



In this painting of the Battle of the Blue, October 22, 1864, by Benjamin Mileham, Colonel Jackman's Confederate brigade attacks the Topeka battery's lone Howitzer. One of the Kansas fatalities was Ben Hughes, the battery's black teamster.

Welcoming “Pa” on the Kaw

Kansas’s “Colored” Militia and the 1864 Price Raid

by Roger D. Cunningham

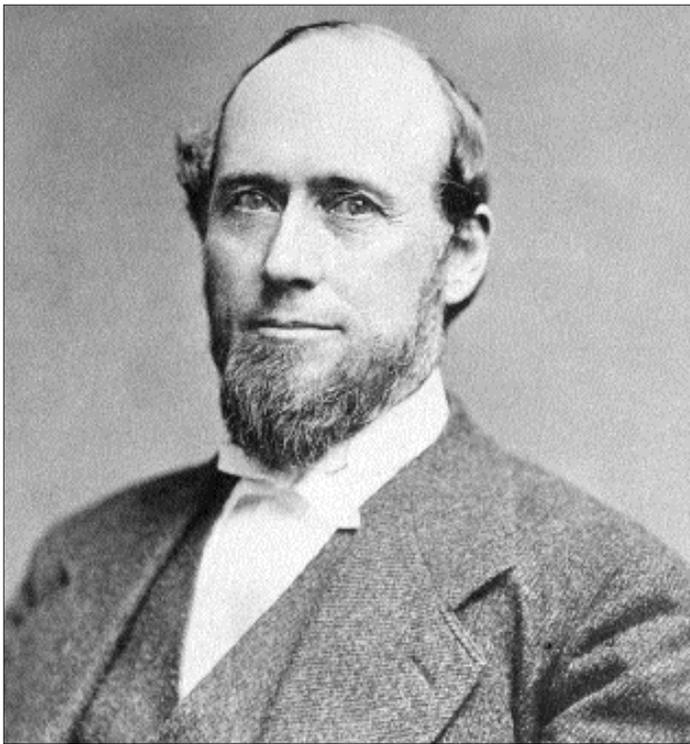
In the public cemetery in Topeka, Kansas, stands a tall granite monument honoring twenty-four members of the Kansas State Militia who were killed at the Battle of the Blue near Kansas City, Missouri, on October 22, 1864. Personally financed by Guilford G. Gage, a wealthy Topekan who had fought in the battle as a private, the Gage Monument is topped by the figure of a white Union soldier, yet two of its honorees are African Americans—Moses Banks and Ben Hughes of the Second Militia regiment. The fact that they and a thousand other black citizen-soldiers took up arms to defend their state from the “rebel foe” during the Civil War largely was ignored when the monument was dedicated in 1895 and has been almost completely forgotten today. It is important to recall the actions of these proud black Kansans—most of them newly freed slaves—who were willing to fight for their freedom, thereby proving to one and all that they were more than worthy of the civil rights that had been unjustly withheld from them.

In the fall of 1864 Confederate Major General Sterling Price led a mounted force of about twelve thousand men on an extended raid from northeastern Arkansas into his home state of Missouri. Originally intending to strike St. Louis and capture its military stores, “Pap” Price soon changed his objective and led his force west past Jefferson City, the state capital, and on toward Kansas City and Fort Leavenworth, on the Missouri–Kansas border. Major General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of the Department of Kansas, had few federal troops available to protect the state from Price’s advance and therefore asked Governor Thomas Carney to call out the Kansas State Militia on October 5.¹

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1. On June 29, 1864, Major General Curtis reported to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that he had 6,562 troops in the entire Department of Kansas—Kansas and Colorado (except Fort Garland) and Nebraska Territories. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1st ser., vol. 34, pt. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), 594.



On October 8, 1864, Kansas governor Thomas Carney issued a proclamation calling the Kansas State Militia to arms, a call that initially exempted black Kansans. Carney later would congratulate the state's "gal-lant soldiery," which included about one thousand African Americans.

When Kansas joined the Union in 1861, one of the new legislature's first acts was to pass a militia law. The scores of companies that formed the Kansas State Militia's eleven regiments varied from uniformed volunteers to units that existed only on paper and generally were poorly armed and equipped. In 1864 the militia was reorganized into five brigade districts that comprised twenty-four regiments and four battalions. This force was better armed, but most of the militiamen still lacked proper uniforms and equipment, and companies were only required to "parade" (drill) monthly, regiments quarterly, and brigades annually.²

On October 8 Governor Carney issued a proclamation dramatically 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 citizen-soldiers soon began to rally under the command of Major General George W. Deitzler, who ordered them to come with "such arms as [were] at hand and a full supply of am-

munition." Deitzler also instructed militia commanders to prepare for thirty days of active service and to see that each of their men had two blankets, a tin cup, knife and fork, and a haversack, with a coffee pot and a frying pan for every five men.³

This "bring your own arms and equipment" approach to national defense was not unique during the country's formative years. With few British regular troops to protect them, colonists had been forced to rely upon a militia system to defend their frontier settlements against Indian raids and had initiated their successful war for independence by fighting the "redcoats" with armed citizen-soldiers popularly known as "minutemen." For many reasons—not the least of which was economy—the United States later incorporated into the Constitution reliance upon small "land and naval Forces" and a much larger militia "to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions." The ground rules for the latter force were laid out formally in the Militia Act of 1792.

The new nation also decreed that its defenders would be white. Black men were not allowed to enlist in the regular army, and according to the Militia Act only "free, able-bodied, white male citizen[s]" between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were obligated to enroll in the militia of each state and to arm and equip themselves. Most states interpreted this legislation as preventing them from allowing black men to serve in their militias. A notable exception occurred in Rhode Island in 1842, when two companies of free black men from Providence responded to the governor's declaration of martial law and helped to put down the Dorr Rebellion. For their efforts, these men were rewarded with immediate suffrage. During the 1850s black units also were organized in at least four states—Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—but they were not officially part of the militia. In 1858, when the Massachusetts legislature did pass a bill opening the militia to black men, the governor vetoed it. A black abolitionist in Boston nevertheless predicted that "sooner or later the clashing of arms will be heard in this country and the black man's services will be needed."⁴

He was right, although it did not happen until the second year of the Civil War. The Second Confiscation and Militia Act of July 1862 authorized President Abraham Lin-

3. Richard J. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas, and the Campaign of the Army of the Border Against General Sterling Price, in October and November, 1864* (Chicago: Church and Goodman, 1865), 35–36.

4. Charles Johnson Jr., *African American Soldiers in the National Guard: Recruitment and Deployment During Peacetime and War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), 9–10; Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 31.

2. Frederick P. Todd, *American Military Equipage, 1851–1872*, vol. 2 (New York: Chatham Square Press, 1983), 803–6.

coln “to receive into the service of the United States, for the purpose of constructing intrenchments, or performing camp service, or any other labor, or any military or naval service for which they may be found competent, persons of African descent.” Lincoln waited even longer to authorize using black soldiers in a combat role—until his Emancipation Proclamation liberated all slaves in the states in rebellion effective January 1, 1863. In spite of discriminatory treatment that included initially being paid less than white troops and often being issued inferior arms and equipment, almost two hundred thousand black men eventually enlisted in the Union Army and Navy, more than half of them coming from Confederate states. The black soldiers were assigned to segregated artillery, cavalry, and infantry units that were collectively known as U.S. Colored Troops. They fought in scores of battles from Kansas to Virginia, and almost thirty-seven thousand of them died, primarily from disease.⁵

However, state militias remained white during the war, with three minor exceptions. The first occurred in New Orleans in 1862, when Governor Thomas D. Moore accepted a regiment of free men of color as part of the Louisiana militia. The Louisiana Native Guards served the Confederacy until federal forces under Major General Benjamin Butler occupied New Orleans. When Butler appealed to black men to join the Union Army, the First Native Guards became its first officially sanctioned black regiment. The second exception to the all-white militia standard occurred in Mobile, also in 1862, when the Alabama General Assembly authorized the enrollment of the city’s Creoles (mulattos) between the ages of eighteen and fifty as part of the state militia. Serving under white officers, at least one Creole company helped guard warehouses of government stores. The final exception was in Boston in 1863, when black citizens organized a Massachusetts Volunteer Militia unit that was designated as the Fourteenth Unattached Company of Infantry.⁶

