

Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers

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Duty to family and country were the greatest motivators in Charles Young's life. When he came home, he would put down his sword and enjoy time with family and friends. He also played several instruments and wrote songs, poetry, and plays.

Young's drive to succeed included his family. He and his wife, Ada (above), who attended Spelman College, sent their children to good schools. Ada was active in the local Wilberforce community and managed the family's affairs.

My dearest Ada: I hope this letter reaches your arrival in New York and find you well and more successful than in your last.

Charles Young

The NAACP honored Young in 1916 (above left).

War I. In protest, he rode his horse from Ohio to DC to prove his fitness. He was sent to Camp Grant in Illinois to train troops (above right).

Charles Young's inspirational life embodies the hope and opportunity that military service has provided African Americans since the mid-1800s. His career began as a leader of the Buffalo Soldiers, whose story is also told at this park. The map below shows the range of his work, and photographs illustrate his life in the field and at home. Explore the life of Brigadier General Charles Young and how his influence continues today.

Young (seated, center, front row) with the 9th Cavalry, 1 Troop, during the Philippine-American War, where they served from 1901 to 1902. He sits next to Samuel Pearson, who became a lifelong friend.

Young in western Wyoming, around 1910. He trained soldiers in the field year-round.

The Youngs' children, Marie Aurelia and Charles Noel, often helped with farming at Youngsholm.

Marie Aurelia and Charles Noel attended schools in Europe when their father was stationed in Liberia.

San Francisco, California
Wilberforce, Ohio
Washington, DC
Mexico
Haiti
Liberia
Nigeria
France
Atlantic Ocean
Pacific Ocean

The World of Charles Young

FROM SLAVERY TO CADET

1864–89 Charles Young is born enslaved in Kentucky, graduates with honors from an integrated high school, and becomes the third African American to graduate from the US Military Academy at West Point.

1863

EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Abraham Lincoln declares that enslaved people occupying Confederate states were “thenceforward, and forever free.” However, slavery remains legal in the rest of the United States.

In Kentucky, Young's family is one of many who remain enslaved despite the Emancipation Proclamation. They use the Underground Railroad to reach freedom in Ohio.

1865

13th AMENDMENT RATIFIED

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

1866

AFRICAN AMERICAN UNITS IN THE ARMY

Congress establishes the first segregated US Army units for African Americans. Later they are called Buffalo Soldiers.

As a cadet at West Point, Young succeeded despite racism from the school and his fellow cadets.

WEST POINT TO WAR

Young's first decade as a US Army officer begins and ends at remote posts. He also teaches at Wilberforce College in Ohio and thrives in the town's cultural atmosphere.

1872

A NEW IDEA FOR THE WORLD

On March 1 the world's first national park is established when President Ulysses S. Grant signs the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act. Buffalo Soldiers are entrusted to patrol federal parks and build roads, trails, and structures.

1896

“SEPARATE BUT EQUAL”

The US Supreme Court confirms that separate but equal facilities are legal for African Americans. The military's segregation policies—like assigning Buffalo Soldiers to separate units—are allowed to continue.

1898–1902

INTERNATIONAL WARS

The United States is at war with Spain in 1898, then the Philippines from 1899 to 1902.

Young serves stateside during the Spanish-American War. He leads troops into battle during the Philippine-American War.

FAMILY AND DUTY

Young experiences major personal and professional changes as he marries, starts a family, and advances his career through a variety of posts.

1903

In San Francisco Young leads the 9th Cavalry in a parade for President Theodore Roosevelt. He is the first African American national park superintendent, as well as the first African American superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant (now Kings Canyon) National Parks.

1905–09

NIAGARA MOVEMENT

W.E.B. Du Bois attracts national attention with this group, which encourages African Americans to seek civil rights through political action.

In 1904 Young becomes the first African American military attaché, serving in Haiti as a diplomat, historian, and cartographer.

In 1907 the Youngs purchase a large house in Wilberforce, Ohio, and name it Youngsholm. The house was once used as a site on the Underground Railroad.

NAACP ESTABLISHED

In 1909 followers of the Niagara Movement join other African American activists to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

CHANGING TIMES

Young is honored for his leadership during the Punitive Expedition in Mexico, and in 1917 Gen. John J. Pershing recommends his promotion to colonel.

1914–18

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

War breaks out in Europe; the United States declares war in 1917.

The US Army keeps Young out of World War I, then forces him to retire. In June 1918 Young rides his horse from Wilberforce, Ohio, to Washington, DC, to demonstrate his fitness. He is later reinstated and serves as military attaché in Liberia.

1920

WOMEN GET THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The 19th Amendment is ratified 72 years after the First Women's Rights Convention.

1921

Late in 1921 Young becomes ill from a kidney infection while sailing to Lagos, Nigeria, on an assignment. He dies there on January 8, 1922. Ada receives the news three weeks later.

