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## Article Title: Chaplain Henry V Plummer, His Ministry and His Court-Martial

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Article Summary: Chaplain Henry V Plummer, the first black Regular Army chaplain, was court-martialed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, for "conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman." Plummer's career as an Army chaplain and the trial which terminated it provide valuable insight into the situation of blacks in the Army during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the whole, the life of Chaplain Henry V Plummer was unique and his ministry well received. Had he focused solely upon his traditional duties as regimental chaplain and superintendent of post schools, instead of also addressing certain social issues and attempting to bring about reforms, he might have avoided the notice of Colonel Biddle and other officers who took issue with his behavior, ultimately leading to his court-martial. Also appearing to be drunk after espousing temperance for many years cannot have helped his case. But Plummer had good reason to believe that false testimony and prejudice also were key factors in his dismissal.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: Henry V Plummer, Charles C Pierce, Frederick Douglass, Robert Benjamin, Nathan A M Dudley, George B Sanford, Joseph Garrard, Mary Garrard, Orville J Nave, Guy V Henry, James Biddle, Charles Diggs, Reuben F Bernard, Barney McKay, John Alexander, Henry M Turner, David R Dillon, Jeremiah Jones, Enoch H Crowder, C Dana Sayrs, D F Jeffers, John C Bates, A B Jackson, Grover Cleveland, John Alexander, David R Dillon, John R Brooke, Benjamin Harrison, J M Langston, Allain Rutherford

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Photographs / Images: Henry V Plummer; Fort Robinson quadrangle in 1893; panoramic view of Fort Robinson; Charles C Pierce; Henry M Turner; Officers' quarters at Fort Robinson in 1891; C Dana Sayrs, Plummer's defense lawyer; Colonel Joseph Garrard; A M E Chaplain George W Prioleau



*Henry V. Plummer was commissioned in 1884 as the first Regular Army Negro chaplain. He was assigned to the 9th Cavalry Regiment. (Courtesy of Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.)*

# CHAPLAIN HENRY V. PLUMMER, HIS MINISTRY AND HIS COURT-MARTIAL

By EARL F. STOVER

Chaplain Henry V. Plummer, the first black Regular Army chaplain, was court-martialed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, for "conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman." The court found him guilty after an eleven-day trial and sentenced him to dismissal from the service on September 7, 1894. Plummer's career as an Army chaplain and the trial which terminated it provide valuable insight into the situation of blacks in the Army during the late 19th century.

## I.

Henry Vinton Plummer was born a slave on June 30, 1844, in Prince Georges County, Maryland, and worked throughout his boyhood as a field hand. During the Civil War he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, served for about sixteen months and was honorably discharged in August, 1865. He learned to read while in the Navy and continued his education following his discharge. During Reconstruction he worked as a night watchman in a Washington, D.C., post office until he had saved enough money to enter Wayland Seminary of that same city.<sup>1</sup> Also, during part of this period, as a political worker on election day, he paid Negroes—Plummer said they were called "Dollar Niggers"—one dollar to vote, presumably for a particular candidate.<sup>2</sup> Before, during, and after his course of study at the seminary, he served as a Baptist pastor or missionary in Maryland and Washington, D.C. He was graduated from the seminary in 1879.<sup>3</sup>

When the white Chaplain Charles C. Pierce of the 9th Cavalry Regiment (one of the four black regiments) resigned in 1884—saying that he was "accomplishing very little"—the

regimental commander wrote the secretary of war and requested that an Episcopal clergyman from Green Bay, Wisconsin, be commissioned and appointed as chaplain.<sup>4</sup> The request, however, was too late to be honored. Plummer had already applied for the position with letters of reference from several clergymen and the great Negro leader, Frederick Douglass. On July 1, 1884, he became the first Negro to be commissioned in the Regular Army chaplaincy of the United States.<sup>5</sup> Chaplain Plummer served as the 9th Cavalry regimental chaplain until his dismissal on November 10, 1894.<sup>6</sup>

## II.

When Chaplain Plummer reported for duty at Fort Riley, Kansas, the local newspaper announced his arrival and said that he "well merits the office."<sup>7</sup> The duties assigned to him were chaplain, superintendent of the post schools, and manager of the post bakery.<sup>8</sup> Only one incident is known regarding his duty with the bakery. One morning his men failed to have the bread ready at the appointed time. When he investigated, he learned that one of them, Private Robert Benjamin, had had a "little social gathering" in the bakery the night before and had caused the delay. Chaplain Plummer reported Benjamin and forgot about it, but Benjamin remembered.<sup>9</sup>

In his monthly report of October, 1884, Plummer said his commander, Lieutenant Colonel Nathan A. M. Dudley, "has set a good example by regularly attending Divine services, and giving every facility in his power to encourage the troops . . . to a higher state of morality and education." Besides conducting public worship each Sunday, he organized a sabbath school and church choir and reported that these services were well attended and "seemingly appreciated."<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter, the post correspondent to the *Army-Navy Journal* wrote that "we heard one of the best sermons and prayers by the colored Chaplain, Plummer. I believe he can discount any of the white Chaplains in the Service. He is doing a good work among the soldiers."<sup>11</sup>

His reports also indicated that he—in contrast to his predecessor—was making progress in his work. His most time-consuming duty was probably that of superintendent of post schools, and it may well have been his most important

ministry. The enlisted men who attended his school were, for the most part, illiterate freedmen, who were told that education was the key to greater opportunities and full citizenship, and the children who attended were mostly children of freedmen. He reported that the schools "are in good working order. The enlisted men are progressing gradually toward morality and education."<sup>1 2</sup>

Three years later, when he was stationed at Fort McKinney, Wyoming Territory, he submitted with his monthly report "a few suggestions on education in the army." His first suggestion was to give enlisted men who taught in the schools "a rank in keeping with their position." In his opinion this would have encouraged the troops "to be more inclined to attend school" and "to respect and obey the teachers." Another suggestion was to establish a "Bureau of Education and Literature" in the Army which would establish uniformity in the selection of textbooks and school furniture and give better care to school and library property. He also suggested a "liberal appropriation for the schools" so that maps, charts, globes, blackboards, and other school supplies and equipment could be purchased. He underscored this suggestion by saying, first, that the children's education must be "looked after" to insure the "progress of society" and "our government"; and second, that many enlisted men "cannot sign the pay-roll" or tell whether the uniform represents "the absolute Monarchy of Russia, the limited Monarchy of England, or the Republic of America." His final suggestion was that illiterate enlisted men be required "to attend school during the long winter evenings."<sup>1 3</sup>

Plummer was also committed to the temperance movement and devoted much of his time to it. In March, 1892, he presented the first in a long series of temperance lectures to an audience of about 125 men. Shortly thereafter, he organized a group of children at Fort Robinson into the "Loyal Temperance Legion." Initially, the children met regularly with as many as thirty members in attendance; later, they sang at meetings conducted by Chaplain Plummer. In March, 1893, they sang at a "great mass meeting" attended by about 150 soldiers and some "Christian workers" from nearby Crawford, Nebraska. A local minister assisted Chaplain Plummer during the meeting, and some women from among the Christian workers sang temperance songs.<sup>1 4</sup>

In 1890 chaplains began to receive efficiency reports, and, like other officers, they were rated in several categories. The rating scale contained six degrees of efficiency: excellent, very good, good, tolerable, indifferent, and bad. Any rating less than good had to be explained and justified by the rating officer.<sup>15</sup> Chaplain Plummer's reports give some indication of how he ministered and how his ministry was received by his commander.

