

AFRICAN AMERICAN CEMETERY

The official service records list twenty-two troopers of the 5th USCC as Missing in Action at Simpsonville, KY, January 25, 1865. A 1913 account of the battle indicated those “killed were buried in a long trench near where they were massacred.” The area in which it is believed they were buried was later used as an African American cemetery.

Members of Simpsonville’s Trim #2 United Brothers of Friendship Lodge, an African American fraternal organization, operated the cemetery until the last member died in 1965. Over 180 graves have been located in the abandoned cemetery.



United Brothers of Friendship and
Sisters of the Mysterious Ten

“On Wednesday of last week one of the bloodiest tragedies was enacted near Simpsonville... About 40 negro troops were murdered by Guerrillas... God help us! To what is all this tending? Never did I expect to see such a state of things in my own, dearly loved country... too bad to be believed of human nature!”

— Diary of Julia Tevis,
Shelbyville, Kentucky
January 30, 1865

For More Information,
contact the
Shelby County Historical Society
502-844-2277
www.shelbyvilleky.com



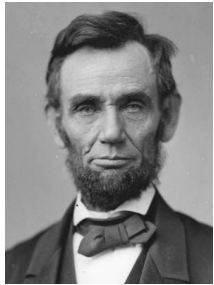
Printed in cooperation with the
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City of Simpsonville

CIVIL WAR Skirmish Near Simpsonville January 25, 1865



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On January 25, 1865, elements of the 5th United States Colored Cavalry (USCC) were surprised by a band of Confederate guerillas while driving a herd of 900 cattle to Louisville. About twenty-two were killed and as many as twenty were wounded. At least four troopers later died of their wounds. Based at Camp Nelson, Kentucky, nearly all of the 5th USCC’s recruits were former slaves.



Following issuance of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, African American troops were mustered into the Union Army. Because it was a slave state "not in rebellion," Kentucky did not enlist slaves in the Union Army until 1864.

Union General Stephen G. Burbridge, commander of the Military District of Kentucky, authorized within his command the formation of "colored" regiments comprised of freedmen, ex-slaves, and slaves (accepted for enlistment at the "request" of their owners). On June 30, 1864, Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas, responsible for organizing colored regiments in the Mississippi Valley for the Union Army established the 5th United States Colored Cavalry (USCC).



Well-known abolitionist, Colonel James S. Brisbin was selected as commander of the regiment. In accordance with Thomas' plans, all of the officers of the 5th USCC were white and the noncommissioned officers were to be chosen from among the black men in the ranks. According to the National Park Service's Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Project, 1,464 men were eventually enlisted in the regiment.

The 5th USCC, part of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) was mustered in at Camp Nelson, Kentucky. Nearly all of the recruits were former slaves, the majority of whom volunteered for three years of service. Some of the companies were recruited at Camp Nelson, while others were enlisted as far away as Lebanon and Louisville.

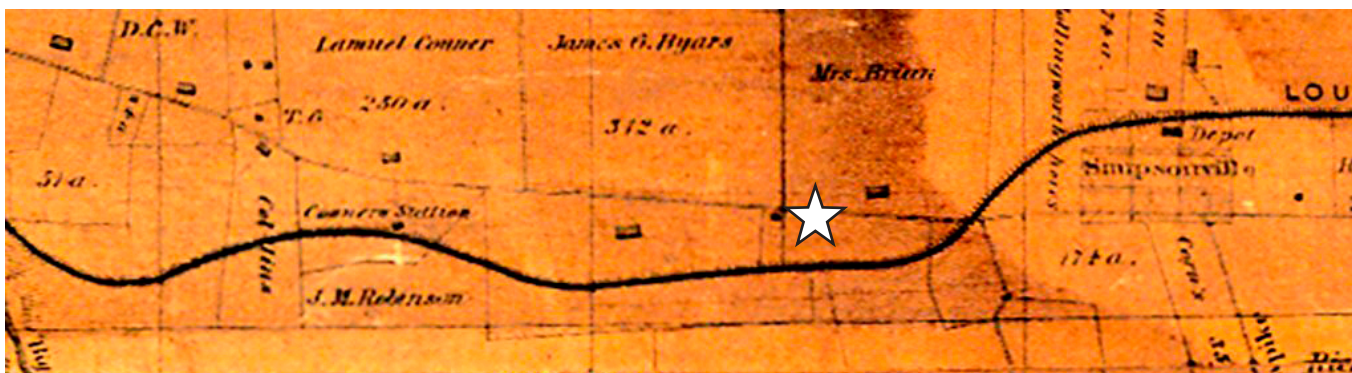


Camp Nelson USCT barracks

Camp Nelson provided the Union Army with over 10,000 African American soldiers, making it the third largest recruiting and training depot for African Americans in the nation. Many of the black soldiers brought their families with them to Camp Nelson and eventually the army established a refugee camp for these individuals. Thousands of African Americans came to Camp Nelson and it was here that they gained their freedom.



Pvt. Samuel Truehart, Co. E 5th USCC



1872 map, with approximate location of skirmish marked

DAILY GAZETTE

Horrible Massacre by Guerrillas
Thirty-five Colored Soldiers Murdered
Eight More Dangerously Wounded

(From Louisville Journal - Jan. 26, 1865)

War of the Rebellion:
Official Record 49, 1:9
JANUARY 25, 1865. Skirmish Near
Simpsonville, Shelby County, Ky.

COLONEL: The general commanding desires me to say that information has reached these headquarters that a cattle guard composed of negro soldiers were attacked at or near Simpsonville, Shelby County, yesterday and a number killed and wounded of the latter 17 are reported...

By command of Brigadier
General Hugh Ewing: E.B. HARLAN
Captain and Assistant Adjutant-
General

The Shelby Record.

19 Negro Soldiers Shot Down in Cold
Blood, 20 Others Seriously Wounded

KILLED NEAR SIMPSONVILLE - What Coulter and 14 Guerrillas Did 48 Years Ago. The soldiers and cattle had gotten to a point on the State pike between where R.G. Bryan and T. S. Byars now live, not much more than a half-mile west of Simpsonville, when Captain Coulter and his fourteen guerrillas, yelling like very devils and shooting their pistols in the air, rode rapidly towards the panic stricken rear guard of the herd of cattle. They began shooting down the men without compunction.

(From a 1913 retrospective article)