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<http://www.usctlha.net>

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History
Not a Study of the Past but a Light to the Future.

By Dr. George Smith
 President

This publication begins a new chapter in the quest for African Americans to know and understand their place in the history of the United States of America. The Board of Directors of the United States Colored Troops Living History Association fully understands the magnitude and the responsibility of initiating this Newsletter. We are committed to the accurate portrayal of our history and will not attempt to rewrite historical facts.

We undertake this endeavor fully aware that some will question the audacity and the capacity of a community based organization to embrace the challenge to educate Americans about the history of African Americans in the United States. The members of the USCTLHA desire to give sight, sound, and feeling to our history, thus stimulating our audience to embrace their history and create a yearning to know more about their past.

The USCTLHA is an organization composed of military and civilian reenactors, researchers, educators, See **HISTORY**, page 7



Communication Committee

By John Gourdin
 Chairman

Greetings Fellow Members and Friends:

Over the past couple of years the USCTLHA has made an amazing transformation from a fledgling upstart of an organization to a full blown national Association. And now, we are poised to begin this New Year with an invigorated effort to spread the word about the deeds and accomplishments of our 19th Century Afro-warriors.

But no matter how well we're are organized and no matter how many experienced and talented members we have among our membership, our organization will stagnate and decline unless we vigorously broadcast our presence to the public – and that is the duty and responsibility of this Committee.

The Communication Committee is composed of a matrix of individuals and dedicated units of our Association working harmoniously to communicate with the public. The matrix includes a Website, See **COMMITTEE**, page 6



United States Colored Troops Re-enactor Color Guard at the Lincoln Cemetery—A Day of Remembrance, November 17, 2007, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

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A Word from the USCTLHA Treasurer

By Charles (Ben) Hawley
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On March 23, 2007 at the Raleigh meeting, I was selected to be the United States Colored Troops Living History Association (USCTLHA) Treasurer. This is a task that I approach very seriously as I serve in this position.

My duties simply stated are:

- To have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the Program; receive and give receipts for moneys due and payable to the Program from any source whatsoever, and deposit all such monies in the name of the Program in such banks, trust companies.
- In general perform all the duties incident to the office of Treasurer and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him by the President or by the Board.

We have established a business bank account in Kensington, Maryland and are approved by the State of Maryland as a charity authorized to solicit funds.

Since that time I have worked very hard with the Board of Directors and have established this organization as a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization. It is important to define what exactly is meant by *tax exempt*.

*Exempt Purposes as defined by the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c) (3). The exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c) (3) are charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, and preventing cruelty to children or animals. The term charitable is used in its generally accepted legal sense and includes relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion; advancement of education or science; erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments, or works; lessening the burdens of government; lessening neighborhood tensions; eliminating prejudice and discrimination; defending human and civil rights secured by law; and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency. See, **TREASURER**, page 5*

Membership

Members of the United States Colored Troops Living History Association (USCTLHA) are dedicated to the preservation of the legacy of the men who served in the regiments during the Civil War. Membership in the organizational unit will not be limited to military historical interpreters. We encourage those who are civilian interpreters, descendants, genealogists, researchers, educators, and individuals who support the mission of the USCTLHA to join this organization to educate the public to the history of the United States Colored Troops and the civilians that provided support for the soldiers through the war.

Membership Application—See Insert

United States Colored Troops Living History Association's Background & History

By Yulanda Burgess
Founding Member

Since the 1960s, Civil War living history/reenacting has been a popular method for presenting an important chapter of the United States history. However, among the thousands of people portraying Union and Confederate soldiers, sailors and civilians, there were few African Americans involved. Throughout the decades there were evidence and sightings of African Americans participating in Civil War commemorative events, but never in numbers that would tantamount to a full company of soldiers in blue. This was finally realized in 1997 at the 100th anniversary of unveiling of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' monument to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment.

The National Park Service put out a massive call for all individuals portraying the United States Colored Troops to present arms in Boston in May 1997 to pay tribute to the only monument dedicated to African Americans who fought in the Civil War. Approximately 105 black men, 30 civilians and an unknown number of men portraying white officers answered the call to the "Hope and Glory" event. The occasion included symposiums, banquets, musical concerts, and the monuments re-dedication with dignitaries present. "Hope and Glory" was highlighted with the famous dress parade on May 28th of men marching four abreast through the streets of Boston and Beacon Hill. During that time -- and to this date -- it was considered the largest gathering of African Americans who interpret Civil War history. Thus a grand vision was contemplated: "Why can't this turn-out happen more often?" The opportunity to discuss this concept was recognized immediately.

An immediate call for a wrap-up session was spread through the ranks of participants. On the last day of "Hope and Glory" on the Charles River banks it was proposed that the momentum from that event be used to achieve a much needed institution in Civil War reenacting: the stronger presence of United States Colored Troops and its connective civilians. A pledge was given to strive for a concerted effort to establish a national brigade organization of historians and reenactors that would help facilitate the presentation and re-

search of the United States Colored Troops' history. Many Union and Confederate organizations had achieved great success under a brigade structure and the vision for a United States Colored Troops constituency was recognized as an appropriate approach.

In the ensuing years, several attempts were made to develop this brigade type organization. It was finally realized on November 4-6, 2005 when the United States Living History Association was organized in Dayton, Ohio under the theme of "To beget unity, love, brotherly kindness and charity."

It was anticipated that the meeting would begin focusing on the following areas:

- Ø Develop an efficient and cost supporting networking and communication system (including a website);
- Ø Establish brigade membership guidelines and by-laws;
- Ø Establish command structures and committees (departments);
- Ø Commence authenticity guidelines for military and civilians;
- Ø Identify reputable and reliable resources for reproduced material culture;
- Ø Establish scholarships for youth and young adults;
- Ø Devise recruitment techniques;
- Ø Identify and target preservation and memorials for USCT connective sites;
- Ø Identify, develop, and implement annual events focusing on USCT history; and
- Ø Identify annual events in conjunction with USV and CSA brigade and independent organizations.

The call for this organizational meeting was answered by thirty-eight individuals. Their common goal: creating a national organization for people who were devoted to the research and historical interpretation of the United States Colored Troops. The official name of the organization was chosen, the mission statement was established, committees were organized, objectives outlined, and interim officers elected. A grand banquet was held to commemorate the overall end result of what these men and women had fought and died for: the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution which abolished slavery.

The parting salutatory words given by the Steering Committee to present and future members was the

See LIVING HISTORY, page 7

STORIES IN DECEMBER FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NEW YEAR

By David A. Anderson

It is mid-December as I write, one month past “Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad Conference.” Rochester’s much-heralded conference underscored my belief that preservation is key to a community’s ability to live up to the ideals imbedded in the nation’s sacred documents.

Learning from the past, better enables us to advance our communities. Yet, throughout this month of December, I have been hard-pressed to get individuals and institutions to commemorate December 6, 1865, the day that the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified. Granted, the 13th is a dry, matter of fact statement:

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Still, December 6, 1865, signaled a new investment in freedom, one in which, a nation still grieving over the assassination of its president, did what its Founding Fathers would not do. Upon hearing the news, the grandparents I never saw raised up “hallelujahs!” exalting in the belief that they could let go of that long moment of hesitation occasioned by the slaying of President Lincoln. It was a day of “No more auction block for me,” and “Free at last, free at last; thank God—a Mighty, we are free at last!”

Former bondsmen, and those to whom they were once bonded, could begin to build the long-delayed America—the one in which “all men are created equal!” The grandsons and granddaughters of the kidnapped sons and daughters of Africa, could now go about defining the standard by which they would grow their children into adulthood. The Congressional momentum continued, and by 1870, the 14th and 15th amendments had been ratified; in place was the legal framework whereby, a long-abused people might engage in the business of citizenship.

December 7, 2007, military veterans organizations again reminded us to “Remember Pearl Harbor!” This important ritual has occurred for as many December 7th as I can remember. Our veterans organizations

are vigilant about preserving the meaning of the sacrifices that ensued from “the day of infamy,” a day in 1941 when the U.S. installation in the Territory of Hawaii was savagely attacked. My mother were startled by the announcement interrupting the radio broadcast. “Momma,” I wanted to know, “where is Pearl Harbor?” There in the “front room” of our cold water flat, standing before the gas space heater we could only afford to have on for two hours a day, Momma admitted that she did not know. To relieve my anxiety, I hugged her.

Fifty-one years later, I asked Momma for details of the grandfather she had never seen. She had been told that he left Alabama the year she was born: “Said he was going to the ‘old soldiers home in Dayton.’”

“Dayton, Momma, I wanted to know: Iowa? Tennessee? Ohio? Daytona Beach, Florida? Momma did not know.

Luck and persistence revealed that Private Samuel Bibb, late of Company H, 17th USCT, was interred at the National Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio. As the United States Colored Troops Living History Association concluded our organizing conference, Brother Bennie McRae, took four of us to that burial ground. Private Bibb wasn’t where I thought he was. Bennie, Sister Patricia Tyson, and Brother Mel Reid helped me hold it together. Serious scout that he is, Mel Reid executed a maneuver, that enabled me to collapse on the hallowed ground in which Great-Grandpa Sam Bibb is entombed.