Major Guy V. Henry, who gave Plummer his first rating in May, 1890, rated him "good" in five categories: professional ability, attention to duty, general conduct and habits, the condition and discipline of men under his control, and his attention to their welfare. He also wrote that Plummer was "a good preacher" and "a good man, anxious . . . to do good."<sup>16</sup> Colonel James Biddle rated Chaplain Plummer in December, 1891, as "excellent" in the first two categories, "very good" in the others, and wrote that he was a "good chaplain and conscientious in the performance of duty."<sup>17</sup> Plummer's next and last rating was written in January, 1894, also by Colonel Biddle. This time Biddle rated him "very good" in each of the five categories, but followed by writing two intriguing comments. One was that a clergyman's ideas are "apt to be in conflict with those of a military man." In the other he said:

I am not capable of judging a man's ability as a clergyman. I think as a class they are apt to feel in conflict with the general code of military discipline. Men are governed (or should be) from the stand point at which they look at things, which in my case widely differs from that of Chaplain Plummer's; therefore I feel that I may be unjust in expressing the general belief concerning him, or even in giving any opinion of my own.<sup>18</sup>

These comments are intriguing because they appear incongruous with the rest of the report. But they are even more intriguing because Biddle first claimed to be incapable of judging a man's ability as a clergyman and then proceeded to judge Plummer. Furthermore, his judgments were characterized by vagueness and innuendo and raise several questions. What did he mean when he said that a clergyman's ideas are "apt to be in conflict with those of a military man" or with "the general code of military discipline?" How did his ideas differ from Plummer's? When he alluded to the "general belief" concerning Plummer, what was it? Who shared it? The officers, nearly all of whom were white? The enlisted men, all of whom were black?

If Plummer had any knowledge of Biddle's attitude, he did not mention it, and his monthly reports usually indicated that he was routinely involved in his duties. In July, 1893, he reported that there was "good attendance at divine services"—his own and those conducted by the Episcopal and Catholic priests—and that the moral "history of the command for the month will compare favorably with any community of equal size and under similar circumstances."<sup>19</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel George B. Sanford, the Fort Robinson post commander in May, 1892, once remarked that he had never seen such large church attendance at a military post, and he attributed that attendance to the "efficient manner in which the chaplain carries out his work."<sup>20</sup> One member of his congregation, Mary Garrard, the wife of Captain Joseph Garrard and Plummer's chapel organist for five years, indicated that Plummer's ministry was favorably received by both her and the enlisted men. In October, 1894, she wrote that Plummer was

energetic, faithful & devoted to his duties. His influence over the enlisted men had been decidedly good, & I have never seen a Chaplain, who had always, such large congregations. . . . He has been, ever since I have known him, almost entirely without help or encouragement from the officers & his success with the soldiers is due to his own untiring efforts.<sup>21</sup>

Sanford's and Mrs. Garrard's remarks indicate that Plummer was an effective religious leader and make Biddle's seem all the more intriguing.

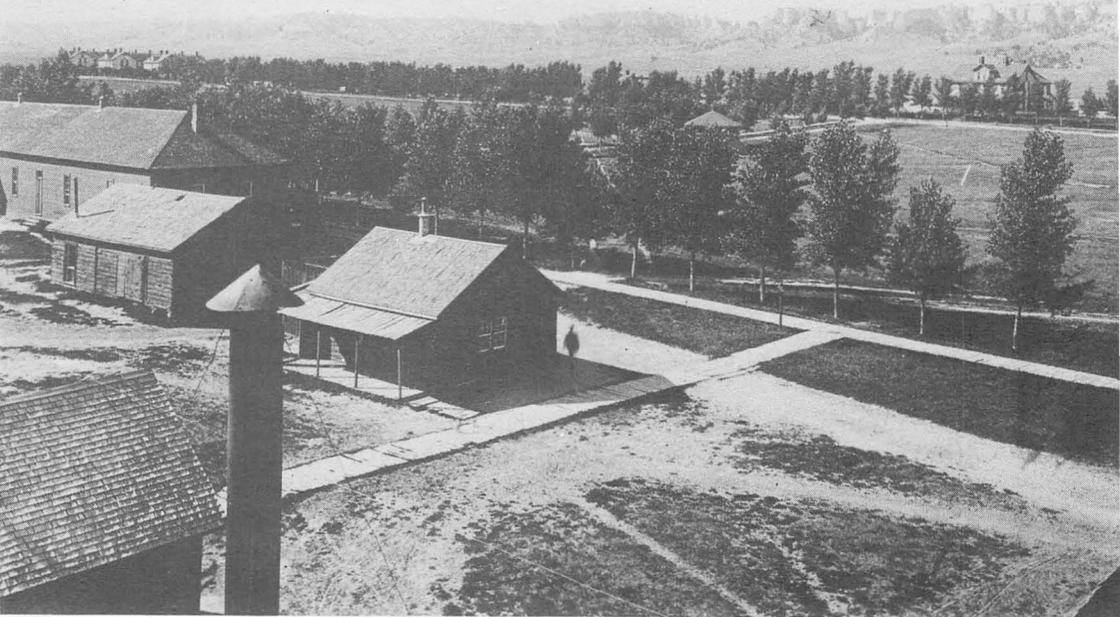
Perhaps Biddle's comments had reference to some activities in which Plummer had become involved. These included his membership in the "Chaplain's Movement," his opposition to the sale of beer and wine in the post canteens, his newspaper writing, his complaint about discrimination at Fort Robinson, and his efforts to take some black troops to Central Africa on "an exploring and missionary party."

The "Chaplain's Movement" was organized in 1887 by Post Chaplain Orville J. Nave of Fort Omaha, Nebraska, and in the beginning had two primary objectives. One was to increase the number of chaplains in the Regular Army, and the other to interest the churches and Congress in establishing a "corps of chaplains outfitted, qualified and prepared to do the work . . . waiting for the Army chaplain."<sup>22</sup> Through Chaplain Nave's efforts the churches and some newspapers promoted these

objectives and called them to the attention of Congress, but Congress did not legislate them into existence.<sup>23</sup> The movement, however, was successful in achieving one of its secondary objectives when President Benjamin Harrison directed that "Sunday morning inspection will be merely of the dress and general appearance, without arms; and the more complete inspection under arms, with all men present . . . will take place on Saturday."<sup>24</sup>

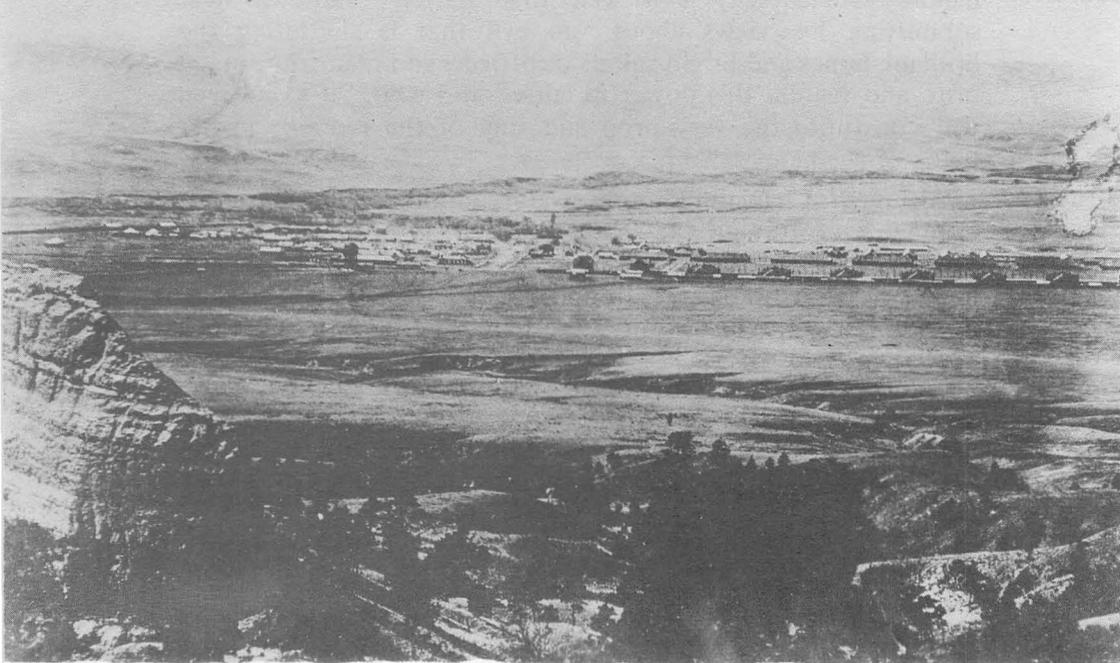
In May, 1891, Chaplain Nave called a Conference of Army Chaplains in Leavenworth, Kansas. Only six of the thirty-four chaplains who were in the Army were able to attend, and Plummer was one of them. Among other things, they made three resolutions that dealt with the sale or use of alcoholic beverages. To encourage enlisted men to spend their leisure time on-post, the Army had started to sell beer and light wines in the post canteens. Many Army leaders believed, too, that this would actually promote temperance. For obvious reasons, however, there were protests from both the merchants engaged in the off-post liquor traffic and those involved in the temperance movement.<sup>25</sup> Chaplain Plummer had addressed this issue in his monthly report of April, 1891, and addressed it again at the conference, saying that the "results of the system are disappointing" and that nothing had been done "toward a reduction of drunkenness." Finally, the conferees resolved that there should be a "thorough and impartial inspection of the canteen system."<sup>26</sup> They also resolved that "everything possible should be done to eradicate this evil [i.e. alcoholic beverages]" from the Army and that enlisted men "addicted to intemperance, gambling, or other degrading vices" should not be advanced to non-commissioned officer rank.<sup>27</sup> Chaplain Nave saw that the conference minutes were printed, publicized in the churches and newspapers, and brought to the attention of elected officials.<sup>28</sup>

