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U.S. Army Black Regimental Bands and the Appointments of Their First Black Bandmasters

Peter M. Lefferts

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The black regimental bands and their bandmasters in U.S. Army service between the Civil War and World War I comprised a fluid yet tight little community of soldier-musicians. Conspicuous in their own day, these units and their leadership teams are by no means familiar to modern readers. Replacement of white by black bandmasters in this community in the first decade of the twentieth century represented in its day an important public battle in the struggle for civil rights and racial fairness in the military. The following narrative offers a fuller account of this battle than has previously been available, but—full warning—the story is going to get a little dense. A bit of necessary background will begin to set the stage.

Some Necessary Background

There were only four regular regiments of African-American soldiers in the U.S. Army from 1870 to 1917. These were the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments (the men of the Tenth were the original Buffalo Soldiers) and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiments.¹ They were primarily stationed far from major white centers of population in the American South and West for most of their history before 1920, and they were mainly deployed against those perceived to be people of color: Native

1. There actually were two black cavalry and four black infantry regiments from 1866 to 1869, with a consolidation of the four infantry (nos. 38, 39, 40, 41) into two in 1869. For more information, two excellent resources with which to begin any study of the black regulars are Dobak and Phillips (2001) and Schubert (1995).

Americans, Mexicans, the Spanish in Cuba, and the Spanish and natives in the Philippines.

These regiments had white officers, and each had a regimental band under an enlisted man—a sergeant, who was appointed chief musician. From the bands' inception, the latter was a position held by a white man. He was the lowest-ranking white soldier in the unit and the only white soldier who was not a commissioned officer.² Before 1907, the highest rank to which a black bandsman in the regular army could aspire was the number two spot—principal musician in the infantry and chief trumpeter in the cavalry (a terminological distinction that began to fade in the records after the turn of the century in favor of principal musician or assistant band leader). Other secondary musical leadership roles for black sergeants were as chief trumpeter in the infantry and drum major. (The bandmasters of the four regular black regiments over the entire history of each unit are listed in Appendix I.)

The post of chief musician was a particularly desirable one simply in financial terms, and thus the injustice of reserving the position for whites was economic as well as racial. The key point here is that monthly base pay and total monthly earnings could be substantially different amounts for an army musician. To begin with, remuneration could be significantly increased by private income from the band's outside engagements, which could sometimes equal the amount earned in base pay. And, in addition, bandsmen also had sufficient free time to work at a second trade if they had skills that were in demand, such as barber, baker, carpenter, or mason, earning extra-duty pay directly from the army that could also equal or exceed their base pay. (The two newspaper articles in Appendix II, Documents A and B, provide contemporary elaboration on the situation of, and financial opportunities for, army bandsmen.³) Clearly, a skilled bandsman's position in a popular outfit with an effective bandmaster and an

2. In the earliest years, "The War Department allowed regimental commanders to hire civilians as music instructors with the title of principal musician. . . . Army records are unclear as to how many white men signed on as principal musicians in black regiments, but they numbered at least three and probably as many as six" (Dobak and Phillips 2001, 155). Note that a conspicuous number of the European-American bandmasters in the black regiments were immigrants (see Appendix I), and although it is true that a significant proportion of all U.S. Army bandmasters in this era had been raised and trained abroad, it may well be that the army particularly sought to appoint European-born bandmasters to the black regiments to sidestep any question of the racial prejudice of American-born whites.

3. In this era, U.S. Army base pay was low and static; first-enrollment privates, for example, started at thirteen dollars a month between 1871 and the first decade of the twentieth century; a chief musician made sixty dollars and drew the expenses allowance of a quartermaster sergeant (White 1944, 98 and *passim*). As to other kinds of opportunities for band members to earn outside income, "some of the members of the band of the 24th Infantry at Manila who are experienced in stage craft have organized a minstrel company, and are

accommodating regimental adjutant could be significantly rewarding. Advance in rank multiplied the effect. Following a rough rule of two, army sergeants, including band sergeants, earned about twice the base pay of privates, while the chief musician earned about twice as much again, and the base pay of a commissioned second lieutenant was about double that of a chief musician. On this basis, a chief musician was already the highest paid noncommissioned officer in the U.S. Army. The possibilities for additional income only enhanced the attraction of the job.

The army's four black regimental bands were well-known to the African-American civilian population, as was therefore the fact of the whiteness of their bandmasters, even though it was not often that opportunities arose for the bands to be seen and heard by black civilians in concert. It was appreciated that the bands were an important training ground and a source of steady employment for African-American musicians outside the entertainment industry and that they offered blacks one of the few opportunities for learning woodwind instruments in the post-Civil War era. A passage in W. C. Handy's autobiography is revealing in this regard. Handy's recalling the names of a number of early black bandmasters triggers an anecdote in which Handy refers back to his first stint with Mahara's Minstrels in 1896:

Credit is due the army bands for training early Negro clarinetists as well as Negro bandmasters. We had a former 9th Cavalry man in the cornet section of the Mahara band. He was George A. Swan, and I was early impressed by his military bearing. Back in 1896 Swan had introduced me to some of the bandmasters and military musicians along the way. At Fort Robinson, Nebraska, he took me out to meet his old German bandmaster, Herr Gungl. I joined the men in rehearsal and for the first time caught the effect of a complete clarinet section in a band. Swan and I visited the 10th U.S. Cavalry at Fort Missoula, Montana, and marveled at the spic and span cavalry band on horseback—all Negroes except the English bandmaster. (Handy 1941, 64–65)

Handy's observation is telling about clarinetists and about both the quality and the isolation of the bands. (The white bandmasters he mentions are Carl S. Gungl of the Ninth Cavalry and Claude Goldsbury of the Tenth

giving performances at the theaters. It is reported that they are making \$500 per day" ("Doings of Stage People" 1900); this corresponds well with the 1902 report (Appendix II, Document B) which says that overall, the band of the Twenty-Fourth earned several thousand dollars from extra-military engagements in the Philippines. Further, "when located near a city, as is the Twenty-fourth Infantry band, the outside engagements that an army band [can get afford] it opportunities for development along musical lines that are, indeed, exceptional. The revenues derived from outside engagements are divided pro rata amongst the members of the band, thus enabling them to earn an amount often equal to or exceeding their pay" (The Twenty-Fourth Infantry and Its Famous Band 1903).

