

**Some were free born. Some were fugitives. Some were slaves.
Now they were all veterans.**

**Sharon A. Roger Hepburn (shepburn@radford.edu)
Radford University**

Abstract

This essay centers on the soldiers of the 102nd United States Colored Infantry (USCI), originally organized in August 1863 as the First Michigan Colored Infantry, the only all-black regiment organized in the state and one of only a handful of state raised northern black regiments. Building on the scholarship of Theda Skocpol, Donald Shaffer, Barbara Gannon, and others, an investigation into the lives and activities of this regiment's veterans offers a useful case study in race and reconciliation in the aftermath of the Civil War. African American veterans, because of their status as veterans, were able to combat racism in some aspects of their lives. Utilizing pension claims, GAR records, Soldiers Home files, and other sources, the experiences of veterans from the 102nd USCI reveals much about the typical African American soldier after their service for the Union.

Keywords: African American Civil War veterans; 102nd USCI; GAR; National Soldiers Homes; pensions

Some were free born. Some were fugitives. Some were slaves. Now they were all veterans.

When the victorious Union Armies proudly marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. at the end of May 1865, black soldiers were largely excluded, a reflection of their segregated service during the war. Almost thirty years later, when the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) reenacted this parade in September 1892, black veterans marched alongside their white comrades, a telling symbol of race reconciliation among veterans in the years following the war. Despite substantial setbacks in the postwar struggle for equality, black veterans achieved some measure of inclusion within the GAR and other areas of veteran services including pensions and admission to Soldiers Homes. It was their shared experiences fighting for a common cause that permitted a truce of sorts amidst a racially divided nation. African American veterans, because of their status as veterans, were able to combat racism in some aspects of their lives. An investigation into the lives and activities of the 102nd United States Colored Infantry (USCI) veterans offers a useful case study in race and reconciliation in the aftermath of the Civil War.

The 102nd USCI, originally organized in August 1863 as the First Michigan Colored Infantry, was the only all-black regiment organized in that state and one of only a handful of state raised northern black regiments. After a winter of recruiting and training at Camp Ward, the regiment left Detroit at the end of March 1864, arriving in Annapolis a few days later to start its service in the field. The unit participated in two major engagements in South Carolina; Honey Hill, November 30, 1864 and Deveaux Neck, December 9, 1864, but other than that saw little action beyond skirmishing. Most of their wartime experience consisted of drilling, marching, engaging in picket, garrison, and fatigue duty, destroying railroads, and building fortifications. With the exception of a month long expedition in Florida in August 1864 and occupation duty in Charleston, Orangeburg, and Winnsboro, most of the service of the 102nd was in the environs of Beaufort and Hilton Head. The

102nd was mustered out of service on September 30, 1865 and the men headed back to Detroit to resume their civilian lives, veterans of the U.S. Army. During their service four enlisted men and one officer were killed in action; sixty five soldiers were wounded, six of whom subsequently died and twenty two of whom were discharged as a result of their wounds. An additional 157 were discharged on account of various disabilities.¹

The Grand Army of the Republic was the first national veterans organization. Membership was limited to veterans of the American Civil War and those seeking membership were accepted based on the validity of their application and military service. Whereas most fraternal organizations of the time excluded African Americans, the GAR “officially followed a color-blind membership policy” and there was a considerable number of interracial posts throughout the nation.² Inclusion of black veterans in the GAR ranks, of course, did not mean equality. Many veterans of USCI units were members of separate African American posts and other than representing their Post at state and national encampments, black veterans did not achieve leadership positions within the GAR organization. Nonetheless, their inclusion in the GAR itself shows some measure of race reconciliation, acknowledging respect for sacrifice to the Union cause.

Veterans of the 102nd USCI joined both African American and interracial GAR posts. Evidence indicates that Barbara Gannon’s list of integrated GAR posts is, as she readily acknowledges, not complete. In her research for *The Cause Won*, Gannon uncovered five interracial GAR Posts in Michigan (Posts 38, 45, 137, 157, and 351). Pension records and GAR reports associated with the 102nd USCI indicate that the list of interracial posts in Michigan include at least eight additional posts (21, 31, 32, 38, 42, 45, 67, and 76).³

102nd USCI members of interracial Michigan GAR posts include Gustave Bannister, George Henderson, Turner Byrd, and John Hall, all members of the Charles T. Foster Post 42 in Lansing. Welch Post 137 was an interracial GAR post in which at least three veterans of the 102nd USCI were members: Jerome Freeman, George Butler, and Aaron Burnett. Joining St. Joseph residents Needham Miller, Louis Bell, and Ezekiel

Howard as comrades in Post 21, another interracial post, were Willis Littleton, of Lincoln, John Huston of Lake, and Hezekiah Madry of Benton Harbor, all of which are in Berrien County, Michigan. Former comrades Henry Clark, Henry Clay, Amos Swanigan, and Alexander (Duncan) Cook joined GAR Post 32 in Battle Creek. Meanwhile, at least four veterans of the 102nd USCI were comrades in Post 351 in Covert, Michigan: John Connor, W. Conner, William Gibbon, and H.B. Tyler. Both Posts 32 and 351 welcomed members from both races.⁴

Besides separate African American Posts such as the Matthew Artis Post in Cass County, evidence suggests that there were also segregated posts within posts in Michigan. Post 1, the John A. Logan Soldiers Home Post, was organized at the Michigan Soldiers Home located in Grand Rapids. According to a list of GAR Posts in Michigan, this was the only official GAR Post at the Soldiers Home. However, William Davis, James Ester, Othello Crosby, Henry Lee, and James Ross, all black veterans, were residents of this Soldiers Home, and were members of GAR Post 1(B). It seems likely then, that Post 1(B) was a subset of the Logan Soldiers Home Post, and that African American veterans were thus segregated. A similar situation may have been the case with George Thorton who was a member of the RH Rutter Post 47(B) in Dowagiac, Michigan. Meanwhile, Post 64(A) in Niles accepted black veterans J. Battles, Benjamin Cosins (Cousins), and George Winborn into its ranks. Posts 64(A) and 47(B) were further examples of segregation despite a color-blind membership policy.⁵

GAR members often put race aside in their commitment to aid Union veterans. Post Adjutant Hi A. Sweet, of the interracial Welch Post No. 137 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, wrote numerous letters trying to assist Aaron Burnett of the 102nd USCI, and then his widow Addie, successfully maneuver the intricacies of the pension process. George Alexander's widow Ellen was almost solely reliant on support provided by GAR relief funds, without which she surely would have gone to the poorhouse. George died in 1901 and Ellen, who was then over sixty and in poor health, was living off the charitable aid provided by the

local GAR Post in Buffalo when she applied for a widow's pension.⁶

When John Devlin, secretary of the Michigan GAR in Detroit, visited with William DeValt in 1915, he became concerned with DeValt's situation. The GAR had been assisting DeValt and his wife for some time. Devlin took a particular interest in "this poor old colored soldier because after examining his papers, I believed he was intitled to more pension. There appeared to be no one to pay any attention to him, his poor old wife was ill and they were without food." Believing that DeValt was mentally unstable and worried that his pension might be taken from him by unscrupulous neighbors, who "if it were known that he had any money [they] would very quickly relieve him of it," Devlin petitioned to get Thomas Davey, Secretary of the Soldiers' Relief Commission in Detroit, appointed his guardian. Devlin further worked, successfully, to get DeValt's monthly pension increased from \$17 per month to \$30. Unfortunately, DeValt died within a year of receiving his increased pension.⁷

Jerome Freeman was a member of the Welch Post. He had served in Company E of the 102nd USCI from September 1864 to September 1865. When Freeman died in November 1894, his comrades expressed their esteem for him, publishing a notification of his death in which post members conveyed their "respect for the departed. . . . [I]n him this community lost one of its best and most worthy citizens, and Welch Post, No. 137 G.A.R., a good member and beloved comrade, who was ever ready to join hands in works of charity, fraternity, and loyalty." The post hung an insignia of mourning on its flag for thirty days to honor him.⁸

Noel Cox joined the Joseph R. Smith #76 Post headquartered in Monroe, Michigan a few years after it was established. Cox was a veteran of the 102nd USCI. When Cox died in 1891 his fellow GAR comrades took care of his remains, buried his body, and took charge of his effects. George DeLong, then serving as Quartermaster of Post 76, Constant Luce, a former Post Commander, and other white post members attended the funeral. Although certainly not free from racism and discrimination, particularly in its more Southern

branches where segregated posts were the norm, the GAR recognized the sacrifices made by black soldiers and accorded them some measure of acceptance as veterans.⁹

African American veterans were beneficiaries of various financial assistance from the federal government. Most important for the black community was their access to military pensions. The 102nd USCI serves as an example of the relative success black veterans experienced in their endeavors to share access with white veterans. Of the 695 102nd veterans to apply for invalid pensions, 607 were successful in their claims (87.3%). 324 of the 437 widows who claimed a pension received one (74.1%) as did 36 of the 68 minors who submitted claims (53%). Thirty one of fifty one parents who claimed a pension received one (61%).¹⁰

As other scholars have shown, white veterans and their dependents were more likely to receive pensions than black veterans and their dependents, and the amount of pensions awarded to black claimants was often less than that for whites.¹¹ Nevertheless, their military service did provide black veterans and their families with opportunities for financial assistance that were not available to African Americans who had not served in the war. Numerous obstacles hampered African American claims for the pensions due them. Many of these can be attributed to race or, perhaps more appropriately, racial conditions and circumstances. Black veterans and their widows often had difficulty establishing their ages, legality of their marriages or proof of death of prior spouses, and the birth dates of their children. Such issues did not necessarily prevent pensions from being awarded, but they certainly made the process more complicated and lengthier. White veterans and their dependents also confronted such impediments but they were not as prevalent as they were among the black community.

Gertie Hollen, widow of John Hollen (Holden), encountered complications in obtaining a widow's pension after Hollen died in 1895. The issue was that she could not provide adequate proof of the death of her first husband, William Arkyle, who died in a railroad accident near Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Gertie could not produce any witnesses

to his death but only to his remains being returned to Phoenixville (in a small soap box) for burial. She filed for a widow's claim within a month of her second husband's death in February 1895 but was not awarded her pension until August 1898 when the Pension Bureau agreed to accept the death of Arkyle. Later, Gertie had difficulty proving her age which subsequently delayed an increase in her pension. Elizabeth Cox, widow of Noel Cox, was repeatedly rejected by the Pension Office in her claim for a widow's pension as she could not provide, and the special examiners could not uncover, satisfactory evidence as to the dissolution of her prior marriage to Lucien Brown.¹²

Several obstacles stood in the way of Sarah Hopkins' claim for a widow's pension. Sarah, James Hopkins' widow, was first married to John Ball in Lexington, Kentucky prior to the Civil War. Sarah testified that she married John Ball "in slave times and lived with him until he died," but that she had no proof of his death and could supply no witnesses who knew of his death. After the war Sarah went to Cincinnati where she later met and married James Hopkins, who had served in the 102nd USCI. Although a death certificate proved the death of Hopkins' first wife, Sarah was unable to find any witnesses who knew James prior to his coming to Cincinnati so she was unable to prove that he had only been married once prior to his marriage to Sarah. After several rejections, Sarah was finally successful, albeit after she had been declared "a lunatic" and sent to Longview Hospital for the Insane. Meanwhile, Nancy Busby could provide no recorded evidence of her marriage to Stephen Busby, the soldier whose pension she was claiming as a legal widow, "for the reason that I was married in West Virginia while in slavery and no record was kept of such marriages when my marriage occurred." Fortunately for Nancy, the pension bureau examiners accepted her explanation and she was awarded an eight dollar pension within a year of filing her claim.¹³