Major Young received the Spingarn Medal for his accomplishments in Liberia as a military attaché, around 1916.

In November 2021 Charles Young was posthumously promoted to brigadier general by the secretary of the Army.

Buffalo Soldiers

300 Years of Service and Segregation	After the Civil War 1866 Onward	International Wars 1898–1902	Transitions 1900–20	World Wars 1917–45	Military Integration 1948–90s	Their Legacy
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African Americans fight for this country as early as King William’s War (1689–97), which cements British power in America. In 1770 Crispus Attucks—of African and Native American descent—is killed during the Boston Massacre. Over 6,000 African Americans fight in the American Revolution (1775–83); over 200,000 fight for the Union in the Civil War (1861–65). Charles Young’s father Gabriel escapes slavery and serves in the 5th US Colored Heavy Artillery. Martin Delany (*below*) is the first African American to become an officer. They are among the many whose military service helps them achieve a level of equality impossible as civilians. But full integration in the military takes another century.

Civil War: 4th US Colored Troops

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / WILLIAM MORRIS SMITH

Martin Delany

NPS

Cathay Williams as William Cathay

US ARMY / WILLIAM JENNINGS

Buffalo Soldiers

US ARMY HERITAGE AND EDUCATION CENTER

Tuskegee Airmen

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / TONI FRISSELL

Korean War

US ARMY HERITAGE AND EDUCATION CENTER

Robert Stanton with Col. Young image

NPS

PERSEVERING PATRIOTS

Charles Young excelled as a military officer at a time when African Americans were excluded from most leadership positions in society. He endured racism, hardship, combat, injury, and malaria but always persevered. He hoped he could make a difference—and he did. He supported the careers of many officers who went on to break more barriers. One, Benjamin O. Davis Sr., became the first African American one-star general in the US Army. Davis’s son achieved greatness, too, as described in the “Sphere of Influence” (*right*).

COLIN POWELL *A son of immigrants, Powell becomes the first African American to serve as chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and as secretary of state.*

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CULTIVATING CULTURE

Charles Young shared his love of music and literature wherever his career took him. He formed military bands at isolated posts and taught soldiers how to play. He and Ada hosted evenings of music and poetry. But Wilberforce, Ohio, was where their cultural life flourished.

The town was known for prominent leaders like Martin Delany (*above*), who practiced medicine and worked for African American civil rights. Other leaders, like W.E.B. Du Bois and Hallie Q. Brown (*both at right*), followed him here. The town was also home to Laura Smith, who had sheltered travelers on the Underground Railroad. The Youngs may have bought her house because of its history.

Youngsholm became a hub for the arts and politics. The Youngs also made their home a place to mentor the next generation of African American leaders.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON *Founder of the Tuskegee Institute, he said of Young, “Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached . . . as by the obstacles which he has overcome.”*

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / C. E. CHEYNE

WILBERFORCE UNIVERSITY as it looked in the early days when it was a college

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, UNC CHAPEL HILL

W.E.B. DU BOIS *A famed scholar, he said, “If Charles Young’s blood pressure was too high for [combat duty], why was it not too high for him to be sent to the even more arduous duty in the swamps of West Africa?”*

W.E.B. DU BOIS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

ADA MILLS YOUNG *Raised and educated in San Francisco, California, Ada joins her husband as he travels the world. She also becomes a community leader in Wilberforce, Ohio.*

NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER

WILBERFORCE STUDENTS around 1900

NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER

BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR. *The fourth African American to graduate the US Military Academy at West Point and a decorated Tuskegee airman. President Clinton advances Lt. Gen. Davis to the rank of four-star general.*

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

BARACK OBAMA *The first African American US president and commander in chief of the military. He establishes Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in 2013.*

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / PETE SOUZA

FAMILY TIES

A passion for service and learning, a talent for music and poetry, and a love of horses—Charles Young received these gifts from his parents, Gabriel and Arminta, and his maternal grandmother Julia. After the family settled in Ripley, Ohio, Gabriel started a livery business that provided horse-drawn transportation. He taught Charles how to care for horses and encouraged his love of music by hiring a piano tutor. These skills would serve him well throughout his life.

Julia, who had been one of the first African American teachers in Kentucky, and Arminta tutored Charles. He graduated high school with honors at age 17. At the commencement ceremony, he gave an oration titled “Let There Be Light.”

Charles and Ada Young gave these same gifts to their children, Charles Noel and Marie Aurelia, and they shared their passion for service and equality with the world.