Cavalry.) The cavalry bands that he heard—and their infantry counterparts—astonished and delighted for decades the local, mostly white civilian audiences that had an opportunity to hear them. They were unexpected sources of oft-remarked excellence.

New, Temporary Black Bands and Bandmasters: The Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection

During the Spanish-American War of 1898, four new, temporary, all-black army units were mobilized toward the end of the year for a short term of service. These were the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth U.S. Volunteer Infantry (Colored) regiments. In an unprecedented move, they were permitted black officers and bandmasters. Three of their four bandmasters had had experience in regular army black regiments and grasped the opportunity to sidestep the regular army's barriers to advancement by moving into the new regiments as chief musician. One was a veteran, David Robert Dillon (1858–after 1920), who in the past had been chief trumpeter of the Tenth Cavalry Band and had served briefly in the Ninth; he reentered military service from civilian life to lead the band of the Seventh Volunteers. A pair of talented and ambitious younger men who had been serving side by side in the Twenty-Fourth Infantry band, Walter H. Loving (1872–1945) and Elbert B. Williams (1864–after 1921), together left that unit to take up new posts. Loving became chief musician of the Eighth Volunteers and Williams took the same job with the Tenth Volunteers. The position in the Ninth Volunteers was filled by cornetist James W. MacNeal (1876–1945), who came out of the New Orleans entertainment industry, where he had been playing with the John Robichaux Orchestra and the Onward Brass Band.

When the four volunteer colored regiments mustered out in the spring of 1899 after only a few months of existence, MacNeal returned to civilian life with the signal honor of promotion to second lieutenant (Cunningham 2007, 23). No such recognition was accorded Dillon, Williams, or Loving. Williams returned to a subordinate role in a regular black regimental band, and we will meet him again shortly. Loving hoped for an appointment to lead one of the regular regiments but was rejected by the army. Undeterred, he joined Dillon in the successful pursuit of leadership opportunities provided by the Philippine Insurrection of 1899–1902. Two more new colored volunteer regiments were formed in the summer of 1899 for service in the Philippines: the Forty-Eighth and Forty-Ninth U.S. Volunteer Infantry (Colored). Both again required black bandsmen and were permitted black bandmasters. These units served in the Philippines from January 1900 to June 1901. Dillon, after serving as chief musician of the Forty-Ninth, once more returned to civilian life in St. Louis with no promotion.

On the other hand, Loving, chief musician of the Forty-Eighth, was granted a coveted officer's commission as second lieutenant before mustering out.

At this moment, Lieutenant Loving was essentially blocked from reentering the regular U.S. Army as a regimental musician; he would have had to accept both lower rank and lower pay. Seeing greater opportunity and less prejudice abroad, he left the army for good, returned to the Philippines in 1902, and joined the Philippine Constabulary as a subinspector, receiving a promotion to second lieutenant that same year and to first lieutenant in 1903. His foreign career unfolded with the personal support of none other than future U.S. president William Howard Taft. Taft had come to the Philippines as head of a U.S. government fact-finding committee in 1900 and met Loving at that time. He returned in 1901 to be governor general for three years. In late 1902, at Taft's instigation, Loving organized and became chief musician of the Philippine Constabulary Band, a group that enjoyed great fame under his baton for many decades.

Loving's foreign career and musical successes were well-known back in the states, and his reputation was burnished further during residencies in America with his band. Most notably, he and the Constabulary Band, along with an accompanying battalion of constabulary troops, were in residence at the large Philippine exhibit for the entire duration of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, from May 3 to December 1.⁴ In 1909, Loving and the Constabulary Band sailed to the United States to play in Washington, D.C., at the presidential inauguration of Taft, Loving's mentor, and then at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle. He also brought the band to the 1915 Pan-American Exposition in San Francisco. Despite the fact that Loving's musical career principally unfolded overseas, he was certainly the best-known African-American military bandmaster before World War I.⁵

Replacing White with Black Bandmasters:

Emmet J. Scott and the Aftermath of the Brownsville Affair

In August 1906, race riots in Brownsville, Texas, instigated by whites and involving black troops of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, caused President Theodore Roosevelt to order the disbanding of several black companies. This

4. A large number of military units paraded, drilled, and held concerts in shorter residencies, so fairgoers in St. Louis in 1904 could have seen other black band musicians, although not another black bandleader aside from Loving. For example, the Twenty-Fourth Infantry band, under the baton of the white chief musician Wilfred O. Thompson, played at the fair from October 5 to October 31 (*St. Louis Republic* 1904; Schwartz and Schwartz 2003, 8).

5. Loving, for example, was one of the featured individuals in the widely distributed article "Instances of Negro Success," by the well-known Washington, D.C., correspondent and syndicated writer, Frederick J. Haskins, that appeared in newspapers across the country on January 21, 1907, and in the following several weeks (Haskins 1907).

official reaction was widely perceived as unfair, and an advantage for blacks was sought in the situation. As one element in a wider campaign, Emmett J. Scott, assistant and personal secretary to Booker T. Washington at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School, in a letter of December 12, 1906, began to lobby Taft, now the secretary of war, to replace white with black bandmasters at the head of the four regular black regimental bands.⁶

Taft quickly approved Scott's initial request. He issued orders to the units in January 1907 that they appoint blacks to vacant chief musician positions, but it was noted that there were no openings at the time to be filled. Scott wanted more—he wanted the sitting white bandleaders to be replaced—so he then directed pressure upon President Roosevelt himself. This campaign was followed closely in the black press.⁷

The sustained personal contact of Roosevelt and Taft with black soldiers and black military bands was a crucial element that Scott was counting on. Taft's direct relationship with Walter H. Loving has already been mentioned, but in the Philippines across the years from 1900 to 1904, Taft had also become familiar with all of the four regular black regiments and bands that served there from 1899 to 1902 as well as with the two volunteer colored regiments and bands that served there in 1900 and 1901. These regimental bands were featured prominently in concerts and on ceremonial occasions, and Taft would have seen and heard them regularly at close quarters. Here in his years of Philippine service, as more generally across his career, he demonstrated his own commitment to racial justice, African-American causes, and equal opportunity, a position familiar to and acknowledged by the black press ("From across the Sea" 1908; "Praise for Wm. H. Taft" 1908; "Taft—Our Only Hope" 1908).

Theodore Roosevelt, for his part, was equally famous for making friendship with the African-American community and its leaders an important part of his political profile. Moreover, Roosevelt may have known Walter

6. Emmett J. Scott (1873–1957) was Booker T. Washington's right-hand man and an important advocate for African Americans. Notably, at the same moment as he was working on the chief musician issue, he was separately applying pressure to create army artillery units staffed by black soldiers. He was later the special assistant to the secretary of war for Negro affairs during World War I and authored *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (Scott 1919); see also "Emmett Jay Scott" 2008.

7. The initial exchange of letters was printed in "Army Custom Disturbed" (1907); see also "Regimental Bandmasters" 1907. "Army Custom" also identified the sitting white bandmasters at that moment: Carl S. Gung'l, chief musician of the Ninth Cavalry; George F. Tyrrell, chief musician of the Tenth Cavalry; Wilfred O. Thompson, chief musician of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry; and Joseph Belisle, chief musician of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry. As Scott's campaign was nearing its end, great detail was offered on his role in "To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908, "As To Negro Bandmasters" 1909, "Negro Is Appointed As Chief Musician" 1909, and "Loving Cup for Emmett Scott" 1910. See also Harlan 1983, 313–317.

Loving personally when the latter was a child in the 1880s (Cunningham 2007, 5). Most significantly, though, for the long-term success of Emmett Scott's strategy, is the fact that Roosevelt had fought side by side with black regiments in Cuba in 1898, where they played an especially crucial role at the battle of San Juan Hill. During these engagements, and in periods of respite, the black bands played to rally spirits. While in the heat of battle, bandmen were sometimes called upon to put down their instruments and serve as stretcher bearers. The bands were conspicuous and appreciated.

Scott, however, might not have raised the specific issue of black bandmasterships with Taft and Roosevelt were it not for the additional association of a pair of musicians we have already met, Walter H. Loving and Elbert B. Williams, with Scott's own home base, the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School. In 1903 Williams was convinced to leave the Twenty-Fifth Infantry for the civilian position of bandmaster at Tuskegee, which he held in 1903–1904. He then returned to the military with a transfer to the Tenth Cavalry. His replacement at Tuskegee, however, did not work out, and the man left after a single year. In June 1905, Walter H. Loving became Booker T. Washington's first choice to take over as Tuskegee bandmaster. (Scott and Washington may have learned of him from Elbert B. Williams, and Loving possibly may have met them during the 1904 St. Louis Exposition residency of the Constabulary Band.) Loving's appointment could not, in the end, be put forward, and the position was subsequently offered back to Williams, who assumed it again for two additional school years, 1905–1906 and 1906–1907 (Cunningham 2007, 14; Harlan 1972, 8:318).⁸ Roosevelt saw Williams at close hand conducting the band at Tuskegee when the president gave a major national address there on the race question on October 24, 1905.

Scott's 1906 initiative, triggered by the Brownsville affair effort and counting on the personal sympathies of Taft and Roosevelt, had to have been calculated additionally on the basis of inside knowledge about the upcoming return to service in the Philippines by all four regular black regiments and the anticipated re-enrollments, retirements, or transfers of their white bandmasters. All of these events were beginning to appear on the near horizon. The Twenty-Fourth Infantry already had returned to the

8. Williams's three years at Tuskegee made a deep impression on him. He was one "who served most capably as band leader at Tuskegee, and whose love for the institution never diminishes, no matter in what field his lot may be cast" (*The [Indianapolis] Freeman* 1910). As a mark of Tuskegee's esteem for Williams, a cash award at commencement was established, the Elbert Williams prize, for the student making the most progress in instrumental music ("Commencement" 1910). This award was made in 1921, for example, to graduating senior William L. Dawson, the later Tuskegee faculty member and famous composer-arranger and conductor ("Tuskegee Closing" 1921).

Philippines in February 1906, and it was going to be followed by the other three regular black regiments in 1907. The prospect of several years of service in the tropics was enough to nudge many regimental fence-sitters, white and black, to retire or transfer out.

In Manila, Walter H. Loving knew all the white chief musicians and black principal musicians in service in the Philippines, and from that outpost in early 1907 he was drawn by Scott into the campaign for black chief musicians. Evidently responding to an earlier communication from Scott regarding "the band proposition," Loving wrote to Tuskegee from Manila on May 10, 1907, telling Scott that he should look for Negroes outside of the army to lead black regimental bands because the competence of the best available talent would overcome the opposition of regimental commanders, specifically reporting the opposition from the colonels of the Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fourth Infantry. (The full letter is reproduced in Appendix III.) Scott indicated in his reply of July 18 that he was "acquainted with the fact that the Colonels of the 10th Cavalry and the 24th Infantry are already trying to hold their white bandmasters."⁹

In the letter to Scott, Loving is harsh in his assessment of the preparedness of black army musicians to lead, but his precautionary tone was justifiable. He knew that army bandmasters had to be more than just baton-waving conductors. They had to be able to play all of the instruments and give instruction on them to raw beginners; they had to know how to compose, arrange, and orchestrate for their large, nonstandard ensembles; and they faced both technical and medical examinations before promotion. He thought he could prepare four men for the hurdles of promotion in six months (presumably doing the training in Manila). He was not given the opportunity, though, and in the end, as Loving clearly foresaw, the certifications of a number of appointments were delayed or fell through.

Some Recognition at Last: The De Facto and Honorific Appointments

What was at stake in Emmett J. Scott's campaign, it should be said, concerned official promotion to an official rank and duties for a standard term of enrollment. Blacks had served as the actual conductor, that is, as *de facto*, or acting, regimental chief musician, for greater or lesser amounts of time on occasion in the past, and this was known to the black press. One black newspaper noted that "colored men have acted as chief musician in

9. On Loving's role, see Fletcher 1968, 147; Schubert 1995, 271; and Cunningham 2007, 14, 23. See also Harlan 1983, 313–317, who quotes letters from Loving to Scott of April 5, 1907 and May 10, 1907.

all of the colored regiments in the temporary absence of the white chief, and have in every case given satisfaction" ("Making History" 1908). While in the Philippines in 1901–1902 with the Tenth Cavalry, to cite an example, Elbert B. Williams "held the position of chief musician of the 10th cavalry for several months until his time of enlistment expired" (*Cleveland Gazette* 1907). And over the next couple of years after the departure of Williams, "Thomas C. Hammond, principal musician of the 10th Cavalry Band, United States Army . . . has frequently led the band in the absence of the Chief musician and has [*sic*] successfully conducted the rehearsals of the men for long periods, living up to the requirements of the position in every respect" (Thompson 1907).