In March, 1892, Chaplain Plummer inclosed in his monthly report a five-page statement against the sale of beer and wine in the post canteen.<sup>29</sup> Colonel Biddle was absent from Fort Robinson when Plummer submitted the report, and Lieutenant Colonel Sanford, the commander of the post, signed the first endorsement and sent it forward without comment through military channels to the adjutant general of the Army.



*The Fort Robinson quadrangle (above) was photographed in 1893 from the Post Administration Headquarters. The building at left is a barracks. Beyond the parade grounds are officers' quarters buildings. . . . The panoramic view (below) was taken during the 1890's from Red Cloud Buttes north of the fort. The road dividing the built-up area in the center is present-day U.S. Highway 20 heading toward Crawford.*

*Fort Robinson, Nebraska.  
About 1893.*



Plummer said that "to make legal one of the most pernicious and menacing evils . . . stands in the way of the physical, mental and moral development of the soldier and most seriously affects the well being and discipline of our army." Furthermore, he said that

no one . . . is benefited by its existence . . . that many of the most promising young men of the service are being made confirmed drunkards, mendicants and gluttons by the inducements, environment and influences of this system . . . being entrapped and enticed by the apparent legality . . . and are on the high way to moral, mental and physical ruin.

He went on to say that "trials by courts-martial for drunkenness and for offences traceable to this evil have been on the increase" and that troops were marched from the pay table to the canteen and "ordered to remain in line until they had paid their beer bills." He described how a soldier's wife had begged him to persuade her husband to give her some of his pay instead of spending all of it, as he had done for several months, for beer and gambling at the canteen. He urged the "complete destruction of this system" and "upon its ruins . . . be raised . . . better libraries and reading rooms, bowling alleys, gymnasiums and other healthy and innocent places of amusement for the general welfare of the soldier and the assured efficiency and discipline of our Army."

Finally, he said that he "in no way intended to reflect upon the Post authorities who have and are doing all in their power to handle satisfactorily and well this matter," but was just submitting his views about "an evil that is shattering the brilliant hopes and bright minds of officers and men who touch, taste and handle this powerful curse" and who, "if saved . . . , will constitute the very prop and stay of the republic in her hours of need and danger."

Although Chaplain Plummer later admitted to Lieutenant Colonel Sanford that the marching of the troops occurred at another post, his report brought the results for which he had hoped. It convinced the adjutant general to halt beer sales at Fort Robinson. Sanford, however, requested that this order be rescinded.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the commanding general of the Department of the Platte instructed Plummer to document his allegations and state whether they applied to Fort Robinson. Plummer prepared his reply, and Sanford forwarded it. Sanford agreed with Plummer that prohibition would be the best policy

but did not believe that it was possible. After stating that government control was the best available option, he said that he would administer the exchange as he was ordered.<sup>31</sup>

Another activity in which Plummer was involved—one that caused some officers of the 9th Cavalry to suspect him of agitating the black troopers at Fort Robinson against the citizens of Crawford—was newspaper writing. He was the editor of the *Fort Robinson Weekly Bulletin* and the “resident manager” for the Fort Robinson Department of the *Omaha Progress*. The *Weekly Bulletin* was a small publication of four pages filled with announcements, advice, personal and newsy items, and a gossip column titled “The Owl Notes.” Although the paper did not identify the “Owl,” Plummer undoubtedly knew who he or she was. It is possible that Plummer himself was the “Owl.”<sup>32</sup> The *Progress* carried news of interest to blacks in the greater Omaha area, including news and letters about injustices to blacks.

One such letter, signed “Yellow Cape,” was published in the edition of April 29, 1893, and described how a former black soldier named Charles Diggs escaped a lynch mob in Crawford by fleeing to safety at Fort Robinson with the aid of some of his friends. It also contained a warning to the “good people of Crawford” to “arouse themselves” or “arise some morning only to find that the town of Crawford WAS.” “If we are not protected when we visit Crawford,” it said, “we will protect ourselves regardless of the consequences.”<sup>33</sup> Whoever Yellow Cape was, he was evidently known for his correspondence. Only a few weeks before, the April 5 edition of the *Weekly Bulletin* carried an item on its front page which said, “The ‘Owl’ sends his best wishes to the ‘Yellow Cape,’ and hopes he will not allow himself to be frightened or ‘bulldozed’ in his good work of reformation.”<sup>34</sup> Whatever significance this item had when it first appeared in print, it became more significant on April 29 to some officers of the 9th Cavalry—especially because of a broadside that turned up on Fort Robinson the previous day.

Following the attempted lynching of Charles Diggs, someone wrote a circular, had it printed by the Progress Publishing Company of Omaha (the same company that published the *Omaha Progress*), and distributed it among the black soldiers of Fort Robinson. This circular was similar to Yellow Cape’s letter

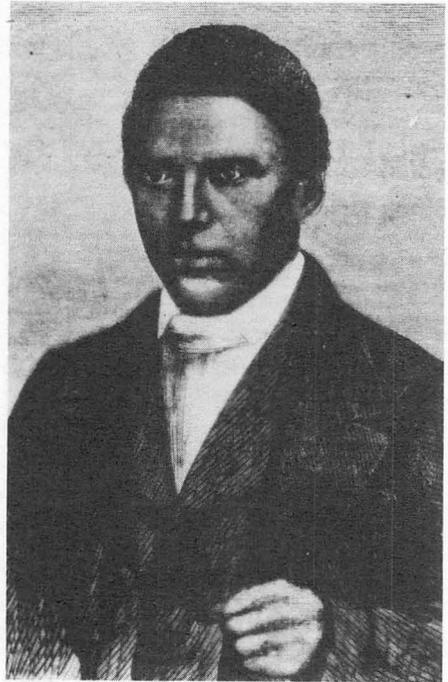
in both style and content and urged the black soldiers to boycott certain Crawford saloon-keepers who "keep and encourage . . . gamblers in their places of business to rob you" and who gave "support and sanction to some recent would be lynchers of our people." It told the story of the attempted lynching and named the members of the lynch mob, which included the town marshal and three saloon-keepers. It said that the troopers should spend their money where they would be treated "like men and soldiers." It said that others had been cruelly treated in Crawford—pistol-whipped, had guns drawn upon them, and "subjected to the most abusive and disgusting ribaldry"—but that "no redress has been furnished—no protection offered." It warned the citizens of Crawford that "these things must cease" and concluded:

You lynch, you torture, and you burn Negroes in the south, but we swear by all that is good and holy that you shall not outrage us and our people right here under the shadow of "Old Glory," while we have shot and shell, and if you persist we will repeat the horrors of San Domingo—we will reduce your homes and firesides to ashes and send your guilty souls to hell.

