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## Guide to the 1st South Carolina / 33 Rd U.S. Colored Troops Records

Processed by Special Collections staff; latest revision, D. Tambo and E. Fields

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## Guide to the 1st South Carolina / 33 Rd U.S. Colored Troops Records, ca. 1847-1923, 1983

### Collection number: Wyles Mss 30

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#### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** 1st South Carolina / 33 Rd U.S. Colored Troops Records,

**Date (inclusive):** ca. 1847-1923, 1983

**Date (bulk):** (bulk 1850s-1860s)

**Collection Number:** Wyles Mss 30

**Creator:** United States. Army. Colored Infantry Regiment, 33rd (1864-1866)

**Extent:** 1 linear foot (1 document box and 4 map folders)

**Repository:** University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Department of Special Collections

Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010

**Physical Location:** Vault and Wyles Map Cabinet

**Language:** English.

#### Access Restrictions

None.

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#### Preferred Citation

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#### Acquisition Information

Purchase, 1966, and ca. 1983-1984.

#### History

Unit History of the 1st. SC Volunteer Infantry/33rd U. S. Colored Troops

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The First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry was first organized in the Department of the South by General David Hunter at Hilton Head, South Carolina, in May of 1862. This first effort to form a black regiment met with failure, initially due to two significant causes: first, Hunter had not received authorization from the War Department in Washington allowing the formation of Black Units, and Second, the recruits were involuntarily inducted into the regiment in a manner reminiscent of their days as slaves. As a result, the Regiment was ordered disbanded. Later, the First South Carolina was reorganized under General Rufus B. Saxon. Attempts to recruit troops from Hilton Head's African-American population were difficult at first due to the memory of the failed "Hunter Experiment." These obstacles were overcome and the first company was formed under the command of Captain C.T. Trowbridge.

On November 10, 1862, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson assumed command of the 1st S.C. It was under Higginson's command that the 1st reached full strength and was drilled in fighting order. Higginson led the regiment on an expedition up the St. Mary's River along the Georgia-Florida state line. This expedition lasted from 23 January to 1 February 1863. One of the most significant actions the 1st participated in was the occupation of Jacksonville, Florida. In March of 1863, a squadron of five steamboats made their way up the St. Johns River with the 1st S.C. and 2nd S.C. Volunteer Infantry on board. On March 10, the forces occupied Jacksonville with no resistance.

On February 8, 1864, the regiment was redesignated the 33rd United States Colored Troops. Combined with two other regiments (one white and one black), the 33rd made their first assault on a fortification at Battery Gregg on James Island, in Charleston. The combined forces began their attack on July 2nd, 1864 and captured the fort that day. In December 1864, the 33rd participated with the 55th Massachusetts at the Battle of Honey Hill, a costly defeat for federal forces. In the final year of their service, the 1st S.C. was part of the union garrison of Savannah and Charleston. They mustered out of service on February 9, 1866 at Fort Wagner, above the graves of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the men of the 54th Massachusetts.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson

Thomas Wentworth Higginson was born in Cambridge, MA, on December 23, 1823, the youngest child in a large and fairly prominent family. He graduated from Harvard, second in his class, in 1841.

He became interested in the Transcendentalism and reform movements, especially abolitionism, that were prominent in New England in the 1830s. Higginson thought that he would like to be a minister in order to address these issues. In 1843, he started taking graduate courses at Harvard Divinity and finished in 1847.

Higginson spent three years lecturing in different cities. In 1852, he became pastor of the Free Church in Worcester. He became friends with Abby and Stephen Foster, whose farm was a stop of the Underground Railroad, and Lucy Stone, a women's rights activist. He was a founder of the city's Natural History Society and the Worcester Public Library. Higginson began his literary career in Worcester, and he considered his time in Worcester (1852-1863) crucial to his development as a writer. He edited *Thalatta*, an anthology of poetry, and an essay entitled "Saints and Their Bodies," which discussed the importance of exercise in order to stay healthy. The essay appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*; he published many more articles in the magazine.

In 1853, Higginson escorted Stone and Abby Foster to the World's Temperance Convention in New York. When Higginson nominated Susan B. Anthony and then Stone to serve on the committee on credentials, a debate erupted: some of the men present did not feel that women should serve on the committee. Higginson said that if women were barred from participating in the World's Temperance Convention, then it would only be a Half World's Convention. He left and invited people to attend a Whole World's Convention he would hold at the same time. He quickly built himself a national reputation.

On May 26, 1854, Higginson participated in an attack on the Boston Courthouse in order to free a slave, Anthony Burns. A police officer was killed in the attack and Burns was returned to slavery. Higginson was indicted, with many other people, for being involved in the riot, but charges against him were later dropped. He continued abolitionist activities, including participation in assisting Free Soil settlers in Kansas, and supporting John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. In 1862, he was chosen to lead the First South Carolina Colored Volunteers, the first regiment of former slaves organized by the Union Army in the Civil War. He served two years before being wounded and discharged in 1864. He continued his writing in Newport. Emily Dickinson sent four poems to Higginson after reading an essay he wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which was meant to encourage aspiring writers. Higginson and Dickinson corresponded until her death in 1886. In 1890, the Dickinson family asked Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd to edit Dickinson's poems. *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, which combines military history and personal experience, was published in 1870. Higginson hoped to correct what he viewed as Northern misconceptions about freed slaves by sharing his stories of their performance as soldiers.

When his wife died in 1877, he returned to Cambridge and remarried, Mary Thacher of Newton, MA in 1879. Their daughter, Margaret, was born in 1880. During the 1880s Higginson served in the state legislature. He fought for civil service reform and encouraged religious and cultural pluralism and tolerance.

Despite his old age, Higginson and his family traveled through Europe in 1901. Higginson and Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) met in 1905 through the Dublin Society and became good friends. He continued to write until his death on May 9, 1911. Decades after his death he was known mainly for editing Emily Dickinson's poems. In the 1960s, when reform movements attracted more attention in that turbulent decade again, his works were given more serious study.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

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The collection contains various materials relating for the most part to the history and organization of the 1st. SC Volunteer Infantry, later designated the 33rd U. S. Colored Troops. A significant portion of the material is related to Thomas Wentworth Higginson who served as the unit's commander between 1862 and 1864. There are both original primary source materials in the form of documents, correspondence (including items from William Lloyd Garrison and Horace Greeley) and secondary source materials, mostly photocopies, including such things as regimental histories.

#### **Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

United States. Army. Colored Infantry Regiment, 33rd (1864-1866)

#### **Bibliography**

Some related printed sources include:

Armitage, Jeffrey Sturges, - *The Thomas Wentworth Higginson Papers: Documenting the Transformation from Slave to Union Army Soldier 1862 to 1865*, Thesis, (A.L.M., Government), Harvard University, (1991).

Berlin, Ira (ed.) - *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867. Series II: The Black Military Experience* (1982). Includes multiple references to Halpine, Higginson, and Hunter.

Blight, David W., *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory & the American Civil War*, (2002).

Brown, William Wells - *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867).

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Fleetwood, Christian A. - *The Negro as Soldier* (1895).

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth - *Army Life in a Black Regiment and Other Writings* (1896).

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth - *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters* (2000).

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth - *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (2000).

McPherson, James M. - *Marching Toward Freedom: The Negro in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (1967).

Meyer, Howard N. - *Colonel of the Black Regiment: The Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (1967).

Murphy, Francis J, *Thomas Wentworth Higginson As Lecturer: A Case Study of Public Lecturing on Science and Other Subjects During the Nineteenth Century*, (1995).

Pearson, Elizabeth Ware (ed.) - *Letters from Port Royal Written at the Time of the Civil War* (1906). Includes numerous references to Higginson and Hunter.

Quarles, Benjamin - *The Negro in the Civil War* (1953).

Smith, John David, (ed.), *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, (2002).

*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1880-1891).

Wesley, Charles H., and Patricia W. Romero - *Negro Americans in the Civil War: From Slavery to Citizenship* (1970)

Other Sources of Information:

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Archives and Special Collections:

<http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Library/Archives/Worcester%20Authors/higginson/higginson.html>

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Box 1: 1 - 9	<b>Original Materials</b>
Box 1: 1	<b>Confederate Currency, 4 items; all issued Richmond, Va</b>
Box 1: 2 - 5	<b>Correspondence</b>
Box 1: 2	<b>General - various officers, including: Col. W.W.H. Davis, Gen. Hunter and others, 1863-1865, 1868, n.d.</b>
Box 1: 3	<b>Garrison, William Lloyd - 1 note (ANS), with quotes by Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison, possibly signed by them, [May 1852]</b>
Box 1: 4	<b>Greeley, Horace - 1 letter (ALS), describing his plan to attend a convention, June 21, 1854</b>
Box 1: 5	<b>Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 1847, 1870-1910</b>
Box 1: 6	<b>Diary of Ann Baxter (later married C. J. Brown of Epsom, N.H.) - 1864</b>
Box 1: 7	<b>Documents - includes: travel, discharge, and equipment-related documents., issued by</b>
Box 1: 8	<b>Photographs - cartes de visite and other, of officers including Higginson, Hunter, and Saxton</b>
Box 1: 9	<b>Miscellany - postcard, 1905</b>
Box 1: 10 - 20	<b>Reference Materials [mainly photocopies]</b>

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Box 1: 10	<b>Correspondence - including several letters from Gen. Hunter to President Lincoln and Gen. Grant, 1861-1865</b>
Box 1: 11	<b>Documents - Mustering Out Rolls (originals in oversize), 1864-1866</b>
Box 1: 12	<b>Histories (of various regiments and relating to participation of Colored/Negro Troops in Civil War); all photocopies with reference to units organized, 1861-1864</b>
Box 1: 13 - 16	<b>Officers (biographies, histories, photos, writings)</b>
Box 1: 13	<b>Halpine, Charles G., 1862</b>
Box 1: 14	<b>Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 1854, 1863, 1923</b>
Box 1: 15	<b>Hunter, David, 1861, 1863</b>
Box 1: 16	<b>Trowbridge, Charles Tyler, n.d.</b>
Box 1: 17 - 19	<b>Photographs</b>
Box 1: 17	<b>Civil War Scenes (copies, some from New York Historical Society), ca. 1861-1864</b>
Box 1: 18	<b>Officers (copies), ca. 1860s</b>
Box 1: 19	<b>Troops (copies), ca. 1860s</b>
Box 1: 20	<b>Miscellany - includes photocopy of a handwritten speech or sermon, unsigned, n.d.; newspaper clipping on letters of former slaves, <i>L.A. Times</i>, May 1983</b>
Map Cabinet 1: 3	<b>Oversize Documents - Mustering Out Rolls for 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, 1864-1866</b>