



Diary of Sergeant Major Christian A. Fleetwood

U.S. Colored Infantry
Fourth Regiment, Company G

_____1864_____EXCERPTS

Christian Abraham Fleetwood (1840-1914), a free African American from Baltimore, Maryland, was one of twenty-one black Union soldiers and sailors to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery in action.

On September 29, 1864, in the Battle of New Market Heights near Richmond, Virginia, African American troops charged Confederate fortifications, incurring many deaths and injuries in three assaults. During the first assault, when soldiers carrying the regimental flag — the “colors” — were shot, Fleetwood succeeded in retrieving the flag despite heavy bombardment and carrying it aloft through the charge to Confederate lines.

Before the war, Fleetwood had traveled to west Africa and had graduated from Ashmun Institute in Pennsylvania. When African Americans were allowed to enlist in the Union military, he joined the army in August 1863 at the rank of sergeant major, the highest rank allowed for black soldiers. In addition to training and fighting with his regiment, he served as its clerk, completing official reports and writing letters for the white officers.

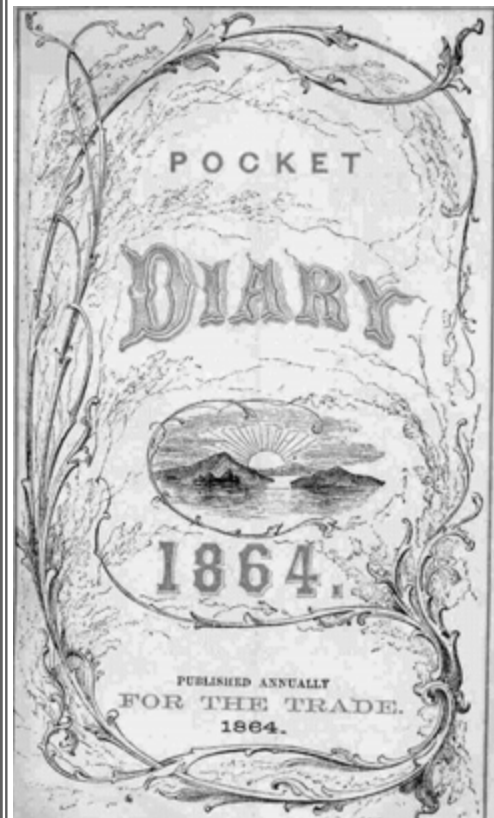
After the war Fleetwood married and worked for several agencies of the federal government in Washington, DC. He also directed the choirs of several churches in the city and helped organize its first black National Guard units. In 1895 he delivered an address, later published as *The Negro As a Soldier*, for the Negro Congress at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia (full text online in American Memory, Library of Congress). In 1914, Fleetwood died in Washington, DC, at age 74.

The 1864 entries included here are:

- June 15-16, 21-22 Battle of Petersburg, Virginia.
- July 21-22 Fleetwood’s birthday (July 21; age 24).
- August 30-31 “Wrote and wrote and wrote!”
- Sept. 27-30 Battle of New Market Heights, Virginia.
- Dec. 16-17, 20-21 Transport by steamship to North Carolina.
- Dec. 24-25 Union attack on Fort Fisher, North Carolina.
- Dec. 28-31 Return to Virginia; thoughts on the year’s end.



Sgt. Major Fleetwood (standing, middle), 1865



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 1864.

Up at break of dawn and under way our Division and White Troops of Gen Smith Went into action early charged out of woods. Cut up badly Regt. broke and retreated Fired into by 5th Mass. Last Regt. Charged with 22nd Took the Battery. Advanced. Upon works new & Lay under their fire all balance of THURSDAY 16 the day advancing by degrees in line. About 7 P.M. Final charge made Seven guns taken by our Regt. Our loss pretty heavy. Slept Moved outside and slept till morning. Moved to the rear and rested. Chapel air about Brigade moved out in evening and lay in line an hour or so. Returned and turned in.

Weather fine and warm

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Union attack on Petersburg, Virginia: June 15-18, 1864

Regt: Regiment

Battery: grouping of cannons and other artillery

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 1864.

