

"Many Carroll blacks served in Colored Troops during Civil War"

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By Duane K. Doxzen

Although blacks had served in military units before the Civil War, it was this conflict that saw the enlistment of blacks in large numbers. A significant number of Carroll County free blacks and manumitted slaves enlisted in the United States Colored Troops. Most of these volunteers served in the Fourth Regiment U.S.C.T., a unit that had been formed around the volunteers from the two thousand black Baltimoreans who had aided in the fortification of the city amidst the panic of Robert E. Lee's northward incursion in 1863.

Blacks and white abolitionists wholly encouraged the enlistment of blacks into the Union military as a way for blacks to begin breaking the shackles of slavery and second-class status by proving themselves. Many northern whites found the idea of blacks serving in the military distasteful, but as the conflict progressed and casualties mounted they came to the coldly pragmatic conclusion that black soldiers could stop a bullet as well as a white soldier could.

Black soldiers from Carroll County found themselves serving under a military hierarchy that operated under gross misconceptions and racist ideas. Black soldiers were often relegated to grueling physical labor by commanders who felt that blacks were better suited to the rigors of heavy labor in harsh climates. When black soldiers were sent into combat they were often thrown into insurmountable situations that resulted in massive casualties. Later in the war U.S. Grant admitted to changing battle strategy to forestall charges of using black soldiers as cannon fodder. Resulting injuries and disease led to large scale casualties and deaths among black units.

We know at least fifty three blacks from Carroll County served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Of this number seven were killed in action, died as the result of a wound inflicted in battle or died of disease. Seven others were discharged or mustered out with wounds or disabilities resulting from their service. The following is a list of those fifty three Carroll Countians who served their country:

William Adams, Joseph Baker, Lewis Blake, David N. Brown, John Calhoun, William Clark, Dennis Cole, John W. Cole, Augustus Cook, John Cook, John Cook, Benjamin Crampton, John Custus, Charles Dorsey, Daniel F. Dorsey, George Dorsey, George W. Dorsey, James H. Dorsey, John Dorsey, Lewis Dorsey, Thomas Dorsey, Isace T. Downs, Theophilus Durham, Joshua Dutton, Singleton Flanagan, Daniel Hammond, John Francis Hammond, Francis Howard, Henry Howard, David Ireland, Reuben Johnson, James I. Lane, James H. Key, George N. Lewis, Jacob Lytle, Philip A. McLane, Isiah Murdock, Simon Murdock, Wm. Henry Nelson (Little), Joshua Paraway, John Pike, Thomas L. Robinson, Joseph Saunders, Robinson Sewell, Ephraim Smith, Isaiah Smith, Wm. Henry Smith, George E.W. Stokes, Alexander Thomas, Daniel Thompson, Francis Williams, John Wilson and Joseph S. Wilson.

Service records of the U.S.C.T. regiments from Maryland can be found in the History and Roster of the Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-1865, Volume II (1899). A copy is available in the library of the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Photo Caption: Pvt. John Wesley Cole, Co. F, 4th United States Colored Troops, U.S. Army. Pvt. Cole was one of approximately 50 local blacks who served in the Civil War. Historical Society of Carroll, Gift of Mary Elizabeth Dorm, 1991.

Side Bar:

Each year the Society hosts an African-American History Forum during Black History Month. This year's program will be held at 7:30 p. m. on Thursday, February 29th, in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster. Our guest speaker will be Duane Doxzen, who will present a program on local history sources for researching African-American history in Carroll County. Mr. Doxzen is a 1994 graduate of Western Maryland College and a Society volunteer who has been researching and preparing a manuscript on this topic for nearly a year. His presentation will focus on the use of a variety of public records including, wills, estate inventories, chattel records, marriage licenses, census and military records, in the process research. He will also summarize the use of other sources including newspapers, church and cemetery records. The program is free to the membership and general public.