

CIVIL WAR PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Reading #1

Oklahoma Writers' Project

George Kye

Age 110 years

Fort Gibson, Oklahoma

"When the War come along I was a grown man, and I went off to serve because old Master was too old to go, but he had to send somebody anyways. I served as George Stover, but every time the sergeant would call out 'Abe Stover,' I would answer 'Here.'

They had me driving a mule team wagon that Old Master furnished, and I went with the Sesesh [secessionist] soldiers from Van Buren to Texarkana and back a dozen times or more. I was in the War two years, right up to the day of freedom. We had a battle close to Texarkana and another big one near Van Buren, but I never left Arkansas and never got a scratch.

One time in the Texarkana battle I was behind some pine trees and the bullets cut the limbs down all over me. I dug a big hole with my bare hands before I hardly knowed how I done it.

One time two white soldiers named Levy and Briggs come to the wagon train and said they was hunting slaves for some purpose. Some of us black boys got scared because we heard they was going to Squire Mack and get a reward for catching runaways, so me and two more lit out of there.

They took out after us and we got to a big mound in the woods and hid. Somebody shot at me and I rolled into some bushes. He rid up and got down to look for me but I was on t'other side of his horse and he never did see me. When they was gone we went back to the wagons just as the regiment was pulling out and the officer didn't say nothing.

They was eleven negro boys served in my regiment for their masters. The first year was mighty hard because we couldn't get enough to eat. Some ate poke greens without no grease and took down and died.

How I knowed I was free, we was bad licked, I reckon. Anyways, we quit fighting and a Federal soldier come up to my wagon and say: 'Whose mules?' 'Abe Stover's mules,' I says, and he tells me then, 'Let me tell you, black boy, you are as free now as old Abe Stover his own self!' When he said that I jumped on top of one of them mules' back before I knowed anything!"

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Reading #2

Excerpt from "Truth and Legend"

By Sam Smith

Some black Southerners aided the Confederacy. Most of these were forced to accompany their masters or were forced to toil behind the lines. Black men were not legally allowed to serve as combat soldiers in the Confederate Army -- they were cooks, teamsters, and manual laborers. There were no black Confederate combat units in service during the war and no documentation whatsoever exists for any black man being paid or pensioned as a Confederate soldier, although some did receive pensions for their work as laborers. Nevertheless, the black servants and the Confederate soldiers formed bonds in the shared crucible of conflict, and many servants later attended regimental reunions with their wartime comrades.

[...] In those same Official Records, no Confederate ever references having black soldiers under his command or in his unit, although references to black laborers are common. The non-existence of black combat units is further indicated by the records of debates in the Confederate Congress over the issue of black enlistment. The idea was repeatedly rejected until, on March 13, 1865, the Confederate Congress passed a law to allow black men to serve in combat roles, although with the provision "that nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize a change in the relation which the said slave shall bear toward their owners," i.e. that black soldiers would still be slaves.

Active fighting ended less than three weeks after the law was passed, and there is no evidence that any black units were accepted into the Confederate Army as a result of the law. Whatever black combat service might have occurred during the war, it was not sanctioned by the Confederate government. Even beyond the Official Records, there is no known letter, diary entry, or any other primary source in which a Confederate mentions serving with black soldiers.

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Reading #3

The Civil War Was Won by Immigrant Soldiers

By Don H. Doyle

In the summer of 1861, an American diplomat in Turin, Italy, looked out the window of the U.S. legation to see hundreds of young men forming a sprawling line. Some wore red shirts, emblematic of the Garibaldi who, during their campaign in southern Italy, were known for pointing one finger in the air and shouting *l'Italia Unita!* (Italy United!). Now they wanted to volunteer to take up arms for *l'America Unita!*

Meanwhile, immigrants already in the United States responded to the call to arms in extraordinary numbers. In 1860, about 13% of the U.S. population was born overseas - roughly what it is today. One in every four members of the Union armed forces was an immigrant, some 543,000 of the more than 2 million Union soldiers by recent estimates. Another 118% had at least one foreign-born parent. Together, immigrants and the sons of immigrants made up about 43% of the U.S. armed forces.

America's foreign legions gave the North an incalculable advantage. It could never have won without them. And yet the role of immigrant soldiers has been ignored in the narrative of a brothers' war fought on American soil, by American soldiers, over issues that were uniquely American in origin.

In the 1860s, Confederate diplomats and supporters abroad were eager to inform Europeans that the North was actively recruiting their sons to serve as cannon fodder. In one pamphlet, Confederate envoy Edwin De Leon informed French readers that the Puritan North had built its army "in large part of foreign mercenaries" made up of "the refuse of the old world."

Embarrassed Northerners claimed the Confederacy exaggerated how many foreign recruits made up the U.S. armed forces -- pointing to immigrant bounty jumpers who enlisted to collect the money given to new recruits, deserted, and then re-enlisted. The underlying premise was that foreigners were not inspired by patriotic principle and, except for money, had no motive to fight and die for a nation not their own.

It was not true. Immigrants tended to be young and male, but they enlisted above their quota. Many immigrants left jobs to fight for the Union, enlisting before the draft -- and the bounties -- were even introduced. They volunteered, fought, and sacrificed far beyond what might be expected of strangers in a strange land.

Historians have done an excellent job of retrieving the voices of native-born, English-speaking soldiers. But the voices of the foreign legions remain silent -- thanks to the paucity of records in the archives, the language barriers posed to historians, and, perhaps, a lingering bias that keeps foreigners out of "our" civil war.

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Why did they fight? What were they fighting for? Recruitment posters in the New York Historical Society provide hints at the answers. One poster reads: *Patrioti Italiani! Honvedek! Amis de la liberté! Deutsche Freiheits Kaempfer!* (Italian patriots! Hungarians! Friends of liberty! German freedom fighters!) Then, in English, it urges “250 able-bodied men... Patriots of all nations” to fight for their “adopted country.”

One immigrant mother gave testimony in 1863 to an antislavery convention as to why her 17-year-old son was fighting for the Union. “I am from Germany where my brothers all fought against the Government and tried to make us free, but were unsuccessful,” she said. “We foreigners know the preciousness of that great, noble gift a great deal better than you, because you never were in slavery, but we are born in it.”

Following the failed Revolution of 1848, thousands of young Germans fled to America. They took up arms in what they saw as yet another battle in the revolutionary struggle against the forces of aristocracy and slavery. “It isn’t a war where two powers fight to win a piece of land,” one German enlistee wrote to his family. “Instead it’s about freedom or slavery, and you can well imagine, dear mother, I support the cause of freedom with all my might.”

“In another letter written to his family in Europe, a German soldier gave a pithy explanation of the war: “I don’t have the space or the time to explain all about the cause, only this much: the states that are rebelling are slave states, and they want slavery to be expanded, but the northern states are against this, and so it is civil war!”

So it was civil war, but for many foreign-born soldiers and citizens, this was much more than America’s war. It was an epic contest for the future of free labor against slavery, for equal opportunity against privilege and aristocracy, for freedom of thought and expression against oppressive government, and for democratic self-government against dynastic rule. Foreigners joined the war to wage the same battles that had been lost in the Old World. Theirs was the cause not only of America, but of all nations.

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Reading #4

“I Hope to Fall With My Face to the Foe”: Lewis Douglass Describes the Battle of Fort Wagner,
1863

Morris Island, S.C., July 20

My dear Amelia: I have been in two fights, and am unhurt. I am about to go in another I believe to-night. Our men fought well on both occasions. The last was desperate we charged that terrible battery on Morris Island known as Fort Wagoner, and were repulsed with a loss of 3 killed and wounded. I escaped unhurt from amidst that perfect hail of shot and shell. It was terrible. I need not particularize the papers will give a better than I have time to give. My thoughts are with you often, you are as dear as ever, be good enough to remember it as I no doubt you will. As I said before we are on the eve of another fight and I am very busy and have just snatched a moment to write you. I must necessarily be brief. Should I fall in the next flight killed or wounded I hope to fall with my face to the foe.

If I survive I shall write you a long letter. DeForrest of your city is wounded George Washington is missing, Jacob Carter is missing, Chas Reason wounded Chas Whiting, Chase Creamer all wounded. The above are in the hospital.