In spite of Kansas’s reputation as a hotbed of antislavery sentiment—the “land of John Brown”—its 1864 Militia Act mandated a white enrolled militia. The *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, however, called this “a very

unwise act” and said of black Kansans, “here is 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.” The *Evening Bulletin* approved of the mayor of Fort Scott’s June 1 decision to call upon all his citizens, “without regard to color,” to organize units to help defend their city against guerrilla attacks. Three weeks later, when Leavenworth was “placed under military guard,” its black men also were directed to organize companies and report for duty.⁷

On October 10 Major General Curtis ignored the exemption of black Kansans from Carney’s call to arms, and with Price’s force only about one hundred miles east of the state line, he issued General Orders No. 54, declaring martial law and ordering all men, white or black, between the ages of eighteen and sixty to “arm and attach themselves to some of the organizations of troops, for temporary military service.” This meant that the state’s white militiamen, who quickly began forming into companies, battalions, regiments, and brigades, were joined by one thousand African Americans, most of them ex-slaves who had escaped from bondage in Missouri since the start of the war. In at least eight cities, these men were soon organized into fourteen segregated companies (Table 1).⁸

Because about two thousand black Kansans already were under arms by the fall of 1864, the number of men available for this militia service was considerably depleted. Those already in uniform had primarily enlisted in two infantry regiments—the First and Second Kansas Colored—that had been organized in 1862 and 1863 and al-

son, *African American Soldiers in the National Guard*, 12. In 1862, fearing a Confederate attack, the mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, called upon his citizens to help erect fortifications. Several hundred black men formed a brigade that worked around the clock for three weeks to fortify the “Queen City” against an attack that never materialized. This black brigade, however, was not armed or uniformed and did not enjoy militia status.

7. *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, June 4, 23, 1864. “Military guard” was probably similar to martial law; that Kansas refused to integrate its militia underscored historian Albert Castel’s conclusion that in spite of its antislavery reputation, the majority of its citizens “remained basically anti-Negro.” For details, see Castel, “Civil War Kansas and the Negro,” *Journal of Negro History* 51 (April 1966): 125–38.

8. The handwritten muster rolls for all of the militia units were typed out by the Kansas Adjutant General’s Office in 1907 and later microfilmed. See Kansas Adjutant General’s Office, Records, rolls LM817 and LM818, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka. In addition to the thirteen segregated companies, a few black men also were attached to seven white companies (A, C, D, E, F, G and I) in Johnson County’s Thirteenth Regiment. See *ibid.*, vol. 5, 25–57, LM817. However, white mistrust in black fighting abilities may have relegated these men to noncombatant roles, such as cooks and teamsters; Captain Fielding Johnson’s company is listed twice on the muster rolls—as Company K, Twenty-third regiment, *ibid.*, LM817, and as Company E, First Colored Regiment, *ibid.*, LM818.

5. The South was credited with providing 99,337 of the Union Army’s 178,975 black troops. See Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, vol. 1 (1908; reprint, Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1979), 11–12.

6. James G. Hollandsworth Jr., *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 2, 16–17; Arthur W. Bergeron Jr., *Confederate Mobile, 1861–1865* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1991), 105; John-

TABLE 1
BLACK KANSAS STATE MILITIA COMPANIES DURING THE PRICE RAID

<u>CITY</u>	<u>DESIGNATION</u>	<u>COMMANDER</u>	<u>PERSONNEL</u>	
			<u>OFF/NCO/EM</u>	<u>DATES OF SERVICE</u>
Elwood	Co. attached to 9th Regt.	CPT John M. Tracy	3/9/38	Oct. 12–27
Fort Scott	Independent Battery	LT William D. Matthews	3/5/148	Oct. 13–Nov. 6
Humboldt	Co. attached to 4th Bn.	CPT Eli Gilbert	3/2/29	Oct. 15–27
Leavenworth	Co. A, 1st Colored Regt.	CPT John H. Morris	3/13/72	Oct. 10–Nov. 10
	Co. B	CPT James Woodland	3/13/74	same as above
	Co. C	CPT William H. Burnham	3/15/72	same as above
	Co. D	LT John Johnson	2/6/43	same as above
	Co. attached to 7th Regt.	CPT Harvey Edgerton	3/1/65	Oct. 12–28
Mound City	Co. attached to 6th Regt.	CPT Samuel Doolittle	3/11/52	Oct. 13–30
	Co. E, 1st Bn.	CPT Henry C. Seaman	2/6/38	Oct. 13–?
Oskaloosa	Co. O, 4th Regt.	CPT Wilber C. Ball	2/0/47	Oct. 11–25
Topeka	Co. D, 2d Regt.	CPT Thomas Archer	3/9/54	Oct. 12–26
Wyandotte	Co. H, 23d Regt.	CPT Charles S. Glick	3/9/98	Oct. 10–Dec. 10
	Co. E, 1st Colored Regt.	CPT Fielding Johnson	3/9/90	same as above

Source: Kansas State Historical Society microfilm rolls LM 817, 818; Linn County Historical Society.

ready fought in several battles in Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. The former regiment had been the first black unit raised (without federal approval) in the North, as well as the first black unit to engage in combat—at Island Mound, Missouri, in October 1862. Company B of the Eighteenth U.S. Colored Infantry also had been manned with more than sixty recruits from Wyandotte in June 1864, and a month later the Independent Battery, U.S. Colored Light Artillery began recruiting in Leavenworth and Wyandotte. By October the battery had enlisted almost ninety men.⁹

The black militia companies generated no descriptive books, and their muster rolls listed little more than the men's names and ranks, but these citizen-soldiers were probably demographically similar to the 208 men from Leavenworth, Fort Scott, Wyandotte, and Quindaro, who

9. In December 1864 the Bureau of Colored Troops redesignated the First and Second Kansas Colored as the Seventy-ninth and Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry; Company B, Eighteenth U.S. Colored Infantry had sixty-one men from Wyandotte, four from Leavenworth, and one from Oskaloosa. See Kansas State Adjutant General, *Report, 1861–1865*, vol. 2 (Leavenworth: W. S. Burke, 1870), 645–49; Independent Battery, Muster-roll, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, 439–42, AR120, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

enlisted in the Independent Battery between July 1864 and March 1865. More than nine out of ten of the latter had been born in the Upper South—primarily Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee—and although some free black men did reside in these states before the war, all but a few of the battery's men probably were former slaves who had accompanied their owners when they migrated westward. The soldiers also were almost all illiterate, as evidenced by the Xs in lieu of signatures in their clothing accounts. They represented several different blue-collar occupations, but 90 percent of them were laborers and farmers. Almost 80 percent were younger than thirty, but Curtis's order calling up men as old as sixty undoubtedly increased the average age of the militiamen.¹⁰

On October 10 Kansas's first six black militia companies were organized in Leavenworth (four) and Wyandotte (two). That same day, an order from the Department of Kansas directed James L. Raferty, a cap-

10. Roger D. Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery at Fort Leavenworth: The Issue of Black Officers During the Civil War," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 23 (Winter 2000–2001): 207. In 1860 about one out of every sixteen African Americans in the South was free.

tain in the Second Kansas Colored, to “take charge of the general organization and command of persons of African descent; . . . for immediate service.” Raferty and two other white men, Josiah B. McAfee and Joshua Mitchell, formed the small “field and staff” (headquarters) of the First Colored Militia regiment, which eventually comprised five lettered companies—the four from Leavenworth (Companies A through D), plus one from Wyandotte (Company E).¹¹

Although Captain Raferty had a less than distinguished military service record, he satisfied one of the most important selection criteria in a time of crisis—he was available. Raferty had first enlisted in the Seventh Kansas Cavalry in Leavenworth in 1861. Under the initial command of Colonel Charles R. Jennison, this regiment soon developed “jayhawking”—robbery and plundering, with murder and arson added—into such an art form that it became better known as “Jennison’s Jayhawkers.” In western Missouri, where the Seventh waged its early campaigns, the charred brick chimneys marking the ruins of suspected “bushwhacker” (pro-Confederate guerrilla) homes that the unit burned were nicknamed “Jennison’s Tombstones.”¹²

Colonel Jennison eagerly liberated Missouri slaves, but his strong abolitionist sentiments were not shared by all Kansans, many of whom considered blacks to be naturally inferior and who objected to slavery in their state only because “they feared its social and economic effect on the small white farmer.” These racist feelings were exemplified by men in the First Kansas Infantry, who upon discovering a light-skinned African American in their unit, complained in a letter that “to have one of the company, or even one of the regiment, pointed out as a ‘nigger’ while on dress parade or guard, is more than we like to be called upon to bear.”¹³

11. Some of the Leavenworth militia companies may have been based upon the units that had been formed in late June, when the city was “placed under military guard.” General Orders No. 55, Department of Kansas, General Orders, Department of Kansas, 1864–1865, RG 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; First Colored Regiment Muster Rolls, Kansas Adjutant General’s Office, Records, vol. 9, 25–44, LM818. Infantry regiments were authorized ten companies, so the First Colored Militia regiment actually was a battalion, as Hinton referred to it in *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 79. The regimental designation seems to have been adopted after the war.

