

CIVIL WAR PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Reading #1

Account of George Kye
110 years old
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 Arkansa 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!"

Kye, G. (1936–1938). *Slave Narratives: A folk history of slavery in the United States from interviews with former slaves*, 13, 172–175. Federal Writers' Project. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.130/?st=gallery>

Reading #2

Excerpt from “Black Confederates: 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.

Smith, S. (2015, February 10). *Black Americans: Truth and legend*. American Battlefield Trust.
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/black-confederates>



Reading #3

“The Civil War Was Won by Immigrant Soldiers”

Summary based on the article by Don H. Doyle

In 1861, while America was engaged in the Civil War, an American diplomat visited Italy. He was surprised to meet many Italians who wanted to fight in the war. These people wanted to fight for a united America.

These people were not alone. Many immigrants in America wanted to fight in the Civil War. In 1860, 13% of the American population were immigrants. Immigrants made up 25% of the Union army.

Immigrant soldiers were very important in helping America with the war. However, they are often forgotten in the history of the Civil War.

The Confederacy criticized the Union for having immigrants fight. This embarrassed some Northerners, who said the Confederacy was exaggerating the number of enlisted immigrants. Some said that immigrants were only fighting because they were being paid. They said the immigrants didn't care about the Union's cause.

These claims were not true. Immigrants had enlisted above their quota. They volunteered, fought, and sacrificed a lot for the North.

Accounts from these immigrants can be hard to find. Because soldiers were from all over the world, some of their accounts are in different languages. This makes it hard to understand their perspectives.

Why did immigrants fight for a foreign cause? One immigrant mother was asked why her son enlisted to fight in the Civil War.

“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.”

Many Germans had lost the fight for freedom in the Revolution of 1848. After the revolution, they moved to America. They saw the Civil War as a battle between freedom and slavery. They wanted to fight for freedom, and they wanted to win.

Many foreign soldiers viewed the Civil War this way. That was why they chose to fight. They believed the Civil War was not just about an American cause. It was also about a global cause.

Doyle, D. H. (2015, June 29). *The Civil War was won by immigrant soldiers*. Time.



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.

Douglass, L. (1863). "I hope to fall with my face to the foe": Lewis Douglass describes the Battle of Fort Wagner, 1863. In C. Woodson (Ed.), *The Mind of the Negro*.

Reading #5

Journal of Emma Florence LeConte

17 years old

December 31, 1864

A detailed eyewitness account of the burning of Columbia

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.

LeConte, E. (1864). *Diary, 1864–1865*. Documenting the American South. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/leconteemma/leconte.html>



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 use 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 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.

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



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”

Summary based on the article by Tom Porter

After Confederate commander Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, one army refused to give up the fight. This army, led by Native American chief Stand Watie, continued to fight bravely.

Why were Native Americans fighting for the South? How did a persecuted group of people choose to fight for the cause of slavery?

Stand Watie lived on a large plantation in Oklahoma. He owned several slaves. He moved to Oklahoma after several Native Americans were removed from their land in Georgia.

Stand Watie was born in Georgia. His Cherokee name was Degataga, which means “stand firm.” His father was baptized and gave Watie the Christian name Isaac S. Uwatie. Watie later combined his Cherokee and Christian names to be Stand Watie.

In 1835, Watie was one of the chiefs that signed Cherokee territory over to the federal government. In exchange, they were given land in Indian Territory, which is now Oklahoma.

Some Cherokee refused to leave their territory. The federal government forced them to leave. This journey to Indian Territory was known as the Trail of Tears. It is believed that 4,000 Cherokee died during the journey.

The Cherokee turned against those who signed the treaty. Three of the signers were later assassinated. Watie survived. Cherokee chief John Ross opposed the treaty. He and Watie became enemies.

In 1861, Georgia left the Union. The state became one of the original seven states of the Confederacy. That year, Watie raised an army of Native Americans to fight for the Confederacy. Watie and his people saw the federal government as his enemy because they took Cherokee land. Watie joined the Confederacy to fight that government.

Many Cherokees were also slave owners. Many took their slaves with them to Indian Territory.

Watie and his army gained a reputation for fierce fighting. Even when the Cherokee gave up their alliance with the Confederacy in 1862, Watie and his followers still fought for them. In 1865, Watie was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. He was one of only two Native Americans who earned that rank in the Civil War.

In 1864, Watie surrendered to Union forces in Oklahoma. He was the last Confederate general to surrender in the war. Among those who surrendered with him were Native Americans from the Creek, Seminole, Cherokee, and Osage tribes.

Watie led a group of Native Americans to negotiate a treaty with the federal government in 1866. The treaty he signed gave former slaves tribal citizenship. Watie spent the rest of his life as a businessman. He spent time collecting the legends and folk tales of his people. He died in 1871.

Porter, T. (2019, June 23). The last Confederate troops to surrender in the Civil War were Native American—Here’s how they ended up fighting for the South. *Business Insider*.



Reading #8

Letter from Ely Parker
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. Adjt. 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 any body 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. 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 Adjt. 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

Parker, E. (1863). *Civil War letters*. PBS.

Reading #9

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

Summary based on the article by Lisa Mullins

The bloodiest day in American history took place in Sharpsburg, Maryland on September 17, 1862. The Union forces of General George B. McClellan clashed with the Confederate forces of Robert E. Lee at Antietam Creek. The conflict became known as the Battle of Antietam.

The Union succeeded in forcing the Confederate soldiers to retreat. However, both sides experienced losses. 23,000 men were killed at this battle alone. This number set the record for the most American lives lost in a single day.

Union success in this battle led to Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.

Many of the lives lost in the battle were those of foreign-born Americans. The Irish Brigade led attacks on rebel positions. The 79th New York Regiment was made up of Scottish Highlanders. Many units were made up entirely of German soldiers. The orders of these units were even given in German.

Immigrants made up 25 percent of the Union army in the Civil War. Many joined due to their opposition of slavery. Others joined because they saw the Union cause as one of freedom and democracy.

The conflict transformed how immigrants were viewed in America.

Mullins, L. (2013, August 15). *Remembering the immigrants who fought in the US Civil War*. The World.



Reading #10

“Women Soldiers of the Civil War” Summary based on the article by DeAnne Blanton

The roles of men and women in the Civil War are often viewed very differently. People usually imagine men as the ones who went to battle, suffered in prison camps, and died tragically. People imagine women as the ones who stayed at home, served as nurses, or took over men’s jobs. However, many women also fought on the battlefields of the Civil War.

Neither the Union nor the Confederate army allowed women to fight. Women who wanted to enlist had to disguise themselves and use a man’s name. Despite this barrier, they still wanted to fight.

It is difficult to determine how many women fought in the war, because many used fake identities. However, historians estimate that about 250 women fought on the side of the Confederacy.

In 1888, Mary Livermore, a member of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, wrote:

Someone 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.

Even people outside of the war effort knew about the women soldiers. Mary Owens was a soldier who was wounded and returned home. She had served under the name of John Evans for 18 months. Upon her return, she was praised. People knew about these women that defied social norms. However, they didn’t understand why these women wanted to join the war.

The accomplishments of these women are not well known. Rather than focus on their achievements, stories about these women simply state that they served in the war.

The Union and Confederate armies did not recognize the service of these women. The U.S. Army even attempted to deny that women were soldiers in the war. A writer from *The American Magazine* named Ida Tarbell tried to write about these women. In 1909, she wrote to the Adjutant General’s Office. She asked if there were any records of women who served in the Civil War. The office wrote back the following response:

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 isn’t true. The Adjutant General’s Office had records of everyone who served in the Civil War. They had the names of both Union and Confederate soldiers. Among these names were those of the women who had fought bravely on both sides.

Blanton, D. (2019). Women soldiers of the Civil War. *Prologue Magazine*, 25(1),
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/spring/women-in-the-civil-war-1.html>



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.

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.

Stroyer, J. (1898). My experience in the Civil War. *My Life in the South*.

