



A BRIEF SKETCH
OF THE
173RD REGIMENT,

N. Y. V. M. I.

Samuel Phillips Dill.



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SAM'L P. DILL.

1868.

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THE One Hundred and Seventy-third Regiment New York Volunteers was organized at Brooklyn, L. I., November 10, 1862, by Colonel C. B. Morton. It was known as the Fourth Regiment Metropolitan Brigade. On entering upon active duty, it was assigned to General Banks' expedition, and followed him to the Department of the Gulf in detachments. In February, 1863, the regiment being finally united was attached to the Second Brigade, commanded by General Paine, and in General Emory's Division, Nineteenth Army Corps. With the exception of a short period, it always remained under the command of General Emory, until the discontinuance of the Nineteenth Army Corps, in the Shenandoah Valley during the winter of 1864-5.

The regiment took an active part in all the severe struggles in the Department of the Gulf. It was conspicuous for its gallantry during General Banks' operations up the Teche ⁱⁿ Western Louisiana. In the Battle of Bisland, April 12th and 13th, it bore a distinguished part; so much so as to win the encomiums of General Emory, who, in a general order, thanked them for their bravery, and ordered the word "Bisland" to be inscribed upon the regimental flag.

This campaign soon after resulted in the siege and surrender of Port Hudson, which was closely invested by our troops—crossing upon the North side almost simultaneously with General Grant's flank movement upon Vicksburg. General Emory being at this time in command of New Orleans, the division was commanded by General Paine. The regiment took its share in the hot and bloody work of driving the enemy within his entrenchments, on May 25th and 27th, and especially in the fierce assault June 14, 1863. The regiment went into action with three hundred men, rank and file; out of this number five commissioned officers and one hundred non-commissioned officers and privates were killed and wounded. Among the badly wounded was the division commander, General Halbert E. Paine,

who was struck in the leg while gallantly leading his men into action. While prostrated on his bed in the hospital, he wrote the subjoined congratulatory letter to the regiment :

[COPY.]

HOTEL DIEU, NEW ORLEANS, LA.

July 18th, 1863.

Officers and Soldiers of the One Hundred and Seventy-third Regiment New York Volunteers :

The fortunes of war having probably withdrawn you permanently from my command, I cannot without violence to my own feelings refrain from expressing to you at this time my high appreciation of the gallantry and exalted military qualities you exhibited while I had the honor to command you.

During the temporary inactivity to which my disability consigns me, I shall observe with the deepest interest the career of your regiment, not from any anxiety as to your future behavior, but from an earnest wish to the regiment with which my own interests have been so closely identified, enjoying new honors, in addition to those already so gallantly and laboriously won.

Whatever duties may henceforth devolve upon me in the progress of this war, whatever circumstances may surround me after its close, I shall always remember with pride, that I have commanded the Second Brigade.

Permit me to assure you, one and all, of my sincere desire for your future success and prosperity.

Very respectfully, yours,

HALBERT E. PAINE,

Brigadier-General.

For twenty days the balance of the regiment held the rifle-pits on the most exposed front, sheltered from the enemy's deadly fire with the unburied bodies of their comrades, who had fallen on the 14th, and to bury whom the enemy malignantly refused to grant a flag of truce.

Port Hudson surrendered July 8, 1863, and due honors were paid to the memories of Captain Cochen, Lieutenant Shea, and others of the gallant dead. Major Galway was mortally wounded, and soon after died. The history of the siege has lately been published by General Banks in terms true and just.

After Port Hudson, the regiment formed a portion of the eight thousand men sent under General Franklin to attack Sabine Pass. This expedition, for some unknown reason, failed, and the regiment was sent to New Orleans. During the fall of 1863, it was engaged in the second Teche campaign. It participated in the following engagements : Vermillion, October 9th ; Carrion Crow Bayou, October 15th ; and Vermillion Plains, November 11th.

During the winter of 1863-4, the regiment received an addition of one hundred and fifty recruits, and on March 15, 1864,

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started on its fourth campaign, up the Red River. In this disastrous movement it bore a distinguished part, being engaged in four of the most sanguinary engagements which history has recorded. At Sabine Cross Roads, April 8th, the One Hundred and Seventy-third and the One Hundred and Sixty-second New York Volunteers were in the front line and on the extreme left of the division, which was commanded by General Emory. Both regiments aided in the rout and repulse of the enemy at Pleasant Hill, April 9, 1864. The One Hundred and Seventy-third, together with the brigade, held the front line—in fact, they were the outlying advance-guard of the army. The enemy was enabled, in the dense wood that concealed his movements, to pour a destructive fire into their ranks, but they tenaciously held their ground, resisting the terrific onslaught bravely. Our brigade commander, Colonel Lewis Benedict, fell at this fire, completely riddled with bullets. The regiment was, however, nearly surrounded, but managed to cut its way through and escape, but not without losing two hundred out of four hundred men. Lieutenant-Colonel Green, an efficient and estimable officer, received here his death-wound.

Notwithstanding the severe loss already sustained, the battle-scarred veterans participated in the battle of Cane River, April 23d—the One Hundred and Seventy-third, One Hundred and Sixty-second, and One Hundred and Sixty-fifth New York, and the Thirtieth Maine Volunteers, made one of the most brilliant bayonet charges upon the enemy, putting him to rout. In this charge the regiment lost the brave Captain Lee, and the brigade commander, Colonel Fessenden, lost a leg. The official report of the Commanding General confirm the heroic bearing of the regiment. General Banks, in a letter to Colonel Peck, says: "The affair at Monett's Bluff, April 23d, was one of the most daring and important actions of the entire campaign. It secured to the army a safe passage for its retreat, unmolested by the enemy."

At Alexandria, the men labored night and day in constructing the famous dam, which finally extricated the gunboat flotilla from its perilous position. On the 16th of May, it participated in the artillery battle of Mansura. The regiment numbered about one hundred and fifty men on arriving at Morganza, having lost three hundred and fifty officers and men during the Red River campaign.

The regiment was transferred in July, 1864, with the Nineteenth Army Corps, to the Army of the Potomac, and was stationed for a short time at Bermuda Hundred. It participated in an engagement at Deep Bottom. The brigade to which it was attached was badly managed and won no laurels, but, notwithstanding, the regi-

ment was unexceptional in its conduct. It shortly afterwards was sent with the Corps (Nineteenth) and the Sixth Corps to the relief of Washington. The brilliant and ever-memorable victories under Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley were participated in by the Third Brigade. At Cedar Creek it held the post of reserve, and returned a large number of stragglers, to duty with their respective regiments in the front.

It may not be too much to assume that the brilliant result of the battle of Cedar Creek was a tower of strength in the reelection of President Lincoln—it was a bright spot in one of the darkest hours. All who participated under Sheridan, may justly be proud of their share of the laurels of his victories, which won for all immortal renown. After the departure of Sheridan to rejoin General Grant, the regiment was temporarily attached to the First Division, First Army Corps, commanded by General Hancock. Immediately after the assassination of President Lincoln, April 14, 1865, it was assigned to the defence of Washington. It participated in the grand review May 25, 1865—representing the Army of the Shenandoah. In June following, it was ordered to join the Second Division, (Grover's,) at Savannah, Georgia, where it remained until the expiration of its term of service.

Colonel Peck first entered the service June 1, 1861, as Captain of Company K, First Regiment Long Island Volunteers, (known as the Beecher Regiment.) He fought with his company at Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks and Seven Pines, Garnett's Farm and seven days' battles. He was severely wounded at Malvern Hill. In the foregoing battles his company of sixty-six men had lost forty-three killed and wounded. Captain Peck, on recovering, became Lieutenant-Colonel of the One Hundred and Seventy-third Regiment, and, March 15, 1863, Colonel in place of Morton resigned. Colonel Peck commanded the brigade at Port Hudson and during part of the Red River campaign. For important services rendered at Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek he was brevetted Brigadier and Major-General, on the recommendation of General Sheridan.

Colonel Peck promulgated the following order on the disbandment of the regiment :

Brooklyn, October 30th, 1865

Officers and Soldiers of the One Hundred and Seventy-third Regiment New York Volunteers :

The day and the hour has arrived for the disbandment of our regiment. Our country no longer needs our services. If it ever does, we know how to respond. *Over three years ago you nobly came forward and enrolled yourselves as soldiers under its brightest banner that ever floated over the troops of any nation.*

You had no enticement of bounty—no allurements of dazzling victory; but true to yourselves, your country, and the dearest interests of humanity during the darkest hour of the war, you made a firm resolve to stand by the flag of our fathers, and you have carried it triumphantly through many a bloody battle, until our nationality has been secured and placed high above the reach of rebels, and our republic made great and glorious and memorable forever.

To men so thoroughly tried as the members of the One Hundred and Seventy-third this is an occasion for joy. The record of our regiment is an accumulation of honors. Its battles—whether on the Teche, at Port Hudson, on the Red River, or in the historical Shenandoah—have been victories, save at one engagement, where, indeed, before yielding, you lost two hundred and thirty-one men out of five hundred.

In the language of our Lieutenant-General, "your marches, sieges, and battles—in distance, duration, and brilliancy of result—dim the lustre of the world's past military achievements." Slavery has been trampled out of existence. Free labor exists through your patient and patriotic endeavors. A future of unexampled prosperity awaits you and your children, whose proudest memory will be the part you have taken in the sacred cause of liberty and union.

Soldiers! we cannot disband without doing reverence to our honored dead. Their bones are bleaching on fifteen battle-fields. Six hundred of your comrades have succumbed to death or permanent disability, and of the two hundred and fifty survivors present, more than fifty bear the scars of honorable wounds. Names are invidious where all have done well. For your preservation give thanks to God, who has brought you safely once more to your families and to peaceful pursuits.

Officers and soldiers! deeply do I feel this sundering of our military relations. I shall ever bear in mind your patience on the march, bravery in battle, your discipline, and the high regard you have always manifested towards me. Let your brilliant record remain untarnished, for we have now reverently deposited the tattered and scarred colors we so long carried in the archives of the State. Thus must we stand proudly before the world, conscious of the approval of our countrymen, knowing that our deeds and actions and our bloodshed have not been in vain.

Officers and soldiers of the One Hundred and Seventy-third! I bid you an affectionate farewell. Long may you live and prosper, and long live our republic!

LEWIS M. PECK, Colonel Commanding.

ENGAGEMENTS

Bisland, La., April 12th and 13th, 1863.	Pleasant Hill, La., April 9th, 1864.
Port Hudson, La., May 24th to July 8th, 1863.	Monett's Bluff, La., April 23d, 1864.
Vermillion Skirmish, La., Oct. 9th, 1863.	Massena Plain, La., May 16th, 1864.
Carrion Crow Bayou, La., Oct. 15th, 1863.	Deep Bottom, Va., July, 1864.
Vermillion Plains, La., Nov. 11th, 1863.	Opequan, Va., September 19th, 1864.
Sabine Cross Roads, La., April 8th, 1864.	Fisher's Hill, Va., September 22d, 1864.
	Cedar Creek, Va., October 19th, 1864.

EXPEDITIONS

Indian Village, La., Feb. 18th, 1863.	Deep Bottom, and the Army of the Potomac, July, 1864.
Breaux Bridge, La., April 21st, 1863.	Washington D. C. and Monocacy Junction, August, 1864.
Plaquemine Bayou, west of Opelousa, April 25th to 27th, 1863.	Army of the Shenandoah.

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