

## 102nd U.S. Colored Troops Civil War



**Members of the 102nd U.S. Colored Troops  
Civil War Lot, Section S**



**Battle Flag for the 102nd USCT**

Formed entirely of volunteers 1863-1865, the First Michigan Colored Regiment was organized at Camp Ward (named after Eber Brock Ward), which once stood on the site of Duffield School, now known as Ralph J. Bunche Elementary and Middle School, three blocks from Elmwood. The Regiment saw service in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

More than 1,400 men served in the regiment and ten percent gave their lives in battle. The regiment was disbanded in October 1865. Eighteen members of the 102nd troop are buried in the Michigan Civil War lot in Section S. Information about these men is fairly limited but follows at the end of this biography. More research needs to be done, regarding who among this group may have been enslaved, escaped on the Underground Railroad or participated in helping others out of bondage.

Since 1984, Elmwood Cemetery has hosted a Veterans Day Commemoration where members of the U.S. Colored Troops, Native American Veterans, and all Veterans are honored. The program involves the members of all branches of the armed forces, JR ROTC programs at Detroit high schools, Martin Luther King Jr. High School Marching Band, re-enactors, political leaders, and the general public.

Elmwood's self-guided tour of the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom map is available in the office or may be [downloaded here](#) and features these members of the 102nd United States Colored Troop, buried in Section S, and 23 other key individuals:

## Row 1

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Griffin, John</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Griffin, George &amp; Louisa</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Co. 1 Mich. Cld. Inf. 102 U.S. C. Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING: <i>1868 Dec. 5</i>	CLASS: <i>Invalid</i>	APPLICATION NO.: <i>56196</i>	CERTIFICATE NO.: <i>766220</i>	STATE FROM WHICH FILED: <i>Mich.</i>
<i>1887 Oct. 31</i>	<i>Widow, Minor</i>	<i>362813</i>		<i>Mich.</i>
ATTORNEY: <i>M. B. Howard &amp; Co.</i>				

**Pvt. John Griffin**, Company F, was born in 1812 and was buried in 1871. Griffin's birthplace is unknown. The military record to the left indicates Griffin had two dependents, George and Louisa. In Elmwood's files, John Griffin's birthplace is noted as "American." His age is noted as 59 and he lived

in the Soldier's Home in Detroit. Griffin died of pneumonia on August 4, 1871 and was interred on August 6, 1871. Additional research is underway to learn more about Pvt. Griffin's life and time during the Civil War.



NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Stewart, Augustus</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Co. 102 Mich. Cld. Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING: <i>1865 Dec. 5</i>	CLASS: <i>Invalid</i>	APPLICATION NO.: <i>773287</i>	CERTIFICATE NO.: <i>766220</i>	STATE FROM WHICH FILED: <i>Mich.</i>
	<i>Widow, Minor</i>			
ATTORNEY: <i>M. B. Howard &amp; Co.</i>				

**Pvt. Augustus Stewart**, Company C, was born on the ocean in 1819. Stewart enlisted at the age of approximately 44 on November 4, 1863 in Detroit. Prior to enlisting, Stewart was employed as a cook and continued in this capacity in the military. Stewart mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on

September 30, 1865. His military records indicate that he was "free on or before April 19, 1861." He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on January 2, 1894. He was interred on January 4, 1894.





## Row 2

**Pvt. Robert K. Russell** served in Company D. He was born in 1847; the location is unknown. He died in 1889. There are multiple Robert Russel(l)s who served in the Civil War in the USCT. One was noted as Robert R. Russell who served with Company D and E. He was a sailor who was born in Missouri who “free on or before April 19, 1861.” Additonal research is underway.



**SGM William H. Carter**, Company F, was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1841. He enlisted on November 15, 1864 in Ypsilanti. His enlistment records indicate he was a laborer. He was described as a most “faithfull (sic) soldier.” He was promoted to 1st Sergeant on February 2, 1864 when the person who previously held that command deserted, and then to Sergeant Major on August 18, 1865. He then transferred to non-commissioned staff, mustering out on September 30, 1865 in Charleston, South Carolina. Military records indicate Carter was “free on or before April 19, 1861.” He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on October 16, 1876 and was interred on October 19, 1876.



NAME OF SOLDIER		Smith, Henry		(2-18-61)	
FATHER		Smith, Mary A.			
MOTHER		Minor			
SERVICE		3, 102 U.S.C. Inf			
DATE OF FILING	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED	
1874 Nov 2	Enrolled	337,272			
1876 Aug 23	White	267,242	296,660	Mich	
AUTHORITY					
BY					
WITNESSES					

**SGT Henry Smith**, Company I, was born in Burlington New Jersey in 1835. He worked as a laborer and enlisted at age 28 in Detroit on December 11, 1863. He was promoted to Sergeant on January 3, 1864 but requested his rank be reduced due to his deafness.