This regiment has established its reputation as a fighting regiment not a man flinched, though it was a trying time. Men fell all around me. A shell would explode and clear a space of twenty feet, our men would close up again, but it was no use we had to retreat, which was a very hazardous undertaking. How I got out of that fight alive I cannot tell, but I am here. My Dear girl I hope again to see you. I must bid you farewell should I be killed. Remember if I die I die in a good cause. I wish we had a hundred thousand colored troops we would put an end to this war. Good Bye to all Write soon Your own loving LEWIS

Note: Lewis Douglass was a son of Frederick Douglass and a sergeant in the Union army's Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry. The Fifty-fourth, led by its white colonel, Robert Gould Shaw, a scion of a prominent Boston family, was an elite black regiment. On July 18, 1863, the Fifty-fourth mounted a brave but hopeless attack against Fort Wagner, which guarded Charleston Harbor. Shaw and almost half the regiment were killed. African Americans had already proven themselves in Civil War battles, but the battle at Fort Wagner turned the public's attention to the heroism of black soldiers. In this letter to the woman he later married, Douglass, still unaware of the dimensions of his regiment's losses, described the battle.

Woodson, C. (n.d.). "I hope to fall with my face to the foe": Lewis Douglass describes the battle of Fort Wagner, 1863. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 16, from <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6215>

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Reading #5

A Journal, Kept by Emma Florence LeConte, From Dec. 31, 1864 to Aug. 6, 1865, Written in Her Seventeenth Year and Containing a Detailed Account of the Burning of Columbia, By One Who Was an Eyewitness¹

Columbia, South Carolina, Dec. 31st 1864

The last day of the year -- always a gloomy day -- doubly so today. Dark leaden clouds cover the sky, and ceaseless pattering rain that has been falling all day. The air is chill and damp, and the morning wind fills one with melancholy. A fit conclusion for such a year - 'tis meet old year that thou should'st weep for the misfortunes thou hast brought our country! And what hope is there to brighten the new year that is coming up? Alas, I cannot look forward to the new year - "My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past". Yes, the year that is dying has brought us more trouble than any of the other three long dreary years of this fearful struggle. Georgia has been desolated. The resistless flood has swept through that state, leaving but a desert to mark its track. And now our hateful foes hold Savannah. Noble old Charleston is at last to be given up. They are preparing to hurl destruction upon the State they hate most of all, and Sherman the brute avows his intention of converting South Carolina into a wilderness. Not one house, he says, shall be left standing, and his licentious troops - whites and negroes - shall be turned loose to ravage and violate. All that is between us and our miserable fate is a handful of raw militia assembled near Branchville. And yet they may say there is a Providence who fights for those who are struggling for freedom - who are defending their homes, and all that is held dear! Yet these vandals - these fiends incarnate, are allowed to overrun our land! Oh my country! Will I live to see thee subjugated and enslaved by these Yankees - surely every man and woman will die first. On every side they threaten - Lee's noble army alone stands firm. Foreign nations look on our sufferings and will not help us. Our men are being killed off - boys of sixteen are conscripted. Speculators and extortioners are starving us. But is this a time to talk of submission? Now when the Yankees have deepened and widened the breach by a thousand new atrocities? A sea rolls between them and us - a sea of blood. Smoking houses, outraged women, murdered fathers, brothers and husbands forbid such a union. Reunion! Great Heavens! How we hate them with the whole strength and depth of our souls!

I wonder if the new year is to bring us new miseries and sufferings. I am afraid so. We used to have bright anticipations of peace and happiness for the new year, but now I dare not look forward. Hope has fled, and in its place remains only a spirit of dogged sullen resistance.

¹ Historical Records Survey. (1938). *LeConte, Emma. Diary, 1864-1865*. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 16, from Documenting the American South, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/leconteemma/leconte.html>

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Reading #6

Excerpt from *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33d United States Colored Troops Late 1st S.C. Volunteers* by Susie King Taylor

About this time I had been reading so much about the “Yankees” I was very anxious to see them. The whites would tell their colored people not to go to the Yankees, for they would harness them to carts and make them pull the carts around, in place of horses. I asked grandmother, one day, if this was true. She replied, “Certainly not!” that the white people did not want slaves to go over to the Yankees, and told them these things to frighten them. “Don’t you see those signs pasted about the streets? On reading, ‘I am a rattlesnake; if you touch me, I will strike!’ Another reads, ‘I am a wild-cat! Beware,’ etc. These are warnings to the North; so don’t mind what the white people say.” I wanted to see these wonderful “Yankees” so much, as I heard my parents say the Yankee was going to set all the slaves free. Oh, how those people prayed for freedom! I remember, one night, my grandmother went out into the suburbs of the city to a church meeting, and they were fervently signing this old hymn, --

“Yes, we all shall be free,
Yes, we all shall be free,
Yes, we all shall be free,
When the Lord shall appear,”

--when the police came in and arrested all who were there, saying they were planning freedom, and sang, “the Lord,” in place of “Yankee,” to blind any one who might be listening.

Grandmother never forgot that night, although she did not stay in the guardhouse, as she sent to her guardian, who came at once for her; but this was the last meeting she ever attended out of the city proper.

On April 1, 1862, about the time the Union soldiers were firing on Fort Pulaski, I was sent out into the country to my mother. I remember what a roar and din the guns made. They jarred the earth for miles. The fort was at last taken by them. Two days after the taking of Fort Pulaski, my uncle took his family of seven and myself to St. Catherine Island. We landed under the protection of the Union fleet, and remained there two weeks, when about thirty of us were taken aboard the gunboat P--, to be transferred to St. Simons Island; and at last, to my unbounded joy, I saw the “Yankee.”

After we were all settled aboard and started on our journey, Captain Whitmore, commanding the boat, asked me where I was from. I told him Savannah, Ga. He asked if I could read; I said, “Yes!” “Can you write?” he next asked. “Yes, I can do that also,” I replied, and as if he had some doubts of my answers he handed me a book and a pencil and told me to write my name and where I was from. I did this; when he wanted to know if I could sew. On hearing I could, he

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asked me to hem some napkins for him. He was surprised at my accomplishments (for they were such in those days), for he said he did not know there were any negroes in the South able to read or write. He said, "You seem to be so different from the other colored people who came from the same place you did. "No!" I replied, "the only difference is, they were reared in the country and I in the city, as was a man from Darien, Ga., named Edward King." That seemed to satisfy him, and we had no further conversation that day on the subject.

In the afternoon the captain spied a boat in the distance, and as it drew nearer he noticed it had a white flag hoisted, but before it had reached the Putumoka he ordered all passengers between decks, so we could not be seen, for he thought they might be spied. The boat finally drew alongside of our boat, and had Mr. Edward Donegall on board, who wanted his two servants, Nick and Judith. He wanted these, as they were his own children. Our captain told him he knew nothing of them, which was true, for at the time they were on St. Simon's, and not, as their father supposed, on our boat. After the boat left, we were allowed to come up on deck again. ²

² Taylor, S.K. (1902). *Reminiscences of my life in camp with the 33d United States colored troops late 1st S.C. volunteers*. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 16, from Documenting the American South, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/taylorsu/taylorsu.html>

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Reading # 7

The last Confederate troops to surrender in the Civil War were Native American -- here's how they ended up fighting for the South

By Tom Porter

Even after Confederate commander Robert E. Lee surrendered in Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, one Confederate army refused to acknowledge defeat and for months stubbornly fought on.

It was led not by one of the wealthy white southerners who made up much of the Confederacy's officer class -- but by a Native American chief called Stand Watie.

So how did a leader of a people facing systematic persecution come to fight for a cause founded on racism and the right to own slaves?

The story illustrates how in the Civil War, the presence of a common enemy caused unexpected alliances to be formed, including an alliance Paul Chaat Smith, a curator at the National Museum of the Native American, has characterized as a "mangy, snarling dog standing between you and a crowd-pleasing narrative."

Watie was himself a plantation holder and slave owner, and had settled in Oklahoma after playing a central role in events that resulted in the eviction of thousands of Native Americans from their land in what is now Georgia.

He was born in 1806 in Cherokee country near what is now Rome, Georgia, and was given the Cherokee name Degataga, meaning "stand firm."

His father -- also a slave owner -- was baptized, giving his son the Christian name Isaac S Uwatie. Dropping the 'U' and combining it with his Cherokee name, his son took the name Stand Watie.

In 1835, Watie was on the of the Cherokee leaders to sign the treaty of New Echota handing over Cherokee ancestral territory to the federal government. In exchange they were granted land to resettle the nation west, in Indian Territory, in what is now Oklahoma.

