

*The Black
Citizen-Soldiers
of Kansas
1864–1901*

This page intentionally left blank



Introduction

The 1925 holiday season was a sorrowful time for the family of Charles Russell Grinsted, in Detroit, Michigan. Grinsted was an eighty-one-year-old retired barber and USCT veteran, and he was dying of bladder cancer. On December 23, he left his home at 3837 Dix Avenue and entered the Harper Hospital for the final time. Six days later, the man finally succumbed to the deadly carcinoma that the hospital had been treating with X-rays for the past two years.¹

Grinsted left behind a fifty-year-old wife, the former Grace Ellen Omstead, and an eleven-year-old daughter named Emma Rebecca. Unfortunately, he left little else—no insurance benefits or property—so that Grace and Emma found themselves facing the new year in desperate financial straits. Because Grinsted was a veteran, Grace’s expenses for his funeral on January 2, 1926, were minimal. The federal government and the Wayne County Soldiers’ Relief Committee each provided

1. Pension Record of Charles R. Grinsted, 16th U.S. Colored Infantry, Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Washington, D.C. (copy in the possession of the author). Grinsted is incorrectly entered in the online database of the National Park Service’s Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System under the surname “Grimstead.” His widow maintained Grinsted was the correct spelling of his name, so I have ignored the alternative spelling “Grinstead” that was sometimes used in other documents.

one hundred dollars to Bristol and Bristol, the undertaker, and a free burial plot was secured at the Roseland Park Cemetery, in the Detroit suburb of Berkley. The widow and her young daughter still incurred some debt, however, and they needed considerably more money than Grace could earn working as a humble “domestic,” if they were to avoid a life of grinding poverty.²

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1844, Charles Grinsted was one of almost 180,000 African Americans who had served in the Union army during the Civil War. He had enlisted in the army in Cincinnati, Ohio, in February 1865 and been assigned to one of the USCT’s many infantry regiments. After serving as a private in Company D, 16th U.S. Colored Infantry, he mustered out of the army in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in February 1866. Over the following decades, Grinsted had moved around a lot—to Indiana, Kansas, Oklahoma Territory, Colorado, Missouri, Illinois, and Michigan—and had married three women and sired six children. These many dependents required more support than a barber could easily provide, so Grinsted did not pass up any opportunity to augment his blue-collar salary. In 1886, like hundreds of thousands of other Civil War veterans, he applied for a service-connected disability pension, claiming it for impaired sight and the 1865 dislocation of his right ankle, which still bothered him. The government initially paid Grinsted six dollars each month, but this meager amount increased considerably over time. By the summer of 1925, he was receiving a monthly check for seventy-two dollars, because his advanced age and medical treatments had rendered him totally incapable of supporting his family.³

Grinsted’s monthly payments stopped when he died. His wife and daughter could ill afford the loss of almost nine hundred dollars per year, so two weeks later, Grace appeared before an inspector from the Bureau of Pensions to fill out the forms required for securing both a widow’s and a minor’s pension. Grace had married Grinsted in Illinois in 1913, when she was thirty-seven and he was sixty-eight. Because of the way in which

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.* The 16th U.S. Colored Infantry began recruiting in December 1863 and mustered out in April 1866.

the federal veterans' legislation was written, if she had married him prior to June 1905, or his death had been due to a disease or injury incurred in or aggravated by his military service, she would have been entitled to receive a widow's pension, but since this was not the case, the only payment the family was entitled to was one of thirty-six dollars each month for Emma, until she turned sixteen in March 1930.⁴

When Grace filled out Emma's "Declaration for Pension for Children under Sixteen Years of Age," she made two interesting entries on the line for listing instances of military service other than the Civil War. Grace claimed that her husband also had served in the "2nd Reg. KNG [Kansas National Guard]," with Indian service in 1876, and as a captain and recruiting officer for the "7th M.N.G. Immunes" during the Spanish-American War. After receiving this information, the Bureau of Pensions wrote to the adjutant general's office of the War Department in March 1926 and asked it to provide "a full military and medical history of [the] soldier's service" in these two units. The bureau wanted to know whether Grinsted's service in the Kansas regiment occurred during one of several specified Indian Wars campaigns, because if it had, Grace would be authorized to receive a separate pension entitlement under an act of 1917. Trying to be helpful, the bureau suggested that the "M" in M.N.G. probably stood for Michigan, since Grinsted had last lived in the Wolverine State.⁵

In April, the adjutant general's office responded to the Commissioner of Pensions, as follows: "It does not appear from the records of this office that such an organization as the 2 Reg Kansas NG was mustered into the military service of the United States in 1876; nor does it appear that such an organization as 7 MNG Immunes was mustered into the military service of the United States during the period of the War with Spain." The War Department's negative response caused the Bureau of Pensions to ask Grace Grinsted to provide further documentation. She explained that her husband had written a history of his life a few years earlier and claimed that he had served in both of those military units. Unfortunately,

4. *Ibid.* Emma's payments went to the Union Trust Company, which Grace billed for four hundred dollars per year for "board and care of ward."

5. *Ibid.*

Grace had no other way of proving whether his claims were correct, so they were officially dismissed.⁶

Except for the one year that he had served with the 16th U.S. Colored Infantry, Charles Grinsted had no other military service that would have qualified him or his dependents for a pension, but he had not tried to deceive his wife. Grinsted had simply erred in recording the details of his other service. In 1876, he had served (as an officer, no less) in the 2d Regiment of the Kansas State Militia, but the unit had not been activated by the federal government to campaign against Indians. Grinsted also had helped to recruit a company of black volunteers in St. Louis, Missouri, for service with the 7th U.S. Volunteer Infantry (USVI) during the Spanish-American War. In April 1898, a white Civil War veteran named Chester C. Clover, of Joplin, Missouri, tried to raise a black regiment for the war, and Grinsted contacted him, indicating that he was “ready to report with a full company.” Missouri’s Governor Lon Stephens refused to accept the services of any African American troops, however, so when the War Department later decided to organize four black volunteer regiments, the 7th–10th USVI, Grinsted evidently offered his company to the 7th USVI, which was organized at Jefferson Barracks, an army post just south of St. Louis. The members of the regiment were supposed to possess “immunity from diseases incident to tropical climates,” so the unit was popularly known as the “Seventh Immunes.” Grinsted had mistakenly referred to the regiment as though it was part of the Missouri National Guard (“M.N.G.”), but it was a federally raised volunteer unit, with companies recruited from four states.⁷

Bowing to the racist attitudes of the day, the War Department had allowed African American lieutenants to serve in the four black Immune regiments, but it reserved all of the other line officer billets—captains and above—for white men. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that because

6. Ibid.

7. Unidentified newspaper clipping (probably from the *Joplin Globe*) in doc. file 91917, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780s–1917, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 94, NA); for details on the 7th Immunes, see Roger D. Cunningham, “Kansas City’s African American ‘Immunes’ during the Spanish-American War,” *Missouri Historical Review* 100 (April 2006): 141–58.

of this policy, the regiment's recruiting was "the flattest thing which has struck St. Louis recently," and the *Globe-Democrat* noted that only two men had enlisted on June 20, 1898, the first day of recruiting. Nevertheless, three companies from the Gateway City were organized, placed under the command of white captains, and mustered into federal service by mid-July. Even if Grinsted's color had not prevented him from commanding the company that he had helped to organize, he was nine years older than the volunteers' maximum age limit of forty-five, having been born in 1844, and in theory he could not have been legally mustered into the Volunteer Army that was raised to fight the war with Spain.⁸

Charles Grinsted commanded the first black militia company that was organized in Kansas after the Civil War. His service record underscores the fact that, in addition to the Regular Army, there were several different military organizations in which African Americans could enlist during the second half of the nineteenth century. These organizations began to appear during the Civil War era, and that is where this story now turns.

8. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 28, 1898; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 29, 1898.



1

“These Unjust . . . Distinctions Ought to Be Abolished”

African American Militia Units during the Civil War

During the Civil War, almost 180,000 African Americans, most of them newly freed slaves, served in the artillery, cavalry, and infantry units that composed the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT). A few thousand black men also served in segregated state militia and quasi-militia units that were raised for varying periods of time. Among the states that remained loyal to the Union, only Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Kansas, and Missouri allowed these African American militia companies to be organized.

Black men fought in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 and served in the peacetime navy, but they were not allowed to enlist in the Regular Army, and the Militia Act of 1792 restricted mandatory militia membership to “each and every free able-bodied white male citizen” between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. Most states interpreted this legislation as preventing them from allowing African Americans to serve as citizen-soldiers. In 1842, two companies of free black men in Providence, Rhode Island, responding to the governor’s declaration of martial

law, helped to put down the Dorr Rebellion, and were rewarded with immediate suffrage. In 1850, citizens from Ontario County, New York, sent a petition to the U.S. Senate asking that militia enrollment be open to “all classes of persons without regard to color.” A few weeks later black Bostonians also petitioned the Senate to enable their men to be employed in transporting the mails and enrolled in the militia. In 1853, when “[c]olored gentlemen” asked the Pennsylvania militia’s inspector general if they could enlist, he opined: “I don’t believe the almighty ever intended a nigger to be put on a par with the whites and I won’t be a party to such matters.” That same year, delegates to the National Colored Convention in Rochester, New York, demanded an end to the exclusion of African Americans from the militia, but their complaint fell on deaf ears.¹

In several of the largest northern cities, black companies formed, but they were not officially incorporated into their respective state militias. In 1854, Cincinnati’s black citizens organized the Attucks Blues, its name honoring Crispus Attucks, the black patriot who was killed by British troops in the 1770 Boston Massacre. At the unit’s first public appearance a year later, it was “said to be well drilled, well uniformed, and well officered.” Three other African American companies—the Attucks Guards, the Free Soil Guards, and the Hannibal Guards—were organized in New York City in the mid-1850s, the Frank Johnson Guards served in Philadelphia during the same time frame, and in 1860 the Detroit Military Guard formed in Michigan.²

Massachusetts also had black volunteer companies. It had been one of the first states to abolish slavery, and by the time of the first national census in 1790, it was the only state with no slaves in its population. Boston’s black men (who enjoyed the right to vote) had been interested in forming a militia unit since at least 1852, when two of them presented a petition

1. *Senate Journal*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., April 8, 30, 1850, 260, 313; Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 26, 30; Harry C. Silcox, “Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Black Militant: Octavius V. Catto (1839–1871),” *Pennsylvania History* 44 (January 1877): 60.

2. Charles Johnson Jr., *African American Soldiers in the National Guard: Recruitment and Deployment during Peacetime and War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), 9–11; *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* (Rochester, N.Y.), August 3, 1855; Dorothy Sterling, ed., *Speak Out in Thunder Tones* (Garden City, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1973), 270.

to the military committee of the state legislature asking permission to incorporate an independent military company. Their request was turned down, but in 1855 about eighty black Bostonians—“among the worthiest of our colored population”—organized a volunteer unit called the Massasoit Guards. The governor refused to arm this company, so Robert Morris, a prominent lawyer who commanded the unit, proposed “to raise by subscription the means to purchase arms and equipments.”³

In November 1857, a black company called the Liberty Guard made its first public appearance in Boston. Commanded by Lewis Gaul, who had been born in Connecticut in 1820, the unit lacked uniforms but had twenty-nine muskets, and its “civic dress was tidy and becoming.” The company was not well received, however, as it marched up State Street with Bond’s Cornet Band. The *Boston Post* reported: “It was with much difficulty, and only by the aid of the police, that they made their way through the street, the crowd pressing hard, and exhibiting great dissatisfaction at the spectacle by hissing, hooting and yelling.” The crowd became “very turbulent” near Charles Street, and one of the lieutenants “received a severe blow from a heavy missile, whereupon the company rallied and drove their assailants upon the Common.” A year after the Liberty Guard’s debut, the state legislature passed a bill opening the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia to black enrollment, but Governor Nathaniel P. Banks vetoed it.⁴

In 1859, John Brown’s ill-fated attempt to arm a national slave revolt by seizing weapons from the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, (West) Virginia, shocked white Americans and seemed to exonerate all those who had opposed the organization of black militia companies. Concerned about the possibility for further race-related violence, Pennsylvania’s

3. Massachusetts’s constitution abolished slavery in 1780. Vermont also had no slaves in 1790, but it did not become a state for another year; *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, May 13, 1852, August 31, 1855, September 28, 1855. Massasoit was an Indian chief who signed a treaty of friendship with the Plymouth Colony’s settlers in 1621. Robert Morris (1823–1882) passed the Suffolk County bar exam in 1847 and became one of the first African Americans licensed to practice law.

4. *Boston Post*, November 17, 1857. According to the 1860 Census, Gaul was thirty-nine and married with four children; Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans: From the Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom to the Eve of the Compromise of 1850* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 346–47; Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 31.

adjutant general reclaimed the arms that had recently been issued to Philadelphia's African American unit, and after reminding its readers that the law said it was white men who were supposed to perform militia duty, the *Public Ledger* asked: "Who commissioned the colored officers and who organized the company?"⁵

In the North, the outbreak of the Civil War caused hordes of volunteers, both black and white, to enlist in new units to help end the rebellion. Realizing that the 16,400-man Regular Army was much too small to defeat the Confederacy, President Abraham Lincoln initially called upon the states that had not seceded for seventy-five thousand militia to serve for three months. Unfortunately, most militia programs were in disarray, and their units ill-prepared to serve, except in a few states such as Massachusetts, which relied on well-motivated volunteers instead of citizens providing mandatory service. An even greater problem was the fact that militiamen could be called up for only ninety days, and they could not be forced to serve outside their states. Thus, the Regular Army's authorized strength was soon increased to almost forty thousand, and Lincoln also called for three-year state volunteers—totaling 542,000 by the end of 1861—some of whom had been militiamen. These new units, augmented by many more three-year volunteers raised through later calls, eventually constituted the bulk of the Union army.⁶

Frederick Douglass, the famous black abolitionist, urged the North's free black men "to drink as deeply into the martial spirit of the times as possible." Following his advice, African Americans who had been excluded from militia programs rushed to organize volunteer companies in several cities. In New York City, they began drilling in a privately hired hall, but the chief of police warned them that "they must desist from these military exercises, or he would not protect them from popular indignation and assault."⁷

In 1860, there were almost 230,000 free African American males in the United States, and about 4,500 of them lived in Massachusetts. In

5. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 24, 1859.

6. Francis A. Lord, *They Fought for the Union* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1960), 1–2.

7. Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: Norton, 1966), 6.

April 1861, black Bostonians met in the Twelfth Baptist Church to call for a repeal of the laws that prevented African Americans from enlisting in the army. Shortly thereafter, they again organized a military unit, and the state's black citizens also petitioned the legislature "to cause to be stricken forthwith from the militia law of the state the odious word 'white,'" which "precluded" them "from being enrolled in the militia, and thus disabled" them "as citizens from defending the Commonwealth against its enemies."⁸

African American martial spirits also soared in Pennsylvania, which was home to more than twenty-six thousand free black males. In Pittsburgh, some of them formed the Hannibal Guard and tendered its services to the state, indicating to Brigadier General James S. Negley, the militia commander in western Pennsylvania, that they were "willing to assist in any honorable way or manner to sustain the present Administration." In May 1862, Rufus S. Jones, a brickmaker who was also captain of the Fort Pitt Cadets, another black unit from Pittsburgh, wrote Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to offer his company's services for "garrison[ing] the Southern forts with colored soldiers." Jones claimed that his unit was two years old and "quite proficient in military discipline." He pledged to recruit two hundred able-bodied men of "unquestionable loyalty to the United States" within thirty days of Stanton giving him authority or placing a recruiting officer in the city.⁹

Many white Northerners initially opposed the idea of using black troops, but the war's mounting casualties eventually liberalized their attitudes toward arming African Americans. In July 1862, the Second Confiscation and Militia Act authorized President Lincoln to take into federal service "persons of African descent" for "any military or naval service for which they may be found competent." Six months later, shortly after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, John A. Andrew, the abolitionist governor of Massachusetts, was allowed to raise a black

8. James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (1965; reprint, New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 20–21.

9. In 1860, only Maryland and Virginia had more free black men than Pennsylvania; *ibid.*, 19–20; Colored Troops Division, Adjutant General's Office, *The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886: A Compilation*, 852, roll 1, National Archives (hereinafter cited as NA) Microfilm Publication M858.

regiment for the Union army—the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. The Bay State also organized two more black regiments—the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, and the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry—and in September 1863, it allowed an African American militia unit to be raised in Boston—the Unattached Company, Independent Division, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia.¹⁰

Since 1840, the Bay State's militia had relied on volunteer units rather than companies of enrolled citizen-soldiers, and by 1855, its adjutant general had proudly reported that it stood "in better repute at Washington, than the Militia of any other State." In 1861, Massachusetts's general statutes had limited the number of militia companies to 120 of all arms and allowed its members to be paid for three consecutive days' duty in the fall of each year. The pay for officers and men in infantry companies was set at \$2.50 per day.¹¹

Reverend George A. Rue of Boston's African Methodist Episcopal Church reported to the *Christian Recorder* that his city furnished the black unit with its uniforms "and all things necessary for a company." As was the custom in the militia, the men elected their own officers. Lewis Gaul, who had commanded the Liberty Guard six years earlier and left his job as a coachman to work in the state adjutant general's office, was selected to be the unit's captain, while James B. Watkins and Peter E. Hawkins served as the first and second lieutenants. Reverend Rue reported that citizens believed Captain Gaul was "well qualified to fill his position," and the other two officers were "men of military ability."¹²

Boston's black militia unit was later officially designated as the 14th Unattached Company of Infantry, but its members called themselves the Shaw Guard, to honor Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, an aristocratic Boston abolitionist who had been killed while commanding the 54th

10. Johnson, *African American Soldiers in the National Guard*, 30–31.

11. Frederick P. Todd, "Our National Guard: An Introduction to Its History," *Military Affairs* 5 (fall 1941): 156; *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the Year Ending December 31, 1865* (Boston, 1866), 50, 53 (hereinafter cited as *1865 Annual Report*).

12. *Philadelphia Christian Recorder*, October 3, 1863; According to Boston's wartime city directories, Gaul was a coachman in 1861 and worked in the adjutant general's office the next year. By 1865, he was listed as a messenger for that office, earning \$1,080 per year.

Massachusetts during its bloody assault on Fort (or Battery) Wagner, near Charleston, South Carolina, in July 1863. Most of the state's infantry companies were armed with Springfield rifles, but the Shaw Guard was issued ninety-six Enfield muskets with bayonets. The adjutant general's office also provided the company with equal numbers of military accoutrements, including bayonet scabbards, cap pouches, cartridge boxes with belts, and waist belts.¹³

In July 1863, there had been draft riots in several northeastern cities, including Boston, and both militia and federal units had responded to the violence. Since that time, however, no serious domestic threats had troubled the Bay State, and the Shaw Guard's activities were largely ceremonial. On January 2, 1865, accompanied by the "celebrated" Boston Cornet Band, the company marched through the principal streets of Boston to celebrate the second anniversary of President Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves. Reverend Rue, who served as the unit's chaplain, reported that during the parade the company's "ranks were full," and the men were "greatly applauded by the respectable citizens." Rue also noted that "Both officers and men reflected great honor upon themselves," and he expressed the hope that "they [would] maintain what they [had] gained." An evening ball staged at the company's Chardon Street armory "very happily concluded the celebrative proceedings of the day." After the war was over, the Shaw Guard also marched with other local military units on the Fourth of July, and in September, when the 54th Massachusetts returned to Boston from South Carolina, the company joined Gilmore's Band and several other civilian groups in celebrating the regiment's arrival at the city's Commercial Wharf.¹⁴

The neighboring state of Rhode Island, where 1,831 free African American males resided in 1860, also had a black militia unit. Many of

13. For details on the 54th Massachusetts, see Peter Burchard, *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and His Brave Black Regiment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), or Luis F. Emilio, *A Brave Black Regiment: History of the Fifty-fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (1894; reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1995). Many of the men in Massachusetts's three black regiments came from outside the state; Lewis Gaul's obituary in the *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1884, said that the Liberty Guards became the Shaw Guards; *1865 Annual Report*, schedule K.

14. *Philadelphia Christian Recorder*, January 14, 1865; *Boston Journal*, January 3, July 5, 1865; *Boston Post*, September 4, 1865; Emilio, *Brave Black Regiment*, 318.

the state's black men were eager to fight to save the Union, which was underscored in 1861, when a company from Providence offered to accompany the 1st Rhode Island Infantry to the front. When these men were turned away, some of them attached themselves to white units as servants. In August 1862, another company of Providence recruits enrolled for a black regiment, but the latter was not organized. Finally, in June 1863, the War Department permitted the state to raise the 14th Rhode Island Colored Heavy Artillery, which was later redesignated the 11th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery.¹⁵

An 1862 act to better organize Rhode Island's militia provided that every able-bodied man on its rolls would be attached to some military organization and perform a specified number of days of duty during the year. By the end of 1863, five brigades had been organized. Within the 1st Brigade's geographic area, a black militia unit formed in Bristol in August. The slave trade had first brought African Americans to the port of Bristol, and after Rhode Island began the gradual abolishment of slavery in 1784, many of the freedmen moved to a part of town called Goree (later New Goree), named after the prominent slave trade center on an island off the coast of Senegal.¹⁶

In August 1863, twenty-three "colored persons"—the number of eighteen-to-forty-five-year-old black men on Bristol's militia roll—met at the courthouse to organize a detachment of infantry (colored). They elected First Lieutenant Daniel Hazard, a mulatto, as their commander. Hazard's military experience probably earned him votes, because he had just completed more than nine months of active service as a private in the 12th Rhode Island Infantry. The detachment joined seven white companies, as well as the Bristol Artillery (an independent military company), in constituting the town's militia complement. The local newspaper expressed the hope that "sufficient interest" would be taken in these organizations "to enable them . . . to have full attend[a]nce at their drill meetings." Bristol's detachment did not serve long, however,

15. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (1953; reprint, Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 27, 31, 185; *Providence Journal*, Aug 26, 1862.

16. *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island, for the Year 1863* (Providence: Alfred Anthony, 1864), 8, 33.

because in March 1864 the legislature repealed the state's unpopular militia legislation.¹⁷

Kansas was the third Northern state to use the services of black militia companies, and in spite of having such a strong antislavery background that it was known as the “land of John Brown,” it did so only when it faced the threat of Confederate invasion. In 1861 Kansas had entered the Union as a free state, and over the next few years its African American population had increased to several thousand, as slaves from neighboring Missouri escaped or were liberated by roving bands of abolitionist “jayhawkers” and escorted across the state line. Other black refugees came from Arkansas and the Indian Territory to the south. From these freedmen, Kansas became the first Northern state to raise an African American regiment, the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry, although initially the unit was not recognized by the federal government. The state also organized other black units—an infantry regiment and an artillery battery—for the Union army, but as historian Albert Castel has pointed out, “at all times, the rank and file of its citizens remained basically anti-Negro.” The Kansas constitution did not allow black suffrage, and the 1864 Militia Act followed the federal example and mandated a white enrolled militia. In Leavenworth, which had about fifteen hundred African American residents by the summer of 1862, the *Evening Bulletin* took issue with the exclusion of black militiamen, calling it “a very unwise act” and noting that black Kansans were “a class of men, good, tried and true, that could be used to great advantage, but we are deprived of their aid and assistance in the defense of our State.”¹⁸

The Kansas State Militia was organized into twenty-four regiments and four battalions that were assigned to five militia brigade districts. In

17. The unit was designated as a detachment because its strength was less than the eighty-three-man minimum prescribed for infantry companies; Pension Record of Daniel Hazard, RG 15, NA; *Bristol Phenix*, August 29, 1863; Frederick P. Todd, ed., *American Military Equipage, 1851–1872*, vol. 2 (New York: Chatham Square Press, 1983), 1153. There are several instances of light-skinned African Americans serving in white units during the war. The commander of the Independent Battery, USCLA, Captain H. Ford Douglas, had served as a private in the 95th Illinois for almost one year.

18. The 1860 Census recorded that only two of Kansas's 627 African Americans were slaves; Albert Castel, “Civil War Kansas and the Negro,” *Journal of Negro History* 51 (April 1966): 129, 138; *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, June 4, 1864.

June 1864, perhaps concerned about pro-Southern guerrilla activity in northwestern Missouri, the First District commander, Brigadier General Samuel A. Drake, placed Leavenworth (his headquarters) under “military guard”—probably a form of martial law—and directed the city’s “colored men . . . to organize into companies of 100 men and report to the commanding officer of the post for duty.” Colonel M. S. Grant, the militia officer serving as the post commander, subsequently ordered these African Americans to report to the Market House for organization and drill. Drake and Grant organized these black citizen-soldiers under their own authority, evidently considering Leavenworth’s security of greater importance than the technicalities of the state’s militia legislation.¹⁹

In the fall of 1864, as Confederate Major General Sterling Price led a twelve-thousand-man mounted force westward across Missouri toward Kansas City and Leavenworth, the Sunflower State’s citizens hurriedly prepared to defend themselves. On October 8, Governor Thomas Carney issued a dramatic proclamation calling the Kansas State Militia “To arms and the tented field until the rebel foe shall be baffled and beaten back!” More than twelve thousand of the state’s white militiamen soon began to “rendezvous” at six cities on or near the Missouri border—Atchison, Wyandotte, Olathe, Paola, Mound City, and Fort Scott. Two days later, Major General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of the Department of Kansas, issued General Order No. 54 from his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth. This order declared martial law and directed that all men, white or black, between the ages of eighteen and sixty, “arm and attach themselves to some of the organizations of troops, for temporary military service.”²⁰

General Curtis’s order quickly augmented the militia’s ranks, and by October 15 about a thousand black citizen-soldiers had formed at least fourteen segregated companies. A few more African Americans were also attached to seven companies in Johnson County’s 13th Militia Regiment, although most of them were probably relegated to noncombatant roles,

19. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, for the Year 1864* (Leavenworth, 1865), 51–52, 67–68; *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, June 23, 1864.

20. Roger D. Cunningham, “Welcoming ‘Pa’ on the Kaw: Kansas’s ‘Colored’ Militia and the Price Raid,” *Kansas History* 25 (summer 2002): 88–89.

such as cooks and teamsters. The black units were organized in eight cities—five of them in Leavenworth, two each in Mound City and Wyandotte, and one each in Elwood, Fort Scott, Humboldt, Oskaloosa, and Topeka. Eight of the companies were attached to white militia regiments or battalions. Four of the Leavenworth companies combined with one of the Wyandotte companies to form a battalion-sized unit, which was placed under the command of James L. Rafferty, who had enlisted in the 7th Kansas Cavalry and risen to command one of its companies earlier in the war. By 1864, however, he was a captain in the 2d Kansas Colored Infantry on temporary duty in Leavenworth. Rafferty's second-in-command, Josiah B. McAfee, and his adjutant, Joshua Mitchell, were also white, but all eleven of the officers in his four Leavenworth companies were African Americans—perhaps the same men who had led the hundred-man companies that had been organized in June.²¹

In Company A, Henry Copeland served as the first lieutenant. Born in North Carolina about 1840, Copeland was a carpenter who had been educated in Ohio, attending the preparatory department (high school equivalent) of Oberlin College in the late 1850s. After he moved to Kansas, Copeland also had served as a first lieutenant in Company D of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry from August 1862 until May 1863. When Copeland's company was mustered into the Union army, however, he was refused a commission because of his color.²²

Two of the three officers in Company B were barbers, including First Lieutenant Samuel Jordan. Captain William H. Burnham, who commanded Rafferty's Company C, was also a barber. Burnham owned his own shop, near the corner of Shawnee and Third streets, and he was a leader within Leavenworth's large African American community. His experience as a political activist extended at least as far back as 1849, when he had lived in Ohio and helped fellow activist John Mercer Langston draft a resolution supporting black emigration to Canada.

21. *Ibid.*, 90–92. Rafferty's name was spelled several different ways, including Rafferty, and Rafferty.

22. *Ibid.*, 93. Copeland's brother, John, had been hanged at Charles Town, Virginia, in December 1859 for his role in John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.

Burnham also had served as the chairman of the Colored State Central Committee that had just met in Lawrence, Kansas, in September 1864.²³

On October 19, Captain Raferty's four Leavenworth companies were ordered to proceed about thirty miles southeast to Independence, Missouri. The *Leavenworth Daily Conservative* reported that "great eagerness was displayed by the boys to get away to see their sweethearts and wives before being borne down to the arena of action and its attendant uncertainties." The next day, the citizen-soldiers journeyed down the Missouri River on the steamer *Benton*. Near Kansas City, they linked up with one of the Wyandotte companies, which was commanded by Captain Fielding Johnson. Born in Indiana territory in 1810, Johnson had served as a volunteer during the Black Hawk War before moving to Kansas in 1856. He was a good friend of Abraham Lincoln (also a Black Hawk War veteran), and shortly after taking office in 1861, the president had appointed him as a Delaware Indian agent. Johnson reportedly convinced the tribe to remain loyal to the Union during the war.²⁴

On October 21, Raferty's five companies marched east to the Big Blue River, midway between Kansas City and Independence, where General Curtis was preparing his hastily assembled Army of the Border to fight Price's rapidly approaching force. Several hundred African American militiamen were placed at the northern end of Curtis's twelve-mile front, near a ford on the Kansas City–Independence road. They were supported by a section of two ten-pounder Parrott guns from Fort Leavenworth's Independent Battery, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, which had been recruiting men since July. The section was commanded by a talented mulatto officer from Louisiana, Second Lieutenant Patrick Henry Minor,

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 94–95; *Topeka Kansas State Record*, July 3, 1872 (Johnson's obituary). Richard J. Hinton, in his eyewitness account of the Price Raid, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas* (Chicago: Church and Goodman, 1865), says that in addition to Raferty's "Leavenworth Battalion," two black militia companies from Wyandotte and three from Shawneetown were at the Big Blue. The other Wyandotte company may have been mounted and thus not assigned to Raferty's command, but there is no other mention of the three black Shawneetown units in the Kansas State Militia muster rolls on KSHS microfilm publication LM 817. Raferty's command is called the 1st Colored Regiment, a designation that seems to have been created after the war.

whose sister Josephine was married to Captain Burnham. Lieutenant Minor's two guns, which were attached to the four-gun 9th Wisconsin Light Battery, were manned by twenty-five of his own artillerymen, augmented by a score of Raferty's black militiamen.²⁵

On October 22, General Price feinted at the northern end of Curtis's front, while one of his three divisions moved south to force a crossing of the Big Blue at Byram's Ford. Farther south, Kansas State Militia units that had been guarding another ford fell back and were overtaken by mounted Confederate troops at the Mockabee Farm. In the ensuing battle, the 2d Militia Regiment from Topeka, which included Captain Thomas Archer's black Company D, suffered twenty-four fatalities, including two African Americans—Moses Banks and Ben Hughes. Banks was from Company D, but Hughes was a teamster in Company K, which had a single howitzer and was also known as the Topeka Battery.²⁶

After the fight at the Big Blue—also known as the Battle of the Blue—General Curtis's force fell back toward Kansas City and took up a position just north of Brush Creek, near Westport. On the morning of October 23, the federal troops moved south of the creek and engaged Price's force. Lieutenant Minor's two-gun section supported the Union line during the ensuing Battle of Westport, and Raferty's militiamen also contributed to Curtis's victory, although their exact role in the fighting is unclear. After Raferty and his citizen-soldiers proudly returned to Leavenworth a few days later, the *Daily Conservative* reported that "Many a hotly contested field will bear ample testimony to their bravery and fighting qualities."²⁷

Leavenworth's African American community was justifiably proud of the performance of its militia companies. John Turner wrote the *Christian Recorder* to inform it that "the colored troops . . . [had] behaved well." He reported that the units "went into Missouri en masse, while more than half of the white militia utterly refused to cross the State line;

25. Cunningham, "Welcoming 'Pa,'" 95. The Wisconsin unit was also known as Dodge's Battery.

26. *Ibid.*, 95–96.

27. *Ibid.*, 96.



Dedicated in 1895, the Topeka Cemetery's Gage Monument honors twenty-four members of the Kansas State Militia who were killed at the Battle of the Blue, fought near Kansas City, Missouri, on October 22, 1864. Two of the honorees—Moses Banks and Ben Hughes—were African Americans. *Randall M. Thies, Topeka.*

and at the Battle of the Blue, they conducted themselves with such courage and steadiness, as to win general commendation.”²⁸

Most of the Kansas State Militia’s other black companies remained within the Sunflower State, including Leavenworth’s fifth unit, which worked on entrenchments and conducted “heavy guard” and picket duty. The company from Elwood, which was located just across the river from St. Joseph, Missouri, marched about twenty miles southwest to help defend Atchison. The Humboldt company stayed at home to protect the town from possible attack. The service of the two Mound City companies was not recorded accurately, but they also may have marched into Missouri. The Oskaloosa unit set out for Missouri but never got there. Captain Wilber C. Ball’s militiamen stopped marching when they arrived at the state line, which Ball attributed to two reasons. Being former slaves, the citizen-soldiers thought that “they might be legally taken possession of by their former owners and returned to slavery.” Captain Ball also stated that “wicked and designing persons” had convinced his men that “the country where they had left their women and children was unprotected and . . . they were in far more danger than the white people.” The black Oskaloosans’ refusal to leave Kansas soil was also mirrored by some white militia units, although not to the extent reported by John Turner to the *Christian Recorder*.²⁹

As General Price’s column retreated south from Westport along the state line, the black militia unit organized by First Lieutenant William D. Matthews at Fort Scott fully expected to have to fight the Confederate invaders. Born in Maryland in 1827, Matthews had worked as a seaman from Baltimore before moving to Leavenworth in 1856 and opening the Waverly House, a boardinghouse that reportedly became a station on the Underground Railroad. In 1862, he had recruited a company in the 1st Kansas Colored and commanded it for nine months. When the regiment was finally mustered into federal service in 1863, however, Matthews and his two lieutenants—Henry Copeland and Patrick Minor—were denied commissions in the Union army because of their color.³⁰

28. *Philadelphia Christian Recorder*, February 4, 1865.

29. Cunningham, “Welcoming ‘Pa,’” 96–97.

30. *Ibid.*, 98.



In October 1864, Lieutenant William D. Matthews was in Fort Scott recruiting soldiers for a black artillery battery when Confederate invasion threatened the area. The post commander ordered Matthews to help defend Fort Scott by organizing a militia company from “all able bodied colored men in Bourbon County.” *Kansas State Historical Society*.

In July 1864, along with Minor, Matthews had been appointed as a recruiting officer for the Independent Battery, and in September, after finding insufficient recruits in Leavenworth, he had journeyed a hundred miles south to enlist men at Fort Scott, where many escaped Missouri slaves had sought refuge in the town named for the adjacent army

Copyright © 2007. University of Missouri Press. All rights reserved.

post. As the threat of General Price's invasion loomed, the local commander, Colonel Charles W. Blair, diverted Matthews from his recruiting mission and put him in charge of enrolling "all able bodied colored men in Bourbon County" and assembling them at the fort. As Matthews began organizing and training the black militiamen to defend the Union military complex and town, Colonel Blair headed north to command a brigade in the fighting around Kansas City. Lieutenant Matthews accomplished his mission, but because the Confederate column veered eastward into Missouri and did not attack Fort Scott, he and his militia company did not have to fight.³¹

When Colonel Blair returned to Fort Scott, he was quite impressed with the work that Matthews had accomplished "in preparing the post for a vigorous defense against the probable attack of the enemy." Before the lieutenant returned to Fort Leavenworth with a score of new recruits for the Independent Battery, Colonel Blair composed a letter thanking him for the "patient industry and skill" with which he had discharged his duties and said that he had been "a model of proper discipline and subordination, strictly attentive to duty, promptly obedient to orders, and acting with a wise discretion in all matters requiring the exercise of your individual judgment."³²

As Price's Confederates continued to retreat south, General Curtis rescinded his declaration of martial law, and by the end of October, six of the fourteen black companies had been disbanded. Captain Raferty's Leavenworth companies mustered out of service on November 10, and in February 1865 Raferty finally rejoined the 2d Kansas Colored (now redesignated as the 83d U.S. Colored Infantry) in Little Rock, Arkansas. From that city he wrote a letter to Kansas's newly elected congressman Sidney Clarke, whom he had known for a short time as a fellow officer in Leavenworth. Raferty wanted Clarke to get him authority to raise a black regiment in either Louisiana or Texas, because recruiting in Arkansas was "played out." Clarke's response to this plan is unknown, but

31. *Ibid.*

32. Colonel Blair to William D. Matthews, November 18, 1864, Pension File of William D. Matthews, RG 15, NA. Blair commanded the third brigade of the first provisional cavalry division in General Curtis's Army of the Border.

in May, Raferty was court-martialed for violating two articles of war—conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline as well as conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. In June, the captain was found guilty of both charges, and after his sentence was confirmed, he was dismissed from the service in July.³³

After Wyandotte's two companies disbanded on December 10, all but a few of the state's black militiamen had returned to their civilian occupations. Some of Raferty's and Matthews's citizen-soldiers had enlisted in Fort Leavenworth's Independent Battery, which had finally reached its authorized strength and mustered into the Union army on December 23. These enlistees included Company A's First Lieutenant Henry Copeland, who surrendered his shoulder straps and became the battery's first sergeant. William McLane, who had been Company C's first sergeant, became the battery's quartermaster sergeant. At least four other men from Company A and two of the men who had served with Lieutenant Matthews at Fort Scott also enlisted in the battery.³⁴

Captain Burnham had written General Curtis to request the Independent Battery's quartermaster position. After failing to secure it, he continued to work for racial equality in Leavenworth. A few days after the battery was mustered into federal service, Burnham issued a call, as chairman of the Colored State Central Committee, for a state convention of the "colored citizens of Kansas and their friends." He noted that although freed slaves were "becoming the defenders of the nation's life," few states had accorded them the right of suffrage. Burnham pointed out that in Kansas, they were taxed, "while denied the right of representation, and the equally important privilege of uniting with the militia of the State in repelling invasion and suppressing domestic violence." He stressed that "These unjust . . . distinctions ought to be abolished."³⁵

33. Cunningham, "Welcoming 'Pa,'" 99; Raferty [*sic*] to Clarke, February 24, 1865, Sidney Clarke Papers, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma; Case MM 2448, Court Martial Case Files, 1809–1894, RG 153, NA. Raferty was court-martialed for selling his wife's baked goods and other items to the men of his regiment, which violated the 31st Article of War; Pension File of James L. Rafferty [*sic*], RG 15, NA. In 1880, while traveling in the Southwest, Raferty died in Socorro, New Mexico Territory.

34. Cunningham, "Welcoming 'Pa,'" 99.

35. *Ibid.*; *Leavenworth Daily Bulletin*, December 28, 1864.

Fortunately for Burnham and his fellow militiamen, there were no unjust racial distinctions in the amounts they were eventually paid for their service during the campaign. An 1865 commission verified all of the Price Raid claims, and two years later the legislature assumed these claims for the state and paid them in Union military scrip. Kansas then asked the federal government to assume this debt, so that the citizen-soldiers could redeem their scrip for cash plus 7 percent interest. In 1871, Congress appointed the Hardie Commission to resolve the matter. The three-man commission allowed slightly more than \$260,000 to be paid to 15,111 militiamen, including just over two thousand dollars for 138 men from Matthews's company and almost six thousand dollars for 287 of Raferty's militiamen. Most of the enlisted citizen-soldiers who had served as privates received only sixteen dollars for their month of service, but officers were paid much more. For example, Captain Burnham received ninety-six dollars, while First Lieutenant Samuel Jordan, of Company B, was entitled to eighty-eight dollars. Charges for missing weapons or items of equipment, however, were deducted from this pay. Twenty-one of Raferty's men who had deserted with their Enfield rifle and complete issue of equipment each owed the government \$20.43.³⁶

Kansas's neighbor to the east was the final Northern state to field black militia units. Missouri's 1860 population included almost 120,000 African Americans—97 percent of them slaves. In mid-1863, the state enacted a law providing for gradual emancipation and eventually contributed more than eighty-three hundred black troops to the Union army, a number exceeded by only three other Northern states: Kentucky, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. In addition to those who enlisted, tens of thousands of other black Missourians left the state. Many slaves were either moved farther south by their owners, or they escaped to freedom in Kansas, Illinois, or Iowa. By the end of 1864, only about sixty thousand African Americans remained in Missouri.³⁷

36. Cunningham, "Welcoming 'Pa,'" 100; *Report of the Price Raid Commissioner* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1889), vi, 53, 207. For details on the problems in paying the Price Raid claims, see Kyle S. Sinisi, *Sacred Debts: State Civil War Claims and American Federalism, 1861–1880* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), chapter 4.

37. Russel L. Gerlach, *Settlement Patterns in Missouri: A Study of Population Origins, with a Wall Map* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 30.

As a slave state, Missouri had many pro-Confederate citizens and fielded a Confederate government-in-exile, as well as thirty thousand Confederate troops. It also suffered several Rebel invasions, such as the Price Raid, which caused it to fund a large militia program for home defense. The chaotic situation within the state was underscored by the fact that on the Union side alone, seventeen different classes of troops were organized during the war. This caused one historian to call Missouri, in effect, a “garrison state.”³⁸

In the fall of 1864, when it appeared that the Price Raid would strike St. Louis, the Department of the Missouri appointed U.S. Senator (and future governor) Benjamin Gratz Brown as a volunteer aide-de-camp to the commander, Major General William Rosecrans, and assigned him the mission of organizing “militia exempts” to defend the city. Colonel Brown’s five-thousand-man City Guard comprised five regiments, two battalions, and several unattached companies. The two-company 2d Battalion was African American and commanded by Captain David W. Burley. Captain Burley’s men remained in service from September 25 until the end of October, but unlike their peers in Kansas, they do not seem to have enjoyed official militia status. Their contributions to the city’s defense may have impressed the delegates to the St. Louis constitutional convention that abolished slavery in January 1865.³⁹

In the first four months of 1865, Missouri enacted three different militia laws. An 1861 law was replaced by new legislation in February, and in April, yet another law went into effect. The April militia law divided the state into two military districts—the first, north of the Missouri River, and the second south of that river. All able-bodied males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were required to enroll in units within each county, with companies organized the same as those in the army. Regiments were supposed to comprise at least eight companies. Men who neglected or

38. *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops (Union and Confederate) in Service during the Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1902), 7; Robert S. Chamberlain, “The Northern State Militia,” *Civil War History* 4 (June 1958): 108.

39. U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880–1901), series I, vol. 41, pt. 3, 752–53; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (1908; reprint, Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1979), 2:1322.

refused to enroll had to pay twenty dollars and could be imprisoned until that fine was paid. By the end of the year, eighty-four regiments and six battalions had been organized, including at least five different African American units—a platoon in Chillicothe, companies in Lexington, Versailles, and Lamine, and the 52d Regiment in St. Louis.⁴⁰

Captain E. C. Holmes, the commander of the ninety-two-man “Colored Company” of the 58th Regiment in Lexington applied for his unit to be paid for thirty days of service in March and April, but it is not clear whether he and his men ever received any money. First Lieutenant L. D. Murphy’s platoon of the 14th Regiment, and Captain William Martin’s Company H (Versailles) in the 78th Regiment were both organized in June, and their surviving muster rolls provide some personal data on the militiamen. All of Lieutenant Murphy’s forty-four men were farmers, except for a cook, a drayman, a preacher, and a waiter. All but five of the men were married, and half of those whose ages were recorded were younger than thirty. Except for two farmers, all of Captain Martin’s fifty-four men were laborers. Almost two-thirds (thirty-four) were married, and an equal number were younger than thirty. Like most, if not all, of his men, Martin was illiterate, and someone else had to sign his name on the roll. In July, Captain Joseph M. Reed’s eighty-six-man Company A in the 11th Regiment was organized in Lamine. All of Reed’s men were farmers, except for nine laborers, a cabin boy, a shoemaker, and a waiter. More than three out of four men were married.⁴¹

St. Louis’s 52d Regiment comprised a five-man headquarters and ten companies. The headquarters officers (“field and staff”) included a colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, adjutant, and quartermaster, all of whom were African Americans. The commander was Francis (or Frank) Robinson, and in September someone wrote the *Christian Recorder* to

40. *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of Missouri for the Year Ending December 31, 1865* (Jefferson City, 1866), 46, 65.

41. Muster-in Rolls for Missouri Militia Companies, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. In December 1865, Captain C. W. Cartlidge submitted a claim for more than two thousand dollars to pay for his ninety-eight-man Independent Colored Company’s two months of guard duty at Hannibal. The state later determined, however, that the company had “rendered service during the war without sufficient authority” and that it could not be paid without adequate legislation.

brag that Robertson [*sic*] was “the first colored man that has ever been promoted to the honorable rank of Colonel.” The correspondent also wrote that he hoped to see the day “when every State in the Union will feel it a duty to appoint men to rank and influence according to their ability, and not with reference to their color.”⁴²

The regiment’s lieutenant colonel was Samuel Helms, a barber, and the adjutant was James M. Turner, who although born a slave in 1839 had gained his freedom as a child and attended Oberlin College, in Ohio, for several years in the 1850s. In 1861 Turner had worked as a servant for a Union army officer and accompanied him at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, but by the end of the war he was working as a porter. The 52d Regiment’s company officers included Company B’s Captain Charleton H. Tandy, who also was a porter.⁴³

One other use of the North’s free black population in a quasi-military capacity occurred in southern Ohio. On September 2, 1862, fearing an attack by Confederate forces from the border state of Kentucky, Major General Lew Wallace declared martial law in Cincinnati, as well as in Covington and Newport, Kentucky, just across the Ohio River. General Wallace ordered all business suspended, instructed citizens to assemble under the direction of Mayor George Hatch, and declared that “the injunctions of this proclamation [would] be executed by the police.” Mayor Hatch then called upon “every man, of every age, be he citizen or alien” to “assemble in their respective wards . . . and there organize themselves in such manner as may be thought best for the defen[s]e of the city.” A later order directed these organizations to assemble for drill every afternoon.⁴⁴

On September 3, the city police began rounding up African Americans “in a rude and violent manner,” but the next day, Judge William M. Dickson was appointed as the commandant of a unit that became known as the “Black Brigade of Cincinnati.” Colonel Dickson was an abolitionist and a

42. *Ibid.*, 669–70; *Philadelphia Christian Recorder*, September 23, 1865.

43. Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: The Public Life of a Post-Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 16; *Annual Report of the Adjutant General . . . of Missouri, for the Year Ending December 31, 1869* (Jefferson City, 1870), 7; Johnson, *African American Soldiers in the National Guard*, 23–24, 34.

44. *New York Times*, September 3, 8, 1862.

confidant of Secretary of War Stanton, and his wife was a cousin of First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln. Under Dickson's leadership, "kind treatment took the place of brutality," and the brigade was presented with a national flag. Seven hundred men were organized into two regiments and five separate companies—seventeen companies in all—and all but three of the companies were led by black officers. The brigade worked around the clock until September 20, chopping down trees, clearing fields of fire, and digging trenches and rifle pits to help defend the Queen City from an attack that never materialized. On September 17, the brigade suffered its only casualty—a man killed by a falling tree. The African Americans were paid one dollar per day during their second week of duty and \$1.50 per day after that, but they were not armed or uniformed, nor were they accorded true militia status.⁴⁵

Some of the members of the Black Brigade later served in USCT units, including Powhatan Beaty, who enlisted in the 127th Ohio (later redesignated as the 5th U.S. Colored Infantry) in the summer of 1863 and rose to be a company first sergeant. Beaty was one of four noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in the 5th USCI who received Medals of Honor for their bravery during the Battle of New Market Heights (or Chaffin's Farm), fought near Richmond, Virginia, in September 1864.⁴⁶

More than twelve hundred African Americans from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Kansas, and Missouri served as militiamen during the Civil War, and nearly a thousand more helped to defend Cincinnati and St. Louis from the threat of Confederate attack. In the North, every state and the District of Columbia contributed men to the Union army's USCT units—ranging from only 104 from Maine and Minnesota to almost 24,000 Kentuckians—but only four states were willing to arm

45. Peter H. Clark, *The Black Brigade of Cincinnati: Being a Report of Its Labors . . .* (1864; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 8–20, 30. The 1st Regiment (seven companies) had 317 men, the 2d Regiment (five companies) had 192 men, and the five separate companies had 197 men. Another three hundred African Americans served in units separate from the brigade; Jim Leeke, "The Black Brigade," *Timeline* 18 (July/Aug 2001): 46; Thomas Truxton Moebs, *Black Soldiers—Black Sailors—Black Ink* (Chesapeake, Va.: Moebs Publishing, 1994), 1289.

46. For details on the 5th USCT, see Versalle F. Washington, *Eagles on Their Buttons: A Black Infantry Regiment in the Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999). Beaty's name is sometimes spelled Beatty.

and equip black militia companies to stay at home and guard against insurrection or invasion. The two New England states had been among the first to outlaw slavery, and they had relatively enlightened views regarding civil rights, but in spite of its antislavery reputation, Kansas only allowed the formation of black militia units when it faced the threat of a Confederate invasion. When that threat disappeared, so did the Sunflower State's black citizen-soldiers. Missouri's African American militia units were only organized in the closing days of the war, and the extent to which they were armed and equipped is not accurately recorded.

