

The Forgotten Story

Concerned about the lack of knowledge regarding Civil War era Camp Douglas and the camp's role in Illinois and American history, a group of individuals came together in 2010 and founded the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation.

Our goal is to tell the story of Camp Douglas.

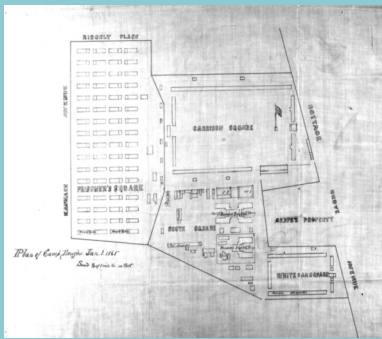


Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation's banner and logo.
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation Collection



Confederate prisoners of war at Camp Douglas, 1862.
Library of Congress Collection

Camp Douglas served the Union cause for four years while the American Civil War raged across the country. During this time, more than 40,000 Federal troops trained at the camp while approximately 30,000 Confederate prisoners of war passed through its gate.



Plan view of Camp Douglas, January 1865.
National Archives

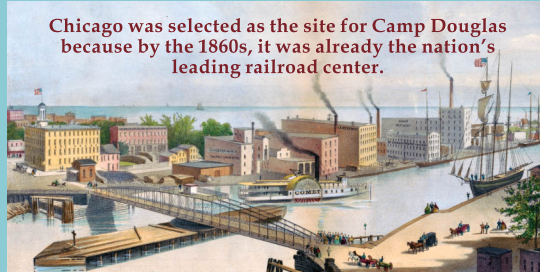
Throughout the war, the camp grew, eventually encompassing 60 acres and including more than 200 structures. It was located adjacent to but outside of Chicago's official southern boundary.



An overlay of the January 1865 plan view of Camp Douglas on a modern satellite map showing area development.
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation Collection

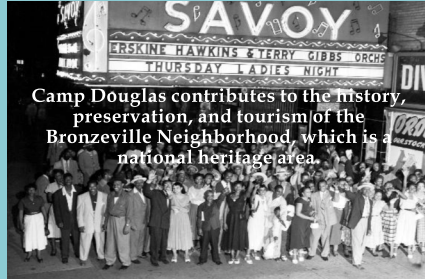
Despite its size, by early 1866, the camp all but disappeared from both the landscape and public memory. Its buildings were auctioned off or razed as Chicagoans turned their attention to rebuilding the country.

The existence of Camp Douglas has had an enduring impact on Chicago.



Chicago was selected as the site for Camp Douglas because by the 1860s, it was already the nation's leading railroad center.

A lithograph by Charles Shuber showing Chicago as it appeared at the beginning of the Civil War, before the demand for troops and supplies fueled its rapid growth.
Civil War Monitor, 2015



Camp Douglas contributes to the history, preservation, and tourism of the Bronzeville Neighborhood, which is a national heritage area.

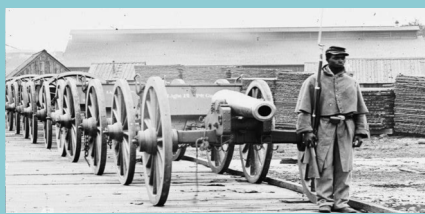
Street scene in Chicago's Bronzeville Neighborhood.
Russell Lee, 1941



CDRF



Teacher Resources



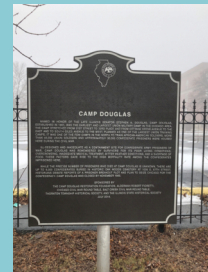
African-American soldier guarding military supplies.
Library of Congress Collection

Until recently, the camp has been largely forgotten, yet it is the most important Civil War facility in Chicago and one of the most important in Illinois. The history of Camp Douglas tells us, in part, the story of the African-American contributions to the Civil War and documents the role prison camps played in race relations during and after the Civil War.



Archaeological excavation units, opened during Summer 2012, to expose specific camp structures.

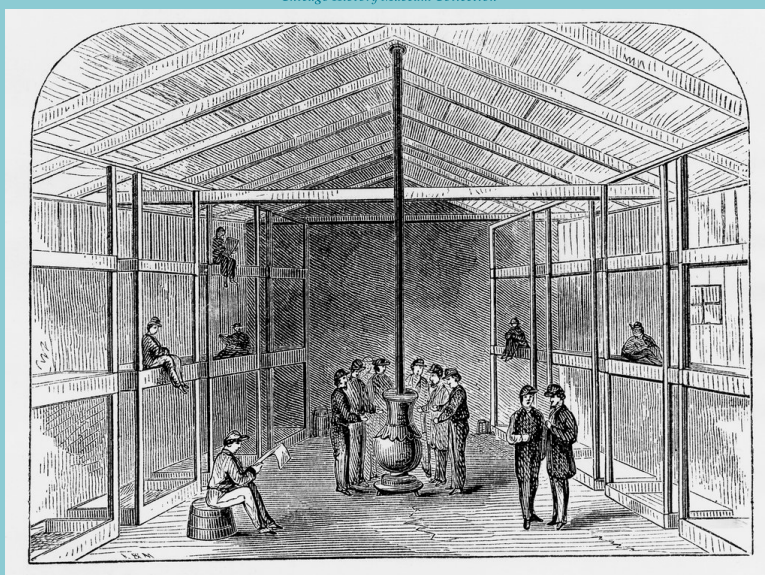
Currently the boundaries of Camp Douglas are roughly marked by 31st Street on the north, Giles Avenue on the west, 33rd Street and 33rd Place on the south, and Cottage Grove Avenue on the east. Urban development of this area began in the 1870s with residential construction.



State of Illinois Camp Douglas Historical Marker.
Photo by Michael M. Gregory

Today, the only visible reminders of Camp Douglas are several historical markers, one of which the State of Illinois erected. It is on the property of the former Griffin Funeral Home at the intersections of 33rd Street with Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and South Calumet Avenue.

Interior view of a POW barracks at Camp Douglas.
Chicago History Museum Collection



Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation