



Record Group: Department of Defense
Subgroup: Adjutant General's Office (Civil War)

Institutional History - New Jersey's Regiments

In response to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 men to serve three months in suppressing the southern rebellion, 3,123 New Jerseyans volunteered for service—100% of the state's quota. The volunteers were organized into four regiments, one from each of the state's four militia divisions. In accordance with the Militia Act of March 22, 1860, they were named the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th New Jersey Militia Regiments.

Recruitment accelerated considerably in May when Lincoln called for an additional 500,000 volunteers to serve three years or for the duration of the war. As an adducement to volunteer, the legislature passed the New Jersey Militia Supplements of May 6 and May 11, 1861, allotting men and dependent families extra pay, provided that they served three years active duty. In response, three additional regiments were formed and were designated the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd New Jersey Volunteer Regiments. Successive requests for three-year volunteers raised twelve additional regiments (numbers four through sixteen) by August 1862. The original four militia regiments were re-designated the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th New Jersey Volunteer Regiments.

In an attempt to bolster sagging enlistments, the next call for troops on August 6, 1862 reduced the term of enlistment to nine months. During this recruitment drive New Jersey provided 10,787 men—more than the allotted quota—who were organized as the 20th through 31st Regiments. Subsequent recruitment drives fielded the 32nd through 40th Regiments, whose term of service varied from 100 days (in the case of the 37th regiment), to three years. Three of the state's regiments, the 16th, 32nd and 36th, were also known as the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd cavalry regiments. New Jersey also had an artillery regiment, consisting of Batteries A - E, attached to brigades of the U.S. Army.

However, due to desertions, discharges, battle losses and reluctance to volunteer for military service, Congress authorized a conscription act on March 3, 1863. The draft was applicable to all men ages 20 through 45. Persons could be exempt from the draft if they paid three hundred dollars and provided a substitute for military service. During the period from October 1863 through December 1864, 34,935 men were drafted from New Jersey. They served as replacements in the New Jersey Volunteer Regiments.

Along with the regular regiments, New Jersey authorized the Invalid Corps in April 1863. These were comprised of men who were unfit for active service on account of wounds or disease contracted in the line of duty, but were able to serve in garrison- and other light-duty assignments. The name was changed to the Veteran Reserve Corps on March 18, 1864. The Bergen Brigade, formed on January 28, 1865, consisted of men from Bergen County who had served in the New Jersey Volunteer Regiments and had been mustered out (discharged) from military service. The brigade was part of the New Jersey Reserve Militia.

Many New Jerseyans of African-American heritage enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War. Under the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, the enrollment of "colored" men was authorized by General Order No. 1, dated January 2, 1863. However, New Jersey never organized any black regiments. All the recruits were forwarded to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and placed directly under the Secretary of War. The troops were mustered into regiments of the United States Colored Troops and credited to the state of New Jersey.

Men from New Jersey who enlisted in the United States Regular Army were credited to New Jersey as part of the allotted quota for volunteers. The regular army differed from the New Jersey Volunteer Regiments by virtue of their chain of command and the funding of the troops. The regular army troops were funded through the federal budget. In all, more than 92,000 New Jerseyans served in the Union Army.

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Created September 2003

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