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Forest Lawn Commemoration Plaque for African American Soldiers of the American Civil War

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STORMING FORT WAGNER

COMMEMORATION FOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE FOUGHT IN EACH OF AMERICA'S GREAT CONFLICTS, THE EARLY COLONIAL WARS, THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND THE WAR OF 1812. HOWEVER, UNTIL THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, AFRICAN AMERICANS WERE NEVER OFFICIALLY INCLUDED IN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED STATES. FEDERAL LAW HAD PROHIBITED THEIR ENLISTMENT IN STATE MILITIAS AND FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

THE MILITIA ACT OF 1862 PERMITTED THE ARMY TO EMPLOY AFRICAN AMERICANS AS LABORERS TO FREE UP FRONTLINE TROOPS ALREADY IN COMBAT. IN 1863, FOLLOWING PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, THE BUREAU OF COLORED TROOPS WAS CREATED. ITS PURPOSE WAS TO FACILITATE THE RECRUITMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS INTO THE UNION ARMY, COORDINATE AND ORGANIZE REGIMENTS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, AND TO HANDLE PERSONNEL MATTERS INCLUDING RATIONS AND PAY.

DESPITE THESE GAINS, MANY DOUBTED THAT THEY WOULD MAKE GOOD SOLDIERS. HOWEVER, THOSE BLACK MEN WHO ENLISTED FOUGHT VALIANTLY AND COURAGEOUSLY, OFTEN FEARLESSLY FACING DEATH IN MANY BATTLES, NOTABLY AT PORT HUDSON, LOUISIANA, MILLIKEN'S BEND, MISSISSIPPI, FT. WAGNER, SOUTH CAROLINA, FT. PILLOW, TENNESSEE AND PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA.

THIS PLAQUE IS IN GRATEFUL TRIBUTE TO ALL CIVIL WAR TROOPS OF COLOR, ESPECIALLY THE 14 THAT ARE INTERRED IN THE G.A.R. LOT HERE AT FOREST LAWN CEMETERY AND WHOSE MONUMENTS ARE MARKED WITH AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR VETERAN PLAQUE.

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