

**A Finding Aid for Research Files on U.S. Colored Troops
Associated with Alexandria, VA**

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A Finding Aid for Research Files on U.S. Colored Troops Associated with Alexandria, VA

This collection is a set of file folders primarily containing information on soldiers of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) from the American Civil War who were associated in some way with Alexandria, Virginia. It was compiled from two main sources. The first is Edward A. Miller, Jr.'s draft paper on African Americans buried at Alexandria National Cemetery. The second source is the research notes from City Archaeologist Dr. Pam Cressey's George Washington University (GWU) students who wrote papers on individuals hospitalized at L'Ouverture Hospital in Alexandria. These notes typically consist of data forms filled out while the students went through service and pension records at the National Archives, though some include photocopies of documents. None of the information in the associated spreadsheet (see [Alexandria Archaeology Publication Number 130 Appendix.xlsx](#)) for this collection is from primary sources; all of it derives from the two aforementioned sources. The spreadsheet itself should be treated as a companion to the physical collection (now curated by the Alexandria Black History Museum) and as a starting point for future research. The Alexandria Library holds a similar spreadsheet on its website that is also derived from Miller's work, but only lists soldiers who are buried at Alexandria National Cemetery. This collection also includes a copy of Miller's draft as well as some miscellaneous papers and notes from the GWU student researchers. Of note, while the vast majority of the 528 people in this collection were enlisted in USCT regiments, there are a few exceptions (see notes on non-USCT regiments).

Regiments in Collection

All of the individuals in this collection are organized by regiment. Those regiments are listed below in the order that they appear in the physical collection. They are organized first by federal unit in ascending numerical order, followed by those with no known regiment (whether unassigned or missing data), and then by state unit in ascending numerical order. For each regiment, I have also listed the place where it was organized (if applicable) according to the National Park Service's (NPS) Battle Unit Details website. For regiments that changed their designation, that change is noted in the line below. Of note, the 10th U.S. Cavalry, which was a federal unit formed after the war, has been grouped with the state units.

Unit Name	Place Organized
1 st U.S. Colored Infantry	District of Columbia
2 nd U.S. Colored Infantry	Arlington, Virginia
2 nd U.S. Colored Cavalry	Fort Monroe, Virginia
3 rd U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery (formed from 1 st Tennessee Heavy Artillery (African Descent))	Memphis, Tennessee
4 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Baltimore, Maryland
6 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania
8 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania
8 th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery	Paducah, Kentucky
9 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Stanton, Maryland
10 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Virginia
16 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Nashville, Tennessee
18 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Missouri
19 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Stanton, Maryland
23 rd U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Casey, Virginia
24 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania
25 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
26 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Riker's Island, New York
27 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Delaware, Ohio
28 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Indianapolis, Indiana
29 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Quincy, Illinois
30 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Stanton, Maryland
31 st U.S. Colored Infantry (absorbed 30 th Connecticut Infantry (Colored), see note on regiments)	Hart's Island, New York

Unit Name	Place Organized
35 th U.S. Colored Infantry (formed from 1 st North Carolina Infantry (African Descent))	New Bern, North Carolina
36 th U.S. Colored Infantry (formed from 2 nd North Carolina Infantry (African Descent))	Portsmouth, Virginia
38 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Virginia
39 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Baltimore, Maryland
41 st U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania
43 rd U.S. Colored Infantry	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
92 nd U.S. Colored Infantry (formed from 22 nd Corps d’Afrique Infantry)	New Orleans, Louisiana
102 nd U.S. Colored Infantry (formed from 1 st Michigan Colored Infantry)	Detroit, Michigan
107 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Louisville, Kentucky
115 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Bowling Green, Kentucky
116 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Camp Nelson, Kentucky
117 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Covington, Kentucky
135 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Goldsboro, North Carolina
136 th U.S. Colored Infantry	Atlanta, Georgia
Unassigned Company A, U.S. Colored Infantry (Virginia Colored Guards)	
Unassigned recruits/regiment unknown	
1 st Michigan Sharpshooters	Kalamazoo, Michigan (Not USCT)
5 th Massachusetts Cavalry (Colored)	Camp Meigs, Massachusetts
10 th U.S. Cavalry “Buffalo Soldiers”	(Not USCT)
14 th Connecticut Infantry	Hartford, Connecticut (Not USCT)
24 th New York Cavalry	Auburn, New York (Not USCT)

Unit Name	Place Organized
29 th Connecticut Infantry (Colored)	Fair Haven, Connecticut
30 th Connecticut Infantry (Colored) (merged into 31 st U.S. Colored Infantry, see note on regiments)	
54 th Massachusetts Infantry (Colored)	Camp Meigs, Massachusetts
56 th Massachusetts Infantry	Readville, Massachusetts (Not USCT)

Regiment Names

“United States Colored Troops” (USCT) was an umbrella term for regiments composed primarily of African American soldiers serving in the United States Army during the Civil War. They were organized under the Bureau of Colored Troops and were broken into three branches: infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Terms such as U.S. Colored Infantry (USCI) and USCT are often used interchangeably in various sources.

There is one unit whose soldiers appear in this collection that was not part of any regiment: Unassigned Company A of the U.S. Colored Infantry, also known as the Virginia Colored Guards. Three men listed in Miller’s work have direct links to this unit, but Miller believed that some of the “unassigned recruits” he found may have also been a part of it. He refers to it as a militia and says that there are few records of it. My initial searches found mentions of it but no details. Some sources refer to it as “George L. Barnes’ Company A.”

Some soldiers in the collection have no unit designation. It could be that their records are incomplete or that they fell ill after they enlisted but before they joined a regiment. Miller and the file folders often label these soldiers as “unassigned recruits.”

