



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Melvin McCaw military records

1889-1917

Sc MG 270

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Summary

Creator: McCaw, Melvin, 1867-

Title: Melvin McCaw military records

Date: 1889-1917

Size: 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

Source: Gift, Mrs. E. Lucille Gatewood, 1987

Revision History: This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

Abstract: Born in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1867, Melvin McCaw was a veteran of the Spanish-American wars in Cuba and the Philippines, and a non-commissioned officer in the 9th Regiment of U.S. Cavalry, the first detachment of African American troops assigned to West Point in 1907. Military records documenting Melvin McCaw's career as a non-commissioned officer in the 9th Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry from 1896 to 1917, and the activities of this segregated African American regiment at West Point after 1907. The collection consists of McCaw's certificates of discharge and reenlistment, including his 1917 memorandum regarding his retirement; letters from military and civilian authorities commenting favorably on the behavior of troops at West Point and on their efficiency and good spirit; military reports; McCaw's certificates of marksmanship (1896) and of proficiency in Cavalry and Drill, Outpost Duty and Army Regulations (1905); and newspaper articles relating to activities of the Lincoln League of Colored Citizens in Newburgh, New York, in 1908. The collection includes both original and photocopies.

Preferred citation: [Item], Melvin McCaw military records, Sc MG 270, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Separated Materials:

Photographs transferred to the Photographs and Prints division.

Creator History

Born in Columbia, Tennessee, in 1867, Melvin McCaw was a veteran of the Spanish-American wars in Cuba and the Philippines, and a non-commissioned officer in the 9th Regiment of U.S. Cavalry, the first detachment of African American troops assigned to West Point in 1907.

McCaw participated in the battle of San Juan Hill and the siege of Santiago de Cuba, as well as the U.S. occupation of the Philippines in 1900. African American troops were introduced into West Point because of the high level of desertion among their white counterparts. A 1907 military report found that they "performed few duties of the soldier, but are required to perform much work of every other character and received no extra pay." The segregated 9th and 10th Regiments of U.S. Cavalry were called "Buffalo Soldiers" because of their earlier participation in the Indian wars of 1867-1891, and their patrolling of the "Wild West" at the end of the 19th century. McCaw was a qualified marksman and a sharpshooter. He was invariably listed as an intelligent and loyal soldier of good character. A married man with two children, he retired from the army after 30 years of uninterrupted service.

Scope and Content Note

Military records documenting Melvin McCaw's career as a non-commissioned officer in the 9th Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry from 1896 to 1917, and the activities of this segregated African American regiment at West Point after 1907. The collection consists of McCaw's certificates of discharge and reenlistment, including his 1917 memorandum regarding his retirement; letters from military and civilian authorities commenting favorably on the behavior of troops at West Point and on their efficiency and good spirit; military reports; McCaw's certificates of marksmanship (1896) and of proficiency in Cavalry and Drill, Outpost Duty and Army Regulations (1905); and newspaper articles relating to activities of the Lincoln League of Colored Citizens in Newburgh, New York, in 1908. The collection includes both original and photocopies.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American soldiers
Spanish-American War, 1898

Names

McCaw, Melvin, 1867-
Lincoln League of Colored Citizens (Newburgh, N.Y.)
United States Military Academy
United States. Army
United States. Army. Cavalry, 10th
United States. Army. Cavalry, 9th