

Second Regiment Rhode Island Volunteers.

Under the first call of the President of the United States for additional troops to serve three years or during the war, the Second Regiment of Rhode Island Volunteers was organized. The work of enlistment was spiritedly prosecuted under an order from Governor Sprague, and Camp Burnside was established on the Dexter Training Ground, in Providence. The command of the Regiment was given to Colonel Slocum, promoted from Major of the First Rhode Island, an officer of great personal bravery, who had gained reputation in the Mexican War. Colonel William Goddard, of the Governor's Staff, was detailed temporarily to act as Lieutenant-Colonel, who on being relieved was temporarily succeeded by General Charles T. Robbins. At the request of Colonel Slocum, Colonel Christopher Branding assisted in drilling the Regiment. To add to the comfort of the men, a thousand rubber blankets were presented to them by the firm of A. & W. Sprague. Many other tokens of interest and regard were also received by officers and men, and the citizens of Lonsdale made a liberal donation to the hospital department. An elegant stand of colors was presented to the Regiment by the ladies of Providence, through Colonel Jabez C. Knight. The ceremonies of the occasion were appropriate and impressive. The colors were assigned to Company D, Captain Nelson Viall, who had served with honor in Mexico.

All things being in readiness, the Regiment struck their tents at 2 o'clock, A. M., June 19th, 1861, and marched to Exchange Place, where, in the presence of a large crowd of spectators, a short and spirited address was delivered by Bishop Thomas M. Clark, who also invoked the Divine blessing. Resuming their march to Fox Point, they embarked on board the steamer State of Maine, and the Battery accompanying the Regiment, under Captain William H. Reynolds, on board the steamer Kill von Kull.

On the morning of June 22d, the Regiment, accompanied by Governor Sprague, Hon. John R. Bartlett, Secretary of State, and Bishop Clark, arrived in Washington, warmly welcomed, and encamped in Gales' woods, near Camp Sprague. On the 25th, the First and Second regiments, with

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their respective batteries, paid their respects to President Lincoln, by whom they were reviewed. While in camp, the Regiment was brigaded with the First Rhode Island, 71st New York, 2d New Hampshire, and the two Rhode Island batteries. In this brigade, commanded by Colonel Burnside, they marched to the battle of Bull Run, leading the column. On that sanguinary and disastrous field, it was the first, with Captain Reynolds' battery, to engage, and fought the enemy forty-five minutes without support, losing 28 men killed, 56 wounded, and 30 missing; among the former, Colonel Slocum, Major Sullivan Ballou, and Captains Levi A. Tower and Samuel J. Smith. The men stood up bravely under a heavy fire from the rebel batteries, but to no purpose. The color company was a conspicuous mark, and the regimental colors were completely riddled by balls. Dr. James Harris, Surgeon of the Regiment, was unceasing in the performance of his professional duties through the day, often exposed to danger on the field, and always having words of cheer for the wounded and dying. After the retreat commenced, he remained at his post, and gave himself up a prisoner, rather than be separated from those who so much needed his attention. The death of the brave Colonel Slocum, left the Regiment in the command of Captain Frank Wheaton, of the United States Army, then acting Lieutenant-Colonel, to the Colonelcy of which he was subsequently promoted. Captain Viall, on the fall of Major Ballou, assumed the duty of a field officer, and was afterward promoted to Major of the Regiment. Captain William H. P. Steere received the commission of Lieutenant-Colonel in the same. In retiring from the field, the Regiment preserved its order, and on returning to Washington established temporary quarters at Camp Clark. It subsequently occupied Camp Sprague, and removed thence to Camp Brightwood, where it remained till March, 1862, occupied in drilling, picket service, clearing away forests, and building Fort Slocum—a worthy monument to the memory of its revered commander.

On the 26th of March, the Regiment moved with the Army of the Potomac, to enter upon the campaign of the Peninsula. During the siege of Yorktown, it was constantly employed in picket and other important duties. On the evacuation of that place by the rebels, it formed a part of Stoneman's advance in pursuit, and participated in the capture of Fort Magruder, at Williamsburg, saving a regiment that had been badly cut up by unwisely drawing upon it the fire of the fort at eight hundred yards distance. It continued with the advance of Stoneman during its operations on the Pamunkey and Chickahominy rivers, was the first to take possession of White House, took part in the battles of Mechanicsville and Seven Pines, and at Turkey Bend was detached with the 7th Massachusetts, to guard Turkey Bend Bridge, and remained there till Porter's corps crossed. After the battle

of Malvern Hill, when the army fell back to Harrison's Landing, the regiment was assigned to the rear as a cover. On the 5th of July, it was in position on the west

