

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION
SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR
CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL ASSESSMENT FORM

PLEASE:

1. Type or print, using a ball-point pen, when filling out this form. Legibility is critical.
2. Do not guess at the information. An answer of, "Unknown," is more helpful. Include a photograph of each viewable side and label it with name & direction of view.

- Thank You.

Type of Memorial

☐ Monument *with* Sculpture ☐ Monument with *Cannon*
☐ Monument without Sculpture ☒ Historical Marker ☐ Plaque
☐ Other (flag pole, G.A.R. buildings, stained glass windows, etc.)

Affiliation

☐ G.A.R. (Post Name & No. _____) ☐ M.O.L.L.U.S.
☐ SUVCW (Camp Name & No. _____) (Please describe below)
☐ WRC (Corps Name & No. _____)
☐ ASUVCW (Aux Name & No. _____)
☐ DUVCW (Tent Name & No. _____)
☐ LGAR (Circle Name & No. _____)
☐ Other Missouri Division of State Parks

Original Dedication Date 10/27/2012 Please consult any/all newspaper archives for a local paper's article that would have information on the *first* dedication ceremony and/or other facts on the memorial. Please submit a copy of your findings with full identification of the paper & date of publication. Thank you.

Location

The Memorial is *currently* located at:

Street/Road address or site location N38°14.197' W94°26.340' Marth Rd, east of Cooper Rd off Hwy K West of Butler

City/Village Butler Township _____ County Bates

State Missouri

The front of the Memorial faces: ☐ North ☒ South ☐ East ☐ West

Government Body, Agency, or Individual Owner (of private cemetery that Memorial is located in)

Name Missouri Division of State Parks

Dept./Div. DNR-DSP

Street Address PO Box 176 City _____
 Jefferson City State MO Zip Code 65102 Contact Person _____
 Allison Dubbert Telephone () 800-3DIOXIN

If the Memorial has been moved, please list former location(s).

NEW BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC SITE

Physical Details

Material of Monument or base under a Sculpture or Cannon = ☐ Stone ☐ Concrete ☐ Metal ☐ Undetermined If known, name specific material (color of granite, marble, etc.) white/gray

SUVCW -- CIVIL WAR

Material of the Sculpture = ☐ Stone ☐ Concrete ☐ Metal ☐ Undetermined
If known, name specific material (color of granite, marble, etc.) _____
If the Sculpture is of metal, is it solid cast or "hollow?" _____

Material of Plaque or Historical Marker / Tablet = polymers

Material of Cannon = ☐ Bronze ☐ Iron - Consult known Ordnance Listing to confirm
Markings on muzzle = _____
Markings on Left Trunion _____ Right Trunion _____
Is inert ammunition a part of the Memorial? ☐ If so, describe _____

Approximate Dimensions (indicate unit of measure) - taken from tallest / widest points

Monument or Base: Height 12 feet Width 14 feet Depth 8 feet or Diameter _____
Sculpture: Height _____ Width _____ Depth _____ or Diameter _____

For Memorials with multiple Sculptures, please record this information on a separate sheet of paper for each statue and attach to this form. Please describe the "pose" of each statue and any weapons/implements involved (in case your photos become separated from this form). Thank you!

Markings/Inscriptions (on stone-work / metal-work of monument, base, sculpture)

Maker or Fabricator mark / name? If so, give name & location found _____

The "Dedication Text" is formed: ☐ cut into material ☐ raised up from material face

Record the text (indicate any separation if on different sides) Please use additional sheet if necessary.

See Text Attached

Environmental Setting

(The general vicinity and immediate locale surrounding a memorial can play a major role in its overall condition.)

