



The 7th Michigan Infantry Regiment “*Forlorn Hope*”

Albert Z. Conner Jr.

Falmouth and Stafford, Virginia, were and still are essentially Southern places. The attitudes of the residents naturally have reflected that reality for many of the years since the war ended. Some of that animosity lingered in Stafford hearts and, for a few, there is still a residue of dislike for the largely faceless “*Yankee invaders.*” Most Civil War histories of Stafford naturally focus on the very real trials and tribulations of the people and the thousand men who left their native county to fight for Virginia and the Southern Confederacy. For that reason, the stories of the hundreds of thousands of Union men and women who struggled here have largely and sadly been neglected – even by well-intentioned and knowledgeable historians.

In reality, a major turning point in the war took place in Stafford County, Virginia – not on the famed local battlefields where Lee’s army generally prevailed – but in the camps of the Army of the Potomac which spread across the hills and flatlands of central and southern Stafford. Stafford truly witnessed the Union Army’s “*Valley Forge*” in the winter of 1862-1863. The army that emerged from their camps here was improbably set on the course to victory by Major General Joseph Hooker, his officers and (mostly) his soldiers. It was here that they returned to the army’s corps structure; reorganized the cavalry and intelligence services; consolidated the combat lessons of the previous two years; renewed an aggressive spirit in the soldiers; rebuilt their logistics infrastructure; and moved on with more, new, and battle-proven commanders.

They all had learned the brutally acquired lesson that, to defeat Lee’s army on the subsequent battlefields, they could no longer look to the mythical man on horseback with a magic plan to lead them. Instead, they would have to rely on their own abilities, fortitude, and resources at every level of command from general to private. In the final analysis, they learned to lean on one another and to fight the war to its bitter conclusion. That meant that the only way to victory would be defeating Lee’s army on the battlefield. Along the way, the Federals would also collectively demand in their letters the support of the people at home to counter the corrosive influence of the Copperheads’ “*fire in the rear*” and to gain continued political support for the Lincoln Administration and the nation to finish the war.

The army that left Stafford in June 1863 had been transformed and three days of reckoning would come at last on the field at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. This was an army that saved America and liberated four million of their fellow countrymen from bondage. Without its sacrifices, America as we know it today – the one that saved Europe and the rest of mankind in two world wars and defeated the advance of communism in the twenty-century – simply would not exist. The war was a valuable lesson in liberty, which would transcend the ages; but it

would come at an almost unbelievable cost. The Union Army's legacy must be understood and described to future generations of Americans.

What happened here in Stafford County, Virginia, has had a lasting effect on Americans who lived afterward. They would no longer be citizens of a dysfunctional conglomeration of sovereign states, collectively living a life of freedom while looking the other way about the institution of slavery. America would become a true nation, operating in unity among the international nation-states. America would become a true federal republic where the people rule and where the original purposes of its founders would be substantially and manifestly realized. The nation would more appreciatively absorb the immigrants – many of whom had served and suffered on the battlefields of the Civil War. Paradoxically, the American South would become a vital and contributing part of a reconciled and reunified nation, one that would emerge on the world stage and would become a unified force for liberty and freedom. The America of 1861-1865 and earlier would emerge into a country of the Marshall Plan and a thousand other humanitarian actions. The nation would win many wars in the centuries that followed; yet no American empire, colonies, or vassal states would emerge. Wherever American forces went, they would fight for freedom, remain as long as duty required and return home as quickly as possible. None of that would have been possible but for the Union Army's victory in America's Civil War.

In addition, to be sure, none of that was yet clear in the America of 1861 and 1862. The nation was in the midst of its most traumatic national epoch, "*a great civil war.*" Thirty years of antebellum ideological and partisan political bickering, economic friction, and sectional strife had come to an end; American nationhood would receive its greatest trial by fire. The best way to understand what took place in that war is to examine in detail what happened to one unit and one soldier at a time. That is our task.

In contrast to elite units of the war, such as the U.S. Sharp Shooters, which were conceived as elite formations, organized and equipped accordingly, and trained with unique tactics and techniques that were ultimately proven on the battlefield, the 7th Michigan Infantry Regiment was of a different order. It was conceived as a **standard** Civil War infantry formation. One of 34 infantry regiments credited to the state of Michigan, the 7th was organized and equipped with typical Union armaments and uniforms, and was employed in standard brigade/division/army corps roles throughout the war. Indeed, it served in the same formations for almost all of its service. It employed standard "*from the book*" tactics, as elucidated in Scott's, Hardee's and Gilham's tactical manuals. The 7th, however, would prove to be one of those "*standard*" outfits which would prove its exceptional mettle on the field of battle and, in one brief shining assault during its time in Stafford and Falmouth, Virginia, it would write a new chapter in American battlefield tactics. The regiment would also electrify the Army of the Potomac with the story of its heroism on the Rappahannock River on December 11, 1862.

The 7th was a volunteer unit – one small part of the vast citizen-soldier army raised in every state and territory of the remaining Union -- organized in Monroe, Michigan, and mustered into Federal service for three years on August 22, 1861. Its companies were recruited in different parts of Michigan. The colorfully named units were: the "*Union Guard*" of Port Huron; the "*Curtenius Guard*" of Mason; the "*Jonesville Light Guard*" of Jonesville; the "*Monroe Light Guard*" of Monroe; the "*Tuscola Volunteers*" of Tuscola; the "*Blair Guards*" of Farmington; the "*Lapeer Guards*" of Lapeer; a company from Pontiac; the "*Prairieville Rangers*" of Prairieville; and the "*Burr Oak Rangers*" of Burr Oak. Under the command of Colonel Ira R. Grosvenor, the 7th departed from Monroe on September 5, 1861, with 884 officers and enlisted men. After

arriving at the front, the regiment took part in the battle of Ball's Bluff (Leesburg, Virginia) on October 21-22, 1861.

When mustered-in, the line companies and their commanders were: "A" Captain Thomas H. Hunt of Port Huron; "B" Captain Phillip McKernan of Mason; "C" Captain Henry Baxter of Jonesville; "D" Captain James Darrah of Monroe; "E" Captain John H. Richardson of Tuscola; "F" Captain John D. Harty of Detroit; "G" Captain James H. Turrill of Lapeer; "H" Captain Joshua P. Sutton of Flint; "I" Captain Bezaleel W. Lovell of Lapeer; and "K" Captain John H. Waterman of Burr Oak.

