

**The Tenth regiment, Massachusetts
volunteer infantry, 1861-1864, a western
Massachusetts regiment**

Roe, Alfred S. (Alfred Seelye), 1844-1917

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VOLUNTEER INFANTRY ASSOCIATION.
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PREFACE

There must be something peculiar in the man who is not ready to maintain that his own home is the very best possible in like manner there must be something lacking in the Union veteran who does not hold his regiment the bravest and truest that ever wore the blue, who does not narrate the services of that organization so regularly, eloquently and persistently that listeners wonder that any member came home alive and what other bodies could have been doing while the st or th was putting down the Rebellion.

While the survivors of the Tenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry do not claim that their regiment was *Primus inter pares* (First among equals), they do maintain that there was none any better and that its rank and file were as truly representative of the real American spirit as any that followed the Flag for the maintenance of the Union.

Though the day is far spent, and the great majority of the men who constituted the membership of the Tenth are today sleeping the sleep that knows no waking, yet the surviving scant fifth of the aggregate, deeming it desirable that the recital of their own and their deceased comrades services should have permanent lodgment by the side of similar stories of other regiments, at this late day, almost half a century after enlistment, avail themselves of the munificent offer¹ of the Commonwealth and the generous contributions of friends, and add this volume to the array of similar narratives of loyalty, endurance and sacrifice.

The body of the work tells the story of the Regiment as a whole; the Roster recites the brief summary of more than twelve hundred men, every one as dear as life itself to some home, more or less distant. Just as far as care and perseverance could take the inquirer, so far have those concerned in the volume carried the investigations concerning those who, so long ago, drank with them from the same canteen and with them bivouacked on the old camp ground. To those who in any way contributed to the fullness of this Roster thanks from many directions are due and they are hereby rendered.

The foundation of the history is the volume put forth by Capt. J. K. Newell in 1875, the result of several years of careful labor, interminable letter writing, the turning of the War files of many newspapers and all the personal interviews that he could secure. This story, modified, revised and extended, forms the basis of a new and later recital of services that grow even brighter in the perspective of intervening years. To Captain Newell's story are added extracts from the diaries of Corporals S. H. Hindley, "H," and Theo. Sar gent, "K," printed in H. M. Tower's History of Spencer, also data from diary of J. W. Hersey, "H," with many incidents and facts, for the first time told in print by survivors who, to the plea for assistance, have sent in personal contributions, always the spice of the more solid dish.

A study of the data, afforded in the Roster, will reveal many interesting items to those curiously inclined. They will find there a remarkable instance

¹The Commonwealth purchases 500 copies of regimental histories of specified size and character to be distributed among the public Libraries of the state.

of homogeneity, in that officers and men were almost entirely of American birth, and while few of them claimed educational advantages beyond those of the public schools, yet still less were obliged to sign their enlistment papers by "his mark." No regiment better appreciated the opportunities of Uncle Sam's postal system and more regularly communicated with friends at home, while reading matter by the pouchful, from the home land, found eager recipients among these church and school reared soldiers.

At the front, only praises followed every year of regimental service. Whether the men were drilling and building forts, marching, on picket duty, camping, skirmishing or in the battle line, where were they found other than faithful? From their baptism of blood at Fair Oaks, through two full years of battle din, to the final scenes in front of Petersburg, every day's duty was faithfully discharged. On their battle flags are inscribed the names of some of the fiercest encounters of the war, but their first was their severest trial. Their aggregate losses entitle the Regiment to a place among the "Three Hundred Fighting Regiments" enumerated by Wm. F. Fox in his famous work, where a total loss of 134 killed and mortally wounded is essential for entrance. The Regiment's percentage of loss was eleven per cent and, while at Spottsylvania, out of 280 engaged, 26 were lost, a percentage of twelve plus. This is all the more conspicuous in that the Regiment received only two hundred recruits, hence a relatively small number of men from whom losses could come. Their actual service at the front was only a little more than two years, and their muster-out, at the end of the three years, did not give the extra time had by many regiments for continuous battle losses.