Type of Location

☐ Cemetery
☐ "Town Square"
☐ Municipal Building
☐ Courthouse
☐ Traffic Circle

☒ Park
☐ Post Office
☐ State Capitol
☐ College Campus
☐ Library

☐ Plaza/Courtyard
☐ School
Other: _____

General Vicinity☒ Rural (low population, open land)☐ Town☐ Suburban (residential, near city)☐ Urban / Metropolitan**Immediate Locale** (check as many as may apply)☐ Industrial ☐ Commercial☐ Street/Roadside within 20 feet ☐ Tree Covered (overhanging branches)☒ Protected from the elements (canopy or enclosure, indoors)☐ Protected from the public (fence or other barrier)

Any other significant environmental factor _____

Condition Information**Structural Condition** (check as many as may apply)

The following section applies to Monuments *with* Sculpture, and Monuments without Sculpture - including the base for Monuments with *Cannon*. Instability in the sculpture and its base can be detected by a number of factors. Indicators may be obvious or subtle. Visually examine the sculpture and its base.

	Sculpture	Base
If hollow, is the internal support unstable/exposed? (Look for signs of exterior rust)	_____	_____
Any evidence of structural instability? (Look for cracked joints, missing mortar or caulking or plant growth)	_____	_____
Any broken or missing parts? (Look for elements (i.e., sword, musket, hands, arms, etc. - missing due to vandalism, fluctuating weather conditions, etc.)	_____	_____
Any cracks, splits, breaks or holes? (Also look for signs of uneven stress & weakness in the material)	_____	_____

Surface Appearance (check as many as may apply)

	Sculpture	Base
Black crusting	_____	_____
White crusting	_____	_____
Etched, pitted, or otherwise corroded (on metal)	_____	_____
Metallic staining (run-off from copper, iron, etc.)	_____	_____
Organic growth (moss, algae, lichen or vines)	_____	_____
Chalky or powdery stone	_____	_____
Granular eroding of stone	_____	_____
Spalling of stone (surface splitting off)	_____	_____
Droppings (bird, animal, insect remains)	_____	_____
Other (e.g., spray paint graffiti) - Please describe...	_____	_____

Does water collect in recessed areas of the Memorial? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Unable to tell

Surface Coating

Does there appear to be a coating? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unable to determine

If known, identify type of coating.

☐ Gilded ☐ Painted ☐ Varnished ☐ Waxed ☒ Unable to determine

Is the coating in good condition? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unable to determine

Basic Surface Condition Assessment (check one)

In your opinion, what is the general appearance or condition of the Memorial? ☒ Well maintained ☐

Would benefit from treatment ☐ In urgent need of treatment ☐ Unable to determine

Overall Description

Briefly describe the Memorial (affiliation / overall condition & any concern not already touched on) .

Supplemental Background Information

In addition to your on-site survey, any additional information you can provide on the described Memorial will be welcomed. Please label each account with its source (author, title, publisher, date, pages). Topics include any reference to the points listed on this questionnaire, plus any previous conservation treatments - or efforts to raise money for treatment. Thank you.

Inspector Identification

Date of On-site Survey 10/27/2012

Your Name Walter E Busch, PDC

Address PO Box 381

City Arcadia

State MO

Zip Code 63621

Telephone () 314-630-8407

What Order or Organization is submitter a member of? MO - SUVCW US GRANT CAMP 68

Please send this completed form to

Walt Busch, PDC, Chair

P.O. Box 509

Pilot Knob, MO 63663

(314) 630-8407

webusch@hotmail.com

Thank you for your help, and attention to detail. SONS OF UNION V

CIVIL WAR VETERANS OF THE National Civil War Memorials Committee

KIOSK

[LEFT PANEL]

Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site
mostateparks.com

Missouri State Parks is a division of the Missouri
Department of Natural Resources [MSP Logo]

Missouri State Parks is supported by the parks
and soils sales tax.

First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regimental History

Most of the men of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry were escaped slaves. Many fled to Kansas from farms and towns in Missouri or Arkansas to find freedom. Some may have been “stolen” in Jayhawk raids. Others in the regiment were free men of color who had moved to Kansas in the hope of a better life. All faced prejudice and bigotry from their white neighbors.

Recruiting the First Kansas Colored

In August 1862, Sen. Jim Lane was appointed Commissioner of Recruiting for the Union Army in the Department of Kansas. Capts. James Williams and Henry Seaman began recruiting African Americans almost immediately, even though President Lincoln had not authorized recruitment of black soldiers. On Aug. 5, Lane reported to the Secretary of War that “recruiting opens beautifully,” and emphasized that he enlisted enough African Americans to form two regiments.

In Leavenworth, a prominent African-American businessman named William D. Matthews recruited an entire company (approximately 100 men) for the First Kansas. Matthews received a commission as captain of Company D. Two other African Americans, Henry Copeland and Patrick Minor, were commissioned as lieutenants for Company D. Lt. Minor took part in the fighting at Island Mound and gained the distinction of being the first African-American officer to serve in combat during the Civil War.

[Insert full length picture of Black Soldier labeled: As a matter of Federal Army policy, when the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry was federalized in 1863 William Matthews (above) was denied a commission in the First Kansas because of his race. He went on to serve as a 1st Lieutenant in the Independent Colored Battery at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Courtesy Kansas Historical Society]

[Insert bust photo of white man labeled: Sen. Jim Lane (right) was an abolitionist who favored using former slaves in military service. His Jayhawkers brought hundreds of “liberated” African Americans to Kansas from their raids into Missouri and Arkansas. Many joined the First Kansas. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society]

[Insert picture of regimental flag labeled: The flag of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry lists eight battles including Island Mound. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society]

They Fought Like Tigers

On Jan 13, 1863, less than two weeks after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry became the fifth African-American regiment to be mustered into Federal service – three months after they had fought and won their first battle.

On Oct. 29, 1862, part of the First Kansas Colored Infantry faced a force of Confederate guerrillas more than double their number at Island Mound in Bates County, Mo. They were the first African-American regiment to come under fire in the Civil War. It was widely believed by white Americans that escaped slaves would not have the courage to engage in deadly combat with their former masters. The men of the First Kansas fought so valiantly that Eastern newspapers reported the battle. Even their enemy praised them. Guerilla [sic] leader Bill Turman reportedly said they “fought like tigers.”

Throughout the Civil War, black soldiers knew they would be killed or returned to slavery if captured. At the Battle of Poison Springs, Ark. On April 18, 1864, Confederates violated the rules of war by executing captured and wounded black soldiers. In the West, “Remember Poison Springs!” was a battle cry of black regiments for the remainder of the war.

The First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Battle Honors

From the time that Jim Lane opened recruitment in August 1862, until they were mustered out of service on Oct. 1, 1865, the First Kansas Colored Infantry saw extensive action. They fought in 16 battles and numerous small skirmishes.

Recruitment of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry began, Aug. 1862
Island Mound, Bates County, Mo., Oct. 29, 1862
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Cabin Creek, Cherokee Nation, July 1-2, 1863
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Horse-Head Creek, Ark., Feb. 17, 1864
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Jenkin’ Ferry, Ark., April 30, 1864
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Timber Creek, Cherokee Nation, Nov. 19, 1864
Re-designated the 79th United State Colored Infantry, Dec. 13, 1864
Joy’s Ford, Ark., Jan. 8, 1865
Clarksville, Ark. Jan. 18, 1865
Roseville Creek, Ark., March 20, 1865
79th USCI mustered out of service, Oct. 1, 1865

[Insert bust photo bearded General labeled: Following the Battle of Honey Springs, Union Maj. Gen. James Blunt (left) included a note about the First Kansas in his report:
“The First Kansas (colored) particularly distinguished itself, ... Their coolness and bravery I have never seen surpassed; they were in the hottest of the fight, and opposed to Texas troops twice their number, whom they completely routed.”

[CENTER PANEL]

Battle of Island Mound State Historic Site
mostateparks.com

Missouri State Parks is a division of the Missouri
Department of Natural Resources [MSP Logo]

Missouri State Parks is supported by the parks
and soils sales tax.

The Battle of Island Mound

During the fall of 1862, Bates County had become a haven for guerrillas and Confederate recruiters. One of their favorite haunts was a marshy tract on the Marias-des-Cygnés River, southwest of Butler, known to locals as “Hog Island.” On Oct. 27, approximately 240 members of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry marched into Bates County to clear out the rebels.