Moreover, in two unique cases, a revered senior musician about to retire from one of the regular black regiments was honored by actual promotion to chief musician for an anticipated term of no more than a couple of months. Their names were raised in articles in the black press on the chief musician issue. The first, James H. Thomas, was an original member of the Tenth Cavalry and served it for thirty years (1867–1897). For his last decade with the unit, he was its chief trumpeter. Discharged on June 17, 1897, as chief trumpeter, he re-enrolled for a seventh and final time on June 18, 1897, serving briefly and then retiring on August 2, 1897 as chief musician (*Cleveland Gazette* 1907).

A similar honor was bestowed upon John N. Norton in 1907. A member of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment Band for over two dozen years, for most of which time he served as either principal musician or drum major, he was appointed chief musician of the Twenty-Fifth on March 26, 1907, in anticipation of his planned retirement on June 10, 1907 ("Race Gleanings" 1907). One newspaper observed that "it was known for over a year ago that Sergeant Norton was to be given the place referred to above. He is indebted to the colonel and adjutant of his regiment for the promotion" (*Cleveland Gazette* 1907). More will be said about Norton's appointment below.

Scott's Strategy Yields Results: The Regular Appointments

Scott's lobbying efforts for permanent appointments of black bandmasters for the black regiments were eventually successful, but tact, pressure, and patience were required, and his task was further complicated because eight or more black musicians were involved in the jockeying for positions. The first of the four regular appointments of black chief musicians was made in the summer or early fall of 1907. Over a year later, in the closing months of his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt issued a presidential order on November 18, 1908, concerning "transfer of colored regiments' white bandmasters

to white regiments and assignment of colored bandmasters to colored regiments," that officially instituted the policy (General Orders 1908). The fourth permanent appointment was made just about two years after the first, in September 1909, a few months after Taft himself had assumed the presidency.

There were bumps on the road in Scott's campaign, and not all of the originally eligible or designated candidates were promoted or remained for long if they were. The stretch of terrain between appointment (that is, nomination) and confirmation appears to have been especially tricky to negotiate. After the dust had cleared, the incumbents were Elbert B. Williams (1908), Edward Polk (1909), Alfred Jack Thomas (1909), and Wade H. Hammond (1909). The tangled and occasionally interwoven specifics of their appointments will be taken up below unit-by-unit in more or less chronological order, and the reader is urged to be patient in the telling of these sometimes detailed and complex stories.

*James A. Thompson, Wade H. Hammond,
and the Ninth Cavalry*

The first expectative appointment of a black regular army bandsman to be chief musician for a normal period of enrollment was in the Ninth Cavalry band.¹⁰ Its leadership team in 1907 consisted of well-known, longtime white bandmaster Carl S. Gung'l, its chief musician since 1892, and James A. Thompson, a member of the band since 1888 and its principal musician since 1902. During his long army career, Gung'l was mentor to a host of black musicians, so it is likely that he now helped orchestrate or facilitate the appointment of his second-in-command. And Gung'l seems to have been ready to retire. When the regiment had been at Fort Grant in Arizona Territory from 1898 to 1900, he brought out his family and planted roots, and it was getting to be time to make a second, less peripatetic life with them. Gung'l began his last enrollment with the regiment in July 1906 at Fort Riley, Kansas, and transferred to the band of the (white) Fifteenth Cavalry in Havana, Cuba, in February 1907. Quite possibly this move was timed so that he did not have to go with the Ninth Cavalry to the Philippines in June 1907. Gung'l was not merely being shunted aside. The band of the Fifteenth was the finest in the U.S. Army; among all U.S. military bands at the time, it was second only to the U.S. Marine Band ("The President's Own"). Thus

10. The black violinist, cornetist, and minstrel show leader William H. McKanlass (1858–1911) claimed to have been "the first colored musician ever offered the position of chief musician in the U.S. Army, the Ninth Cavalry under Gen. Hatch" ("Capt. W. H. McKanlass" 1899). If there is a shred of truth to this, it would had to have been in 1886, when things were unsettled in the Ninth and a total of three different white musicians held the post. General Hatch died in 1889.

Gungl was being offered a most prestigious posting. He led his new band for a year and a half before retiring in Cuba on September 30, 1908.

Upon the transfer of Gungl, James A. Thompson, an African-American nineteen-year veteran, was elevated to de facto chief musician within his own unit in early 1907. By one report, "As assistant leader he had charge of the band in the absence of the white chief, and was thus enabled to demonstrate his competency both as an artist and as an executive officer" ("To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908), and another account says he had "been serving at intervals for a long time as leader, while holding the position of principal musician, the official title by which the first assistant is known in the army" ("Negro Bandmaster" 1909).¹¹ Though there evidently was a delay in issuing his official papers, at the time of his January 1908 discharge and re-enrollment, the U.S. Army Register of Enlistments identifies Thompson as chief musician.

James A. Thompson was chief musician of the Ninth Cavalry band from February 1907 to later 1909. Although holding the title, he seems never to have been fully confirmed, perhaps because he could not pass the physical. After only two years he had to step down, first relinquishing his bandleader's appointment and then, as principal musician, retiring on account of disability on November 19, 1909. No time was lost in finding his replacement. Successful lobbying by a nationally prominent African-American public figure, Bishop William T. Vernon, registrar of the U.S. Treasury and president of Western University in Quindaro, Kansas, led to the appointment of Wade H. Hammond, for the previous two years the bandmaster at Western, to Thompson's post. Hammond entered the regular army and took the reins as chief musician in the Ninth Cavalry in September 1909, two months before his predecessor's full retirement. He was at that moment, according to the black press, the fourth of four, a claim that could no longer be gainsaid, and "the quota is complete" ("At the National Capital" 1909). Wade H. Hammond served with distinction as chief musician of the Ninth Cavalry until 1922, then in a similar capacity with the Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, retiring in 1942 after thirty-three years of service.

*John N. Norton, Elbert B. Williams,
and the Twenty-Fifth Infantry*

For about a decade, from February 1895 to December 1904, the stable leadership team of the band of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry consisted of white chief musician Vincent F. Safranek and black principal musician John N.

11. In "To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908, Thompson's is the first appointment discussed; the article gives no firm date but clearly intends to mean that the appointment fell in late 1907 or early 1908, significantly in advance of the second, which it identifies as that of Elbert Williams on March 16, 1908.

Norton. Upon re-enrollment in 1904, Safranek transferred to the Sixth Infantry Band. He was replaced as chief musician by Joseph Belisle. When Belisle's three-year term was up in March 1907, he transferred as chief musician to the Twenty-Sixth Infantry. Very possibly he preferred not to go the Philippines. Norton was then appointed chief musician on March 26, 1907, at which point it was understood that he was going to retire from the army on June 10, 1907; this appointment, already mentioned above, was surely intended at first as an honorific of short tenure. As it turned out, however, Norton stayed on significantly longer, sailing to the Philippines in the summer of 1907 with the band and serving there until his retirement in January 1908 ("From across the Sea" 1908).

Norton's succession was carefully lined up, and it involved a by now familiar name in this article, Elbert B. Williams. However, the story gets a bit convoluted here. While Williams was serving officially in the Tenth Cavalry but was delegated to Tuskegee to direct the Institute's band for the second time, he came up for discharge in 1907 at about the same moment as his nominal white superior, the Tenth Cavalry's chief musician, George F. Tyrrell. From Tuskegee, Scott and Washington pushed for the promotion of their protégé Williams to be chief musician of the Tenth Cavalry instead of Tyrrell or any other white bandmaster. They did not get their way. (The situation with the Tenth Cavalry will be revisited below.)

Another solution, though, involving Norton's job was quickly found for Williams. When his term of duty and posting to Tuskegee expired in June 1907, he transferred to the Twenty-Fifth Infantry as principal musician under Norton, nominally to serve for a normal three-year enlistment period, and he went with the regiment to the Philippines. Possibly he had expected to take the position of chief musician in late June, when Norton was originally due to retire. In any event, Norton held on a while longer, stepping down the following January in the Philippines. Elbert Williams was formally designated as chief musician of the Twenty-Fifth on March 16, 1908. The appointment seems to have been confirmed in June 1908, after a thorough vetting.¹² In announcing the appointment, the [Baltimore] *Afro-American Ledger* said, "He has served as principal musician, has conducted the band on many important occasions, and fairly won his spurs in tests of the most trying character. His appointment was a popular one" ("To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908).

Despite other candidates for the honor of being called number one, the Williams appointment was, in at least some eyes, "the first fruit of Emmett

12. For the March date, see "To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908 and the letter of Williams to Emmett Scott on March 19, 1908 (Harlan 1983, 313–317). The date is also given as June 1908 ("Chance for another negro bandmaster" 1909), and the discrepancy may have to do with examinations that Williams had to pass to confirm his position.

J. Scott's persistent and productive agitation for Negro bandmasters for negro regiments in the United States Army" (Thompson 1909). And the newspapers carefully noted that all his paperwork was signed, sealed, and delivered. Although the newspapers are silent on this specific point, the implication to be read here is that James A. Thompson, whose appointment had preceded that of Williams by about a half a year, was still waiting to be fully processed.

Williams was a well-liked leader. According to a black newspaper, "Elbert Williams, leader of the Twenty-fifth, has demonstrated the superior advantage to be derived from having our bands in charge of a sympathetic associate rather than an alien 'boss'" (Thompson, December 1908). He served as chief musician of the Twenty-Fifth for three years, 1908–1911, both in the Philippines and at Fort Lawton in Seattle. At the end of 1908, Sergeant Leslie V. King, a protégé of Williams, was named to be his assistant. In 1910 Williams reenlisted for another three-year term (1910–1913) with the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, but he transferred in 1911 to the Ninth Cavalry band with a step down to principal musician in what probably was a managed succession for his second-in-command. King stepped up from principal musician into the role of chief musician with the Twenty-Fifth and held this post for almost a quarter century until his retirement in 1935. Meanwhile, Williams reenlisted again in 1913 with a transfer to the Tenth Cavalry, where he probably functioned as acting chief musician for one year while Alfred Jack Thomas was at Bandmasters School (see below). Retiring in 1914 after thirty years of service, Williams first moved back to Washington state to be near his wife's family, then crossed the continent to Washington, D.C., to teach at a new African-American conservatory, the Columbia Academy and Conservatory of Music. He subsequently reentered the army as the bandmaster of a new black World War I regiment, the 93rd Division's 371st Infantry Regiment, the Black Tigers.

*Thomas C. Hammond, Alfred Jack Thomas,
and the Tenth Cavalry*

The Tenth Cavalry Band had not had a fully stable leadership team since the retirement of the white chief musician, Claude Goldsbury, who had served in that role from 1885 to 1897 and had caught the eye of W. C. Handy in 1896. Goldsbury was briefly replaced by black bandsman James Thomas, as discussed above, and then by the white George W. Darrow, who died within a year. Next in the post was George F. Tyrrell, who served as chief musician from 1898 to 1902, followed by George F. Kelley from 1902 to 1904, and then Tyrrell again from 1904 to 1909. Tyrrell's health was an ongoing problem, and Elbert B. Williams, his principal musician, may

have served in an extraordinary capacity as acting chief musician in 1901–1902.¹³ The question of whether a black could lead a black regimental band was put vigorously in 1907 at the end of Tyrrell's second tour of duty with the regiment, in anticipation of his expected reappointment as chief musician. This appointment was contested on behalf of black musician Thomas C. Hammond, a cornetist and violinist who had served as chief trumpeter of the Tenth for most of the time since his first enrollment in 1894 and who had recently been promoted to principal musician. Another candidate in the mix was Elbert Williams, as already mentioned.

Tyrrell's colonel wanted to keep him, so he held on to his post in 1907, but not without public resentment.

Upon the statement that no Afro-American is available, the war department has authorized the reenlistment of the present chief musician of the Tenth cavalry, a white man, at the end of his present enlistment, which expires July 31 of the present year. This news was received with much disappointment by the enlisted men of the regiment, who rejoiced at the prospect of a colored man holding such a conspicuous and well-paying position as chief musician of a regimental band.¹⁴ ("A Chief Musician's Position Lost!" 1907)

With the Ninth Cavalry and Twenty-Fifth Infantry positions settled for the moment and with the army still under pressure, it was inevitable that a prestigious transfer for Tyrrell would be worked out. In fact, he went to the Fifteenth Cavalry, apparently following directly after Gung'l as chief musician of its elite band. Hammond, the principal musician, was designated to succeed him in the Tenth Cavalry. In July 1908, the black press thus was able to celebrate the announced appointments of three out of four black bandmasters: Thompson, Williams, and Hammond ("To Have Negro Bandmasters" 1908). To summarize, James A. Thompson had been appointed to the Ninth, and his appointment had been followed by the appointment and confirmation of Elbert B. Williams to the Twenty-Fifth, while Thomas C. Hammond was soon to be appointed to the Tenth, leaving only the band of the Twenty-Fourth in white hands.

13. By one account, at some point Williams "held the position of chief musician of the Tenth cavalry for several months until his time of enlistment expired," but the year is not specified (*Cleveland Gazette* 1907); Anthony Powell's research has Williams as chief musician in 1901–1902 (Johnson 2004, 10, 11). This must have been in an acting capacity only.

14. In recommending the promotion of Thomas C. Hammond to bandmaster, Ira T. Bryant, a musician and prominent black lay person in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., protested the reenlistment of George F. Tyrell as chief musician, Tenth Cavalry, on the basis of the argument that there was no competent colored man; he felt that the decision to keep Tyrell "is discouraging to all colored army musicians" (Schubert 1995, 184, citing a letter of August 12, 1907 from Bryant to Secretary of War Taft). About the initial trouble with the appointment to the Tenth Cavalry, see also Schubert 1995, 478.

The celebration, though, was premature. Tyrrell had been on an extended furlough to the U.S., presumably for reasons of health, leaving Hammond to be conductor, but then Tyrrell returned to his unit in the Philippines. At this juncture, it was decided that he would keep his appointment until the return of the regiment to Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, in the spring of 1909, and serve through their move to Fort Myer, Virginia. (The timing was such that Tyrrell's announced transfer became the first under Roosevelt's presidential order of November 1908.) Hammond would have to sit back and wait for almost another year for his official, regular promotion.

These changing plans left more confusing traces in the newspapers, which were doing their best to keep up. In late August 1908, *The* (Indianapolis) *Freeman* wrote of there being two black bandmasters who were regularly appointed, namely Thompson and Williams (Thompson, August 1908), but the paper had backed off by December to a statement that only one, that is, Williams, was "full-fledged" ("Making History" 1908), and this is where things stood on January 16, 1909 ("The Freeman Would Like to See" 1909). The same newspaper, however, wrote of "two, with one soon to follow" just a week later, on January 23, 1909 ("Negro Bandmaster" 1909). The best resolution of the unfolding story may be that only at this very moment in January 1909 was James A. Thompson at last fully confirmed in his appointment with the Ninth, while Hammond was still awaiting Tyrrell's transfer out of the Tenth.

The promotion of the principal musician, Thomas C. Hammond, did not, however, follow as expected. Upon the return of the Tenth Cavalry to the United States in the spring of 1909, white bandmaster Tyrrell moved laterally and was in his new posting with the Fifteenth Cavalry band by June. But something then fell through for Hammond. Discharged in mid-August back down at the rank of private, he reenlisted with the Twenty-Fourth Infantry in mid-September 1909, also at the rank of private.

In place of Thomas C. Hammond, a younger, up-and-coming colleague in the Tenth Cavalry band, Alfred Jack Thomas, took the reins as chief musician. This possibly happened right after the departure of Tyrrell in June or over the summer at the time of Hammond's move, but in any event before Thomas's own October 1909 discharge and reenlistment. Because another Hammond, the unrelated Wade H. Hammond, ultimately was called the fourth of four, it sounds as if Thomas officially took up the post before W. H. Hammond's September appointment. Alfred Jack (A. J.) Thomas had first enlisted in the Tenth Cavalry in 1903. He served as its chief musician at Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, for three years, 1909–1912, undertook two years of U.S. Army bandmaster schooling in 1912–1914, rejoined the Tenth for another three years, 1914–1917, and then transferred to a newly formed black unit, the 92nd Division's 368th Infantry Regiment, for World

War I service. Afterward he had a long and distinguished postwar civilian career as a musician and educator in Baltimore. Serving under him in the Tenth were future black army bandleaders Dorcy Rhodes, William H. Lewis, and John A. Clarke. Lewis and Clarke became the leadership team of the Tenth Cavalry in 1917. Dorcy Rhodes led the band of the 351st Field Artillery in World War I and then, after a few years as a civilian, reentered the U.S. Army to be bandmaster in the 9th Cavalry.

*Edward Polk, Alexander Sewall,
and the Twenty-Fourth Infantry*

W. O. (Wilfred Otto) Thompson, the last white chief musician of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry, served in that role from 1899 to early 1909, succeeding Charles H. Schaffner. Initially, his second-in-command was the long-serving and well-liked Archie H. Wall, who had been in the Twenty-Fourth since 1876 and had served as its principal musician since 1885. Wall, though, retired in 1903 and was replaced as principal musician by Edward Polk, who had been in the band since 1899.

In the spring of 1907, Loving and Scott knew of the reluctance of W. O. Thompson's colonel to lose him to a transfer. The Twenty-Fourth Infantry returned to the U.S. from the Philippines in early 1908, and Thompson was due to end his term of service at Madison Barracks, New York, in November. Protocol ensured his reenlistment as chief musician of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry on November 29, but because he was white his position was no longer tenable, and plans were afoot to transfer him. The black press reported that he would go to the Twenty-Sixth Infantry, a white regiment, and return to the Philippines to replace its retiring bandmaster, Valentine Buckreis ("Making History" 1908), which is the posting that eventually went to Joseph Belisle. At the time this planned transfer became public knowledge, several African-American musicians came under consideration for Thompson's job. The Baltimore and Washington black press particularly lobbied for a local favorite, Alexander Sewall, who had been a navy trumpeter. One black newspaper reported that "among those mentioned for the position is Alexander Sewall, formerly of the United States Navy, conductor of a band in this city [Washington, D.C.], who is highly recommend by musicians of the highest standing" ("Making History" 1908).

The twists and turns in Sewall's story are mirrored in press reports in the *Washington Bee*. Early in January, a small notice identified Sewall as the leader of a local orchestra and band and said he was being mentioned in connection with the vacancy in the Twenty-Fourth (*Washington Bee*, January 2, 1909, 5). Not long thereafter we learn that Sewall had applied for the position, but that the present bandmaster then reenlisted so that there was

no longer a vacancy (Sewall 1909). In another pendulum swing two weeks later, the *Bee* reiterated that Sewall was a candidate and said that Sewall is “a musician bearing excellent endorsements from members of the Marine Band” (“The Week in Society” 1909; see also “News Notes” January 1909). The ground was constantly shifting around Sewall because, shortly after his reenlistment, W. O. Thompson once more got slated to be posted away, this time to the Eighteenth Infantry band (“Chief Musician Thompson is Transferred” 1909). In a final hiccup, however, Thompson was ultimately transferred neither to the Twenty-Sixth nor the Eighteenth Infantry but to the Ninth Infantry, while Sewall’s candidacy somehow evaporated.