Up early took down tents and packed everything self. Handy sick Division moved towards Pburg. Stopped in woods Slept like a Dormouse. Woke and snacked. President Lincoln & Gen. Grant passed our bivouac and were cheered.

Weather fine and warm

WEDNESDAY 22

Lying in woods all day. Nothing new. Turned out at midnight an attack being made. Moved out but were not called upon

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Fleetwood, 1865

THURSDAY, JULY 21, 1864.

Letter from Dr.
 My Birthday. Came in with Reports
 Chased by inf & cav. (Chap & Han.) Escaped.
 Read "Soldier's Wife" & Supl^l Policing.
 After supper Convay. singing &c.
 In midst of Dumb Concert, Johnny
 opened. honor of the day I presume
 but effectively silenced the Dumb Concert.
 Watched the shelling & turned in.

(Weather fine. Night beautiful.)

FRIDAY 22

In with Reports as usual.
 out to Line and Lay around, loose
 Wrote to Hallie, Mollie, & Leed.
 Col^d Division of 9th Corps came down
 Down with Kelly to visit, saw
 several more Baltimoreans.

(Weather fine.)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 30, 1864.

Oh dear the Reports, and
 endless orders for more, more!
 wrote and wrote and wrote!
 No letters. Sent for again
 after supper and wrote!
 Wrote to Miss Etta E. Mars,
 Springfield Mass,
 To your Shebang oh! adolescent.
 Took a wash and change today.
 Weather variable

WEDNESDAY 31

Reports &c. throughout the day.
 Sent out Cottin & Hamilton to recover
 body of 6th Regt. man drowned on Sunday
 Regt. mustered for pay by Major.
 No letters. busy as usual all day

(Weather fine.)

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inf & cav:
 infantry
 & cavalry

Chap[lain]
 & Han[dy]:
 friends

*Trials of a
 Soldier's Wife:
 1864 Southern
 novel*

Johnny [Reb]:
 Confederates

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Col^d: Colored



4th U.S.C.T., Company E (detail)

Weather fine.

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 Endless orders for more, more!
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Shebang: shelter made
 of poles and tree limbs

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1864.

Report re. Crossed River with Hawkins. Stopped to see Miller 22^d Com_d Hd. Qrs. Returned with Hawkins After dinner wrote to M^r Details Formed Guard and picket. Supper At Hawkins till 10 P.M. Retired Awaked at 11½ to Hd Qrs Got out the Regt and after much tribulations and several unsuccessful attempts to catch a nap we embarked WEDNESDAY 28 on board a gunboat and debarked at Jones Landing. Marched up to works Bivouacked at Deep Bottom Dined & sup^d with 5. U.S.C.T. Trimonthly Report made out slept with Kelly, Arnold, & Hawkins Letters came from Bradford & Est. & Cootus with carte. Stirred up Regt. and knapsacks C. G. E. packed away. Coffe boiled and

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M^r: Mother

carte: carte de visite
(small card portrait,
often included
with letters)