Age often proved difficult for black veterans to establish to the Pension Office's satisfaction. Many former slaves were in the same predicament as was William Givens, who, in his pension claim, stated that the evidence required to prove his birth date "is beyond my power to produce . . . there are no public records of my birth, baptismal or

family bible records . . . I have always understood that I was born on Christmas 1833. My reason for thinking so is that my old master's son was born on the same day that I was and my mother, master, and mistress were in the habit of making us both presents."¹⁴

In February 1908, George Jones, already receiving an invalid pension of \$12 per month, gave a statement trying to prove his age in order to claim an increased pension based on his age. He stated that there was no public or baptismal record of his birth and that the family bible, originally kept by his mother, had burned in a house fire years prior so that no record of his birth existed. Encountering a similar problem, Wesley Sasser simply said "as I was born in slavery it is impossible to get any record of my birth."¹⁵

By 1890 Anthony Henry was receiving a pension of \$12 but when he later applied for an increase based on his age (the pension law of May 1912 provided for an increase upon reaching 70), he encountered difficulties. Lacking a precise birth date as did so many African American veterans, Anthony had given several different dates of birth in various documents over the years. The Pension Office understandably needed this cleared up and proof that he was 70 before approving his claim. When requested to provide such evidence, Henry stated that he "was borne in the south and that my parents died while I was young . . . therefore I state under oath that I am unable to furnish such public record of my birth." Henry tried to prove his age by acquiring affidavits from those who knew him during the war. These affidavits were deemed insufficient in various ways. Dr. Milton Chase, for one, could only testify that Henry came to work for him as a servant "as a boy looking to be about 16 or 18 years old." The Honorable JMC Smith, of Michigan's House of Representatives, appealed to the Pension Office on Henry's behalf; "you will see by his application that he was born in slavery and I take it from that he will be unable to give his exact age." Smith went on to inquire as to whether discharge or enrollment papers would furnish sufficient evidence of age. Ultimately, his appeal was granted and Henry received the increase based on his age. As can be seen with Henry's case, certain allowances were sometimes necessary to accommodate the weaknesses of African American veterans

claims. Philander Hood was not as fortunate. He too was born in slavery and had no proof of his actual birth date so when a discrepancy arose over his age he was unable to provide sufficient proof to the Pension Bureau and his repeated attempts for an increase in his pension were denied.¹⁶

Sometimes the difficulty was simply proving who they were. In determining whether she was his legal widow, pension examiners had Milton Murdock's widow Louisa explain why two different names for her husband appeared in various records. "He claimed his slave name was Willis Wisher and that he took the name of Milton Murdock when he ran away to keep from being caught up with." Fortunately, Louisa was able to obtain numerous witnesses from Louisiana and Mississippi who knew Wisher/Murdock and who testified that they were one and the same. Murdock was certainly not the only fugitive slave to enter the ranks of the USCI under an assumed name. This need for protection from their slave status could later prove detrimental in their pension claims. Jeremiah Swift, who enlisted as Jerry Swift, was sometimes known as Jeremiah Ward. His various names caused some difficulty for both he and his widow in their pursuit of pensions based on his service. Ultimately, both Jeremiah and his widow were successful in their endeavors. In many cases it seems as if the various obstacles to their pensions based on their race or slavery were overcome in one way or another. The issue was the time it often took to conduct their investigations, time that black veterans could ill afford in their often impoverished state.¹⁷

Pension examiners' predisposed attitudes could affect their judgment as to the credibility of the claimants and witnesses, and their findings could determine the ultimate acceptance or rejection of a pension claim. The examiner in John Brown's pension case broadcasted his racial typecasts even as he *complimented* Brown when he noted that the claimant was "much above the average colored man in intelligence." The special examiner in Charles Chandler's case referred to Chandler and his witnesses as "ignorant colored men" and declared them all unreliable and their testimony "entirely worthless." The special examiner had a low opinion of Chandler as well, saying that "had he been a man of more

intelligence” he would have accused him of “manufacturing evidence,” essentially saying he thought Chandler was too unintelligent to cheat. Another investigator in Chandler’s case noted in his report that one of the witnesses undoubtedly “perjured himself...but he is so extremely ignorant that it is doubtful if he has any idea of the nature of an oath.” Chandler first filed his claim in 1884. Several years of examination followed to determine the merits of his case. Chandler died in 1890 without receiving a pension.¹⁸