The Twenty-Fourth Infantry’s principal musician, Edward Polk, stepped up to the position of chief musician in June 1909. In the army since 1888, Polk had served in bands of the Ninth Cavalry and Twenty-Fifth Infantry before joining the Twenty-Fourth. He served with distinction in his prestigious new role for four years, from 1909 to 1913, and was succeeded by another member of the band’s black leadership team, Kenney Smith. In the late spring of 1909, it seemed that W. O. Thompson’s replacement by Polk in the Twenty-Fourth would create the fourth of four black bandmasters. However, at the moment of Polk’s formal appointment, the newspapers instead celebrated the fact that “this gives the race three of the four bandmasters provided for the Negro regiments in the United States Army, with one Negro principal musician acting as bandmaster in the fourth regiment” (“News Notes” June 1909; on three of four, see also “Commissioner Emmet J. Scott” 1909). Presumably the Ninth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry were settled, and James A. Hammond—heir apparent in the Tenth Cavalry—was still waiting for the bureaucratic wheels to grind. But in the end, Polk became only the second black bandmaster to make it through from appointment to confirmation. He was rapidly to be followed by A. J. Thomas and W. H. Hammond.

Some Last Thoughts

Summarizing the positions from which blacks became pioneering chief musicians, we can say that most had been for greater or lesser stretches of time the principal musician in the same unit, so promotions to chief musician were effected from within, following military hierarchy and protocol. In several instances, moreover, the principal musician had served as *de facto* band leader before assuming the official position. Only Wade H. Hammond, replacing James A. Thompson after his short tenure, came directly from outside the military, in his case from a black university setting.

Also, unsurprisingly, a profoundly racist U.S. Army dragged its heels as long as it could in these matters, made it hard for the black bandmasters to

win confirmation, and ensured that the replaced white bandmasters were not disadvantaged. Gungl and Tyrrell successively directed the prestigious Fifteenth Cavalry band before retirement. W. O. Thompson also moved within the military for a short while before retiring. All three ended up as prominent local bandmasters in civilian school settings. Belisle moved laterally, too, and he then continued for several more decades in the military.

Among the pioneering black army bandmasters, the most neglected figure, sitting at the very center of the story and deserving of significantly more recognition than he has received to the present, is Elbert B. Williams, whose early career was so closely entwined with that of Walter H. Loving, and also with Emmet J. Scott and Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee. Williams served as a military bandsman in six different African-American regiments, the 9th, 10th, 24th, 25th, 10th Volunteers, and 371st Infantry. Three times an official army bandmaster (in the 10th Volunteers, 25th, and 371st), he was the second African American to be tapped for a regular appointment but the first to be fully confirmed for a normal term. Moreover, Williams had a long and important second career in music education at Tuskegee and in Washington, D.C. He was older by almost twenty years than most of his fellow band leaders when he answered the call in World War I, and when he returned to Washington, D.C., after a year's service abroad, he led bands in that city's African American community into the 1920s.

As a token of esteem from the sitting chief musicians, Emmett J. Scott received an elaborately hammered and engraved three-handled silver loving cup mounted on an ebony base at a ceremony in the Tuskegee chapel on Tuesday, February 1, 1910. The occasion commemorated his central role in the fulfillment of the quota of four black bandmasters for the U.S. Army. The names inscribed on that cup were those of Elbert Williams, Edward Polk, Wade Hammond, and Alfred J. Thomas.¹⁵

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Appendix I

Bandmasters of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry¹

Ninth Cavalry 1866–1944

European-American Bandmasters:		Served
William Boerner (1834–1919)	German	1867–1872
Charles Spiegel (1824–1905)	German	1872–1886
Gustav Oechsle (1839–1913)	German	1886
James Watters (1839–1913)	Irish	1886–1892
Carl S. Gung ¹ (1850–1937)	German	1892–1907
African-American Bandmasters:		Served
James A. Thompson (1865–after 1909)		1907–1909
Wade H. Hammond (1878–1957)		1909–1921/22
Morris Brown (1881–1939)		1921/22–1926
Dorcy Rhodes (1887–1951)		1926–1936
John A. Clarke (1886–1978)		1936–1944

Tenth Cavalry 1866–1944

European-American Bandmasters:		Served
[data gap 1866–1875]		
George A. Brenner (c. 1840–1896)	German	1875–1883 [1885?]
Claude Goldsbury (1858–1936)	English	1883–1897
James H. Thomas (1846/51–1907)	(U.S.; black)	1897
George W. Darrow (1862–1898)	U.S.	1897–1898
George F. Tyrrell (1862–1917)	English	1898–1902
George H. Kelley (1855–after 1920)	U.S.	1902–1904
Tyrrell, again		1904–1909
African-American Bandmasters:		Served
A. Jack Thomas (1884–1962)		1909–1917
William H. Lewis (1881–1966)		1917–1921/22
Wade H. Hammond (1878–1957)		1921/22–1934
[gap 1934–1942; band deactivated]		
Harry H. Hollowell (1914–2005)		1942–1944

Twenty-Fourth Infantry 1869–1951

European-American Bandmasters:		Served
Thad Potter (1835–)	U.S.	1870–1872
[data gap 1872–1878]		
Carl S. Gung ¹ (1850–1937)	German	1878–1889
Charles Schwab (1851–1893)	German	1889–1893
Charles H. Schaffner (1858/62–1916)	U.S.	1893–1899
Wilfred O. Thompson (1869–1950)	U.S.	1899–1909
African-American Bandmasters:		Served
Edward Polk (1866–1933)		1909–1913
Kenney Smith (1871–1949)		1913–1916
Thomas A. Green (1877–1959)		1916–1917
William Warren (1869–1940)		1917–1923
Robert B. Tresville (1891–1965)		1923–1941
Slone [Sloan] Williams Jr. (1904–1983)		1941–1944