[Insert Colored “You are here” Map labeled: “Most of these men [guerrillas] are of the worst, and ought to be shot or hung. The whole wooded country of the Marias-des-Cygnés, Osage, and their tributaries is full of them.” Col. Fitz-Henry Warren, April 12, 1862]

Fort Africa

The black troops commandeered the farmstead of local Southern sympathizers, Enoch and Christina Toothman, fortified the yard with fence rails, and christened it “Fort Africa.”

Scouts and local citizens reported that a force of several hundred Southern sympathizers – bushwhacker or guerrillas – were in the area. Messengers returned to Kansas to request reinforcements. The First Kansas planned to skirmish with the Southerners until reinforcements arrived and then make a strong final attack. During the next two days, the black soldiers skirmished with the bushwhackers.

Fire on the Prairie

October 29, a detachment of about 30 black troops under Capt. Andrew Armstrong and Lt. Richard Hinton were sent to engage the bushwhackers as a diversion while a foraging party tried to replenish dwindling food supplies.

[Troop Movement Map Insert 1: 1. After the Kansas troops returned to camp, the rebels set fire to the prairie. The Kansans set a backfire to prevent the raging flames from reaching Fort Africa. Using the smoke as cover, rebel skirmishers shot at the black pickets, driving them back to Fort Africa. The rebels withdrew, hoping to provoke a pursuit by the First Kansas.]

[Troop Movement Map Insert 2: 2. Capt. Henry Seamen sent out a party of eight to scout the rebel position. They were supposed to remain in view of camp. However, they ventured out of sight behind a low hill known as Island Mound.

Lt. Joseph Gardner and about 20 men left camp to find the scouting party. Instead of returning, they joined forces and proceeded into the river bottom to investigate a log house about half a mile away. Capt. Andrew Crew and Lt. Elkanah Huddleston left camp without orders and also joined the black force. The black troops had been lured farther away from their camp and into a rebel trap.]

[Troop Movement Map Insert 3: 3. The small party of Kansans were about a mile from Fort Africa when some 130 rebel horsemen emerged from the woods bordering the Marias-des-Cygnés River and galloped toward the black soldiers. The black detachment retreated toward Island Mound and the shelter of a ravine. The Southern horsemen caught up to them before they could reach the ravine.]

A Bloody and Desperate Battle

On the southern slope of Island Mound the two groups clashed in deadly fighting. Amidst the prairie fires set by both sides, the bloody and desperate battle was fought hand to hand with no mercy given.

There was no unit cohesion as the Southerners rode in among the trapped black soldiers. Outnumbered six to one, they faced a mounted foe armed with shotguns, pistols and sabers. The black soldiers fought back ferociously, using their bayonets and the butts of their rifles against their attackers.

[Troop Movement Map Insert 4: 4. Many Southern horsemen rode through the Federal position and around the western side of Island Mound. They were met by Capt. Armstrong's company, which was coming to the support of Gardner's embattled detachment. As the horsemen moved around Armstrong's position to flank him, Capt. Luther Thrasher's company took a position on the northeast edge of Island Mound.]

[Troop Movement Map Insert 5: 5. As the Southerners rode around the northern side of the mound, Thrasher opened fire on them. Lts. Luther Dickerson and Patrick Minor blocked a rebel breakthrough to the north. The Southerners retreated over the top of Island Mound and back to Hog Island.

Maps adapted from Missouri State Parks file maps created by Jim Denny based off research by Chris Tabor.]

Aftermath

Casualties of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry were eight killed and 11 wounded. Southern losses are not known but were probably similar. The day after the battle, Union reinforcements arrived and the combined force moved on Hog Island only to discover that it had been vacated. Newspapers across the nation reported on the battle. Accounts about the black soldiers' bravery helped to ease doubts about how former enslaved men might perform in battle.

BOIM – Kiosk-Oct2012

[RIGHT PANEL]

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The Battle of Island Mound: A Demonstration to the Nation

African Americans saw the Civil War as a fight for their freedom. Early in the war, freed black men who tried to enlist in the Union Army were turned away. A 1792 Federal law still barred blacks from bearing arms for the U.S. Army. The U.S. Navy, on the other hand, allowed African Americans to serve as shipboard firemen, stewards, coal heavers and even boat pilots. Abolitionists urged President Abraham Lincoln to both free the slaves and recruit African-American men in defense of the Union. Lincoln, however, was concerned that such a move would prompt border states, like Missouri, to secede.

