



LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

February 2007 Issue 61

The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Co I The Colored Troops

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **United States Colored Troops (USCT)** were regiments of the United States Army during the American Civil War. The USCT were the forerunners of the famous Buffalo Soldiers.

The United States War Department issued General Order Number 143 on May 22, 1863 establishing a "Bureau of Colored Troops" to facilitate the recruitment of African-American soldiers to fight for the Union Army.



Sgt. Major Christian Fleetwood, Medal of Honor Recipient.

Regiments were recruited from all states of the nation and became known as the United States Colored Troops (USCT). Approximately 175 regiments comprised of over 178,000 free blacks and freed slaves served during the last two years of the war, and bolstered the Union war effort at a critical time. By war's end, the USCT comprised approximately a tenth of all Union troops. 1,715 USCT soldiers

were combat casualties during the war.

USCT regiments were led by white officers and rank advancement was limited for black soldiers. For a time black soldiers received less pay than their white counterparts. Famous members of USCT regiments were Martin Robinson Delany, and the sons of Frederick Douglass. Soldiers who fought in the Army of the

(Continued on page 4 54th)

The Fighting 54th Today

The Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Co. "I", Inc. is an African American reenactment unit of the American Civil War. It is a non-profit charitable corporation dedicated to the education of the public and preservation of the memory of the soldiers of the Civil War, particularly those African-Americans serving the Union in the State of South Carolina.

Membership is open to any interested person, of any race, desiring to assist in this work. As of January 1996 the unit has 15 men under arms and 10 lady members living throughout the State of South Carolina and surrounding areas. This unit was depicted in the motion picture *Glory*.

(Continued on page 5 REENACTORS)



MEMBER OF 54TH. MASS. REENACTORS BY GRAVE OF A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS, FLORENCE NATL. CEMETARY, MARCH 1996

Lowcountry Civil War Round Table

AS I SEE IT

by Paul Bucklin, President

All in attendance last month were treated to an exceptional presentation by historian JACK DAVIS concerning "Jefferson Davis & His Generals". We are fortunate to be able to bring speakers of his caliber here to the Lowcountry.

This month we are trying something new as we bring to you a group of Charleston re-enactors. They will represent the United States Colored Troops (USTC) in a living history demonstration. *You won't want to miss it!!!*

As I was thanking Mr. Davis last month some of you were exiting the auditorium. I was embarrassed for all of us. Our programs last only one hour. We normally are out of the auditorium by 8:15 PM. There is no traffic jam awaiting anyone. Please make every effort to show the proper courtesy to our speakers and wait until our program is completed. Thanks.

I recently pulled up Civil War Roundtables on the "Web". I was surprised to learn that 149 Roundtables in America have a web page. Eighteen of those roundtables are located in just Pennsylvania. To my surprise 10 were operating abroad (2-Australia, 4 in Canada, the UK, Belgium, France, & Germany). I found a Regimental Index for both the Union & Confederate Armies.

There are soldier's letters, soldier's diaries, and battle reports there for the reading. I linked into subjects like artists, galleries, battle sites, clip art, and flags. Two hours later I had learned much about the Civil War that was right at my fingertips.

So, when you've got a few free minutes I urge you to have some fun and explore the Civil War on the internet.



Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc.

The Minie Ball Gazette

P.O. Box 2252
Bluffton, SC 29910

WWW.LOWCOUNTRYCWR.T.ORG

***Dedicated to Historic Preservation
and Enlightenment***

Editors: Mitch & Marian Sackson

The Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc. is a not-for-profit, charitable organization as qualified under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code

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Please return the Dinner Reservation Form as soon as possible, but no later than *February 8th 2007*

January Buffet

There were about 155 ravenous members at our buffet in November. The more, the merrier. Golden Corral, as usual, provided a sumptuous meal. See ya in February.



The 2006-2007 Lecture Series

Sept 13 2006 Chancellorsville. Mac Wyckoff will explore Chancellorsville, a bloody affair that best portrayed Robert E. Lee's confidence, determination, tactical courage and military genius. It was a battlefield triumph for the South and a personal tragedy for Lee with the loss of his "right arm" General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Mr. Wyckoff will bring this battle to life as seen through the eyes of the major personalities locked in combat May 1-3, 1863, Chancellorsville, Virginia.