Readers of this volume will search in vain for the story of the war, that is the field of more extended works; this is just the history of a single regiment, keeping as near the individual as possible from start to finish. Incidentally, other similar organizations are mentioned and historical scenes, places and persons are noted at intervals, but everywhere and at all times the impression is pronounced that the story is specific rather than general. The narrator has had the efficient aid of the committee appointed by their comrades to supervise the compilation and publication. Messrs. Anderson, Gilmore (until his lamented death), Hendrick, Hersey, Howes, Walker and Warriner have faithfully cooperated in every possible way to aid and advance the work.

The reader will observe that an unusual number of portraits embellish the book. The originals of these faces were secured from divers directions and distances. Many of them were crumpled and dimmed by time and carelessness, yet each one as precious as gold to the possessor. Varying in size and vividness, the engraver has done his best to bring out the qualities of resemblance the pictures once possessed; the four groups of officers heads are reduced from the wood cuts with which Captain Newell adorned his book of almost thirty-five years ago.

The surviving veterans of the Tenth, together with their friends and those of the majority already in the other world, are indebted to a wide range of people who have helped in the preparation of this book. The

helpers include, not only the History Committee, but Major Knight and Lieutenant Eaton who listened to the reading of the story in manuscript and the former gave his working hours for months to the elaboration of data in the Roster of Company E; to Lieutenant Darby for his labors in looking up the facts for Company B; the Company Committee of Company H for the thorough manner in which the particulars of that organization were presented; to J. W. Hersey for his war-time diary; and to H. A. Tower of the Band for the admirable work he did in looking up the record of his fellow musicians. Finally, every one who directly or indirectly helped on the development of this history of the Regiment is entitled to the heartiest thanks of every survivor and friend.

ALFRED S. ROE.

Worcester, March, 1909.

Col. H. L. Eustis,

Capt. E. E. Day, Maj. O. Miller, Lt. Col. J. M. Decker,

Lieut. B. F. Leland, Sergt. Maj. E. K. Wilcox, Lt. A. E. Munyan.

SPRINGFIELD

Western Massachusetts! The words arouse thoughts of the hills of Berkshire and the Connecticut River as it courses through the counties of Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden. The western boundary is readily given and, properly, its eastern is the line which separates these three counties from Worcester. In area, this section of the Commonwealth is somewhat more than one-third of Massachusetts, its population in 1860, a trifle under one-seventh of the total; and its valuation, one-eleventh. In furnishing soldiers, population not area counts, and comparison with the aggregates collated by Adjutant General Wm. Schouler shows that the western part of the Commonwealth, in its outpouring of loyal, patriotic men, was fully up to the record of the eastern and central portions and, in expenditures for the raising of troops and caring for dependent families, there was not the slightest falling off. Naturally the militia companies nearest Boston were earliest able to respond to the first call for troops, and only the Allen Guards of Pittsfield were found in the April answer to the President's demand, but regrets over the enforced delay were many and loud.

The Tenth Regiment of the State Militia was entirely a Western Massachusetts organization. Under the command of Col. J. M. Decker, had the companies been nearer the general rendezvous, it might have figured with the Sixth, Fourth and the other bodies so fortunate as to be in at the very beginning. As it was, by reference to the several prefatory sketches of the companies, it will be seen that many of the subsequent soldiers were putting down their names in April and, as it were, dancing attendance on the recruiting station till their muster-in, the following June. When the vision of Secretary Seward and other members of Lincoln's Cabinet, of a rebellion, suppressed in sixty days, had vanished, and in the middle of May there came from Washington permission for Massachusetts to organize six regiments as her first installment towards filling the call for half a million men, there was many an exultant heart-beat along the Connecticut and under the shadow of Greylock, because at least one of the regiments must come from that vicinity.

Governor John A. Andrew has received merited praise during almost half a century for the early proffers, made by him of the services of Massachusetts Militia in the opening weeks of 1861, but some recognition should be had of the wisdom and foresight of his predecessor, Nathaniel P. Banks, Jr., who had placed the citizen soldiery of the Commonwealth in a condition of efficiency never attained before. It was the very climax of good fortune which placed at the disposal of Governor Andrew a superbly equipped body of men, ready to respond at the earliest summons and even to march on their mission southward through loyal states, where men were not yet awake to the need of the Government. While it is true that certain Pennsylvanians, without arms or uniform, had reached Washington a few hours before the arrival of the Massachusetts Sixth, the latter was the first armed body to interpose itself between the Capitol and its enemies. Governor Andrew had

truthfully said that the soldiers of the Bay State went out equipped in all the essentials of warfare, "down to tent pegs and shoe strings."