Many white Americans were reluctant to allow African-American troops in combat because of deeply held racist ideas. Many felt that black soldiers could not be as skilled or as brave as white soldiers. They thought that African Americans were better suited for jobs as carpenters, cooks, scouts and teamsters.

[Insert Waist-up picture of Frederick Douglass labeled: "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship." Frederick Douglass Courtesy Library of Congress]

First Combat by African-American Troops

The Battle of Island Mound was the first time African-American troops saw combat in the Civil War. In their official military reports and letters to newspapers, the white officers praised the bravery and combat skills of the black troops in the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry. Lt. R. Hinton told the *Daily Conservative* of Leavenworth, Kan., "Our nine days campaign proved that negroes are splendid soldiers, will march further, fight as well, and live on as hard fare without grumbling, as any soldiers now in the service of the government."

The Southerners who participated in the battle also went to the press with positive remarks. The *New York Times* reported that, "Bill Truman [Turman] told in Butler [Mo.] on the Friday following the fight, that the black devils fought like tigers and that the white officers had got them so trained that not one would surrender, though they tried to take a prisoner." After the battle, positive national press helped to make it more acceptable for African Americans to join the military and participate in combat.

[Insert graphic labeled: *Harper's Weekly* used this depiction of the Battle of Island Mound in a series of articles devoted to African American troops in March of 1863.

"This is what we have done. We have demonstrated that the negro is anxious to serve his country, himself and race; that he can be drilled and made effective as a soldier; and that he will fight as well as any other set of men; all things being equal as to equipment, etc." Lt. R. Hinton, Nov. 7, 1862]

African-American Soldiers

On Jan. 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, officially allowing the Union Army to recruit African-American men to fight in defense of the Union and their freedom.

Not only did black soldiers face racial prejudice and unequal pay, but both black soldiers and their white officers would be in grave danger if they were captured in battle. Confederate President Jefferson Davis promised that black prisoners of war would be enslaved or executed on the spot. Threats of Union reprisal against Confederate prisoners forced Southern officials to treat black soldiers somewhat better. Some Union officials tried to protect their troops by keeping black soldiers away from the front lines.

[Insert Broadside graphic labeled: A U.S. Army recruiting poster promised freedom, protection and pay to the African-American men who joined. Courtesy National Archives.]

By the end of the Civil War, about 180,000 black men served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and almost 18,000 served in the Navy. Nearly 40,000 black soldiers died over the course of the war – 30,000 of infection or disease.

There were nearly 80 black commissioned officers. Black carpenters, chaplains, cooks, guards, laborers, nurses, scouts, spies, steamboat pilots, surgeons and teamsters also contributed to the war cause. Black women, who could not formally join the Army, served as nurses, spies and scouts.

[Insert graphic labeled: Black troops fought in many battles in the last two years of the war. Courtesy Library of Congress]





The Battle of Island Mound

During the fall of 1862, Bates County had become a haven for guerrillas and Confederate recruiters. One of their favorite haunts was a marshy tract on the Marias-des-Cynges River, southwest of Butler, known to locals as "Hog Island." On Oct. 27, approximately 340 members of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry marched into Bates County to clear out the rebels.



"Most of these men [guerrillas] are of the worst, and ought to be shot or hung. The whole wooded country of the Marias-des-Cynges, Osage, and their tributaries is full of them."
Col. Fitz Henry Warren, April 12, 1862

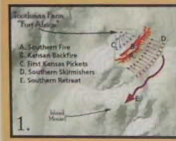
Fort Africa

The black troops commandeered the farmstead of local Southern sympathizers, Enoch and Christiana Toothman, fortified the yard with fence rails, and christened it "Fort Africa."

