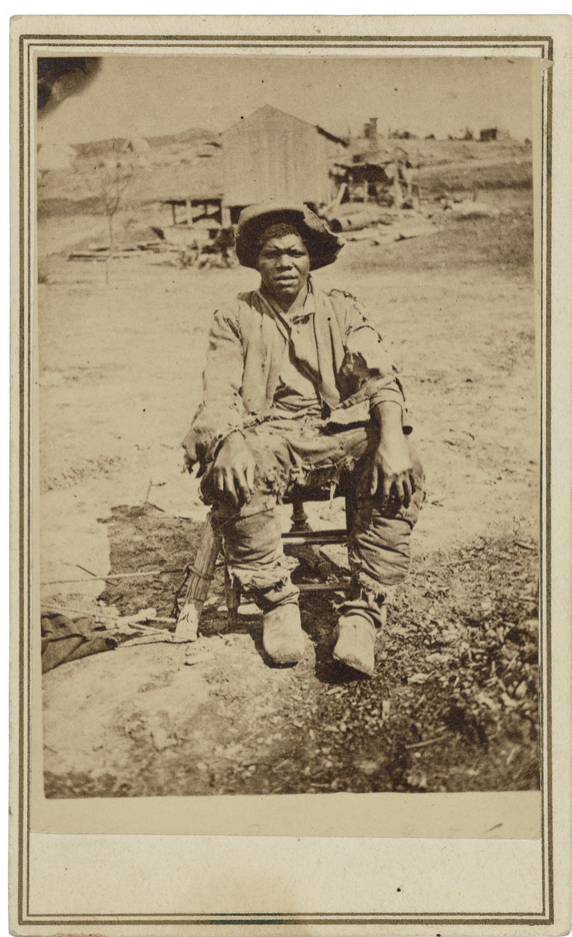




Hubbard Pryor, Defender of Fort Hill

Robert D. Jenkins, Sr., October 2, 2020

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Hubbard at the time of enlistment | National Archives



Hubbard after joining the 44th USCT | National Archives

Hubbard Pryor fled slavery at the age of about 22, walking from a farm in Floyd County, Georgia, near Rome, to Chattanooga. On April 7, 1864, he joined Company A of the 44th United States Colored Troops (USCT), an African-American regiment that was organized at Chattanooga, Tennessee. The white regimental captain wrote: "For raiders in the enemies country, these Colored Troops will prove superior, ... They are good riders, have quick eyes at night . . . and know all the by-ways."

His freedom would be short-lived, however.

The 44th USCT moved south to occupy a garrison at Dalton, Georgia. On October 13, 1864, Pryor's regiment was surrounded at Fort Hill, a Federal outpost that overlooked the railroad depot and the town of Dalton. Outnumbered over twenty to one, the regiment, along with the white Federal troops stationed at Fort Hill, surrendered to the Confederates under Gen. John Bell Hood after a brief skirmish. The 44th USCT's men did not want to surrender, but were at the mercy of their white officers who did not either understand or appreciate the mistreatment that would befall the former enslaved individuals if they were captured.

The white officers were released by agreement, but the African-American soldiers were placed "under guard and lash," and were returned into slavery provided that their former owners claimed them. Those who were not claimed were forced to work rebuilding southern railroads and other facilities across Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

A number of the soldiers escaped, and by early November, over 200 had rejoined the regiment in Chattanooga. Pryor spent the rest of the Civil War back in slavery.

After the war in September 1880, Pryor married a former slave named Ann Deaves of Polk County, Georgia. A church elder named Mr. McGee performed the services. Hubbard and Ann Pryor settled down as farmers and raised four children, three boys and a girl. The family later left Georgia for Texas. In May 1890 Pryor wrote the war department to learn if he had been listed as a prisoner or a deserter at war's end.

Listed as a prisoner, he was thus eligible for a pension. Before he could apply, however, he died on August 16, 1890, in Calvert, Texas, at the age of about 46.



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