

NURSING THE WOUNDED Angels of Mercy

Nurses and soldiers inside a hospital tent in Virginia



Courtesy National Museum of Civil War Medicine

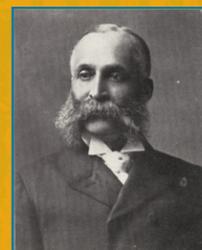
Nurses, both women and men, worked for the Union Army in hospitals and on battlefields. Though most had no formal training, they provided care and comfort to thousands of soldiers and civilians. For many, their participation in the war effort was a family affair. Nurses often served alongside their husbands, wives, sons, and brothers, committed to the bonds of family, community, and country.

Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, July 1863

Nurses and other hospital workers can be seen on the balconies and in the courtyard of this Nashville hospital.



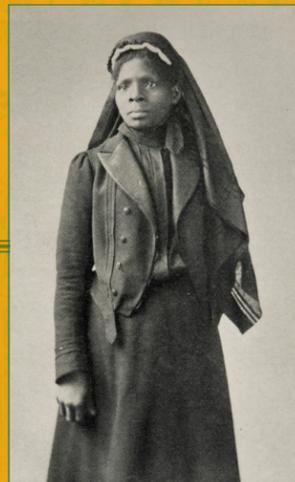
Courtesy National Archive and Records Administration



Courtesy National Library of Medicine

Charles Burleigh Purvis, M.D., c. 1900

Nurse and contract surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., Charles Purvis served during the war along with his cousin Charlotte Forten, a nurse and teacher.



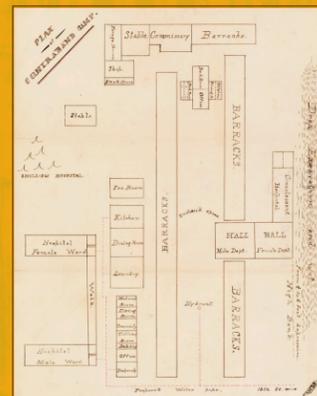
Courtesy East Carolina University

Susie King Taylor, c. 1902

Taylor served with the 1st South Carolina Colored Volunteers on the battlefield alongside her husband Edward King, a sergeant in the regiment.

WITHIN THESE WALLS Union & Confederate Hospitals

African Americans, free and enslaved, provided care for wounded soldiers in Union and some Confederate hospitals. The survival of the military hospital was dependent upon their work. Hospital work represented change and opportunity for many African Americans.



Courtesy National Archives, Washington D.C.

Diagram of Contraband Camp, Washington, D.C., 1863

Contraband Hospital in Washington, D.C., was one of the few hospitals to treat African Americans in Washington, D.C. The hospital hired nurses primarily from within the population of fugitive slaves and employed the largest number of black surgeons among U.S. military hospitals.

change and opportunity

Group working for a relief organization in Washington, D.C., April 1865



Courtesy Library of Congress



Courtesy Library of Congress

Chimborazo Hospital, Richmond, Virginia, c. 1861–1864

Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, the largest Confederate hospital, relied on the slaves of local plantation owners and hospital surgeons to fill positions such as nurses, cooks, and laundresses.

relied on the slaves

BINDING WOUNDS PUSHING BOUNDARIES

African Americans in Civil War Medicine



Courtesy Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and the U. S. Military History Institute

Contraband, c. 1863–1865



Courtesy Toronto Public Library

Anderson R. Abbott, 1863–1865

“. . . there were loyal women, as well as men, in those days who did not fear the shell or the shot, who cared for the sick and dying . . .”

— Susie King Taylor, black nurse with the 33rd United States Colored Infantry, 1902



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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Curated by Jill L. Newmark
www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/bindingwounds



Courtesy National Archives, Washington, D.C.

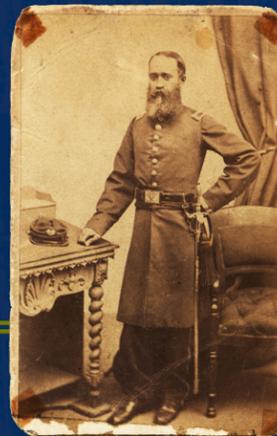
William P. Powell, Jr., August 1863

Contract assistant surgeon at Contraband Hospital, Washington, D.C.

IN UNIFORM A Symbol of Pride

African Americans served as surgeons and nurses during the American Civil War tending to wounded soldiers and civilians. Surgeons were in positions of authority which had never occurred in the United States before, while nurses received paid wages for their work. These men and women came from different backgrounds and life experiences, but their desire to participate in the cause for freedom transcended class, education, and social position. Their participation challenged the prescribed notions of both race and gender, and pushed the boundaries of the role of blacks in America.

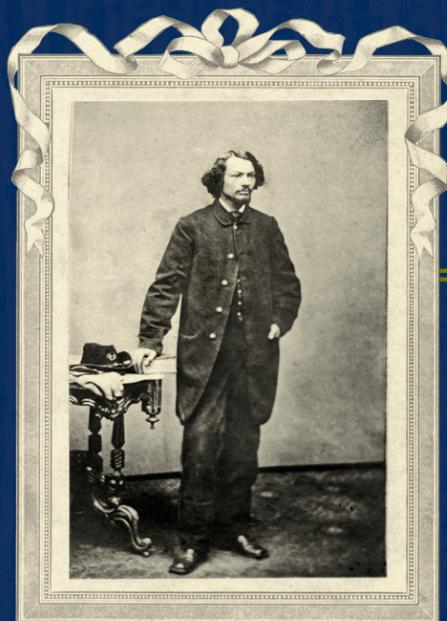
African American Civil War surgeons entered military service as majors, captains, or lieutenants and wore the uniform of Union Army officers as a symbol of pride and patriotism. They represented a change in the role and position of African Americans that some were reluctant to accept.



Courtesy Museum of African American History, Boston and Nantucket and the Massachusetts Historical Society

John Van Surly DeGrasse, c. 1863

Assistant surgeon with the 35th United States Colored Troops



Courtesy Anne Straith Jamieson Fonds, The J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The University of Western Ontario Archives

John H. Rapier, Jr., c. 1864

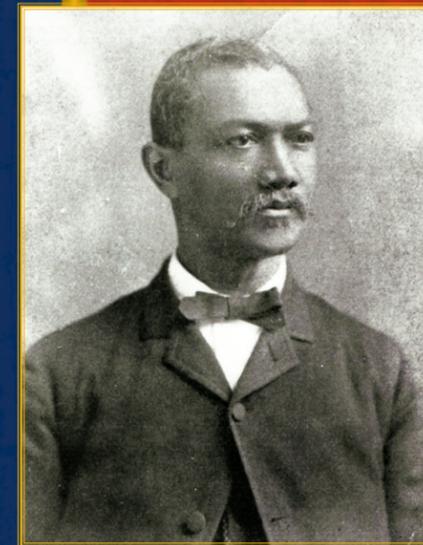
Contract assistant surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, D.C.

"Splendid among the shabby field hands . . . the sight of his uniform stirred the faintest heart to faith in the new destiny of the race, for Dr. Augusta wore the oak leaves of a major on his shoulders."

—Anderson R. Abbott, M.D., African Canadian surgeon, c. 1863

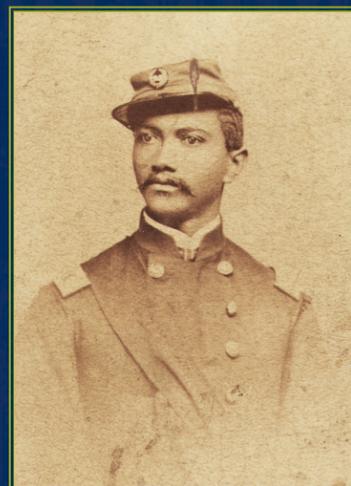
IN SERVICE TO MY COUNTRY Catalyst for Change

Alexander T. Augusta, c. 1865–1870



Courtesy National Library of Medicine

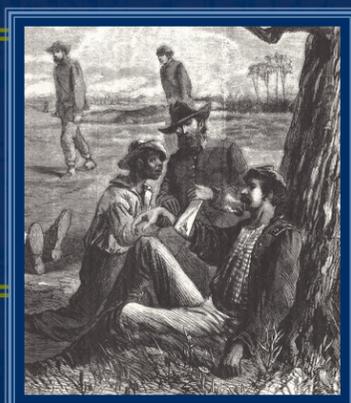
The sight of black Army officers in uniform was controversial, but proved to be a catalyst for change. Major Alexander T. Augusta was often confronted with hostility when he wore his uniform in public, but he was determined to wear it despite the risk to his safety. After being refused a seat in a covered streetcar in February 1864, Augusta was ejected by the conductor and reported the incident to his superiors and several newspapers. After hearing of the incident, United States Senator Charles Sumner brought a resolution before Congress to abolish the exclusion of blacks from railroad privileges. The resolution resulted in the desegregation of streetcars in Washington, D.C.



Courtesy Oblate Sisters of Providence Archives

Alexander T. Augusta, c. 1867

Surgeon-in-charge of Contraband Hospital, Washington, D.C.



Courtesy Harper's Weekly

Illustration from Harper's Weekly, August 29, 1864

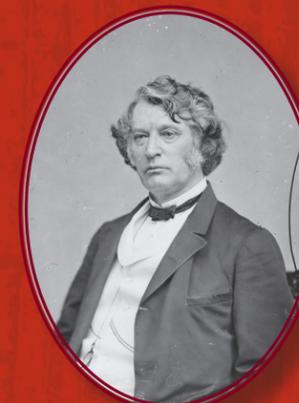
In this illustration from *Harper's Weekly*, an African American man assists a medical officer on the battlefield.



Courtesy Library of Congress,

Typical Washington, D.C. streetcar, c. 1880

wore his uniform in public



Courtesy The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

Senator Charles Sumner, c. 1861

cause for freedom