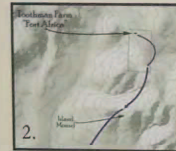
Scouts and local citizens reported that a force of several hundred Southern sympathizers - bushwhacker or guerrillas - were in the area. Messengers returned to Kansas to request reinforcements. The First Kansas planned to skirmish with the Southerners until reinforcements arrived and then make a strong final attack. During the next two days, the black soldiers skirmished with the bushwhackers.

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sent to engage the bushwhackers as a diversion while a foraging party tried to replenish dwindling food supplies.



1. After the Kansas troops returned to camp, the rebels set fire to the prairie. The Kansas set a backfire to prevent the raging flames from reaching Fort Africa. Using the smoke as cover, rebel skirmishers shot at the black pickets, driving them back to Fort Africa. The rebels withdrew, hoping to provoke a pursuit by the First Kansas.



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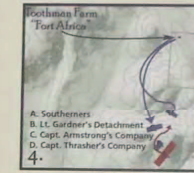


3. The small party of Kansas were about a mile from Fort Africa when some 100 rebel horsemen emerged from the woods bordering the Marias-des-Cynges River and galloped toward the black soldiers. The black detachment retreated toward Island Mound and the shelter of a ravine. The Southern horsemen caught up to them before they could reach the ravine.

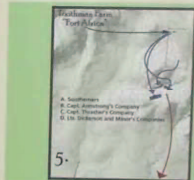
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5. As the Southerners rode around the northern side of the mound, Thrasher opened fire on them. Lt. Luther Dicherson and Patrick Miner blocked a rebel breakthrough to the north. The Southerners retreated over the top of Island Mound and back to Hog Island.

Maps adapted from Missouri State Parks file maps created by Jim Denny based off research by Chris Tolson

Aftermath

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Hog Island only to discover that it had been vacated. Newspapers across the nation reported on the battle. Accounts about the black soldiers' bravery helped to ease doubts about how former enslaved men might perform in battle.

First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regimental History

Most of the men of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry were escaped slaves. Many fled to Kansas from farms and towns in Missouri or Arkansas to find freedom. Some may have been "stolen" in jayhawk raids. Others in the regiment were free men of color who had moved to Kansas in the hope of a better life. All faced prejudice and bigotry from their white neighbors.

Recruiting the First Kansas Colored

In August 1862, Sen. Jim Lane was appointed Commissioner of Recruiting for the Union Army in the Department of Kansas. Capts. James Williams and Henry Seaman began recruiting African Americans almost immediately, even though President Lincoln had not authorized recruitment of black soldiers. On Aug. 5, Lane reported to the Secretary of War that "recruiting opens beautifully," and emphasized that he enlisted enough African Americans to form two regiments.

Sen. Jim Lane (right) was an abolitionist who favored using former slaves in military service. His jayhawkers brought hundreds of "stolen" African Americans to Kansas from their raids into Missouri and Arkansas. Many joined the First Kansas.



Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society

In Leavenworth, a prominent African-American businessman named William D. Matthews recruited an entire company (approximately 100 men) for the First Kansas. Matthews received a commission as captain of Company D. Two other African Americans, Henry Copeland and Patrick Minor, were commissioned as lieutenants for Company D. Lt. Minor took part in the fighting at Island Mound and gained the distinction of being the first African-American officer to serve in combat during the Civil War.



As a matter of federal Army policy, when the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry was federalized in 1863 William Matthews (center) was awarded a commission in the First Kansas because of his race. He went on to serve as a 1st Lieutenant in the Independent Colored Battery at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society



The flag of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry fits eight battles, including Island Mound. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society

They Fought Like Tigers

On Jan. 13, 1863, less than two weeks after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry became the fifth African-American regiment to be mustered into Federal service - three months after they had fought and won their first battle.

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engage in deadly combat with their former masters. The men of the First Kansas fought so valiantly that Eastern newspapers reported the battle. Even their enemy praised them. Guerrilla leader Bill Turman reportedly said they "fought like tigers."

Throughout the Civil War, black soldiers knew they would be killed or returned to slavery if captured. At the Battle of Poison Springs, Ark., on April 18, 1864, Confederates violated the rules of war by executing captured and wounded black soldiers. In the West, "Remember Poison Springs" was a battle cry of black regiments for the remainder of the war.