It is not clear why other Northern states with large black populations, such as Pennsylvania and New York, did not allow black militia units to be raised, but racism certainly seems to have played a role in the former state. During General Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North in the summer of 1863, Pennsylvania's governor Andrew Curtin and Philadelphia's mayor Alexander Henry called for recruits to bolster the militia, and Philadelphia's African American community quickly raised a company. When the unit reached Harrisburg, Major General Darius N. Couch refused to muster it into service with the disingenuous excuse that Congress had only provided for the enlistment of black troops for not less than three years. When Secretary Stanton was informed of General Couch's action, he immediately informed him that he was "authorized to receive into the service any volunteer troops that may be offered, without regard to color." The black unit, however, had already returned to Philadelphia. When an officer informed Stanton that more African American companies from Philadelphia and "other points" could be provided, Stanton informed him of his telegram to Couch but cautioned "if there is likely to be any dispute about the matter, it will be better to send no more."⁴⁷

There may have been a few African Americans with light complexions in the ranks of the Pennsylvania militia units that were activated during the Antietam and Gettysburg campaigns, as well as in the Indiana and Ohio militia units that helped to defend their states from John Hunt Morgan's 1863 raid. As a rule, most state authorities lacked confidence in the fighting abilities of African Americans, but after draft quotas went

47. Silcox, "Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Black Militant," 59–60.

into effect, these officials probably had no desire to divert black men from serving in the Union army. Many citizens undoubtedly would have agreed with Missouri's *Lexington Weekly Union*, which opined: "Every Negro received [in the army] saves a white man." More than a year after the government refused the services of his Fort Pitt Cadets, Rufus Jones bolstered the Union army's strength. He enlisted in the 8th U.S. Colored Infantry in July 1863 and rose to be that unit's sergeant major before the end of the year. In November 1865, Jones finally mustered out as the regimental clerk at Brownsville, Texas.⁴⁸

Although only a few companies of the black militiamen actually engaged in combat, their impact was greater than their small numbers and limited use suggest. Many of the citizen-soldiers served under officers of their own color, and the latter were given the opportunity to develop and exercise invaluable leadership skills, some of them probably for the first time. The desire of these officers and men to exercise their right to bear arms and accept the military responsibilities of citizenship paved the way for the abolishment of more "unjust distinctions" based on race. This resulted in much greater African American participation in the organized militia after the war. By the turn of the century, twenty-two states and the District of Columbia would raise black units that served for varying periods of time. Throughout the Gilded Age, the proud members of these militia companies continued to serve as fine examples of civic responsibility within their respective communities.

In the decades after their militia service ended, several former African American citizen-soldiers joined William H. Burnham in demonstrating leadership at local, state, and national levels. In 1865, Frank Robinson and Samuel Helms became members of the executive committee for the Missouri Equal Rights League, and James M. Turner served as its secretary. Six years later, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Turner as the U.S. consul to Liberia, and he remained in that diplomatic post until

48. Dyer, *Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, 11; Michael D. Doubler, *I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636–2000* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Director, Army National Guard, 2001), 109; Lorenzo Greene, Gary R. Kremer, and Antonio F. Holland, *Missouri's Black Heritage* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 82; Compiled Military Service Record (CMSR) of Rufus S. Jones, RG 94, NA.

1878. Charleton H. Tandy organized the first attempt to assist the masses of destitute black migrants who began to arrive in St. Louis in early 1879, en route to an imagined “promised land” that they hoped to find in Kansas. Around the same time, William D. Matthews became the grand master of the Sunflower State’s York Right Masons, and he rose to become national grand master of that organization by 1891. When Matthews died in 1906, the *Leavenworth Times* wrote that he had been “scrupulously honest in all his business dealings and his word in a personal matter was as good as an oath.” The good citizenship of other African American militiamen also earned them respect within their communities. When Lewis Gaul died in 1884, the *Boston Globe* reported that he “was a firm vindicator of the rights of the colored man, [and] had the confidence of all who knew him as a man and a citizen.”⁴⁹

Shortly after the Civil War, African Americans organized their own militia units in Massachusetts, Missouri, and Rhode Island, and many of these black citizen-soldiers had served in the Union army or navy. Black Kansans, however, waited until 1875 to organize their first militia company. The next chapter examines the Kansas State Militia and National Guard during the Gilded Age.

49. Kremer, *James Milton Turner*, 3, 20, 106; Roger D. Cunningham, “Douglas’s Battery at Fort Leavenworth: The Issue of Black Officers during the Civil War,” *Kansas History* 23 (winter 2000–2001): 215; *Leavenworth Times*, March 3, 1906; *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1884. In the Confederacy, militia units of free black men also served in New Orleans and Mobile. Between 1868 and 1876, at least five former officers from Louisiana’s Native Guards served in their state house of representatives and three more were elected to their state senate.



2

“Strong, Healthy, Well-Developed Men”

The Kansas State Militia and National Guard during the Gilded Age

In 1865, the Kansas state legislature enacted a new law to govern its enrolled militia. The legislation established the governor as the militia’s commander-in-chief and empowered him to appoint, with the consent of the senate, a military staff comprising a major general, four brigadier generals, four colonels (adjutant general, paymaster general, quartermaster general, and a surgeon general), three lieutenant colonels (all aides-de-camp) and a major (assistant adjutant). The generals also could appoint other staff officers. The state was organized as a division, divided into four brigade districts, which the major general could alter “at pleasure.”¹

Militia companies were supposed to have not less than sixty nor more than one hundred men, and these citizen-soldiers elected their officers—a captain and two lieutenants. The captain in turn appointed his NCOs—five sergeants and eight corporals—and two musicians. Ten companies comprised a regiment, commanded by a colonel, with a lieu-

1. *The General Statutes of the State of Kansas* (Lawrence: John Speer, 1868), chapter 64, sections 3, 4.

tenant colonel and a major as the other field officers, all of them elected by the company officers. The colonel could nominate four officers—an adjutant, quartermaster, surgeon, and assistant surgeon—for his staff, subject to the governor’s approval.²

County assessors included the names of all men liable to be enrolled in the militia in their annual assessment rolls and returned these rolls to their county clerks. On or before August 10, the latter officials were supposed to forward copies of these rolls to the adjutant general, who would then compare them to the company rosters filed in his office and ensure that all discrepancies were resolved. Any men (except conscientious objectors, state prison employees, and persons exempted by the laws of the United States) who failed to enroll in a company could be fined and committed to the county jail for up to thirty days (although it is unlikely that this punishment was ever applied). If a man wanted an exemption due to physical disability, he had to procure a certificate from the regimental surgeon.³

Companies were not required to parade (assemble) more often than once per month, while regiments had to parade quarterly and brigades annually, “except in case of actual or threatened invasion or insurrection.” Any company member who failed to present a reasonable excuse to his captain for missing a muster could be fined five dollars and imprisoned for up to thirty days. If the governor or one of the general officers ordered the militia to assemble for an emergency (limited to ninety days at one time) and a militiaman refused “to turn out when so ordered,” he could be fined up to one hundred dollars and imprisoned for up to ninety days. These fines would be paid to the state treasurer and used “only for school purposes.”⁴

If militia members were ordered into active service, they would receive the same compensation that was being paid to soldiers in the Regular Army. The latter’s regulations and federal military laws would apply to the militia, except that “no military officer of the United States service” could command any portion of it, unless the governor or one of the state’s

2. *Ibid.*, section 5.

3. *Ibid.*, sections 2, 8, 16. Before May 1 each year, conscientious objectors had to file an affidavit and pay their county treasurer thirty dollars for the benefit of schools.

4. *Ibid.*, sections 9, 10, 11, 14.

general officers so ordered. The governor and his generals also were authorized to convene courts-martial.⁵

During the 1870s, there was a surge of martial enthusiasm across the United States. This was stimulated in part by Civil War veterans “who retained a longing for military association.” Service in the National Guard, as many states began to call their organized militia, became a fashionable way for men to both express their masculinity and demonstrate their patriotism. In some of the largest cities in the East, companies became exclusive organizations, which clothed themselves in expensive dress uniforms and often hosted lavish and well-attended social events in their fortresslike armories.⁶

In 1877, massive railroad strikes across the nation convinced many state governments, especially in the East, that rejuvenated militias were necessary to deal with the increasing threat of organized labor disputes. Over the next fifteen years, almost every state strengthened its militia by revamping related legislation. In 1879, concerned militia officers also gathered in St. Louis to found the National Guard Association “to promote military efficiency throughout the active militia . . . , and to secure representation before Congress for such legislation as . . . may [be] necessary for this purpose.” Eight years later, the association’s lobbying helped convince Congress to double the annual federal expenditure for the militia’s arms to four hundred thousand dollars. Kansas’s share of this money came to more than eight thousand dollars.⁷

In the post–Civil War western states and territories, where populations were much thinner and labor problems less threatening, the revival of the militia was less pronounced than it was in the East. Hostile Indian tribes still represented the primary threat to citizens throughout much of the West, and with few exceptions, the Regular Army was the primary force that dealt with this threat. As volunteer regiments mustered out of the Union army, Congress authorized a larger Regular Army, and its strength

5. *Ibid.*, section 11.

6. Martha Derthick, *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 17.

7. *Ibid.*, 20; Brian Dexter Fowles, *A Guard in Peace and War: The History of the Kansas National Guard, 1854–1987* (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1989), 34.

increased from only 22,310 in April 1865 to 56,815 in August 1867. Two years later, however, Congress decided to save money by reducing the army's authorized strength, and it remained under thirty thousand for most of the period leading up to the Spanish-American War.⁸

In Kansas, Indian depredations convinced the state to take defense matters into its own hands between 1867 and 1869. In July 1867, the four-company 18th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry was organized and mustered into federal service at Fort Harker to augment the regulars for four months. Some of its citizen-soldiers joined black 10th U.S. Cavalrymen to fight several hundred Kiowa and Cheyenne warriors at the Battle of Prairie Dog Creek in August. From September to November, Governor Samuel J. Crawford organized a "frontier battalion" of five companies, but its uneventful service was terminated when the army refused to provide the volunteers with rations. In October 1868, Governor Crawford resigned his office and assumed command of another regiment, the five-company 19th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, for six months. The 19th Kansas assembled in Topeka, where one of its companies was recruited, and one of its veterans later recalled that "a greener, rawer bunch was never brought together." After a hard campaign on the central plains, the volunteers were discharged at Fort Hays in April 1869, and the adjutant general later reported: "Their presence along the border of the western settlements was salutary, and but few depredations were committed while the sturdy frontiersmen remained in the field." Finally, in July 1869, the four-company 2d Battalion, Kansas State Militia (or 2d Frontier Battalion), spent four months in the field. The state provided the unit with arms and ammunition, and the citizen-soldiers gave their firearms to local settlers after they mustered out.⁹

8. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1903), 2:626.

9. *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1901-'02* (Topeka: W. Y. Morgan, 1902), 213, 226; Robert M. Utley, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1890* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 120; Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 23; Henry Pearson, "Trials of the Southern Plains Campaign, 1868-1869," in Jerome A. Greene, ed., *Indian War Veterans: Memories of Army Life and Campaigns in the West, 1864-1898* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2007), 249-53; *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1869* (Topeka, 1869), 8-11.



On August 21, 1867, a combined force of black regulars and citizen-soldiers from the 18th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry defeated Kiowa and Cheyenne warriors at the Battle of Prairie Dog Creek, in western Kansas. *Historical Services Division, National Guard Bureau, Arlington, Virginia.*

In the summer of 1874, mounted militia companies were activated on six occasions to “repel Indian invasions” in Barbour (the spelling changed to Barber in 1883), Cowley, Reno, and Sedgwick counties, but the state’s hostile Indian threat was primarily countered by the Regular Army, whose units were stationed at forts located along the Santa Fe Trail and the Smoky Hill route to Denver. In 1870, there were 2,722 regulars scattered among seven forts and several field locations, but as the various tribes—Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa—were driven from

the state or pacified, the federal military presence was greatly reduced. By 1878, the army had closed Forts Harker and Larned, and a total of only 915 officers and men occupied the remaining five posts—Forts Dodge, Hays, Leavenworth, Riley, and Wallace.¹⁰

The last Indian raid in Kansas was in 1878. More than nine hundred Northern Cheyenne had surrendered to the army the year before, and they had been escorted to the Darlington Agency in the Indian Territory. After enduring malnutrition and sickness at the agency, a group of more than three hundred Cheyenne, led by Chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf, decided to return to their homes in Montana. During the last two weeks in September, the group escaped northward across western Kansas. The Indians were involved in a series of engagements in which more than thirty settlers were killed before the Cheyenne crossed into southern Nebraska at the end of the month.¹¹

As hostile Indians disappeared, the threat of labor violence increased. The labor strikes of the late 1870s affected the development of Kansas's militia, as the state's adjutant general, Colonel Peter S. Noble, indicated in a biennial report: "The threatened destruction to property and lives during the fall of 1878, . . . upon the line of one of our great railways, and the riots which occurred in [other states] . . . in 1877, aroused the instincts of self-preservation and stirred the military spirit of the citizens of Kansas, which resulted in the formation of numerous independent companies of militia."¹²

Thus, the Kansas State Militia increased from only thirteen companies at the start of 1878, some of them "simply existing on paper, without arms and equipment," to twenty infantry companies, two artillery batteries, and fourteen cavalry companies by the fall of 1880. Five years later, a new law officially renamed the militia the Kansas National Guard and

10. *Report of the Adjutant General to the Governor, 1873–4* (Topeka: State Printing Works, 1874), 33; *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1870*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1870), 68–69; *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1878*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1878), 12–13.

11. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 283–84. Women and children constituted more than 70 percent of the Cheyenne band.

12. *Second Biennial Report of the Adjutant General Covering the Years 1879 and 1880* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1881), 3 (hereinafter cited as *2BRAG*).

authorized it to comprise not more than thirty infantry companies, two cavalry companies, and one light artillery battery—a total of just over two thousand personnel. There were about eighteen hundred Guardsmen in 1888, but the authorization was later reduced, so that only 131 officers and 1,472 men were serving in 1896. This ranked the strength of the Kansas National Guard in the middle of the other state and territorial militias.¹³

The 1885 legislation actually created two components—an active militia (Kansas National Guard), and a reserve militia for the men who did not choose to enlist in the former. The law also mandated other important changes. It decreased the authorized size of companies and established five-year terms of enlistment. The state would begin to provide uniforms to the enlisted men, but officers still had to provide their own uniforms, arms, and equipment (within sixty days of being commissioned). Companies were entitled to receive one hundred dollars annually to pay for “such building or rooms to be used for headquarters, armory and drill room.” Companies were still required to meet monthly, but there would be an annual muster and camp of instruction lasting three to six days. While Guardsmen were attending this camp, they were authorized to receive one daily ration and to be paid one to four dollars per diem, depending upon their rank.¹⁴

The new Kansas National Guard was adequately organized for responding to the limited number of incidents that occurred in the state during the 1880s and 1890s. A survey published in mid-1896 by the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* reported that between 1886 and 1895 the country’s organized militia had been activated for 328 cases of “riot duty”—an average of almost eight per state/territory. This survey credited eight of these activations to the Sunflower State.¹⁵

13. *Ibid.*; Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 34; *Army and Navy Journal* 25 (February 18, 1888): 594; *The Organized Militia of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1897), 4 (hereinafter cited as *OMUS*). Militia strength ranged from New York’s 13,242 to Delaware’s 390.

14. *Session Laws of 1885* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1885), 219–24.

15. Winthrop Alexander, “Ten Years of Riot Duty,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* 19 (July 1896): 25–26.

More than one-third (118) of the nation's total militia activations had been caused by riots related to labor problems, but Kansas had been forced to respond to only two labor-related problems during the decade covered by the survey. In 1886, there was a Missouri Pacific Railroad strike, and 240 men from the 1st Regiment were deployed to Parsons for six to thirteen days in April to deal with it. In the summer of 1893, there was a coal miners' strike in Weir City, and about 350 men from the 1st and 2d Regiments were alerted and held at their armories until this situation quieted down.¹⁶

Half of the state's militia activations were caused by county seat wars—disputes over which towns would be designated as county seats—which first occurred in the late 1880s. In 1888, the adjutant general reported that these troubles originated in fights “between rival town companies, who, for purely financial reasons, had drawn the public into a war for their benefit.” He also recommended that “whoever, by conspiracy or as individuals, incited the people to deeds of violence . . . should be deemed guilty of a felony and severely punished.”¹⁷

Disputes in Pratt, Wichita, Sherman, and Garfield counties were settled without having to deploy any troops, but in Stevens County, in 1888, two companies (eighty-one men) from the 2d Regiment were required to serve for one week in June, and most of the regiment and an artillery battery (341 men) were again on duty for eight to eleven days in August. In January 1889, another dispute in Gray County required the services of about three hundred citizen-soldiers for up to fifteen days. Three years later, sixty Guardsmen had to be activated for ten days in nearby Seward County.¹⁸

The two additional incidents that required Kansas National Guard activations were the so-called Legislative War of 1893, which occurred in

16. *Ibid.*, 9–10, 25–26. In his book, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia, 1865–1920*, historian Jerry M. Cooper expanded the survey to cover the last third of the nineteenth century and determined that “suppressing labor-related incidents” covered almost 30 percent (118 of 411) of all activations.

17. *Sixth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1887–8* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1888), 4.

18. Alexander, “Ten Years of Riot Duty,” 9–10; Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 36. For details on the activations for county seat wars, see Robert K. DeArment, *Ballots and Bullets: The Bloody County Seat Wars of Kansas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

Topeka and will be discussed in a later chapter, and a second disturbance in the state capital in December 1895. In the last incident, an infantry company from Lawrence was held in readiness for one day, and an artillery battery section from Topeka was on duty for three days guarding the state arsenal. These activations were necessary because excited citizens threatened to attack the Kansas Medical College after discovering evidence that its students had been involved with grave robbing.¹⁹

A ninth activation, which was not mentioned in the survey, occurred in Salina in April 1893. The county sheriff asked the governor to order the local militia company to guard John Hudson, a black prisoner in the city jail, after an attempt was made to lynch him. Hudson, who had allegedly attacked a white woman, was protected, but Salina's racist sentiments became so aroused that another African American, Dan Adams, was lynched a week later for attacking a railroad baggage agent with a razor. The *Topeka Daily Capital* opined, "undoubtedly, the passions excited by that [earlier] event led to the reckless action of the mob tonight, in hanging a negro for a small crime."²⁰

Thus, compared to what was going on in the more heavily populated states in the East between 1886 and 1895, the domestic scene in Kansas was relatively peaceful and required only nine National Guard interventions during six of the ten years that were surveyed by the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*. Unfortunately, this domestic tranquillity caused the state legislature to neglect its defense force. More activations might have convinced Kansas to place greater emphasis on improving its National Guard.

