

assume 30,000 of the estimated 118,000 enlistees were black men). It would also provide a point of entry into naval records for the Civil War Soldiers' and Sailors' that will eventually include information about every person who fought in the Civil War.

This process of identification has proven remarkably challenging. Unlike the Union Army, which created a Bureau of Colored Troops to administer affairs concerning the approximately 179,000 soldiers who served in the racially segregated black regiments, the Navy neither segregated African-American sailors nor created a separate administrative bureau. Personnel records indicating such physical characteristics as color of hair, eyes, and skin offer a point of entry. Although such terms as "Negro," "Colored," and "Mulatto" seem straightforward, other descriptions are far more ambiguous. Men who were professional mariners frequently were described as "black" complected regardless of their ethnicity or nativity. By the same token, light-skinned African Americans at times appear in the records as "dark."

However subjective, these physical descriptions are the necessary starting point for investigating the African-American naval experience in the Civil War.

In an attempt to overcome the biases in the sources, the research team (consisting of advance students in the graduate history program at Howard University led by the author) undertook to enter into a computerized database the name and

all descriptive information of every man whose physical description connoted African ancestry. Researchers examined surviving enlistment records—the weekly returns of enlistments at recruitment depots—as well as the surviving quarterly muster rolls of the 600-plus vessels in the Union fleet. At present, the database contains some 100,000 individual records representing approximately 19,000 men.

The database, like the personnel records from which it was constructed, holds great interest to historians of the Civil War and of the U.S. Navy as well as to genealogists and descendants. Preliminary analysis of the data reveals a number of fascinating trends, as the demographic profile of the men illustrates. Most enlistees were young men, particularly in their twenties. A majority was born in the southern United States, and of that group perhaps four-fifths escaped from slavery prior to enlisting. African-American enlistees from the free states of the North came from far and wide, although the majority hailed from the seaboard states of the north-Atlantic coast. A good number had had prior seafaring experience—for perhaps 10% this included a stint in the U.S. Navy prior to the war. Men of African ancestry from offshore points also served in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. Although most of these men came from the West Indies, others came from Africa and Europe and from the islands of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. Once enlisted, the men

African-American History in the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors (CWSS) Partnership

On September 10, NPS Director Roger Kennedy held a press conference to announce that NPS had completed the first phase of the CWSS Names Index project by putting over 235,000 African-American Civil War soldiers' names on the Internet. The Internet site <<http://www.nps.itd.gov/cwss>> includes regimental histories of 180 African-American Union regiments, with hyperlinks between soldiers' names, regiments they served in, and the battles the regiments fought in.



On September 12, at an event with General Colin Powell as the featured speaker, former NPS Field Area Director Robert Stanton presented a computer file of these name records to D.C. Councilmember Frank Smith for use on the African-American Civil War Memorial, which, when completed, will be in the National Park System as part of the National Capital Field Area.

For more information, contact the NPS Project Manager, John Peterson, at 202-343-4415 or NPS cc:Mail or John Peterson@nps.gov

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