Twenty-Fifth Infantry 1869–1946

European-American Bandmasters:		Served
Isaac A. Priest (1828–1870)	U.S.	1869–1870
Michael A. Truber (1835–1893)	German	1870–1880
Frank W. Arnold (1835–1888)	German	1880–1887
John H. Petermann (1845–after 1915)	German	1887–1890
Louis Bracht (1839– after 1898)	German	1890–1893
James F. Hopkins (1864–1937)	U.S.	1893–1894
Vincent F. Safranek (1867–1955)	Bohemian	1895–1905
Joseph Belisle (1870–1939)	U.S.	1905–1907
African-American Bandmasters:		Served
John N. Norton (1856–1935)		1907–1908
Elbert B. Williams (1864–after 1921)		1908–1911
Leslie V. King (1881–1963)		1911–1934
Wade H. Hammond (1878–1957)		1934–1942
Jesse J. Stanbrough (1892–1947)		1942–1944

1. Starting points for the data in Appendix 1 were Powell 1994, Southern 1997, and Johnson 2004.

Appendix II

Documents A and B

Document A. “News of the Army: Remedial Legislation Needed for Army Bands,” *Kansas City Times*, January 6, 1896, p. 8:

Adjutant General Ruggles has a good word to say for army bands in his annual report. He says that the proper maintenance of the regimental band is a question requiring remedial legislation. The band has been an adjunct of the regiment since the foundation of the government, and has always been recognized as contributing to the pleasure, the contentment and the discipline of the enlisted men. As at present organized it is composed of one chief musician authorized by law, and one sergeant and twenty privates possessing musical ability detached from companies, and is of no expense to the government other than the cost of transportation, instruments and music. The band is maintained by the savings of the ration, 5 per cent of the profits of the post exchange and earnings from private engagements for parties in civil life. A portion of the money thus obtained by hiring out the band is paid to the men to secure first-class musicians, for it is found impossible to maintain good military bands on the pay of \$13 of the private soldier. The outside engagement of bands have been the source of much correspondence growing out of the objection from bands in civil life. Although the army bands have always been prohibited from furnishing music at prices lower than charged by other bands, the civilian often prefers the military organization, and as a result there is endless protest. Upon one

occasion one of the States from which the government asked the cession of jurisdiction required by the constitution, demanded as the condition thereof assurance that competition of soldier with citizen labor should be discontinued within its boundaries. Surely a great government that can provide its soldiers with the best of arms and ammunition, of clothing and rations and quarters and medical attendance, should not stoop to obtain its martial music by hiring out its bands to processions, to balls, to theaters, to gardens, and to anything that may bring in money.

General Ruggles recommends that regimental bands be authorized by law, organized and paid as follows: One principal musician, \$75; one sergeant, \$50; ten privates, \$25; twelve privates, \$20 per month.

Document B. Allen Allensworth, Chaplain 24th Infantry,
 "The 24th Infantry," *The [Indianapolis] Freeman*,
 October 18, 1902, p. 1 (excerpts):

The 24th Infantry Now Garrisoning Fort Harrison, Montana: The Famous 24th Infantry Band Has Merited and Received More Favorable Comment, While in Manila, than Any Military Band on the Island—A Few Vacancies Soon.

. . . . The 24th Infantry band has merited, and received more favorable criticism through the press of Manila, where it was on duty, and by the verbal comments of persons of who have heard it, than any other military band on the island. Its fame spread to all the cities of the East, and in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore, as in Manila, it was accepted as a standard of excellence. . . . This band soon won the hearts of Manila by its complete organization, artistic ability, and the character of the men. This was done by their willingness and readiness to respond to the numerous calls for music, to aid charitable enterprises and to serve at social functions. . . . It may be that some of your musical readers would like to know what chances there are for a musician to improve and advance in an army band. I will answer them. If he wishes to perfect himself in the art, he has nothing to do but respond to his calls, learn and perform. In addition to this he has an opportunity to make and save money. If he has a trade, he will have extra time to use it—barber, tailor or shoemaker. The pay ranges from \$13 to \$60 month, according to the position held in the band, with clothing, board and medical supplies and attendance furnished.

Besides this, there are opportunities to make extra pay from private engagements, public concerts and entertainments. While in Manila the band made several thousand dollars in this way. I am informed by the commanding officer of the band, that there will be shortly a few vacancies, by reason

of retirement of a sergeant and a few others, who will be retired from all active service and placed on the retired list on three fourths pay. Some of those retired men receive as much as \$50 per month. Some of our retired bandmen have purchased elegant homes in California from their savings while in the army.

The 24th Infantry band has a pleasant future. It is contemplating a tour of representative duty at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, so those who are members of this musical organization will be very fortunate.

Appendix III

Source: Library of Congress, *Booker T. Washington Papers, 1853–1946*, 762 microfilm reels, reel 76 (Special Correspondence, 1906–1911)

Manila, P.I. May 10, 1907

My dear Mr. Scott:

Inclosed you will find a clipping from the Manila American of May 10th on the proposed Tuskegee School to be started here this fall. You will see by this that the work at Tuskegee has spread over the entire globe.

Now Mr. Scott, I have been investigating the band proposition and find that there are no musicians who are now in the Army capable of taking charge of these bands. I would suggest that some steps be taken to select four men of talent and send them to some college of music to prepare for six months for these positions. As it is, the Colonel will not accept a man who cannot out do the man that is being relieved, and he will continue to write to the War Department saying there are no colored men who are competent to fill these positions. It would be too bad for you to work so hard to bring about this change and then have your work result in vain. I understand from good authority that the Colonels of the 10th Cavalry and the 24th Infantry have already asked the War Department to retain the present incumbants [*sic*] in office.

Another thing, I will show you just why the Chief musician should be a man unknown to the members of the band. It is because the men will have a tendency not to pay proper respect to a man cut out of their own ranks. You cannot expect to drink, fall asleep and eat with a crowd of men and then after a quick ascension expect these men to pay you due respect. While on the other hand, if a new man comes to the regiment bearing a good reputation as to conduct and ability, the men will be forced to respect him. But if a man goes to a regiment knowing no more than the man he is supposed to teach, his days will be numbered by both men and officers. The

officers especially will pick out every little flaw to make good their objection to colored Bandmasters.

I truly hope that you will take this step in order to ward off all danger in the future, as I am certain nothing can be accomplished without this precaution. If I were nearer I would gladly take hold of four good men and have them ready in six months to take charge of these bands and make the same or better progress than their predecessors.

I truly hope that success may crown your every effort to bring about this important change which is but a stepping stone to higher things in the future.

Very truly yours
WHLoving
Captain PC.