One of the main reasons why militia duty was not especially popular in the Sunflower State was that there were few incentives to serve. Guardsmen were not excused from performing jury duty and paying poll taxes, as was the case in other states, and they were only authorized to receive pay and allowances if they attended the annual muster or camp of instruction,

19. Alexander, "Ten Years of Riot Duty," 10; *Tenth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1895–96* (Topeka: Kansas State Publishing, 1896), 9–10 (hereinafter cited as *IOBRAG*).

20. *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 12, 21, 1893.

were called up by a county sheriff or city mayor in case of a “breach of the peace,” or were called into the “actual service of the state.”²¹

If any Guardsman was disabled or killed “while doing military duty according to law,” he or his widow and children would “receive from the state such just and reasonable relief” as the legislature deemed proper. As long as the Guardsmen remained alive and well, however, the only tangible benefits that they received for their time and effort were the provision of arms and equipment and a military uniform—blouse, trousers, and cap. Officers received even less for their service. They had to purchase their own uniforms and to arm themselves as well.²²

In spite of these paltry incentives, scores of men in communities throughout the eastern half of the state decided to enlist for five years of service in Kansas National Guard companies that adopted colorful local titles, such as the Capital Guards of Topeka, and the Drought Rifles of Wyandotte. The companies were authorized to have forty to sixty enlisted men (NCOs, musicians, and privates), who elected a captain and two lieutenants to leadership positions. The company officers then elected field officers to command battalions and regiments. By 1895, all officers commissioned by the governor were considered to be brevet appointees until they passed a fifty-question exam. If they failed their test, they were mustered out.²³

The governor also was empowered to appoint, with the senate’s consent, a staff of thirteen officers, including five generals and an adjutant general (a colonel, who was paid fifteen hundred dollars per year). These last six officers made up the state military board that met quarterly in Topeka to advise the governor on “all the military interests of the state,” as well as to audit all claims and accounts of a military character. The military board also was authorized to issue the National Guard’s rules

21. *Session Laws of Kansas*, 219–28. When called into active service, Guardsmen received the same pay, rations, and allowances as members of the Regular Army.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*; *IOBRAG*, 48. The National Guard’s practice of electing officers was viewed skeptically by army officers. In 1896, one of them said of the Kansas National Guard: “I would impress upon company officers the necessity of electing field officers upon their merits and not on account of their good fellowship.”

and regulations and to change the state's military organization, if that became necessary.²⁴

The captains who served as company commanders were essential personnel in determining the militia's overall effectiveness. In 1892, the adjutant general pointed out that although there were many applications for National Guard positions, the "State would act wisely if it would accept none but the very best men" for these command positions. Each captain was responsible for the appearance, discipline, and efficiency of his unit, as well as being "accountable for the care and preservation of the articles of public property . . . ; for the proper performance of duties connected with the subsistence, pay, and clothing of its members; and for the correct keeping and rendition of all company accounts, reports, and returns."²⁵

The captain was assisted by his lieutenants, and the first lieutenant assumed command of the unit in his absence. The next link in the chain of command was the NCOs—corporals and sergeants—who looked after the company's four squads. The NCOs were furnished with certificates of their rank, and the captain then selected one of them to serve as the first sergeant. NCOs could be reduced to the ranks by the sentence of a court-martial or by the order of their regimental commander.²⁶

The rules and regulations that governed how state militia units were managed were modified versions of those that governed the units of the Regular Army, but their essential elements remained the same. Guardsmen led separate lives and did not sleep at their armory, so their officers and NCOs spent much less time concerned with their discipline, health, and welfare, and theoretically they could focus most of their efforts on planning and conducting individual and collective training.

Kansas's 1885 militia law said that unit members were supposed to meet at least once each month for military instruction, at which time the commander, or some suitable person detailed by him, should "drill the

24. *Session Laws of Kansas*, 220–22.

25. *Eighth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1891–'92* (Topeka: Hamilton Printing, 1892), 3; *Regulations for the Army of the United States*, 1889 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1889), 25.

26. *Regulations for the Army*, 25. A first sergeant could be returned to the grade of sergeant without reference to higher authority.

company not less than two hours, in the school of the soldier, the manual of arms, and the movements of the company.” The captain was also responsible for “the theoretical and practical instruction” of his NCOs, requiring them to study tactics so that they could explain every movement, causing them to quickly recognize all of the trumpet signals, and practicing them in giving commands.²⁷

The weapons that were issued to the militiamen were fairly basic. By the 1890s, in the infantry, officers were armed with handguns, while enlisted men were issued .45-caliber Springfield rifles, to which a twenty-inch bayonet could be attached. These weapons were not always properly maintained. The army officer who inspected them in 1895 reported that “the condition of these rifles is very poor; some of the parts are missing, sights jammed so that they can not be adjusted, and barrels rusty inside and out.” When they went to the field, citizen-soldiers often augmented their state-issued arms with revolvers and knives that they had purchased with their own money. Officers, NCOs, and musicians were authorized to carry straight swords as badges of rank, but the swords were useless in combat, and normally they were worn only on ceremonial occasions.²⁸

In infantry companies, drill was supposed to be conducted in accordance with the revised edition of Lieutenant Colonel Emory Upton’s *Infantry Tactics Double and Single Rank*, which had been adopted for Regular Army and militia instruction in 1873. Upton’s revised *Infantry Tactics* tried to establish a uniform tactical system for artillery, cavalry, and infantry units. In an effort to avoid the carnage that he had encountered on the bloody battlefields of the Civil War, Upton ensured that his system paid greater attention to the role of skirmishers in combat. He acknowledged that the speed and accuracy of breech-loading weapons had changed the disposition and management of troops in battle and had given a “great impetus to the employment of skirmishers.”²⁹

27. *Session Laws of Kansas*, 223; Emory Upton, *Infantry Tactics Double and Single Rank* (New York: Appleton, 1874), 75. Upton’s first edition (1867) contained a section on bugle music, but the 1874 edition changed the section’s title to “Trumpet Signals—Infantry.”

28. Don Rickey Jr., *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 217–19; *IOBRAG*, 50.

29. Upton, *Infantry Tactics Double and Single Rank*, vii.

Infantry Tactics, however, did not completely dispense with the linear warfare that had taken the lives of so many Civil War soldiers. Upton's system was based on a "front of four men as a unit," which was simply called a "four." Under ideal circumstances, there were a dozen fours in a company, which was divided as nearly as possible into two equal platoons. In battle, an infantry company was formed in double rank, with the right platoon designated as the first platoon, and the left as the second platoon.³⁰

As the tactical situation required, the men in an infantry company could be maneuvered in many different ways, at normal speed (quick time) or on the run (double time), or deployed as skirmishers. In skirmish drill, the soldiers dispersed, and officers and NCOs were supposed to ensure that they kept their presence of mind, saved their ammunition, and took advantage of whatever cover the ground offered. Leaders also were instructed to "cultivate among the men the feeling that they can't be beaten, and that, when compelled to give ground, a new position is to be gained from which the action will be renewed."³¹

Upton's *Infantry Tactics* was a great improvement over the tactics that had characterized the battles of the Civil War, but it still needed more revision. In an 1880 letter, the author candidly admitted to his mentor, Major General William T. Sherman: "You are aware that thus far in our history tactics, in areas of the service, have been simply a collection of rules for passing from one formation to another. How to fight has been left to actual experience in war." If Upton had not committed suicide a year later, perhaps he would have been able to solve this problem. Instead, it was not until 1891 that a board of officers finally developed the army's first true tactical manual.³²

The 1891 edition of *Infantry Drill Regulations* emphasized small-unit movements and made an eight-man squad (seven privates and a corporal) the basis of extended-order drill. The disappearance of close-order formations in battle underscored the fact that the improved accuracy, rapid fire, and increased range of firearms made them increasingly deadly.

30. *Ibid.*, 7, 73, 74.

31. *Ibid.*, 117.

32. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 140.

The Kansans who fought *insurrectos* in the Philippines at the turn of the century would fire and maneuver quite differently than their fathers had during the Civil War.³³

Most militia units met much more frequently than once each month, but their military proficiency varied considerably, and because of an almost total lack of field training, they were usually strongest in the showier aspects of the manual of arms and close-order drill. Often, the better companies agreed to compete against other units in sham battles and military drills. These events were snubbed by the regulars, but they were always popular with civilian audiences. In 1885, the *New York Times* ranked interstate military competitions “among the foremost of festivities” in the South, where many of the larger cities staged them for fun and profit. The competitive drills offered prizes that sometimes involved considerable sums of money. The Lomax Rifles of Mobile, Alabama, won the top prize of five thousand dollars in the best infantry company competition at the National Drill and Encampment, conducted in Washington, D.C., in 1887, and the companies that won second through fifth places split another fifty-five hundred dollars. The year before, at the Kansas National Guard’s second annual encampment at Fort Riley, the first prize for the best-drilled company was a much more sensible \$150, with another \$175 divided among the next three places.³⁴

A few National Guard companies were able to develop enough military proficiency to elicit praise from Regular Army officers. After serving as an honor guard for the visit of President Rutherford B. Hayes to Kansas in 1879, the members of Topeka’s Capital Guards were reportedly informed by no less an authority than the army’s commanding general, Major General William T. Sherman, that they were “the best drilled company he had ever seen outside of the regular army.”³⁵

33. John K. Mahon and Romana Danysh, *Infantry, Part 1: Regular Army* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), 38. For an excellent discussion of tactical developments after the Civil War, see Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics, 1865–1899* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994).

34. Roger D. Cunningham, “Breaking the Color Line: The Virginia Militia at the National Drill, 1887,” *Virginia Cavalcade* 49 (autumn 2000): 179, 184; G.O. No. 1, 14 June 1886, Kansas Adjutant General Orders, KSHS.

35. *Radge’s Fifth Biennial Directory of the City of Topeka for 1880* (Topeka: Commonwealth Printing House, 1879), 253.

It should be pointed out, however, that General Sherman's compliment was somewhat left-handed, because the regulars were often not quite as well trained as they should have been. In October 1879, Brigadier General John Pope, who commanded the Department of the Missouri from his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, reported: "The constant work imposed on [the troops] . . . both as laborers and soldiers in the field leaves little of the time possessed by more favored arms of service for drills or other military exercises." Thus, both professional soldiers and militiamen faced the same problem of finding enough time to conduct adequate military training.³⁶

Beginning in May 1879, Kansas's white infantry companies were further organized into regiments, each of which was commanded by a colonel, assisted by a small staff of officers and NCOs. These regiments were supposed to comprise ten companies, lettered from A to K (with no letter J), but by the mid-1880s, there were four eight-company regiments (one per brigade district). As the martial spirit in some communities waned and their units disbanded, the Kansas National Guard was forced to modify its structure. Six companies mustered out in 1893, and the state military board reduced the number of authorized infantry companies to twenty-four. By 1896, Kansas had three regiments, comprising nine, ten, and eight companies. The members of the 1st Regiment's Company E, from Kansas City, were Civil War veterans, ranging in age from forty-six to seventy-two. Second Lieutenant Harry A. Smith, an army officer assigned to inspect the Kansas National Guard, recommended that the unit should be detached from the regiment because its members did not care "to perform the routine duties of camp and drill." The company of veterans did disband, as did several other units, so that by the Spanish-American War, there were only two regiments, totaling twenty companies.³⁷

Lack of funds and the geographic dispersion of the companies prevented them from gathering to conduct battalion or regimental collective training, except during a few annual encampments that were sporadically conducted, beginning in 1885. The first encampment was

36. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1879*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1879), 84.

37. *OMUS*, 79, 84; Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 41–42.

conducted in conjunction with the state fair in Topeka, and the event was “more public relations than serious military training.” Regarding the latter, one army officer commented: “The battalion formation and evolution, however, exhibited those defects which are unavoidable in both Regular and Volunteer forces so long as the National Government fails to make provision for assembling more frequently larger bodies of troops together for field practice.”³⁸

In 1894, the adjutant general reported: “The Guard is composed principally of laboring men who can ill afford to devote their time to encampments without pay. The arduous duties imposed upon them at weekly drills is all the state should require [to be] performed without pay.” In spite of receiving state encouragement that was only “begrudgingly meted out to them,” however, the men of the Kansas National Guard generally seemed to constitute a competent force. Major Joseph T. Haskell, an army officer detailed to evaluate the 1894 encampment, reported that the Guard was “composed of excellent material, strong, healthy, well-developed men, all of whom seem to take an interest in their work, and only needed instruction and practice. The discipline was good; they seemed to appreciate criticism, and showed a willingness to comply with the requirements that go towards making good soldiers.”³⁹

Although they were not invited to attend these National Guard encampments, nor to be assigned to white regiments or allowed to form a regiment or battalion of their own, the men in the ten African American companies that were organized in seven Kansas communities—Topeka, Lawrence, Wyandotte, Olathe, Leavenworth, Kansas City, and Wichita—between 1875 and 1894, also served as citizen-soldiers. These black Kansans, many of whom had been born into slavery, asked only for the opportunity to share one of the privileges of citizenship—to bear arms in the defense of their city, county, and state. The first African Americans to seek this opportunity lived in Topeka and Lawrence.

38. Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 34; *Army and Navy Journal* 23 (July 24, 1886): 1072.

39. *Ninth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1893–94* (Topeka: Hamilton Printing, 1894), 12 (hereinafter cited as *9BRAG*); *10BRAG*, 3.



3

“Ready for Any Emergency That May Require Their Services”

The Black Militia Companies in Topeka and Lawrence

In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act officially opened the Kansas Territory to white settlement, leaving “all questions pertaining to slavery in the Territories . . . to the people residing therein.” This event caused guerrilla warfare between pro- and antislavery (“free state”) forces to escalate, and the territory soon became known as “Bleeding Kansas.” It had few African American residents, however—only 343 (including 192 slaves) in 1855, and 627 by 1860—until the Civil War, when a large number of both black and white refugees fled to the newly admitted thirty-fourth state from fighting in Missouri.¹

Most of Kansas’s African American refugees were former slaves who had escaped from their Missouri owners. Of the 114,391 slaves residing in Missouri in 1860, less than two-thirds remained in 1863, by which

1. Douglas Brinkley, *American Heritage History of the United States* (New York: Viking, 1998), 191; Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865–1915: A Social History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 6.

time there were eight thousand black Kansans. In August 1863, Brigadier General Thomas Ewing Jr., commanding the District of the Border in western Missouri, ordered the commanders of army posts in his district to provide military escorts for slaves wanting to escape to Kansas, and within a few weeks most of the border-county slaves were gone. The majority of these African Americans concentrated in a small region adjacent to the Missouri border, including Linn County and the cities of Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Wyandotte. The refugees tended to settle in towns rather than on farms, because they had no money to purchase land and livestock.²

Many of Kansas's key leaders were staunch abolitionists, including U.S. Senator James H. Lane, who was also a general in the state militia and an ardent supporter of the idea that ex-slaves should be armed to fight for the Union. Senator Lane took it upon himself to ensure that Kansas became the first Northern state to raise a black military unit to fight the Confederacy. Although eight Northern states provided larger numbers of African American troops to the Union army, one out of every ten Kansas soldiers was black, and only the District of Columbia and the border (slave) states of Kentucky and Maryland organized black units representing larger percentages of their volunteer troops.³

Black Kansans primarily served in two infantry regiments and a light artillery battery. The 1st Kansas Colored Infantry began recruiting in August 1862, and a detachment of about 240 soldiers from the regiment was the first African American unit to engage in Civil War combat, at Island Mound, Missouri, in October. By May 1863, ten companies had been mustered into service, and in December 1864 the regiment was redesignated as the 79th U.S. Colored Infantry. It served in Missouri, Arkansas,

2. Albert Castel, *A Frontier State at War: Kansas, 1861–1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 208; John W. Blassingame, "The Recruitment of Negro Troops in Missouri during the Civil War," in William E. Parrish, ed., *The Civil War in Missouri: Essays from the Missouri Historical Review, 1906–2006* (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 2006), 156; Richard B. Sheridan, "From Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas," *Kansas History* 12 (spring 1989): 37; Jeremy Neely, *The Border between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 152.

3. Kansas provided 20,149 soldiers to the Union army, and 2,080 (10.3 percent) of them were black.

and the Indian Territory (modern-day Oklahoma) until October 1865, sustaining the heaviest casualties of any Kansas unit—188 officers and men killed and mortally wounded and 166 dead from disease. The 2d Kansas Colored Infantry (83d U.S. Colored Infantry) was organized at Forts Scott and Leavenworth between August and October 1863 and served primarily in Arkansas until November 1865, by which time it had lost a total of 243 officers and men, most of them (211) dying from disease. The Independent Battery, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, was organized in Leavenworth, mustering into the Union army in December 1864, and it served at the nearby fort until July 1865. The battery suffered thirteen fatalities, and it was unique in having only African American officers—Captain H. Ford Douglas, and Lieutenants William D. Matthews and Patrick H. Minor (who had fought at Island Mound). Douglas, Matthews, and Minor also were the only black artillery officers in the Union army.⁴

Kansas's black troops earned praise for their military prowess. After the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry fought at the Battle of Honey Springs, in the Indian Territory in July 1863, Major General James G. Blunt opined: "The question that negroes will fight is settled; besides they make better soldiers in every respect than any troops I have ever had under my command." This bravery earned the African American soldiers no respect from their opponents, however. Some Confederate soldiers were so incensed at having to engage black troops that they felt no obligation to treat them as honorable opponents. Soldiers of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry were executed after being taken prisoner at the Battle of Poison Spring, Arkansas, in April 1864. When Kansas's adjutant general summarized the service of the state's two African American infantry regiments in his annual report, he wrote: "Though suffering severe losses, and fighting at great disadvantage, owing to the merciless treatment they were sure to receive if taken as prisoners of war, yet they faltered not, but with a steadiness and a gallantry worth[y] of themselves and the cause, have earned an honorable reputation among the defenders of the Union."⁵

4. Company B, 18th U.S. Colored Infantry also recruited black Kansans. For details on the black artillery battery, see Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery."

5. Cornish, *Sable Arm*, 146–47; *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, for the Year 1864* (Leavenworth: P. H. Hubbell, 1865), 696.

After Confederate forces surrendered in 1865, the War Department began to discharge the hundreds of state volunteer regiments that constituted the bulk of the Union army. By the end of September, most of Kansas's cavalry and infantry regiments and light artillery batteries had been mustered out of federal service. Among the last units to be discharged were the 79th and 83d U.S. Colored Infantry in October and November. Most of these African American "defenders of the Union" gladly laid down their arms and became civilians again, joining hundreds of thousands of white veterans who returned to the task of making a living. Black Kansans, most of them only recently liberated from slavery, faced an uncertain future, but they were happy to be free and to see "the sweet assuring smile of peace f[a]ll on Kansas for the first time in her existence."⁶

Many Americans decided to seek their fortunes in the West, where land was plentiful and cheap, thanks to the Homestead Act. Kansas benefited greatly from this postwar westward migration, and its population nearly quadrupled from almost 365,000 in 1870 to more than 1.4 million in 1890. In 1878, the *New York Times* commented on Kansas's impressive growth: "The state is extremely fertile, and so admirably adapted for farming and grazing that it will be strange if it be not before long one of the most populous and prosperous States beyond the Mississippi."⁷

By the end of the Civil War, there were more than 1.8 million Union veterans, and as Kansas grew, it attracted so many of them that it became known as the "great soldier state." By 1890, 50,627 veterans represented more than one out of every eight voters. More than eighteen thousand of these veterans belonged to the posts of the largest federal veterans' organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, or GAR, which had been founded in Illinois in 1866. The GAR's Department of Kansas struggled initially, and it had only 1,041 members by 1881. During the remainder of the 1880s, however, the GAR's strong support for increased veterans' benefits, such as disability pensions, convinced many more men to join its ranks.⁸

6. William G. Cutler, *The History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 241.

7. *New York Times*, September 13, 1878.

8. Kyle S. Sinisi, "Veterans as Political Activists: The Kansas Grand Army of the Republic, 1880–1893," *Kansas History* 14 (spring 1991): 90–93.

Under an 1862 law, Union army veterans whose wartime service resulted in permanent bodily injury were eligible for pensions that ranged upward to a maximum of thirty dollars per month for the totally disabled. This law was liberalized several times before the first major revision, the Arrears of Pension Act of 1879. The new law provided that veterans and their widows who had already claimed pensions or who established new claims before July 1, 1880, would receive payments effective from the date of the soldier's original discharge. This produced a stampede of new claims for the Pension Bureau—more than 138,000 in 1880—and the total federal pension expenditure almost doubled between 1877 and 1880.⁹

In 1890, Congress passed the Dependent Pension Act. This law granted a pension to any honorably discharged soldier with ninety days of military service and a disability (for any reason) that incapacitated him for manual labor. The act also provided pensions for minor children (until they were sixteen years of age), dependent parents, and widows who had married veterans prior to the act's passage and who had to work for a living. The new legislation increased the number of pensioners from almost 538,000 in 1890 to about 969,000 in 1894, and the latter year's \$140 million expenditure on veterans and their dependents was about four times greater than what it had been in 1879.¹⁰

In 1885, the GAR's Department of Kansas began using its growing political clout to convince the state legislature to pass laws that benefited veterans. Kansas soon established a home for the orphans of deceased veterans, made Memorial Day (May 30) a legal holiday, gave veterans preference in public hiring, and granted suffrage to the residents of the western branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, which opened in Leavenworth in 1886. Three years later, the state made the unauthorized wearing of the miniature bronze GAR button punishable by thirty days in jail and a twenty-five-dollar fine. The GAR also enjoyed a close relationship with the Kansas National Guard, and the

9. Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 142–46.

10. *Ibid.*, 152–53; Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 1148–49.

department eventually borrowed the latter's tents to use at the annual encampments that it began conducting in 1885.¹¹

Although the GAR claimed to be free of racial discrimination, African American veterans almost always belonged to segregated posts, and the organization initially denied charters to the black veterans who tried to form posts in the lower South. Black GAR posts were organized in at least six Kansas communities—Atchison, Fort Scott, Kansas City, Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Topeka—and by 1894, they totaled 167 members. In some cases, black veterans did join white GAR posts. In 1894, the post in De Soto included two USCT veterans among its twelve members, and there were six USCT veterans in the Clay Center post. Most African American veterans, however, probably preferred to associate with comrades who had served in USCT units and would not have tried to join white posts.¹²

As settlers flocked to Kansas, the number of its black citizens increased dramatically, albeit not as much as the state's white population grew. Between 1870 and 1890, the total number of black Kansans almost tripled from just over seventeen thousand to just under fifty thousand, but their percentage of the population decreased slightly from 4.7 to 3.5 percent. In 1880, they were heavily concentrated in the eastern quarter of the state, where five counties contained half of the 43,107 black Kansans, while twenty-one counties, mainly in the state's sparsely populated western quarter, had none.¹³

Unfortunately, many black families were attracted to the Sunflower State by false claims. In 1875, some badly misinformed African Americans from the upper South became convinced that if they moved to Kansas, they would be given forty acres of land and rations for six months. Around Nashville, some of them even believed that they could

11. Sinisi, "Veterans as Political Activists," 90–91.

12. Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 145; *Roster of the Members and Posts, Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Kansas* (Topeka: Frost, 1894), 22, 40, 90, 101, 171, 197, 202, 205; for details on the GAR's racial policies, see Wallace E. Davis, "The Problem of Race Segregation in the Grand Army of the Republic," *Journal of Southern History* 13 (August 1947): 354–72.

13. All population figures were extracted from the federal census data available at the Web site maintained by the Library of Virginia.

get free transportation from Tennessee to Kansas and Missouri. Black families from Kentucky and Tennessee were persuaded to establish small colonies in Hodgeman and Graham counties in 1877, and in Morris County a year later.¹⁴

In 1879, the state began to experience the great “Kansas Fever” exodus, which brought at least fifteen thousand and perhaps as many as twenty-five thousand poor black tenant farmers from several Southern states to an imagined “promised land.” In an editorial, entitled “From Mississippi to Kansas,” the *New York Times* said that “negroes would rather brave the hardships of a Kansas Winter than live in the beautiful land of the South,” because in Kansas they were “before the law the equal of any man,” while in the South they were “still regarded as little better than beasts of burden” with “no rights which their white neighbors feel themselves bound to respect.” A year later, the governor of Kansas informed a New York audience that his state “offered the Southern negroes no greater inducement than protection of life and property and a free ballot.” Most of the “Exodusters” soon discovered that the opportunities they expected to find in Kansas had been greatly exaggerated, and many of them eventually left. Enough of them remained behind, however, to significantly increase the black populations of several cities in the eastern third of the state.¹⁵

The Exodusters had good reason to believe that they would fare well in the land of John Brown. Unfortunately, racial prejudice increased, as white Kansans feared the social changes that would come in the Exodusters’ wake. After the black migration peaked, most white Kansans no longer felt threatened. Over the next two decades, however, the state’s African American minority encountered varying degrees of discrimination, as the white majority sought a compromise between their sublimated prejudices and the image of Kansas as a state committed to equal rights.¹⁶

14. *New York Times*, March 8, 1875. Today, Nicodemus National Historic Site commemorates Graham County’s all-black community.

15. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1879, December 9, 1880; for details on the Exodusters, see Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1979).

16. Randall B. Woods, “Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation? The ‘Color Line’ in Kansas, 1878–1900,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 14 (April 1983): 196–98.

Generally speaking, black Kansans had free access to facilities that were essential to health and safety, but there was no social equality, as was evidenced in the public school system. Topeka's two-story elementary school initially accepted children of both races, but in 1866 the African American children were moved to classrooms on the second floor. In 1879, the legislature ruled that cities of the first class—those with populations of ten thousand or more—could establish separate primary schools for black and white students, and by 1881, twelve of Topeka's fourteen elementary schools were reserved for white children. By the 1890s, however, elementary schools in Atchison, Lawrence, and Wichita were integrated, as were high schools in the larger cities and some colleges. The University of Kansas had African American graduates, but its medical school was not integrated.¹⁷

In the major cities, residential segregation caused African Americans to live in designated areas (where public services, such as street repair, were inferior), but the urban police forces were integrated, as were some of the fire departments, and there were no "Jim Crow" laws governing streetcars. Hotels usually practiced exclusion, restaurants frequently excluded or segregated black patrons, and churches, labor unions, and theaters enforced the "color line." In September 1896, when Charles Young, the Regular Army's only black line officer, reported to Fort Leavenworth to take his examination for promotion to first lieutenant, Leavenworth hotels refused to accommodate him, and he ended up staying in Kansas City.¹⁸

To survive the various forms of exclusion that they encountered, Kansas's African American communities developed patterns of mutual assistance and organized their own social institutions, such as churches and fraternal orders. Black churches included African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.), Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian denominations, and there was at least one Catholic church in Leavenworth. Black fraternal orders included both Royal Arch and Ancient Free and

17. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 27; Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?" 183, 187, 188.

18. Woods, "Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?" 189–93; *New York Times*, September 14, 1896.

Accepted Masonic lodges, as well as societies representing the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Knights of Labor, and the Sons of Bethel. More than a score of African American newspapers, beginning with the *Colored Citizen* of Fort Scott (and later Topeka), also helped to bring their respective communities together and to work toward “the goal of race progress.”¹⁹

Most black Kansans encountered varying degrees of discrimination in their legal proceedings. They were arrested more frequently, and they were more likely to be convicted and to receive longer sentences than white criminals. During the last quarter of the century, the state’s population was never more than 6 percent black, but African Americans comprised almost one-quarter of the inmates at the state prison in Lansing. Lynchings of black victims were relatively rare, but at least fourteen African Americans encountered “Judge Lynch” between 1879 and 1894, including three prisoners in Lawrence, who were taken from the city jail by “a crowd of vigilant[e]s” and hung from a nearby railroad bridge in 1882.²⁰

African Americans who wished to enroll in the Kansas State Militia also faced discrimination, thanks to Article VIII in the state constitution, which continued to limit militia enrollment to “all able-bodied white male citizens between the ages of 21 and 45 years.” This discriminatory legislation caused the *Colored Citizen* to declare: “we think it high time that we leagued ourselves together, and see that the word ‘white’ is stricken from the Constitution, else when we are called upon as voters to all go a fishing and let the election take care of itself.”²¹

Kansas’s constitutional restriction, however, did not prevent a black “military company” from forming in Topeka in the spring of 1875. Originally established in 1854 as a free state settlement on the Kansas (or Kaw) River, Topeka was the Shawnee County seat and state capital. African Americans had first appeared in the city when it served as a sta-

19. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 31–32, 83–84.

20. Woods, “Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?” 192–93; *New York Times*, June 12, 1882.

21. *Fifth Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1885–86* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1886), 15 (hereinafter cited as *5BRAG*); *Fort Scott Colored Citizen*, May 24, 1878.

tion on the Underground Railroad from about 1857 until 1861. In October 1864, the city had organized a black militia unit to oppose the Price Raid, and two African American citizen-soldiers, Moses Banks and Ben Hughes, were killed at the Battle of the Blue, which was fought near Kansas City, Missouri. After the war, African Americans migrated to Topeka in increasing numbers. By 1875, one-tenth (724) of the city's 7,272 citizens were black. The latter decided to name their new company the Osborn Guards, in honor of Governor Thomas A. Osborn, who had first been elected on the Republican ticket in 1872 and reelected two years later. Topeka's city directory proudly proclaimed that the members of this unit were "fully armed and equipped and trained in good discipline and ready for any emergency that may require their services."²²

The captain of the Osborn Guards was Charles Russell Grinsted, a mulatto barber whose business establishment, Grinsted and Smith, was located at 183 Kansas Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare. Grinsted had been born in Louisville, Kentucky, in May 1844, and he was a USCT veteran. In February 1865, he had enlisted in the 16th U.S. Colored Infantry in Cincinnati, Ohio. After serving as a private in Company D and as a regimental clerk, Grinsted had mustered out of the Union army at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in February 1866.²³

It is likely that several other men in Captain Grinsted's company also had served in the USCT. When Kansas conducted its own census in 1885, male citizens were asked several questions about their prior military service. Within Topeka's four wards, there were at least 117 veterans among the 4,411 black citizens, all but three of them having served in the USCT. These men constituted a patriotic segment within the city's African American community, and if the veterans decided not to join the militia themselves, they probably encouraged their younger male friends and relatives to engage in martial activities that recalled their proud days in uniform.²⁴

22. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 20, 201; *Radge's Biennial Directory . . . of the City of Topeka, for 1876-1877* (Topeka: Commonwealth Job Printing Establishment, 1875), 76, 195.

23. 1885 Kansas Census, Shawnee County—Topeka (microfilm roll K-128), KSHS; CMSR of Charles R. Grinsted, 16th U.S. Colored Infantry, RG 94, NA. Grinsted's father, Richard, was an Englishman.

24. 1885 Kansas Census, vols. 251-54 (microfilm rolls K-127 and 128), KSHS.

The Osborn Guards paraded in public for the first time on August 18, 1875, when the unit joined a Kansas Avenue procession celebrating “the establishment of the Royal Arch degree among the colored Masons of Kansas.” The *Topeka Commonwealth* reported that the company was “armed and equipped as the law directs.” It also noted that the men were of “good size and when they are regularly uniformed and have dispensed with the old-fashioned cartridge boxes designed to hold a bushel of ball and a half bushel of powder, will doubtless develop into a fine appearing company.” Another newspaper reported that after marching, the unit went to the city park, where it “partook of a regular old fashioned barbecue dinner. Music and refreshments, handsome women and sturdy men were very much mixed for a time.” This festivity underscored the social nature of the company and suggested that its members were every bit as interested in emphasizing their masculinity and attracting the attentions of the opposite sex as they were in being ready for emergencies.²⁵

Captain Grinsted’s company was not mentioned in the adjutant general’s report to the governor for 1875, but by the end of 1876, the unit had been admitted to the militia as Company G in the newly organized 2d Regiment. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert A. Friedrick of Topeka, the 2d Regiment comprised six other companies—three from Topeka (Companies B, C, and F), as well as units from Holton (A), Olathe (D), and Farlington (E). On December 12, the men of Company G reelected Grinsted as their captain, and George W. Brown and William Coleman as their lieutenants, and the three men were commissioned by the governor.²⁶

William Coleman also was a USCT veteran. Born a slave in Springfield, Missouri, in 1844, he had enlisted in Leavenworth County in August 1863 and been assigned to Company F, 2d Kansas Colored Infantry in September. In the summer of 1865, while Coleman was

25. *Topeka Commonwealth*, August 19, 1875; *Topeka Daily Blade*, August 16, 1875. In 1874, an infantry equipment board decided to replace the heavy leather cartridge box (supported by a shoulder sling) with the smaller McKeever cartridge box, which attached to a soldier’s belt.

