

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

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Carroll's Glory Soldiers of the Civil War
by Jay Graybeal

NOTE: Article copied from Jay's original, no newspaper clipping on file

Last year American moviegoer applauded "Glory" which chronicled the history of the 5th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, one of the first black regiments to see combat in the American Civil War. Although Maryland did not raise any similar unit, a number of Carroll County men saw service in the Union Army. These soldiers enlisted in segregated regiments known as the U.S. Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.). The 4th, 7th, 9th, 19th, 30th, and 39th Infantry Regiments, U.S.C.T. were composed of Marylanders. The Maryland Commissioners who compiled the histories and rosters of these regiments in 1898 wrote of their service: "The history and record of the Colored Troops raised in Maryland is one of which the survivors can also point with just pride. The severe losses incurred were above the average of the regimental losses in the Army during the Civil War. They had to contend with prejudice that time and their own good conduct could alone allay, they appeared to appreciate the ordeal through which they were passing, and not only their own Countrymen, but the civilized world stood and wondered as the Colored Union Volunteer passed by to battle."

A majority of Carroll County free blacks and former slaves served in the 4th and 30th Regiments, U.S.C.T. The 4th was organized in Baltimore during the summer of 1863 for three years of service. After training and building fortifications in Yorktown, Va., the regiment was assigned guard duty at the prisoner of war camp at Point Lookout, Md. From May 1864 until the end of the war, the 4th saw combat as part of the Army of the James, the 18th Army Corps and with expeditions in North Carolina commanded by General Benjamin F. Butler. Their list of engagements included Bermuda Hundred, Dutch Gap, Chapin's Farm, Fort Fisher and Sugar Loaf Hill. Their casualties were 105 killed in action and 187 died of wounds or disease.

Recorded in the Chattel Records for Carroll County are manumissions for twelve slaves who enlisted in the 4th Regiment, Thomas L. Robinson, Augustus Cook, William Henry Smith, George E.W. Stokes, Jacob Loytle, Charles Dorsey, Philip A. McLane, John Cook, Joseph Baker, Lewis Blake, Robinson Sewell, and Joshua Paraway. One was killed in action, two died of wounds and four died of disease.

Simon P. Murdock (1828-1933) was a prominent veteran of the 4th. The former private started a Sunday school for black children and donated the ground for and helped build the Strawbridge M.E. Church in New Windsor. He later served as a commander of the Thaddeus Stevens Post No. 40, Guard Army of the Republic in New Windsor.

The 30th Regiment was organized at Camp Stanton, Md., during the winter of 1864 for three years service. After training the unit served with the 9th Army Corps in Virginia. The 30th was

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engaged in the Wilderness Campaign and later was active in building fortifications during the siege of Petersburg, Va. They suffered a number of casualties in the poorly led attack, known as the Battle of the Crater, following the explosion of huge mine dug under the Confederate lines. The 30th and 39th Regiments had been trained to lead the assault but their commander Gen. U.S. Grant changed their orders just prior to the attack. He had been convinced by General George G. Meade who felt that a failed attack would lead to charges that they had sacrificed black troops.

The 30th joined the 4th Regiment in Butler’s North Carolina expeditions. Later they served with Sherman’s Army in North Carolina. Their battles included Petersburg, Fort Fisher, Sugar Loaf Hill and Cox Bridge. Regimental casualties were 46 killed in action and 179 died of wounds or disease.

Some manumissions of soldiers who served in the 30th Regiment are recorded in the Chattel Records, Benjamin Crampton, Theophiles Durham, William Bryant, Francis Howard, Isaiah Smith, Joshua Dutton, Samuel Nickum. One was killed in action, one died of disease and another was discharged for disability.

Despite their many sacrifices, Carroll’s “Colored Troops” did not enjoy equal wartime pay, treatment, or post-war benefits. Veterans such as Simon Murdock were not allowed to join their white comrades in the local Guard Army of the Republic Post. An integrated military would not become a reality until after World War II.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Daniel Hartzler

Photo caption: Simon Murdock (back row, far left) and fellow veterans of the U.S.C.T.