

Fort Scott

National Historic Site
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

First to Serve

FIRST KANSAS (COLORED) VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT

During the Civil War, Kansas was the first Union state to officially recruit and train military units comprised of black soldiers. Between July 1862 and October 1863, the 1st and 2nd Kansas Colored

Volunteer Infantry Regiments were recruited in eastern Kansas and mustered into the Union Army at Fort Scott. They compiled a proud campaign record in Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and the Indian Territory.



RECRUITMENT

Kansas Senator (General) James H. Lane pioneered the recruitment of black soldiers in the midwest. Most of the soldiers of the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regiment were from Fort Scott, Leavenworth, Mound City, Wyandotte, and Lawrence, Kansas. The **Fort Scott Bulletin** reported:

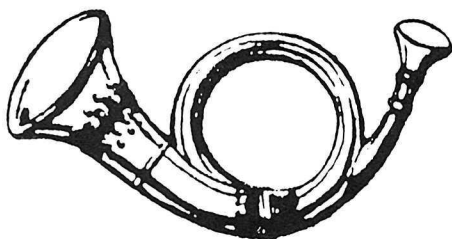
July 26, 1862

“An effort is being made in Leavenworth to raise a regiment of negroes. There are contrabands enough in Fort Scott to fill up two companies. . . .”

August 16, 1862

“Colored Regiments—Gen. Lane is still going on with the work of organizing two Colored Regiments, notwithstanding the refusal of the President to accept black soldiers. Last Tuesday about fifty recruits were raised here. . . .”

ORGANIZATION



The 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regiment was mustered into the United States Army on January 13, 1863, at Fort Scott, Kansas. It was the fifth black regiment to enter the Union Army. Colonel James M. Williams, who had helped recruit the regiment, became the commanding officer. Throughout the Civil War, white officers normally commanded black regiments. However, a few black soldiers eventually earned the rank of officer

and many others were promoted to non-commissioned officers (corporals and sergeants).

On December 13, 1864 during a general reorganization of the black regiments the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry became the 79th United States Colored Troops (USCT) and the 2nd Kansas Colored Infantry was designated the 83rd United States Colored Troops.