

LESSON PLAN – UNION BAPTIST CEMETERY AND CINCINNATI’S AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY (GRADES 6-12)



Union Baptist Cemetery, Cincinnati Ohio

OBJECTIVE: Introduce students to the African American history of Cincinnati and the contributions of African American Civil War Soldiers.

CONTENT AREA: Social Studies

TIME ALLOTMENT: One class period (could be extended)

CONNECTIONS TO OHIO MODEL CURRICULUM:

- » **Middle School:** Grade 8: Content Statements: 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 19
- » **High School:** American History: Content Statements: 1, 3, 5, 12, 16, and 18

SKILLS: close reading, map reading and analysis, cause and effect of historical events

VOCABULARY: Union Baptist Cemetery, United States Colored Troops, Medal of Honor, Black Brigade, Underground Railroad, Massachusetts 54th and 55th, African American Civil War Memorial, National Register of Historic Places

TEACHER TIP: Great lesson plan for Black History Month, Veterans Day or Memorial Day, or remote learning opportunities.

VISITING THE SITE: The Union Baptist Cemetery is located at 4933 Cleves Warsaw Pike, Cincinnati, Ohio. It is Cincinnati's oldest historically African American cemetery in the original location. It is maintained by the Union Baptist Church and is open from 8:00 am to dusk. For more information, contact the Union Baptist Church, 405 West 7th St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45203. (513) 381-3583.

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Have students look at the photo of the structure in the Union Baptist Cemetery (photo, page 1). Ask students to list three things they observe from the photo, such as the type of building, its size, its aesthetic appearance, and its surroundings.

COMPELLING QUESTIONS (FOR STUDENTS)

Reading #1 and #2: What hardships did African American communities face in establishing cemeteries in 19th – century Cincinnati? Why do you think the city demolished so many African American churches, social centers, and cemeteries? How does race impact African American cemeteries in the 19th century in Cincinnati? How did the individuals in Reading #2 work toward freedom and civil rights for African Americans?

Reading #3: How did African American Civil War soldiers contribute to the Union's war effort? Why was it significant that African Americans served in the Civil War as soldiers for the Union?

How to use this lesson plan: The three readings could serve as individual lessons. Reading #1 will serve as a local history unit on African American life in Cincinnati in the 19th Century. Reading #2 makes a great lesson for Black History Month, with important African American figures buried in the Union Baptist Cemetery. Reading #3 focuses on African American Civil War Soldiers. The map data could also be used as a stand-alone lesson. Teachers may deconstruct readings to create units. Photos help provide students opportunities to see the faces of important African American community leaders.

READING #1 – HISTORY OF THE UNION BAPTIST CEMETERY



View of Union Baptist Cemetery

The Union Baptist Cemetery is the oldest historically African American cemetery in Cincinnati in the original location. Its history and development mirrors the growth and development of Cincinnati's people of color during the periods before and after the Civil War. The following information is excerpted from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Union Baptist Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio:

Statement of Significance

"The Union Baptist Cemetery at 4933 Cleves Warsaw Pike in the Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati is the oldest African American burial ground in Cincinnati and Hamilton County in the original location. It was purchased, has been maintained, and is still used by the Union Baptist Church, the second oldest black church congregation in Cincinnati. Founded in 1831, the Union Baptist Church in Cincinnati is one of four early black Baptist congregations in Ohio. Because a cemetery is sometimes the only 19th century remnant on the landscape that marks a black community's long existence, the Union Baptist Cemetery is the most important historical physical link to the Union Baptist Church. None of their historic buildings remains even though the congregation presently is a strong downtown entity. Through the years, the Union Baptist Church owned four historic church buildings and two historic social centers in Cincinnati, but all were demolished as the city grew. The congregation now worships in a 1971 brick building at Seventh Street and Central Avenue adjacent to Interstate-75 in downtown Cincinnati..."

Part of the cemetery's story is the struggle for free people of color to establish a cemetery. Other religious and ethnic groups had this same challenge.