Especially do African Americans, not engage in public parade, nor quiet contemplation—Americans, in general, do not commemorate the 13th Amendment. Cities are preoccupied with expansion of blue-uniformed armies to patrol and control the inner city compounds that so many great-great-great-great grandsons roam and ravage, we citizens seldom give the dispirited people that live in these mean streets, a picture of the blue-coated men of color who fought their way into the Union Army, thus to become the margin of the Union victory that delivered a nation from its Constitutionally-protected sinful ways.

Little in our system of public educational system; little in our religious catechisms; rarely at the dining room table do we provide African American youths with the tools or incentives to research family lineage, to perhaps discover there, one’s descent from a United States Colored Troop(er). How then can we fully engage in the business of living the principles of citizenship so painfully birthed by the Congress in 1865?

See **STORIES**, page 5

STORIES, *from page 4*

Is it any wonder that our military, and our State Department, have so much difficulty in getting the people of Iraq to take on the burden and the honor of democracy. We celebrate wars, and indeed, our warriors are deserving of our gratitude. But they also deserve a nation of people that understand and commemorate what our stride toward democracy has been about. Insofar as we muzzle the freedom story, we doom ourselves to ugliness exemplified in the battle over who will control the mean streets of the Bagdads of North America.

The hour is late, but December will come again. When we again “Remember Pearl Harbor,” let each of us also be able to report that we have counseled young people to search for their “colored Yankee Soldier” ancestors. Let it be said that we rewarded Junior Flip for composing a rap on Douglass’s “Men of Color, to Arms” (February, 1863). Let the record show that “Founders Day,” May 22, 1863, was, in 2008, the text of Reverend Doctor’s pre-Memorial Day homily. Between now and midnight, December 6, 2008, let each of us take ten minutes to acquaint a youngster with the historic act that announced, “No more auction block for me!” Use three of those minutes to sing a verse of “John Brown’s Body Lies a Moldering in the Clay” (as do the bodies of Shields Green of Rochester, and John Copeland of Oberlin, both hanged, December 16, 1859, for their roles in Brown’s assault on Harpers Ferry). Encourage the children in your circle to take these data to school for show and tell. “Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow—December stories.

TREASURER, *from page 2*

As Treasurer I have two things I would like to accomplish for this organization.

- (1) To increase our membership by 100% in the year 2008. We can accomplish this by holding a membership drive where each member brings in a new member. Details will be announced as they become available, meantime start lining up your prospective members.
- (2) The next goal I have set for myself is to enroll the USCTLHA in the United Way Combined Federal Campaign (UWCFC). One of the primary prerequisites for membership in the UWCFC is that your organization must be audited by a certified public account (CPA). This auditing process is rather expensive, thus I am seeking assistance from anyone that can refer a CPA to our organization.

Self Discovery Through Military Ancestry

If I knew then what I know now...

By George Geder
Family Historian

1959. In the third grade we read, aloud, 'Little Black Sambo'. It took my mother's ire to get that racist children's book out of the classroom and out of the school curriculum.

1964. In junior high, I was humiliated by my History teacher when she said that 'negro' is not to be capitalized since it didn't represent a people from a specific country.

1968. Senior high saw the birth of the Black Student Union, Ujamaa, because there wasn't any relevant Black literature in the school library.

1969. My college 'lit n' comp' professor wasn't amused when I tried to liken the Greek Tragedies to the tra-
vails of the ghettos.

It wasn't until I was in my mid fifties that I learned of an ancestor that had a direct link to American history; a link that could have bolstered my pride and self-esteem if I knew about it in my primary education days.

John Stevenson, my great-great grandfather, served as a soldier for the 29th Connecticut (Colored) Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the Civil War. He was born around 1834 presumably in slavery. His parents were noted as slaves on the 1880 census and one newspaper obituary states that he was indeed a slave. By 1855, we know that he is a free man living in Madison county, New York.