Oct 11 2006. Gettysburg. Rev. Jeff Miller will examine Gettysburg, the strategies of Lee and Meade, and the aftermath of the Confederate loss. The three days of Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863 are called by some the turning point of the Civil War or the "high tide" of the Confederacy. General Lee marched into Pennsylvania expecting to win his third major battle in six months; but now he entered the enemy's country and the outcome was quite different. From the gallantry of Pickett's charge to the bravery on Little Round Top, Gettysburg has become the symbol of the War Between the States.

Nov 8 2006 The Western Theater. Richard McMurry will talk on the Western battles: Forts Donnellson and Henry, Shiloh Church, Vicksburg, Chickamauga and many others in what is referred to as the trans-Mississippi region. These battles have until recently been relegated to a position of less importance than the battles in the Eastern states, yet they represented, for the Union, the most significant victories. What was the Unions strategy and why were they more successful?

Jan 10 2007 Jefferson Davis and his generals. Jack Davis is a renown historian of the Civil War. His talk will concern Jefferson Davis' relationship with his generals, specifically Gen Johnston, Beauregard and Bragg.

Feb 14 2007 Role of 'Colored' Troops. This presentation will depart from our usual format and present a living history when the Charleston Re-enactors Group becomes the 54th Massachusetts and portrays their role in the battle of Battery Wagner. We will discuss the events that led to the formation of the so called "Colored Troops" and their role in the Civil War. Also, we will show the uniforms and customs of this regiment and discuss details of the battle.

Mar 14 2007 Chickamauga & Chattanooga. Ed Bearss will return to examine the battles of this region of Tennessee, including Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. The name Chickamauga was an old Cherokee word meaning river of death and it lived up to its name as each side lost nearly a third of its men. Chickamauga was a Union disaster. As September 1863 ended the federals held Chattanooga but were on the verge of surrender. The Union was galvanized by the potential destruction of the Army of the Cumberland and dispatched large numbers of troops quickly by rail from the Eastern Theatre.

Apr 11 2007 Fort Pillow. Brian Steel Wills will tell us what really happened at Fort Pillow. Situated on a high bluff on the eastern bank of the Mississippi river about forty river miles above Memphis, TN, it became part of a chain of Federal garrisons. In April 1864 it was manned by 295 white Tennessee troops and 262 U.S. Colored Troops when Nathan Bedford Forrest, the famous (or infamous) Confederate cavalryman, attacked and the fort surrendered. Casualties were high and only sixty-two of the U.S. Colored Troops survived the fight. The Confederates were accused of massacre, a controversy that continues today. Fort Pillow became the subject of a Federal joint Congressional investigation. Was it a massacre, revenge or "war as an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds"?

May 9 2007 Mobile Bay. Craig Symonds is back with us to elaborate on the added significance of Rear-Admiral Farragut's naval victory at Mobile Bay in light of Sherman's victory in Atlanta. Farragut, aloft in the rigging of his flag ship Hartford, directed the battle as his ships outmaneuvered the feared rebel iron clad, Tennessee, so that she struck no blow but went to the bottom under federal gunfire. The capture of Mobile Bay left only Wilmington, North Carolina as the only open port for blockade runners in the closing days of the war.

Lowcountry Civil War Round Table

(54th Continued from page 1)

James were eligible for the Butler Medal, commissioned by that army's commander, Benjamin Butler.

USCT regiments fought in all theaters of the war, but mainly served as garrison troops in rear areas. The most famous USCT action took place at the Battle of the Crater during the Siege of Petersburg where regiments of USCT troops suffered heavy casualties attempting to break through Confederate lines. Other notable engagements include Battery Wagner and the Battle of Nashville. USCT soldiers often became victims of battlefield atrocities, most notably, but not exclusively, at Fort Pillow. The prisoner exchange cartel broke down over the Confederacy's position on black P.O.W.'s. Confederate law stated that blacks captured in uniform be tried as slave insurrectionists in civil courts--a capital offence. Although this rarely, if ever happened, it became a stumbling block for prisoner exchange. USCT soldiers were among the first Union forces to enter Richmond, Virginia after its fall in April 1865. The 41st USCT regiment was present at the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox. Following the war, USCT regiments served as occupation troops in former Confederate states.