Ultimately, he was discharged at

Orangeburg, South Carolina on July 13, 1865 for his “physical disability.” He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on March 9, 1889 and was interred on March 12, 1889.



**Pvt. Daniel B. Walker**, Company D, was born in Virginia in 1820. He enlisted at the age of 43 on November 23, 1863 in Detroit. According to the remarks in his military records, he was a “slave.” His occupation before joining is listed as farmer. In the military, Walker served as the cook of the company. He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on July 13, 1890 and was interred on July 15, 1890.



**Pvt. William Riley**, Company A, was born in Rockville, Maryland. He enlisted at the age of 33 in Detroit on January 23, 1864. According to the records, he was a laborer, and he was “free on or before April 19, 1861.” He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. Riley died on March 28, 1891 and was interred on March 30, 1891.



NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Holmes, George A.</i>				
NAME OF RESIDENT: <i>William Holmes, Union</i>				
RESIDENCE: <i>6 102 11th St</i>				
DATE OF FILING:	CLASS:	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILING
<i>Nov. Jan. 7</i>	<i>Enlisted</i>	<i>684 202</i>	<i>244, 221</i>	<i>Michigan</i>
<i>Nov. Jan. 27</i>	<i>Enlisted</i>	<i>534 531</i>		<i>Michigan</i>
ATTORNEY:				
REMARKS:				

**Pvt. George A. Holmes**, Company E, enlisted in Detroit at the age of 31 on December 5, 1863. He was a sailor born in New York and was “free on or before April 19, 1861.” He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he

signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on October 4, 1891.





## Row 3

NAME OF ENLISTMENT: <i>Hodges, Greenbury</i>				
NAME OF ENLISTMENT: <i>Hodges, Louisiana</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Co. 102 U.S. Inf</i>				
DATE OF PLANS:	CLASS:	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH PLACED
<i>1863 Oct 2</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>320925</i>	<i>227781</i>	<i>Mich.</i>

**SGT Greenberry (aka Greenbury) Hodges**, Company C, enlisted in Detroit at 44 years old on September 16, 1863. He was a laborer, born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1819, who was “free on or before April 19, 1861.” He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865.

He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on August 4, 1879 and was interred on August 6, 1879.



NAME OF ENLISTMENT: <i>Williams, Henry</i>				
NAME OF ENLISTMENT: <i>Williams, Ohio</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Co. 102 U.S. Inf</i>				
DATE OF PLANS:	CLASS:	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH PLACED
<i>1864 Jan 7</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>314666</i>	<i>345742</i>	<i>Mich.</i>

**Pvt. Henry H. Williams**, Company F, was one of four Henry Williams who served with the regiment. However, according to military records, only one served in Company F. Williams, a laborer, was born free in Malden, Canada. He enlisted on September 13, 1864, at the age of 18. While

serving, his duties included taking care of government horses. He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. Williams died on November 7, 1888 and was interred on November 9, 1888.



**Pvt. Berry (a.k.a. Benjamin) Thomas**, Company K, was a laborer, born in Virginia in 1835. Thomas enlisted late in the war on January 31, 1865 at Pontiac, Michigan as a substitute for John B. Nixon. He was assigned to Company K on May 31, 1865. He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. According to his military records he was free. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on August 16, 1866 and was interred on August 18, 1866.





NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Robinson, Frank</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Robinson, Rachel</i>				
SERVICE: <i>101 Mich. Cav. Inf. E. 102 U.S.C. Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING: <i>1894 Aug 12</i>	CLASS: <i>Invalid</i>	APPLICATION NO. <i>732246</i>	CERTIFICATE NO. <i>822492</i>	STATE FROM WHICH FILED: <i>Mich</i>
<i>1901 July 15</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>745,033</i>	<i>522,647</i>	<i>Mich</i>
ATTORNEY: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				
REMARKS: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				

**Pvt. Frank Robinson**, Company E, enlisted in Detroit on November 1863 at the age of 24. Born in Newport, Kentucky, he was a laborer. He served in the military as a musician in the regimental band. The regimental band toured southern Michigan as part of its recruitment efforts. During his time



in the military, he also played in post and brig bands. According to records, he was "free on or before April 19, 1861." He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died in 1910.