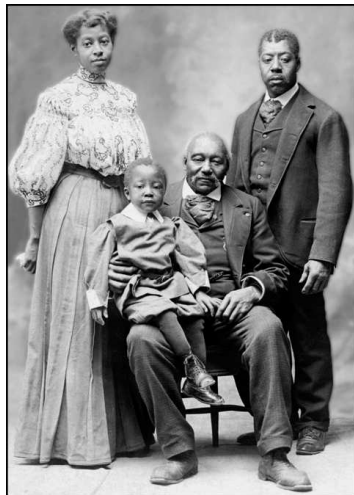
What I find absolutely remarkable is that he made his way from Cazenovia, New York all the way to Connecticut to volunteer. That takes gumption, courage and purpose. He served from 1863 until December 1865. Along the way he was wounded in battle. After the war, he became a member of the Cazenovia, New York branch of the Grand Army of the Republic which, in turn, was one of the first integrated veteran's organization in the country. This group was also credited as starting what we know as Memorial Day. John spent the rest of his life fighting for an equitable pen-
See **SELF DISCOVERY**, page 6

SELF DISCOVERY, from page 5
sion based on his war injuries. He died in 1914.

If I had known all this when I was in school, imagine how I could have impacted my peers and educators. Nevermind, I'm beaming with pride and dignity today. My challenge now is to inform the world that African ancesored people did, in fact, fight for their freedom and played an important role in dismantling slavery. My ancestors were not completely idle, passive spectators in the Civil War. I am the descendant of at least one 19th century freedom fighter.



John Stevenson and members of the Cazenovia, New York branch of the Grand Army of the Republic



George Geder's Ancestors

L-R: Beulah Stevenson-Geder, grandmother; William Emmett Geder, father; John Stevenson, 2nd great grandfather; and Emmett Moore Geder, grandfather

COMMITTEE, from page 1
Speaker's Bureau, Newsletter, Clearinghouse and Outreach Services. Each will be more fully described in proceeding articles.

Each function is headed by devoted and experienced leaders who are appointed, from among the membership, by the Committee Chairman, with the advisement and concurrence of the President and consent of the Board of Directors.

Combined, the role of this Committee is to communicate the common goal of our Association, and that is, to interpret and promote the history of the United States Colored Troops. We hope to achieve this by educating and engaging the public in celebrating the legacy of those brave and noble soldiers who served to overthrow the dreaded institution of slavery in America.

We are grateful for this honored opportunity to work with you and for you during this coming year.

Research Assistance for USCTLHA Members

By Cheryl Trowbridge-Miller

I have access to images of the following: U.S. Federal census records from 1790 - 1930 (less the year 1890 which was destroyed by fire); WWI draft cards; WWII draft cards; 1850 & 1860 slave census; U.S. Colored Troops Enlistment Records; Freedman's Bank Records; WPA Slave narratives; and misc. archived Newspapers.

Additional access includes, but is not limited to the following indexes: Works Progress Administration (WPA) records; State birth, death, marriage, and some divorce; and the Social Security Death Index.

I am offering to research and extract these records, **at no cost**, for members of the USCTLHA.

I can be reached via email at kjtcet2@aol.com. Please include USCTLHA in the subject line. In the body of the message indicate the name(s) of your ancestor, approximate birth year, and their state of residence. If you are researching a common surname, please provide as much information as you can; therefore, allowing me to narrow the search down to the correct individual.

LIVING HISTORY, *from page 3*

the following: "...Approach the challenges you face with enthusiasm and diligence, and to keep our mission as a driving force for your decisions. What we have started will be our legacy. As Frederick Douglass stated in 1852, "We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome."

The United States Colored Troops Living History Association was born out of a concept. It is now a reality. Since its inception, the USCT Living History Association has brought together several fractions in an effort to build a solid foundation for preserving the legacy of the United States Colored Troops. It has a glorious future full of hope and strives for glory. It is a unified gathering of men and women from all walks of life who will continue to focus on honoring the legacy of courageous men and women who fought and died for freedom.

Interested in joining — SEE INSERT—

HISTORY, *from page 1*

families and friends who desire to come together for families and friends who desire to come together for the purpose of enlightening ourselves and helping others to come to realize our rightful place in the pages of American history. Through celebrations, reenacting of historical events, promotion of educational programs, symposiums, and a collaborative effort to research the unknown we will bring our history forward. We also realize that it is imperative that we encourage, inspire and awaken the African American community to question the validity of what has been deemed to be factual information regarding the presence of African Americans within the United States.

African Americans themselves have been denied the legacy of their heritage in this country for many years because they have been influenced to avoid information related to the Civil War and slavery. Our text books have presented this aspect of our history as a shameful period in this country's history and thus caused us to shy away from this subject. In following this lead we have opted to avoid learning about the determination to survive and thrive in the hostile environment of slavery in America. An analysis of the psychological and social factors to be

overcome after over 200 years of enslavement would fill volumes of literary works if historians were inclined to interest themselves in this aspect of American history. America's history will never be complete if African American history is not fully appreciated.