Pension examiners themselves, intentionally or not, further hindered processing of black veterans’ claims by establishing greater scrutiny for their applications, often designating them “special” and thereby delaying the adjudication of their claim, sometimes for years. Edward Haynes of Company A, 102nd USCI first filed his pension claim in 1870. It was classified “special” to determine the origin in the service of lame ankles and lung disease, the disabilities upon which Edward based his claim for an invalid pension. The special examination continued until 1885, fifteen years later. Haynes’ claim was ultimately approved, but he had already died by then leaving his wife to file for his accrued pension and for a widow’s pension of her own. In 1890 the Pension office issued an accrued pension at \$2 per month from October 1865 (date of his muster out) to December 18, 1885, when Edward died. She was also granted a widow’s pension. In the end, a needy widow received financial assistance from the federal government but the process was an extremely long and complicated one, whether specifically or exclusively due to race or not. When Mary Grundy reopened her widow’s pension claim in 1900 she noted that her husband had been dead for over fourteen years and that she had first filed a pension claim twelve years prior but “got no satisfaction” and had given up. In 1903 she was still attempting to complete her claim and there is no indication in the file that she ever received a pension.¹⁹

Sometimes there is no clear indication as to why pension claims were delayed. Thomas Johnson, Company A, 102nd USCI, filed for a pension in 1883. When he died in 1885 his claim had not yet been completed. Shortly after his death, Thomas’s widow Margaret filed for a widow’s claim. She finally received a \$8 pension, in 1897, twelve

years after first filing. From the file itself, there does not appear to be much in the way of problematic issues to warrant the delay in her claim. She had never been married prior to her marriage to Johnson and although he had, there was adequate evidence as to his first wife's death three years prior to Margaret and Thomas's marriage. He died unexpectedly while out of town, but again, there adequate evidence to prove his death had been submitted. Margaret herself questioned the Pension Bureau as to "what is being done to my claim . . . I have furnished all the evidence called for by the department and have not received any reply." This query was dated May 21, 1893, a full four years before her claim was approved.²⁰

Whether or not such delays were due specifically and solely to racial discrimination, they nonetheless posed a hardship to veterans and their families. Pension records thus show a mixed record for African American veterans. The federal government certainly recognized their status as veterans and rewarded their service with access to military pensions. Oftentimes, however, black veterans encountered difficulties that were somewhat unique to their race or prewar conditions. The pension system was not a colorblind one.

While race increasingly separated American society, Civil War veterans were brought together in Soldiers Homes and relief agencies for veterans and widows. The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS), built and maintained by the federal government, was initially a place of refuge for disabled soldiers but evolved into retirement-like facilities as the veteran population aged. African American veterans of the Civil War were extended the same privileges of admission to Soldiers Homes as were white veterans.²¹ Although many black veterans took advantage of such services, particularly after 1890, they were not represented proportionally in Soldiers Homes. African American soldiers made up close to 10 percent of the Union army but were only about 2.5 percent of the residents of the various NHDVS by 1899.²² A snapshot of the NHDVS central branch in Ohio in 1880 shows 1030 white residents of the home and only 33 black residents. Twenty years later, the federal census denotes 4449 white residents of

the Central branch and 152 black residents (3.3 percent). According to the 1900 census returns, the black veteran population of the various Soldiers Homes were: 3.9 percent of the Leavenworth branch, 2.5 percent of the Milwaukee branch, 3 percent of the Indiana branch and 1.5 percent of the Illinois branch.²³

