

Boston African American National Historic Site



54th Massachusetts



54th Massachusetts Infantry

Fact: By war's end, over 180,000 African Americans had served in the Union army and navy.

Augustus Saint-Gauden's masterpiece *The Robert Gould Shaw Memorial* honors Colonel Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry regiment, the first African American unit recruited in the North. The 54th helped erode northern public opposition to black men serving in the armed forces through their bravery and heroism at the Battle of Fort Wagner, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863.