Sergeant Major Christian Fleetwood was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions with the 4th USCT in the Battle of Chaffin's Farm in Virginia. Fleetwood took up the regimental colors after 11 other USCT soldiers had been shot down while carrying them forward. Many USCT soldiers won some of the nation's highest awards.

After the war many of these USCT veterans struggled for recognition and had difficulty obtaining the pensions due them. The Federal government did not address the inequality until 1890 and many of the veterans did not receive service and disability pensions until the early 1900s. The history of the USCT's wartime contribution was kept alive within the black community by historians such as W.E.B. Dubois and the subject enjoys a recent surge in literature.

The motion picture *Glory* starring Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman depicted actions of the African-American soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment during the assault on Battery Wagner.

A national celebration in commemoration of the service of the United States Colored Troops was held in September of 1996. A national museum is located in the Historic U street Corridor in Washington, D.C. at 1200 U Street, NW. The African American Civil War Memorial, featuring *Spirit of Freedom* by sculptor by Ed Hamilton, is located at the corner of Vermont Avenue and U Street, NW.



STORMING OF BATTERY WAGNER BY THE 54TH REGIMENT

The number of "Colored Troops" by State

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Arkansas | 5,526 |
| Alabama | 4,969 |
| Connecticut | 1,764 |
| Colorado Territory | 95 |
| Delaware | 954 |
| District of Columbia | 3,269 |
| Florida | 1,044 |
| Georgia | 3,486 |
| Iowa | 440 |
| Indiana | 1,597 |
| Illinois | 1,811 |
| Kansas | 2,080 |
| Kentucky | 23,703 |
| Louisiana | 24,502 |
| Maryland | 8,718 |
| Massachusetts | 3,966 |
| Michigan | 1,387 |
| Mississippi | 17,869 |
| Missouri | 8,344 |
| Minnesota | 104 |
| Maine | 104 |
| New Hampshire | 125 |
| New York | 4,125 |
| New Jersey | 1,185 |
| North Carolina | 5,035 |
| Ohio | 5,092 |
| Pennsylvania | 8,612 |
| Rhode Island | 1,837 |
| South Carolina | 5,462 |
| Texas | 47 |
| Tennessee | 20,133 |
| Vermont | 120 |
| Virginia | 5,723 |
| West Virginia | 196 |
| Wisconsin | 155 |
| At large | 733 |
| Not accounted for | 5,083 |
| Total | 178,895 |

Dining On The Bluffton Riviera

Attending and "dining" at our Bluffton High School atrium social before each roundtable is a far cry from any "Riviera". However we are doing our best to make it an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for all who partake. We are pleased with the way that Golden Corral is providing us with this service. Some glitches like no un-sweetened ice tea at our last outing will occur and we will correct them as they happen. In general it should be a relaxing and socializing opportunity for everyone.



We ask your cooperation as we dine at our "Riviera". As you arrive find a seat at one of the 30 numbered tables. We'll begin the buffet offerings at 5:45 PM. Our speaker and guests at the reserved head table will go first. Then we will draw from a "hat" (at random in order to give everyone a fair chance) one by one the 30 numbered tables and call them as they are picked into the buffet line. Please wait until your table number is called. The last table called will be presented a bottle of wine (compliments of the Roundtable) to enjoy for their patience and good spirit.



There is plenty of food being offered and after the last table goes through the buffet line we will announce that seconds are available for all. Please abide by this procedure and we'll all have a more pleasant evening on our "Riviera".

The "HALF-TIME" Membership Drive

We have completed the "first half" of our program year. We offer one of the finest line-up of outstanding Civil War presenters of any Roundtable in America. The Bluffton High School and auditorium offer us an outstanding facility and an opportunity now to welcome more interested "new members" to our organization.

Our "Half-Time Membership Drive" will run from January 10 to our May 9 season ending program.

New members will join at "half-the-cost", which means the total of the one-time \$25 initiation fee plus one-half the annual fee of \$13.

Enlist as a Single: \$38

Enlist as a Family: \$49

We encourage our members to help in this enlistment program. Ask a friend or neighbor to come and be your guest at one of our programs. Bring them to our social (pre-meeting dinner) and have them pick up a membership form at the Membership table or at the entry door to the auditorium. You can include them on your dinner reservation form. Just follow the directions as outlined when you return that form to Jim Strohecker. Thank for your help in this effort to spread the good news about our Lowcountry Civil War Roundtable.