This underrepresentation is further underscored in view of the often impoverished economic status of black veterans and their families. Donald Shaffer points out, however, that there are some circumstances that contributed to this underrepresentation that do not directly point to racial inequality. Early residents of the NHDVS tended to be those who were seriously disabled or maimed during the war and, since fewer black soldiers received such injuries due to their shorter lengths of service and less sustained combat experience, it should be expected that there be significantly fewer black residents of the Homes. Additionally, the life expectancy of African Americans was about ten years less than whites so fewer black veterans lived long enough to enter the Soldiers Homes in their old age. In 1890 only 27 percent of the 196,795 black men who had served in the Union army were alive as compared to 54 percent of the 1,811,429 white Unions soldiers.²⁴ Of the sixty-five enlisted men of the 102nd USCI wounded in the line of duty, twenty two were subsequently discharged from the service and only four are known to have been admitted to NHDVS branch homes.²⁵ Most did not receive such devastating wounds as to necessitate care in a veterans facility. An exception was Wilson Battles, the earliest known 102nd veteran to reside in a NHDVS, who was admitted to the Dayton home October 19, 1869 at the age of 38.²⁶ Battles had received a gunshot wound at the Battle of Deveaux Neck in December 1864. According to his discharge papers Wilson's "left hand and arm was destroyed," the result of a "gunshot wound of left forearm, fracturing ulna."²⁷ He was a resident of the Dayton home until the end of June 1872 when he left on his own request but was readmitted in December 1873 and remained there until he died in early July 1874. Of the forty one NHDVS residents from the 102nd USCI researched thus far only four were first admitted prior to 1890, eleven entered soldiers homes in the 1890s,

nineteen were admitted between 1900 and 1910, and another seven entered the system after 1910. Most of these men entered the NHDVS during their 50s and 60s.²⁸ For these black veterans the NHDVS was more of an old age home.²⁹

Even absent an official policy to restrict admittance to the Soldiers Homes to whites it seems likely that racial issues played some role in the underrepresentation of black veterans in the homes. Throughout the NHDVS system black members lived in segregated barracks and ate at segregated tables. In the Dayton, Ohio branch for example, almost all of the black residents in 1900 were listed on the census in a cluster on New Jersey Avenue, presumably in separate barracks. And, as previously mentioned there seems to have been separate GAR Posts in at least some of the homes. Black veterans may have been less inclined to enter Soldiers Homes knowing of such discriminatory practices.³⁰

Black veterans of the 102nd USCI resided in soldiers homes throughout the nation. Thomas Dudley, of Company B, was admitted to the Hampton, Virginia branch of the NHDVS in December 1892 and remained there until his death only six months later.³¹ John E. Taylor spent almost a year at the Togus, Maine branch during 1917-1918. Charles Carter was first admitted to the Central Branch Soldiers Home in Ohio in 1908. From then until 1921 when he was discharged for the last time, Carter was in and out of various Soldiers Homes, rarely staying for a year or more before being discharged at his own request. Although Carter was primarily a resident of the Central (Ohio) and Marion (Indiana) branches he did spend a couple of stints at the Danville Branch and resided at the Southern Branch in Hampton for a short period of time in 1920. Unfortunately, the records do not show why he requested discharges, but since he did apply for readmission regularly after spending time on his own it seems unlikely that there were serious racial issues, tensions, or discrimination that precipitated his leaving the homes. Or at the least, such issues were not severe enough to overcome his need to seek care at the facilities. At least one 102nd veteran resided in the Sawtelle, California Soldiers Home. Joseph West, of company K, was admitted to the California branch of the NHDVS in 1911 at the age of

72 and remained there until his death in 1914. Wounded in the right leg at Deveaux Neck on December 9, 1864, West had part of his leg amputated sometime after his service.³³ When he entered the soldiers home his disability was recorded as the loss of his right leg.³⁴ Franklin Gibbs, James Knox, and Vance Cammel resided at the Western Branch at Leavenworth, Kansas. Among those admitted to the Northwestern Branch in Milwaukee were James Hopkins, James Ross, Joseph O'Neil, and William Strange (alias Harrison Small). Bryant Roberts entered the Dayton soldiers home in 1902, later transferring to the Milwaukee branch, then to the Marion branch, and finally back to Milwaukee. He died in 1912 in Indianapolis while on furlough from the Milwaukee branch home.³⁵ Joseph O'Neil was first admitted to the Milwaukee branch, NHDVS in July 1908. From that first admission until his death in 1919 he was discharged and re-admitted five times. Each of his discharges were upon his own request.³⁶