26. *Record of Militia Officers Commissioned by the Governor, 1873–83* (microfilm roll AR 126), KSHS; *Radge’s Directory of Topeka for 1876–1877*, 56.

standing in formation in Little Rock, Arkansas, he suffered a sunstroke. Later, while marching from Little Rock to Camden, he had a relapse and was hospitalized. From then on, he claimed to suffer from cramps in his limbs, faintness, difficulty in breathing, “heaviness in the head,” vision problems, and fluttering of the heart. After mustering out as a sergeant in Camden in October 1865, Coleman returned to Kansas and married Lucy Ellen in Topeka in 1867.²⁷

It is not known how long Captain Grinsted’s company continued to belong to the Kansas State Militia, but it does not seem to have been available for activation in April 1878, when Governor George T. Anthony called up companies from Independence and Leavenworth and two from Topeka to respond to a strike by workers of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. The *Topeka Daily Bulletin* seemed to oppose the absence of black citizen-soldiers. It reported that the militia comprised only “able bodied white male citizens” and that black men could therefore “stay in out of the wet.” The *Colored Citizen* claimed that when any black Kansan “went forward to serve in behalf of the State, [he] was waived [*sic*] back by the Governor as the Constitution of the State . . . barred colored men from becoming soldiers.” The newly appointed adjutant general, Colonel Peter S. Noble, publicly denied this allegation, maintaining that “No colored man was refused upon any pretext . . . , on the contrary, I tried to induce several colored men to enlist at that time.” A few weeks later, this issue attracted the attention of the *New York Times*, which commented that Kansas’s constitution made “white male citizens alone competent to serve in the State Militia, and the colored men are asking the Legislature to amend it at the next session.”²⁸

In this debate on black participation in the militia, it is impossible to determine which side more accurately represented the truth, but given the state of race relations at that time, it is more than likely that aspiring

27. Pension Record of William Coleman, 83d U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 15, NA; CMSR of William Coleman, 83d U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 94, NA.

28. Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 26–27. Many Kansans resented Anthony’s use of the militia, and it cost him the Republican nomination for governor in 1878; *Fort Scott Colored Citizen*, May 24, June 14, 1878. This newspaper later moved from Fort Scott to Topeka and published its first issue there on July 26, 1878; *New York Times*, June 6, 1878.



Colonel Peter S. Noble was the adjutant general of Kansas from 1878 until 1883. *The Adjutant General's Department of Kansas*.

black citizen-soldiers were at least discouraged from enlisting. Before the end of the year, however, another African American company formed in Topeka. In December 1878, George W. Brown placed a short notice in the *Colored Citizen*: “The Public are respectfully invited to attend a meeting at the 4th Baptist Church on Wednesday night next for the purpose

of organizing a Militia company. All that have signed their names are ordered to be present by ord[e]r of the chairman."²⁹

On December 11, the new company formed and named itself the Morton Guards, in honor of Senator Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, a staunch Republican civil rights advocate who had died the year before. At various times, the unit also would be officially referred to as Company A, Colored Infantry; A, 1st Colored; the 1st Colored Infantry Company; and the 1st Independent Company. George Brown, who worked as a letter carrier and had served as the first lieutenant of the Osborn Guards, was elected to be the new unit's captain, and John Carter and Wesley Buford were elected as the first and second lieutenants. Three sergeants and a color bearer were also appointed.³⁰

Lieutenant Carter was a USCT veteran. He had been born into slavery in Tennessee around 1829 and was later brought to Springfield, Missouri. In 1860, he was among ten slaves bought by Emory Carter, of St. Joseph, Missouri. He enlisted in Company F, 1st Kansas Colored Infantry, in Topeka, in August 1862, and two years later he was hospitalized in Arkansas suffering from sunstroke. After being discharged in Leavenworth as the company first sergeant in October 1865, Carter got married and returned to Topeka, but he suffered from chronic diarrhea and blindness in his right eye due to his previous illness, and he found it difficult to perform hard labor in the sun.³¹

At least one of the new unit's sergeants, Andrew Gregg, also was a USCT veteran. Born a slave in Jessamine County, Kentucky, in 1843, he was purchased there by Samuel Gregg in 1848. Almost a hundred thousand Kentuckians had moved to Missouri in the decades before 1860, and Samuel Gregg was one of them. He brought his slaves to Jackson

29. *Radge's Fourth Biennial Directory . . . of the City of Topeka for 1878-1879* (Topeka: Commonwealth Job Printing Establishment, 1878), 240; *Topeka Colored Citizen*, December 7, 1878.

30. *Topeka Colored Citizen*, December 14, 1878. Andrew Gregg was the orderly sergeant, C. C. Solomon and William Noble were the first and second duty sergeants, and J. A. Givens was the color bearer; the *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 16, 1879, questioned whether Brown could "read sufficiently well to fill his responsible position acceptably."

31. CMSR of John Carter, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 94, NA; pension record of John Carter, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 15, NA. Carter married Ellen Ellis in Lawrence in 1867. They had a son in 1871.

County, Missouri, which was adjacent to the Kansas border, and Andrew Gregg somehow crossed that line to freedom. He enlisted in the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry at Lawrence in February 1863 and was assigned to Company G. At the Battle of Poison Spring in 1864, he was shot in his right leg, which later caused him to suffer from varicose veins. After he mustered out of the Union army as a corporal at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in October 1865, Gregg's wounded leg entitled him to receive a disability pension of four dollars per month. He moved to Topeka in 1867, got married, and worked as a laborer.³²

The members of the Morton Guards seem to have concluded that Wesley Buford was a more effective leader than George Brown, because in April 1879, they elected new officers, with Buford promoted to captain, Brown demoted to first lieutenant, and James E. Douglas elected as the new second lieutenant. Captain Buford was a common laborer, as was Douglas, and he was too young to have served in the Civil War. He had completed a five-year enlistment in the 24th U.S. Infantry, however, and he brought an excellent military service record and invaluable active duty leadership experience to the task of commanding his militia company.³³

Born in Gallatin, Tennessee, in 1850, Wesley Buford had enlisted in the army in Nashville, in January 1871. His enlistment paper indicated that he was a twenty-one-year-old groom (probably for horses), who stood just over six feet tall, with brown eyes, black hair, and a yellow complexion. Buford was also illiterate, so he wrote an X on the paper, and his recruiting officer, First Lieutenant George E. Albee, labeled it "his mark" and signed his name for him. Lieutenant Albee later received the Medal of Honor for gallantry in an action that had occurred fifteen months earlier, when he led black troops against hostile Comanche on the Brazos River, in northern Texas.³⁴

32. CMSR of Andrew Gregg, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 94, NA; pension record of Andrew Gregg, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 15, NA.

33. *2BRAG*, 12, 19.

34. Enlistment paper of Wesley Burford [*sic*], RG 94, NA; Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. Army*, 1: 154. The Regular Army enlistment paper and pension record for Wesley Buford spell his last name "Burford," but that spelling disappears after he arrives in Kansas. Whether he purposely altered his name after he was discharged or the army erred in its spelling is unknown.

Seven weeks after he enlisted, Buford got married, probably while assigned to the recruit depot at Newport Barracks, Kentucky. In mid-April, twenty-seven black recruits were transferred to the 24th U.S. Infantry, and he may have been one of them. Buford's wife, Sarah, accompanied him to the Texas frontier, where he was assigned to Company D in May. His unit was stationed at Fort McKavett, an isolated post in central Texas, and he and his wife probably lived on the outskirts of the post in a disorderly collection of shacks that was commonly referred to as a "sudsville" (since laundresses washed clothes there).³⁵

Eighteen months before the Bufords arrived at Fort McKavett, the 24th U.S. Infantry had been formed there by the consolidation of the 38th and 41st U.S. Infantry regiments. By 1871, the 24th U.S. Infantry was one of six regiments stationed in Texas, including all but one of the four black regiments. Sixty-one of the regiments' sixty-four companies were distributed among thirteen frontier posts, guarding the citizens of the Lone Star State from attacks by various hostile Indian tribes and outlaws.³⁶

Buford and his company spent much of their time campaigning in the field. By the end of the year, he was probably convinced that the hard life of an infantry private was worth somewhat more than the paltry thirteen dollars he was being paid each month. Buford was able to earn a little more money by performing extra duty as the company tailor. Sarah also helped the family's financial situation by serving as one of his company's authorized laundresses. She washed soldiers' clothes for a fixed rate of pay and also was entitled to receive government rations and medical care. These benefits undoubtedly came in handy, as Sarah gave birth to three children—Willie, Dora, and Martha—before the end of 1875.³⁷

In mid-April 1872, Company D left Fort McKavett and spent three weeks marching to its new home, Fort McIntosh, on the Rio Grande at

35. Pension record of Wesley Burford [*sic*], RG 15, NA; roll 846, National Archives Microfilm Publication M617, Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800–1916, NA.

36. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1871*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1871), 96.

37. The 1870 Census listed 351 officers and men and eleven washerwomen (laundresses), with eleven children, at Fort McKavett, according to Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 308; Pension Record of Wesley Burford, 24th U.S. Infantry, RG 15, NA.

Laredo. In September, Buford was promoted to corporal, which increased his monthly pay to fifteen dollars. In April 1873, he and his company were transferred once again to another post on the Rio Grande, Fort Duncan, near Eagle Pass. There he was promoted to sergeant, which earned him another two-dollar pay raise. At the end of the year, Buford performed three weeks of escort duty to San Antonio.³⁸

From June to December 1875, Companies D and I of the 24th U.S. Infantry participated in a campaign “against predatory Indians.” Except for the presence of its white officers, a few civilians, and some Tonkawa scouts, the expedition of almost 450 men was an all-black force that also included six companies from the 10th U.S. Cavalry, one company from the 25th U.S. Infantry, and a company of Seminole-Negro Indian scouts. The force assembled at Fort Concho and headed north to sweep hostile Indians from the Staked Plains. The twenty-five-hundred-mile expedition only killed one Indian and captured five others, but it provided “the first thorough exploration of the Staked Plains and forever dispelled the myths and fears surrounding this mysterious and uncharted region.”³⁹

For Sergeant Buford, it was quite a hard campaign, and when he later applied for a disability pension, he blamed his health problems on the “cold, exposure and bad alkali water used while on Scouting Expedition . . . through western Texas.” Buford’s arduous trek across western Texas, and his family’s austere living conditions in various sudsvilles, probably helped to convince him that life in the civilian world had a great deal more to offer. First Sergeant Buford was discharged at Fort Duncan in January 1876, and he and his family returned to Gallatin before moving on to Topeka in 1877.⁴⁰

When the Morton Guards changed its leadership in 1879, it also adopted a new name, the St. John Guards, to honor John P. St. John, the Republican governor who had just taken office in Topeka. This apparently was an attempt by the company to endear itself to the militia’s

38. Roll 245, National Archives Microfilm Publication M665, Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, June 1821–December 1916, NA.

39. *Ibid.*; William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 147–48. There is a chapter on the expedition in Paul H. Carlson, “Pecos Bill”: *A Military Biography of William R. Shafter* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988).

40. Pension Record of Wesley Burford [*sic*], RG 15, NA.

commander-in-chief, but it is unclear whether he was impressed. The new governor soon came under criticism, however, from angry white citizens in the south-central part of the state. These Kansans were not pleased that the state was wasting its limited supply of arms on an African American company, while hostile Indians still posed a threat to their domestic tranquillity.⁴¹

In response to the September 1878 raid by Cheyennes led by Chief Dull Knife, which had resulted in the deaths of more than thirty Kansans, Governor St. John established a forty-man Patrol Guard to warn of hostile Indian incursions across a line that ran about a hundred miles west from Barbour County. The citizens of Pratt County lived just north of this line, and they believed that all of the state's weapons should be used to defend against the threat from Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes in the Indian Territory, just south of Barbour County. With this in mind, they questioned the governor's decision to arm the St. John Guards, and he assured them that every stand of serviceable arms was "doing service on the frontier." The governor also stated that the arms issued to Topeka's African American company were "forty condemned muskets, some without hammers, some without tubes, all defective and unserviceable. The colored folks wanted them to drill with and I let them go. You folks should not be jealous of the colored troops, but if you are, and want such arms as these, I will send you all you ask for."⁴²

On April 2, the St. John Guard, with a strength of forty men, was finally mustered into "State militia service" by Adjutant General Peter S. Noble. One Topeka newspaper optimistically reported that the company was "ready for the 'front' at a moment's notice." By May, the citizen-soldiers were drilling with their defective weapons every Monday night, and the *Colored Citizen* reported that they would soon have their new uniforms. The *Daily Bulletin* reported that the company was drilling regularly and would "soon divide public admiration with the Capital Guards." It also noted that the unit joined the city's Memorial Day procession at the end of May.⁴³

41. John P. St. John had campaigned for governor on a prohibitionist platform, and in 1884 he ran for president on the national Prohibition party ticket.

42. Fowles, *Guard in Peace and War*, 26; *Topeka Commonwealth*, May 22, 1879.

43. *Topeka Daily Bulletin*, May 5, 31, 1879; *Topeka Colored Citizen*, May 10, 1879.

As the black militiamen were drilling on the street in early July, the *Colored Citizen* reported that “a couple of white loafers, of the smart Aleck kind, kept repeating each command given. The boys say the next time these loafers come around, they will give them a little bayonet exercise.” This harassment, albeit slight, may have spurred the company to display even greater proficiency in their martial skills, because two days later, on the Fourth of July, Captain Buford and his men “made a fine appearance” and demonstrated that they were “making rapid progress in their drill.”⁴⁴

As the first day of August approached, the *Colored Citizen* reported that “our Militia Company, of which we all feel so proud, will turn out that day, and will escort the speakers to the park.” The reason for the appearance of these speakers was Emancipation Day, a holiday that was celebrated by African Americans at different times in different states. Black Kansans observed it on the first day of August to commemorate the liberation of the slaves in the British West Indies in 1834. The St. John Guards marked the joyous occasion by marching and giving “an exhibition of their proficiency in the manual of arms.” Their holiday performance caused the *Daily Capital* to predict: “With plenty of practice and obedience to commands they ought to be the ‘crack’ colored company of the State.”⁴⁵

The Topeka company’s closest competitor for the honor of being Kansas’s best African American unit resided twenty-five miles east, in the city of Lawrence, the Douglas County seat and also home to the University of Kansas. In 1854, the city had been founded by members of an antislavery organization, the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society, and it was later named after Amos Lawrence, the society’s treasurer. Douglas County soon became the primary battleground for the struggle between free state and slave state proponents that created “Bleeding Kansas.” Lawrence’s reputation as the citadel of “Kansas abolitionism” had attracted an attack by pro-slavery raiders in 1856.⁴⁶

44. *Topeka Colored Citizen*, July 5, 12, 1879.

45. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1879; *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 2, 1879; Emancipation Day was celebrated on August 3 in Missouri and on June 19, or “Juneteenth,” in Texas.

46. Castel, *Frontier State at War*, 124. The organization was renamed the New England Emigrant Aid Society in 1855.

Between 1857 and the start of the Civil War, Lawrence had served as a station on the western branch of the Underground Railroad, helping untold numbers of slaves to escape from bondage in Missouri. On August 21, 1863, William C. Quantrill led a mounted band of more than four hundred Confederate guerrillas from Missouri to raid Lawrence a second time. Quantrill and his raiders burned about two hundred buildings and killed almost the same number of men and boys, committing what some historians have called the greatest atrocity of the war. Fourteen months later, when the Price Raid threatened eastern Kansas, the commander of the military post at Lawrence was ordered to send all “organized negroes” to Wyandotte. The officer, however, reported that he had examined the “colored militia,” and they were “not in a condition to proceed to Wyandotte, they being over age, invalids, &c.” Thus, the black men remained in Lawrence and worked on fortifications.⁴⁷

Lawrence continued to attract black migration after the war, and by 1870 it had the state’s second largest African American community—1,412 people. By 1880, the state’s large influx of Exodusters would increase the city’s black population to 1,996, with 1,228 more African Americans living in Douglas County. As might be expected, many of Lawrence’s citizens were quite sympathetic to the plight of the Exodusters. One of its newspapers, the *Lawrence Journal*, decided that the only thing for Kansans to do was to receive and care for the poor migrants. It also pointed out: “Unpleasant as the responsibility may be, it is upon us, and must be met in the same spirit that has always animated our people with reference to the great questions of freedom.”⁴⁸

The organization of the black company in Lawrence actually preceded the arrival of the Exodusters by several months. Interest in forming a militia unit seemed to get a significant boost on January 14, 1879, when a well-drilled company of boys called the Ottawa Cadets staged an impressive parade on the streets of the city. The cadets’ performance caused the *Republican Daily Journal* to opine: “Lawrence ought to have a first class military organization.” The next day, while expressing the

47. Cunningham, “Welcoming ‘Pa,’” 97.

48. *Lawrence Journal* article reprinted in *New York Times*, April 29, 1879.

hope that “our suggestions regarding the formation of a military company in this city will be acted upon at once,” the *Journal* also reported that an African American barber named H. H. Thomas was organizing a “colored militia company.”⁴⁹

On January 21, the black men of Lawrence formed their unit, which was eventually named the Lawrence Guards. The men elected John M. Mitchell, “one of the most intelligent and enterprising colored men in Lawrence,” to command the company, with A. H. Brooks and William Holland serving as their first and second lieutenants. Like the former commander of the Osborn Guards, Mitchell was a barber, whose Crystal Palace Barber Shop was located under the National Bank on Massachusetts Avenue. Mitchell and Brooks were also leaders in Lawrence’s fraternal organizations. They were worshipful master and secretary of Ancient Square Lodge No. 7 of the Free and Accepted Masons, and Mitchell alone was the high priest of the Onward Chapter of the Royal Arch Masons. Holland worked at the Ludington House hotel, probably as a porter.⁵⁰

The *Lawrence Daily Tribune* predicted that “with the aid of the large number of colored veterans of the war residing here, the new company should make rapid progress in drill and discipline.” It is not known how many of the Lawrence Guards’ enlisted men were veterans, but two of the three officers had served in the Union army. Alfred Brooks had been born a slave about 1842 and grew up as the property of Harriet C. Jay, near the small town of Dover, in Lafayette County, Missouri. He had enlisted in the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry at Fort Scott in January 1863 and been assigned to Company C. After being wounded at Poison Spring and Helena, Arkansas, in 1864, Brooks had mustered out with his regiment at Pine Bluff in October 1865, and he had lived in Wyandotte before moving to Lawrence in 1867.⁵¹

William Holland also had been born into slavery in 1847, near Lafayette, in Macon County, Tennessee. His mother had belonged to the

49. *Lawrence Republican Daily Journal*, January 16, 17, 1879.