The broadside was signed "500 Men With the Bullet or the Torch."<sup>35</sup>

In Colonel Biddle's absence the post commander, Lieutenant Colonel Reuben F. Bernard, attempted to trace this pamphlet to its author and learned that on April 28, Sergeant Barney McKay of Troop G, 9th Cavalry, had "received, receipted for, and paid for an express package" from the Progress Printing Company of Omaha.<sup>36</sup> Although McKay said that this package contained only newspapers and produced the papers to substantiate his claim, Bernard believed that he was responsible for the distribution of this "incendiary circular," placed him in confinement, and ten days later charged him with violating Article of War 62—conduct "to the prejudice of good order and military discipline." McKay was kept in confinement until his general court-martial began on June 1, 1893, and on June 21 the court found him guilty and sentenced him to a reduction to the rank of private, a dishonorable discharge and two years in prison.<sup>37</sup>

At no time, however, did Bernard believe that McKay had authored the circular. On May 6, 1893, he said in a confidential letter to Brigadier General John R. Brooke, the commanding



*Charles C. Pierce (left) preceded Plummer as the 9th Cavalry Regiment chaplain. During World War I he was the first chaplain promoted to a colonelcy. (Courtesy of Presbyterian Synod of the Southwest, R. K. Smith Collection). . . . Henry M. Turner, the Army's first Negro chaplain, served with the 1st Colored Infantry Regiment in 1863. As bishop of the A.M.E. Church, he interceded on Plummer's behalf in 1894 on the grounds of "color prejudice." (Drawing from Harper's Weekly, December 12, 1863)*

general of the Department of the Platte, that the officers of the 9th Cavalry and the citizens of Crawford believed Chaplain Plummer was "at the bottom of it all." He said that he had some "very suspicious evidence against him but not enough to warrant me in taking action." He also complained that the Progress Printing Company would not cooperate with him by furnishing the original manuscript or by telling "the truth about the matter."

In addition, he claimed that the officers considered the chaplain a "disturbing element" and that even Lieutenant John Alexander—the only other black officer in the regiment—had

told him Plummer "was a bad man and should be gotten rid of." Then he described the "very suspicious evidence" which made him believe that Plummer authored the broadside. First, he said Plummer had told him that he had written the letter about the post canteen system in the previous year to get even with Lieutenant Colonel Sanford for treating him "shamefully about quarters" and to make Sanford appear obnoxious in Washington. The other part of the "evidence" was that Plummer "hurriedly went to Crawford in a hack" shortly "after the circulars came"; that he told the hack driver that the "soldiers should repeat San Domingo on Crawford" and that he would give his "last drop of blood in defense of his race"; that the driver found one of the circulars in his hack; and that "no person could have dropped it there except the chaplain." He said that this was the only evidence he had against Plummer but was "confident from his actions" that he was guilty.<sup>38</sup>

Although Plummer was probably unaware of Bernard's suspicions about him as an agitator and the author of the broadside, he was certainly aware of Bernard's attitude toward him because when Biddle returned Plummer wrote him a lengthy letter in which he accused Bernard of discrimination on three counts.<sup>39</sup> Plummer explained that he had wanted to purchase a sciopticon for entertainment and educational purposes in the regiment and had requested the assistance of the band to raise the necessary funds. Bernard, however, disapproved the request because "the Chaplain intended to purchase a communion set with a part of the proceeds." Plummer, who had "always been accorded the assistance of the Band in his efforts, labors, and endeavors," considered Bernard "unreasonable and illogical" and said that "if it is regulation for the Band to be ordered to play on private occasions, it is certainly lawful to use it in connection with the moral and temperance elevation of the command."

Chaplain Plummer next complained that Bernard refused transportation for some "Christian workers" from Crawford, Nebraska, who held a "large and important temperance meeting" on the post because "it was not a military duty under the law." Plummer said that he had to pay for their transportation. He also said that two weeks later Bernard provided an escort and ambulance to transport a "showman . . . his baggage and

company” to Crawford and that he could not understand why Bernard would assist those “whose presence tended only to the financial harm of the soldiers” and would not aid those whose efforts were “solely and absolutely for the improvement of the men of the command.”

Plummer’s main allegation against Bernard, however, pertained to housing discrimination. When the regimental headquarters moved from Fort McKinney to Fort Robinson, the post commander, Lieutenant Colonel Sanford, assigned Chaplain Plummer, who held the rank of captain, quarters on the “lower line.” They were in need of repairs and were located among quarters occupied by “enlisted men and their families and officers’ servants.” Plummer said his quarters were inadequate, but Sanford replied that they were no worse than those occupied by other officers. During Biddle’s absence in 1893, quarters became vacant on the “upper line,” and Plummer made a request to occupy them “by virtue of his rank in the U.S. Army.” Bernard, alleged Plummer, not only denied his request but added “insult to injury” by issuing a formal order that designated Plummer’s quarters on the lower line as his permanent quarters. Furthermore, he alleged that Bernard had the adjutant read the order to the assembled command “with stentorian accents and rhetorical emphasis . . . with all the power and circumstances of wars.”

Plummer concluded by complaining about the lack of “scope and opportunity” given to him during the “last two years” and by appealing to Biddle’s sense of justice. “Is it right . . . fair,” he asked, “for a veteran of the late war to be thus discriminated against?” He expressed the hope that Biddle would “rise above caste and petty prejudice and give the Chaplain . . . justice . . . which is due, by virtue of his rank, character and services.”

Plummer’s hope for justice, however, turned out to be mere wishful thinking. Upon receiving the chaplain’s letter, Biddle sent it to Bernard “for his information, and such remarks as he may see fit.”<sup>40</sup> Bernard chose not to address himself to Plummer’s pointed allegations and charged that Plummer wrote the letter for the same reason he wrote the one about the post canteen system in the previous year. He reiterated what he had written in his confidential letter to General Brooke—that Plummer had told him he had written that letter “for spite”

against Sanford. He said that Plummer wrote "an effusion of falsehoods, with slight shades of truth intermingled in such a manner as to make the whole thing, in spirit, grossly false."<sup>41</sup>

When Biddle read Bernard's response, he sent it to Plummer and directed him to "submit any explanation that you may desire to make with reference to the remarks about Lieutenant Colonel Sanford."<sup>42</sup> Plummer said that Bernard was "entirely mistaken" about his motives, that there was no animus or spite intended, that his motives were honorable, and that he "thought it proper, right and just that my Colonel should know how I felt."<sup>43</sup> There the whole matter seemed to end. Later, however, it would come up again in the pre-trial investigation.

The other activity in which Chaplain Plummer was involved and which Colonel Biddle may have found in "conflict with the general code of military discipline" was Plummer's effort to persuade the adjutant general and secretary of war to send him on an "exploring and missionary tour" to Central Africa with some black troops. In late 1893 Plummer preached a sermon entitled "The Duty of the American Negro to Their Brothers in Africa." It was an attempt "to inspire my men to a nobler life" and caused some comment for several days among the troops. Except for Plummer's allusion to the "dollar niggers," the content of the sermon is unknown, but it indicated that Plummer was interested in central Africa.<sup>44</sup>

On April 20, 1894, Chaplain Plummer sent the adjutant general a request through military channels that he "be detailed to conduct an exploring, and missionary party, into Central Africa" with the view of "introducing American civilization and christianization, among some of the tribes . . . and if found feasible to form a nucleus, for a colony of our people." He expressed confidence that from fifty to one hundred enlisted men from the four Negro regular army regiments would "gladly volunteer to go under my command on this enterprise" and stated five reasons for making such a request:

1st. The land of my fore-fathers is ripe for civilization and christianization, and it seems to me, that no race is better fitted to carry the light to that dark land, than the educated and skilled negro, of this country.

2nd. Annually, hundreds of our sons and daughters who are educated, and trained, in our colleges, academics, and other schools; could find useful fields in Africa, as civilizers, and christianizers, which they cannot find in this country.

3rd. Should my scheme be successful, hundreds and thousands of my people, would follow in the wake of the enterprise, and settle permanently in Africa, and, thus be lessening the negro population, remove the dread of negro domination, and, be at least the entering wedge, to the solving of the so called "Negro problem" in the southern portion of our country.

4th. Other nations, are fast pushing into, and, claiming that dark continent; I am anxious in behalf of the millions of my people here to secure a slice of the African turkey, before it is all gobbled up by foreign nations.

5th. Should it be thought the enterprise, will be too expensive, I beg leave to say in connection therewith, that the race has been subjected to unrequited toil, for two and a half centuries, and served the American people without a murmur; and, in every war, waged for the establishment, and maintaining our Government the race has borne no little part; nearly two hundred thousand served on the side of the union during a late rebellion.

He concluded with the remark that to equip and send such a detail "under the glorious Stars and Stripes" would "be the climax upon all the laws, enacted, looking towards the elevation of the negro race; call forth the incomiums of every civilized christian nation, and bring down the blessing of the just, and eternal God, upon the American people."<sup>4 5</sup>

Henry M. Turner, bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a leading black emigrationist, J. R. McMullen of the International Migration Society, and other black leaders, all petitioned the secretary of war to send Plummer on the expedition, but the secretary of war directed the adjutant general to inform Plummer "that there is no law authorizing him to detail any officers of the Army for such an expedition." This the adjutant general did on June 22, 1894.<sup>4 6</sup>

It appeared that Chaplain Plummer was as concerned about the social issues of his day as he was about his duties as regimental chaplain and superintendent of the post schools; he probably considered his involvement in these issues as part of his ministry. Then, too, his confrontations with the suspicious Lieutenant Colonel Bernard, his correspondence with Colonel Biddle, and his proposal to the adjutant general and secretary of war to send him to Africa on an exploring and missionary tour indicated that he was an aggressive black clergyman and leader rather than what later generations would call an "Uncle Tom" who "kept his place." It was also apparent that his ministry was well received by the enlisted men, even though Colonel Biddle and some other officers in the regiment seemed to consider him and his ministry "in conflict with the general code of military discipline" and a "disturbing element."

## III.

On the basis of a complaint made against Chaplain Plummer by Saddler Sergeant Robert Benjamin in the early morning on June 3, 1894, the chaplain was charged with violating Article of War 61, which read: "Any officer who is convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman shall be dismissed from the service." It was Lieutenant Colonel Bernard—again both post and regimental commander during another one of Colonel Biddle's absences—who received Benjamin's complaint, investigated it, and recommended to Biddle that Plummer be so charged. The two specifications that supported this charge provide the basic outline of the complaint. It was also Bernard who placed the chaplain under arrest, apparently with Biddle's approval, from June 6 to July 16.<sup>47</sup>

On the occasion of Sergeant David R. Dillon's promotion, Dillon, Sergeant Major Jeremiah Jones, and Benjamin went to the sergeant major's quarters, located next to Plummer's, to celebrate. The first specification said that Chaplain Plummer visited Jones' quarters on June 2, 1894, between 5:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. and "did then and there engage in drinking intoxicating liquor with enlisted men . . . and did himself furnish an additional supply of intoxicating liquor to said enlisted men, remaining with them engaged in drinking for a period of about three hours."

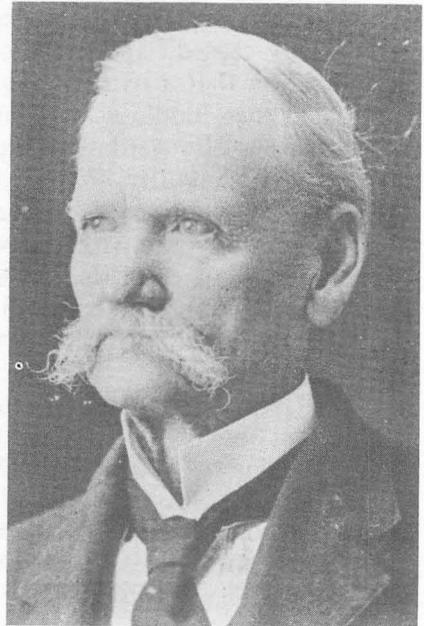
The other specification was that Plummer visited Sergeant Benjamin's quarters on June 2, 1894, at 8:30 p.m.

wearing the blouse of a Sergeant Major of Cavalry, and did there behave in an unbecoming manner in the presence of Sergeant David R. Dillon, Band, 9th Cavalry, and Mrs. Robert Benjamin . . . by lying down upon the floor and refusing to get up and leave . . . when requested so to do by . . . Mrs. Benjamin, and upon being told by . . . Sergeant Benjamin to get up from the floor and go home, did engage in an angry altercation with . . . and did threaten to whip . . . Sergeant Benjamin, and did use intemperate and vulgar language toward . . . Sergeant Benjamin. All this in the presence of . . . Mrs. Benjamin, and to the discredit of the service . . ."

Originally, these specifications contained allegations that Chaplain Plummer caroused with enlisted men, was "under the influence of intoxicating liquor," and behaved "in a disgraceful manner." They also contained two vulgar remarks that Sergeant Benjamin alleged Plummer had directed toward him. But after an investigation into the charge by Captain Enoch H. Crowder,



*Officers' quarters structures of this type were built at Fort Robinson in 1891. This home was designed to accommodate two captains and their families. Used until World War II years, such homes were razed in the 1950's.*



*C. Dana Sayrs, Chadron lawyer, Civil War veteran, and Dawes County judge, defended Chaplain Plummer during his court-martial.*

the acting judge advocate of the Department of the Platte and a future judge advocate general of the Army, the specifications were amended so that the evidence might better sustain them.<sup>48</sup>

The ostensible reason for Benjamin's complaint was Plummer's "disgraceful" behavior in Benjamin's home.<sup>49</sup> Captain Crowder's pre-trial investigation, however, provided a better reason. He reported that Benjamin had borne animus toward the chaplain for several years because he had never forgotten that Plummer had reported him at Fort Riley for failing to get the bread baked and ready by the appointed time.<sup>50</sup> Then, too, Plummer said Benjamin complained to him that the chaplain was "down on him," that he had not attended his social functions, that he would not lend him \$15.00, and that on two occasions he had treated a friend of Benjamin harshly for failing to salute.<sup>51</sup> In other words, Benjamin had awaited an opportunity to get even with Plummer, and the opportunity had presented itself. He was probably somewhat aware of Plummer's lack of standing with the regimental officers—particularly with the suspicious Lieutenant Colonel Bernard, and he surmised that Plummer was vulnerable. Therefore he registered his complaint.

The pre-trial investigation also indicated that Colonel Biddle thought Plummer's "usefulness as an Officer and Chaplain" had "virtually ceased" and could only be restored by "the thorough vindication that a trial by court-martial could give him." It also revealed that Biddle wanted him tried under Article of War 61, because a guilty verdict would mean automatic dismissal from the Army. A guilty finding for violating Article of War 62, Biddle said, would be of "no good to service," because Plummer would still be "left with the regiment."<sup>52</sup> Plummer's appeal to Biddle to settle the case "without dragging me through a court fell on deaf ears."<sup>53</sup> Biddle also attacked the chaplain's integrity and said, "I fear that the high character and purity of a christian [*sic*] life cannot be conceded to him as the church would require, or the sentiments of Christianity demand."<sup>54</sup> This was possibly a reference to Plummer's alleged behavior on the evening of June 2, 1894. For several years, he had vigorously opposed the sale of beer and wine in the canteen and had promoted the cause of temperance, yet on that evening he had been drinking and providing "intoxicating liquor." Further-

more, Biddle probably believed that Plummer's other behavior that evening was in "conflict with the general code of military discipline." He had fraternized with enlisted men, had furnished them with intoxicating liquor, had worn an enlisted man's coat and possibly had behaved disgracefully in an enlisted man's home. Biddle did not want Plummer in the regiment. To this end he provided Captain Crowder with the correspondence regarding Plummer's complaint against Lieutenant Colonel Bernard about discrimination because he probably believed, as did Captain Crowder, that it tended to disprove the chaplain's representations "of faithful and meritorious service."<sup>55</sup> It is also apparent that Biddle used this correspondence to make Crowder and his superiors aware of Plummer's indifference to "keeping his place" in the post's social structure.

Chaplain Plummer then attempted to avoid a court-martial and possible dismissal from the Army by requesting orders from the adjutant general to appear "before a retiring board with a view of examination for retirement." He claimed an infirmity caused by his Civil War naval duty and old age. Colonel Biddle recommended approval of the request in the "interest of the service," but the adjutant general replied that he could not act on it until Plummer was examined by the post surgeon. When the surgeon found no disability, Biddle changed his recommendation.<sup>56</sup>

On June 15, 1894, a black enlisted man named D. F. Jeffers, who was assigned to Angel Island, California, wrote a letter to Sergeant Benjamin's wife which raised the question of Biddle's attitude toward Negroes, and Plummer in particular. It said:

Unless it is a matter where your personal honor is at stake, I would advise you as a matter of race pride to avoid being a witness against the chaplain, you know the general feeling against the few colored officers we have and that there are always those who are ever ready to take any advantage of the leaders of the race.<sup>57</sup>

Plummer certainly thought that Biddle was prejudiced. When he received his dismissal order, he wrote to the adjutant general of the Army that his dismissal was due to "prejudice in the regiment under the present regime."<sup>58</sup> Apparently he first began to feel this way when the regimental headquarters moved to Fort Robinson, and he was assigned quarters on the lower line. In the fall of 1891, he thought of Colonel Biddle as his

"beloved commander," but in the summer of 1893, he complained about discrimination and the lack of scope and opportunity. When he pleaded for justice regarding his quarters assignment, he must have resented it when Biddle did not assign him to quarters on the upper line. He said that his social life with his "brother officers" and their families was nearly that of "a total stranger."<sup>59</sup> As far as Plummer was concerned, Biddle's attitude was representative of the "general feeling against the few colored officers," and he considered Biddle "ever ready to take any advantage of the leaders of the [Negro] race."

#### IV.

In the beginning there was some doubt as to the advisability of a trial. Captain Crowder, who made the pre-trial investigation, said that portions of the original specifications were only "slightly corroborated" by other witnesses.<sup>60</sup> He had inquired about Benjamin's credibility and had learned that his general reputation among 9th Cavalry officers for "truth and veracity" was good, that he was "far above the usual standard of intelligence among enlisted men," and that his several enlistments "fully demonstrated" the "uniform confidence placed in him by his superior officers." On the other hand, he had learned some facts to Benjamin's discredit: the "animus which he bore the Chaplain, not only at the time of the trial, but for some time prior thereto"; his "extreme intoxication at the time of his quarrel with the Chaplain"; and the "failure of Sergeant Major Jones, Sergeant Dillon, and Mrs. Benjamin to fully corroborate his statements as to matters which it is conceded occurred in their presence."<sup>61</sup>

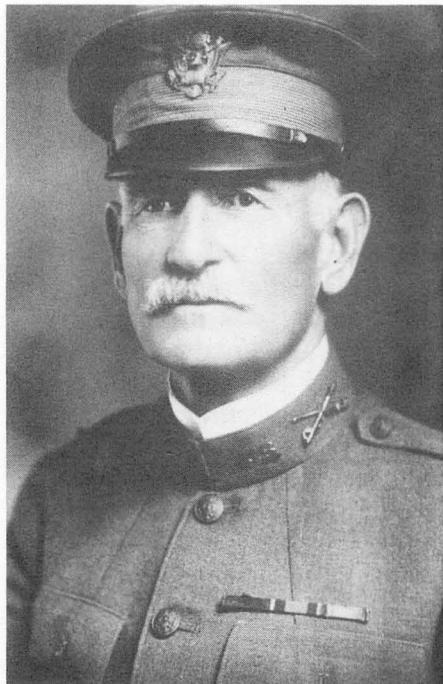
Crowder mentioned the D. F. Jeffers letter to Mrs. Benjamin urging her not to testify against Plummer "as a matter of race pride" and was convinced that she would not testify to corroborate her husband's testimony. He believed that the evidence was not "sufficient to sustain the charges in their present form" and recommended that the allegations of carousal, drunkenness, and use of vulgar and profane language be omitted from the specifications.<sup>62</sup> He noted that Plummer believed "his conduct should be leniently considered" because "conditions at Fort Robinson were practically such as to limit

his social life to the colored noncommissioned officers." He also said that Plummer "claimed a record of meritorious and faithful service," but inclosed the correspondence regarding Plummer's complaint against Lieutenant Colonel Bernard for discrimination and said it tended to "disprove" his claim.<sup>63</sup>

When the trial began, the thirteen members of the court—all white officers—probably did not expect it to last eleven days. A future chief of staff, Colonel John C. Bates, was president. Chaplain Plummer's counsels were both white—Captain Joseph Garrard of the 9th Cavalry and C. Dana Sayrs, Chadron, Nebraska, attorney. The judge advocate or prosecutor was 1st Lieutenant A. B. Jackson of the 9th Cavalry. Lieutenant Jackson prosecuted so vigorously and energetically that Sayrs said Jackson considered it his duty "that the accused be convicted lest he [Jackson] might be charged with inefficiency."<sup>64</sup> Plummer's counsels defended with equal vigor and energy.

The prosecutor and the defense counsel alike kept the president of the court quite busy making evidence rulings. When it was time for the court to decide on the verdict, it appeared that Chaplain Plummer had gotten his day in court. The president of the court made numerous evidence rulings that seemed to be proper and without prejudice to the accused. Altogether there were thirty rulings: fourteen were for the prosecution, thirteen for the accused, and three pertaining to questions raised by court members. The counsels for defense had done well, it seemed.

Testimony indicated that there was sufficient evidence to convict Chaplain Plummer on the first specification. He did socialize and take at least four drinks with three non-commissioned officers in an enlisted man's quarters, and he did pay for some of the whiskey.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, this made Chaplain Plummer, who had been outspoken about and active in the temperance movement, appear hypocritical; the prosecutor used this to discredit him throughout the trial. The counsels for defense, however, took every opportunity to elicit testimony that he was not inebriated and that his conduct was not unbecoming. They also addressed the allegation of fraternizing with enlisted men. Is not a chaplain supposed to socialize with enlisted men? After all, he is also their chaplain.<sup>66</sup> If the



*Colonel Joseph Garrard (left) as a young captain supported Chaplain Plummer's chapel programs and was his counsel at the court-martial. Ironically, years later he was forced into retirement when accused of racial prejudice. (Courtesy of U.S. Military Academy)... (Right) A.M.E. Chaplain George W. Prioleau succeeded Plummer in the 9th Cavalry in 1896 and served until 1915. (Courtesy of Howard University)*

white officers would not socialize with him—the only black officer in the regiment—with whom was he supposed to socialize?<sup>67</sup>

Testimony regarding the second specification indicated that there was not sufficient evidence to convict beyond a reasonable doubt. Chaplain Plummer did wear the blouse of a sergeant major.<sup>68</sup> It was doubtful, however, that he lay on the floor and refused to get up and leave when requested to do so by Sergeant and Mrs. Benjamin; or that he engaged in an angry altercation and threatened to whip Sergeant Benjamin; or that he used intemperate and vulgar language toward Sergeant Benjamin. Chaplain Plummer, Sergeant Major Jones, and Sergeant Dillon would not corroborate Sergeant Benjamin's testimony, and in fact contradicted most of it. Mrs. Benjamin was

the only witness to corroborate her husband's testimony.<sup>69</sup> The counsel for the defense did an excellent job of attacking Sergeant Benjamin's credibility. None of the witnesses who took the stand testified favorably as to his "truth and veracity." Sergeant Major Jones, who had known Benjamin for fourteen years, testified that Benjamin's general reputation for truth and veracity was "bad" and that he would not believe Benjamin "on oath in any matter where he was personally concerned."<sup>70</sup> Sergeant Dillon gave similar testimony.<sup>71</sup> Their opinion of Benjamin's character was in sharp contrast to that of the officers of the 9th Cavalry.