The First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Battle Honors

From the time that Jim Lane opened recruitment in August 1862, until they were mustered out of service on Oct. 1, 1865, the First Kansas Colored Infantry saw extensive action. They fought in 16 battles and numerous small skirmishes.

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Courtesy Library of Congress

Following the Battle of Honey Springs, Union Maj. Gen. James Blunt (left) included a note about the First Kansas in his report: "The First Kansas Colored Infantry were completely distinguished themselves. Their coolness and bravery I have never seen surpassed; they were in the hottest of the fight, and opposed to Texas troops twice their number, whom they completely routed."

The Battle of Island Mound: A Demonstration to the Nation

African Americans

saw the Civil War as a fight for their freedom. Early in the war, freed black men who tried to enlist in the Union Army were turned away. A 1792 Federal law still barred blacks from bearing arms for the U.S. Army. The U.S. Navy, on the other hand, allowed African Americans to serve as shipboard firemen, stewards, coal heavers and even boat pilots. Abolitionists urged President Abraham Lincoln to banish the slaves and recruit African-American men in defense of the Union. Lincoln, however, was concerned that such a move would prompt border states, like Missouri, to secede.

Many white Americans were reluctant to allow African-American troops in combat because of deeply held racist ideas. Many felt that black soldiers could not be as skilled or as brave as white soldiers. They thought that African Americans were better suited for jobs as carpenters, cooks, scouts and teamsters.



Courtesy Library of Congress

First Combat by African-American Troops

The Battle of Island Mound was the first time African-American troops saw combat in the Civil War. In their official military reports and letters to newspapers, the white officers praised the bravery and combat skills of the black troops in the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry. Lt. R. Hinton told the *Daily Conservative* of Leavenworth, Kan., "Our nine days campaign proved that negroes are splendid soldiers, will march further, fight as well, and live on as hard fare without grumbling, as any soldiers now in the service of the government."

The Southerners who participated in the battle also went to the press with positive remarks. The *New York Times* reported that, "Bill Truman [Turman] told in Butler [Mo.] on the Friday following the fight, that the black devils fought like tigers and that the white officers had got them so trained that not one would surrender, though they tried to take a prisoner." After the battle, positive national press helped to make it more acceptable for African Americans to join the military and participate in combat.

"Once let the black man get upon his person the brass bullet, 'til he get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship."

Frederick Douglass



Harper's Weekly used this depiction of the Battle of Island Mound in a series of articles devoted to African American troops in March of 1863.

"This is what we have done. We have demonstrated that the negro is anxious to serve his country, himself and race; that he can be drilled and made effective as a soldier; and that he will fight as well as any other set of men; all things being equal as to equipments, etc."

Lt. R. Hinton, Nov. 7, 1862

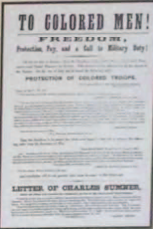
African-American Soldiers

On Jan. 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, officially allowing the Union Army to recruit African-American men to fight in defense of the Union and their freedom.

Not only did black soldiers face racial prejudice and unequal pay, but both black soldiers and their white officers would be in grave danger if they were captured in battle. Confederate President Jefferson Davis promised that black prisoners of war would be enslaved or executed on the spot. Threats of Union reprisal against Confederate prisoners forced Southern officials to treat black soldiers somewhat better. Some Union officials tried to protect their troops by keeping black soldiers away from the front lines.



Black troops fought in many battles in the last two years of the war. Courtesy Library of Congress



A U.S. Army recruiting poster promised freedom, protection and pay to the African-American men who joined. Courtesy National Archives

By the end of the Civil War, about 180,000 black men served as soldiers in the U.S. Army and almost 38,000 served in the Navy. Nearly 40,000 black soldiers died over the course of the war—30,000 of infection or disease.

There were nearly 80 black commissioned officers. Black carpenters, chaplains, cooks, guards, laborers, nurses, scouts, spies, steamboat pilots, surgeons and teamsters also contributed to the war cause. Black women, who could not formally join the Army, served as nurses, spies and scouts.