(REENACTORS Continued from page 1)

Members of the unit participate in battle reenactments, visit schools and participate in public events as fully equipped and trained Reenactors of the period. The unit has sponsored two events of its own: The Battle for McLeod Plantation (March 1995) and a reenactment of its muster out in the Town of Mt. Pleasant (August 1995).

Other reenactment units of the 54th. exist in Boston, MA; Washington, DC; Philadelphia, PA and Atlanta, GA. A unit of the 1st SC Vol. Inf., Colored is active in Savannah, GA



REENACTORS IN A RECENT 'CAMPAIGN'

Lowcountry Civil War Round Table

THE SISTER REGIMENT

By Steve Bacon

The speakers for this month are Civil War Re-enactors who portray members of the famous and valorous 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. In 1989, Hollywood produced one of the finest movies regarding the Civil War ever filmed, "Glory", starring Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman (the Sergeant Major) and Matthew Broderick (Col. Robert Gould Shaw). To be historical correct, the actual Sgt Maj of the 54th was Frederick Douglas' son. Also, one of the color bearers earned a Congressional Medal of Honor.

However, the movie leaves historians hanging because it ends with the assault on Battery Wagner (Charleston, SC). In that battle, 40% of the regiment, including Col. Shaw, were killed. It now leaves the question, what did they do next? The 54th was involved with several other "minor" events including the Battle of Honey Hill (Jasper Co., SC) and the Battle of Olustee (Ocean Pond, FL). Re-enactors of the 54th participate at the annual Battle of Olustee. Whether it was on the battlefield, in the classroom or facing Civil War Roundtables, 54th Re-enactors pride themselves on being extremely professional and their uniforms and equipment are always in perfect condition.

So what does this have to do with a "sister unit"? Most people are not aware that the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry even existed. While at the same training camp as the 54th used earlier, the 55th went without pay for nearly 18 months. On the same day (July 18, 1863) that the 54th failed in their assault on Battery Wagner, the 55th was presented its regimental colors by Massachusetts Governor Andrew. Both regiments would be brigaded together and would fight and die, side-by-side at Honey Hill on Nov. 30, 1864.

During the first 6 months of the 55th's existence, they worked digging trenches on Morris Island and pulled picket duty. In addition, they helped with the construction of the infamous "Swamp Angel" Battery...A 200 pound Parrott rifle that was used to shell the city of Charleston. In early 1864, both regiments were ordered to Jacksonville, FL as a staging base for the assault on Spanish Fort, AL (Mobile). The 54th was nearly destroyed when they engaged Georgia and Florida troops at the Battle of Olustee and strangely enough the 55th was not even used. Both regiments marched back to Jacksonville to recover. On July 2, 1864, the 55th was brigaded with the 103rd New York and the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops and were ordered to attack Fort Lamar on James Island, SC (Battle of River's Causeway). During this battle, they captured two brass 12 pound Napoleon cannons, which now allowed them to place crossed cannons on their U.S. flag. On Oct. 7, 1864, the regiment was finally paid, it took three days to complete and the soldiers sent home to their families over \$60,000 (about \$600,000 in today's money). On Nov. 30, 1864, the 55th participated in the Battle of Honey Hill. In 1865, the 55th participated in the Battle of Grim ball's Causeway or the last Battle for Charleston. No gains were made and the 55th passed into reserve status. The 55th was mustered out of service on Aug. 29, 1865. They too earned Glory.

Additional Reenactments

For those of you would maybe interested in observing (or even participating in) key re-enactments in the area are as follows:

The Annual Battle of Olustee will take place on Feb. 16-18

The Annual Battle of Honey Hill will take place in Oct (weekend TBA)

The Annual Battle of Seccessionville will take place on Boone Hall Plantation (Charleston) on Nov. 10-11
Call 843-884-4371 more information.



ART SHERRY'S CANNON

Have Cannon Will Travel

By Art Sherry

Would you like to feel the excitement of a Civil War Battle? I have a reproduction 1861 10 pound Parrott Rifle and I'm looking for a *few good men or women* who would like to do Civil War reenactments. No experience necessary.

I'll teach you all you need to know. We do both Union and Confederate sides, usually about 9 to 10 weekends a year. You can stay in a motel or a tent. The purchase of a Civil War uniform is required.

