

24.2006.1

Brigadier General CSA Francis Asbury Shoup
Franklin County
Marker Text Review Report 06-08-2020

Marker Text

(Side One) Remembered for service in Confederate States of America army, 1861-1865, and "Shoupade" fortification design; fought in battles of Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Atlanta. Advocated recruitment of African Americans for CSA army. After the war, he was a university professor, published author, and Episcopal rector.

(Side Two) Born near present-day Laurel 1834. Attended Indiana Asbury University, Greencastle. Graduated 1855 from United States Military Academy at West Point. Served in Federal army 1855-1860; resigned to pursue law career. In Indianapolis circa 1860. Died 1896; buried at Sewanee University Cemetery, Tennessee.

Report

This marker is problematic, does not meet current research standards, and has been reviewed by IHB staff. There are several issues. First, the marker omits important context about the enslaved persons forced to construct the "Shoupades." According to Civil War historian Stephen Davis, "Shoup oversaw work crews, which included 1,000 impressed enslaved persons" to create these fortifications. Current research standards would require that the marker include a mention of the enslaved people forced to construct the Shoupades.

Second, the marker statement regarding Shoup's advocacy for Black enlistment in the Confederacy is both inaccurate and misleading. The Confederate Army was fighting for the right to continue to enslave African Americans. Enslaved people would not have been able to "enlist" as enlistment refers voluntarily signing up for military service. Theoretically, they could have been conscripted, as their labor often was, but they could not have voluntarily served. Enslaved people were considered property not citizens eligible for military service.

Third, this statement about Black confederate soldiers without context furthers a pervasive myth that Black soldiers fought for the confederacy. None did. Jefferson Davis rejected all suggestions that free or enslaved African Americans should be armed because, as Davis wrote, it "would revolt and disgust the whole South." Civil War historian Bruce Levine explains that Black men serving as soldiers would have proved that the Confederacy's white supremacist ideology was a lie. Furthermore, they feared that armed African Americans would revolt or join the Union cause. Facing defeat, Davis reversed his stance and in March 1865, confederate law allowed for Black troops. A week before the end of the war "a company or two of black hospital workers was attached to a local Richmond home guard" while another 40-60 Black men were drilled and housed under guard at military prison facilities, according to Levine. They never saw combat.

The marker statement about Shoup's advocacy for Black confederates implies to the reader that this was significant or it wouldn't be included on a historical marker. This statement furthers a dangerous myth and the marker being cited by secondary sources to adds credence to it. According to historian Rebecca Onion, the danger of the myth lies in furthering the idea that "the Confederacy can't have been so bad for black people. Otherwise, why would they have

defended it?" In his book, *Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth*, Civil War historian Kevin Levin explained how the Black confederate myth began. Levin states in his introduction that public historians more clearly identified slavery as the cause of the Civil War and "its maintenance as central to the Confederate war effort," starting in the 1970s. In response, the Sons of Confederate Veterans began promoting the myth of Black confederate soldiers "to counter the growing acceptance that slavery was the cause of the Civil War," to deny the role of free and enslaved Black people in the demise of the Confederacy, and "to embrace their Lost Cause unapologetically without running the risk of being viewed as racially insensitive or worse."

Fourth, the idea that Shoup "advocated" for recruitment of African Americans lacks much-needed context. Writing for the *Richmond Whig* and reprinted in the *New York Times* in 1865, Shoup made his views of the potential of African American soldiers clear. He stated that they would make good soldiers because years of enslavement had made them obedient. Black soldiers would be only "corporeal parts" while their white superiors would supply the "intelligence and courage of the whole. Shoup never thought that Black soldiers would fight for the Confederate cause, but that "discipline" would make them act. Shoup called this discipline a "giant that leaves them no power to escape." He wrote that because African Americans were "simple-minded" they could be made "faithful and obedient." He assured his white audience that white officers would make desertion too dangerous, and that because Black soldiers would be outnumbered, any mutiny would be met with white troops "brought to crush the refractory ones at once." Regardless, Shoup's arguments for using Black confederates remain irrelevant as no Black confederates fought in the Civil War. Many African Americans, including Indiana's 28th United States Colored Troops, served bravely for the Union fighting to end slavery and gain fuller citizenship rights. Learn more about the 28th USCT:

<https://www.in.gov/history/markers/3.htm>.

Sources:

Stephen Davis, *A Long and Bloody Task: The Atlanta Campaign from Dalton through Kennesaw to Chattahoochee* (Savas Beatie, 2016).

Kevin M. Levin, *Searching for Black Confederates: The Civil War's Most Persistent Myth* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

Bruce Levine, "The Myth of the Black Confederates," All Opinions Are Local, Online Forum, *Washington Post*, October 30, 2010, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/local-opinions/2010/10/the_myth_of_the_black_confeder.html.

Rebecca Onion, "Dismantling the Myth of the 'Black Confederacy,'" August 30, 2019, *Slate*, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/08/black-confederate-myth-history-book.html>.

"NEGRO SOLDIERS.; LETTER OF GEN. LEE. VIEWS OF BRIG.-GEN. SHOUP," *New York Times*, February 26, 1865, 1, [NYTimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com/1865-02-26).

Note:

IHB reviewed this marker in 2011 and produced a short report that determined the text was accurate in regards to Shoup advocating for Black Confederate soldiers. In other words, the reviewer determined that Shoup did advocate but did not interpret the lack of context as misleading. Further research has convinced IHB staff that his advocacy was irrelevant as no Black soldiers fought for the Confederacy and the inclusion of this statement without context misleads the reader and perpetuates the myth. This report did include information on the myth. A copy of the older report along with primary research material is available in IHB marker files.