presented by the
KentuckyHistoricalSociety

Discovering Together Kentucky's Civil War History

CIVIL-WAR
150
KENTUCKY

Kentucky's Civil War: Simpsonville Massacre

Historical Marker #2283 in Shelby County commemorates the massacre of members of the 5th United States Colored Cavalry (USCC) near Simpsonville.

On January 25, 1865, Company E of the 5th USCC was transporting a herd of 900 cattle to Louisville. These troops, based at Camp Nelson in Jessamine County, had previously fought at the Battle of Saltville, Virginia. Nearly all of the soldiers were former slaves.

When the troopers neared Simpsonville, they were attacked by Confederate guerrillas. During the fight, which the Louisville Journal called "a horrible butchery," twenty-two of the USCC were killed and eight were severely wounded. At least four of the injured later died from their wounds.

Local resident Julia Tevis called the ambush "one of the bloodiest tragedies." She added, "never did I expect to see such a state of things in my own, dearly loved country."

The dead Union soldiers were buried in a mass grave and the area eventually became an African-American cemetery. Today, efforts are underway to mark the graves and commemorate the soldiers killed in the ambush.

Photo: Marker located along U.S. 60, west of Simpsonville. Photo courtesy of J. T. "Jerry" Miller

100 West Broadway | Frankfort, KY 40601 | 502.564.1792 | www.history.ky.gov

Kentucky
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT

The Kentucky Historical Society is an agency
of the Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet.