

Simon B. Malone (1842-1925)

Much of what is known about Simon Malone comes from oral history and family tradition. Although sometimes this is contradictory, it is still valuable because there is little documentation about African-Americans in the nineteenth century.

Simon Booth Malone was born into slavery on December 18, 1842, in Tippah County, Mississippi. In 1863, during the Civil War, the Fifth Ohio Cavalry raided his home. Knowing this was his chance for freedom, Simon had his brother-in-law help him remove the slave chain that bound his neck, and fled. He followed the cavalry north, caring for the soldiers' horses, carrying water, and doing other odd jobs. He made his way to Illinois and worked as a farmer until he enlisted in Company D of the 13th Regiment of the United States Colored Heavy Artillery Volunteers.

Simon trained at Camp Nelson in Kentucky. He also did garrison duty there and at other stations in that state. He helped construct the breastwork at Fort Pillow, Tennessee where earlier a bloody battle had been fought. It was there that Confederate troops had shot down black troops attempting to surrender, and had burned or buried alive the wounded. Because of such treatment, black Union soldiers became fierce fighters who refused to surrender.

At the beginning of the Civil War, many African-Americans volunteered to fight but were turned away. However, as the War dragged on and casualties mounted, there were fewer white soldiers available or willing to serve. The first black soldiers appear in Louisiana in 1862. On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln sanctioned the use of African-American soldiers on a national level. By war's end, 186,000 African-Americans had enlisted in the Union Army, over 1,800 of them from Illinois. The South had also started using black soldiers.

Even though black soldiers experienced discrimination in their own army in pay and chance for advancement, they were willing to endure this treatment because they felt that the Union army represented their best chance for equality. The Southern Confederate army considered black soldiers traitors and insurrectionists, and ordered immediate execution rather than capture, "no quarter given."

After several months of service, Simon was nearly captured while bathing in a stream. He escaped, but burst a vein in his leg doing so. This led to his medical discharge.

Returning to Illinois, he married Julia Dillon in 1867. They moved to Normal and later bought a house near where Kingsley Jr. High is today. He did many jobs including working as a coal miner in Minonk and a wagon driver in Normal. They had nine children. Julia died suddenly at the age of 55. Her funeral was held at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church and she was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

The effects of Simon's leg injury grew worse through the years, and in 1880, he was awarded a disability pension. He spent his last years in and out of veteran's homes due to

this injury which contributed to his death at the age of 82 on January 16, 1925. He was then one of the last living members of the Charles E. Hovey post of the Grand Army of the Republic. He was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in one of the Civil War soldiers' sections.

Discussion Question: Why would Simon Malone, as a runaway slave, take the risk of returning south with the union army?