

Fighting for Freedom: United States Colored Troops from Maryland



The history of the United States Colored Troops remains a fascinating topic as their contributions in the Civil War marked a turning point within the country. Without their service the Union may have faltered in their movement against the Confederacy. After the first two years of the war, President Abraham Lincoln enacted the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, thus paving the way for colored recruits to join the United States Army. It was in 1863 that the federal government began actively pursuing the recruitment of free and enslaved African-Americans. Lincoln stated that emancipation was a military necessity, absolutely essential to the preservation of the Union. We must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued. The slaves were undeniably an element of strength to those who had their service, and we must decide whether that element should be with us or against us. In the fall of 1863, the War Department authorized the systematic enlistment of slave men in Maryland, Missouri, and Delaware, including slaves owned by loyal masters. According to General Order 329, it promised freedom to the recruits and compensation to loyal owners. This act, along with the military conscription act of 1863, allowed for the emancipation of slaves. It was overwhelmingly answered by thousands of African-Americans who seized the opportunity to join the war.

U.S. History Content Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following [United States History Content Standards](#) for Grades 5-12

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Standard 2: *How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions.*

Standard 4: *The sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period.*

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)

Standard 1: *The causes of the Civil War*

Standard 2: *The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people.*

Standard 3: *How various reconstruction plans succeeded or failed.*

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following [United States History Content Standards](#) for Grades K-4

Topic 2: The History of the Student's own State or Region

Standard 3: *The people, events, problems, and ideas that created the history of their state.*

Standard 3c: *The student understands the various other groups from regions throughout*

the world who came into the his or her own state or region over the long-ago and recent past.

3-4 - Draw upon census data and historical accounts in order to describe patterns and changes in population over a period of time in a particular city or town in the students' state or region. [Draw upon historical data]

3-4 - Describe the problems, including prejudice and intolerance, as well as the opportunities that various groups who have lived in their state or region have experienced in housing, the workplace, and the community. [Appreciate historical perspectives]

Standard 3d: *The student understands the interactions among all these groups throughout the history of his or her state.*

3-4: Analyze the significance of major events in the state's history, their impact on people then and now, and their relationship to the history of the nation. [Analyze cause-and-effect relationships]

3-4: Examine various written accounts in order to identify and describe regional or state examples of major historical events and developments that involved interaction among various groups (e.g., the Alamo, the Underground Railroad, the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, and the California Gold Rush). [Consider multiple perspectives]

Topic 3: The History of the United States: Democratic Principles and Values and the People from Many Cultures Who Contributed to Its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage

Standard 4: *How democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols.*

Standard 4a: *Demonstrate understanding of how the United States government was formed and of the nation's basic democratic principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.*

K-4: Analyze how over the last 200 years individuals and groups in American society have struggled to achieve the liberties and equality promised in the principles of American democracy. [Analyze continuity and change]

Standard 4b: *Demonstrate understanding of ordinary people who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.*

K-4: Analyze in their historical context the accomplishments of ordinary people in the local community now and long ago who have done something beyond the ordinary that displays particular courage or a sense of responsibility in helping the common good. [Assess the importance of the individual in history]

Maryland State Content Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following Maryland Social Studies Standards for Grades 4 and 8.

Grade 4 - Standard 5.0: History Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States

Topic C. Conflict between ideas and institutions

Indicator 4. Analyze the institution of slavery impacted individuals and groups in Maryland

Grade 8 - Standard 5.0: History Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

Topic C. Conflict between ideas and institutions

Indicator 4. Analyze how the institution of slavery impacted individuals and groups in Maryland

Indicator 5 - Analyze factors affecting the outcome of the Civil War

Maryland State Common Core Reading Standards

Materials compiled in this document can be used by educators to fulfill the following Maryland Common Core Reading Standards for Grades 6-8:

CCR Anchor Standard #1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

RH.6-8.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

CCR Anchor Standard #3 - Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of text.

RH.6-8.3- Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCR Anchor Standard #4 - Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

RH.6-8.4- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

CCR Anchor Standard #6 - Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

RH.6-8.6- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)

CCR Anchor Standard #9 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

RH.6-8.9- Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic

Primary Resources

1. Description: [Civil War Muster Roll for 7th Regiment, mainly comprised of former slaves from Maryland's Eastern Shore](#) .

Date Created/Published: 1860-1867

Notes: The muster rolls list the soldier's name, rank, age, when and where enrolled, enrolling officer, when and where mustered, mustering officer, period mustered for, name of paymaster, last date paid, and remarks, etc. The remarks field typically denotes deaths, transfers, and desertions.

Source: Adjutant General (Muster Rolls) 1863-1866, U.S. Colored Troops, 7th Regiment [MSA S936-47].

Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

2. Description: [Civil War Bounty Roll for 7th Regiment, USCT, including former slaves from Queen Anne's, Worcester, and Talbot counties](#).

Date Created/Published: 1864-1880

Source: Comptroller of the Treasury (Bounty Rolls), Slaves and Owners by USCT Regiment, Page 148 [MSA S 629].



Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

3. Description: [Affidavit of Asbury Hughes, alias George Alfred](#)

Date Created/Published: 1864-1900


Source: U.S. Colored Troops Pension File Collection, MSA SC 4126, John Chase, Box 7, Folder 110

Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD

4. Description: [United States Colored Troops Pension File of John Johnson](#)
Date Created/Published: 1863-1875
Notes: [Affidavit from his wife Harriet Johnson \(p. 2 of letter\)](#), [Widow's Claim for Pension](#), [Widow's Pension](#), [Medical Report](#)
Reproductions: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
Source: U.S. Colored Troops Pension File Collection, MSA SC 4126, Box 24, Folder 518
Repository: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. and Maryland State Archives.
5. Description: [Slave Statistics of Pritchett Meredith](#) 
Date Created/Published: 1867-1868
Source: Dorchester County Commissioner of Slave Statistics (Slave Statistics)
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
6. Description: Manumission of [John T. Anderson](#) by [William H. Higgins](#)
Date Created/Published: June 4, 1864
Source: Queen Anne's County Circuit Court (Land Records), Liber SED 1, Folio 230 [MSA C1427-6].
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
7. Description: [Talbot County Assessment Record for Edward Dorham, USCT Soldier](#)
Date Created/Published: 1840
Notes: Edward Dorham's father, Belfast was listed on the [1832 assessment record](#) as being the slave of Edward S. Winder. Edward S. Winder's daughter, Elizabeth J. Winder was the owner of Edward Dorham. The 1840 assessment record lists Edward as being an infant, which would coincide with him being around the age of 23 when he enlisted in Company A of the 7th U.S. Colored Troops regiment in 1863. Edward Dorham was valued at \$5.
Source: Talbot County Board of County Commissioners (Assessment Record, Slaves), 1840, Election District 1, Slave owner: Mrs. E. Winder, Page 72-73, MSA C1836-2.
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
8. Description: "Excitement Among the Colored People - Slave Prisons Visited by the Military Authorities" in the *Baltimore Sun*
Date Created/Published: July 28, 1863.
Source: *Baltimore Sun* from NewsBank: Selected America's Historical Newspapers
Repository: Enoch Pratt Free Library, Database
9. Description: "Assault on Negro Troops" in the *Baltimore Daily Gazette*
Date Created/Published: February 27 1864
Source: *Baltimore Daily Gazette*, 1862-1865 [MSA SC 2959]
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
10. Description: [Death Record for Charles Weeks, USCT Soldier](#) 
Date Created/Published: May 26, 1904
Notes: Death Records can show important information such as date of death, cause of death, occupation, residence, names of parents, place of burial, etc.
Source: BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS (Death Record) [MSA CM1132-83]. Charles Weeks, May 24, 1904, Certificate Number B 69,130
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
11. Description: [U.S. Colored Troops Service Record for Horace Gibson](#)
Date Created/Published: September 21, 1863
Notes: The service record lists the company, regiment, age, height, weight, county born, occupation, date of enlistment, when and where enlisted, enlisting officer, remarks, etc. The remarks section typically lists battles fought in, wounds received (if any), and promotions.
Source: Ancestry.com. National Archives and Records Administration. U.S., Colored Troops

Military Service Records, 1861-1865, Infantry, 7th United States Colored Infantry, Horace Gibson, Page 287.

Repository: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

12. Description: [1870 U.S. Federal Census Record for Dorchester County, Maryland](#)
Date Created/Published: August 29, 1870
Notes: Census record for Robert Bennett displaying his occupation as "Disable Soldier."
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Census Record, MD) 1870. Dorchester County. Cambridge District. Film Reel SCM 7250. Census Page 22. MSA SM61-269.
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
13. Description: [1890 U.S. Federal Census for Maryland, John C. Kineyea, USCT Soldier](#)
Date Created/Published: June 1890
Notes: The 1890 Census for Maryland is a Veteran's Schedule listing Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Widows, etc.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Census Record, BA) 1890. Baltimore. Enumeration District 183. Film Reel SCM 26-2. Census Page 1. Image Number 408. MSA SM61-352.
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
14. Description: [Marriage Record for James Taylor, USCT Soldier](#)
Date Created/Published: June 20, 1867
Notes: James Taylor marries Mary E. Clayton on June 20, 1867. Marriage record filed on October 16, 1867.
Source: QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT (Marriage Record) 1866-1886. James Taylor to Mary E. Clayton. MSA T1703-1.
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
15. Description: Land Record for Thomas J. Woolford (Grantee), USCT Soldier
Date Created/Published: May 25, 1887
Notes: Thomas J. Woolford purchases parcel of land called "Belfield" for \$300. The land amount is "eleven acres and three quarters of an acre of land."
Source: Dorchester County Circuit Court (Land Records) Thomas J. Woolford and his wife Martha Catharine Woolford from George R. Brown and others. CL 9, Pages 634-636. [MSA CE 47-21].
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
16. Description: [Land Record for Thomas J. Woolford \(Grantor\), USCT Soldier](#) 
Date Created/Published: June 20, 1887
Notes: Thomas J. Woolford and his wife sell roughly 7 acres to James Bantom for the sum of \$18 on June 20, 1887. According to census documents, neither Thomas J. Woolford or his wife could write and the land document shows them both leaving their "marks" as their signatures.
Source: Dorchester County Circuit Court (Land Records) Thomas J. Woolford and his wife Martha Catharine Woolford to James Bantom. CL 9, Pages 735-736. [MSA CE 47-21].
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
17. Description: Google Earth File for Charles Bennett, USCT Soldier - "[Charles Bennett, Journey from Slavery to Freedom](#)" KMZ File
Date Created/Published: June 26, 2012
Notes: Charles Bennett's journey from slavery to freedom displayed through historical maps depicting his life as he fought for the cause of freedom.
Source: Google Earth, "Charles Bennett, Journey from slavery to freedom," KMZ File. Map: *Queen Anne's County*. Simon J. Martenet, *Martenet's Atlas of Maryland*, 1865, Huntingfield Collection, MSA SC 1339-1-75
Repository: Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD
18. Description: Google Earth File [Historical Maps and USCT Soldiers from Five Counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore](#)
Date Created/Published: May 16, 2012

Notes: Displaying historical maps of five Eastern Shore counties, which was the place of origin for the soldiers studied.

Source: Google Earth, Historical Maps and USCT Soldiers from Five Counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot) on Maryland's Eastern Shore, KMZ File. Maps: Caroline County. Dorchester County. Kent County. Queen Anne's County. Talbot County. Simon J. Martenet, Martenet's Atlas of Maryland, 1865, Huntingfield Collection, MSA SC 1339-1-75
Repository: Maryland State Archives

19. Description: [Photograph, Robert Riley, Former Slave and USCT Veteran](#)

Date Created/Published: ca. 1880

Source: Carolyn C. Williams Collection of Robert Riley Papers. Photographs of Robert Riley [MSA SC 3836].

Repository: Maryland State Archives

Secondary Resources

Berlin, Ira, et al., eds. *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series II: The Black Military Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

C. J. M. *Record of the Services of the Seventh Regiment, U. S. Colored Troops*. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971 [1878].

Callum, Agnes Kane. *Colored Volunteers of Maryland, Civil War: 7th Regiment United States Colored Troops 1863-1866*. Baltimore, MD: Mullac Publishers, 1990.

Callum, Agnes Kane. *Colored Volunteers of Maryland, Bounty Records of 9th Regiment United States Colored Troops 1863-1866*. Baltimore, MD: Mullac Publishers, 1998.

Chester, Thomas Morris. *Thomas Morris Chester, Black Civil War Correspondent: His Dispatches from the Virginia Front*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

Cornish, Dudley Taylor. *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 [1956].

Gladstone, William A. *United States Colored Troops, 1863-1867*. Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1990.

Gladstone, William A. *Men of Color*. Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1992.

McPherson, James M. *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1965.

Quarles, Benjamin. *The Negro in the Civil War*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1988 [1953].

Ravanbakhsh, Heather. "African American Military Records." *The Archivist's Bulldog*, Vol. 10 No. 19, Newsletter of the Maryland State Archives, October 15, 1996.

Redkey, Edwin S., ed. *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army, 1861-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Regosin, Elizabeth A. and Donald R. Shaffer, eds. *Voices of Emancipation: Understanding Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction through the U.S. Pension Bureau Files*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2008.

Small, Clara. *Men of Color, To Arms! Manumitted Slaves and Freed Blacks from the Lower Eastern Shore Who Served in the Civil War: Worcester County and Somerset County, Maryland*. Fruitland, MD: Arcadia Enterprises, Inc., 2010.

Taylor, Susie King. *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs: Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, late 1st South Carolina Volunteers*. New York: M.Wiener Publishers, 1988.

Westwood, Howard C. *Black Troops, White Commanders, and Freedmen during the Civil War*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Williams, George W. *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888.

Wilmer, L. Allison, J. H. Jarrett, and Geo. W. F. Vernon. *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-65*. Vol. 2. Baltimore, MD: Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1899.

Associated Heritage and Preservation Organizations

[National Archives and Records Administration](#)

[African American Civil War Memorial & Museum](#)

Copyright and Other Restrictions

Access to materials linked within these document packets is intended for educational and research purposes. The written permission of the copyright owners and/or holders of other rights (such as publicity and privacy rights) is required for distribution, reproduction, or other use beyond that allowed by fair use or other statutory exemptions. The responsibility for making an independent legal assessment and independently securing any necessary rights rests with persons desiring to use particular items in the context of the intended use.

Credits

Documents for the Classroom is a collaborative partnership of the Maryland State Archives and the Center for History Education (CHE), University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), and the following sponsoring school systems: Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public School System, Baltimore County Public Schools, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Prince George's County Public Schools, Caroline County Public Schools and Howard County Public Schools.

Other program partners include Martha Ross Center for Oral History, Maryland Historical Society, State Library Resource Center/Enoch Pratt Free Library, with assistance from the National Archives and Records Administration and the Library of Congress. The program is funded through grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

The document packet was researched and developed by David Armenti and Tanner Sparks.

© Copyright Maryland State Archives