



Foundation Document Overview

Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument

Ohio



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument is to preserve and protect Col. Charles Young's home and surrounding farmland, and to commemorate and interpret his life and accomplishments. The national monument also commemorates and interprets the service, struggles, and achievements of the Buffalo Soldiers in their duty to the United States.

Significance

Significance statements express why Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Despite facing racial prejudice throughout his career, Col. Charles Young was the highest ranking African American commanding officer in the United States Army from 1894 until his death in 1922. He was the third African American to graduate from West Point and the last African American to complete West Point until 1936. His active military duties included combat commander during the Philippine-American War (1901), acting superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks while commanding troops of the 9th U.S. Cavalry (1903), and squadron commander during the U.S. Army's pursuit of Pancho Villa into Mexico in 1916.
- Col. Charles Young's diverse military career also included an assignment to Wilberforce University as a professor of tactics and military science (1894–1899), and three tours of duty as a military attaché, first to Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island of Hispaniola and two later tours to Liberia. His pioneering achievements in military instruction at Wilberforce University, and military intelligence and foreign diplomacy as an attaché, helped guide the United States' emergence as a power on the international stage at the beginning of the 20th century.
- The home of Charles Young, Youngsholm, served as a gathering place for a nationally important group of African American thinkers, performers, and leaders. Charles Young actively engaged in the dynamic and stimulating intellectual and artistic environment that characterized Wilberforce University during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries.
- The 24th and 25th Infantries and the 9th and 10th Cavalries of the U.S. Army were African American regiments established by Congress in 1866 and they were commonly called Buffalo Soldiers by Plains Indians. These regiments provided security and order in the frontier west during the "Indian Wars," served as park rangers in Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant (Kings Canyon) National Parks, and fought with distinction in multiple foreign wars and campaigns.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

A Doorway into a Larger Story

- **Importance**—The national monument provides a critical link in a larger network of inter-connected sites related to the Buffalo Soldiers and the life of Charles Young. The national monument can serve as a portal into expanded understanding of the rich story of Young and the Buffalo Soldiers – a legacy that spans the United States and the globe.

Youngsholm (Charles Young's home) near Wilberforce, Ohio

- **Importance**—Charles Young's home (designated a national historic landmark in 1974) is significantly linked to his residency and tenure as professor of military tactics at nearby Wilberforce University. The house reflects Young's rising military, cultural, and social position. At Youngsholm and in the stimulating artistic and intellectual environment of Wilberforce University, Young was able to raise a family, mentor a successive generation of leaders, and find intellectual refuge.

Grounds and Farmlands Associated with Youngsholm

- **Importance**—The grounds immediately adjacent to the house as well as the adjoining agricultural lands provide a setting that is suited to the commemorative objectives of the national monument. As important components of the cultural landscape, the lands and grounds provide continuity with the land use patterns that Charles Young developed for his own agricultural pursuits at the property.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Serving in the U.S. Army, Charles Young confronted prejudice, overcame racial barriers, and made personal sacrifices to become an exemplary military officer, leader, and mentor.
- During the early 20th century as the United States emerged as an international power, Charles Young used his work ethic, ambition, academic leadership, and devotion to duty to achieve success as a groundbreaking African American military instructor, commander, diplomat, and military attaché.
- Supported by his family, friends, and mentors, Charles Young trained the next generation of African American soldiers and his example of integrity, and perseverance continues to inspire new generations of leaders.
- Beginning in 1866, many African American men enlisted in the segregated regiments of the U.S. Army, leaving behind the vestiges of slavery to accept a risky, life-changing opportunity that offered education, dignity, guaranteed pay, responsibility, and respect—benefits most thought they would never receive.
- From 1866–1917, military equality in the U.S. Army meant the segregated units had the same duties and responsibilities as their white counterparts, soldiers were empowered, and service achievements were respected and recognized. Simultaneously within the larger social sphere, African Americans continued to experience racial inequality, political limitations, and degrading marginalization while maintaining their personal dignity and self-esteem.
- Charles Young's choice to purchase "Youngsholm," adjacent to Wilberforce University, as a home for his family aligns with his rising military, cultural, and social status and represents the convergence of his private and public life. Interactions in his home with such notable literary figures and leaders as Paul Laurence Dunbar and W.E.B. Dubois fostered intellectual curiosity and actively supported engagement in an African American cultural renaissance.

Description

The Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, encompassing Young's home and adjoining farmland in Wilberforce, Ohio, was established by presidential proclamation on March 25, 2013. With this proclamation, the national monument became the 401st unit of the national park system. The dynamic process of developing the long-term vision and program objectives for the site is underway and will continue under a variety of coordinated planning efforts. It is envisioned that a primary objective will focus on the monument's role as an entryway to expanded understanding of Charles Young and the Buffalo Soldiers. Creative efforts to broadly link and share stories, resources, and inspiration with associated sites and partnership organizations will be a core element of the national monument's mission.

As a soldier, diplomat, and civil rights leader, Charles Young was a leading figure in the emergence of the United States as a world power. Young was born to enslaved parents, Gabriel and Armintha Young, in Kentucky in 1864. Two years later, the family moved to Ripley, Ohio, to improve their prospects after the Civil War. Young excelled in school and graduated from high school with academic honors. Proud of his father's service in the Union Army during the Civil War, he followed his father's advice and pursued his advanced education at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Young graduated from West Point in 1889, becoming only the third African American at that time to have graduated from the academy. The growing stridency of racism in American society during Young's career is reflected in the fact that no other African American graduated from West Point until 1936. For most of his military life, Young was the only active duty black West Point graduate and his accomplishments were a source of pride among African Americans across the country.

Charles Young's home (which he named "Youngsholm") was built ca. 1854 facing what is now U.S. Highway 42 outside Wilberforce, Ohio. The house was designated a national historic landmark in 1974 and is presently in overall poor to fair condition. Prior to transfer of the property to the National Park Service, the house was owned and managed by the Wilberforce University chapter of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity.

During his residency, lands adjoining the house (currently under an agricultural lease) were farmed by Young or by hired workers. Other portions of the property are wooded and a pond is also located on the site.

Charles Young arrived at Wilberforce in 1894, upon accepting a detached service assignment as an instructor of military science and tactics at Wilberforce University. Young organized the military training program for cadets and officer candidates. He remained an instructor at the university until 1899. It was at Wilberforce that Young began a life-long friendship with

the intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois (co-founder of the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and Paul Laurence Dunbar (nationally prominent African American poet and writer). Although his career took him across the globe, Young considered Youngsholm and Wilberforce his home where he raised a family, mentored a successive generation of leaders, and found intellectual refuge.

The national monument was also established to commemorate and honor the achievement of the Buffalo Soldiers, U.S. Army regiments composed of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry; the four infantry regiments were reorganized to form the 24th and 25th Infantry in 1866. Congress established these all-black regiments in 1866 primarily to patrol the remote Western frontier during the "Indian Wars." Although the pay was low for the time, many African Americans enlisted because they could earn more and be treated with more dignity than they often received in civilian life. According to legend, American Indians called the black cavalry troops "buffalo soldiers" because of their dark, curly hair, which resembled the coat of the American bison (*Bison bison*) or, as it was commonly referred to, buffalo. Aware of the buffalo's fierce bravery and fighting spirit, the African American troops accepted the name with pride and honor.