William Ford was admitted to the National Soldiers Home in Dayton, Ohio, in 1892. When he died in 1901, Ford was buried in the Dayton National Cemetery as are over 650 African Americans who served in the Union Army. In the immediate vicinity of Ford's final resting place lies white veterans. Likewise, Joshua Dunbar of the 55th Massachusetts lies in the Dayton National Cemetery surrounded by the graves of white soldiers. A preliminary plotting of gravesites shows that gravesite locations, at least at the Dayton National Cemetery, were not segregated. Rather, veterans were buried according to their dates of death, signifying that perhaps in death race and reconciliation was complete.³⁷

Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain black veterans thoughts of, and treatment at, the Soldiers Homes, but the reasons why more African American veterans, whether of the 102nd USCI or other units, chose not to enter Soldiers Homes may have had less to do with race and more to do with the character of the black family and community. Simply put, many black veterans preferred, whenever possible, to be supported by a pension and cared for by family and friends rather than to live in a government sponsored, military regimented, impersonal institution. They relied more on kin networks than on government

care and housing if such an alternative was available to them. For those marginalized veterans unable to support themselves or with impoverished families unable to do so, the Soldiers Homes may have been the viable, though perhaps not preferred, option. After all, they were segregated and were likely ostracized from white residents just as African Americans in the US generally were, a reflection of their status in society by the late nineteenth century. Albeit a small sample, thirty six veterans (of forty one studied thus far) in National Homes with contact names on their NHDVS registration included sixteen who were married, and one who was estranged. The rest listed children (11), siblings (4), or friends (5) as their person of contact, most of whom lived in different areas than the Soldiers Homes and may not have been able to provide for the veterans. James Hopkins's daughter lived in Detroit while he resided in the Milwaukee branch of the NHDVS. Likewise, Joseph O'Neil was in the Milwaukee branch when his nearest relative, his sister Minnie Farrio, lived in Chicago. Perhaps it is enough said that what is remarkable given American society at the time is that black veterans were accepted into the same homes as white veterans.³⁸

Like all African Americans in the post-Civil War Era black veterans struggled to preserve the opportunities opened to them with the war and Emancipation. Black veterans were more effective in some areas than were nonveterans but their efforts were far from an unqualified success. It was the legacy of their service that allowed them to maintain at least some semblance of equality, at least when it came to the assistance befitting veterans.

About the Author

Sharon Roger Hepburn received her PhD from the University of Buffalo (1995). Her specialties include African American History and 19th America. Currently she is a full professor and chair of the department of history at Radford University in Virginia. Her first book, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (University of Illinois Press, 2007), received the 2008 Albert B. Corey award jointly sponsored by the American Historical Association and the Canadian Historical Association. She has had articles published in the *Michigan Historical Review* and *American Nineteenth Century History*. Her current research project is a full regimental history of the 102nd United States Colored Infantry and its service during the Civil War. Dr. Roger Hepburn is the recipient of the 2010 College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences Distinguished Scholarship Award at Radford University.

Endnotes

1. One officer was killed in action; two men were shot and killed accidentally while another was shot and killed while running the guard; one died while he was on picket duty after being shot; another one drowned; and two are listed as died from poisoning. 102nd United States Colored Infantry, Regimental Books, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration (Hereafter cited as NARA).
2. Donald Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 7.
3. The research thus far conducted for this study centers primarily on membership in GAR Posts within Michigan where a significant number of 102nd USCI veterans resided during the postwar years. 102nd veterans were member of both separate and interracial GAR Posts in other states as well. Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Civil War Pension Files (hereafter cited as CWPF), RG 15, NARA; Grand Army of the Republic Records Project, Department of Michigan, available at <http://www.suvcwmi.org/gar/>.
4. CWPF; GAR Records Project, Department of Michigan, <http://www.suvcwmi.org/gar/>.
5. Ibid.
6. Aaron Burnett, CWPF; George Alexander, CWPF; Ellen Alexander's claim for pension was rejected when the Pension Office ruled that, due to a technicality, George had not served for the requisite 90 days.