After the spring of 1862, the 7th served in the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, II Army Corps, for most of the war. In July 1862, following the resignation of Colonel Grosvenor, Colonel Norman J. Hall, a youthful Regular Army artilleryman, assumed command of the regiment and led it until he was temporarily promoted to brigade command. The 7th's sister regiments in the 3rd Brigade included the 19th Massachusetts, 20th Massachusetts, 42nd New York, and 59th New York. The 127th Pennsylvania would also join the brigade. The 7th fought in the Peninsula Campaign during the summer of 1862, specifically at Yorktown, Fair Oaks, Peach Orchard, Savage Station, White Oak Swamp, Glendale, and Malvern Hill. It next fought at Second Bull Run or Manassas (August 29-30, 1862), and in Maryland at South Mountain (September 14, 1862), and Antietam (September 17, 1862). The regiment was well thought of by its commanders and frequently commended for its battlefield actions



Figure 1. Colonel Norman J. Hall, 7th Michigan, commanding brigade at Fredericksburg. Note the II Army Corps insignia on his cap. (Archives of Michigan)

The 7th Michigan's greatest wartime action came during the battle of Fredericksburg in December 11-15, 1862. In the early morning of December 11, Union engineers on the Stafford bank of the Rappahannock readied their equipment to construct a floating pontoon bridge at the upper crossing site. Despite fog and efforts to muffle the sounds, Confederate pickets alertly noted and reported this activity. About 4 a.m., a Confederate battery subsequently broke the early morning calm by firing twice; that was the signal that the enemy was approaching. Confederate Brigadier General William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade, deployed mainly as sharpshooters in cellars and other barricaded shelters on the lower floors, took up their positions on the Fredericksburg side. They continued to hear the engineers working on the pontoon bridge; however, heavy fog screened the bridge builders from view. The fog eventually

thinned and the Mississippians opened fire, taking a toll on the Union engineers and their supporting two regiments of infantry. Union artillery on Stafford Heights, positioned the night before, suppressed the Mississippians' musketry - first by direct fire from 36 field pieces and then by a general bombardment from 150 cannons pounding the surrounding town houses and setting some of the buildings on fire. Lacking a linear defensive position on which to concentrate their fire – a distinct credit to General Barksdale's battle plan -- the Federal bombardment was rendered far less effective. In an odd juxtaposition of terrain advantage, the outnumbered Confederate batteries on the ridgelines beyond Fredericksburg could fire their fragmentation rounds effectively to the river line. The Federal artillery, although better guns positioned on dominant ground on Stafford Heights, could effectively strike the town itself and the hills beyond with solid shot, but would be constrained (by the shorter range of those rounds) at firing fragmentation rounds in support of the advancing infantry beyond the town. Well-protected Mississippi sharpshooters resumed fire whenever the Union engineers continued their work, and it became clear to both the Yankee engineers and artillerymen that something else must be done to relieve the pressure on the bridge builders.

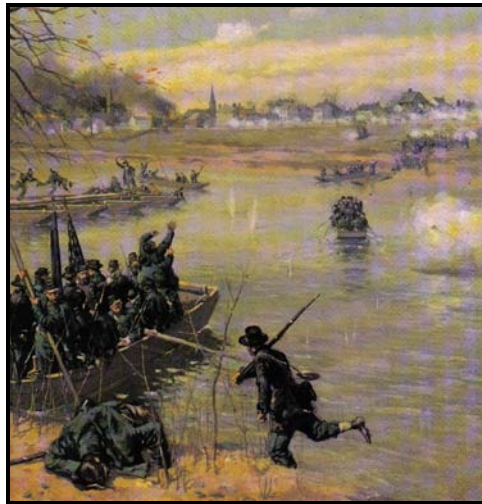


Figure 2. Assault river crossing, December 11, 1862, by the 7th Michigan and the 19th and 20th Massachusetts Regiments of Hall's brigade (*Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 3, 1886).

Apparently from a plan conceived by junior engineer officers (ironically the engineer commander, Brigadier General Daniel P. Woodbury, was cool to the idea), Brigadier General Henry Jackson Hunt, commanding the army's artillery and in personal command on Stafford Heights, suggested an emergency plan to Major General Ambrose Burnside. The plan envisioned using spare pontoon sections as assault boats by infantry to rapidly advance across the narrow Rappahannock to relieve the sharpshooter-fire pressure on the engineers while they finished construction. Hunt, Woodbury, and Burnside approached Colonel Norman J. Hall's brigade of six regiments (7th Michigan, 19th Massachusetts, 20th Massachusetts, 42nd New York, 59th New York, and 127th Pennsylvania). Despite its six regiments, Hall's entire brigade mustered only 1,000 effectives, the equivalent of but one, full-strength regiment. No doubt, Hall was concerned – since virtually no Civil War actions had been attempted which were not detailed in one of the prevailing tactics books of the day – but he nevertheless volunteered his own 7th Michigan, to be followed by the rest of his brigade. A man standing nearby reportedly overheard Burnside saying something to Hall to the effect of “*the effort meant death to most of those who should undertake the voyage.*” The commanding general then added, “*If any should*

cross under the conditions it would be **one of the greatest feats of the war.**" (Emphasis added).

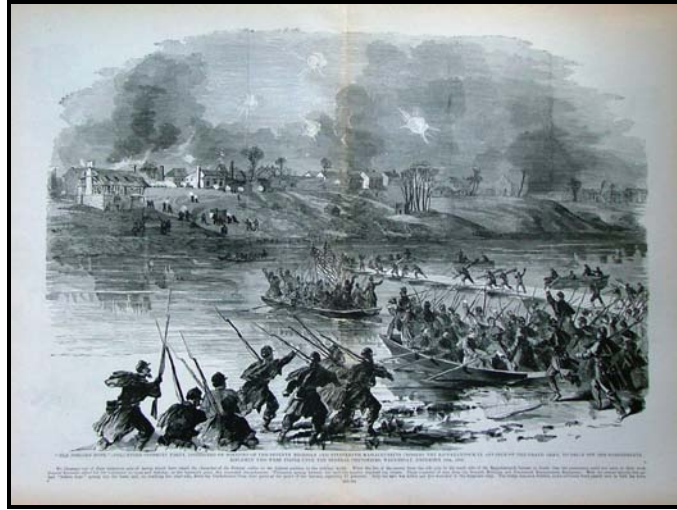


Figure 3. "The Forlorn Hope," referring to the 7th's riverine assault, was the title of an illustration in *Frank Leslie's Magazine* during the war. The term's origins trace at least to the Napoleonic Wars, during which the command of the "forlorn hope" led directly to success (i.e., promotion or glory) or to certain death or wounding or to both (Moncure Conway Foundation).



Figure 4. Brigadier General Daniel P. Woodbury (left); Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt middle); and Major General Ambrose E. Burnside (right) (Library of Congress).

More surprisingly, when the veteran soldiers were presented with the opportunity, Hall's troops volunteered with three long cheers! Colonel Hall, turning to Burnside, summarized, "*My soldiers are ready to cross the river and drive out the Confederates.*" With daylight rapidly fading, Hall initially selected two of his infantry regiments and ordered them to seize the area controlled by the Mississippians, thus allowing the Federal engineers to complete their critical task. The attack would be spearheaded by the 7th Michigan with an initial wave of about 60-70 to a total of about 120 men crossing in six pontoon "boats," each to be rowed by three engineers of the 50th New York Engineers. The lead pontoon boat was directed by Lieutenant Robbins of the engineers [This refers to Lt. James L. Robbins, Company A, 50th New York Engineers. His leading role suggests he may have been one of the originators or at least one of the supporters of the plan. Robbins rose to captain during the war].

Although the precise timing varies in different accounts and reports, it is clear that the 7th Michigan and the 19th Massachusetts regiments were first staged to the riverfront in the vicinity

of the bridging site. Working with Captain William Plumer's 1st Company, Massachusetts Sharp Shooters, the regiments were employed in returning the fire of the Mississippians and Floridians on the far shore.



Figure 5. Colonel C. H. Tompkins, 1st Rhode Island Artillery Regiment. He later served on the military commission that tried and convicted the Lincoln assassination conspirators (Library of Congress).

The critical artillery support for this assault – no doubt heightened in priority because of Hunt's commitment to the risky plan -- was substantial. The 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery Regiment's Colonel C. H. Tompkins, commanding the division artillery ("*center right division*"), directed the fires of Battery K, 5th U.S. Artillery (Kinzie); Battery K, 1st U.S. Artillery (Graham); Battery G, 4th U.S. Artillery (Miller); Battery K, 3rd U.S. Artillery (Turnbull); Battery D, 1st New York Artillery (Kusserow); Battery C, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery (Waterman); Battery K, 4th U.S. Artillery (Seeley); and Battery H, 1st Ohio Artillery (Norton). Positioned on the night of December 10th, these batteries were joined (after the Confederates began firing on the bridge site at 6 AM) at about 9 AM on the 11th by Battery I, 1st U.S. Artillery (Kirby), Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery (Hazard), and Battery G, 1st New York Artillery (Frank). All batteries were in the vicinity of the Lacy House – spread from about 300 yards to the house's river facing right to the center bridge site. This massing of fires certainly assisted the attack: 12-pounders fired solid shot and some shell; and the rifled guns fired "*percussion shell*." Several periods of intense fire, each recollected as about 30 minutes in duration, saw the guns pounding the houses on Sophia (Water) Street where the Mississippian sharpshooters were positioned. Unquestionably, this fire distracted the riflemen and caused some casualties, while inflicting damage and fire on Fredericksburg's river-facing houses and other buildings.

After rapid preparations, the 7th's soldiers piled into the pontoons at a rate of about 20-25 per boat and engineers and/or some of their own men rowed them "*cross-current*" through the river's freezing stream. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Baxter (see Figure 9 below), he ordered them to pole or paddle their way across as quickly as possible, not to fire en route, and to stay together and attack immediately without waiting to form line of battle. Accounts vary on the uneven conduct of the engineers, for whom this must have seemed a surreal experience. These accounts of the engineers ranged from men refusing the mission outright to grudging participation to creditable conduct. The 7th's men creditably launched their boats and covered whatever deficiencies the engineers were responsible for. Baxter was badly wounded in the shoulder at about the crossing's mid-point. Command of the 7th was assumed by Major Thomas H. Hunt. Both Baxter and Hunt had been among the original captains of the 7th,

reflecting a common Civil War occurrence in which good company-grade officers, if they survived, rose to higher commands in their regiments.

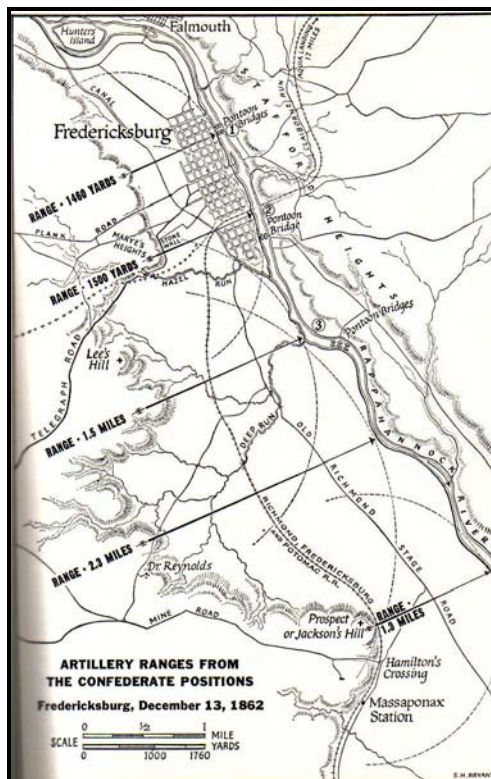


Figure 6. As described in Douglas Southall Freeman's *Lee* (abridgment in one volume by Richard Harwell), (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p 273, Confederate artillery positioned at Marye's Heights, Lee's Hill, and Prospect/Jackson's Hill were able to threaten the upper, middle and lower pontoon crossing sites (the former with fragmentation rounds). This indirect fire rendered the advance by the Hall's Brigade far more dangerous.

While criticism of the 50th New York Engineers during the riverine action is fairly simple to develop at this distance in history, a letter written on December 17, 1862, by engineer Samuel S. Partridge [not in NPS/CWSSS] adds some needed perspective:

Each pontoon carried in it a peck or two of plugs to stop the bullet holes, and also one or two men more than were necessary to work it into place – and it was hard to see these brave fellows move their pontoon into the jaws of death, the bullets crashing into them and the men falling dead into them in the very act of plugging up the holes...it was declared impossible to do the last length – to throw sleepers to the shore and lay a roadway on them. I saw a lieutenant and 21 men try to lay one sleeper and saw all but five deliberately picked off with a target rifle.

Barksdale's Confederate marksmen fired repeatedly, but could not hold back the approaching assault – the assault boats were particularly assisted as they approached the far shore by a small bluff at the Sophia (Water) Street level that mercifully blocked direct fire from the basements and lower floors to the water. Challenged by the steep embankment, following Hall's orders, the Federal infantry disembarked without first assembling, deployed roughly as skirmishers, and advanced to clear the Rebel sharpshooters from the houses. The 7th

Michigan, quickly followed by the 19th Massachusetts, rushed the houses on Sophia Street, and routed out the enemy before working their way into town. Rolling back slightly, Barksdale's men regrouped and fiercely counterattacked the advancing Federals and forced them back nearly to the river's edge. The second attacking regiment was the 19th Massachusetts. The 20th Massachusetts was initially in reserve and, if necessary, Hall's other regiments would be committed. When it crossed, the 19th Massachusetts pushed up on the 7th Michigan's right and attacked into the houses as well. The Federal bridge builders, who had been ordered to return to work during the assault, failed to continue immediately in their construction tasks. Hall then committed the 20th Massachusetts, which, through confused communication, tried to cross the uncompleted bridge. In what must have been an awkward and dangerous movement, they ran back across the bridge and moved across by pontoon boat. The 20th thus reinforced the faltering Union bridgehead. The first three regiments were apparently enough to drive Barksdale's Mississippians backward toward the Confederate center of mass beyond the town. The remaining regiments of Hall's brigade (42nd New York, 59th New York, and 127th Pennsylvania) were able to cross when the bridge was finally completed that night.

One of the 20th Massachusetts' men later wrote the "*Michigan men made a rush at the nearest houses and took quite a number of prisoners. The orders to the whole Brigade were to bayonet every armed man found firing from a house...but it was not of course obeyed.*" The Michigan and Massachusetts troops, in acts of great chivalry, took at least some of the wounded prisoners who had been mainly injured by artillery and falling debris, and evacuated them to the Stafford shore.

Continuing, the 20th Massachusetts soldier related, "*The 7th Michigan were deployed on the left and a short distance up the street at the foot of which we landed, and the 19th on the right, both holding houses, fences, etc., and exchanging shots with the Rebels who were a little farther back. ... When a good many troops had got over, we were advanced up the street*" Crossing the Rappahannock River in pontoon boats under fire, the 7th and the other regiments had written a new chapter in American military history. By driving the Confederate sharpshooters and skirmishers from their covered walls, rifle pits, and stone buildings, the advance had relieved pressure at the bridgehead and rendered the Confederate fire less able to strike the advancing forces of General Burnside at will. Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard had ordered almost all of his division into Fredericksburg. Historian Frank O'Reilly summarized the event:

The Union army had at last established a tenuous beachhead at Fredericksburg. The last few seconds had made American military history. This desperate crossing had been the very first amphibious assault under fire in the annals of the United States military. The humble antecedent to the seaborne invasions of the Second World War had been played out in the quiet currents of the Rappahannock River.

More than the large scale, seaborne amphibious assaults of World War II – because of the tactical innovations and expedients, artillery support difficulties, and raw courage of the combat soldiers participating – the 7th's assault on the Rappahannock is more akin to the assault crossing of the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, on the lower Waal River at Nijmegen, Holland, in September 1944, as well as other riverine assault crossings of that war. Crossing in 16-man collapsible assault boats, the paratroopers captured the key objective bridge at great cost, leaving a lasting impression on British XXX Corps Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, who observed, "*I have never seen a more gallant action.*"

Such was the legacy of the 7th Michigan's assault and the common bond of valor by American citizen-soldiers separated by 82 years in time.

Although somewhat repetitive to the materials above, Colonel Norman J. Hall's official report, written six days after the riverine attack, is worthy of including here in its entirety as it provides numerous, necessary additional details (O.R. -- Series I -- Volume XXI [S# 31]):

Headquarters, Third Brigade, Camp near Falmouth, Va., December 17, 1862.

Captain: In compliance with orders, I have the honor to make the following report of the operations of the brigade under my command during the late battle in and before Fredericksburg, Va.:

On the evening of the 10th instant, my command was designated to take the advance of the army, as soon as the bridges should be built, on the following morning. On arriving at the point where the head of the column was to rest, I received orders to report with the brigade to Brigadier-General Woodbury, commanding Engineer Brigade, at the Lacy house. The bridges were not being advanced on account of the deadly fire of the enemy's sharpshooters, posted behind buildings and in cellars and rifle-pits along the opposite bank. Two regiments were deployed (the Seventh Michigan and Nineteenth Massachusetts Volunteers) along the bank of the river to cover the bridge-builders by their fire as skirmishers, but afterward withdrew them, to enable the batteries to fire shell. After some hours of delay, Generals Hunt and Woodbury consulted with me upon the practicability of crossing troops in boats, and storming the strong points occupied by the enemy, so as to protect the heads of the pontoon bridges, of which but one had progressed to any extent. It was arranged that, under cover of a heavy artillery fire, the engineers should place boats at intervals along the bank, and provide men to row and steer them.

Lieutenant-Colonel Baxter, commanding Seventh Michigan Volunteers, was informed of the plan, and his regiment volunteered to be crossed and storm the town as proposed. Captain [Harrison G. G.] Weymouth, [Company K] of the Nineteenth Massachusetts, also volunteered to support the Seventh Michigan, if required, crossing in the same way.

The first-named regiment was deployed, and took post along the bank, while the latter lined the river as sharpshooters, together with Captain Plumer's company of sharpshooters (independent), which was ordered to report to me for this object. At a signal, the batteries opened their fire, and continued with great rapidity for over half an hour, the engineer troops failing to perform their part, running away from the boats at the first fire from the enemy and seeking shelter. [This is Capt. William Plumer, who commanded the 1st Company, Massachusetts Sharp Shooters, raised in September 1862 and attached to the 15th Massachusetts Infantry until September 1864. At Fredericksburg, the 15th was in the 1st Brigade (Sully), of the 2nd Division (Howard) of the II Army Corps, Right Grand Division (Sumner).]

No prospect appearing of better conduct, I stated to Colonel Baxter that I saw no hopes of effecting the crossing, unless he could man the oars, place the boats, and push across unassisted. I confess I felt apprehensions of disaster in this attempt, as, without experience in the management of boats, the shore might not be reached promptly, if at all, and the party lost. Colonel Baxter promptly accepted the new conditions, and

proceeded immediately to arrange the boats, some of which had to be carried to the water. Lieut. [Cyrus] B. Comstock, chief engineer, Army of the Potomac, directed the embarkation personally, I believe. Before the number of boats fixed upon had been loaded, the signal to cease the artillery firing was made, and I thought best to push those now ready across, rather than to wait till all were filled, and to allow the enemy to come out of his concealment from the cannonade.

The boats pushed gallantly across under a sharp fire. While in the boats, 1 man was killed and Lieutenant Colonel Baxter and several men were wounded. The party, which numbered from 60 to 70 men, formed under the bank, and rushed upon the first street, attacked the enemy, and, in the space of a few minutes, 31 prisoners were captured and a secure lodgment effected. Several men were here also wounded, and Lieutenant [Franklin] Emery [Company G, 7th Michigan] and 1 man killed. The remainder of the regiment meanwhile crossed, and I directed the Nineteenth Massachusetts to follow and gain ground to the right, while the Seventh was ordered to push to the left. Seeing no preparations for advancing the bridge, which, according to the plan, was to have been under construction when the crossing was commenced, I went to the engineer battalion and asked the commanding officer to send down parties at once. He replied that General Woodbury was in command, and was away. I entreated that men should be instantly sent, nevertheless, but could obtain no satisfaction.

The firing in the street had now become general and quite rapid, and, as I had been informed that a brigade of the enemy had been seen moving toward the bridgehead, I requested General Hunt to reopen fire upon the flanks and in advance of the party that had crossed. I afterward learned from prisoners taken that this brigade of the enemy was General Barksdale's, composed of the Thirteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-first Mississippi Regiments. Several prisoners were taken belonging to the Eighth Florida Regiment, which was in the city.

All firing upon the bridge had been now silenced, and the bridge was rapidly completed. I reported to General Burnside directly the conduct of the engineer troops. An order for the Twentieth Massachusetts Volunteers to move across the bridge the instant it was down was incorrectly transmitted, so as to cause Acting Major [George N.] Macy, its commanding officer, to throw it across in boats [Apparently Hall did not see or hear about the 20th's initial attempt to cross the bridge]. This regiment was held in line along the bank to resist any attempts of the enemy to recover this point by an exposed movement, and the Seventh Michigan Volunteers and the Nineteenth Massachusetts Volunteers could hold against any advance through buildings. [Macy was later promoted to colonel of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry and he was brevetted a brigadier general.]

A portion of the Seventh Michigan, Forty-second, and Fifty-ninth New York fell back, as did the Nineteenth Massachusetts a moment later. The Twentieth Massachusetts stood firm and returned the fire of the enemy, till I had, with the assistance of my staff and other officers, reformed the line and commenced a second advance.

The firing having commenced in my line, it was impossible to restrain it, so that an effective charge was not expected. The advance was renewed in fine style by the whole line, but gave way from the left. The Nineteenth Massachusetts gained several houses near the enemy on the road and held them, losing 2 commanding officers – 9 officers in all, and many men. The Twentieth Massachusetts showed the matchless courage and

discipline evinced on the previous day. Further attempts to advance were hopeless. I reported that I could hold my position, and was ordered to do so.

The remainder of the day, till late at night, was spent under a fire of shell from our own guns as well as those of the enemy. Twenty or 30 men were wounded by shots from the former. After midnight, the brigade was relieved by General Sykes' division, and withdrew to the city. The Forty-second New York was detailed for picket duty next day. I know nothing of its operations while thus detached.

On the 15th, Col. William R. Lee, Twentieth Massachusetts, arrived and assumed command of the brigade. Nothing is required to be said in praise of the conduct of the officers and men of this brigade, while under my command, in the late battles. Lieutenant Stinson, aide-de-camp to General Howard, was sent to me for staff duty, and fearlessly carried my orders during the thickest of the fight. To him and to the officers of this brigade staff, Capt. William B. Leach, assistant adjutant-general; Lieut. William F. Milton, aide-de-camp; Lieut. C. P. Abbott, aide-de-camp, and Captain Crombargar, commissary of subsistence, I owe both my thanks and the most honorable mention for the zealous performance of all their duties.

I have the honor to inclose lists of killed, wounded, and missing, and a tabular statement, Very respectfully,

*N. J. Hall, Colonel Seventh Michigan, Commanding Brigade.
[To:] Capt. [Eben J. or T.] Whittelsey, Assistant Adjutant-General.*

An interesting comparison with the official reports is a recollection from Clara Barton, who was on duty at the Lacy House. Although somewhat romanticized (she was giving the account as a postwar speech) and muddled by the fact that she confused the overall disposition of forces (“*The men of Hooker and Franklin were right and left. But here in the center came the brave men of the silvery-haired Sumner*”), and was clearly drawing on other material, she recalled the observed events from her vantage point. Perhaps it demonstrates how the assault had moved from history to myth to memory, as Miss Barton described the 7th Michigan’s riverine assault:

Drawn up in line they wait on the beautiful grounds of the stately manner whose owner, Lacy, had long sought the other side, and stood that day aiming engines of destruction at the home of his youth and the graves of his household.

There on the second portico I stood and watched the engineers as they moved forward to construct a pontoon bridge. It will be remembered that the rebel army occupying the heights of Fredericksburg previous to the attack was very cautious about revealing the position of its guns.

A few boats were fastened and the men marched quickly on with the timbers and planks. For a few rods, it proved a success, and scarcely could the impatient troops be restrained from rending the air with shouts of triumph.

On marches the little band with brace and plank, but never to be laid by them. A rain of musket balls has swept their ranks and the brave fellows lie level with the bridge or float down the stream.

No living thing stirs on the opposite bank. No enemy is in sight. Whence comes this rain of death?

Maddened by the fate of their comrades, others seize the work and march onward to their doom. For now the balls are hurling thick and fast, not only at the bridge, but over and beyond to the limit of their range – crashing through the trees, the windows and the doors of the Lacy House. And ever here and there a man drops in the waiting ranks, silently as a snowflake. And his comrades bear him in for help or back for a grave.

There on the lower bank under a slouched hat stands the man of honest heart and genial face that a soldier could love and honor even through defeat; the ever-trusted, gallant Burnside. Hark – that deep-toned order rising above the heads of his men, “Bring the guns to bear and shell them out.”

Then rolled the thunder and the fire. For two long hours, the shot and shell hurled through the roofs and leveled the spires of Fredericksburg. Then the little band of engineers resumed its work, but ere ten spaces of the bridge were gained, they fell like grass before the scythe.

For an instant, all stand aghast; then ran the murmurs: “The cellars are filled with sharp-shooters and our shell will never reach them.”

But once more over the heads of his men rose that deep-toned order: “Man the boats!”

Into the boats like tigers then spring the 7th Michigan. “Row! Row! Ply for your lives, boys.” And they do. But mark! They fall, some into the boats, some out. Other hands seize the oars and strain and tug with might and main. Oh, how slow the seconds drag! How long we have held our breath.

Almost across -- under the bluffs – and out of range! Thank God – they’ll land!

Ah, yes, but not all. Mark the windows and doors of those places above them. See the men swarming from them armed to the teeth and rushing to the river.

They’ve reached the bluffs above the boats. Down point the muskets. Ah, that rain of shot and shell and flame!

Out of the boats waist-deep in the water; straight through the fire. Up, up the banks the boys in blue! Grimly above, that line of gray!

Down pours the shot. Up, up the blue, till hand to hand like fighting demons they wrestle on the edge.

Can we breathe yet? No! Still they struggle. Ah, yes, they break, they fly, up through the street and out of sight, pursuer and pursued.

Another encounter with Clara Barton, and tied to the Lacy House/Chatham, also involved one of the 7th Michigan’s wounded soldiers, Riley Faulkner. Barton later wrote:

Among the wounded of the 7th Michigan was one Faulkner, of Ashtabula County, Ohio, a mere lad, shot through the lungs and, to all appearances, dying. When brought in, he could swallow nothing, breathed painfully, and it was with great difficulty he gave me his name and residence. He could not lie down, but sat leaning against the wall in the corner of the room.

I observed him carefully as I hurried past from one room to another, and finally thought he had ceased to breathe. At this moment, another man with a similar wound was taken in on a stretcher by his comrades, who sought in vain for a spot large enough to lay him down, and appealed to me. I could only tell them that when that poor boy in the corner was removed, they could set him down in his place. They went to remove him, but, to the astonishment of all, he objected, opened his eyes and persisted in retaining his corner, which he did for some two weeks, when finally, a mere bundle of skin and bones, for he gave small evidence of either flesh or blood, he was wrapped in a blanket and taken away in an ambulance to Washington, with a bottle of milk punch in his blouse, the only nourishment he could take.

On my return to Washington, three months later, a messenger came from Lincoln Hospital to say that the men of Ward 17 wanted to see me. I returned with him, and as I entered the ward seventy men saluted me, standing, such as could, others rising feebly in their beds, and falling back – exhausted with the effort.

Every man had left his blood in Fredericksburg – every one was from the Lacy house. My hand had dressed every wound – many of them in the first terrible moments of agony. I had prepared their food in the snow and winds of December and fed them like children.

How dear they had grown to me in their sufferings, and the three great cheers that greeted my entrance into that hospital ward were dearer than the applause. I would not exchange their memory for the wildest hurrahs that ever greeted a conqueror or king. When the first greetings were over and the agitation had subsided somewhat, a young man walked up to me with no apparent wound, with bright complexion, and in good flesh. There was certainly something familiar in his face, but I could not recall him, until, extending his hand with a smile, he said, "I am Riley Faulkner, of the 7th Michigan. I didn't die, and the milk punch lasted all the way to Washington!" [According to several sources, although his records may have been confused with those of Amasa Faulkner in several places, Riley Faulkner probably served in Company A, 7th Michigan; he had probably enlisted on March 22, 1862, in Tuscola County, Michigan, at 21 years of age. He was probably discharged for disability in Washington, D.C., in August 1863].

After the "Mud March" (January 20-24, 1863), the 7th endured the bitter defeat and suffered humiliation along with the rest of the Army of the Potomac during its winter, "Valley Forge" in Stafford. After the loss at Fredericksburg, Melvin Rice, Company B, 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, wrote:

In the night, we retreat and go back into camp. Our regiment is quartered in a deserted village called Falmoth [sic]. Co. B. C. and [I - no other company provided...perhaps a typo in the original transcription] are quartered in an old church building [Union Church being the only church there at that time]. Here we do picket. Our war Governor visits us, Mr. [Austin] Blair [1818-1867, Republican governor from

1861-1865] of Jackson City. It is now 1863. I am very much in love with this country around Fredricksburg [sic] and Falmuth [sic - he spells it several ways]. It can ship by ships to any part of the world.

All was not completely dreary. After the first Fredericksburg battle, and probably after the “Mud March,” the army settled into camp life in the center of a perimeter defense encompassing several hundred square miles in Stafford County. The troops of the II Army Corps camped closest to Falmouth itself. John J. B. Adams of the 19th Massachusetts would recall in 1899:

While in Camp at Falmouth, the baseball fever broke out. It was the old-fashioned game, where a man running the bases must be hit by the ball to be declared out. It started with the men, then the officers began to play, and finally the 19th [Massachusetts] challenged the 7th Michigan ... it was a grand time, and all agreed that it was nicer to play base than minie ball.



Figure 7. Union Church, Falmouth, circa 1870. This is the closest known photographic image of the church to the way it looked in the Civil War when occupied by elements of the 7th Michigan (Courtesy of Jerry Brent).

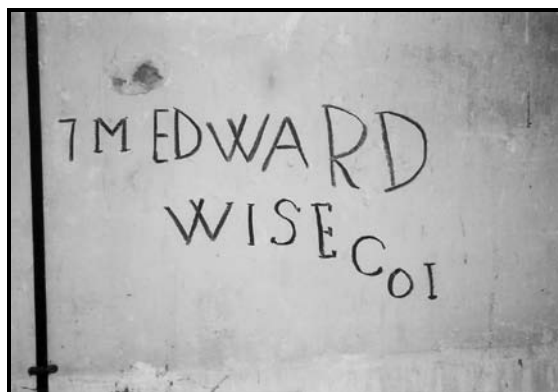


Figure 8. Soldier graffiti in the Union Church (charcoal dust has been added to clarify the inscription), probably inscribed using the worming-end of a rifle ramrod; this identifies the wartime presence of Edward Wise of Company I, 7th Michigan Volunteers (Photo by Norman Schools, Moncure Conway Foundation).

The 7th also experienced the army’s reorganization, renewal, and renovation under Major General Joseph Hooker’s command (after January 26, 1863). In a remarkable bit of war reporting, Private Melvin Rice succinctly related four months of Civil War history from a private soldier’s perspective: “Burnside is relieved and Gen. Joseph Hooker is placed in command. Have a grand review. There is talk of a move. Everything is ready. A move commences. We,

our Company, for some cause is left here in Falmouth. All the army is on the move gone up the river. Our men have found the Confederate Army. We can hear the distant roar of battle. It is up stream in the direction of Chancellorsville.” Rice’s Company B remained at Union Church in Falmouth during the battle. While performing picket duty during Chancellorsville, they discovered a “*clandestine secret submarine telegraph wire*” at the Conway House.

According to historian Noel Harrison, a rumor (attributed to a New York newspaper) was circulating in April 1863 throughout the Army of the Potomac that on or about April 25th, “*a clandestine telegraph station*” had been discovered in “*a brick house on Falmouth’s riverfront.*” Someone was reportedly transmitting information to the Confederates “*via a ‘submarine wire’*,” which transited the Rappahannock under water. The unknown telegraphers were variously described as “*a Union telegrapher*” and “*a civilian and his son.*” Harrison surmises that, if true, the telegraph line segment may have been part of the prewar telegraph line that had extended through Falmouth.

A transcription of a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article of April 24, 1863, contains some of the same details. The article relates that “*Intelligence was received here to-day of an important arrest at Falmouth, the headquarters of the army of the Potomac. No doubt has existed for a long time that the rebels have had some secret means of knowing every thing that transpired within our lines, and that much information was instantaneously conveyed.*” The article stated that, before orders from the headquarters had been fully received by Hooker’s subordinates; Confederate pickets were teasing the Federals from the other bank of the river about their drawing “*eight days’ rations.*” This led, the *Inquirer* reported, to Provost Marshal General Marsena Patrick alerting every picket position “*to discover and expose the iniquitous system.*” On the 23rd, a guard in Falmouth “*stationed outside a dwelling adjoining the brick church on the river-bank*” reported hearing “*a clicking, like that of a telegraph instrument.*” The guard informed his superiors who directed him to search the premises. He found four to five individuals, one of whom was seated at a telegraph instrument and sending messages “*by a submarine wire across the Rappahannock.*” All were reportedly arrested and faced a punishment of “*death by hanging.*” A letter from General Hooker to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton on April 27th requested that the papers Washington agents provide the names of reporters of the New York Times and Philadelphia Inquirer to him. Hooker asked specifically for the names of the reporters who had done the stories on “*the submarine cable said to be in use by the enemy between Falmouth and Fredericksburg*” and he also cited the previously mentioned *Inquirer* article. Finally Hooker threatened to “*suppress the circulation of the two newspapers*” and to “*exclude their correspondents*” if his request wasn’t satisfied. Stanton replied on April 30th that Major Eckert of the U.S. Military Telegraph was providing Hooker’s requested information and the secretary also supported any measure taken by Hooker. All of this suggests something less than the confirmation provided in the Philadelphia newspaper; however, it leaves a lingering historical cloud above the possible house containing the enemy telegraph. The brick Moncure Conway House is closest house to the brick church, assuming it was Union Church. But the report merely stated it was “*a dwelling*” without further description. Also, Union Church would not readily be described as “*on the river-bank.*” It is also known (see below) that an “*old tobacco warehouse on the very banks of the river*” was used by the U.S. Christian Commission. Historian Edwin C. Fishel would later uncover several other aspects. He asserts that the *Inquirer* and probably the *Times*, had falsified the origins of the dispatches. The *Inquirer* article was actually written in the paper’s editorial office and the *Times* version was likely a dispatch that had failed to pass the censors, but was later mailed to New York. Thus, the submarine wire and telegraph remain essentially a mystery.

Possibly related to the “*submarine wire*” incident was a set of events in May 1863 that depicted Federal concern over Falmouth residents “suddenly” fishing along that side of the Rappahannock and possibly communicating with Confederates (who were also actively fishing on the Fredericksburg side) and providing information to them. John H. Rhodes, a Union artilleryman in the 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, related that the left section of his battery (B) was ordered to hitch up and move by the double-quick establishing picket down to the river “by the old church in Falmouth” to observe and control this fishing activity. The Rebels, he related, had been warned, but had continued to fish. While under the guns, the Confederates apparently took action to stop these actions and their fishing stopped.

With heightened capabilities and renewed confidence, the army fought at Chancellorsville (May 1-5, 1863). This defeat, however, brought only brief despair and reflection. The “*Valley Forge*” period in Stafford and Falmouth had strangely strengthened the army’s morale and resolve. Afterward, they would no longer seek to identify with their generals, as their Southern peers had done and would continue to do. Instead, the Army of the Potomac would identify most strongly with one another, their patriotism, and ultimately with their cause of union and emancipation. That would sustain them until the final victory was secured.

After the battle at Chancellorsville, Melvin Rice of Company B, despite some dreadful spelling and punctuation problems, added some humorous common-soldier insights on Stonewall Jackson, food supplies, civil-military relations, and upcoming events:

... [B]ut in this battle they have lost their great Jaxon we will not have to fear him any more, they the rebs are fishing with sein across the river see them draw them out by the wagon load. report Gen Lee is going north draw rations ready to march. Comisary told us to help oursefes to bread for the rebs would get what we did not take So as we passed by we stuck our bayonets into a sheat that is 24 loafes of bread it is a sight to make a hungry man smile when we get out side of town halted on a acount of Alf Brown a member of our Co. had deserted we were expecting it for he married a woman of the little town of Falmouth a good soldier disgraced him self. now we start on a march to follow up to save the north from invasion the rebs are going down the Shanandoah. [Alf Brown may be William A. Brown, Pvt., Company B, 7th Michigan, the only NPS/CWSSS listing of a Brown in the 7th with an “A” in his name. He was from Ingham County, Michigan, and was 18 years of age at enlistment].

The 7th next participated in the Pennsylvania Campaign in June 1863, again with the Army of the Potomac. They would fight in a brief engagement at Haymarket, Virginia on the way to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. By long and forced marches, they reached Gettysburg on the 2nd of July, being assigned to a key position on Cemetery Ridge, where the 7th remained until the close of battle on the 3rd of July. Reflecting their previous losses at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, the regiment took only 14 officers and 151 men into action in Pennsylvania. Following the two days of fighting they suffered a loss of 21 killed and 44 wounded, described by one account as “*an eloquent eulogy upon the heroism of this regiment.*” The 7th joined in the pursuit of the Confederate army as it retreated into Virginia. The tide of war in the East had turned. Combined with the fall of Vicksburg in the West, the South’s days were numbered.

After Gettysburg, the 7th fought at Falling Waters, Maryland, and, in the fall, on August 20th, sailed from Alexandria, Virginia to New York, there to remain during the progress of the infamous draft riots, which were causing great loss of life and disastrous destruction there. The

following October it was again with the Army of the Potomac, fighting in a spirited battle at Bristow Station in the Bristow Campaign. In November and December, the regiment fought in the Mine Run Campaign. The regiment was "*marching, fighting, and building earth works until December.*" Some 162 of its members re-enlisted and were returned to Monroe, Michigan, on January 2, 1864, on a furlough of 30 days duration. The 7th reassembled at the end of its furlough and returned to its old camp at Barry's Hill. In May, the regiment started on the long Overland Campaign. In some of the heaviest fighting of the war, the Overland Campaign saw the beginnings of trench warfare and systematic mine warfare.

The 7th, as part of the II Corps, crossed the Rapidan River at Ely's Ford on the 4th of May 1864, and was afterwards engaged with the Confederates in the battle of the Wilderness. It then fought at Spotsylvania Court House, where it assaulted the Southern defensive works with great losses. The regiment took part in the series of engagements after Spotsylvania and participated in the disastrous charge at 2nd Cold Harbor. In that long and difficult campaign, with the most continuous hard fighting of the war, the 7th fought in the Wilderness; on the Po River during the Spotsylvania battle; on the north Anna River; at Totopotomoy; and at Cold Harbor in June 1864.

It next fought at Petersburg, including Deep Bottom; Strawberry Plains; Reams' Station; Boydton Plank Road; Hatcher's Run; Cat Tail Creek, and the Siege of Petersburg. The regiment crossed the James River and arrived before Petersburg on June 15th, where it assisted in building fortifications and performed picket duty until the end of July. While in front of Petersburg it took part in the numerous actions in that vicinity. On October 27, 1864, Sergeant Alonzo Smith of the 7th captured the colors of the 26th North Carolina. That same day, Sergeant Daniel Murphy of the 7th's sister regiment, the 19th Massachusetts, captured the flag of the 47th North Carolina. The 7th was involved in Grant's flanking movement around Petersburg, before moving to High Bridge and Farmville, which finally ended the Siege of Petersburg. It was still on the march April 9, 1865, when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. After the surrender, the 7th marched to Burkeville, Richmond, and finally to Washington, D.C., where it took part in the Grand Review.

On June 6, 1865, the 7th Michigan Infantry Regiment was ordered to report to General Logan at Louisville, Kentucky. They arrived in Louisville on the 22nd of June and were mustered out on July 5, 1865. The regiment's last act was to return to Jackson, Michigan, where its soldiers were paid for the last time, mustered-out, and the unit was disbanded. The regiment had 11 officers and 197 enlisted men who had been killed-in-action or mortally wounded; and 3 officers and 186 enlisted men who died of disease while in military service, for a total of 397 fatalities. The 7th's total wartime enrollment had been 1,375. Another account had reported the 56 had died of wounds and 17 had died in Confederate prisons. This account also reported 344 had been discharged for wounds and put the regiment's total casualty rate at 50.2 percent.

The 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry had a number of outstanding men and exceptional soldiers. Several are depicted here in Figures 9-12 in order to provide a sample of their character and service. Not all military fame is quite so clear, particularly when the fame involves old veterans.



Figure 9. Brigadier General Henry Baxter. Among the 7th's ranks during the war had been future brigadier general Henry Baxter, who was captain of Company C and lieutenant colonel after July 1, 1862. He was severely wounded in the abdomen in the Peninsula, but returned to duty in time to lead the 7th's immortal riverine assault across the Rappahannock in the Fredericksburg battle on December 11, 1862. Baxter's left shoulder was shattered in that assault; invalidated for several months, he was promoted to brigadier general on March 12, 1863. Baxter returned to fight again at Gettysburg – where he lost his entire staff and half of his troops commanding a brigade in the I Army Corps. While commanding a brigade in the V Army Corps during the 1864 Overland Campaign, a rifle ball passed through Baxter's leg killing his horse. Colonel Richard Coulter, 11th Pennsylvania Infantry, wrote the O.R. for the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, V Army Corps in the Wilderness battle. In his report, he commented on Baxter: *"In so far as it may be proper for a junior I desire to call attention to the gallantry of General Baxter, commanding brigade. Wherever his presence was required there was he found giving direction and encouragement to his men. He was wounded while at the head of his command."* Brevetted as a major general in April 1865, Baxter survived the war, and later served as President Grant's ambassador to Honduras. As with so many men who had survived so many wounds and close calls on the Civil War's battlefields, Baxter died in an anticlimax of pneumonia in his hometown of Jonesville, Michigan, in 1873 (Library of Congress).

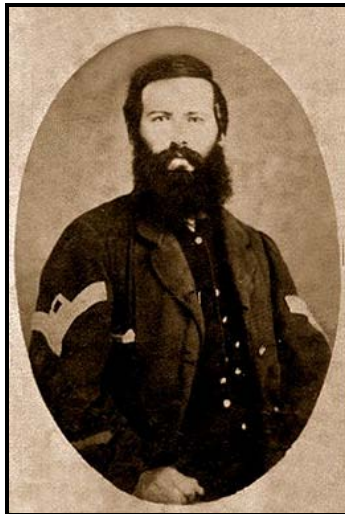


Figure 10. Hartman Sharp Felt, 25 years of age, enlisted on Aug. 17, 1861, at Bunker Hill, Michigan, as a corporal in Company B, 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. He was wounded twice (head and leg) at Fair Oaks, Virginia, in the Peninsular Campaign. After recuperating to his satisfaction in a general hospital in Philadelphia – he apparently left without permission and was officially listed as a deserter by the hospital on August 1, 1862 – Felt returned to his regiment. Promoted to sergeant on September 1, 1862, he was sent to Grass Lake, Michigan, on recruiting

duty. Felt wrote (Sept. 17, 1862 – coincidentally the day his company fought at Antietam), that “*recruiting appears to be dead here at present.*” After requesting to rejoin his unit, he returned on October 20, 1862, in time to fight at the battle of Fredericksburg (December 11-15, 1862) and was present on December 11th for his regiment’s finest hour. He next fought at Chancellorsville on May 1-5, 1863, and Gettysburg on July 1-3, 1863. Felt was promoted to first sergeant on September 1, 1863. He contracted scarlet fever and was hospitalized from November 6 to 18, 1863. Felt reenlisted as a veteran volunteer on December 17, 1863, and during the early months of 1864 (January and February) he again served on recruiting duty in Michigan. He was listed on “*detached service*” in March through June of 1864. On July 22, 1864, Hartman Felt was promoted to second lieutenant in Company C of the 7th Michigan. His commissioned period was brief as he was mortally wounded 24 day later at Deep Bottom, Virginia. His wounds consisted of gunshot wounds (left arm and left breast). Taken on the Steamer *State of Maine* to Ward K, Armory Square Hospital, Washington, D.C., he died there on August 24, 1864. Felt was buried in the burial ground of Lee’s Arlington House (which became the Custis-Lee Mansion and Arlington National Cemetery). His parents disinterred his remains and had him reburied in Grass Lake, Michigan (Archives of Michigan; information provided by Dave Berry).

