



# **Guide to the African American soldier's World War II photograph album of India, circa 1942-1945**

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## Summary

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### Collection Title:

African American soldier's World War II photograph album of India, circa 1942-1945

### Source:

John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture

### Abstract:

Collection comprises a 16-page 8 1/2 x 11 inch photograph album belonging to an unidentified member of the 45th Engineer General Service Regiment, a segregated unit of African American soldiers stationed in Ledo, India beginning in 1942. Their charge was to build a portion of the Stilwell Road, a major supply route from India to China. Mounted on loose pages, the 44 black-and-white snapshots include posed and candid images of individuals and groups of African American soldiers, at work and at rest. Soldiers identified in the captions include Charley Woodard, Clarence Benson, Charles J. Greene, and Cain Walker. There are also photographs of buildings on the base, including Battalion Chapel, headquarters (labeled "The Gateway to Hell"), Harmony Church, and a large Stilwell Road sign, along with various shots of military equipment, a "Coolie Camp," the "laundry man," and the Taj Mahal. Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

### Extent:

0.2 Linear Feet (1 box)

### Language:

Materials in English

### Collection ID:

RL.11490

### Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m12s3z>

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], African American soldier's World War II photograph album of India, circa 1942-1945, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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## Background

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### Scope and Content

Collection comprises a 16-page, 8 1/2 x 11 inch photograph album belonging to an unidentified member of the 45th Engineer General Service Regiment, one of at least four segregated units of African American soldiers active, stationed in Ledo, India beginning in 1942. Their charge was to build a portion of the Stilwell Road, a military supply route from Ledo in Assam, India, through Burma, to Kunming, China.

The album's original binder is no longer present. Mounted on the loose pages are 44 black-and-white snapshot photographs, most measuring 3 x 4 1/2 inches, some with brief captions in ink. The images include posed and candid snapshots of individuals and groups of African American soldiers, at work on the base and during periods of rest. Soldiers identified in the captions include Charley Woodard, Clarence Benson, Charles J. Greene, and Cain Walker. There are also photographs of buildings on the base, including Battalion Chapel, headquarters (labeled "The Gateway to Hell"), Harmony Church, a large Stilwell Road sign, along with varied shots of military equipment, a "Coolie Camp," the "laundry man," and the Taj Mahal. There are a number of blank pages, and there are some photographs missing.

Acquired as part of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture.

### Biographical/Historical

The Stilwell Road, a supply route running more than a thousand miles from India to Burma and China, was built chiefly by African American soldiers and local inhabitants almost throughout the whole of World War II. Named after General Joseph Stilwell of the U.S. Army in 1945, it was originally known as the Ledo Road. The soldiers in the album seem to have been with the 45th Engineer General Service Regiment, 382 Engineer Combat Battalion, United States Army.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Statement**

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### **Access Restrictions**

Collection is open for research.

### **Use Restrictions**

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

### **Acquisition Information**

The African American soldier's World War II photograph album of India was received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase in 2011.

### **Processing Information**

Processed by Alice Poffinberger, 2011; encoded by Paula Jeannet, June 2017.

Accession(s) represented in this collection guide: 2011-1021

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## Related Materials

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### Related Material

The Rubenstein Library at Duke University holds a number of photograph albums created by African American soldiers. To find their collection guides, search the Rubenstein collection guides site using the string "African American soldiers."

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## Names and Subjects

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- African American soldiers -- History -- 20th century
  - African American soldiers -- India
  - African American soldiers -- Photographs
  - World War, 1939-1945 -- India
  - World War, 1939-1945 -- Participation, African American -- Photographs
  - India -- History -- British occupation, 1765-1947
  - India -- History, Military -- World War, 1939-1945
  - India -- Photographs
  - Stilwell Road (Burma and India) -- Photographs
  - Black-and-white photographs
  - Gelatin silver prints
  - Photograph albums
  - John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture
  - United States. Army -- African American troops -- History -- 20th century
  - United States. Army. Engineer General Services Regiment, 45th
  - United States. Army -- Military life
  - United States. Army -- African American troops -- Photographs
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## Collection Inventory

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Photograph album (loose pages only), circa 1943-1945 (online item available)

Box 1

**Digital Object:** [African American soldier's World War II photograph album of India](#)