Some refused to leave and were forcibly removed by the government. It is believed that nearly 4,000 Cherokee died attempting to make the journey to Indian Territory after 1838 in what has become known as the Trail of Tears.

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Four years after the treaty, the Cherokee turned against those who had signed away their land, assassinating three of them. Watie survived.

Cherokee chief of John Ross, who opposed the treaty, became an adamant enemy of Watie.

In 1861, Georgia seceded from the Union, becoming one of the original seven states that formed the slave-owning Confederacy.

That same year, Watie raised a force of Native Americans to fight for the Confederacy as North and South went to war.

It was the federal government, responsible for robbing Cherokee of their ancestral land, which Watie -- in common with many of his people -- saw as his main enemy, not the Confederacy.

And shockingly, many Cherokee were themselves slave owners, with some taking their slaves with them to Indian Territory after the forced resettlements west.

Smith has described the Cherokee as “deeply committed to slavery.”

He told the Smithsonian Magazine they “established their own racialized black codes, immediately reestablished slavery when they arrived in Indian territory, rebuilt their nations with slave labor, crushed slave rebellions, and enthusiastically sided with the Confederacy in the Civil War.”

Watie’s force earned a fearsome reputation, performing audacious raids behind enemy lines and attacking Native American settlements loyal to the Union.

Even as the majority of Cherokee repudiated the alliance with the Confederacy in 1862, Watie remained loyal. So successful was he as a military commander that in 1865 Watie was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, one of only two Native Americans to achieve the rank in the conflict.

It wasn’t until June 23, 1864 that Watie surrendered to Union forces in Doaksville, Oklahoma. In doing so, he became the last Confederate general to lay down his arms in the Civil War.

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His force at the time comprised Creek, Seminole, Cherokee, and Osage Indians.

Waties led a delegation of his Cherokee faction in Washington DC in 1866 to negotiate a new treaty with the US government. Their loyalty to the Confederacy meant the old treaties had been torn up.

The new treaty signed by Watie granted former slaves tribal citizenship.

After the war, Watie spent the rest of his life as a businessman and plantation owner, and collecting his people's folk tales and legends. He died in 1871. ³

³ Porter, T. (2019, June 23). *How Native Americans ended up fighting for the Confederacy*. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 16, from Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-native-americans-ended-up-fighting-for-the-confederacy-2019-6>

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Reading #8

Headquarters, Mil. Div. of the Miss.
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Nov. 18th, 1863

Dear Brother Nic:

Yours of the 30th Sept. was this evening received. I thank you very much for it, and I am more grateful to you inasmuch as I believe it is the first letter I have received from you since my entrance into the Army. By the heading of my letter you will perceive that I have not only changed my place in the Army, but my location in the geography of this heathen and God forsaken country. I am now Asst. Adj. Genl on Genl. Grant's Staff, who commands the Military Division of the Mississippi, a district comprising nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of the United States, and having within its limits $\frac{1}{2}$, if not more of the Armies or troops of the Federal Union.

The flower and bulk of the Southern Army is here within speaking distance in our front. A few miles from here, was fought a short time ago, the battle between Rosecrans & Bragg. Before this letter reaches you, another battle will be fought between Grant and Bragg. To my mind the issue or result is not doubtful. Unless Bragg wins, he will be one of the worst whipped men in the south. And upon the other hand, should he get any advantage of us, we will be in a bad plight.

Now Nic, you in the North, who are out of the reach of the noise, excitements, and hardships incident to an Army life, cannot begin to realize what war is. As I have said, here lies two great armies within sight of each other. Their whole study and object is to destroy one another. They watch each other with an eagle eye. Daily we hear the rattle of musketry as the scouting parties meet each other. And no hour of the day passes that the heavy boom of the cannon is not heard, and the screaming of the shell as it flies through the air, and its final thundering explosion as it bursts, scattering its death missiles in every direction.

Now this is a common and every day matter and no more attention is paid to it by anybody that the popping of a frozen tree in mid winter in the north. You think that my fears have been excited from what I have seen and experienced. You never was more mistaken in your life. I would go into a regular battle as calmly as I would go to my meal when hungry, but I do not like to be shot at by unseen foes from behind trees, stumps and logs, as I was on the Mississippi, and with no chance to pay the enemy back. And again, a prudent man, engaged in the business I am now, knows full well that when he goes into battle, he may be going to his doom of death, and if he has an earthly matter to settle, to do so before he goes into such imminent danger.