## Row 4

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Gilbert, Charles</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Gilbert, Jennette</i>				
SERVICE: <i>102 Mich. Cav. Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING: <i>1891 Oct 20</i>	CLASS: <i>Invalid</i>	APPLICATION NO. <i>463,868</i>	CERTIFICATE NO. <i>406,098</i>	STATE FROM WHICH FILED: <i>Mich</i>
<i>1891 Oct 20</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>463,868</i>	<i>406,098</i>	<i>Mich</i>
ATTORNEY: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				
REMARKS: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				

**SGT Charles Gilbert**, Company H, was born in Pike County, Georgia. He enlisted at the age of 24 on December 21, 1863 in Jonesville, Michigan but was mustered in at Detroit. He enlisted as a corporal, but was promoted to sergeant on May 10, 1864. It is noted that he was "free." He mustered out in Charleston, South

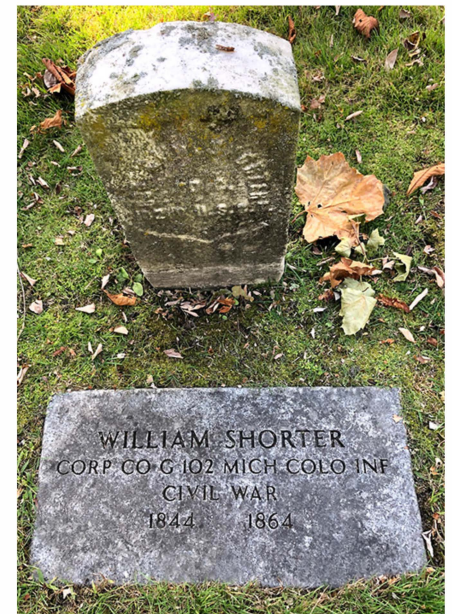


Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on April 2, 1888.

## Row 5

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Shorter, William</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Shorter, Mary</i>				
SERVICE: <i>102 Mich. Cav. Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING: <i>1891 June 10</i>	CLASS: <i>Invalid</i>	APPLICATION NO. <i>103,445</i>	CERTIFICATE NO. <i>989,625</i>	STATE FROM WHICH FILED: <i>Mich</i>
<i>1891 June 10</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>103,445</i>	<i>989,625</i>	<i>Mich</i>
ATTORNEY: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				
REMARKS: <i>W. H. H. H.</i>				

**CPL William Shorter**, Company G, was born in New York in 1843. He enlisted on December 26, 1863 in Detroit at the age of 20. His occupation is listed as farmer. In March 1864, he became sick with tuberculosis and was hospitalized. He remained there until his death in May 1864. He appears to have



been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on May 28, 1864 and was interred on June 6, 1864.



NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Griggs, George</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Griggs, Mary</i>				
SERVICE: <i>Unk. U.S. &amp; F.</i>				
DATE OF FILING	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED
<i>1738 Jan 16</i>	<i>Minor</i>	<i>1710175</i>		<i>Okla.</i>
REMARKS: <i>x.c. 2647682</i>				

**CPL George H. Griggs**, Company D, was born in Woodstock, Ontario Canada. A laborer, he enlisted at Detroit on February 18, 1864. His enlistment rank was private, but he was promoted to corporal on March 12, 1864, then demoted on March 24th 1865, then promoted back on July 18, 1865. His military

records contain contradictory statements about his status as a free or enslaved person. However, his Canadian birth, if accurate, would seem to suggest that he was free. He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He appears to have been literate as he signed his name on the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on December 1, 1877.



**Pvt. Albert J. Ratliff**, Company F, was born in Gosfield, Ontario Canada. A laborer, he enlisted at the age of 18 on November 18, 1863 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Most of his time in the military he was sick in a Detroit, Michigan hospital. He ultimately received a medical discharge in September 1864 because of "phthisis pulmonalis," described as "phthisis pulmonalis" which previously was a name for tuberculosis. The "disease of the lungs... existed previous to his being enlisted." He was deemed "totally unfit for the service." There are no notes in his records regarding his status as free or enslaved, but his Canadian birth suggests the former. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died in March 1866 and was interred on March 11, 1866.



## Row 7

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Floyd, Leonard</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Minor</i>				
SERVICE: <i>10. rec. U.S. &amp; Inf.</i>				
DATE OF FILING	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED
<i>May 15</i>	<i>Invalid</i>	<i>655344</i>		<i>Mich.</i>
REMARKS: <i>Slave...Joined Co. August 26, 64 at Magnolia, Florida by Enlistment,</i>				

**Pvt. London (aka Leonard and Landon) Floyd**, Company D, was born in North Carolina or Georgia around 1844. His occupation is listed as farmer. In one of the remarks on his enlistment there is a note that reads, "Slave...Joined Co. August 26, 64 at Magnolia, Florida by Enlistment," which

seems to suggest that he may have been a freedom seeker. He mustered out in Charleston, South Carolina on September 30, 1865. He filed for a military pension on May 15, 1888. He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form. He died on April 26, 1890.





