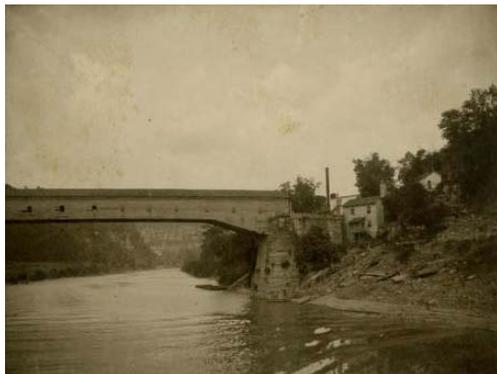


Kentucky's Civil War: Camp Nelson



Historical Markers #1515 and #2222 commemorate Camp Nelson in Jessamine County, where most of the state's African American Union soldiers were recruited.

Established near Nicholasville in 1863, Camp Nelson was named for Union General William "Bull" Nelson, who was murdered by another Union general in 1862.

Initially a large supply depot, Camp Nelson included 4,000 acres, fortifications, and 300 buildings. The camp supplied several Union military campaigns. In early 1864, when the Union army began recruiting African American soldiers from Kentucky, Camp Nelson became the state's largest recruiting ground for black soldiers. Eventually, it became one of the largest in the nation. Several regiments of African American Union soldiers were trained there.

As slaves and freedmen converged on Camp Nelson to enlist in the Union army, many of their families joined them and a large refugee camp grew up around the camp. When these refugees were forced out and hundreds died from exposure, the Federal government freed the family members of former slaves who enlisted in the Union army.

Today, Camp Nelson remains a well-preserved site of national significance.

Photo: The covered bridge near Camp Nelson. The palisades around the Kentucky River protected the south side of Camp Nelson. From the collections of the Kentucky Historical Society.