Now Nic, you may imagine that because I did this, I was becoming frightened. I ordered, when expecting to go to Little Rock, Arkansas, that should I fall in battle, that all the property I owned in the north, should be equally divided between Carrie, Father, and you. This Nic, will be my will in case I am killed during the war. Now in doing this, I do not evince fear, but prudence.

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I fear no rebel bullet, shot or shell in a fair fight and to tell you my honest conviction, I do not believe I am to be killed in the war. I propose by-and-by to come home and settle down once more on my farm, and go to work as all honest men do. Instead of thinking of me as a dead man, I want you to lay up in your mind the conviction that I am coming home again to gladden by my presence the hearth of such relations and friends as think well of me.

My official experience in the Army as an Adj. is checkered, or as some would say, singular. When I received my appt., the Sec'y. of War ordered me to appoint to Genl. John E. Smith; he was delighted to receive me, and made it very pleasant for me. I was getting along swimmingly when orders came for me to report to Maj. Genl. Grant, and he put me upon duty to his Staff. When we reached here, the General's staff had but little to do. I had but little to do, and a Genl. Wm. F. Smith came and wanted to borrow me, and Genl. Grant consulted to lend me. Genl. Wm. F. Smith commands the Engineer Dept. of the Army, and knowing me to be an engineer, he would have me. Now he wants me to leave Grant and stay with him, but I shall not do it, though I shall do the work of the Engineer Troops so long as Genl. Grant wants me. So you see I am making myself useful rendering my services desirable to the best generals in the Army. I am very much flattered and pleased by the kind attentions of all Army men with whom I have been brought in contact officially. As for the common soldier, he does his duty and pays respect to my shoulder straps.

Now respecting home matters, I am glad to know what you have done, and that everything is properly attended to. I want the family, that is, father and Carrie, duly and liberally cared for. They should not want for anything. The farm is large enough to yield a good living, and it should do so. When I left for the Army, I left no money at home, because I had none to leave. I had to borrow \$500.00 to fit myself and get to my post. This I must pay from my salary as a soldier, and until it is paid, they at home can expect no help from me, and even not then, for a mortgage which is against me of another \$500.00 must be provided for, and other debts amounting to \$400.00 more. So you see by my statement that I am really a poor man.

For over six weeks I have been a sick man. In that time, I have lost 30 pounds in weight. I am now gaining, but very slowly. Our feed is, beef, bread, and coffee, three times a day. Sleep, almost anywhere. Write me again when your time permits. Watch the papers for news from here. A great commotion is about to take place again among these hills. My regards to the Mrs. & children and to Mr. & Mrs. Wright.

From your alive Brother,
Ely S. Parker ⁴

⁴ Parker, E. (1863, Nov. 18). *Headquarters, mil. div. of the Miss. Chattanooga, Tenn.* Retrieved 2019, Dec. 16, from PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/content/timeline/opendoor/civilwarDiaries.html>

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Reading #9

“Remembering the Immigrants who Fought in the US Civil War”

By Lisa Mullins

September 17, 2012

A ceremony was held Monday in a small town in western Maryland to remember the bloodiest day in American history. One-hundred and fifty years ago, on September 17th 1862, a Union army led by General George B. McClellan attacked Robert E. Lee’s Confederate forces along Antietam Creek, near Sharpsburg, Maryland. The Union didn’t win outright, but rebel forces were forced to retreat the next day. The human cost, to both sides was immense. Twenty-three thousand men were killed, wounded or went missing that day. Never before, or since, have so many Americans fallen in battle in a single day. The “victory” allowed President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation a few days later, freeing the slaves in the rebel states. Those are the well-known facts about the Battle of Antietam. One of the not-so-well-known facts is how many of those who fought that day were foreign-born. The attack on one key rebel position, a sunken road, was led by the Irish Brigade, immigrants recruited by the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Elsewhere, the 79th New York Regiment was distinguished: they were Scottish Highlanders, complete with bagpipes. Germans formed a huge proportion of the Union troops. An entire Corps of several divisions was formed of German volunteers, and every order from the general down to the lowest corporal was given in German. Complaints about such bilingualism in the military were overruled by Lincoln. Major Leopold Blumenberg, a Jewish immigrant from East Prussia, led the all-German 5th Maryland Regiment against a position held by the 12th Alabama, led by another German Jew, Captain Adolph Proskauer. Overall, immigrants made up 25 percent of the Union army in the Civil War: that’s a far greater proportion than immigrants made in the general population. According to Patrick Young, a history blogger and immigration advocate, many joined because of their opposition to slavery. Others, Young says, were always writing about how the United States was the only hope in the world for freedom and democracy - what they called republicanism. “Princes and Kings would rejoice,” Young quotes foreign born soldiers as saying, “if the United States were split apart.” Young says the war also transformed the place of immigrants in the minds of many native-born Americans, at least in the north. ⁵

