

[DHR note: I have not been able to find a definitive history of Veteran Reserve Corps units, so I am including the following excerpt from the final report of Provost Marshal General James B. Fry, under whose command the VRC functioned. This is part of the 25-page report in which he provided, with apology, only a brief paragraph summarizing the activity of each regiment. From reading the context of his report, it appears to me that this report covers the year from late 1864 to his report in late 1865. It provides at least a general summary of the activity Cornelius Mathews' unit at Camp Douglas, Chicago.]

“Brig. Gen. James B. Fry, Provost Marshal-General, "Services," page 563:

Fifteenth Regiment.--Commenced the official year at Camp Douglas, Chicago, in conjunction with Eighth Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps and Twenty-fourth Ohio Battery. Guarded Government property and patrolled Chicago; guarded and escorted stragglers, conscripts, substitutes, and rebel prisoners. Up to the close of the war the prisoners constantly on hand averaged from 9,000 to 13,000. Only thirteen escaped from camp and none during the transportation. The regiment aided in escorting 1,000 deserters and stragglers and between 2,000 and 3,000 substitutes and conscripts, of whom only six escaped while under charge of officers of the Fifteenth. Strength of garrison varied between 500 and 700. Men on guard every third day or every other day. The regiment aided in preventing the outbreak of the Chicago conspiracy. Officers constantly and closely employed, frequently on two or three lines of duty at once.”

Source: *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series III, Volume V, Serial #126: Correspondence, Orders, Reports, And Returns Of The Union Authorities From May 1, 1865, To The End. #21, War Department, Provost Marshal-General's Office, Veteran Reserve Corps Bureau, Washington D.C., November 30, 1865.

The “Chicago conspiracy” to which General Fry referred is summarized in the extensive Wikipedia article on Camp Douglas as follows: “The Camp Douglas Conspiracy, thought to have been a serious plot to assault the camp and free the prisoners, was supposed to have come to fruition on November 8, 1864. Historians still do not agree on whether the plot was real or a hoax devised by people seeking advantage from misinformation.” [November 8 was the date of the Presidential election.]

The full article on Camp Douglas is at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Douglas_\(Chicago\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Douglas_(Chicago)) .

Photographer: “City Photograph Gallery, No. 146 Lake, Chicago, L. D. Patton, Agent.” The fact that Cornelius Mathews was assigned to duty with the 15th VRC in Chicago at Camp Douglas provides a ready answer to the question of how his photograph came to be taken in Chicago. It appears to me that he mailed this copy to himself at home in Gibson County IN at some point during his tenure in Chicago. L. D. Patton, 146 Lake, was listed in the “Photographs, Ambrotypes, etc.” section of the Chicago Business Register in 1864. (U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995, Illinois, Chicago, 1864, Chicago, Illinois, City Directory, 1864, page 703, Ancestry image 369/437.)