Overview of the Establishment of Cemeteries in 19th Century Cincinnati

"In an overview of Cincinnati cemeteries, the first graveyards were on the lots of early churches that sat near the Ohio River. Public burial grounds were established primarily east of Vine Street and south of Sixth Street by the city's founders, who were mostly Presbyterian. Two years after the first town plat for Cincinnati was drawn in 1789, James Kemper's Presbyterian congregation met in a clearing at Fourth and Main Streets, and the next year, they erected a frame meeting house. As early as 1802, several potter's fields for paupers [synonymous with paupers' grave; grave site for unknown or unclaimed bodies] were established immediately on the west side of the city near the Mill Creek. Other potter's fields were located north of the city in the area that became known as Over-the-Rhine. In 1818, the Cincinnati Orphan Asylum was built on city-owned land where Music Hall now stands. It became a public infirmary after 1837, and land around it was used for a cemetery. English Jews established a graveyard on Western Row, the west edge of the city, and Catholics bought land for their early burial grounds north of Northern Row, now Liberty Street. After the Miami-Erie Canal was built in Cincinnati in 1829, as businesses and industries prospered, sickness and cholera became epidemic. City leaders, mostly Protestant, seeking large acreages outside the city to bury the dead, looked north in the 1840s and established cemeteries at Wesleyan Methodist and Spring Grove. Several cemeteries were established in Clifton and in Walnut Hills for Jews, German Catholics and German Protestants. But after 1850, Jews and Catholics bought rural land for their cemeteries on the west side of Cincinnati in Price Hill, and in Delhi and Greene Townships. During the Civil war, blacks established the Union Baptist Cemetery on land west of Cincinnati in 1865. Not until the 1870s was the Price Hill Incline built so travel to the cemeteries across the Mill Creek must have been difficult. The landscape at the west edge of Cincinnati near Delhi Township still shows the historic pattern of the development of cemeteries for paupers, Jews, Catholics and blacks. By the end of the 19th century, twenty-three cemeteries were available for the internment of the dead."

Historical Context for Black Cemeteries in Cincinnati

"The first public burial ground in Cincinnati was located upon a square bounded by Fourth and Fifth, Walnut and Main Streets. It was given to the people by the original proprietors for a cemetery and for the first Presbyterian Church built near the corner of Fourth and Main Streets. Used for burials for twenty-seven years, the public cemetery became so crowded that another cemetery was needed. In 1810 a new cemetery was laid out by the Presbyterians between Elm and Vine, and Eleventh and Twelfth Streets. It was on the block adjacent and south of the potter's field that later became Washington Park. The public cemetery for Protestants was soon filled and other grounds had to be secured. Other denominations opened graveyards for their members as the population and the number of churches increased. In Cincinnati, except for the potter's fields, most cemeteries were restricted according to religious, racial or economic status. ... in 1844, a group of African Americans founded the first cemetery for blacks in Walnut Hills. It was first named the United Colored American Cemetery. ... However, this cemetery was moved in 1884. Originally established on the east side of Reading Road in the area that became Avondale, prominent black Americans, such as John Ison Gaines, were buried there ... as Avondale became a more fashionable residential area, a proposal was made in the Ohio Legislature condemning the Colored American Cemetery in Avondale...."

Description

"The Union Baptist Cemetery, 4933 Cleves Warsaw Pike, is located on one of Cincinnati's hilltops in the Price Hill neighborhood, five miles west of downtown Cincinnati...In this hilly part of the city's west edge, seven different cemeteries were established in the 19th century for Catholics, blacks, Jews and paupers. The

Board of Trustees of the Union Baptist Church purchased sixteen acres on the south side of Cleves Warsaw Pike on August 31, 1865, and the deed was recorded on September 2, 1865. A resolution concerning this property was passed on February 25, 1870, by the same board, "setting apart forever, certain Real Estate for Burial Purposes." While the land was bought in 1865, the plaque at the entrance gives the establishment date as 1864...The appearance of the cemetery is typical of other burial grounds established in the 19th century in Cincinnati and Hamilton County..."

READING #2 – MEN AND WOMEN INTERRED IN THE UNION BAPTIST CEMETERY

The Union Baptist Cemetery was organized by many of Cincinnati's early African American community leaders. Their lives reflect the challenges, struggles, and successes of African Americans living in nineteenth century and early twentieth century Cincinnati. These men and women are interred in the Union Baptist Cemetery. The following information is excerpted from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Union Baptist Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio:

Reverend David Leroy Nickens (1794 - 1838)

"Born enslaved in Virginia, David Nickens moved to Ross County, Ohio, with his father Edward and his mother in 1806, three years after Ohio became a state. It appears that he was educated in Cincinnati. In 1824, at the age of 30, Nickens established in Chillicothe the First American Church of a God in Christ, known today as the First Baptist Church. He was licensed in July of 1824 becoming the first African American minister licensed minister in Ohio. Some sources say that he was the first ordained African American Baptist minister in Ohio.

After a dispute over slavery arose in one of the African American Baptist churches in Cincinnati, Nickens moved to that city in 1835. For three years, he served as the first minister of the Colored Branch of the Enon Baptist Church, and changed its name to the African Union Baptist Church. Nickens worked with Theodore Weld and Augustus Wattles, white abolitionists, reforming education for African American children in the city. When Nickens died in 1838, at age 44, his wife, Serena and family moved back to Chillicothe. His sandstone grave marker is in the Union Baptist Cemetery.

Reverend Peter Farley Fossett (1816 - 1901)

"Born enslaved at Monticello, Peter Fossett was the son of Joseph and Edy Fossett. Joseph Fossett was Sally Hemming's great nephew. [Sally Hemmings was enslaved by Thomas Jefferson and had children by him while she was enslaved.] Ten years after Joseph was manumitted [released from slavery] by Jefferson's will Joseph purchased freedom for his wife, five younger children, and four grandchildren. In 1840 they came to Cincinnati, but Peter remained a slave in Virginia for another decade. Peter ran away, was captured and resold, and finally gained his freedom through the efforts of Mary Hemmings' son-in-law Jesse Scott. Peter joined his family in Cincinnati where he became one of the city's most celebrated caterers. Along with his wife, Sarah Walker Fossett, he was an activist in the Underground Railroad providing an escape route for runaway slaves from the south. One of the Baptist ministers in the state, he served the Union Baptist Church as clerk and trustee, and from that church was ordained into the Christian ministry. For 32 years he also served without pay as pastor of the First Baptist Church in Cumminsville. Politically active, he was a member of the Colored School Board of Cincinnati, the National Prison Reform Congress and University Extension Society [...] After his death in 1901, the Peter Fossett Hospital was organized in Cincinnati. However, it closed in 1926.

Mrs. Sarah Walker Fossett (1826 - 1906)

"Born enslaved in 1826 in Charleston, South Carolina, Sarah studied in New Orleans under a French specialist who taught her the care and treatment of scalp and hair. Soon after she mastered the manufacture and the dressing of hair goods, she came to Cincinnati where she became a successful professional businesswoman. She assisted the escape of fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad, working with white abolitionists, Nicholas Longworth, benefactor Thomas Emery, and Levi Coffin. Known for her philanthropic work, she served as the lady manager for the Orphan Asylum for colored children for 25 years. In 1866, she was instrumental in acquiring a new building from the Thomas Emery family and moving the asylum to Avondale. Married to Reverend Peter Farley Fossett, she assisted her husband in both his secular and church work.

Dr. Jennie D. Porter

"The first African American woman to earn a doctoral degree in philosophy at the University of Cincinnati, she was an educational leader and champion of African Americans. Born in Cincinnati, she was an advocate of separate African American schools and of all African American teaching staffs. She built her life on the then unpopular conviction that African Americans are mentally equal to whites, and that quality of education was the key to improving living conditions for African Americans. A teacher at Frederick Douglass School in Walnut Hills for 17 years, she became the first African American woman principal of a Cincinnati school in 1914. Stowe was the largest public school in Cincinnati, irrespective of race, with more than 3000 students in 1926. She invited numerous African American luminaries to visit the school, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, George Washington Carver and Marian Anderson. Porter's graduates included Theodore Berry, the first African American mayor of Cincinnati, and DeHart Hubbard, an Olympic Gold Medalist. She lived in the West End at 733 W. Court Street until 1917, but that home was demolished. Later she moved to Walnut Hills and lived in a 1928 Tudor Revival home at 1355 Lincoln Avenue until she died in 1936. After her death, the Jennie D. Porter School, built near her home in the West End, was opened in 1953."

The above biographies are from section 8, pages 10 - 12: National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, prepared by Dr. Bailey Turner, UBC Trustees, and Mary Ann Olding.

READING #3 – AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR VETERANS BURIED IN THE UNION BAPTIST CEMETERY

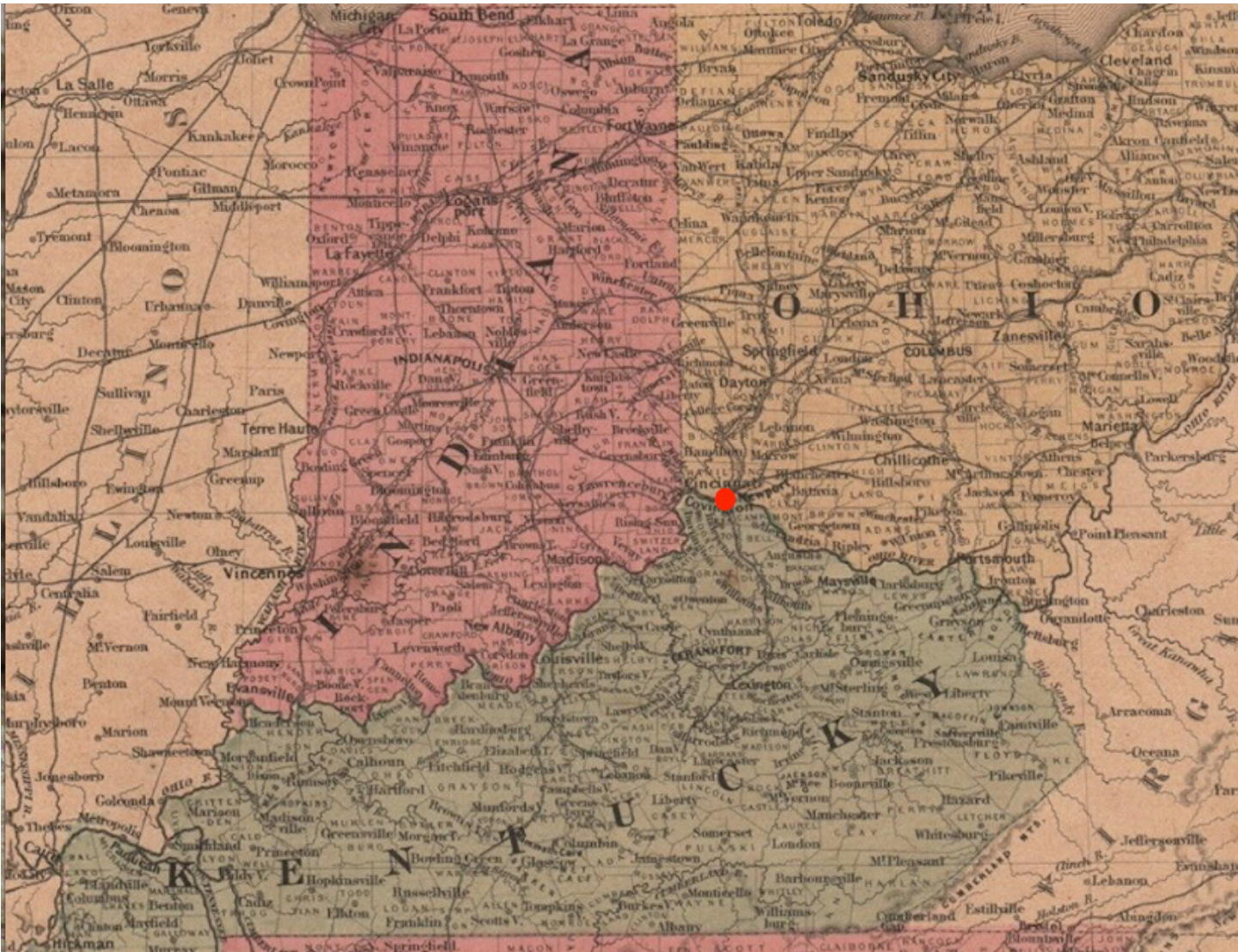
The Bureau of Colored Troops was established (May 22, 1863). Recruiting became standardized; prior to this, it was regulated individually by state. This also created standard terminology for African American regiments. Generally speaking, they were referred to as the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.). The men served in one of the three traditional areas of the Army. Most men served in the United States Colored Infantry (U.S.C.I.). Other men served in the United States Colored Cavalry (U.S.C.C.), or the United States Colored Heavy Artillery (U.S.C.H.A.). All four of these designations can be found on headstones of African American Veterans at the Union Baptist Cemetery.

By the end of the war nearly 180,000 African American soldiers had enlisted in the Union Army. This number represents roughly 10% of the Union Army. The enlistment of African American soldiers became an important part of the final strategy that allowed for victory in the North.

The Union Baptist Church Cemetery contains the remains of more than (120) African American Civil War veterans. These were men who returned or moved to Cincinnati after the war ended. These men raised their

families, worked, and helped develop Cincinnati's thriving African American community.

Map #1: Ohio and Kentucky (1860)



Map (1860): Cincinnati, Ohio, border city of Kentucky, marked. Sources: 1860 and 1900 U.S. Census; Official Records of the Civil War – Ohio and Kentucky (1860)

Table #1: Slaves, Free Persons of Color 1860, and USCT enlistments in Ohio and Kentucky

	ENSLAVED PERSONS	FREE PERSONS	USCT
OHIO	0	36,673	5,092
KENTUCKY	225,483	10,684	23,703
U.S. (TOTAL)	3,953,760	487,970	178,975

UNION BAPTIST CEMETERY U.S.C.T. VETERANS

A significant number of U.S.C.T. Veterans are buried in the Union Baptist Cemetery. Equally important is the fact that these men helped establish and elevate the African American society in Cincinnati and elsewhere in the years following the Civil War. Three examples of these men follow:

George Washington Williams

Born in Pennsylvania on October 16, 1849, George Washington Williams grew up as a free person of color. Williams joined the Union Army at the age of 14, serving in the 25th Corps. Following the war, he became the minister of the Union Baptist Church (1876-1877). Though minister for a short period of time, he helped the growth of the church and cemetery. He left the pastorate for politics and became the first African American elected to the Ohio Legislature in 1879. He served one term, then began researching and writing *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*. This was one of the first histories written by an African American author. In the final chapter of his work, he made a specific proposal expressing the idea of having a monument (in Washington D.C.) made for African American Civil War soldiers:

“A Government of a proud, patriotic, prosperous and free people would make a magnificent investment by erecting at the capital a monument dedicated to its brave black soldiers. The large and beautiful Government Park, immediately in front of Howard University [which Williams proposed to rename the Robert Gould Shaw Park] would be an admirable place for a monument to the Negro soldiers who fell in their country’s cause... Williams sent him a detailed description of the land in question. He emphasized that the monument would increase the attractiveness of that section of the city, which already had the government reservoir, the soldiers’ home, Scheutzen Park, and Howard University...”

Williams continued to write numerous articles and several books. Williams traveled to the Congo to investigate conditions and wrote letters condemning what he found. He died while living in England in 1891 at the age of 41.



Photo of G.W.Williams

The monument that was Williams’ dream was not realized in his lifetime. However, upon its construction in 1998, it was dedicated to Williams because it had been his vision. Today the African American Civil War Memorial can be visited at 1200 “U” Street in Washington D.C. It is a National Park Service site.

George Washington Williams quotation:

“...They (African American Civil War Soldiers) earned the right to be free by deeds of desperate valor; and in 449 engagements in which they participated. They proved themselves worthy to be entrusted with a nation’s flag and honor...”

Note: When Williams wrote this in 1887, some African American activists and community leaders felt it necessary to cite the bravery and sacrifices of African American veterans to challenge common narratives of the ongoing segregation and marginalization of African Americans. Reconstruction had been ended by the Hayes administration 10 years prior and many of the racist institutions in the South remained unchanged, to the frustration and anger of many African Americans faced with an often-apathetic public.

Powhatan Beaty

Powhatan Beaty was born in Virginia on October 8, 1837. By 1849 Beaty was living in Cincinnati. In 1862, before the Union permitted African Americans to enlist, Beaty and approximately 700 African American Cincinnatians became part of a civilian labor group known as the “Black Brigade.” They helped construct fortifications to protect the city from potential Confederate invasion. Beaty’s participation in the Black Brigade predates African American enlistment in the Union Army. In June, 1863, he led a group of recruits to Columbus to join the famous Massachusetts 54th and 55th regiments. When he arrived in Columbus, he was told that the regiments were full. He then enlisted in the 5th U.S.C.I. as a company First Sergeant. While serving in the 5th U.S.C.I., at the battle of New Market Heights on September 29, 1864, 1st Sgt. Beaty was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Bravery- one of only 17 U.S.C.T. soldiers to do so. It read:

“This is to certify that Powhatan Beaty was enrolled on the ninth day of June, 1863 to serve three years, and was discharged on the twentieth day of September, 1865, by reason of muster out of company while holding the grade of First Sergeant, in Company G Fifth Regiment of US Colored Infantry: that a medal of honor was awarded to him on the fifteenth day of March, 1865 for gallant and meritorious conduct in taking command of his company after all the officers had been killed or wounded, and leading it in action at Chapins Farm, Va., September 29th, 1864; that his name was entered and recorded on the Army and Navy Medal of Honor Roll on the ninth day of May, 1916.”

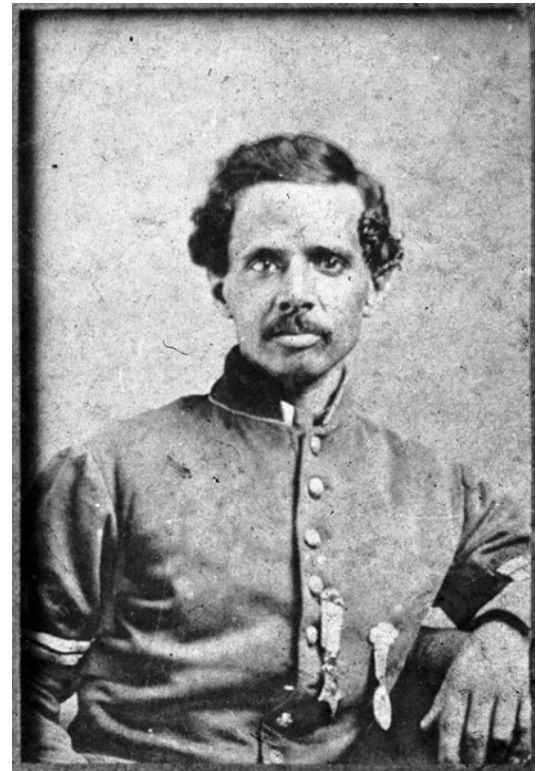


Photo of P. Beaty

Following the war, Beaty returned to Cincinnati, raised his family, and became the superintendent of the Union Baptist Church for 27 years. His son, A. Lee Beaty, became a lawyer and served as a Legislator in the Ohio General Assembly. Powhatan Beaty died December 6, 1916 and is buried in the Union Baptist Cemetery.



Photo of Jefferson Lewis' headstone Union Baptist Cemetery

Jefferson Lewis: Slave, Soldier, Citizen

Jefferson Lewis was born a slave in Northern Kentucky in 1843. Philander Butler recalled, “I have known Jefferson Lewis for the past forty years and longer and we were slaves in Fleming County, Kentucky and were playmates together as children” In September 1864, in Covington, Kentucky, Lewis enlisted in the Union Army, and served in Co. H, 117th Regiment, the United States Colored Infantry (U.S.C.I.). The 117th U.S.C.I. was one of many regiments formed in Kentucky. The regiment participated in the siege of Petersburg and the final pursuit of CSA General Robert E. Lee. Following the war, Lewis’ regiment was sent to Texas for two additional years of duty. Jefferson Lewis was on detached duty as a teamster for much of his time in the army. Lewis’ detached duty was likely due to health issues. “He (Lewis) contracted rheumatism from exposure. He says he had slight attacks of rheumatism at Fort Harrison, Va. And around Richmond Va., but when rheumatism caused him serious trouble was in Texas....” William

Ratliff remembered, “ I was a Private in Co. H, 117th U.S.C.I., and Jefferson Lewis was in the same company and regiment. I remember while the regiment was in Texas, Jefferson Lewis walked with a stick and said he was lame from rheumatism ...” Jefferson Lewis was mustered out with his regiment at Brownsville, Texas in August 1867. Following the war, Lewis moved to Cincinnati, Ohio and worked as a manual laborer. Jefferson Lewis died December 23, 1905 and was buried in the Union Baptist Cemetery.

Map #2: Travels of Jefferson Lewis



[Numbered Locations: 1 – Slave in Fleming County, Kentucky; 2- Enlisted in Covington, Kentucky; 3 – Ordered to Baltimore, Md., 4- Fall of Petersburg; 5- Appomattox Court House and the final pursuit of CSA General Robert E. Lee; 6- Duty at Petersburg; 7- Moved to Brazos Santiago, Texas; 8- Duty at Brownsville, Texas; 9- Moved to Cincinnati, OH & later buried in the Union Baptist Cemetery].

Source: Thomas Jefferson Lewis' pension file; 117th U.S.C.I. records

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Research a local African American Cemetery

Have students research a local African American Cemetery. Have students compile data about the cemetery. Research questions: Who found the cemetery, who maintains the cemetery, how old is the cemetery, and does it have any different features from other cemeteries? If there are unmarked or damaged headstones the students could adopt a headstone to straighten and repair.

Activity 2: United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.)

Have students research the U.S.C.T. regiments raised in their area/state or U.S.C.T. veterans who moved to the community following the Civil War. Use a name or regiment to have the students research and write a short response piece about the men and why they fought.

Activity 3: Create a walking tour of your cemetery

Using data either on local U.S.C.T. Veterans or other prominent local African Americans, have you students create a walking tour of your local cemetery. The students can research and write short biographies. These biographies can be made into a single sheet tour map. Select a day and have the students conduct walking tours based on their research.

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

Students may learn more about African American culture in Cincinnati (circa 1860) and the role of the United States Colored Troops. Those interested in learning more will find the following websites offer a variety of materials:

National Park Service Civil War website

Visit the official National Park Service Civil War website. Offering the current generation of Americans an opportunity to know, discuss and commemorate this country's greatest national crisis, while at the same time exploring its enduring relevance in the present, the website includes a variety of helpful features and links, such as the "About the Civil War" page that offers a timeline and stories from various perspectives. Also included are links to Civil War Parks, the NPS education programs, and much more.

<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/index.htm>

National Archives and Records Administration

The National Archives (NARA) is a federal agency committed to the availability of government documents to the public. Included are documents related to the soldiers that served during the Civil War, such as military and pension files and articles pertaining to both soldiers' homes and the marking of veterans' graves.

<https://www.archives.gov>

African American Civil War Memorial

This website includes a database with the names of African American Civil War Veterans. It also houses an extensive photo gallery, information for teachers hoping to use the information in lesson plans, and the history of the museum.

<https://www.afroamcivilwar.org>

The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

This Cornell University database contains a massive amount of primary source data of both the Union and Confederate armies including: correspondence, official reports, orders, information on prisoners of war, state prisoners, political prisoners, and the reports of high ranking military officials.

http://collections.library.cornell.edu/moa_new/waro.html

Books

- » *George Washington Williams*, by John Hope Franklin
- » *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*, by George Washington Williams
- » *The Sable Arm, Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865*, by Dudley Cornish

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This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Union Baptist Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio, John Hope Franklin's "George Washington Williams," and other sources. The lesson plan is courtesy of Paul LaRue, history educator and winner of numerous state and national teaching awards.