⁵ Mullins, L. (2012, Sep. 17). *Remembering the immigrants who fought in the US Civil War*. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 19, from PRI, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-09-17/remembering-immigrants-who-fought-us-civil-war>

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Reading #10

“Women Soldiers of the Civil War”

By DeAnne Blanton

It is an accepted convention that the Civil War was a man’s fight. Images of women during that conflict center on self-sacrificing nurses, romantic spies, or brave ladies maintaining the home front in the absence of their men. The men, of course, marched off to war, lived in germ-ridden camps, engaged in heinous battle, languished in appalling prison camps, and died horribly, yet heroically. This conventional picture of gender roles during the Civil War does not tell the entire story. Men were not the only ones to fight that war. Women bore arms and charged into battle, too. Like the men, there were women who lived in camp, suffered in prisons, and died for their respective causes.

Both the Union and Confederate armies forbade the enlistment of women. Women soldiers of the Civil War therefore assumed masculine names, disguised themselves as men, and hid the fact they were female. Because they passed as men, it is impossible to know with any certainty how many women soldiers served in the Civil War. Estimated place as many as 250 women in the ranks of the Confederate army. Writing in 1888, Mary Livermore of the U.S. Sanitary Commission remembered that:

Some one has stated the number of women soldiers known to the service as little less than four hundred. I cannot vouch for the correctness of this estimate, but I am convinced that a larger number of women disguised themselves and enlisted in the service, for one cause or other, than was dreamed of. Entrenched in secrecy, and regarded as men, they were sometimes revealed as women, by accident or casualty.

Some startling histories of these military women were current in the gossip of army life. Livermore and the soldiers in the Union army were not the only ones who knew of soldier-women. Ordinary citizens heard of them, too. Mary Owens, discovered to be a woman after she was wounded in the arm, returned to her Pennsylvania home to a warm reception and press coverage. She had served for eighteen months under the alias John Evans.

In the post-Civil War era, the topic of women soldiers continued to arise in both literature and the press. Frank Moore’s *Women of the War*, published in 1866, devoted an entire chapter to the military heroines of the North. A year later, L.P. Brockett and Mary Vaughan mentioned ladies “who from whatever cause... donned the male attire and concealed their sex... [who] did not seek to be known as women, but preferred to pass for men.” Loreta Velazquez published her memoirs in 1876. She served the Confederacy as Lt. Harry Buford, a self-financed soldier not officially attached to any regiment.

The existence of soldier-women was no secret during or after the Civil War. The reading public, at least, was well aware that these women rejected Victorian social constraints confining them to the domestic sphere. Their motives were open to speculation, perhaps, but not their actions, as numerous newspaper stories and obituaries of women soldiers testified.

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Most of the articles provided few specific details about the individual woman's army career. For example, the obituary of Satronia Smith Hunt merely stated she enlisted in an Iowa regiment with her first husband. He died of battle wounds, but she apparently emerged from the war unscathed. An 1896 story about Mary Steven Jenkins, who died in 1881, tells an equally brief tale. She enlisted in a Pennsylvania regiment when still a schoolgirl, remained in the army two years, received several wounds, and was discharged without anyone ever realizing she was female. The press seemed unconcerned about the women's actual military exploits. Rather, the fascination lay in the simple fact that they had been in the army.

The army itself, however, held no regard for women soldiers, Union or Confederate. Indeed, despite recorded evidence to the contrary, the U.S. Army tried to deny that women played a military role, however small, in the Civil War. On October 21, 1909, Ida Tarbell of *The American Magazine* wrote to Gen. F.C. Ainsworth, the adjutant general: "I am anxious to know whether your department has any record of the number of women who enlisted and served in the Civil War, or has it any record of any women who were in the service?" She received swift reply from the Records and Pension Office, a division of the Adjutant General's Office (AGO), under Ainsworth's signature. The response read in part:

I have the honor to inform you that no official record has been found in the War Department showing specifically that any woman was ever enlisted in the military service of the United States as a member of any organization of the Regular or Volunteer Army at any time during the period of the civil war. It is possible, however, that there may have been a few instances of women having served as soldiers for a short time without their sex having been detected, but no record of such cases is known to exist in the official files.

This response to Ms. Tarbell's request is untrue. One of the duties of the AGO was maintenance of the U.S. Army's archives, and the AGO took good care of the extant records created during that conflict. By 1909 the AGO had also created compiled military service records (CMSR) for the participants of the Civil War, both Union and Confederate, through painstaking copying of names and remarks from official federal documents and captured Confederate records. Two such CMSRs prove the point that the army did have documentation of the service of women soldiers.⁶

⁶ Blanton, D. (2017, Dec. 7). *Women soldiers of the Civil War*. National Archives. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 19, from <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/spring/women-in-the-civil-war-1.html>

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Reading #11

My Experience in the Civil War

By Jacob Stroyer

My knowledge of the Civil War extends from the time when the first gun was fired on Fort Sumter in April 1861 to the close of the War.

While the slaves were not pressed into the Confederate service as soldiers, yet they were used in all the slave-holding states at war points, not only to build fortifications but also to work on vessels used in the war.

The slaves were gathered in each state, anywhere from 6,000 to 8,000 or more, from different plantations, carried to some center and sent to various war points in the state.

It would be impossible to describe the intense excitement which prevailed among the Confederates in their united efforts to raise troops to meet the Union forces. They were loud in their expressions of the certainty of victory.

Many of the poor white men were encouraged by the promise of from three to five negroes to each man who would serve in the Confederate service, when the Confederate government should have gained the victory.

On the other hand, the negroes were threatened with an increase of the galling yoke of slavery. These threats were made with significant expressions, and the strongest assumption that the negro was the direct cause of the war. [...]

Fort Sumter had been so badly damaged by the Union forces in 1863 that unless something had been done upon the top, the continued bombardment which it suffered up to the close of the war would have rendered it uninhabitable.

The fort was being fired upon every five minutes with mortar and parrot shells by the Yankees from Morris Island.

The principal work of the negroes was to secure the top and other parts against the damage from the Union guns.

Large timbers were put on the rampart of the fort, and boards laid on them, then baskets, without bottoms, about two feet wide and four feet high, were put close together on the rampart and filled with sand by the negroes.

The work could only be done at night, because, besides the bombardment from Fort Wagner, which was about a mile or little less from us, there were also sharp-shooters there who picked men off whenever they showed their heads on the rampart.

The mortar and parrot shells rained alternately upon Fort Sumter every five minutes, day and night, but the sharp-shooters could only fire by day-light.

The negroes were principally exposed to the bombardment. The only time the few Confederate soldiers were exposed to danger was while they were putting the Cheval De Frise on the parapet at night.

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The “Cheval De Frise” is a piece of timber with wooden spikes pointed with iron, and used for defense on fortifications.

In the late war between the Spaniards and the Americans, the former used barbed wire for the same purpose.

If my readers could have been in Fort Sumter in the summer of 1864 they would have heard the sentinel cry, every five minutes, “Look out! Mortar!” Then they would have seen the negroes running about in the fort yard in a confused state, seeking places of safety from the missile sure to bring death to one or more of them. Another five minutes, and again the cry of the sentinel, “Look out,” means a parrot shell, which is far more deadly than is the mortar because it comes so quickly that one has no chance to seek a place of safety.

The next moment the survivors of us, expecting that it would be our turn next, would be picking up, here and there, parts of the severed bodies of our fellow negroes; many of those bodies so mutilated as not to be recognizable.⁷

⁷ Stroyer, J. (1898) *My experience in the Civil War*. National Humanities Center. Retrieved 2019, Dec. 19, from <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/emancipation/text6/stroyercivilwar.pdf>.