Additionally, this organization desires to become the voices of those long ago silenced who never had the opportunity to tell us that they worked, toiled, fought and died in this soil and placed their foot prints in the foundation of this country. It is the ultimate goal of the USCTLHA to increase awareness of the contributions made by African Americans to the Civil War, a defining period in America's history, and the struggle to gain freedom and full citizenship.

Americans must come to realize that African American history is too important to be given token acknowledgement during the month of February. The tapestry of American history is too interwoven with our history to continue to be excluded or given passive recognition one month out of the year.

We extend an open invitation to anyone who desires to join us on this historical journey of discovery and recognition of African American history. We ask you to consider taking this voyage with us, in hopes that you will come to embrace the rich heritage left by our ancestors and continue their legacies in an effort to fill in the missing pages of the true history of the United States of America.

Position of Secretary - USCTLHA

By Sharon Heist

Like all secretarial positions a large part of the duties relate to the accurate making and maintenance of organizational records. This includes announcements, minutes, programs, reports, etc. The secretary is responsible for making agendas for board meetings, keeping board members apprised of organizational requirements and maintaining contact with the membership on matters of general business. It is necessary to provide the board with progress information, items that need board action, and an annual report for the general membership. He/she must interact closely with other board members to insure continuity and adherence to the bylaws, state and federal regulations and organizational goals.

History of the United States Colored Troops (Excerpt)

The following brief outline of the recruitment of colored persons is taken mainly from the reports and records of the Bureau for Colored Troops, and is inserted here in connection with the foregoing recapitulation of the laws and orders on the subject.

The acceptance of colored men as soldiers in the service of the United States began in Louisiana by the muster in, on the 27th of September, 1862, of the First Louisiana Native Guards, subsequently designated Seventy-third Regiment U.S. Colored Troops.

Four other regiments were raised in that military department and mustered in prior to March 7, 1863, two of them before the 1st of January, 1863.

The efforts made in the early summer of 1862 to raise colored troops in South Carolina did not result in the muster of an organization until January 31, 1863, when the First South Carolina Volunteers, subsequently designated Thirty-third U.S. Colored Troops, was mustered into the service as soldiers. Three other regiments were mustered in in that department prior to July 1, 1863.

In April, 1863, a regiment was completed in Kansas, called the First Kansas Volunteers, subsequently designated Seventy-ninth U.S. Colored Troops. Another regiment then in process of organization was some time after completed.

Early in the spring of 1863 the organization of colored troops was commenced in the Mississippi Valley under the personal supervision of the Adjutant-General of the Army. His first regiment was mustered into service on the 1st of May, 1863, as the First Arkansas Volunteers of African Descent, afterward designated Forty-sixth Regiment U.S. Colored Troops. Five other regiments raised in like manner were mustered in prior to June 30, 1863.

The Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Regiments of Massachusetts Volunteers were colored troops. They were organized in Massachusetts, and were mustered into service between March 30 and June 22, 1863. They were organized, officered, &c., by the State authorities, like other regiments of volunteers, and so continued until mustered out.

The foregoing colored troops were raised prior to the commencement of the operations of the Bureau for Colored Troops, which was created by General Orders, No. 143,(a) dated May 29, 1863.

Under the immediate supervision of that Bureau, a regiment designated the First U.S. Colored Troops was mustered into service in the District of Columbia on the 30th of June, 1863, and simultaneously with this a regiment was mustered in in North Carolina.

At this period, June, 1863, the recruitment of colored troops was going on all over the country, and so continued until stopped by orders on April 29, 1865, in consequence of no more troops being required.

With the exception of the two Massachusetts regiments above mentioned, the military organizations composed of colored men were mustered directly into the service of the United States, and were organized and officered by officers acting under the authority of the United States, and not of any particular State.

Since March 27, 1865, all appointments of officers for these troops have been made exclusively by the War Department, and after an examination by a board of officers. Prior to that time the Adjutant-General of the Army, in the Mississippi Valley, made appointments, in the name of the Secretary of War, to the regiments which he organized; and department commanders made, subject to the approval of the President, provisional appointments to the regiments organized by them.

The recruitment of men of color by draft and substitution was exclusively under the control of this Bureau, but their recruitment as volunteers was mainly under the Bureau for Colored Troops, especially established for that purpose.

The entire number of troops commissioned and enlisted in this branch of the service during the war is 186,017.

SOURCE: United States War Department. THE WAR OF THE REBELLION: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901.

UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS LIVING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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