7. William DeValt, CWPF.
8. *Ann Arbor Argus*, November 13, 1894; Gannon, *The Won Cause*, 109.
9. Noel Cox, CWPF.
10. *Organization Index to Pension Files of Veterans who served between 1861 and 1900*, T289, NARA. Donald Shaffer's random sample of 545 black veterans shows a slightly different success rate than that of the 102nd USCT. 75.4 percent of black veterans in his sample who applied for pension received one while 60.7 percent of widows claiming a pension were successful in their efforts. 50 percent of children claiming a pension received one and 35.5 percent of parents did so. Shaffer, *After the Glory*, 209.
11. Larry M. Logue and Peter Blanck, "Benefit of Doubt': African-American Civil War Veterans and Pensions," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 38:3 (Winter 2008), 377-399; Sven E. Wilson, "Prejudice and Policy: Racial Discrimination in the Union Army Disability Pension System, 1865-1906," *American Journal of Public Health* 100: S56-S65 (April 2010). Shaffer's random sample of an equal number of white pension applicants shows 92.6 percent of white veterans who applied for a pension received one while 83.7 percent of widows of white soldiers received a pension when they claimed one. Meanwhile, 50 percent of children and 69.4 percent of parents who applied for a pension were successful.
12. John Holden (Hollen), CWPF; Noel Cox, CWPF.
13. Sarah Hopkins, CWPF; Stephen Busby, CWPF.
14. William Givens, CWPF.
15. George Jones, CWPF; Wesley Sasser, CWPF.
16. Anthony Henry, CWPF; Philander Hood, CWPF.
17. Milton Murdock, CWPF; Jeremiah Swift, CWPF. Louisa Mudock's claim to pension was further complicated by the fact that Murdock had left a wife and children in Michigan before returning to the south, after which he married her in Mississippi.
18. John Brown, CWPF; Charles Chandler, CWPF. Chandler's claim was approved in early September 1890 but the file was returned with a death notification. Chandler had died on August 29, 1890.
19. Edward Haynes, CWPF; Felix Grundy, CWPF.
20. Thomas Johnson, CWPF.
21. The Indexes to NHDVS are not segregated in that the names of white and black veterans in the index are listed together in alphabetical listing. The same is also the case with the NHDVS registers, they are not segregated records but veterans were entered into the register according to their admission to the facility.

22. Trevor K. Plante, "The National Home for Disabled Veteran Soldiers," *Prologue* 36 (Spring 2004). Shaffer sets the number at 1% between 1876 and 1905.
23. 1880 and 1900 Census, FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>; Note: The census only enumerates those veterans in the Soldiers Home at the time of the actual enumeration.
24. Shaffer, *After the Glory*, 138, 206.
25. Thomas Gaines, Joseph West, James Hopkins, and James Ross.
26. Battles's medical records and discharge papers note that he was 39 in 1865. His enlistment papers of 1863 say age 37. Wilson Battles, Carded Medical Records; CMSR.
27. Wilson Battles, Carded Medical Records; CMSR.
28. Only two soldiers were in their late 30s when they were first admitted to a soldiers home; four were in their 40s; six in their 50s; thirteen in their 60s; six in their 70s; one in his 80s; and one in his 90s.
29. *United States National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938* (hereafter cited as NHDVS), FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>. There were undoubtedly more 102nd veterans who entered NHDVS as this investigation is only in the early stages and the records have to be accessed individually from the NHDVS register.
30. 1900 Census, FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>.
31. NHDVS, FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>.
32. Ibid.
33. There is no indication from the carded medical file for West that his leg was amputated during his service. In fact, he was returned to duty at the end of January 1865. Perhaps complications later led to an amputation.
34. CMSR, Joseph West; Casualty Lists for 102nd USCI; Carded Medical Records, Joseph West; NHDVS, FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>.
35. NHDVS, FamilySearch, <http://FamilySearch.org>.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
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