**CPL Robert Thomas**, Company D, was a farmer, born in Lafayette County, Kentucky. Thomas enlisted on February 13, 1864 in Janesville, Wisconsin. He was mustered in on February 14, 1864 in Detroit. He was promoted from private to corporal on July 10, 1864. In July 1865, he became sick with tuberculosis and died. He was buried in October 1865. According to remarks in his military records, he was a “slave.” He appears to have been unable to read or write because he signed his mark to the Volunteer Enlistment form.



**CIVIL WAR: Black troops trained in deplorable conditions**

Ypsilanti, 23 when he enlisted, was one of 116 in the Michigan regiment who died of disease. Combat took a much heavier toll. Five died in action, seven died of wounds. One of those was Jesse Oliver of Ypsilanti, one of Harper's fellow soldiers in Company F. He died in South Carolina from wounds received in the same April 18, 1865 battle. Joseph H. Morgan, 21, also of Ypsilanti, was wounded in battle at Honey Hill, S.C. in 1864, but survived to muster out of the regiment after the war in the fall of 1865.

The black soldiers from Michigan, like those of other states, were often assigned non-combat duties such as building fortifications partly because many Union army leaders doubted they would be steadfast in battle. Also, Confederate leaders, furious about the use of black troops which they believed to include vengeful former slaves, ordered their troops to kill captured black troops and their white officers, rather than hold them for prisoner exchanges.

So Harper and the other enlistees in the 102nd faced an added risk at the front. But they were paid less than white soldiers: 10 dollars a month, with 3 dollars deducted for clothing, compared to white soldiers' pay of 13 dollars a month with no deduction, wrote Haddon Hargrove in an article for Michigan History magazine.

"When Harper enlisted, Michigan's black regiment had been assembling recruits in Detroit since Aug. 12, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation had opened the door for recruitment of black men across the country. Since the war began in 1861, abolitionists had lobbied for black recruitment. Some black regiments had been formed, but many black men who had tried to enlist in the army had been refused. They had better luck in the U.S. Navy, which already allowed black men to serve.

By 1863 and even before, "It was clear there was going to be a need for more men than earlier imagined," says Roger Rosenzweig, who teaches Civil War history at Michigan State University. "But there were a fair number of Northern whites who weren't at all excited about black soldiers." The Detroit Free Press railed against the formation of the new black regiment in its editorials.

**Hardships in beginning**

The troops trained in deplorable conditions at a camp in Detroit. "There is not a barn or pigsty in the whole city of Detroit that is not better fitted for human habitation than Camp Ward," reads one report of that time quoted by Hargrove. Soldiers had to eat leftover rotten meat from Fort Wayne, where white soldiers trained, says Jerome Peoples, who leads another group of re-enactors representing the 102nd regiment. When the soldiers came back from their tour of the state, they faced winter with only one blanket apiece in ramshackle buildings. "It rained on them, it snowed inside on them," he says. Before the regiment left Detroit, 200-odd recruits had deserted, including some from Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. A few soldiers died at Camp Ward.

Abolitionist leaders Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass visited the troops at Camp Ward. Serious training got under way in the fall of 1863. The regiment stopped in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti on a railroad tour of southern Michigan later that year.

The Union army with some exceptions placed white officers in command of black troops. Company B of the 102nd had Ypsilanti Peter E. Mead as 2nd lieutenant. The regiment's field staff included Adjutant James A. McKnight of Ann Arbor.

**Proving bravery in the South**

The regiment of 895 men and officers left Detroit for Annapolis in March 1864. Presumably Harper was among the soldiers who arrived there only to find they were denied use of an empty barracks because of possible friction with white troops stationed there. The next day, however, they won praise from General Ulysses S. Grant, Hargrove wrote.

The Michigan black troops then moved to Hilton Head, S.C. They saw more non-combat duty than combat, but had to be prepared for attacks from surrounding Confederate troops as they worked in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

In one instance in August 1864, Confederate cavalrymen attacked a detachment of the 102nd regiment pulling up railroad tracks. The Michiganers held their ground and repulsed the attack. Detachments also proved themselves in other combat action in South Carolina during 1864 and 1865.

After a battle at Goshensville, S.C., officers commended men from the regiment who held ground under severe fire and charged the enemy. "Many of the men, though wounded and bleeding, refused to go to the rear and fought until the battle was concluded," states the Record of the First Michigan Colored Infantry, published in 1903.

After the war's end, some soldiers in the regiment remained on duty several months in the South as part of the occupying Union army. The regiment was disbanded in Detroit in October 1865.

Peoples and his re-enactor group take a play about Michigan's black Civil War soldiers to prisons, schools and juvenile centers. He thinks it's essential to tell the regiment's story. "I believe this to be the heart of the history of the African American because it started the quest for freedom."

Connection reporter Anne Rueter can be reached at (734) 994-6759.

[\*\*The 102nd U.S. Colored Troops Civil War Lot is listed in Elmwood's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Self-Guided Tour Map.\*\*](#)