

This event is sponsored by the U.S. Grant Camp #68, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Our website is grantcamp.org for more information on our camp and the National Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War website is www.suvcw.org for more information on our organization dedicated to the memory of the Union soldiers who lived and fought to preserve our great Union.

We wish to thank Dr. Sarah Cato for her continued support of this event & the Missouri Civil War Museum for providing us the opportunity to display the replica 56th USCT Regimental Flag. Check them out at <https://mcwm.org/>

Finally, thank you to Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery for allowing us to hold this event.



56th United States Colored Troops (USCT) Infantry Remembrance

Jefferson Barracks National
Cemetery

September 14, 2019



Agenda

Procession

Pledge of Allegiance

Prayer

Introduction of Special Guests

Remarks of Grant Camp Commander

Robert Amoler, Jr.

Speech by Dr. Sarah Cato,

Professor of African-American Studies

Salute

Taps

History of the 56th USCT Infantry

The 56th United States Colored Infantry was an infantry regiment that served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The regiment was composed of African American enlisted men commanded by white officers and was authorized by the Bureau of Colored Troops which was created by the United States War Department on May 22, 1863. The regiment was originally organized as the 3rd Arkansas Volunteer Infantry (African Descent) on May 22, 1863

The regiment was organized at St. Louis in August 1863 as the 3rd Regiment Arkansas Volunteer Infantry (African Descent) and assigned to the VII Corps (Union Army). The regiment was dispatched to Helena, AR, where it was initially utilized for garrison and guard duty. The regiment was re-organized at Helena, AR, on March 11, 1864, and re-designated the 56th United States Colored Infantry. The 56th was commanded by Col. Carl Bentzoni, a Prussian born officer who trained the troops for combat. The 3rd Regiment Arkansas Volunteer Infantry (African Descent) participated in the Expedition from Helena up White River February 4–8, 1864. and up St. Francis River February 13–14.

On July 26, 1864, near Wallace's Ferry in Arkansas, the unit (now re-designated as the 56th United States Colored Infantry Regiment), along with the 60th Colored Infantry regiments and Battery E of the 2nd U.S. Colored Artillery were attacked by a superior force of Confederate cavalry commanded by Col. Archibald S. Dobbins. Supported by about 150 men from the 15th Illinois Cavalry, the infantry regiments organized a fighting retreat and at a crucial moment in the battle made a counter charge into the enemy line.

The 56th Colored Regiment losses during service consisted of: 4 officers and 21 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded; and two officers and 647 enlisted men by disease; for a total of 674 fatalities. The vast majority of the deaths due to disease occurred during a cholera epidemic that struck in August 1866 while the regiment was waiting to muster out at Jefferson Barracks Military Post near St. Louis. One hundred seventy-five African American enlisted men of the 56th U.S. Colored Infantry are buried together in a mass grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.