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side of James river, opposite City Point, occupied in throwing up breastworks. When the Army of the Potomac withdrew from the Peninsula, the Regiment proceeded to the vicinity of Yorktown, where it remained a week destroying earthworks, and August 29th it embarked for Alexandria, where it landed September 1st. It shared the fortunes of Pope's Bull Run campaign, was in position at Elk Mountain on the 17th of September, during the battle of Antietam, and subsequently, after performing a variety of fatiguing duties, marched with Franklin's corps to a position in front of Fredericksburg. In the assault upon that city, December 11th, it acted with spirit and efficiency. In the preliminary movements of Franklin's corps, this Regiment was the first to cross the river, in face of a heavy body of rebel infantry and artillery, and deploying as skirmishers, drove in their pickets—a movement executed with the coolness and precision of a regimental drill. Here, Colonel Wheaton was ordered to the command of a brigade that had been under the command of General Howe, and the command of the Regiment devolved on the gallant Colonel Nelson Viall, who received his commission on the field. This he subsequently resigned, and the temporary command of the Regiment fell to Lieutenant-Colonel Goff, an able and highly esteemed officer. He was succeeded by Colonel Horatio Rogers, Jr., transferred from the 11th R. I. Volunteers. After the battle of the 14th, Colonel (now General) Wheaton received from the Regiment the gift of a superb sword, belt and silver spurs, as a testimony of their regard for him as an officer.

In the " mud expedition " that followed this attack on Fredericksburg, the Second Rhode Island participated. It subsequently went into winter quarters, and was employed in picket duty and the usual camp routine. On the 2d and 3d of May, 1863, the battle of Chancellorsville was fought. On the morning of the 3d, the Regiment supported General Gibbon's division in carrying Salem Heights, near Fredericksburg, having two men slightly wounded. In the storming of Marye's Heights, on the afternoon of the same day, the most terrible portion of the conflict, and in some sense a separate, independent battle, the Regiment, led by Colonel Rogers, performed deeds of conspicuous valor. At a critical moment, it largely contributed towards checking the enemy when our forces were being driven on the right, and saved a New Jersey regiment, hotly pressed, from annihilation and probable capture.

The battle of Gettysburg, Pa., July 1st, 2d and 3d, next followed. In reaching this field of Union triumph, so dearly purchased, the Regiment made good time, and toward night of the second day, having marched about thirty miles, it took position on the field of battle on the extreme left, as a portion of Sedgwick's reserve. During the whole of the 3d, though not directly engaged, it was constantly moving, under a storm of shells, to different parts of the field, in support of points hardly pressed,

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losing one man killed and three wounded, and on the following day was on picket on the further edge of the battle field. In pursuit of the retreating rebels, the Regiment had a picket skirmish at Williamsport, July 12th, in which three men were wounded. Continuing its march back into Virginia, the Regiment made camp near Warrenton, July 25th, having marched, going and returning, nearly three hundred miles. On the 9th of October, following the battle of Gettysburg, the rebel General Lee put his army again in motion, to turn the right flank of the forces under Meade, and make a push for Washington; but the falling back of the Federals upon Centreville and Chantilly completely checkmated his purpose. At this point, the 6th corps, including the Second Rhode Island, occupied the extreme right of the line. In the advance of the Union forces upon Rappahannock Station, November 7th, which resulted in the rout of the enemy and the capture of 1600 prisoners, the Regiment was held in reserve; and in another successful advance across the Rapidan, November 26th, it participated. A quiet winter at Brandy Station intervened, when on the 4th of May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac began the grand movement that ultimated in the capture of Richmond, and the overthrow of the rebel confederacy. The marching and fighting of the succeeding four or five weeks, to reach the Chickahominy, comprises a part of the history of the Regiment. In the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania Court House, and all along the succession of flank movements, it bore an honorable and conspicuous part, and in the sanguinary battle of Cold Harbor, a few days before its term of service expired, added another to the laurels won on other fields. On the 11th of June, the three-years' men, under the command of Colonel S. B. M. Read, returned to Providence, and on the 17th were mustered out of service. By order of Governor Smith, they were received by the Division of Militia under the command of Major General Olney Arnold, and escorted to Howard Hall, where a bountiful collation had been

provided, and a formal State reception took place. Colonel Read was wounded in the head and leg, May 12th, on the third day of the battle of Spottsylvania Court House, and was promoted from Lieutenant-Colonel on the 1st of June following, for gallant conduct in the battles of the campaign in which he had participated up to that date.

At the date of the mustering out of the first three-years' men, Companies A, B and C, comprising recruits enlisted from time to time, conscripts and reenlisted veterans, remained in the field before Petersburg. Wishing to preserve to the close of the war the identity of a Regiment that had served so faithfully and bravely, Governor Smith authorized a reorganization, dating from the muster out of the original Regiment. Companies D, E, F, G and H, were recruited and sent forward, and regimental relations were once more established, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Elisha H. Rhodes, breveted Colonel April 2d, 1865, for gallant services before Petersburg.

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On the 6th of July, 1864, General Early, with a portion of the rebel advance, crossed the Potomac, near Antietam, into Maryland, and made a raid on Washington. The Sixth Army Corps, including the Second Rhode Island, and Batteries C, D and G, were hurried to the defence of the Capital, and reached there just in season to save the city, and to aid in driving the enemy, who had approached within shelling distance, back into the valley of the Shenandoah. The pursuit of the rebels was continued, first under General Wright, and then under General Sheridan, who had been appointed to the command of the Department. In the battle of Winchester, September 19th, the Regiment behaved with great gallantry, and had nine men wounded, one mortally. After this battle the Regiment was detailed as part of the garrison of Winchester, to protect it against guerrillas, as well as to escort trains to the front. It was there when the battle of Cedar Creek, October 19th, was fought, and remained until December 1st, when it rejoined the Army of the Potomac, and passed the winter of 1864 and 1865 in doing siege duty in the trenches in front of Petersburg, Va. The Regiment was engaged in all the skirmishes that took place during this period, the most important of which were Hatcher's Run, December 10th, 1864; Hatcher's Run, February 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, 1865; Fort Fisher, Va., March 25th, and Fort Stedman, same day.

In the attack on Petersburg, April 2d, 1865, the Regiment took a prominent and important part. The night before, the 6th corps was massed in front of Fort Fisher, ready for the assault. Just at daybreak, Sunday morning, the lines advanced under a heavy fire, and carried the enemy's main lines by storm. The Second Rhode Island started in the second line, but were the first to reach the works, and planted its colors on the parapet. The enemy fled in great confusion, after their lines were pierced. Lieutenant Frank S. Halliday, acting Adjutant of the Regiment, with a small party, carried a rebel fort mounting two guns, and turned them upon the enemy. The whole affair was a glorious success, and caused the evacuation of the city on Monday morning, April 3d.

In the battle of Sailors' Creek, Thursday following the above, April 6th, the Regiment displayed great prowess. About 5 o'clock, A. M., the division to which it was attached, advanced on the enemy's lines, and the Second Rhode Island attacked a part of the Naval Brigade, commanded by officers of the late rebel fleet. The Regiment charged to within a few feet of their lines, when it met a severe flank fire, which forced it to retire. The action was so close that men were bayoneted, and knocked down with the butts of muskets. In the confusion, the colors of the Regiment were captured, but were quickly retaken. The place where it charged was swampy, with water at least three feet deep, but the men pushed gallantly forward, and regained all the ground lost, causing the enemy to flee in great confusion, who left a part of their wagons in Federal hands. The loss was severe in officers and men, but

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there was a proud satisfaction in knowing that the efforts of the Regiment hastened the surrender of Lee and his army. Captain Charles W. Gleason and Lieutenant William H. Perry, both gallant officers, were killed. They were loved and respected by the Regiment. They entered the service as enlisted men at the beginning of the war, and by merit rose to their positions as officers. In this battle the conduct of officers and men was in the highest degree commendable. The new men, who went into action for the first time, fought like veterans.

After the fall of Richmond, and the surrender of the rebel Northern Army, under Lee, the Regiment left that city for Washington, D. C., May 24th, was mustered out of the United States service at Hall's Hill, Va., July 13th, and left for Providence on the 15th. It reached its destination by the train from New York at 12 o'clock, midnight, July 17th, accompanied by the 11th and 58th Massachusetts regiments, bound to Readville. The regiment was received with the cheers of waiting friends, the salute of the Marine Artillery, and the presented

arms of Company A, Pawtucket Light Guard, Captain M'Cloy. After the reception, they formed and were escorted to Washington Hall, where they partook of an ample collation, prepared by L. H. Humphreys, under the direction of Captain Henrie Crandall. The Regiment had often been severely depleted by sickness, and by losses upon the battlefield. After the battle of Malvern Hill in 1862, it could number only 250 effective men. It numbered on its return, 345 officers and men. Under general orders from the War Department, General Meade directed, March 7, 1865, the mimes of the following battles in which the Regiment had borne a meritorious part, to be inscribed upon its colors, viz.:

First Bull Run, Yorktown, Williamsburg, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Marye's Heights, Salem Heights, Gettysburg, Rappahannock Station, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Fort Stevens, Opequan, Hatcher's Run, Sailors' Creek, Appomattox.

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