One of the enthusiastic divisions of the Militia, the Tenth, had been drilling for months with the expectation that the coming conflict might need its services, but when the demand was made it was not for a brief errand into the southland, but for an enlistment of three full years. There were many who would gladly have given the three months, at first called for, but who could not see their way clear to pledge the longer period. Still so great was the pressure for places in the ranks in these early days, there was no question of filling the companies, rather it was one of who should be taken and who rejected. One of Governor Andrews earliest orders was the noted No. 4 in which every commanding officer of a company was enjoined to go carefully over the lists of names and see to it that only those of effective and ready men be retained. The alacrity and spirit with which this order was obeyed augured well for the day when the test should come.

However devoted men may be to their nation or state, there is a clannish instinct in the great majority which prompts them to a love for their neighbors, so companies recruited in contiguous localities have a closer hold on each other than those coming from widely separated sections. Thus Western Massachusetts has a special fondness for the regiments which, in whole or part, were raised in that division of the Commonwealth. These were the 10th, 27th, 31st, 37th, 46th, 49th, 52d and a considerable part of the 21st, 34th and 57th Regiments. Of course men from this section found their way into the various artillery and cavalry organizations of Massachusetts, nor was the Navy wanting in stalwart men whose strength and vigor had been developed in the various industries of the interior. An idea of the services rendered may be had from the fact that, of the foregoing Regiments, the 31st is the only three years organization, not included in Fox's book of "Three Hundred Fighting Regiments." While the record of all was excellent, the 31st doing splendidly in its Louisiana campaigns, special interest pertains to that of the Tenth, since it was the pioneer, the one to blaze the way for others to follow.

As the permission for Massachusetts to raise six additional regiments bore date, May 15, 1861, it is fair to assume this as the very first date in the annals of the Tenth, though men had been waiting, more or less patiently, for such announcement during weary weeks and the muster-in, the real regimental birthday, was yet more than a month away. With Springfield selected as the rendezvous of the new organization, having exceptional conveniences for such purpose, it would be natural to find Springfield Companies earliest on the ground. The Company, as yet unnamed, but to become Company E in the Regiment, recruited by Capt. Frederic.

Barton, was the first company in Hampden county, raised expressly for the war. Company F, as the Springfield City Guard was already in existence and on the ground, as was another company, raised by Oliver Edwards, later Adjutant of the Tenth. May 31st they were joined by Company A from Great Barrington, the other companies except Company D appearing

June 14th, the Pittsfield Company (D) being a day late through a delay in the receipt of orders. Companies A (Great Barrington,) and K (Westfield), marched the entire distance, the latter body escorted all the way by the Rough and Ready Fire Engine Company, and a cavalcade of one hundred and fifty horsemen. Company I, representing West Springfield and Holyoke, also responded on foot. Still another company from Colrain, Company E of the old Militia Tenth, reported in the evening, its membership and that of Edwards s Company being distributed among the other companies.

On the evening of Sunday, June 9th, had occurred one of those stirring events, then entirely new, but to which the loyal North was to become accustomed during the ensuing years. The three Springfield Companies, along with that from Great Barrington attended service at the First church, listening to an earnest, patriotic sermon by the Rev. H. M. Parsons and the strains of "Hail Columbia," "The Star Spangled Banner" and other national airs, as they pealed forth from the organ, while the flag itself bedecked the pulpit, and bunting in red, white and blue festooned the galleries. Soldiers and citizens completely filled the edifice and all carried away a deeper devotion to the cause rapidly becoming the paramount one in the land. The question of who should command the Tenth Regiment was solved Monday, June 10th by Governor Andrew, in that he then signed the commission, as Colonel, of Henry Shaw Briggs, till that day Captain of Co. K, (Allen Guard), 8th M. V. M., thus ending a subject which had given the papers many columns of matter and interested officers and men hours of discussion.

By Tuesday, the 11th. the local companies with that from Great Barrington, had so far perfected themselves in drill that