



Photographer Peter Glendenning, 1864

At the start of the Civil War, Blacks were not allowed to serve in the Union Army although many were eager to do so. Although Congress authorized the raising of African-American regiments in 1862, it was not until early 1863—after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued—that heavy recruitment began. The First Michigan Colored Infantry Regiment, made up—like other such regiments—of black soldiers and white officers, began training in the fall of 1863. On 5 January 1864, the Colored Ladies Aid Society presented them with a flag. The following month they were mustered in as federal troops, known as the 102nd Regiment United States Colored Troops. The 102nd served on picket duty, built fortifications, destroyed railroads and engaged the enemy.