# JOSHUA ADDEMAN

## REMINISCENCES OF TWO YEARS WITH THE COLORED TROOPS

**Joshua Addeman**

# Reminiscences of two years with the colored troops

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24166276*
*Reminiscences of two years with the colored troops :*

# Joshua M. Addeman Reminiscences of two years with the colored troops

The circumstances attending the organizing of a colored regiment in this State are well remembered. In the summer of 1863, white men were no longer eager to enlist for a war the end of which none could foresee; but nevertheless the war must be prosecuted with vigor; another draft was impending and the State's quota must be filled. With difficulty Governor Smith obtained permission to organize a company, and, as this rapidly filled, then a battalion, and finally a full regiment of twelve companies of colored men for heavy artillery duty. In common with many others I did not at the outset look with particular favor upon the scheme. But with some hesitation I accepted an appointment from the State as a second lieutenant and reported for duty at Camp Smith, on the Dexter Training Ground, in this city. After serving here for some weeks in the fall of 1863, in the organizing of companies and forwarding them to Dutch Island, where the regiment was in camp, I successfully passed an examination before what was known as "Casey's Board," and after some preliminary service with a company of the third battalion, was assigned to the command of Company H of the second battalion, with whose fortunes my lot was

cast till the close of our term of service. On the turtle-backed crown of Dutch Island we remained amid fierce storms and the howling winds that swept with keen edge over the waters of the Narragansett, until the 20th of January, 1864, when, as I was about to make a visit home, the transport, Daniel Webster, appeared in the harbor and orders were issued to prepare for embarking on the following day. At the time appointed, we were on board, but the sutler's arrangements were not completed until early the next morning, when we got up steam and were soon out of sight of our familiar camp.

The incidents of the voyage it is not necessary to recite to any comrade whose chance it was to make a trip in an army transport, which had long since seen its better days, and which had been practically condemned before Uncle Sam found for it such profitable use. The men packed like sheep in the hold, the officers, though far better off as to quarters, yet crowded too much for convenience and comfort, the inevitable sea-sickness, the scanty rations, and what was worse, the extreme scarcity of water, were annoyances but the counterpart of those endured by many brave men who preceded and followed us to the scene of duty. But in the main the weather favored us, and on the hurricane deck we spent the hours off duty, gazing far across the illimitable waste of waters, as day after day we approached a warmer clime with its glowing sunshine and glittering waves and the deep blue sky bending down in unbroken circle around us. The rebel cruisers were then in the midst of their destructive

work and it was natural, as we caught sight of a distant vessel, to speculate whether it was a friendly or a hostile craft. When we were in the latitude of Charleston, a steamer appeared in the far distance, then a flash, a puff of smoke and a loud report notified us that it was sending us its compliments. It approached nearer, a boat put out and officers from the gunboat Connecticut came on board, examined our papers and soon allowed us to proceed. The weather rapidly grew warmer and our winter clothing proved very uncomfortable. The steamer's supply of water was exhausted and we had to depend on sea-water, distilled by the vessel's boilers, for all uses. The allowance of an officer was, I think, a pint a day. Warm and insipid, its only use, as I remember, was for our morning ablutions, which were more a matter of form than of substance. In rounding the coast of Florida we bumped one evening on a sand bar or coral reef. I was very unceremoniously tumbled over, and the game of back-gammon, in which I was engaged with a brother officer, was of course, ended at once. Rushing on deck we found ourselves clear of the obstruction and again on our way. But the breakers, in plain sight, gave us assurance of the peril we had so narrowly escaped.

In the early morning of February second we crossed the bar and noted well that line stretching far to the right and left of us, drawn with almost mathematical exactness, which marked the demarcation between the clear waters of the Gulf and the turbid waters of the Mississippi. In going up the river the buckets were constantly dropped into the muddy stream, and their contents,

when allowed to stand for a few minutes, would soon furnish an abundance of that luxury we all craved so much, – clear water, cooled by the ice and snows of the far north. Reaching the inhabited portions of the river, we saw the planters busy with their spring work, and though the air was chilled with the icy breath of northern climes, the orange trees in blossom and the green shrubbery on the shores, gave indication of the semi-tropical climate we had reached. Arriving at New Orleans in due season, our senior captain reported for orders. I must not pause to speak of the strange scenes which greeted our eyes in this, the most cosmopolitan city of our land. A delay here of two or three days proved almost as demoralizing as a campaign, and I, for one, was glad when the orders came to move. For reasons that afterwards transpired, we dropped down the stream some fifteen miles to a point called English Turn. It derived its name, as I remember the tradition, from the fact that as the commander of some English vessel was slowly making his way up what was then an unknown and perhaps unexplored body of water, he was met by some French explorer, coming from the opposite direction, who gave him to understand that all the country he had seen in coming up the river, was, by prior discovery, the rightful possession of the French monarch. Though no Frenchman had perhaps seen it, yet with his facile tongue he worked persuasion in the mind of the bluff Englishman, who at this point, turned about and put out to sea – hence its name, English Turn. We found here relics of very

early times in the form of an old earthwork, and an angle of a brick wall, built, when, and whether by French or Spaniard, none could tell. Here we soon selected a site and laid out our camp. The time rapidly passed in the busy occupations which each day brought, in little excursions into the surrounding country, in conversations with the colored people whose sad memories of the old slavery days recalled so vividly the experiences of Uncle Tom and his associates in Mrs. Stowe's famous tale. Nor were the days unvaried by plenty of fun. Music, vocal and instrumental, we had in abundance. The mimic talents of our men, led to the performance of a variety of entertainments, and in their happy-go-easy dispositions, their troubles set very lightly on them. Their extravagancies of expression were by no means an unremarkable feature. When I at first heard their threats to each other, couched sometimes in the most diabolical language, I had deemed it my duty at once to rush into the company street and prevent what, among white men, I would suppose to be the prelude to a bloody fight. "Oh, Captain," would be the explanation, "we'se only a foolin'."

While here, we had a little flurry of snow, which reminded us of what we had left in abundance behind, but which was a startling novelty to the natives, few, if any, of whom, had ever seen anything like it before. Their explanation was that the Yankees had brought it with them. In the course of a week or two, an assistant Inspector-General put in an appearance and gave us a pretty thorough over-hauling; but what astonished him the

most, was to find us in so healthy a condition; for it appeared that because of a few cases of measles on board ship, we had been represented as being in very bad shape, and it was for sanitary reasons that we were sent to English Turn.

We now began to hope for some change. The place was decidedly unhealthy. Our men were dropping off rapidly from a species of putrid sore throat which was very prevalent. The soil was so full of moisture that we had to use the levee for a burial ground. Elsewhere a grave dug two feet deep would rapidly fill with water, and to cover a coffin decently, it was necessary that two men should stand on it, while the extemporized sextons completed their task.

Washington's birthday was duly celebrated, and foot-ball, wheel-barrow and sack races, among other sports, furnished fun for the whole camp. Even the inevitable greased pig was provided, but he was so greasy that he got over the lines into the swamps and – freedom.

Our battalion commander, Major Shaw, arrived on the third of March, and on the following day, it was my good fortune to witness, in New Orleans, the inauguration of Gov. Hahn, who, by some form of election, had been chosen the chief executive. The unclouded sky, the rich foliage and the beautiful atmosphere, combined to make a glorious day, and the spectacular arrangements were in keeping. The place was Lafayette Square. Flags of all nations waved in the breeze. In seats, arranged tier above tier, were five thousand school

children of the city, dressed in white with ribbons and sashes of the national colors, while many thousands of the citizens were gathered as spectators. Patriotic songs were sung by the little folks; five hundred musicians filled the air with sweet sounds, and in the anvil chorus which was sung, fifty sons of Vulcan kept time on as many veritable anvils; while some half dozen batteries of artillery came in heavy on the choruses. These were fired simultaneously by an electrical arrangement; and the whole was under charge of P.S. Gilmore, a name not now unknown to fame in grand musical combinations. An elaborate address by General Banks, then commanding the department, was an interesting feature of the occasion.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.