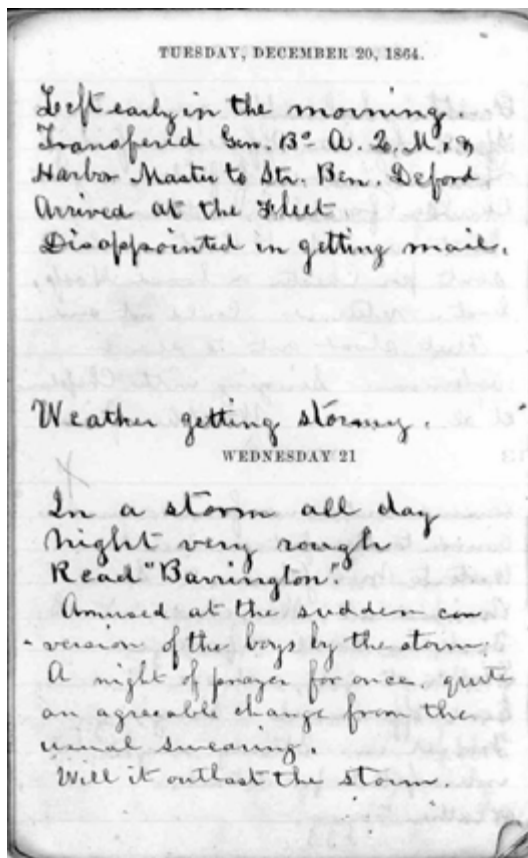
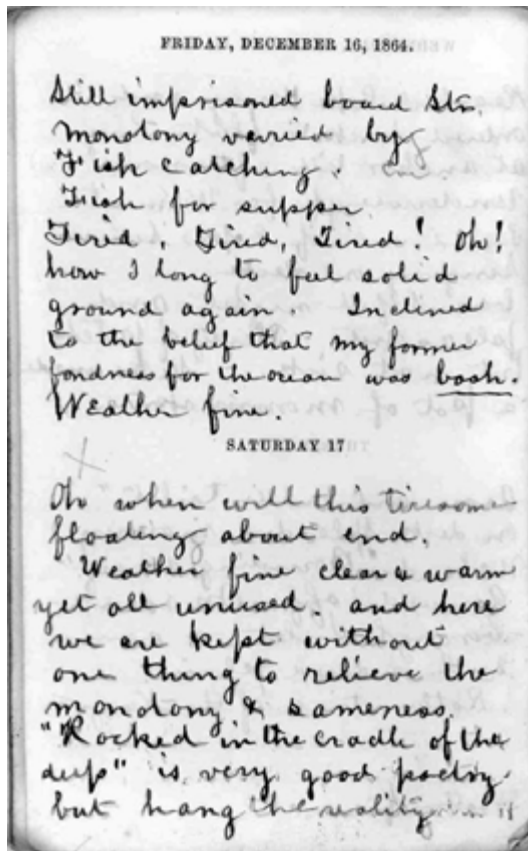
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1864

line formed. Moved out & on charged with the 6th at daylight and got used up. Saved colors. Remnants of the two gathered and Maneuvering under Col Ames of 6th U.S.C.T. Marching in line & flank all day saw Gen. Grant & Staff both Birneys and other "Stars" Retired at night. stacked arms & moved three times ending at a captu FRIDAY 30 red strong-hold where we spent the remainder of the darkness with the usual diversions of moving Rec^d in morning 193 recruits Drilled a squad in morning. Rebels charged our line three times repulsed. Lying in ravine. one man killed. Moved in eve. Threw up entrenchments to protect flanks of position. First night sleep armer 27th weather changed to the bad.

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"Saved colors."
During the
Battle of
New
Market
Heights
(Chaffin's
Farm,
Virginia),
Fleetwood
took up the
regiment's
flag after two
of its bearers
had been shot.
In April 1865
he received the
Congressional
Medal of Honor
for his action.
His citation
noted that he
"seized the
colors, after two
color bearers had
been shot down,
and bore them
nobly through
the fight."



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1864.

Still imprisoned board Stm.
monotony varied by
Fish catching
Fish for supper
Tired, Tired, Tired! oh!
how I long to feel solid
ground again. Inclined
to the belief that my former
fondness for the ocean was bosh.
Weather fine.

SATURDAY 17

Oh when will this tiresome
floating about end.
Weather fine clear & warm
yet all unused. and here
we are kept without
one thing to relieve the
monotony & sameness.
"Rocked in the cradle of the
deep" is very good poetry
but hang the reality.

Stm: steamship

The regiment left
Bermuda Hundred,
Virginia, Dec. 13 on the
steamship Montauk,
anchoring off
Masonborough Inlet,
NC, two days later.



Fleetwood, ca. 1895

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1864

Left early in the morning.
Transferred Gen. B^o A. Q. M. &
Harbor Master to Stm. Ben. Deford
Arrived at the Fleet
Disappointed in getting mail.

Gen. B^o A. Q. M.:
General Benjamin
Butler's Assistant
Quarter Master

Weather getting stormy
WEDNESDAY 21

In a storm all day
Night very rough
Read "Barrington."
Amused at the sudden con-
-version of the boys by the storm.
A night of prayer for once, quite
an agreeable change from the
usual swearing.
Will it outlast the storm.

Barrington:
perhaps Sir Jonah
Barrington's volumes
on his native Ireland
(*Popular Sketches
of His Own Time*,
1827/1832)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1864.

Moved to Mouth of Cape Fear River
Ironides opened fire at 12 1/2.
Lasted until 5 Sunset
Magnificent sight the
Action between the Fleet and
Forts Caswell & Fisher on shore
The roar of artillery only 2^d to
July 30. Before Petersburg.

Weather clear and fine.

SUNDAY 25.

Bombardment recommenced
& continued through the day.
Troops commenced Landing
Got three companies off and
ordered back. Got a ducking
in the surf coming off.
Turned in to day

Early morning beautiful. Snow
hazy. Night wet & stormy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1864.

Ordered to Camp. Arrived at Jones Ldg.
Afternoon thence to camp Heavy march
rain mud!!! and darkness.
Found camp occupied by 27th
Found letters from Emma, Avy,
Addie, Mar, Cootus, Joe, Leed,
Hollie, C. N. F., Est, A. B. W.,
& Tom Hawkins, Anglos & Americans.
Turned in at chaplain's quarters
Morn. beautiful. Changed to miserable.

THURSDAY 29

Visited Gd. Mt. of 27th Rich.
Met Miller of 22^d
27th vacated. Got quarters
fixed up and moved in.
Details piled thick & fast
Got a square meal and wrote
to Emma. 3 sheets of note.
Washed changed & turned in
Twenty three days without a wash
or change of clothing.
Weather clearing cool.

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Union attack on
Fort Fisher,
coastal
North Carolina



Fleetwood, ca. 1895

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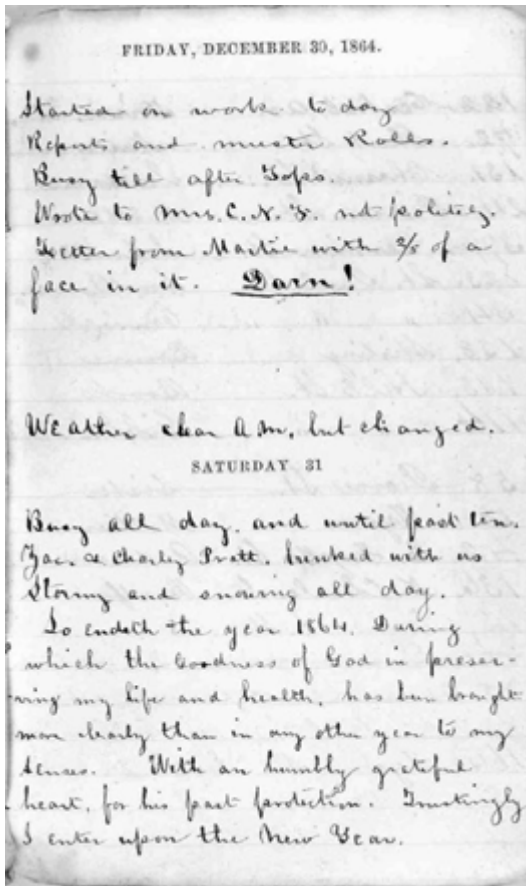
persons with whom
Fleetwood often
corresponded

Anglos &
American:
newspapers,
including the
Weekly
Anglo-African

Gd. Mt.: guard mount
(men on guard duty)

Quarters:
shelter

Details: work
assignments



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1864.

Started on work to day
Reports and muster Rolls.
Busy till after Taps.
Wrote to Mrs. C. N. F. not politely
Letter from Martie with 2/5 of a
face in it. **Darn!**

Weather clear a.m. but changed.

SATURDAY 31

Busy all day and until past ten.
Zac. and Charley Pratt. bunked with us
Stormy and snowing all day.

So endeth the year 1864. During
which the Goodness of God in preser-
-ving my life and health, has been brought
more clearly than in any other year to my
senses. With an humbly grateful
heart, for his past protection. Trustingly
I enter upon the New Year.



Officers of the Fourth U.S. Colored Troops, Fort Slocum, New York, April 1865
Christian Fleetwood fourth from right