

1st Michigan Colored Infantry Civil War Soldiers Remembered

On Wednesday, April 17, 2013, soldiers from the 1st Michigan Colored Infantry buried in Beaufort National Cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina were remembered and honored. A laurel wreath, adorned with a white banner labeled MICHIGAN and a red, white and blue ribbon, was placed where the Michigan soldiers, buried largely together, rest in Section 31.

The 1st Michigan Colored Infantry was formed on February 23, 1863, with approximately 845 men from southern Michigan and Ontario, Canada. The unit was re-designated the 102nd Regiment U.S. Colored Troops. It fought throughout South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. During its service the regiment lost six soldiers in action; five died of wounds; and approximately one hundred and thirty perished of disease. The unit was mustered out of service on September 30, 1865, and disbanded less than a month later in Detroit on October 17.

Michigan Historical Commission President, Jack Dempsey and his wife Suzanne, arranged for this impromptu tribute to these Michigan soldier while in the Hilton Head region. With a few other Michiganders, Bill and Carol Bedford of Crystal Lake and David and Gail Sonnenschein of Bloomfield Hills, vacationing in the area, a fitting ceremony was held. Commissioner Dempsey spoke about the context of the service of these men and then read aloud Dudley Randall's poem *Memorial Wreath*.

The small ceremony was concluded with a serendipitous flyover as a military jet departing from Parris Island flew by overhead. "It was very moving as the sound of the military jet above – as if performing an honorary flyover – filled the cemetery," said Commissioner Dempsey. "It was a perfect and fitting conclusion to the ceremony." Cemetery officials told the group that the wreath would remain in the cemetery over the graves for as long as it looks decent and respectable.

Reflecting on the service and sacrifice of those they were honoring, Dempsey concluded, "we were humbled to be in the presence of the graves of these Michigan heroes."



The Michigan wreath laid in memory of the 1st Michigan Colored soldiers buried in the Beaufort National Cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina.

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