Call me at 843-705-9049.

E-mail at artcivilwar75@hargray.com for more information.

The Dinner Menu for February 14 2007

Pot Roast & Vegetables, Baked Wild Alaskan Salmon, Fried Chicken

House Salad with Carrots, Cucumbers, Onions, Peppers, Tomatoes, Cheese and 7 Types of Dressing (Ranch, Blue Cheese, Italian, Thousand Island, Catalina, Honey Mustard, Caesar)

Steamed Carrots, Mash Potato, Okra & Stewed Tomatoes, Steamed Spinach, Dinner Yeast Rolls with Honey Butter

Mixed Fruit with Cantaloupe, Honeydew, Strawberries (if in season), Grapes, Watermelon-if possible

Mixed Cookies (Oatmeal Raisin, Chocolate chip, Peanut butter), Brownies, Coconut Macaroons, Lemon Bars

Sweet & Unsweetened Tea, Lemonade, Coffee

Served on Dinner Plates with Silverware and Glasses

Catered by **Golden Corral, Bluffton, SC**

(Note: Substitutions may need to be made)



Our cooks at work for your next meal

**Dinner Reservations for February 14th Meeting At Bluffton High School
Social @ 5pm•Buffet @ 5:45•Meeting @ 6:45•Presentation @ 7:00
(NOTE: BUFFET TIME OF 5:45) NO LATER THAN THURSDAY FEB 8 2007**

Note: There will be two (2) lines at the buffet. Do not go on line until your table is selected!!! This will eliminate the l o n g line & long wait. You may take a 2nd plate for salad. Violators will be given the choice of Andersonville or Elmira.

All Members are invited to the General Meeting. Reservations are required ONLY for DINNER.

Dinner Reservation For February 14 2007

NO LATER THAN THURSDAY FEB 8 2007

Number of Dinners: ____ @ \$12 each = ____

Name 1: _____

Name 2: _____

Phone #: _____

Make Check Payable to: **LCWRT**
Inc. Mail Check with this Form to: →
Or place it in Jim's Lower Box

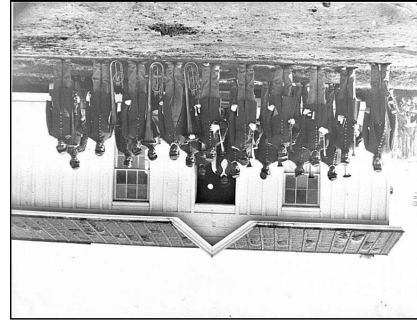
Jim Strohecker
125 Lake Somerset Circle
Bluffton, SC 29909

Guests: _____

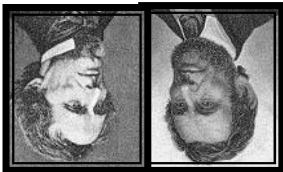
List Guests on additional paper if necessary

February 2007 Issue 61
The Massachusetts 54th Regiment
Presented by
Charleston Reenactors

ARLINGTON, VA BAND OF 107TH U.S. COLORED INFANTRY AT FT CORCORAN



Lowcountry Civil War Round Table
Inc.
The Minnie Ball Gazette
P.O. Box 2252
Bluffton, SC 29910
WWW.LOWCOUNTRYCWWRT.ORG



Worthwhile Web Sites

Very descriptive site for Sherman's March. It is quite long but worth the trip:
<http://www.shermansmarch.com/>

A large collection of Civil War data and clips:

info@civilwarinteractive.com

Specializes in South Carolina during the Civil War. Also has description of Sherman's burning of Columbia:
<http://sciway3.net/clark/civilwar/>

NEXT MONTH



Mar 14 2007 Chickamauga & Chattanooga. Ed Bearss will return to examine the battles of this region of Tennessee, including Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. The name Chickamauga was an old Cherokee word meaning river of death and it lived up to its name as each side lost nearly a third of its men. Chickamauga was a Union disaster. As September 1863 ended the Federals held Chattanooga but were on the verge of surrender. The Union was galvanized by the potential destruction of the Army of the Cumberland and dispatched large numbers of troops quickly by rail from the Eastern Theatre.



We thank Palmetto Electric for their allowing the LCWRT usage of their meeting room for our *Morning After*.