12. Stephen Z. Starr, *The Union Cavalry in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 258; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 187.

13. Castel, “Civil War Kansas and the Negro,” 126; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), 32.

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

Independent Battery!

U. S. Colored Light Artillery!

Colored Men Attention!

Lieut Wm D Matthews has opened an office in the room on Williams Street, formerly occupied by D. S. Andrick, for a Drug Store for the purpose of recruiting colored men for the above Battery.

B. O U N T I E S.

In addition to the regular wages a bounty of \$100 will be paid for one years service, \$200 for two years, and \$300 for three years.

Advertising for recruits

In July 1864 the Independent Battery, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, began recruiting. This advertisement appeared in the October 1, 1864, issue of the Fort Scott Daily Monitor. Lieutenant William D. Matthews spent almost two months in Fort Scott seeking men for the battery.

Raferty’s racial views are not recorded, but he rose to command one of Jennison’s companies and helped the regiment live up to its infamous nickname. As one member of the Seventh admitted candidly, this company comprised “splendid fighting material, but did not have the proper discipline at first.” In July 1862, while operating in Tennessee, Raferty was arrested for opposing orders “to turn out of . . . [his unit’s] lines negroes that were not clearly contraband,” and a month later, he tendered his resignation. Colonel Albert L. Lee, the Seventh’s new commander, forwarded the paperwork to his higher headquarters with the disparaging comment that Raferty was a “shiftless, ignorant and inefficient [officer], and I despair of any improvement.” Raferty was discharged and returned to Leavenworth, where a year later the Second Kansas Colored was organized.¹⁴

Evidently Colonel Samuel J. Crawford, the commander of the Second Kansas Colored and future Kansas gov-

14. Stephen Z. Starr, *Jennison’s Jayhawkers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 75, 202; Simeon M. Fox, “The Story of the Seventh Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Collections*, 1903–1904 8 (1904): 24; James L. Raferty, Compiled Military Service Record, Seventh Kansas Cavalry, RG 94, National Archives. Raferty’s name is spelled different ways in various documents, including “Rafferty” and “Rafety.”



Second-in-command of the First Colored Militia regiment was Josiah B. McAfee, who had served in several regiments in and around Kansas before being assigned to the First Colored in October 1864.

ernor, knew nothing of Raferty's bad record or simply chose to ignore it, because he allowed him to be commissioned as one of his lieutenants in September 1863. Raferty took command of Company I, as a captain, in October. In June 1864 he was ordered to proceed from the regimental encampment at Fort Smith, Arkansas, back to Kansas to collect deserters and new recruits and return them to Fort Smith. Two months later he was ordered to rejoin his unit, but somehow he justified remaining in Leavenworth until October, when he was assigned to temporary duty with the First Colored Militia regiment.¹⁵

Raferty's second-in-command was Josiah B. McAfee. Born in Pennsylvania in 1830, McAfee had taught school in Maryland before moving to Kansas in 1855 and settling near Grasshopper Falls (present Valley Falls) a year later. McAfee enlisted in the Eleventh Kansas Infantry in September 1862 and soon was elected to be an officer. In Feb-

15. James L. Raferty, Compiled Military Service Record, Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 94.

ruary 1863, however, he resigned his commission to become chaplain of the Fourth Indian Home Guards regiment. After traveling to Fort Gibson in Indian Territory and learning that the unit had not been organized, McAfee mustered out of the service in September. Two months later he became chaplain of the Second Kansas Colored at Fort Smith. In August 1864 he was ordered to return to Kansas with money that some of his fellow officers and men wanted to send to their families.¹⁶

McAfee was ordered to report to Raferty as his acting adjutant, but he became the First Colored Militia regiment's major, while Sergeant Joshua Mitchell of the Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry was appointed as the adjutant. Born in Maine in 1842, Mitchell had enlisted in the Eighth Kansas Infantry at Fort Leavenworth in October 1861, but after developing health problems he was discharged in August 1863. He enlisted again in the Fourth Independent Battery at Fort Leavenworth in December 1863. This unit soon was redesignated as Company M, Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry. Why a cavalry sergeant was selected to serve as an infantry regiment's staff officer is not recorded, but it suggests that Mitchell either had greatly impressed someone in his chain of command or, perhaps like Raferty and McAfee, he simply was available.¹⁷

Of the fourteen other company officers in Raferty's command, the eleven from Leavenworth seem to have been African Americans, and although it was a time-honored tradition that militiamen were allowed to elect their company officers, this still was quite unique. More than one hundred black officers were commissioned during the Civil War—one rising to the rank of brevet lieutenant colonel—but the Union Army's black troops ordinarily were led by white officers. Believing that black men were naturally inferior and should occupy a subordinate social status, most white Americans found it inconceivable that African Amer-

16. *The United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume* (Chicago: S. Lewis and Co., 1879), 208–10; Josiah B. McAfee, Compiled Military Service Record, Eleventh Kansas Cavalry and Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 94; McAfee, Pension File, Eleventh Kansas Cavalry and Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 15, National Archives. The Eleventh Kansas Infantry was redesignated as a cavalry regiment in April 1863; the Fourth and Fifth regiments of Indian Home Guards began to organize in April 1863, "but failing to complete their organizations, the appointments of the officers were revoked August 29, 1863, and said officers mustered out of service, to date from the dates of acceptance of their appointments, there having been no commands for them when appointed." See Adjutant General's Office, *Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force of the United States Army for the Years 1861, '62, '63, '64, '65, Part 7* (Washington, D.C.: 1867), 368; Regimental Letter, Casualty and Order Book, Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 94.

17. *The United States Biographical Dictionary, Kansas Volume*, 714–15; Joshua Mitchell, Compiled Military Service Records, Eighth Kansas Infantry, Fourth Independent Battery, Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry, RG 94.

icans were intelligent enough to lead soldiers and also subscribed to the false notion that black troops had greater confidence in white officers' leadership abilities. Thus, many very capable black men were denied the opportunity to "wear shoulder straps."¹⁸

In Company A, Captain John H. Morris, a barber, and First Lieutenant Henry Copeland were black, and a mulatto porter named Thomas Newton was the unit's second lieutenant. Born in North Carolina around 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 moving to Kansas, he also had served as a first lieutenant in Company D of the First Kansas Colored from August 1862 until May 1863, when that company officially was mustered in to the Union Army, and he was refused a commission because of his color.¹⁹

Of the three officers in Company B, Captain James Woodland was a mulatto barber, as was First Lieutenant Sam Jordan. Captain William H. Burnham of Company C was a black barber with his own shop, near the corner of Shawnee and Third Streets in Leavenworth, and First Lieutenant John Johnson of Company D seems to have been a black laborer. Assuming that black and white officers would not have been integrated at the company level, it is almost certain that the remaining officers in Companies B, C, and D—Lieutenants John Sheppard (B), Charles Blackwood (C), Joseph S. Robertson (C), and William C. Ball (D)—also were African Americans.²⁰

At least five of these officers—Burnham, Jordan, Morris, Newton, and Woodland—were recognized leaders within Leavenworth's large black community (population 3,374 in 1865), having been elected as county delegates to the State Colored Convention that had been held in the city in early August. Burnham's experience as a political activist extended at least as far back as 1849, when he lived in Ohio and helped fellow activist John Mercer Langston

18. In addition to the three officers on the regiment's field and staff, there were three officers in four companies and two officers in Company D, which was much smaller than the others. See Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery at Fort Leavenworth," 202.