There was also an abundance of testimony that Benjamin was extremely drunk for the greater part of the evening and that he had great animosity for Chaplain Plummer.<sup>72</sup> Testimony also made it appear that Sergeant Benjamin had written himself an anonymous threatening letter—signing it "We Thirteen"—in an attempt to have the court believe that he, and perhaps other witnesses, had been threatened and would be in danger if they testified against the chaplain.<sup>73</sup>

When the testimony concluded, it appeared that acquittal was in the realm of possibility; when the verdict was announced, however, Chaplain Plummer was found guilty as charged and sentenced to be "dismissed from the service of the United States."<sup>74</sup> Then the record, proceedings, and sentence of the court-martial were sent forward to the President for approval. African Methodist Episcopal Church Bishop H. M. Turner, believing there was "some color prejudice in the demand for his dismissal," wrote to President Grover Cleveland on October 18, 1894, and requested that Chaplain Plummer be granted clemency and not be dismissed from the service.<sup>75</sup> On October 27, 1894, J. M. Langston, a black congressman from Virginia, and Allain Rutherford of Washington, D. C., also wrote to the President on behalf of Chaplain Plummer and enclosed nine letters, affidavits, and testimonials from people who vouched for his character and sobriety. They said that they believed the real charge was "undue familiarity with the enlisted men." They explained that a chaplain's "influence for good would depend upon his personal and friendly relations with the men who constitute . . . his flock or congregation and that he had to seek his social life among the enlisted men." They invited the

President's special attention to the letter of Mrs. Joseph Garrard, attesting to both his sobriety and the effectiveness of his ministry. The other enclosures also vouched for Chaplain Plummer's character and sobriety.<sup>76</sup>

All of this, however, was to no avail. President Cleveland approved the action of the court-martial on November 2, 1894, and on the same day the secretary of war directed that the sentence take effect on November 10, 1894.<sup>77</sup> On November 9 after having received a copy of the General Orders that confirmed the sentence, Plummer acknowledged receipt of them to the adjutant general of the U.S. Army and said:

I have violated no law of the Army, nor of morality. . . . I gave my service, yea laid my life upon the alter [*sic*] of this country in the dark days of her peril. I was dismissed from the service upon false testimony and prejudice. I cannot help to remember . . . that patriotism and devotion to duty, counts for naught against falsehood and prejudice in the regiment under the present regime.<sup>78</sup>

On November 10 Chaplain Plummer was dismissed from the Army.

## V.

On the whole the life of Chaplain Henry V. Plummer was unique and his ministry well received. Had he focused solely upon his traditional duties as regimental chaplain and superintendent of post schools, instead of also addressing certain social issues and attempting to bring about reforms, he might not have been regarded by Colonel Biddle and other officers as a clergyman whose behavior was "in conflict with the general code of military discipline" or whose presence was a "disturbing element." Had he "kept his place" as a Negro, the white officers might have held him up before the black troops as an example to emulate, as they had with black Lieutenant John Alexander.<sup>79</sup> Then, too, had he not had the additional duty of managing the Fort Riley post bakery, he might not have had to report Benjamin and cause him to wait for an opportunity to get revenge.

On the other hand, had he not made the mistakes of drinking and paying for alcoholic beverages after actively espousing the cause of temperance for so many years, of wearing the blouse of a sergeant major, and, especially, of visiting the quarters of an

intoxicated and hostile sergeant bent on getting revenge, he would not have made himself so vulnerable. Sergeant Benjamin probably would not have had a pretext to file his complaint, and Colonel Biddle probably would not have had any basis to make the charge against him. Yet, the mistakes he made call attention to the ostracism he suffered. As Mrs. Garrard said, he was given almost no help or encouragement in his work from the officers. He was denied the living quarters and social life of an officer. And when he appealed to Biddle for justice from obvious racial discrimination, his appeal was rejected and turned back on him as something less than faithful and meritorious service. Had Colonel Biddle and his officers regarded him as "an officer and a gentleman," he might have acted differently.

The record of trial indicates that the evidence rulings were proper and without prejudice to the accused and that he received a vigorous and adequate defense. Yet, both the pre-trial investigation and record of trial leave the impression that the evidence was insufficient to sustain the charge and that the jury did not apply the standard of reasonable doubt. After all, what had Chaplain Plummer done of sufficient magnitude to cause Colonel Biddle to charge him with violating an article of war that meant automatic dismissal from the army when found guilty? He did wear the coat of a noncommissioned officer for about thirty minutes one evening, but beyond this there are only questions: How could he have been faulted for fraternizing with noncommissioned officers, especially when he was their chaplain and there was no other social life open to him? How could he have been found guilty of unbecoming behavior at Sergeant Benjamin's quarters when the key witnesses would not corroborate the testimony of Sergeant and Mrs. Benjamin?

Three weeks after the trial, on the morning of September 24, 1894, another general court-martial took place at Fort Robinson—that of Sergeant David R. Dillon, one of the key defense witnesses at Plummer's trial. Evidently, as a result of the trial, relationships between Dillon and the Benjamins became severely strained, and Dillon was ordered to stay away from the Benjamins, particularly Mrs. Benjamin. But one day Dillon went to the gate of Benjamin's quarters and got into a loud and heated argument with Benjamin and was charged with violating Articles of War 21 and 62. He was convicted on both counts

and dismissed from the Army.<sup>80</sup>

One week before Chaplain Plummer's dismissal, the *Army-Navy Journal* reported the recent promotion of the chaplain's nemesis, Sergeant Robert Benjamin, and said that Colonel Biddle expressed "the worth of Sergeant Benjamin's long and faithful service in the regiment and in the position he now relinquishes."<sup>81</sup> Dillon's dismissal, Benjamin's promotion, and Biddle's remarks were undoubtedly brought to Plummer's attention, and it is no wonder that he believed his dismissal was the result of false testimony and prejudice.

Following his dismissal he and his family (wife and four children) moved to Kansas where he first served as pastor in Kansas City and later in Wichita.<sup>82</sup> He was active in Kansas Republican politics and on several occasions unsuccessfully attempted to use his political connections to reverse his dismissal and be recommissioned and reappointed as an Army chaplain.<sup>83</sup> The possibilities destroyed in 1894 haunted him to the end. He died on February 10, 1905, in Kansas City.<sup>84</sup>

## NOTES

(Acknowledgements for assistance in writing this paper are made by the author to Captain Kenneth L. Baker, Judge Advocate General Corps, Fort Hamilton, New York, for his legal advice; and to Frank N. Schubert, College Park, Maryland, for the use of his files of Fort Robinson material.)

1. Henry V. Plummer to Robert T. Lincoln, Secretary of War, Washington, D. C., undated 1881, Selected Appointment, Commission and Personal Branch Records (hereafter abbreviated ACP), H. V. Plummer, Record Group 94, National Archives (hereafter abbreviated RG and NA); W. F. Pride, *History of Fort Riley*, Fort Riley, Kansas, Cavalry School Book Department, 1926, p. 186.

2. Chaplain H. V. Plummer, 9th Cavalry, Trial by General Court-Martial at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, August 27, 1894, to September 7, 1894, (hereafter abbreviated as TGCM), RG 153, NA, 19.

3. Plummer to Honorable Robert T. Lincoln, undated 1881, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

4. Chaplain Charles C. Pierce to the Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington, D. C., April 5, 1884, Selected ACP, C. C. Pierce, RG 94, NA; Colonel Edward Hatch to the Adjutant General, U. S. Army, Washington, D. C., June 30, 1884, Letters Sent, Fort Riley, Kansas, RG 391, NA.

