

Annals of Iowa
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FIRST REGIMENTAL FLAG OF IOWA.

[We here give this interesting history of the Regimental Flag of the First Iowa Volunteer Infantry, by Allen Broomhall, Esq., of Atalissa, Iowa]

This Flag was offered, by the ladies of the city of Muscatine, as a prize to the best drilled company of Wide-Awakes in attendance at a Republican mass meeting, held at Muscatine, during the Presidential campaign of 1860; and was won by the Atalissa or Gosnen company. And by them, in April, 1861, it was presented, with a neat and appropriate address, to company "C," of the First Iowa regiment of volunteers, and by them carried as the Flag of the regiment, through their eventful campaign.

After the regiment was mustered out of the service, and company "C" returned home, the Flag was again presented to its donors, and by them presented to the Adjutant General of Iowa, and by him to the State Historical Society.

AN EXTRACT.

[The following is taken from the history of the First Regiment of Iowa Volunteer Infantry, by Henry O'Connor, Esq., of Muscatine Iowa.

In connection with the day of the First Iowa Regiment, described on another page, the account of the battle of Wilson's Creek, (Springfield,) will be read with interest. From this first regiment of three months' men, have gone to the field as commissioned officers, over one hundred and fifty, who lately, in part, paraded in Vicksburg, Miss., after its surrender, with Maj. General F. J. Herron, at their head, who presided at a public dinner, at their celebrated meeting.]

We camped for the night. A council of war was held, and as the General could not coax them into a fight, he said he would not kill his men running after them; so we marched back for Springfield, next day. We reached our camps around Springfield on the fourth of August. The Iowa First encamped on the farm of Major Phelps, who was then in Washington at the extra session of Congress, his patriotic wife and daughter at home, with trunks packed and horses saddled, ready for any emergency, but rendering all the service in their power and making every sacrifice for the Union cause. The troops lay on their arms day and night from that time until the eve of the ever memorable battle of Wilson's Creek. Horses and mules were kept harnessed, wagons loaded, and every thing ready for moving at a moment's notice. The General and his field officers were anxiously and hourly expecting reinforcements. None appeared. The rebel army, variously estimated at from twenty-five to forty thousand strong, were encamped on Wilson's Creek, eight miles from our lines. General Lyon had positive and reliable assurances from his spies, confirmed afterwards by the rebel officers, that they intended to march on Springfield in three columns, on the Fayetteville, Mount Vernon and Forsyth roads. They were to march on Saturday, the tenth, and make the attack at daylight on Sunday. Lyon could wait no longer; he must either retreat or fight. The brave patriot soldier had never learned to retreat. He had two million dollars worth of United States property in charge; he had faith in his handful of troops; and his sagacious and far-seeing Judgment told him that a retreat to

Rolla through the mountains, with a train of wagons eight miles long, before rebel cavalry and artillery, might be easily turned into a route. Lyon did not want to be the hero of another Bull-run disaster, and hence, in a council of war on the morning of the ninth, he overruled a majority of his field officers, determined to anticipate the enemy one day, and march out and give them battle on the tenth. Orders were accordingly issued at noon Friday, to be ready to march at six in the evening, each man with forty rounds of cartridges and two days rations. The Iowa First were in line, seven hundred and sixty strong, at sundown, and were reviewed by the General, attended by his faithful and brave aid, Major Schofield. The General addressed a few thrilling words to the regiment. "Boys," said he, "we may have warm work tomorrow. You are from a northern State, loyal to the union. The honor of Iowa and the interests of your country are in your hands; I want you to maintain them." I may be permitted to say, they proved worthy of the high trust.

The little army, fifty-two hundred strong, marched out silently in three columns---the left under Sigel, a small force under Sturgess, which, in the morning just as the battle commenced, joined the right wing under General Lyon himself, and formed the main body. The Iowa First was in General Lyon's column. We followed the Mount Vernon or Little York road some four miles, then turned off on the prairie, following a guide. About two o'clock in the morning, we halted, dropped in the long grass of the prairie and slept soundly for two hours. With the first dawn we were in motion, and in about an hour, with the first glimpse of the morning sun, our ears were saluted with the sharp sound of musketry among the trees. Our advance had already surprised and captured the enemy's pickets, without noise, and had by this time engaged their camp guards. Totten's splendid battery, with the Iowa first immediately behind it, was in a few minutes placed in position, on a commanding eminence---the best position on that field---and to the selection of which we owe much of our safety and success. The battery opened without ceremony, Captain Totten himself pointing the guns. The enemy were at first thrown into confusion, and little was heard from them for the first half hour. They soon rallied, and about six o'clock the action became general. From this time till half past eleven, any attempt at description would be useless. A rapid succession of charges and repulses; one continual roar of musketry and cannon, which shook the buildings in Springfield, eight miles off; shells bursting, horses and men mangled, writhing, and dying all round; no water; thermometer ranging from 100 to 108; but in all this, there was no shrinking. I never heard the word retreat mentioned, by man or officer, during, those seven hours. The Iowa First were in five separate charges or engagements, each of them in itself a battle, for we had to meet fresh troops every time, and always over double our number. About ten o'clock, being twice slightly wounded before that, and having two horses shot under him, the brave, disinterested and patriotic Lyon, with hat in hand, waiving the First Iowa and Second Kansas on to a charge, fell, mortally wounded.

The General put himself at the head of six companies of the First Iowa, and all of the Second Kansas, which was originally only six hundred strong, and led them on in what he evidently considered, as it proved to him, a death struggle. This is the concurrent testimony of all who were on the field, and who talked the matter over that night at Springfield.

The battle of Wilson's Creek may be called a victory or a defeat; but one thing is certain, our army, and among them our First Iowa regiment, had the satisfaction of eating our rations, shaking each other by the hand, and singing the "Star Spangled Banner," on the same ground upon which we fired the first gun in the morning.

On the morning of the eleventh, the army, under the command of General Sigel, vacated Springfield, and in six days made the march to Rolla, by a circuitous route, one hundred and thirty miles. The longer route was taken, on account of the Gasconade river being high and only fordable at certain points. We brought nearly all our wounded with us from Springfield. At Rolla we found

the clothing furnished by the State awaiting us. Very acceptable, indeed, as most of us were almost without clothing. We arrived in St. Louis, by rail, on Saturday, August seventeenth, where, as soon as muster rolls were properly prepared, we were paid off and started for home.

The First Iowa regiment was under command of Lieutenant Colonel William H. Merritt, who was as cool as a philosopher in the thickest of the battle. Colonel J. F. Bates went out with the regiment a few miles, but was so entirely prostrated by sickness that he found himself obliged to heed the order of his physician, and return to Springfield, greatly to his own mortification and the regret of his friends. Most of the company officers were on the field.

Of course, in such a fight, considered by officers of twenty years service to be the bloodiest, according to numbers, ever fought on the American continent, (it stands as yet the only real pitched battle in this war,) there were many acts of daring and heroism. Major Porter, who was on horseback and in the thickest of the fight, displayed a coolness and courage that more than sustained his previous reputation. And his son, a private in company F—"Wat.," as we called him—acted more like a veteran of a hundred battles than a raw prairie boy of twenty-two. Adjutant George Waldron, of Dubuque, who was severely wounded, I believe in the same charge in which General Lyon fell, acted throughout with the most praise-worthy skill, courage and coolness. Adjutant Waldron was, by great odds, the most accomplished field officer we had in the regiment.

Of course, at such a time and in my position, I could notice but little outside of our own company; but I cannot omit to notice Captain Frank J. Herron, (now Major General,) of Dubuque, who, although sick enough to be in bed, remained on the field all day, and was wounded in the action; and his First Lieutenant, (Clark,) who nobly sustained him; Lieutenant George Stone, of Mount Pleasant, whose chivalric and daring bravery arrested the attention of all who noticed him; Lieutenant George Satterlee, of company A, who was at his post all day; the gallant Captain Mason, who fell at the head of as brave a company of men as ever trod a battle-field--his First Lieutenant, William Purcell, was wounded, as was then supposed mortally, but did not quit the field until obliged to from loss of blood and sheer exhaustion; Seargent Hugh J. Campbell, of company A, who was wounded early in the day, behaved with great coolness and bravery; and Sargent Major Compton, who really filled the place of a field officer, behaved in such a gallant manner as to elicit the praise and admiration of the whole regiment.

I must not omit to mention that brave, patriotic and Christian soldier, Reverend I. J. Fuller. He enlisted as a private, was subsequently appointed Chaplain, and at Wilson's Creek was on the field all day with his haversack full of bandages, like a good Samaritan, caring for the wounded, regardless alike of personal sacrifice or danger.

It would be impossible properly to notice all who deserve it in a sketch like this, especially where all acted so bravely.

The regiment came home about eight hundred strong, and from letters and observation, I find that about six hundred of that number have again entered the service.

This brief sketch, mainly from memory, is necessarily very imperfect; but it may serve to preserve in the State a recollection of the deeds and conduct of Iowa's first offering to the Nation's cause.

The marching of the regiment, from the time they left Keokuk until they reached Rolla, on their way home, made, according to a log-book which I kept, six hundred and twenty-two miles.

With the most sincere wish that we may all live to see our glorious old Union once more restored to its full greatness and harmony, and our flag floating over the homes of freemen from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore, I commit this sketch to the charity of those who may read it.

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CAMP WOODS, ON CLEAR CREEK, MISS., October 9th, 1863.

N. B. Baker, Adjt. Gen. of State of Iowa:

I have noticed, with regret, an error in the Iowa papers, in regard to a captured flag which I forwarded to you from Vicksburg, to be placed in the State Historical Society.

The Flag was captured at Vicksburg on the 4th of July, 1863, from the 26th Louisiana, and not at Champion Hills, as stated in the papers.

By giving this correction in the leading Iowa papers, you will confer a favor on me and my regiment.

Respectfully your obd't servant,
W. M. G. TORRENCE,
Col. 10th Iowa Vols.