Prior to the creation of the Bureau of Colored Troops on May 22, 1863, many African American regiments had already begun to form. As part of the standardizing process of the USCT, most of these units were given new designations to conform to a unified USCT naming scheme. For instance, the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry became the 102nd U.S. Colored Infantry. If a soldier served with a regiment before and after it was re-designated, his documents may appear under both unit names and his company may have changed. A handful of regiments kept their original names throughout the war, including in this collection: the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry (Colored), the 29th Connecticut Infantry (Colored), and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry (Colored).

The 30th Connecticut Infantry (Colored) never fully formed and was merged into the 31st U.S. Colored Infantry, which had been forming at Hart’s Island, New York. Between Miller and the GWU student researchers, there is some inconsistency when it comes to what unit names are used for individuals from these regiments. For example, one soldier was listed by a student as being part of the “31st Connecticut Infantry” but there never was a regiment named as such.

Currently, in the collection, those whose folder's list them as part of the 30th Connecticut are grouped together along with the other state-named units.

Non-USCT Regiments

10th U.S. Cavalry

One of the original "Buffalo Soldier" regiments, the 10th U.S. Cavalry was an all-African American regiment raised in 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Most often remembered for its involvement in the "Indian Wars" of the late 1800s, the regiment also served in the Spanish-American War, and World War II, among other conflicts. It was deactivated in 1944 but was later revived in 1958 as an integrated unit and still exists as of 2021. As it was founded after the Civil War, it is not a USCT regiment, but Miller lists four men from the unit who are buried in Alexandria National Cemetery which is why they are in the collection. Of note, one of those men, George Foster, also served in the 1st US Colored Infantry prior to joining the 10th Cavalry and is listed with the former unit.

1st Michigan Sharpshooters, Company K

The 1st Michigan Sharpshooters Regiment was a predominantly white regiment and not a USCT unit. However, all of the soldiers of Company K of the regiment were Native Americans mostly hailing from the Anishinaabe peoples of northern Michigan, including the Ojibwa, Odawa, and Potawatomi. While they were not members of the USCT, some of them were hospitalized at L'Ouverture Hospital, several signed the petition demanding that soldiers of color be buried in Alexandria National Cemetery, and one of them is buried in said cemetery.

14th Connecticut Infantry

Charles B. Wilson of the 14th Connecticut has a form filled out by a GWU student that implies that he was hospitalized at L'Ouverture, but the information is sparse and his race/ethnicity/etc. is not listed.

24th New York Cavalry

James Davis, was hospitalized at L'Ouverture, died there, he was buried in the "colored section" of Alexandria National Cemetery, and his burial record lists him as "Indian."

56th Massachusetts Infantry

Henry Morton of the 56th Massachusetts is listed by Miller who states that Morton was hospitalized at L'Ouverture, died there, and was buried in the "colored section" of Alexandria National Cemetery, but Miller was unable to find any mention of his race/ethnicity/etc.

Regiment and Soldier Origins

Despite the decidedly federal naming scheme of the USCT, its regiments, much like most of the other regiments of the Union Army, were organized in individual states and drew most of their soldiers from their state of origin. This has led some sources, including some of those found in this collection, to attach state names to these units. While this is not entirely problematic, it can mask some of the complexities of regiment formation within the USCT. Some recruits came from Union-held slave states such as Kentucky and Missouri, but joined regiments in neighboring free states like Ohio and Illinois. Some men even crossed over from Canada to serve in the USCT. Units that were unable to fill their quotas were often merged with regiments, sometime from other states, such as the 30th Connecticut Infantry (Colored) that was absorbed into the 31st USCI which had formed in New York. Others picked up soldiers at Union Army camps and depots as they moved to their assigned posts. For example, the 28th USCI, originally from Indiana, supplemented its ranks at Ellicott's Mills, Maryland. Many men were lured by lucrative bounties offered by substitute brokers seeking replacements for draft eligible men who were willing to pay someone to take their place in the army. Those recruited this way may never have set foot in the place they were credited to. Further, some regiments were formed with men who had been freed by the Union Army such as the 135th USCI which drew many of its soldiers from men who had followed General William T. Sherman's forces on his march through Georgia and the Carolinas.

Cemeteries and Plots

For individuals buried in Alexandria, the names of the cemeteries and the plot numbers listed are taken directly from Miller or from a student's notes. The terms "Military Cemetery", "Soldiers' Cemetery", and "Alexandria National Cemetery" are probably all referring to the same place, but names as written have been used. After the patients of L'Ouverture Hospital successfully petitioned the Army to start burying soldiers of color in the Military Cemetery, many (if not all) of the soldiers who had been previously buried in Freedmen's Cemetery were reinterred alongside their comrades in what is now National Cemetery. Miller is inconsistent in listing reburials and anyone listed as being buried in Freedmen's may no longer be there.

Sources

It appears that Edward Miller never published a finished version of the draft that makes up much of this collection. The draft is on file with Alexandria Archaeology. He did however publish some of the information from it in two pieces in *Historic Alexandria Quarterly*. Hard copies of these articles are included in the collection.

Miller, Edward A. "Volunteers for Freedom: Black Civil War Soldiers in Alexandria National Cemetery, Part I." *Historic Alexandria Quarterly*, Fall 1998. (alexandriava.gov)

Miller, Edward A. "Volunteers for Freedom: Black Civil War Soldiers in Alexandria National Cemetery, Part II." *Historic Alexandria Quarterly*, Winter 1998. (alexandriava.gov)

Compiled military service records of volunteer Union soldiers who served with the United States Colored Troops: infantry organizations, 36th through 40th / introduction by Michael F. Knight; roll list by Michael Tucker, Jr.; Budge Weidman, project manager. — Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2006.

[See [Pub 130 Appendix re USCT.xlsx](#)]