Confederate works in advance of his regiment, and when the regiment was driven back to the Union works he carried the colors there and bravely rallied the men.

First Lt. Nathan H. Edgerton, 6th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Took up the flag after three color bearers had been shot down and bore it forward, though himself wounded.

Capt. Thomas F. Ellsworth, Co. B, 55th Mass. Col. Inf., at Honey Hill, SC, 30 November 1864. Under a heavy fire carried his wounded commanding officer from the field.

Capt. Ira H. Evans, Co. B, 116th USCI, at Hatcher's Run, VA, 2 April 1865. Voluntarily passed between the lines, under a heavy fire from the enemy, and obtained important information.

Sgt. Maj. Christian A. Fleetwood. 4th USCI at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Seized the colors, after two color bearers had been shot down, and bore them nobly through the fight.

Pvt. James Gardiner, Co. I, 36th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Rushed in advance of his brigade, shot a rebel officer who was on the parapet rallying his men, and then ran him through with his bayonet.

Sgt. James H. Harris, Co. B. 38th USCI, at New Market Heights, VA, 29 September 1864. Gallantry in the assault.

Sgt. Maj. Thomas Hawkins, 6th USCI, at Deep Bottom, VA, 21 July 1864. Rescue of regimental colors.

Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton, Co. H, 4th USCI. at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. When the regimental color bearer fell, this soldier seized the color and carried it forward, together with the national standard, until disabled at the enemy's inner line.

Sgt. Maj. Milton M. Holland, 5th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Took command of Company C, after all the officers had been killed or wounded, and gallantly led it.

Cpl. Miles James, Co. B, 36th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Having had his arm mutilated, making immediate amputation necessary, he loaded and discharged his piece with one hand and urged his men forward; this within 30 yards of the enemy's work.

First Sgt. Alexander Kelly, Co. F, 6th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Gallantly seized the colors, which had fallen near the enemy's lines of abatis, raised them and rallied the men at a time of confusion and in a place of the greatest danger.

Lt. Col. Henry C. Merriam, 73rd USCI, at Fort Blakely, AL, 9 April 1865. Volunteered to attack the enemy's works in advance of orders and, upon permission being given, made a most gallant assault.

Capt. Henry C. Nichols, Co. E, 73rd USCI, at Fort Blakely, AL, 9 April 1865. Voluntarily made a reconnaissance in advance of the line held by his regiment and, under a heavy fire, obtained information of great value.

First Sgt. Robert Pinn, Co. I, 5th USCI, At Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Took command of his company after all officers had been killed or wounded and gallantly led it in battle.

First Sgt. Edward Ratcliff, Co. C. 38th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Commanded and gallantly led his company after commanding officer had been killed; was the first enlisted man to enter the enemy's works.

Second Lt. Walter Thorn, Co. G, 116th USCI, at Dutch Gap Canal, VA, 1 January 1865. After the fuse of the mined bulkhead had been lit this officer, learning that the picket guard had not been withdrawn, mounted the bulkhead and at great personal peril warned the guard of its danger.

Pvt. Charles Veal, Co. D, 4th USCI, at Chapin's Farm, VA, 29 September 1864. Seized the national colors, after two color bearers had been shot down, close to the enemy's works, and bore them through the remainder of the battle.

Capt. Albert D. Wright, Co. G, 43rd USCI, at Petersburg, VA, 30 July 1864. Advanced beyond the enemy's lines, capturing a stand of colors and its color guard; was severely wounded.

ENDNOTES

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² Irving Werstein, The Storming of Fort Wagner (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1970), 18.

³ James Dorman and Robert Jones, The Afro-American Experience (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 256.

⁴ Forner, 32

⁵ Bennie J. McRae, Jr., "United States Colored Troops....a brief history," April 1995; available from < <http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/hisusct.htm>>; Internet; accessed 02 February 2002.

⁶ Luis F. Emilio, A Brave Black Regiment, The History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Voluntary Infantry, 1863-1865 (Boston: The Boston Book Company, 1894), 36.

⁷ Dudley Cornish, The Sable Arm-Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966), 46-57.

⁸ Werstein, 67.

⁹ Emilio, 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., xi.

¹¹ Cornish, 80.

¹² Ibid., 69-78.

¹³ Emilio, 46.

¹⁴ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1984), 1-5.

¹⁵ Scott W. Smith, "The First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry (US)," available from <<http://www.awod.com/gallery/probono/cwchas/1sc.html>>; Internet; accessed 15 January 2002.

¹⁶ Werstein, 10.

¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹⁹ Emilio, 2.

²⁰ Ibid., 9-10.

²¹ Joseph B. Coleman, Brave Black Regiment: The Formation Of The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, January 1863 – June 1864 (Fort Leavenworth: United States Army Command and General Staff College, 1995), 24.

²² Emilio, 6.

²³ Coleman, 27.

²⁴ Walter Dean Myers, Now Is Your Time: The African American Struggle for Freedom (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 156.

²⁵ Emilio, 14.

²⁶ Coleman, 32.

²⁷ Emilio, 30.

²⁸ Ibid., 31.

²⁹ Myers, 163-164.

³⁰ Emilio, 33.

³¹ Ibid., 36.

³² Werstein, 67.

³³ Ibid., 38.

³⁴ Ibid., 67.

³⁵ Emilio, 44.

³⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁰ Paul A. Hutton, A Brave Black Regiment (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1992), 51.

⁴¹ Cornish, 183.

- ⁴² Ibid., 46.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 190.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 187.
- ⁴⁵ Edward Zwick, dir., Glory, 114 min., Media Home Entertainment, 1989
- ⁴⁶ James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 214.
- ⁴⁷ Werstein, 80.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 68.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 53.
- ⁵⁰ Joseph T. Glatthaar, Forged In Battle, The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers (New York: Penguin Group, 1991), 276.
- ⁵¹ Emilio, 100.
- ⁵² Robert E. Greene, Swamp Angels (Washington, D.C.: BoMark/Greene Publishing Group, 1990), 88.
- ⁵³ Emilio, 65.
- ⁵⁴ Hutton, 75.
- ⁵⁵ Emilio, 75-77.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 68.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 81.
- ⁶⁰ Hutton, 79.
- ⁶¹ Emilio, 73.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 96-97.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁰ Myers, 153.

⁷¹ Ibid., 226.

⁷² Ibid., 228.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 236-237.

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