50. *Topeka Colored Citizen*, October 11, 1879; *Johnson & McKinney’s Annual City Directory of the City of the . . . City of Lawrence for 1879* (Lawrence: H. A. Cutter, 1879), 49, 50, 88, 105.

51. *Lawrence Daily Tribune*, January 30, 1879; Pension Record of Alfred Brooks, RG 15, NA; CMSR of Alfred Brooks, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry (new), RG 94, NA.

wife of a farmer named Jerry Dixon, while his father, Anthony Holland, was a slave at the Holland farm, several miles away. Under the name Andrew Jackson Dixon, he had enlisted in the 40th U.S. Colored Infantry at Gallatin in February 1865 and learned for the first time that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had freed most slaves two years earlier. Private Dixon served for fourteen months in Company E, until he was discharged at Chattanooga in April 1866. He then adopted his new name, in honor of his father, returned to Lafayette, and moved on to Lawrence about 1868.⁵²

Having officers who were experienced in the ways of war undoubtedly got the Lawrence unit off to a good start, and the *Journal* optimistically predicted that "with the necessary drill this will make the best company in the State." The unit quickly filled its ranks, and three weeks after it had been organized, Captain Mitchell wrote Adjutant General Noble to inform him that he had sixty-nine men enrolled in the company, and they were ready to be mustered in. Mitchell said that if Noble gave him three or four days' notice, he could get a hall and have everything ready for any day or night except Saturday. A night ceremony, however, was preferred.⁵³

The Lawrence Guards reportedly ordered "a hundred guns and other accoutrements," but Kansas only provided forty-four muskets and other items of equipment to the unit, which was also referred to as Company B, Colored Infantry; the 2d Colored; and the 2d Independent Company. The unit began to conduct weekly drills at its headquarters, which was in a rented building on the corner of Rhode Island and Warren (Ninth) streets. On March 24, its drill was "more fully attended . . . than at any time heretofore, fifty members being present." By Memorial Day, which had been established as a holiday to honor the Union army's war dead eleven years before, the company was armed and ready to march in its first local parade. Its members reportedly made a "good appearance."⁵⁴

52. Pension Record of William Holland, RG 15, NA; CMSR of Andrew J. Dixon, 40th U.S. Colored Infantry, RG 94, NA.

53. *Lawrence Republican Daily Journal*, January 30, 1879; John Mitchell to Adjutant General Noble, February 11, 1879, Adjutant General's Office Correspondence, KSHS.

54. *2BRAG*, 12, 30; the unit was referred to as the "2d Col'd" on page 6 of *The Roster of Kansas State Militia, 1880*, and as the "2nd Independent Company" in a letter that Captain

In mid-July, the Lawrence Guards met to make arrangements for purchasing uniforms, and two weeks later, the unit held an “interesting ceremony” at Miller’s Hall, at which Lieutenant Colonel T. J. Tilley, an aide-de-camp on Governor St. John’s military staff, officially mustered the men into the Kansas State Militia. Lieutenant Colonel Tilley made “a very neat and appropriate address” to the members of the company, explaining to them that “every man on taking the soldier’s oath should thoroughly understand that he might be called on and should be ready to perform a soldier’s duty in case of emergency.” After this speech, thirty-six of the unit’s forty-eight men signed a muster roll, and they were sworn in. Then the citizen-soldiers enjoyed a “feast of good things for the inner man” and a second entertainment, with many ladies present.⁵⁵

The Lawrence Guards continued to improve, and one newspaper reported that it was rumored “on the street” that the company could beat the St. John Guards. It was also reported that the unit was expected to be present for the grand military day at the National Temperance Camp Meeting on August 20, along with seven white companies from Kansas and Missouri. This meeting was to be conducted at Bismarck Grove, a tract of about sixty acres two miles northeast of Lawrence. The Kansas Pacific Railroad had developed the grove into “a popular place of resort for recreation and pleasure.” For unknown reasons, however, the black citizen-soldiers did not perform at this event.⁵⁶

The company hosted its own “soldiers reunion and basket picnic” at Miller’s Grove on September 1, with excursions of African Americans from Kansas City, Leavenworth, Topeka, and Wyandotte also expected to attend. Two other black companies, as well as “several distinguished gentlemen” who had been engaged to make addresses, failed to appear at

Mitchell wrote to the *Topeka Colored Citizen*, December 13, 1879; *Colored Citizen*, February 8, August 30, October 11, 1879; *Republican Daily Journal*, February 22, March 25, 1879; *Lawrence Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1879.

55. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, July 15, 1879; *Lawrence Daily Tribune*, July 29, 1879. The *Tribune* misspelled Tilley’s name and demoted him to lieutenant.

56. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, August 19, 29, 1879. The seven white companies were the Craig Rifles (Kansas City, Missouri), Capital Guards (Topeka), Council Grove Guards, Drought Rifles (Wyandotte), Ottawa Rifles and Zouaves, and the Parsons Rifles; *Johnson & McKinney’s Annual City Directory . . . of Lawrence for 1879*, 41.

the function, but the members of the Lawrence Guards reportedly still had a grand time. The Central Band “made the woods ring with music,” the men drilled, and after a fine dinner, Judge Bailey gave an address on the life and services of William Lloyd Garrison, the courageous abolitionist leader, who had died less than four months earlier. Garrison had crusaded against slavery from the time he founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, and Judge Bailey’s discussion of his admirable career “was well received and seemed to give satisfaction.” The Lawrence Guards then “marched back to the city in good order, to the sweet music of the band.”⁵⁷

That evening, the company’s festivities continued at Frazier’s Hall. The “gallant Soger Boys . . . tripped the light fantastic to the delightful music of the band to their hearts’ content.” To raise money, as well as to display their gallantry, the Guards also conducted an election to choose “some fair lady as Goddess of the company.” Miss Lizzie Miller won this honor, beating Maggie Frey by a relatively close count of fifty-four to forty-two votes. The money raised by this voting was supposed to be used for purchasing uniforms, and the *Daily Journal* reported, “When the boys get their uniforms they are going to wrap Miss Miller in the colors of the company and bear her through the streets at their head.”⁵⁸

By the end of September, the Lawrence Guards were being copied by local black youths, who had decided to organize a military unit of their own. The *Daily Journal* reported: “We predict that Lawrence is soon to have a company of Zouaves, not to be excelled by those of Ottawa. Last evening they were out on drill and twenty-five better looking or better drilled colored boys we never saw.” This boys’ unit was praised in a letter to the *Daily Journal*, which said: “This movement if successful will be of great advantage to our rising young men. The military drill will make them dignified and courteous, will exercise their each and every muscle, making them healthy in body and spirit.” The fact that these boys were

57. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, September 2, 1879; *Lawrence Daily Tribune*, September 2, 1879.

58. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, September 2, 1879.

emulating the Lawrence Guards underscored how much the African American community respected its citizen-soldiers.⁵⁹

On November 6, the *Daily Journal* printed an order from Captain Mitchell directing the members of the Lawrence Guards to meet at headquarters at one o'clock in the afternoon for their monthly drill "as required by the law of the State." Twenty-four of the militiamen showed up for this drill, some of them wearing their new uniforms, and it was also reported that there was "a fair prospect" that all of the men would have their uniforms "within a few days."⁶⁰

In early December, Captain Mitchell received a letter from "Colonel" William Berzey, who was the commander of a black militia company located in St. Louis. African American militia units had existed in Missouri since the last months of the Civil War, including the 52d Regiment in St. Louis that had served for an undetermined period of time. Constantine L. de Randamie, who had commanded a St. Louis company called the Attucks Blues during the early 1870s, had moved to Topeka in 1877, and he had become the city's first black real estate agent. De Randamie may have been associated with the organization of the Morton Guards, although there is no evidence to confirm that.⁶¹

In 1874, Captain William Berzey had reorganized de Randamie's unit and changed its name to the Attucks Guards, which one of Kansas's black newspapers reported was "one of the best disciplined companies in the country." The Attucks Guards was the only one of four St. Louis units that had responded during the great railroad strike in 1877, and the *Missouri Republican* reported that its men "were among the first to place themselves at the command of the authorities in the late troubles, and whose behavior we hear freely complimented on all hands." Two years later, Captain Berzey also was instrumental in organizing the Colored

59. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1879.

60. *Ibid.*, November 6, 7, 1879.

61. *Topeka Colored Citizen*, December 13, 1879; *Lawrence Western Recorder*, July 20, 1883; Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 88. In 1873, Frederick Douglass wrote President Grant to recommend de Randamie for the post of minister to Liberia. Douglass noted that he was "a gentleman in all respects" and "a faithful supporter of the Republican party and of your administration." For details, see John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, vol. 21 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 423–24.

National Guards Union of the United States, which was the African American equivalent of the white National Guard Association of the United States that had just conducted its first meeting in St. Louis in October 1879. Berzey adopted the honorary title of colonel to recognize his presidency of the black organization, whose members represented militia companies from several states.⁶²

In his letter, Berzey explained that a militia convention—the second meeting of the Colored National Guards Union—was going to be held in Columbus, Ohio, in mid-February 1880 and that every “colored military organization” in the country was requested to send representatives. It is not clear whether Captain Mitchell was able to attend the convention (which was hosted by Columbus’s black militia company, the Palmer Guards), but he certainly considered it to represent a great opportunity for Kansas’s African American units, as he indicated in a letter to the *Colored Citizen*: “I therefore believe it will be beneficial to the three Companies of this State to send one or two representatives, and it will also be the means of uniting the three companies in this State, once united it will not be long before we shall take rank second to none other in the State, and then our people will have reason to be proud of us, as a military organization.”⁶³

Thus, by the end of 1879, the African American communities in Topeka and Lawrence had organized militia companies that were armed and equipped by the state and at least partially uniformed, thanks to the units’ own fund-raising efforts. These two cities had no monopoly on martial spirit, however. Another black community also had raised a unit, a fourth company would be organized during the summer of 1880, and a fifth community would try to form a unit but fail.

62. Johnson, *African American Soldiers in the National Guard*, 58; *Atchison Western Recorder*, July 18, 1884 (the newspaper had just moved from Lawrence to Atchison); *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, August 1, 1877.

63. *Topeka Colored Citizen*, December 13, 1879. The convention was held in Columbus on February 16–19, and representatives from at least five states attended. For details, see the *Columbus Ohio State Journal*, February 17, 18, 1880.



Appendix

The Officers of Kansas's Black Companies

Between 1875 and 1896, at least forty-four African Americans were elected to serve as officers in five Kansas State Militia (KSM) companies, three reserve militia companies, and two independent companies. During their service, some officers advanced in rank, and a few served in more than one unit. Nineteen of them achieved the rank of captain, ten became first lieutenants, and fifteen were second lieutenants. Governors commissioned twelve of the black KSM officers between 1875 and 1880, and six more men were commissioned between 1887 and 1896, as documented by records at the Kansas State Historical Society. The remaining twenty-six men were listed as officers in newspapers or city directories, and some also may have been officially commissioned, but this cannot be verified.

The six black officers commissioned between 1887 and 1896 belonged to the Garfield Rifles, and it is not clear why they were singled out for that honor. In his "Statement of the Condition of the Kansas National Guard in 1896," Second Lieutenant Harry A. Smith of the U.S. Army recommended: "As the colored company at Leavenworth is no part

of the National Guard[,] I would recommend that the practice of issuing commissions to its officers be discontinued. This practice sprang up some ten years ago and has been continued ever since.” In July 1896, Captain Ed Moore was the last Garfield Rifles officer to be commissioned.

The officers are listed alphabetically, and their other military service in the USCT, Regular Army, or the Volunteer Army raised for the Spanish-American War is also indicated. The names of those who were officially commissioned by Kansas are in boldface.

Baden, Robert—2LT, MR 94

Bailey, William—2LT, 1LT, GR 96–97

Bell, William—2LT, GR 97

Bradshaw, Perry—CPT, LR 89–94

Brooks, A. H.—PVT, Co. C, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry, 63–65; 1LT, LG 79–80

Brown, George W.—1LT, OG 76; CPT, 1LT, SJG 78–79; CPT, LR 89

Brown, William H.—2LT, GR 87

Buford, Wesley—SGT, Co. D, 24th U.S. Infantry 71–76; 2LT, SJG 78–79, CPT, SJG 79–80

Burns, C. I.—2LT, MR 96–97

Carter John—SGT, Co. F, 79th U.S. Colored Infantry 62–65; 1LT, SJG 78

Chapman, William R.—CPL, Co. B., 18th U.S. Colored Infantry 64–66; CPT, 3C 79–80

Chinneth, John—1LT, MR 94

Coleman, William—SGT, Co. F, 83d U.S. Colored Infantry 63–65; 2LT, OG 76

Douglas, James E.—2LT, 1LT, SJG 79–80

Grant, James—2LT, GR 91

Grinsted, Charles R.—PVT, Co. D, 16th U.S. Colored Infantry 65–66; CPT, OG 75–76

Harris, Joseph—PVT, Co. G, 60th U.S. Colored Infantry 63–65; 1LT, O 80–81

Hill, H. H.—2LT, GR 85

- Holland, William**—PVT, Co. E, 40th U.S. Colored Infantry 65–66; 2LT, 1LT, LG 79–80
- Jackson, George W.**—1LT, 87–89; CPT, GR 89–96
- Johnson, Henry—2LT, GG 91–92; CPT, GG 94
- Johnson, John—CPT, LR 87
- Jones, Samuel W.—CPT, MR 95; CPT, Co. E., 23d Kansas 98–99
- Mundy, Henry—CPT, GR 83–84
- Mitchell, John M.**—CPT, LG 79
- Moore, Edmund**—1LT, GR 89–96; CPT, GR 96–97
- Nelson, William**—2LT, O 80–81
- Overton, William L.—1LT, GR 83; CPT, GR 84; CPT, GG 91–92
- Overton, M. W.—1LT, LR 87
- Ross, H. G.—CPT, GR 86
- Scott, Sylvester**—2LT, GR 89–91; 1LT, GR 91–96
- Sparks, B. A.—2LT, LR 87
- Stager, M.—2LT, BR 87
- Stratton, Albert**—PVT, Co. H, 24th U.S. Infantry 79–84; 1LT, GG 91–94; NCO, Co. G, 23d Kansas 98–99
- Taylor, H. O.—2LT, SJG 80
- Thomas, John R.—Musician, Co. I, 24th U.S. Infantry 78–83; Musician, Trp. B, 9th U.S. Cavalry 83–88; Musician, Trp. C, 10th U.S. Cavalry 88–92; CPT, MR 94, 96; NCO, Co. K, 8th Illinois 98–99; PVT, Co. K, 9th U.S. Volunteer Infantry, 99
- Townsend, William B.—2LT, GR 84
- Walker, William—PVT, Co. C, 13th U.S. Colored Infantry; CPT, BR 87
- Waller, John L.—NCO, 2LT, LG 80; CPT, Co. C, 23d Kansas 98–99
- Webster, Willis**—CPT, GR 87–88
- Williams, John—2LT, GR 90
- Williams, L. D.—1LT, BR 87
- Wright, William—2LT, GR 86
- Young, Robert**—PVT, Co. B, 18th U.S. Colored Infantry 64–66; CPT, O 80–81

Kansas State Militia

- OG—Osborn Guards, Topeka
- SJG—Morton Guards/St. John Guards, Topeka
- LG—Lawrence Guards
- 3C—Third Colored, Wyandotte
- O—“Olathe Colored Militia Company”

Reserve Militia

- GR—Garfield Rifles, Leavenworth
- LR—Logan Rifles, North Topeka
- BR—Blaine Rifles, North Topeka

Independent Companies

- GG—Governor’s Guards, Kansas City
- MR—Company K/Murdock Rifles, Wichita