CHILDREN on horseback at the Young family farm

NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER



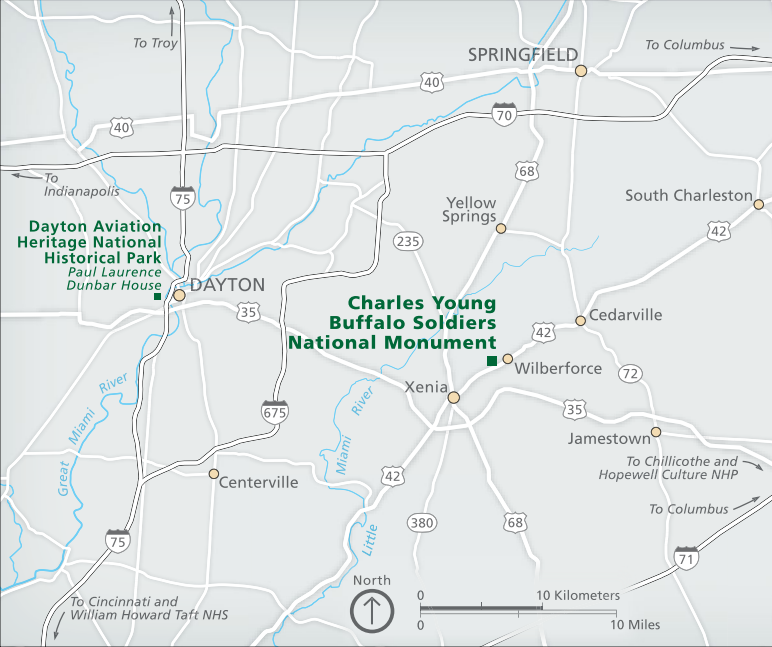
Historic transom window from Youngsholm. Such windows indicated a prominent household in the community.

Welcome to Youngsholm

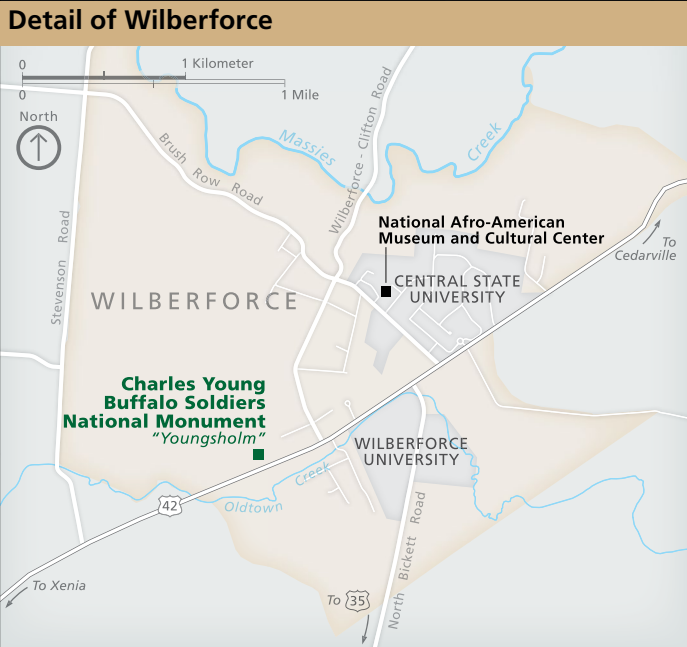
Charles Young’s home is the center of activity for this national monument. We welcome you to visit often. Tours, programs, and events are offered year-round for visitors of all ages.

HOW TO GET HERE Youngsholm is in Wilberforce, Ohio, on US 42, one mile west of Wilberforce University and Central State University. Free off-street parking is available.

WHAT TO DO Visit Youngsholm to immerse yourself in the life and legacy of Charles Young and the Buffalo Soldiers. Explore exhibits, watch the park film, collect your passport stamp, and browse the bookstore. Check the park website for operating hours and program information. Enjoy a self-guiding walking tour, set on nearly 60 acres of the Youngs’ historic farm. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk. Use the official NPS App to guide your visit. The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center has artifacts belonging to Charles Young. Visit nearby national parks that share a rich history with Youngsholm (*map above*).



BE SAFE AND PROTECT THE PARK The park is on a US highway. Drive and walk cautiously. • Summers can be hot and humid. Bring water to drink, wear sun protection, and take frequent breaks. • Prevent insect bites and stings by wearing closed-toed shoes and using insect repellent. • In winter sidewalks and steps can be slippery. • Using remotely piloted aircraft like drones is prohibited. • For firearms and other regulations check the park website.



Emergencies call 911

ACCESSIBILITY We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information call or check the park website.

National Park Foundation. Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

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Omega Psi Phi window at Youngsholm. This fraternity of African American leaders protected the home and helped establish this national monument to Buffalo Soldiers and Charles Young.

MORE INFORMATION

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1120 US 42 East
Wilberforce, OH 45384
937-352-6757
www.nps.gov/chyo

Follow us on social media.

Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument is one of over 430 parks in the National Park System. Learn about national parks at www.nps.gov.

THE BARN AT YOUNGSHOLM

NATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER