United States Colored Troops 39th Infantry Regiment
Muster Rolls, 1864 August-October: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1626
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 3.1 linear feet
1 box
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists of a complete set of muster rolls for the 39th Infantry Regiment of United States Colored Troops for the period of August 31st to October 31st, 1864, documenting African American soldiers who fought in the American Civil War in Virginia under the command of Colonel Ozora Pierson Stearns.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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The 39th Infantry Regiment of United States Colored Troops was organized during March 1864 in Baltimore, Maryland. The regiment was composed of African American enlisted men commanded by white officers, including Colonel Ozora Pierson Stearns. Shortly after its formation, the regiment moved into action, campaigning from the Rapidan River to the James River in May and June of 1864, followed by a lengthy involvement in the sieges of Petersburg and Richmond, during which time they fought in the Battle of the Crater and other major Union initiatives. In December 1864 and January 1865, the regiment participated in both expeditions against Fort Fisher in North Carolina, including the assault and capture of the fort on January 15th, 1865. The remainder of their tenure was spent engaged in various actions in North Carolina until they mustered out of service in December 1865.

Description

Consists of a complete set of muster rolls for the 39th Infantry Regiment of United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T) for the period spanning from August 31st to October 31st, 1864, which document African American soldiers who fought for the United States Army during the American Civil War. The rolls were taken by Colonel Ozora Pierson Stearns (1831-1896) at the regiment's encampment at Poplar Springs Church, near Petersburg, Virginia, and provide an account of the ten companies (A through K) under his command. An eleventh form registers the field and staff of the unit. The forms are thoroughly filled in, with all the names of enlisted men and officers, as well as the dates and places from which they joined the regiment. Most came from Baltimore and surrounding Maryland counties, but many also were from New York (including both New York City and elsewhere in the state), Delaware, Connecticut, and several other northeastern states. The rolls provide many details about men who were absent from the muster because of illness or other assigned duties. They also list losses from desertion and death. Most of the deaths recorded are noted as the result of disease rather than from battle or wounds received therein. Among those listed is Sergeant Decatur Dorsey (1836-1891) of Company B; Dorsey was an African American officer who received the Medal of Honor for his actions at the Battle of the Crater and settled in Hoboken, New Jersey, after the war.

Arrangement

Arranged by company.

Access and Use

Access

Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

Appraisal
No materials were removed from the collection during 2019 processing.

Processing and Other Information

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2019-05-01T16:40-0400

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Dorsey, Decatur, 1836-1891
- Stearns, Ozora Pierson, 1831-1896
- United States. Army. Colored Infantry Regiment, 39th (1864-1865)
- African American soldiers -- Virginia -- 19th century.
- African Americans -- History -- 19th century.
- Petersburg (Va.) -- History -- Siege, 1864-1865.
- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, African American.
- American history/Civil War and Reconstruction
- Black history
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<tr>
<td>Muster Roll of Captain Samuel Wilson (Company A), 1864 August 31-October 31</td>
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<td>Muster Roll of Captain Thomas H. McBride (Company B), 1864 August 31-October 31</td>
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<td>Muster Roll of Captain Edward M. Fuller (Company C), 1864 August 31-October 31</td>
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<td>Muster Roll of Captain Albert F. Dodge (Company F), 1864 August 31-October 31</td>
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<td>Muster Roll of Captain David M. Gilman (Company K), 1864 August 31-October 31</td>
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