19. Kansas State Census, 1865, Leavenworth County. The militia muster rolls lack racial information, so officers' names were matched to those of men from the same city who were identified as black or mulatto in census or other records. According to the Oberlin College Archives, Henry's brother was John A. Copeland, who was hanged in December 1859 in Charles Town, Virginia, for his role in John Brown's attack on the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

20. Kansas State Census, 1865, Leavenworth County, lists a black barber named Joseph Robeson, who may have been Lieutenant Robertson, but Ball, Blackwood, and Sheppard are not listed. *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, January 7, 1865.

draft a resolution supporting black emigration to Canada. Two years after that, Burnham had represented Coshocton County at the Convention of the Colored Citizens of Ohio in Columbus. He also served as chairman of the Colored State Central Committee that had just met in Lawrence in September.²¹

The next black militia units to be organized were a company in Oskaloosa on October 11; three companies in Elwood, Leavenworth, and Topeka on October 12; a company in Fort Scott and two in Mound City on October 13; and a company in Humboldt two days later. All of these black militia units, except the ones under Captain Raferty and the one at Fort Scott, were attached to six of the twenty-four regiments and two of the four battalions of white militia that were ordered to assemble at six cities near the Missouri border—Atchison, Fort Scott, Mound City, Olathe, Paola, and Wyandotte. The *Oskaloosa Independent* reported that more than forty "colored men . . . marched toward the seat of war. Some of them appeared willing and cheerful; while others were rather 'down in the mouth.' We think most of them will give a good account of themselves during the campaign."²²

Another black company may have been raised in Lawrence—the famous "abolition center" that had suffered a devastating raid by William C. Quantrill's Confederate guerrillas a year earlier—but few details about this organization were recorded. Evidently, the city's black men responded slowly to the local provost marshal's General Orders No. 1, which directed Lawrence's male population to report and form companies on the morning of October 11. Five days later the *Kansas Tribune* urged African Americans to "shoulder your musket and assist in defending the land of your adoption. A goodly number of your brethren are already in the field."²³

On October 12 the *Daily Times* of Leavenworth reported that Captain Raferty was organizing companies from the "colored portion of the community" and that "in a couple of days a Brigade of Iron-clads will meet their 'Pa' ['Pap' Price] and give him welcome on the Kaw [Kansas

21. *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, July 16, 1864; William and Aimee Lee Cheek, *John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829–65* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 172; *Minutes of the State Convention, Convened at Columbus, Jan. 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th, 1851* (Columbus: E. Glover, 1851), 3. H. Ford Douglas, who eventually commanded the Independent Battery, also attended the 1851 convention in Columbus. *Kansas Tribune* (Lawrence), September 25, 1864.

22. Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, LM817. The Linn County Historical Society, Pleasanton, Kans., has a muster roll for Company E (Colored), First Battalion. *Oskaloosa Independent*, October 15, 1864

23. Albert Castel, "Civil War Kansas and the Negro," 129; *Kansas Tribune*, October 11, 16, 1864.

River]—if he concludes to come.” Offering no explanation for this strange nickname (which had earlier been applied to the Second Kansas Colored), the newspaper also painted an alarming picture of the rapidly approaching Confederate threat:

The people are unanimous in their determination to meet the rebel host on the border, and stand as a wall of fire against the vandals who would lay waste our fields, murder our families, desecrate our homes, and spread ruin and desolation in their wake that years of patient toil and application cannot build up.

To stop the “vandals,” Major General Curtis hastily assembled his combined force of federal troops and Kansas militiamen, which he named the Army of the Border. On October 19 he established his headquarters near Independence, Missouri, as Price approached Lexington, fewer than thirty miles to the east. Curtis also issued a special field order directing Captain Richard J. Hinton to go to Fort Leavenworth and bring forward “colored troops organized under proclamation of martial law.” Hinton was ordered to procure arms and equipment for them and to collect the black troops at Wyandotte and “other points that he may be able to reach in time and bring them forward with all speed.”²⁴

Hinton was the aide for Major General James G. Blunt, the newly appointed commander of the District of South Kansas, but like Raferty, Hinton had spent time serving with black troops as a lieutenant in the First Kansas Colored and respected them as soldiers. Five months earlier he had testified before the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission in Washington that he “would rather have command of negro troops . . . than of the ordinary white recruits that one gets.” He further opined:

Give them enough to do, let them feel that you mean to treat them justly, win their confidence, and a happier better tempered set of men, under any of the ordinary vicissitudes of a campaign, I have never seen in my life. They don’t grumble, they don’t growl, they don’t curse and swear at their officers under their teeth, and all that sort of thing, and it is more pleasant, therefore, for officers to command them.

24. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 117; Richard J. Hinton, Pension File, RG 15. Born in England in 1830, Hinton immigrated to the United States in 1851 and Kansas Territory in 1856. He was a second lieutenant in the First Kansas Colored in 1862 and later became a captain in the Second Kansas Colored. He mustered out of the army in 1865 as a brevet lieutenant colonel, and after a career that included working for the government, serving as a journalist, and writing several books, he died in London in 1901.

Hinton’s enlightened views obviously made him an excellent choice to supervise the employment of black militiamen.²⁵

On October 19 Captain Raferty was ordered to detail 170 of his men to report the next day for duty with the officer commanding Leavenworth’s fortifications. These plans changed quickly, however, and he was ordered to take his command to Independence on the steamer *Benton*. Before Raferty and his men began their thirty-mile journey down the Missouri River to “welcome Pa,” 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.”²⁶

The next day, as Raferty reached Kansas City with several hundred men, Hinton instructed him to march his unit southwest to Shawnee, where the Kansas State Militia was headquartered. According to Hinton, however, Raferty was “not disposed to recognize” his orders. When Raferty sought clarification from Curtis’s headquarters, he was instructed to remain in Kansas City until the next morning, getting “equipments [*sic*] and five days’ rations in haversacks ready to move to the Big Blue [River].” Raferty also was informed that Hinton was authorized to give him instructions.²⁷

On October 21 some of the federal troops fought Price’s men on the Little Blue River, a few miles east of Independence, and Curtis informed Major General Henry Halleck, the Union Army’s chief of staff in Washington, that he was “falling back to avoid flank movements, designing to make another strong stand at

25. Adjutant General’s Office, Colored Troops Division, “The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886,” 36, 37, roll 3, M858, National Archives; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 3d ser., vol. 3, 73. The commission was established in March 1863 to investigate the condition of African Americans emancipated by President Lincoln and to report what measures would best contribute to their protection and improvement as well as how they could best be used in suppressing the rebellion.

26. Special Orders No. 127, District of North Kansas, October 19, 1864, Department of the Missouri Special Orders, RG 393; Special Orders No. 223, Department of Kansas, October 20, 1864, Department of Kansas Orders, *ibid.*; *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, October 21, 1864.

27. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 143, 149. An October 20 telegram to Curtis from Fort Leavenworth informed him that two hundred colored troops were coming on the *Benton*, but later that day Captain Raferty [*sic*] informed Curtis that he had arrived in Kansas City with three hundred men. Captain Johnson’s Wyandotte company probably joined the four Leavenworth companies soon after they arrived in Kansas City and may account for this increase. Hinton also mentions one or two companies of “Iron Clad Cavalry” being in Kansas City. Captain Glick’s Wyandotte company may have been mounted, which could explain why it was not attached to Raferty’s command.

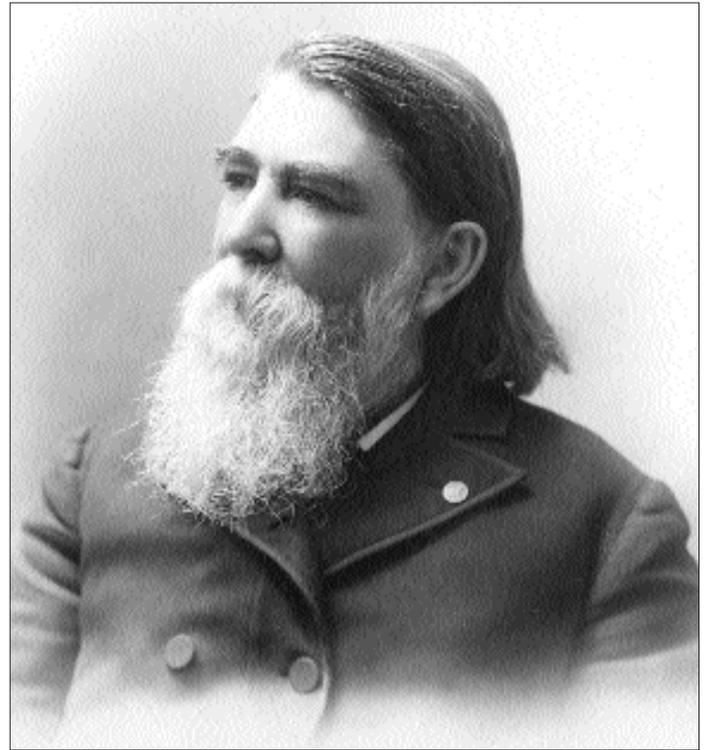
[the] Big Blue [River], where the militia, with artillery, are located in strong position." That same day Raferty's men marched to the Big Blue, which was located midway between Kansas City and Independence. The "colored volunteers, about six hundred strong" included the four Leavenworth companies, plus two companies from Wyandotte and, behind them, a section of two ten-pounder Parrott guns from Fort Leavenworth's Independent Battery, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, which was attached to the four-gun Ninth Wisconsin Battery.²⁸

