

Perry H Landon
1841- 1927
Kent County Maryland
7th United States Colored Troops

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History 394-12/AMS 300-10
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4/30/2013

On my honor I pledge to have abided by the Washington College Honor Code
Signed:

Perry H Landon was born in Kent county Maryland, a slave for life. Born in 1841 Landon would spend the first 22 years the property of slave owner named James Ricuad. As the Civil war became increasingly costly, many states loyal to the Union raised colored regiments. In 1863 in exchange for his freedom Perry Landon served in the 7th United States Colored Troop. Formed in Baltimore Maryland, the 7th U.S.C.T. would see constant action until the end of the war. The 7th would play a vital role in numerous battles as a part of the final push to capture Richmond and Petersburg, and eventually capture Robert E. lees Army of Northern Virginia. Perry Landon lost his right arm at the Battle of New Market Heights, a deadly battle, which resulted in the Union capture of Richmond. Unlike his white counterparts Landon would receive little recognition for his actions in combat. After returning home to Chestertown Maryland, Landon was confronted by a society that shunned free African Americans. All Civil War veterans were faced with a lack of social services and harsh reality of life in the post bellum United States. Wounded veterans faced a lack of health care and depending on the type of injury were unable earn decent wages. Following the war, white veterans formed the Grand Army of the Republic, a veterans association that, through the collection of dues, provided political representation and services for veterans. Excluded from GAR chapters on the premise of race, African American veterans formed their own organizations. Landon is known to have been key figure in the founding and operation Charles Sumner post number 25 in Chestertown Maryland. Until his death in 1927 Perry Landon was a bulwark in the Chestertown African American Veterans Community.

Every soldier in American history, from Bunker hill to Fallujah has fought for a myriad of reasons, in doing so overcome unimaginable fear, suffering, and hardship. Yet

the majority of soldiers do not fight for grandiose political ends, or immortality in the form of great monuments. Most soldiers fight for their homes and fellow soldiers. Perry H Landon and all African American's who fought for the Union earn a unique place in American ledged. Before joining the United States colored troops Landon lived a life of slavery in a time and place that systematically oppressed African Americans both free and enslaved. The Civil War in popular rhetoric is describes as the war that ended slavery. In 1861 the Civil War was predominately fought over the definition and extent of Federal power. Southern slave owners felt disenfranchised over limitations placed over the expansion of slavery. Slaves represented capital in the antebellum United States; slave owners believed that if slavery were to be abolished they would be stripped of their only monetary assets. Moreover, Federal attempts to enforce its laws were seen as an attack on state sovereignty. Almost overnight the political debate over slavery quickly gave way to hasty militarism. The life of Perry Landon is fundamentally the story of the American Civil war. Through the Life of Landon, one can understand the Civil War through the individual perspective.

The Life of a Kent County Slave

No discussion of the American Civil War, can escape the discussion of slavery. The life of Perry H. Landon was at the center of the political issues that the civil war was

predicated upon. Born in Kent County Maryland in 1841 into slavery Landon was the property of James Ricaud. At the time he was a slave he is listed under the name Henry Landon, he is also listed to have a brother by the Name Alexander Landon.¹ Record of Alexander Landon is lost at the time he enlisted in the Union Army in 1863. James Ricaud was a prominent resident of the Eastern Shore, a graduate of Washington College. Ricaud was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates from Kent County, also in 1836 he was a member of the Maryland State Senate and in 1864 was a presidential elector. Moreover from 1855-59 he was the Associate judge for the 7th Judicial District. According to period slave records James Ricaud owned a total of 27 slaves, no historical records exist of Perry H Landon prior to his enlistment in the U.S.C.T.² However from accounts of other slaves and freed blacks in Kent County it is possible to paint a picture of what life would have been like for Perry Landon in antebellum Maryland. James B Ricaud likely owned many properties his will does not specifically list what was given to his wife and daughter at the time of his death. Ricaud lived at White House Farm until his death in 1866 located just south west of Chestertown Maryland this property still stands today.³ According to his pension file following his discharge form the Union army his occupation was listed as a “farmer” it is entirely possible Landon spent time farming this land.⁴

¹ Kent County Maryland “ Record of Slaves” James Ricaud, 1845.

²"James Barroll Ricaud, MSA SC 3520-2114." *Maryland State Archives*. N.p., n.d. Web. 7 May 2013. <<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/sp>

³ Michael Owen Bourne., Eugene Hall Johnstone ed, *Historic Houses Of Kent County: An Architectural History: 1642-1860* (The Historic Socioty of Kent County).P 35

⁴ Perry H. Landon Pension File 54331. Private Co. e. 7 W.S.E can no 789 bundle no. 49. Maryland State Archives.

The concept of Black soldiers in the Union Army was a provocative topic during the Civil War. It was generally believed that black soldiers would be unreliable in combat. William T. Sherman is famed to have said on the subject of African American soldiers “Is not a Negro as good as a whit man to stop a bullet? Yes: and a sand bag is better; but can a Negro do our skirmishing and picket duty? Can they improvise bridges, sorties, flank movements etc., like the white man? I say no.”⁵ The military tactics of Civil War were constantly plagued with problems of command and control. In that it was difficult for commanders to rely upon subordinate officers to follow orders in the chaos of battles Moreover it was difficult for any battlefield commander to fully understand the scope and interworking of military engagements. Therefore trust was a major factor in relationships between military officers and units of the era, that is to say, could a given unit or officer be trusted to follow orders in the face of certain death, if failure to do so meant the collapse of an entire flank or position. Because of the general attitude at first, African American soldiers were generally limited to manual labor and rear echelon deployments.

By 1863, the American Civil war had grown from a “genteel” political dispute to a desperate and deadly industrial war. Battles like Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg, had shown the carnage that modern ordinance could produce. Where tactics were based upon impossibly inaccurate smoothbore flintlock muskets, the rifled musket, modern artillery and fixed fortifications caused carnage, which has never been seen in any subsequent American war. January 1st 1863 after much political duress, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation; the exact legal implications of the

⁵ Shelby Foote “The universe of battle” in “The Civil War: An illustrated History” By Geoffrey C. Ward and Ric Burns and Ken Burns. Alfred A. Knope 1990. p 247.

emancipation are another subject. It is sufficient to say that the emancipation justified the rapid dismantling of slavery.

...And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons...And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service...⁶

The catch of the Emancipation proclamation is that nothing is mentioned of enslaved blacks in loyal union states and partially occupied boarder stats like Maryland. The delicate political compromise, and really the genius of the Emancipation proclamation was that it technically freed slaves in states that were already actively apart of the confederacy, and allowed slave owners in boarder states a viable option to free their slaves.

In early 1863 there was still a general fear that if pushed, boarder states like Maryland would succeed and join the confederacy. Yet by the end of 1863 as the war became increasingly bloody, Maryland would become more opposed to the war. Maryland always had its best interests in mind during the Civil War, during the latter half of the 19th century slavery was on the decline in Maryland. The old line state had made attempts to decrease its slave based economy which competed directly with free whites, also it sought to remove free African Americans, some attempts were made to deport free blacks to colonies in Africa.⁷ Maryland's economic connection with slavery was the sale of Maryland slaves to plantations in the Deep South. Maryland slaves were generally

⁶ Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation," January 1, 1863.
<http://www.archives.gov>

⁷ Barbra J. Fields "Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the 19th Century" Yale Univerity Press 1985. P 10

considered to be high quality farm labor, because slaves in Maryland did live a healthier lifestyle than those in the Deep South.⁸ The political rhetoric of the confederacy in established that the federal government hastily called up military forces to invade South Carolina, Virginia and North Carolina were moved to succession on the principal that the Federal government did not have the right to aggressively move military forces through sovereign states.

In principal Maryland residents were apposed to the movement of union forces through the state to Washington DC. in order to protect the federal Capital from attack⁹ In 19th Century America there was still very much a fear that the United States would in times of was fall victim to the same conditions that prompted the great empires and dictatorships of Europe, and that the death of democracy would be born domestically. Maryland, like many of the boarder states in 1861 was opposed to the actions of the federal government, and the possible destruction of the state by fighting and pillaging armies. While even to the wars end Maryland was a state divided, by 1863 Maryland had had enough of the war, sympathy for the union became increasingly widespread. According to Robert Brugger “ Slave owners supported recruitment of free blacks as one means to get rid of them and where possible used the states statute book as one means to limit their property losses in August 1863 a union recruiter in Fredrick went to Jail for Violating a law that punished anyone aiding slaves to escape.”¹⁰ Effectively it was the ability of slave-owner to be compensated for the freeing of their slaves that persuaded

⁸ Ibid., 5

⁹ Barbra J. Fields “Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the 19th Century” Yale Univerity Press 1985. P 94

¹⁰ Robert J. Brugger Maryland A Middle Temperment: 1634-1980 (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 310

Maryland slave owners that the institution of slavery could be dissolved. Like all Maryland politics it boiled down to a simple question of “give and take.” As mentioned previously, The Maryland slave market ultimately revolved around the sale of slaves further south. When slave owners could simply be compensated for freeing their slaves, many slave owners realizing that slavery was dying, were quick to make a deal. By 1864 the Federal government had allocated \$14,000 for the enlistment of Maryland Slaves.¹¹ The political ramifications behind the enlistment of African Americans were monumental. At the time Perry H Landon enlisted, African American troops had proven that colored regiments were equal to if not superior in fighting spirit and ability to any unit in the Union army. For Perry Landon, the civil war was no political discussion, but a reality. Waiting for Landon were hardened veterans who had been fighting since the beginning of the war.

7th U.S.C.T: Baltimore to New Market Heights

Perry H Landon enlisted into the 7TH U.S.C.T September 23, 1863, in order to do so his master James Ricaud was paid \$100, at the end of his service Perry H Landon would be free. The 7th U.S.C.T was formed at Camp Birney, Baltimore, Maryland.¹² Military life during the American Civil war was Spartan at best. Beyond the common difficulty of Military life soldiers of the U.S.C.T faced overt racism on a daily basis. When colored regiments earned postings to combat areas racism still presented a major problem. In a letter written by a Private from the 43rd USCI Bermuda Hundred in Virginia in December 23rd 1864 discusses the problems of racism on the front lines

¹¹ Ibid., 302

¹² L. Allison Wilmer, J.H Jarrett GEO. W.F Vermon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5* (The General Assembly of Maryland Volume II 1899. Press of Guggenheimer, Well & CO., Baltimore Maryland. P 155-182

...The conduct of the officers towards the soldiers is good only at times Some of them do things which I think they have no right to do. They strike the men with their swords, and jog and punch them in their side to show them how to drill. And I will here say, that if it be not stopped soon, I will report such conduct to the public, by giving their names. I do not think it right that soldiers should be cuffed and knocked around so by their officers, epically as we colored soldiers are...¹³

The treatment of enlisted men varied, many units had excellent relations with their officers, while some units went so far as to mutiny against abusive officers. On the whole however, colored regiments were viewed as sub par to white units, and towards the end of the war received highly dangerous assignments. Furthermore, colored regiments were denied full pay, and received sub par medical treatment. Moreover, Colored units were hard presses to be used in combat, but were commonly used for manual labor. Col. William Birney of the 2nd U.S.C troops was the superintendent of recruiting colored troops in the State of Maryland, and had general charge of the enlistment and organization of the 7th regiment. By October 8th, 1863 the first six companies, A.B.C.D.E.F were uniformed but arms were not issued to any of them until October 18th; drilling in the meantime went on daily¹⁴

November 12, 1863, the remaining four companies G.H.I and K. , had been fully organized and the 7th regiment U.S.C. troops mustered into service of the United States.¹⁵ The winter of 1863 was spent at camp Stanton, Benedict Maryland, drilling and preparing the regiment for active field duty. The location of the camp was and unhealthy one, and many of the 7th regiment perished form sickness during the winter season.¹⁶ March 4th

¹³ Edwin S. Redkey "A Grand Army of Black Men" Cambridge University press 1992.

¹⁴ L. Allison Wilmer, J.H Jarrett GEO. W.F Vermon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5* (The General Assembly of Maryland Volume II 1899. Press of Guggenheimer, Well & CO., Baltimore Maryland. P 155-182

¹⁵ *ibid.*,

¹⁶ *ibid.*,

1864, the regiment was transported by steamer to Portsmouth Va., disembarked and preceded thence to Gettys station on the U.S military railroad. The experience of the men the first night of their bivouac in the cold, bleak and inclement season was long remembered; after moving from point to point to protect Suffolk and Portsmouth from an attack by the enemy, the regiment embarked March 7th on the steam transport “Daniel Webster” for the department of the south and after a rough voyage reached Hilton Head, South Carolina, March 10th where the regiment disembarked and marched out beyond the town and went into camp near old “Fort Beauregard”¹⁷

We know from combinations of pension records and records of the 7th U.S.C.T that Perry Landon was wounded during Union action at the Battle of new market heights specifically the charge of Fort Gimler.¹⁸ According to Landon’s pension applications he was wounded in the forearm by a “rifle ball” and as a result had his entire left arm amputated.¹⁹ Furthermore it is found in Landon’s pension record that after he was wounded he was transported to and recovered at a U.S Army hospital at Port Smith, VA. The 7TH U.S.C.T would continue on to fight more battles as apart of the Petersburg Richmond Campaign, Their service would take them as far as Texas before the 7th was disbanded in Baltimore in 1865.²⁰ Part of the Richmond Petersburg Campaign. The Battle of new market heights was apart of the first general action aimed at capturing Petersburg and Richmond. Roughly five weeks after the union humiliation at the battle of

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ Perry H. Landon Pension File 54331. Private Co. e. 7 W.S.E can no 789 bundle no. 49. Maryland State Archives.

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ L. Allison Wilmer, J.H Jarrett GEO. W.F Vermon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5* (The General Assembly of Maryland Volume II 1899. Press of Guggenheimer, Well & CO., Baltimore Maryland. P 155-182

the Crater, the battle of New Market heights was an opportunity for many untested colored soldiers to gain their first experience of hard combat. Twice before the action of September 28th 1864, the Union army had assaulted New Market Heights, yet the previous attempts had aimed to flank the confederate position.²¹ Under the overall command of Maj. General David B Birney this assault would take the Confederate positions head on. Under direct orders, the solders in lead units were ordered to advance without percussion caps on their weapons, this way them men could not stop to fire until they had reached confederate positions.²² Additionally as was standard practice, the men carried minimal equipment, usually a blanket, water, and ammunition.²³ The 7th U.S.CT was responsible for capturing the extreme right of the confederate position. It is evident that General Butler who was coordinating the capture of Richmond, wanted Birney's colored troops to make the attack on New Market Heights, he writes

from prejudice and ignorance of their good qualities that the negros would fight...This [feeling] ... was so deep-seated one and spread far wide, and the negro had not had sufficient opportunity to demonstrate his valor and his staying qualities as a soldier. And the further cry was that the negros never never struck a good blow for their own freedom. Therefore, I determined to put them in...and that experiment should be one of which no man should doubt, if it attained success.²⁴

The Union Army did not win the Civil War in a single great blow, but by wearing down the confederacy until it did not possess the resources or will to fight. The Battle of New market Heights, opened to the door to capture the symbolic city of Richmond, a goal that had cost many thousands of lives since 1861. The 7th was only one regiment that made up the 45th Colored battalion, but the charge that day can be considered one of the

²¹ Noah Andre Trudeau "Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865" Little, Brown and Company Boston, New York. First Edition 1988. P. 285

²² *ibid.*,

²³ *ibid.*,

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

final nails in the coffin of the confederacy. The 7th did not directly assault the confederate positions at new market heights, but was used to attack the more lightly defended confederate right. This position was defended by the veterans of Wade Hamptons South Carolina Legion, famed for being some of the original aristocratic secessionists.²⁵ The 7th likely did not see the worst of the action in the initial assault of new market heights, as the focus of the action was in the center of the line. However the next day the 7th would make a frontal assault on Ft. Gilmer where Perry Landon was wounded.²⁶ Landons Pension record contains one minor discrepancy, in his first applications Landon states that he was wounded at the assault on Ft. Gimler, however, in later applications he states that he was wounded at the charge of Ft. Harrison.²⁷ Ft. Harrison and Ft Gilmer were relatively close to each other; to the plain eye both were indistinguishable mounds of dirt, arranged into deceptively effective defensive fortifications. From modern military records there is no doubt that the 7th and 9th regiments were responsible for assaulting Ft, Gimler.²⁸ Ft. Gimler was a five-sided earthwork screened by a ten-foot moat and two lines of abats across its northern face, but its eastern face was unprotected. The fort boasted just two cannon; its small garrison consisted of veteran troops who would be steadily reinforced throughout the action.²⁹ The assault on Ft Gimler was not well coordinated, in a confusion of orders Colonel James Shaw, believed he was ordered by

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Ibid.,

²⁷ Perry H. Landon Pension File 54331. Private Co. e. 7 W.S.E can no 789 bundle no. 49. Maryland State Archives.

²⁸ Noah Andre Trudeau “Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865” Little, Brown and Company Boston, New York. First Edition 1988. P. 298

²⁹Ibid.,

General Birney to attack with just four companies in skirmishing order.³⁰ It likely would not have made a difference if the entire regiment had attacked, the union action that day had taken so long to organize, that the confederates had brought up sufficient reinforcements to repel the attack.³¹ Landon was apart of company C of the 7th U.SCT, his unit walked into a slaughter. The attack began with nine officers and 189 enlisted men. The four companies that made the attack were virtually eliminated; the 7th would report 20 dead, 80 wounded and 136 missing.³² What reasons would Landon have to be uncertain about where he fought on the 28-29th of September? Perhaps in the fog of War Landon simply did not know, soldiers of the rank were generally uninformed of vital information of troop movements and order of battle. Perhaps Landon did not want to be associated with the military blunder that was the assault on Ft Gilmer, choosing rather the success that was the assault on Ft. Harrison. Perhaps even through some wild occurrence he found himself fighting with another regiment that was involved in the assault on Ft. Harrison (this being highly unlikely due to stringent military discipline) The most plausible scenario is that Landon simply did not what he was taking part in that day, which if correct shows the regimentation and discipline that colored units followed.

It is a miracle that Landon survived the slaughter at Ft. Gimler. For Landon the war was over, he now faced the difficult prospect of recovery and life following the war. The life of a wounded soldier came with challenges equal to combat. in a world lacking social services the world could be cold an unforgiving, epically for African Americans. In a letter written by George W. Hatton, Orderly Sergeant 1st USCI Hampton Virginia

³⁰ Ibid.,

³¹ Ibid.,

³² Ibid.,299

July 1 1864 “ Racism was common in all parts of Army life, even in hospitals. Military hospitals during the Civil War were sites of unimaginable suffering. African Americans often reaped the consequences of medical Doctors overtaken by racist feelings. In a letter Sergeant Hatton writes of his experience in a U.S army hospital after being wounded at the battle of Petersburg.

I was wounded at the battle of Petersburg on the 15th of June last and arrived at the Hampton Hospital on the 20th. On my arrival there, I wrote to my Father, stating that I was wounded and would like him to come and see me and if possible take me home... On my fathers arrival at the hospital he states the objective to the Dcotors in charge... After making every exertion in his power to get a furlough, he failed in doing so...A white man , whose name I did not learn, came from Washington with my Fther for the same purpose, to see his son and carry him home . His success needs no comment.³³

No known written record exists of Landon’s experience during the war, he was literate as evident by later records from the founding of the Charles Sumner post and his military pension records, the latter story by George W. Hatton does shed light on the racism Landon would have experienced as a wounded soldier.

African American civil war veterans Kent County Maryland

After recovering from his wounds in Virginia, Landon was discharged form the military by signature of Geo. H. Shady on the grounds that he was no longer fit to perform duty. Landon now faced the daunting task of returning home and earning an existence in a harsh world. Complicated by the fact that manual labor was generally the only form of work available to freed blacks in Kent County Maryland. Ironically, because of the loss of his right arm, Landon did have the benefit of drawing a higher pension and sooner than other African American veterans, who would often struggle to receive their

³³Edwin S. Redkey “A Grand Army of Black Men” Cambridge University press 1992. P 256-257

pensions. According to his pension records Landon Henrietta Wright Landon as well as 5 children William Landon, b. Jan 23rd, 1876 Theodore Landon, b. Jan 15th, 1878 Anna Landon, b. Oct. 5, 1880 Arthur Landon, Aug. 31st, 1885 Ester Landon. June 15th, 1889.³⁴ Landon's federal pension 1883 Landon was receiving \$24 per month, March 3rd, 1883, by the time of his death he was receiving \$80 per month, this increase show the political power that Civil war veterans possessed. According to the 1901 Federal census he lived on 27 Cross Street. . African American veterans in Kent County would form the Charles Sumner post # 25. This organization would provide a social organization in addition to being a political institution for African American veterans of the Civil war. The harsh reality for African American Veterans from Kent County Maryland, is they did not return from the war heroes, but returned free men to a environment of overt racism. Kent County Maryland historically was based upon a culture of segregation. The vast majority of whites on the eastern shore were quick to treat freed blacks like second-class citizens. The members of the Charles Sumner post represented the tip of the spear of civil rights in Post War Reconstruction. Landon's name can be found on the founding charter of the Charles Sumner post, as well as several more documents from the early years of its operation. it is evident from these records that Landon was a major contributor to the functioning of the post throughout his lifetime.

The post engaged in a number of activities including parades on Remembrance Day. More importantly the post provided assistance to African American veterans in the area. Perry Landon died in 1927 from a chronic infection. Like landon, by the mid 20th Century,

³⁴ Perry H. Landon Pension File 54331. Private Co. e. 7 W.S.E can no 789 bundle no. 49. Maryland State Archives.

the veterans of the Civil War, began to pass away. The Sumner post still represented significant assets. The families and descendants of the Sumner Post went to great measures to ensure that the post would stay in their legal domain. June 16th 1950 Henrietta Landing (Landon) took part in a legal deposition in order to secure the property lease and assets of the Charles Sumner post.³⁵ The fact that as late as 1950 the post still represented a major institution in the African American Community of Kent County. Etta Landing in June of 1931 after the death of Perry Landon, Etta landing applied to become the Executor of Landon's will. Landon did not die a poor man, he died in possession of modest assets and was an original signature of the Sumer Post;³⁶ The post played a major role in the African American community until the decedents of the veterans who founded it no longer depended the monetary and social structure the post provided.

The Life Perry H. Landon embodies the individual perspective of the American Civil War. Through the life of Landon we can understand what soldiers endured before and after the war. For Landon and his friends and family in Chestertown Maryland, every day was a fight for rights and freedom. Freedom from slavery did not ensure liberty for African American's. The end of the Civil War signaled the end of military hostilities between north and south. But began an entirely new war; the war for Civil Rights. This war would have no battles, no monuments, only casualties.

³⁵ Wittiness claims possession of "The Centennial Lodge" Henrietta Landing, In the Circiot Court for Kent County, Maryland. In Equity. No. 3811.

³⁶ Petition for Letters of Administration, Etta Landing. Record in Liber "Administration Bond" No. 17. Folio 584. FWS. Register of wills.

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