

Regiment History



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FORTY-EIGHTH REGIMENT MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER MILITIA (INFANTRY) NINE MONTHS

The 48th Regt. Mass. Vol. Mill was originally intended to be an Essex County regiment, and its units began to assemble at Camp Lander, Wenham, in September, 1862. Hon. Eben F. Stone of Newburyport, the commandant of the camp, later became colonel of the 48th Regiment. Recruiting proceeded slowly, and when on Dec. 4 the regiment was transferred to Camp Meigs, Readville, only eight companies had been organized and mustered into the service.

At the time of this transfer two of these companies, which had been raised in Lawrence, were detached from the 48th and assigned to the 4th Regiment, the six remaining companies becoming Co's. "A ", "B ", "C ", "D ", "E ", and "F" of the 48th.

Contemporaneous with the organization of the above units, six companies, having the same company letters and composed mostly of men of Irish birth or parentage, had been recruited by Mr. James O'Brien at Camp Joe Hooker, Lakeville, with the purpose of forming a new Irish regiment to be known as the 55th. There being urgent need for the 48th Regiment to form a part of the Banks expedition to Louisiana, the six companies raised by Mr. O'Brien were transferred to Readville, and there by a special order dated Dec. 13, 1862, they were consolidated into four companies and assigned to the 48th, becoming Co's. "G", "H", "I", and "K" of that regiment.

This consolidation and transfer caused great dissatisfaction in the companies thus affected and resulted in the resignation of several commissioned officers and the desertion of a considerable number of enlisted men. Mr. O'Brien, who had raised the Lakeville companies, showed throughout a most excellent spirit, accepted the lieutenant colonelcy of the 48th Regiment, and, as we shall see, died a most gallant soldier's death in the first assault on Port Eudson.

Under command of Colonel Stone, on Dec. 27, the regiment left for New York, and there two days later embarked on the steamer CONSTELLATION bound for New Orleans, which place was reached Feb. 1. From New Orleans it was shortly sent to Baton Rouge where it was assigned to Col. Chapin's (1st) Brigade of Genl. Augur's (1st) Division, the 49th Mass. Regt. being in the same brigade.

About the middle of March the 48th took part in a demonstration against Port Hudson in cooperation with the attempt of Admiral Farragut to pass the batteries with his fleet. Returning to Baton Rouge, March 20, the regiment remained there doing guard duty until May 18 when it was attached to Col. Dudley's (3d) Brigade and joined in the expedition to Port Hudson. At Plains Store, May 21, the 3d Brigade was sharply engaged, supported by the 1st Brigade, the

48th losing two killed, seven wounded, and eleven prisoners.

On May 24, the regiment arrived in front of Port Hudson. An assault having been ordered for the 27th, in response to a call for volunteers to lead the storming party, Lieut. Col. O'Brien and 92 officers and men of the 48th responded. In the assault, which took place in the mid afternoon of the 27th, the storming column and the main line became 430 intermingled, confusion ensued, and the attack failed, Lieut. Col. O'Brien and six others of the 48th being killed and 41 wounded.

From June 5 to 13, the regiment was again at Plains Store. It was then ordered to the Union left and temporarily attached to Emory's (3d) Division with which it took part in the assault of June 14 losing two killed and eleven wounded. On the day following the assault it returned to the 1st Brigade and with it did duty in the trenches in front of Port Hudson until July 9 when the city surrendered.

On July 13, the 48th was engaged on Bayou Lafourche a few miles from Donaldsonville losing three killed, seven wounded, and twenty-three prisoners. The prisoners were soon paroled by the enemy and four days later rejoined the regiment at Donaldsonville. On August 1, it returned to Baton Rouge.

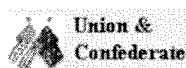
At this place the regiment remained in camp from August 1 to 9, when it boarded the transport SUNNY SOUTH, and started for Cairo, III., where it arrived on the 17th. Here it entrained for Boston where it arrived August 23. The men were now furloughed until the 3d of September when they reassembled at Camp Lander, Wenham, and were mustered out of the service.

Source: Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors & Marines in the Civil War

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FOURTH REGIMENT MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER MILITIA(INFANTRY) NINE MONTHS

Under the call of August 4, 1862, for 300,000 militia to serve nine months, 19,080 being the number assigned to the quota of Massachusetts, the 4th Regt. again volunteered and was ordered to Camp Joe Hooker at Lakeville, Mass., to recruit to war strength. Its companies were mustered into the United States service on various dates between Sept. 1, and Sept. 26, while the field and staff were mostly mustered December 16. On the 27th of December the regiment proceeded to New York where it embarked for Louisiana. It left New York Harbor January 3, 1863, and arrived at Carrollton, La., February 13. On March 7 it arrived at Baton Rouge, La., forming a part of Ingraham's Brigade, Emory's Division, 19th Corps. Here it cooperated with the Navy in the attempt of Admiral Farragut to run past the Port Hudson batteries. It engaged in the attack on Fort Bisland, April 11 to 13, and joined in the pursuit of the Confederates as far as Franklin. From the last of April until the 30th of May it was in or near Brashear City. During the first two weeks in June it participated in the siege of Port Hudson and on June 14 took part in the assault. After the surrender of the city July 8, the 4th Regt. did garrison duty in the defenses until the termination of its period of enlistment. The regiment started for home via Cairo, Ill., on the 4th of August and arrived in Boston on the 17th. It was mustered out at Camp Joe Hooker, August 28.

N.B.--The muster out rolls of the 4th Regiment show that it was present at Brashear City, La., on the occasion of the capture of that place by the Confederates, June 23, 1863, and that it lost a large number of prisoners.

Source: Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors & Marines in the Civil War

MAY 22, 1863.--Steamer Louisiana Belle attacked near Barre's Landing, Bayou Teche, La.

Report of Capt. George S. Merrill, Fourth Massachusetts Infantry.

BRASHERAR CITY, May 23, 1863.

COL.: I have the honor to submit the following report concerning the recent guerrilla attack upon a detachment of this regiment:

On Wednesday, the 20th instant, by orders from headquarters, I was directed to report with 50 members of my company (B) to Col. Chandler, assistant quartermaster, on board steamer Louisiana Belle. My subsequent orders from Col. Chandler were to proceed with the steamer, principally as a guard against guerrilla attacks while taking freight. We reached Washington about sunset on the 21st, and, after stationing a guard, commenced loading with cotton. Our forces had been entirely withdrawn from the town, and the inhabitants, in our limited intercourse, received us with evident lack of friendship. At 10 p. m., from reports brought in by some of my guards of suspicious movements, and after a personal investigation, I became fearful of a night attack by a band of guerrillas, and thereupon doubled the number of my sentries, and adopted other extra precautions to guard against the apprehended surprise. The night passed quietly, our freight being stowed by midnight.

At 6 a. m. on the 22d we started down by bayou. When about 1 mile above Barre's Landing, I observed 3 horsemen some distance in advance

(on the left bank, coming down), leisurely riding along the road. They were well mounted, and carried arms, blankets, and canteens. No sooner did the steamer come within their sight than they put spurs to their horses and galloped out of our view, in the direction of Barre's Landing. While passing this point, a citizen came toward the bank and warned us against a band of guerrillas, who, he stated, were located just below. I immediately ordered my men to put on their full equipments, and hold themselves in readiness to repel any attack should we be molested. A mile and a quarter, I judge, from the Landing had been passed without indications of any foe, and my men, without, however, removing equipments or putting aside arms, were on the upper deck eating breakfast, when, at a sharp turn in the bayou, where the stream is quite narrow, we were greeted with a murderous volley from the dense woods on the left bank. Capt. Alexander, in command of the steamer, who was on the hurricane deck, fell, mortally wounded by this fire; one of the pilots, two of the deck-hands, and ten of my men were also wounded. The shots of the enemy, who were fully concealed, seem to have been directed principally at the pilot-house, which was completely riddled by ball and buck-shot, and which diversion of fire alone prevented a much greater sacrifice among those on board. The principal pilot, who was unharmed, escaped to the engine-room below. The boat, now manageless, ran forcibly upon, and the bows became entangled in, a fallen tree on the left bank, while the stern, forced round by the strong current, caught upon the opposite bank, the wheel becoming wedged into the branches of an overhanging tree. Upon these apparent evidence of the success of their attack, the guerrillas sent up loud shouts of triumph, and called upon us to surrender. The position of the boat was such that it was impossible to land our force and clear the woods, even had that course been advisable, under the severe fire we must have sustained from the ambushed band.

Immediately ordering my men behind such shelter as the boat afforded, we briskly returned the fire of our foes, who were fully concealed by the foliage, and succeeded in so far driving them back and silencing their volleys as to enable us to force the bow of the boat into the stream, and extricate ourselves from the position. Meanwhile the pilot had arranged a temporary steering apparatus below, by which we succeeded in moving very slowly down the bayou. The guerrilla band followed, or rather kept in advance of us, each turn of the bayou or stoppage of the steamer (which, owing to the insufficient facilities for pilotage and steerage, caught occasionally again either bank) being made the occasion for afresh volley from their pieces. We kept up a smart fire into the woods in advance and besides us, and had the satisfaction of seeing the fire of our foes lessen and grow weaker with each successive volley, while a number who ventured into sight were made to bite the dust before the rifle-shots of my men.

Just after extricating the steamer from its first position of danger, we were fired upon from the doorway of a house on the opposite (right) bank, where a white flag was flying, and which house, I am informed, had been guarded by a detail from the Forty-first Massachusetts while that regiment was stationed at the Landing.

From the time of the first attack 8.15 a. m., during an hour and a half, we were pursued and continually fired upon by this cowardly band, until, at the distance of some 5 miles from the point of their first ambush, the over flow wage of water impeding their progress, the pilot was able to resume in safety his customary position, and the miscreants gave us no further annoyance.

The master of the steamer lived nearly four hours from the time of receiving his wounds; one in the head and the other, most severe, in his side. Of the men under my command, 10 were wounded, 2 dangerously in the back; 1 dangerously in the neck, back, arm, leg, and foot; 1 seriously in both legs; the others in less degree.

Much credit is due to the pilot for his successful efforts in managing the boat after the pilot-house became untenable. Of my own men, I may say

they behaved with all the coolness and courage I could have desired, freely braving danger, and risking personal exposure whenever it would lend to the discomfiture of our opponents. The attacking party, I judge, numbered some 30; so far as seen were mainly in citizens' dress, and, from all the attendant circumstances, were, I am well satisfied, principally or wholly citizens of Washington.

With much respect, colonel, your obedient servant,

GEO. S. MERRILL,
Capt. Company B, Fourth Massachusetts.

Lieut. Col. E. T. COLBY,
Comdg. Fourth Massachusetts Regt.

Source: Official Records

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