The men in the two Wyandotte companies, commanded by Captains Charles S. Glick and Fielding Johnson, had begun their militia service working on fortifications, but they "displayed a brave and soldierly spirit" when they were ordered to the Big Blue. Initially designated as Companies H and K in the Twenty-third Militia regiment, the latter unit, under Captain Johnson, was transferred to Raferty's unit as Company E. In 1862 Brigadier General James H. Lane, commissioner of recruiting for the Department of Kansas, had appointed Johnson as a recruiting commissioner for five counties, and Johnson also had served as the U.S. Indian agent for the Delaware Indians, working out of Quindaro from 1861 until 1864.²⁹

The two Parrott guns were commanded by Second Lieutenant Patrick Henry Minor, a mulatto officer from Louisiana who also had graduated from the preparatory department of Oberlin College in the late 1840s. After further education in France, Minor moved to Kansas, joined the First Kansas Colored as a second lieutenant, and fought with it at the battle of Island Mound in 1862. Like Copeland, he was denied a commission when his regiment was mustered in to the Union Army in 1863, so he returned to Leavenworth, where his sister Josephine was married to Captain Burnham of Company C. In July 1864 Minor was appointed as a recruiting officer for the Independent Battery, and his two guns at the Big Blue were manned by at least twenty-five members of that unit, augmented by a score of Raferty's men. His brigade commander later re-

28. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 163; Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, vol. 9, 29, LM818; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 123. Hinton wrote that there were also three black companies from Shawneetown, i.e. Shawnee, at the Big Blue, but there is no other mention of these units in the Kansas State Militia's muster rolls; the Wisconsin unit, commanded by Captain James H. Dodge, was also known as Dodge's Battery.

29. Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, vol. 8, 79-84, LM817; *ibid.*, vol. 9, 41-44, LM818; Edward E. Hill, *The Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1880: Historical Sketches* (New York: Clearwater Publishing Co., 1974), 60; *New York Times*, August 18, 1862; *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, June 20, 1864. The newspaper reported that Johnson was removed from the agency because he stood in the way of Senator Lane and Secretary of the Interior John P. Usher and "could not be relied upon as seconding their fraudulent schemes with the Indians."

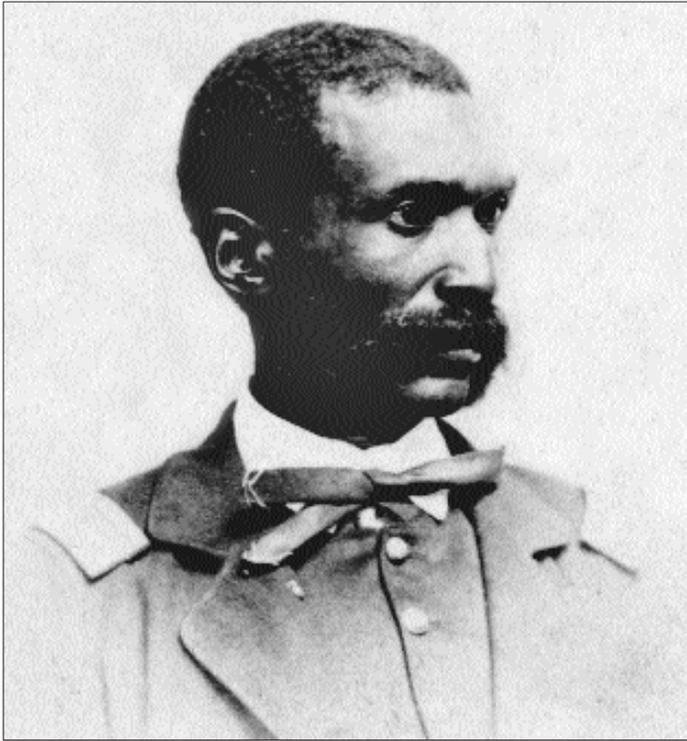


Captain Richard J. Hinton was ordered to bring black troops from Fort Leavenworth to Independence, Missouri, as Confederate forces began to threaten the Kansas border. Hinton had once proclaimed that he "would rather have command of negro troops . . . than of the ordinary white recruits that one gets."

ported that the battery "occupied a fine artillery position in the center [of his troops], cut out expressly for the occasion."³⁰

Curtis's force was spread out along a twelve-mile front from the point where the Big Blue joined the Missouri River in the north to Russell's Ford, near Hickman Mills, in the south. Raferty's black militiamen were located toward the northern end of this line, near a ford on the road that led from Kansas City to Independence. Price feinted at this point on October 22 and sent one of his three divisions 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 to the northwest, and at the Mockabee Farm the Kansans were overtaken by the much

30. *The Bee* (Washington, D.C.), April 9, 1904; Ann D. Gordon, ed., *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 1: 541; Captain Willans to Major Hunt, October 16, 1864, Letters Received and Sent file, Chief of Artillery, Department of Kansas, 1864-1865, RG 393. Willans informed Hunt that he would send a section of guns to Wyandotte with Minor and twenty-five men from the battery plus twenty more from the colored militia. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 1, 597.



Lieutenant William D. Matthews recruited and trained the local "colored militia" and prepared it to defend Fort Scott as General Price and his troops approached.

larger Confederate force. In the ensuing battle, the Second Militia regiment, which included Captain Thomas Archer's black Company D, suffered twenty-four fatalities. Among the dead were two African Americans—Moses Banks of Company D and Ben Hughes, a teamster for the Topeka Battery (Company K). After the battle it was discovered that Hughes's throat had been cut from ear-to-ear, suggesting that he had been murdered after the fighting.³¹

Curtis's force fell back toward Kansas City after the fight at the Big Blue—or Battle of the Blue—and assumed a position just north of Brush Creek, near Westport. Early on the morning of October 23, the federal troops moved south of Brush Creek, and Lieutenant Minor's two guns were divided between the Ninth Wisconsin Battery's two sections, which were in turn positioned on each side of the

31. Richard D. Rogers, "A Story of Brave Kansans," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Winter 1995–1996): 267. The Topeka Battery, which also was designated as Company K in the Second Militia regiment, was armed with only one twenty-four-pounder Howitzer. See Kansas State Adjutant General, *Report, 1864* (Leavenworth: P. H. Hubbell and Co., 1865), 65; James W. Steele, *The Battle of the Blue of the Second Regiment, K.S.M.* (Chicago: N.p., 1896), 76.

Union line. One of Minor's guns, sighted by the Ninth Wisconsin's commander, hit a Confederate gun and broke its carriage. Raferty's men also contributed to the Union victory in the battle of Westport, although their exact role in the fighting is unclear. Three days later, after the troops rode another boat back to Leavenworth, the *Daily Conservative* reported that the black militiamen had "arrived from the wars," adding that "Many a hotly contested field will bear ample testimony to their bravery and fighting qualities."³²

Three Leavenworth newspapers—the *Evening Bulletin*, the *Daily Conservative*, and the *Daily Times*—also reported that after Captain Raferty returned, he stopped his men in front of their offices and ordered them to give three cheers, which the *Daily Times* reported was a favor "as unexpected as appreciated." Referring to the *Daily Times* as a "Copperhead organ," the staunchly Republican *Evening Bulletin* disputed this report, said that the former's claim of having been cheered was "one of the most brazen falsehoods ever published" and maintained that it was the newspaper that Raferty and his men had actually cheered. A few days later Raferty himself settled the issue in a letter clearly stating that "The Iron Clads did not cheer for the *Daily Times*, nor for its editor, nor could they be induced to do so by any means."³³

What became of the other black units that had been organized to fight Price? A fifth black company from Leavenworth never left home. Reportedly formed from African Americans not already on duty at Fort Sully—a series of defensive fortifications hastily constructed on a hill on the western edge of Fort Leavenworth—the unit was organized on October 12. Under the command of Captain Harvey Edgerton, it was "most reliable" in working on entrenchments and conducting "heavy guard" and picket duty until it was disbanded on October 28.³⁴

32. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 145, 152, 163; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 1, 544; The regimental muster roll claims that the unit returned to Leavenworth on October 28, but the city's newspapers all reported its return on October 26. See *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, October 27, 1864.

33. *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, October 27, 31, 1864; *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, October 27, 1864; *Daily Times* (Leavenworth), October 27, 1864. The Copperheads, or Peace Democrats, opposed Lincoln's prosecution of the war and favored a negotiated peace with the South. Major Herman H. Heath, the department provost marshal, earlier had questioned the loyalty of the *Times* in a letter to Major General Curtis, saying that he felt the "editors and writers [should be] arrested as enemies to the public and cause." See U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 148.

34. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 51. The Independent Battery manned Fort Sully's guns until the end of the war. See Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, vol. 3, 261–62, LM817.

Three other black units also remained in Kansas. From Elwood, located just across the river from St. Joseph, Missouri, Captain John M. Tracy's company marched about twenty miles southwest to help defend Atchison. Captain Eli Gilbert's company remained in Humboldt, about forty miles west of Fort Scott, and protected it from possible attack. Captain Richard D. Mobley, the commander of military forces in Lawrence, was ordered to send all of his city's "organized negroes" to report to Captain Hinton in Wyandotte, although whether these men formed a company per se is unclear. Mobley, however, reported that they were "not in a condition to proceed to Wyandotte, they being over age, invalids, &c.," so these men remained in Lawrence and worked on its fortifications.³⁵

The activities of the two units from Mound City are not recorded accurately. Captain Samuel R. Doolittle's company was organized on October 13. Born in Utica, New York, Doolittle had enlisted in Company H of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry in 1861 and been commissioned as a second lieutenant a year later. In 1863, while stationed in Tennessee, he tendered his resignation, claiming that his health was poor and his property in an "unsettled condition." When he forwarded Doolittle's paperwork to higher headquarters, Major John T. Snoddy noted that he was "incompetent and unfit for the position he holds."³⁶

Given his poor health and leadership abilities, it was strange that Doolittle was selected to command militiamen, but like Raferty, with whom he had served in Company H, Doolittle was available. Doolittle later claimed that he had commanded three black companies that were attached to the Sixth Militia regiment and was "on the road" for twenty-six days marching from Mound City to Hickman Mills, Missouri, about fifty-five miles to the north. Although Doolittle's company muster roll reflects a much shorter period of service, and there are no other records indicating his command of two additional black units, one of the latter might have been the second Mound City company, commanded by Captain Henry C. Seaman, which also had organized on October 13.³⁷

Henry Seaman had first come to Kansas in 1856 and soon involved himself in abolitionist activities. He and his

35. Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, vol. 4, 34, LM817; The only evidence of Captain Gilbert's company is a muster roll in the Kansas State Historical Society. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 167.

36. Samuel R. Doolittle, Compiled Military Service Record, Seventh Kansas Cavalry, RG 94.

37. Samuel R. Doolittle, Pension File, RG 15. Captain Seaman's unit was designated as Company E, First Battalion, but it might have been detached for service with the Sixth regiment.

brother Ben participated in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue John Brown from his post-Harpers Ferry raid incarceration in Charles Town, Virginia, in 1859. Believing that slavery was "the sole cause of the rebel[li]on," he volunteered for military service two years later, hoping "to crush not only the rebellion but to do away with the cause" as well. Seaman rose to command Company D, Fifth Kansas Cavalry, but like Doolittle, he tendered his resignation in 1862, citing "the total difference of feeling" between himself and his superiors regarding "this curse of our land [that is, slavery]." Seaman then was ordered to recruit troops for the First Kansas Colored, and he commanded more than two hundred of them in the fight at Island Mound.³⁸

The Oskaloosa company set out for Missouri but never arrived. Despite the *Independent's* optimistic predictions for its unit, most of Captain Wilber C. Ball's militiamen stopped marching when they arrived at the border—an action matched by some of the white militia units as well. After the war Captain Ball declared in a sworn statement that his men refused to enter Missouri for two reasons. Being former slaves, they thought that "they might be legally taken possession of by their former owners and returned to slavery." 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."³⁹

Captain Ball's men also might have been concerned that Confederate forces recently had demonstrated their utter contempt for black troops by killing more than one hundred men of the First Kansas Colored—many of them after they had been wounded or surrendered—in an April battle at Poison Springs, Arkansas. Six days before the massacre at Poison Springs, Confederate forces also had killed almost two-thirds of the black troops defending Fort Pillow, Tennessee—some of them after they had surrendered. The motto "Avenge Fort Pillow" had figured prominently in a recruiting advertisement placed by the *Independent*

38. O. E. Morse, "An Attempted Rescue of John Brown from Charlestown, Virginia, Jail," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1903-1904* 8 (1904): 215, 218; Henry Seaman, Compiled Military Service Record, Fifth Kansas Cavalry, RG 94; *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, vol. 21, pt. 2 (Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1996), 246; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 53, 456. Seaman's service with the First Kansas Colored was not recognized officially by the government. Chris Tabor, *The Skirmish at Island Mound, Mo.* (Independence, Mo.: Blue and Gray Book Shoppe, 2001), 9.

39. Kansas Adjutant General's Office, Records, vol. 2, 170, LM817; Statement by Captain Ball attached to the muster roll of Company O, Fourth Regiment, Kansas State Militia Rolls, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

Battery in Leavenworth's *Daily Times*, and "Remember Fort Pillow" became a U.S. Colored Troops' battle cry.⁴⁰

The atrocities committed at these two battles and the fact that Ben Hughes's body was found after the Battle of the Blue with his throat cut from ear-to-ear underscored the fact that many Confederates despised their black opponents. It was commonly believed that captured black soldiers would not be treated the same as white prisoners of war and would either be executed or returned to slavery. In mid-1863 Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby-Smith, commander of the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department, had chastised subordinates in Louisiana for not recognizing the "propriety of giving no quarter to armed negroes and their officers." About the same time, President Lincoln tried to deter such policies by ordering that equal numbers of Confederate soldiers would be executed for all Union soldiers killed in violation of the laws of war, and that rebels also would be used to work on fortifications if Union soldiers were enslaved.⁴¹

Kansas's black soldiers were not deterred by Confederate atrocities, and unlike Oskaloosa's black militiamen, they were motivated to perform greater efforts on the field of battle. Colonel Samuel Crawford admitted in his memoirs that the Second Kansas Colored sought revenge for the Poison Springs Massacre at the battle of Jenkins' Ferry, Arkansas, later that month. In his annual report for 1864, Kansas's adjutant general commended the state's black soldiers for not faltering, in spite of "fighting at great disadvantage, owing to the merciless treatment they were sure to receive if taken as prisoners of war."⁴²

After the Battle of Westport, Price retreated south along the Missouri-Kansas border, with federal troops—including Lieutenant Minor's artillery section—in hot pursuit. Major General Curtis revoked his order proclaiming martial law in Kansas but only for that portion of the state north of the Kaw River. Southeastern Kansas remained in great danger, and Fort Scott had four million dollars worth of public property "to be protected or lost." The black militia unit that had been organized there by First Lieutenant William D. Matthews fully expected to fight the rapidly approaching Confederates.⁴³

40. For details on Poison Springs, see Gregory J. W. Urwin, "We Cannot Treat Negroes . . . As Prisoners of War: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in Civil War Arkansas," *Civil War History* 42 (September 1996): 193–210; Cunningham, "Douglas's Battery at Fort Leavenworth," 206.

41. Urwin, "We Cannot Treat Negroes . . . As Prisoners of War," 203; Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War*, 206.

42. Dudley Taylor Cornish, "Kansas Negro Regiments in the Civil War," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 20 (May 1953): 428–29.

43. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 150.

Lieutenant Matthews also was a black officer. Originally born in Maryland in 1827, he had moved to Leavenworth in 1856 and opened a boardinghouse that became a "station" on the "underground railroad." In 1862 he had recruited Company D of the First Kansas Colored for Brigadier General Lane and then served as that unit's captain for nine months. When the regiment was mustered in to the Union Army in 1863, however, Matthews and his two lieutenants—Henry Copeland and Patrick Minor—were denied commissions.⁴⁴

In July 1864, along with Minor, Matthews had been appointed as a recruiting officer for the Independent Battery, and in September, as recruits became hard to find in Leavenworth, he was ordered to Fort Scott to try to locate more. The threat from the Price Raid, however, caused Matthews's recruiting mission to be altered by post commander Colonel Charles W. Blair, who put him in charge of organizing and training the local "colored militia" on October 12. The next day a special order directed Matthews to "enroll all able bodied colored men in Bourbon County and assemble them at the Post immediately." Luckily for Matthews and his men, shortly after Price's defeat at the battle of Mine Creek on October 25, the Confederates veered into Missouri and only passed within a few miles of Fort Scott.⁴⁵

The following day Lieutenant Minor's artillery section was released from the force pursuing Price, and it joined Lieutenant Matthews and his militiamen at Fort Scott. Although the latter organization had seen no action, Colonel Blair was very impressed with the work that Matthews had accomplished "in preparing the post for a vigorous defense against the probable attack of the enemy." Before Matthews and Minor returned to Fort Leavenworth with a score of new recruits for the Independent Battery, Blair composed a letter thanking Matthews 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."⁴⁶

44. *The Bee*, April 9, 1904.

45. *Daily Times*, August 7, 1864; Special Orders No. 53, Fort Scott, October 12, 1864, RG 393; *ibid.*, No. 54, Fort Scott, October 13, 1864; *ibid.*, August 1864–October 1865.

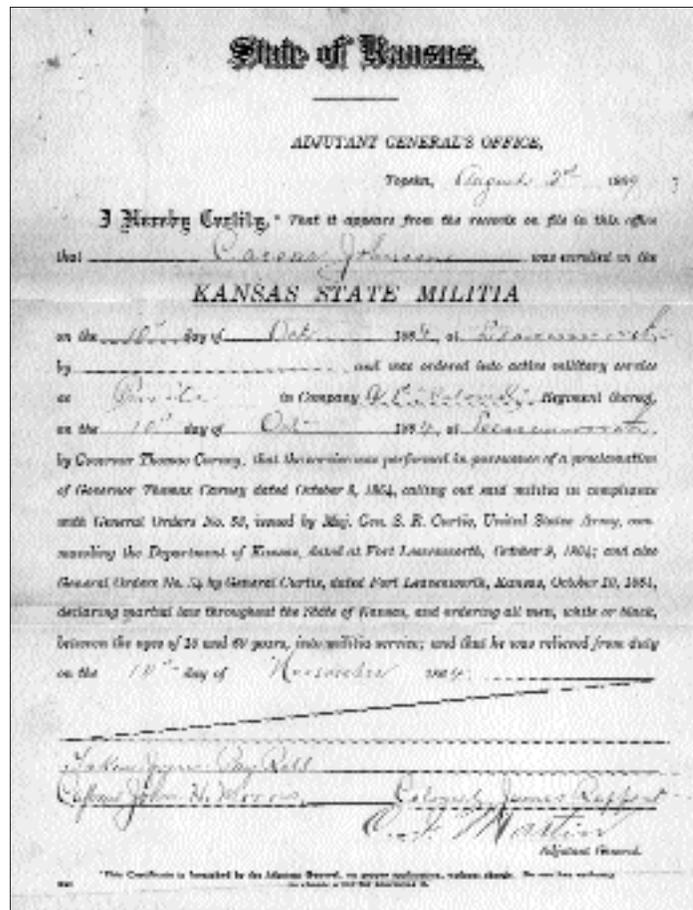
46. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 259; Colonel Blair to William D. Matthews, November 18, 1864, William D. Matthews, Pension File, RG 15.

On October 25, as Price continued to retreat toward Arkansas, Major General Curtis issued General Orders No. 57, which decreed that “the restrictions and burthens incident to martial law [are] no longer necessary in my command; General Order No. 54 is therefore rescinded.” This meant that none of Kansas remained under martial law, so all of the black companies could be disbanded. Governor Carney congratulated “our gallant soldiery” for their “sweeping and complete” defeat of “the marauders” and ordered militia commanders to march their units to their respective counties and disband them, “making a careful record of the term of service of each man.” By the end of the month, six of the black companies had been disbanded.⁴⁷

After spending two weeks at Fort Leavenworth, the First Colored Militia regiment was mustered out of service on November 10. Captain Raferty stayed busy turning over property and completing the requisite returns, muster rolls, and pay rolls, as he informed Brigadier General John M. Thayer, commander of the District of the Frontier, in a November 29 letter explaining why he had not yet returned to Arkansas. At the end of January 1865 the Department of Kansas ordered Raferty to rejoin his command without delay, and on February 1 he finally left Leavenworth. The *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin* reported his departure, wishing him “every success in his mission.” In mid-February Raferty arrived in Little Rock, where the Second Kansas Colored—newly redesignated as the Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry—had been reassigned.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, several of Raferty’s Leavenworth militiamen had enlisted in the Independent Battery, which completed its organization just before Christmas 1864. On November 11 Raferty himself had enlisted one man for the battery—Frank McDaniel, an eighteen-year-old farmer from Missouri—although there is no record of McDaniel serving as a militiaman. Company A’s Henry Copeland surrendered his shoulder straps and was appointed as the battery’s first sergeant, and William McLane, who had been the first sergeant in Company C, eventually became the battery’s quartermaster sergeant. William Burnham, who had commanded Company C, wrote Major General Curtis in December and requested the battery’s quarter-

47. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 247.
 48. *Daily Times*, November 12, 1864; Special Orders No. 236, November 10, 1864, Department of Kansas, RG 393, relieved Captain Raferty of duty and disbanded his troops; Special Orders No. 26, January 31, 1865, Department of Kansas, James L. Raferty, Compiled Military Service Record, Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 94; *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, November 23, 1864, February 1, 1865.



In 1909 the State Adjutant General’s Office provided Caesar Johnson, of Leavenworth, with this documentation of his month’s service in the Kansas State Militia’s First Colored regiment.

master position, but it was first given to Benjamin Wilson and then, after Wilson was discharged for disability, to McLane. At least four other men from Company A—Fenton Burrell, Alonzo Eddings, Isaac Thomas, and Simon Woodson—also enlisted in the battery, as did at least two of the men who had served with Lieutenant Matthews at Fort Scott—John Cunningham and Archie Johnson. One man from Wyandotte’s Company E, George Robinson, may have been the same individual who enlisted in the battery on December 14 and later deserted.⁴⁹

The battery spent its entire term of service at Fort Leavenworth and finally was mustered out of the Union Army

49. Independent Battery, Muster-out roll, U.S. Colored Light Artillery, 440, AR120. On McDaniel’s enlistment paper, the name is spelled “Rafferty.” Department of Kansas, Chief of Artillery, Letters Received and Sent file, 1864–1865, RG 393. Burnham may have believed that this was an officer’s billet, but in a company or battery an NCO performed the quartermaster function.

on July 22, 1865. Sadly, Lieutenant Minor did not live until the end of his service, dying on March 26 of disease “contracted by exposure” during the Price Raid. The *Evening Bulletin* reported on his “imposing” funeral procession two days later, noting that “it seemed as if the entire colored population of Leavenworth, with no small sprinkling of the white, lined the streets.” Another newspaper remembered him as “a brave officer and a good man.”⁵⁰

For their services during the Price Raid, militiamen eventually were paid according to their rank and length of service. Kansas assigned the difficult task of verifying all Price Raid claims—for services, damages, transportation, supplies, and lost property—to a series of five commissions that sat between 1865 and 1879. In 1867 the legislature assumed these claims for the state, but lacking cash, it paid them in Union military scrip, which later could be redeemed with 7 percent interest. Kansas then asked the U.S. government to assume this debt, and in 1871 Congress appointed the Hardie Commission to resolve the matter. The commission allowed \$260,242 to be paid for the services of 15,111 Kansas state militiamen, including slightly more than two thousand dollars for 138 men from Lieutenant Matthews’s company and almost six thousand dollars for 287 men of the First Colored Militia regiment.⁵¹

For thirty days of service, a private was owed sixteen dollars plus an allowance of \$3.50 as commutation for clothing, minus the cost of clothing that had been issued to him, as well as deductions for equipment he had lost. The penurious government expected reimbursement for all equipment losses, no matter how trivial, and many men were charged two cents for losing their tompons—small wooden cylinders that were used to plug rifle muzzles during inclement weather. The twenty-one men who had deserted with their entire issue of equipment—Enfield rifle, cartridge box, cap pouch, bayonet scabbard, and waist belt and plate—each owed the government \$20.43.⁵²

Like hundreds of thousands of other Civil War veterans, several of Kansas’s black militiamen also were able to secure disability pensions from the U.S. government, but only if they had also served in units that were

mustered in to federal service, such as the Independent Battery, and could link their disability to that service. Although black and white veterans and their dependents legally enjoyed equal eligibility for pensions, a recent study concluded that African Americans received an unequal portion of the pension money. White veterans, their widows, and their parents all enjoyed pension application success rates that were higher than those of their black counterparts. Only the success rates of minor children were found to be equal. The study concluded that higher poverty and illiteracy rates put black veterans and their dependents at a disadvantage in proving their claims, and even if they managed to assemble the proper proof, they “found their worthiness was suspect in the minds of many white bureaucrats from the beginning.”⁵³

More than half the veterans of the Independent Battery or their dependents applied for pensions, including four former militiamen and three of their widows. All but two of the latter seven applications were approved. William Matthews was able to secure a pension for impaired sight and deafness in both ears that had been caused by the loud discharge of a siege gun at Fort Scott, while Henry Copeland was reimbursed for heart disease and an injury to his right ankle. Copeland wrote Richard Hinton in 1892 to inform him that he was living in Lawrence and had been “doin as well as could be expected [*sic*] of a man with a large family untell [*sic*] last fall when I had a bad attack of the h[e]art disesed [*sic*] which have left me a total wreck from what I was. I cant do any work. So I have to take every thing easy.” After Copeland died three years later, his wife, Libby, secured a widow’s pension, as did Fenton Burrell’s widow, Julia, after her husband died in a Leavenworth coal mine in 1890.⁵⁴

Gilbert Van, a former slave who had served as the first sergeant for Captain Seaman’s Mound City company, enlisted in the Seventy-ninth U.S. Colored Infantry (formerly the First Kansas Colored) in February 1865 and served as a private in its Company K until the regiment mustered out of service in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in October. In 1882 he

50. Independent Battery, Muster-out roll, 441, AR120; *Leavenworth Evening Bulletin*, March 30, 1865; *Daily Times*, March 30, 1865.

51. *Report of the Price Raid Commissioner* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1889), iii–vi. In 1865 Kansas’s first commission calculated the colored militia’s cost as only \$1939.46. See *The Claim of the State of Kansas*, 41st Cong., 1st sess., 1869, H. Doc. 6, 8.

52. Kansas Adjutant General’s Office, Records, vol. 9, 25–44, LM818. Twenty-one desertions were recorded on the muster rolls for the First Colored regiment: A (two), B (two), C (four), D (eight) and E (five).

53. Donald R. Schaffer, “‘I do not suppose that Uncle Sam Looks at the skin’: African Americans and the Civil War Pension System, 1865–1934,” *Civil War History* 46 (June 2000): 134, 146–47.

54. Cunningham, “Douglas’s Battery at Fort Leavenworth,” 216; William D. Matthews, Henry E. Copeland, and Fenton Burrell, Pension Files, RG 15. After the war “Captain” Matthews remained in Leavenworth, where he was a prominent member of the city’s large black community until his death in 1906. Henry E. Copeland to Richard J. Hinton, August 21, 1892, 1892 folder, box 2, Richard J. Hinton Collection, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

successfully applied for a pension, and after he died in Indian Territory in 1898, his orphaned daughter Daisy received a minor's pension until she turned sixteen in 1901.⁵⁵

At least three of the white officers who had served with the black militia companies, or their dependents, also were able to secure pensions. Samuel Doolittle, citing a continuation of the ill health that had been a factor in his resignation from the Seventh Kansas Cavalry in 1863, received a pension, and his wife, Mellie, successfully applied for a widow's pension after he died in 1907. Henry Seaman became the marshal of Baxter Springs and was killed in an 1870 gunfight involving a "fallen woman," her employer, and a Texas cowboy. Twenty years later his widow, Harriet, was able to secure a pension based upon his prior service in the Fifth Kansas Cavalry. Josiah McAfee, who resigned from the Eighty-third U.S. Colored Infantry in January 1865 to become the private secretary for Governor-elect Samuel Crawford, earned a pension for being unable to support himself from 1904 until his death in 1908.⁵⁶

Thus, about one thousand black Kansas militiamen and soldiers contributed to the defeat of the Price Raid, and almost one-half of them did so under the leadership of men of their own color, which was rare. Governor Carney praised all of Kansas's citizen-soldiers, saying that the future would cherish their "gallant . . . self-sacrificing action." As time passed, however, the actions of the black militiamen and their officers could not be cherished, because like so many of the U.S. Colored Troops' contributions to the larger war effort, they were ignored, misidentified, or forgotten. Much of this "historical amnesia" could be attributed to racism, which deemed it "impolitic to say too much" about the African Americans' active role in securing their own freedom, but there were other factors—black troops had not been raised in significant numbers until the war was half over, they had been disproportionately used for hard labor in lieu of combat, and they had fought in fewer of the major battles. The illiteracy that was so common among the black veterans also ensured that

55. Gilbert Van, Compiled Military Service Record, Seventy-ninth U.S. Colored Infantry (New), RG 94. Van had been born a slave in the Cherokee Nation about 1829. See Gilbert Van, Pension File, RG 15.

56. Samuel R. Doolittle and Josiah B. McAfee, Pension Files, RG 15. McAfee later served as the adjutant general of Kansas from 1867 until 1869, and he was elected mayor of Topeka in 1870. According to the Baxter Springs Heritage Center, which provided the information on Seaman's death, his name is inscribed on the Kansas Law Enforcement Memorial for police officers in Topeka.

few of them were able to write the firsthand accounts that white veterans generated in the decades after the war.⁵⁷

Errors in the record of Kansas's black militia units soon manifested themselves. Fewer than six years after the Price Raid, a report from the U.S. House of Representatives referred to the commander of the "brigade of colored citizens" as "Captain James S. Rafferts, of the Eighth United States colored troops." By the one-hundred-year mark, a book-length treatment of the fighting around Kansas City completely ignored Captains Raferty and Hinton, referred to the First Colored Militia regiment as the Second Kansas Colored Militia and to the Independent Battery as the Second U.S. Colored Battery. The book did not acknowledge the existence of any other black militia companies, and although it did mention Lieutenant Minor, it misspelled his name. In the 1980s the semi-official history of the Kansas National Guard entirely ignored the role of the black militiamen.⁵⁸

The only author who seemed to be inclined to properly recognize the black Kansans' contributions was the man who had actually served alongside them—Richard J. Hinton. In his 1865 book on the campaign of the Army of the Border, he wrote that the black troops deserved "great credit for uniform zeal and gallantry." In an appendix he also reproduced the letter from Colonel Blair to Lieutenant Matthews, thanking him for his good work in preparing Fort Scott to defend itself from the anticipated Confederate attack. One hundred and thirty-seven years later Hinton's words help to remind us that while the majority of men who fought to preserve the Union were white, they nevertheless were assisted capably by a strong minority of black men. And as Hinton himself had reported to the *New York Times* in 1862, many of the latter intended to show that their race "was capable of making as many sacrifices for Freedom as the white man was for Nationality."⁵⁹ 

57. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 250; Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1999), 465–66.

58. *Claims of the State of Kansas*, 41st Cong., 2d sess., 1870, H. Rept. 64, 1; Howard Monnett, *Action Before Westport* (Kansas City: Westport Historical Society, 1964), 71, 140; Brian Dexter Fowles, *A Guard in Peace and War: The History of the Kansas National Guard, 1854–1987* (Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 1989).

59. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 79, 318. Hinton later supported Matthews in his many unsuccessful attempts to lobby Congress for special legislation awarding him nine months of back pay as a captain in the First Kansas Colored. See *New York Times*, August 18, 1862. The Leavenworth correspondent who wrote the article was identified only as "R.J.H." and is presumed to be Hinton. R.J.H. quoted an "intelligent colored man" who may have been Matthews.