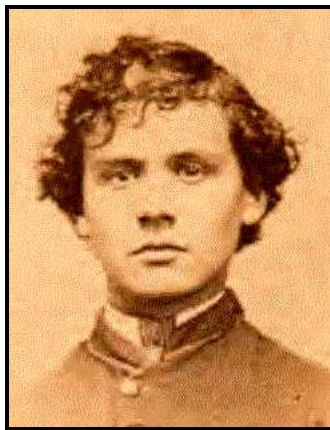


Figure 11. William Almas. Originally from Ontario, Canada, William Almas enlisted in Lapeer, Michigan, on August 7, 1861 for three years service at the stated age of 18 years (reputedly lying about his age to enlist). He mustered-in on August 22, 1861. Almas was killed-in-action at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on July 3, 1863 during the repulse of the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble charge. He was buried in grave number C-#7 in the Michigan Plot at Gettysburg National Cemetery. His name appears as “*Almouth*” in some records (Information and photo courtesy of Andrew Miller).



Figure 12. Another illustrious Civil War member of the 7th was William Rufus Shafter. Shafter, born in Galesburg, Michigan, served in the 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment during the first years of the Civil War and took part in the battle of Ball’s Bluff and the Peninsular Campaign. As a lieutenant in Company I, 7th Michigan, he was wounded at Fair Oaks and later received the Medal of Honor for heroism during that battle. He was captured at Thompson’s Station and spent

several months in a Confederate prison camp. After release, he commanded the 17th Infantry Regiment of United States Colored Troops, at Nashville. By the end of the war, he was a brevet brigadier general. Remaining in the regular U.S. Army, his service continued into the Indian Wars. Nicknamed "*Pecos Bill*," Shafter led the 24th U.S. Infantry, a regular unit of black troops against the Cheyenne, Comanche, Kickapoo and Kiowa Indians in Texas. In May 1897, he was appointed as a brigadier general. During the Spanish-American War, Shafter deployed with a ground expedition to Cuba. Weighing over 300 pounds and unfit for tropical conditions, he was nevertheless appointed in May 1898 as a major general in the regular U.S. Army and assumed command of the V Army Corps sailing for Cuba. During the Santiago Campaign, he suffered from gout and was forced to ride in a buckboard carriage and be carried around on a door. Ill or not, Shafter won battles at San Juan Hill and El Caney, before laying siege to Santiago. That city surrendered on July 17, 1898, bringing an end to the war in Cuba. He returned to the U.S. with his corps in September, took command of the Department of California, and retired there in 1900. Shafter retired to a 60-acre farm adjoining his daughter's ranch near Bakersfield, California. He died there on November 12, 1906, from an intestinal obstruction complicated by pneumonia. He was buried at the Presidio in San Francisco, California (Library of Congress).



Figure 13. John T. Spillane, 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, pictured here c. 1912, enlisted in Company E as a drummer in June 1861 for three years' service. A resident of Wayne County, Spillane served from August 22, 1861 to December 18, 1862, when he reenlisted for the war. Serving for the rest of the conflict, he was wounded at Fort Haskell on September 6, 1864, and again at Petersburg on September 27th of that year. On July 5, 1865, Spillane was mustered out at Jeffersonville, Indiana. He was a police officer in later years, rising to the rank of captain and living in Detroit, Michigan, where he also served as a departmental commander in the GAR Union veterans' organization. Spillane gained somewhat overly difficult fame as "*The Boy Drummer of the Rappahannock*" due to spurious claims made in 1880s and 1890s by Robert C. Hendershott (see below) to that accolade. Hendershott and his claims were summarily renounced by the surviving members of the old 7th Michigan Volunteers in an 1892 resolution at their encampment. The substance of the resolution was that, as the "*Drummer Boy*" had already become sufficiently celebrated in a poem and a play, the role had now attracted some claimants. Along with the resolution came a reported cry from "*someone*" to "*throw [Hendershott] out the window.*" Quoting an earlier account in *The Detroit News*, the article continued that Drummer Spillane had climbed into the third boat across, having exchanged his drum for an unlikely "*little carbine*" and thus participated in the riverine assault. Spillane was presented a gold medal (illustrated in a news article) by the citizens of Detroit. It consisted of a bar with the name "*Jno. T. Spillane*;" a link and two ornate chains to a circular medallion emblazoned with the arching words "*The Boy Drummer of the Rappahannock*"..."*Dec. 11, 1862.*" Centered on the medallion was the figure of a boy drummer in kepi and overcoat with a drum and carrying his drumsticks. Into the 21st Century, however, "*Robert Henry Hendershot*" [sic] lives on in his family's web site (<http://www.mindspring.com/~noahsark/drum.html>) as "*The Drummer Boy of the Rappahannock.*" Another Internet account (found at <http://www.historynet.com/americas-civil-war-drummer-boy-of-the-rappahannock.htm/5>) summarizes a 2004 article, which includes even more candidates and a longer story! It seems Hendershot, although earlier of the 9th (in the West) and then of the 8th Michigan (a part of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, IX Army Corps, Right Grand Division, at Fredericksburg) claimed that he "*happened to be*" on the Rappahannock shore, got carried away, and joined the unprecedented

riverine assault with the 7th. Given the level of notoriety and his campaign for the title, Hendershot (replete with a medal of his own from President Benjamin Harrison and ivory drumsticks from the Queen of Hawaii) has largely won. He was renounced by the 7th and 8th Regiments' veterans, but supported by those of the 9th (which was not in the Eastern Theater). The moral of this story is an old one in war: if you only do one thing of note in your war, make sure it is well documented at the time (Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park, National Park Service).

The story of the 7th Michigan continues into the twenty-first century. A reenactment unit blends history and modernity: the 7th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Company B, Inc. or the "*Curtenius Guards*," prides itself on being "*a family-oriented, federal 501 (c)(3) tax exempt, Michigan registered non-profit corporation organized exclusively for the purpose of fostering and preserving the history of the Civil War era (1861-1865).*" The unit conducts "*public discussions, demonstrations of living history, Civil War battle re-enactments, military drills, parades, memorials, ceremonies and other related public portrayals of historically accurate Civil War era military and civilian lifestyles and activities*" and maintains an active Internet web-site (<http://www.7thmichigan.us/>) for public outreach and information. This unit played the leading role in creating and establishing a monument in Fredericksburg honoring the riverine assault of the 7th. That dedication ceremony was held on August 31, 2003. Along with kindred spirits representing the 2nd United States Sharpshooters and the United States Christian Commission, this same re-enactor group participated in the "*Yankees in Falmouth!*" living history event on September 20-21, 2008. As the Twenty-first Century continues and the sesquicentennial of the Civil War rises on the horizon, it is hoped that such organizations will inspire future generations of students and enthusiasts to new and greater interest in one of America's greatest epic stories.

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(See also the web-site of the reenactment unit, Company B, 7th Michigan Infantry: <http://www.7thmichigan.us/>). (Also see www.michiganinthecivilwar.org)