



Colonel Charles Young

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Charles Young was the first African American to achieve the rank of colonel in the United States Army and, until his death in 1922, he was the highest-ranking African American officer. In 1884, he reported to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He became its third African American graduate five years later. After graduating with a commission as a second lieutenant, he proceeded to serve 28 years with black troops in the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalries. He had multiple military assignments both foreign and domestic, and it was after his service in Mexico, during the 1916 Punitive Expedition, that he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Young was placed on the U.S. Army's inactive list during World War I, but was reinstated as a full colonel in 1918. He died in 1922 while on a reconnaissance mission in Nigeria. He received a full military funeral and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Important Dates

- March 12, 1864: Charles Young is born into slavery in May's Lick, Kentucky. He soon moves to Ohio.
- 1880: Young graduates from the all-white high school in Ripley, Ohio, at the top of his class.
- 1883: Young takes an exam for entry into West Point, achieving the second highest score in his area.
- 1884: Young reports to the United States Military Academy at West Point.
- 1889: Young graduates from West Point with a commission as a second lieutenant.
- February 18, 1904: Young marries Ada Mills in Oakland, California.
- 1912: Young publishes "The Military Morale of Nations and Races."
- 1916: Young commands the 2nd squadron of the 10th United States Cavalry during the Punitive Expedition in Mexico. As a result of his leadership, he is promoted to lieutenant colonel.
- June 22, 1917: Young is placed on the U.S. Army's inactive list and is not able to serve in World War I.
- 1918: Young works as a Professor of Military Science at Wilberforce University in Ohio.
- November 6, 1918: Young is reinstated to active duty and promoted to full colonel.
- 1919: Young is assigned as military attaché to Liberia.
- January 8, 1922: Young dies of a kidney infection in Nigeria.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Charles Young is a common name so remember to combine it with other terms to retrieve relevant results. Try combining "Charles Young" or "Young" with the following terms as an "all" word search, in proximity or phrases: colonel, army, lieutenant, West Point, Liberia, death, war, military, major.
- Limit your search by date to find information about specific events.
- Use the Advanced Search to limit your results to African American papers like *The Appeal* (Saint Paul, MN), or *The Kansas City Sun*.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Eventful Life of Major Young](#)" *Appeal* (Saint Paul, MN), March 4, 1916, Image 1, col. 7.
- "[A Colored Army Officer](#)" *Advocate and News*" (Topeka, KS), August 3, 1916, Image 11, col. 2.
- "[Col. Young Reinstated](#)" *Kansas City Sun* (Kansas City, MO), November 16, 1918, Image 1, col. 4-7.
- "[Colonel Charles Young](#)" *Dallas Express* (Dallas, TX), January 28, 1922, Image 4, col. 2-3.