5. Frederick Douglass to the President, Washington, D. C., May 14, 1884, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

6. General Orders No. 56, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D. C., November 2, 1894.

7. Pride, *History of Fort Riley*, 186.
8. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, p. 141. Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Riley, Kansas, October 31, 1884, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
9. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 106, 114-115, 141.
10. Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Riley, Kansas, October 31, 1884, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
11. *Army-Navy Journal*, November 29, 1884, 343.
12. Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Riley, Kansas, December 31, 1884, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA; A. L. Fowler, *The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1971-18. In 1870 the acting inspector general of the Department of Texas called attention to "the great labor thrown upon the officers of the colored regiments in being obliged to make all rolls, returns, accounts, and keep all books with their own hands." He made several recommendations for the education of the Negro soldiers, not only to relieve the officers of these labors but to enable the soldiers "to take their places as the political equals of white men, which they have become, under the constitution"; T. F. Rodenbaugh and W. L. Haskin, *The Army of the United States* (New York: Argonaut Press LTD, 1966), 282-283. The adjutant of the 9th Cavalry wrote that the black soldiers following the Civil War were "totally uneducated," that only one man in the entire regiment was able to write well enough to act as sergeant major, and that officers occasionally had to read the unit rosters to the first sergeants so they could call the roll.
13. Plummer to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., December 31, 1887. Selected ACT, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
14. Reports of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, March, 1892, July through October, 1892, and April, 1893. Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA. *Army-Navy Journal*, December 2, 1893, 245. It was quite common for chaplains to take every opportunity to promote the cause of temperance, and they occasionally went to the newspapers. Their efforts were not always appreciated by the line officers.
15. Efficiency Report by Major Guy V. Henry on Chaplain H. V. Plummer, Fort McKinney, Wyoming Territory, May 1, 1890, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Efficiency Report by Colonel James Biddle on Chaplain H. V. Plummer, Fort McKinney, Wyoming Territory, December 15, 1891, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
18. Efficiency Report by Colonel James Biddle on Chaplain H. V. Plummer, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, January 14, 1894. Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
19. Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, July 31, 1893, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA. Lieutenants John Alexander and Charles Young, second and third Negro graduates of West Point, served intermittently at Fort Robinson during Chaplain Plummer's assignment there.
20. Commanding officer, Fort Robinson, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte, May 3, 1892, Letters Sent, Fort Robinson, RG 94, NA.
21. J. M. Langston and Allain Rutherford to the President, Washington, D.C., Inclosure No. 1, October 27, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

22. Chaplain Orville J. Nave to Woodrow Wilson, Trenton, N. J., November 7, 1912, Selected ACP, O. J. Nave, RG 94, NA, 2 of Inclosure No. 6.
23. *Ibid.*, 1-2 of Inclosure No. 6.
24. *Ibid.*, 1 of Inclosure No. 3.
25. *Army-Navy Journal*, November 5, 1892, 177-178; October 28, 1893, 161; and December 16, 1893, 280; Theophilus G. Steward, "The Canteen in the Army," *Harper's Weekly*, April 9, 1892, 350.
26. Chaplain Orville J. Nave to Woodrow Wilson, Trenton, N. J., November 7, 1912, Selected ACP, O. J. Nave, RG 94, NA, 11-12 of Inclosure No. 6.
27. *Ibid.*, 15.
28. *Ibid.*, 7-8, 17.
29. Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, March 31, 1892, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
30. Lieutenant Colonel George Sanford to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, April 25, 1892, Letters Sent, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, RG 393, NA.
31. Lieutenant Colonel George Sanford to Chaplain Plummer, May 2, 1892, and to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, May 3, 1892, Letters Sent, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, RG 393, NA.
32. Sergeant Barney McKay, Trial by general court-martial at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, June 1-21, 1893, RG 143 NA, Exhibit "B", 112-115.
33. *Omaha Progress*, April 29, 1893, 2. RG 153, NA, with McKay, TGCM.
34. McKay, TGCM, RG 153, NA, Exhibit "B," 112.
35. *Ibid.*, Exhibit "B," 108.
36. Lieutenant Colonel R. F. Bernard to Brigadier General John R. Brooke, Department of the Platte, May 6, 1893, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA.
37. McKay, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 102-103; Sergeant Barney McKay to Brigadier General John R. Brooke, Department of the Platte, May 28, 1893, RG 153, NA, with but not attached to McKay, TGCM.
38. Lieutenant Colonel R. F. Bernard to Brigadier General John R. Brooke, Department of the Platte, May 6, 1893, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA; *Cleveland Gazette*, April 7, 1894. Regimental orders regarding the untimely death of Lieutenant John Alexander praised him for "appreciating the delicate distinctions of social intercourse which the peculiar and oft-times trying position of his office thrust upon him."
39. Plummer to Colonel James Biddle, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, June 25, 1893, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA.
40. *Ibid.*, First Endorsement, Post Adjutant Grote Hutcheson to Lieutenant Colonel R. F. Bernard, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, June 30, 1893.
41. *Ibid.*, Second Endorsement, Lieutenant Colonel R. F. Bernard to post adjutant, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, July 1, 1893.
42. Colonel James Biddle to Chaplain H. V. Plummer, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, July 6, 1893, Letters Received, Department of the Platte RG 393, NA.
43. Plummer to Colonel James Biddle, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, July 10, 1893, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA.
44. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 137-138.
45. Plummer to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington, D. C., April 20,

1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

46. Bishop H. M. Turner to the secretary of war, Washington, D.C., April 23, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA. Bishop Turner was the first black man to serve as a U. S. army chaplain and served as a volunteer with the 1st U.S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War; Bishop H. M. Turner and others petitioning the secretary of war, Washington, D.C., April 25, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

47. Report of Captain E. H. Crowder to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, June 28, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA, 15; Colonel James Biddle to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte, June 9, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA; Fort Robinson Post Returns, June 1894, RG 94, NA; Report of Chaplain H. V. Plummer from Fort Robinson, Nebraska, July 31, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

48. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 3-4.

49. Report of Captain E. H. Crowder to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, June 28, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA, 3, 10.

50. *Ibid.*, 11, 119.

51. *Ibid.*, 10.

52. Colonel James Biddle to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte, June 9, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA. Under the present Uniform Code of Military Justice, the sentence which results from conviction is determined during a separate sentencing hearing in accordance with the bifurcated system which is considered more enlightened and just. Also, the 3rd Circuit Court held this article of war unconstitutional on December 12, 1972 (*Levy vs. Parker*, No. 71-1917) because of its vagueness, i.e., does not explain what conduct is "unbecoming" or define the phrase "a gentleman," and its "very real capacity for arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement." The U.S. Supreme Court, however, has not ruled on its constitutionality.

53. Plummer to the Post Adjutant, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, August 10, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA.

54. Colonel James Biddle to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, June 9, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA, Third Endorsement.

55. Report of Captain E. H. Crowder to the assistant adjutant general, Department of the Platte, June 28, 1894. Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA, 20-21.

56. Plummer to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., September 11, 1894, and Endorsements, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

57. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, Exhibit "C."

58. Plummer to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.

59. Plummer to the post adjutant, Fort Robinson, Nebraska, August 10, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA; Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 140.

60. Report of Captain Crowder to the assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte, June 28, 1894, Letters Received, Department of the Platte, RG 393, NA,

15, 20.

61. *Ibid.*, 16.
62. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
63. *Ibid.*, 19-21.
64. Plummer, TGCM, RG 153, NA, 1 of Exhibit "G."
65. *Ibid.*, 136-138 and 2 of Exhibit "G."
66. *Ibid.*, 136, 143.
67. *Ibid.*, 140, and 7 of Exhibit "G."
68. *Ibid.*, 127, 139.
69. *Ibid.*, 27-46, and 3-4 of Exhibit "G."
70. *Ibid.*, 105.
71. *Ibid.*, 91-92.
72. *Ibid.*, 106, 119, 121-124.
73. *Ibid.*, 11-13, 107, 114, 129-133, Exhibit "A", and 6 of Exhibit "G."
74. *Ibid.*, 156.
75. Bishop H. M. Turner to President Grover Cleveland, Washington, D.C., October 18, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
76. J. M. Langston and Allain Rutherford to the President, Washington, D.C., October 27, 1894, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
77. General Orders No. 56, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C., November 2, 1894.
78. Plummer to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1894, Selected ACP, H.V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
79. Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops, World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, Government Printing Office, 1966), 14. This citation indicates that Lieutenant John Alexander was held up before Negro troops during World War I as an example because he "kept his place."
80. Special Orders No. 100, Department of the Platte, September 27, 1894, RG 153, NA. Filed with Sergeant David R. Dillon, Trial by general court-martial at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, September 24, 1894.
81. *Army-Navy Journal*, November 3, 1894, 154.
82. Plummer to Adjutant General Corbin, Washington, D.C., April 23, 1898, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA; *Kansas City (Kansas) American*, February 17, 1905.
83. Samuel C. Miller to Elihu Root, secretary of war, Washington D.C., September 21, 1899, Selected ACP, H. V. Plummer, RG 94, NA.
84. *Kansas City (Kansas) Citizen*, February 11, 1905.