

**A Regimental History of the 5th Michigan
Infantry Regiment From Its Formation Through
the Seven Days Campaign**

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By

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ABSTRACT

Every regiment that fought in the Civil, Union and Confederate, has a story to tell. Unfortunately, too many of these historic units' legacies are not recorded and made available to modern-day scholars and citizens. Such was the case for the 5th Michigan Infantry before this thesis was written.

This work is part one of a regimental history of the "Fighting Fifth," covering the first year of the war. It draws from the unit's soldiers' diaries and letters, as well as those of members of the 5th Michigan's "sister" regiments: the 2nd and 3rd Michigan and 37th New York. The perspectives of Detroit-area newspapers are included, as are the Regimental Descriptive Books and Order Book. No longer are these documents simply sitting in a vault, but now are largely included in this thesis and made available for all people.

Here is the first part of the story of a unit that led charges against enemy lines frequently and suffered the fifth highest casualty rate of all Union regiments during the Civil War.

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CHAPTER I

FORMATION OF THE REGIMENT

On April 13, 1861, news spread across the North of the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter. The headlines of the *Detroit Daily Advertiser* included: "THE CRISIS REACHED!" and "The Rebels Attack Fort Sumter."¹ Two days later, the same newspaper contained an article entitled, "The Feeling in Detroit." It stated in part:

Notwithstanding the news our people are not downcast, as they know full well that no strategical point has been gained by this conquest, and it was simply a point of honor in the administration to do all in its power to hold Fort Sumter and relieve its garrison. In this the government has failed, but in its policy made manifest, it will receive the hearty and cordial support of our entire population. A meeting to express the feelings of this community will be immediately held, which, we have no doubt will approve the course pursued by the government, and a determination will be evinced that, so far as the people of this place are concerned, to effort will be spared to vindicate the honor and integrity of our country, and our country's flag.²

With the exceptions of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Missouri, the states remaining in the Union responded positively to Lincoln's

¹ "The Crisis Reached!" *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 13, 1861.

² "The Feeling in Detroit." *Ibid.*, Apr. 15, 1861.

call for 75,000 troops. On April 16, Michigan Governor Austin Blair made the following proclamation in Detroit:

Whereas, The President of the United States has made a requisition upon the State of Michigan for military aid in enforcing the laws and upholding the Constitution and the Union of the United States.

1st of ten Companies of Infantry, to be mustered into the service of the United States for three months, (unless sooner dissolved).

To this end, the Companies of the uniformed volunteer Militia that may desire to tender their services, will forthwith report, through their Company commanders, to the Adjutant General at Detroit, the names of Company officers, and the number of their rank and file, ready for service, the number, kind and condition of their arms.

Out of the whole number of companies, the adjutant general will first select ten companies for immediate service. The companies for which may be accepted will be required to fill up, according to the following schedule:

For each company - one Captain, one First Lieutenant, one Second Lieutenant, four Sergeants, four Corporals, two musicians, and sixty-five privates.

All Companies formed, and to be formed, will be instructed and put in a serviceable condition as soon as possible, and will at once begin drilling according to "Hardee's Tactics."³

Those not immediately required will be formed into

³ "Hardee's Tactics," to which Governor Blair referred, was *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics*, the standard training tactics taught to cadets at West Point and later the official manual of Union and Confederate armies. A Georgia native and future Confederate general, William J. Hardee, wrote the work.

one, or more, additional regiments, as the exigencies of the service may demand.

It is confidently expected that the patriotic citizen soldiery of Michigan will promptly come forward to enlist in the cause of the Union, against which an extensive rebellion in arms exists, threatening the integrity and perpetuity of the government.⁴

In April 1861, the Detroit newspapers experienced a major transition. Suddenly, nearly every article centered around the "rebellion" and provided updates from Charleston, Montgomery, Richmond (after relocation of the Confederate capital to Virginia), and Washington, as well as information about Jefferson Davis and Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard. Also frequently printed were texts of speeches and proclamations made by President Lincoln, Secretary of State Seward, and other Union leaders. It was as if, suddenly, nothing else in their lives mattered. The upcoming war was the single event in the citizens' day-to-day lives, and it would be for the next four years.

The Detroit *Daily Tribune*, starting on April 17, began printing at the top of page two of every issue an American Flag with a pennant hovering above it stating: "The Union

⁴ "Proclamation of Gov. Blair." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 17, 1861.

Forever," a clear testament to the public stance.

Also on that date, an article from that newspaper entitled, "Military Movements In Michigan" declared: "In other States the raising of volunteers has proceeded with unprecedented rapidity and enthusiasm. We cannot doubt that Michigan will prove equal to any other State in devotion to the Union."⁵

Not surprisingly, Michigan citizens rushed to support the cause. In fact, too many rallied around the flag, resulting in volunteers being turned away.⁶ However, their services were likely called upon at a later time as the war progressed.

On May 3, the adjutant general of the United States Military Department of Michigan ordered the following companies already in existence to combine to form the 5th Michigan Infantry Regiment: the "Sherlock Guards," "Mount Clemons Rifle Guard," "Saginaw City Light Infantry," "Pontiac Volunteers," "Huron Rangers," "Governor's Guard,"

⁵ "Military Movements In Michigan." *The Detroit Daily Tribune*, Apr. 17, 1861.

⁶ "Disbanding the Volunteers." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, May 24, 1861.

"Washington Guard," "Ingersoll Rifles," "Livingston Volunteers," and "East Saginaw Volunteers."⁷

These companies, before the war, were small state militia units. However, their sizes needed to be increased as they were converted into regimental companies of the United States Army.

The "Sherlock Guards" were from Detroit and under the authority of Capt. Edwin T. Sherlock. They became Company A of the 5th Michigan Infantry.

The "Mount Clemons Rifle Guard" served as Company B. Commanded by Capt. Judson S. Farrar, this unit took its name from its place of origin. Mount Clemons is situated about twenty miles from Detroit.

Company C was the "Saginaw Light Infantry" and commanded by Capt. Henry W. Trowbridge. Saginaw is located about one hundred miles northwest of Detroit.

The "Pontiac Volunteers" made up Company D, under the leadership of Capt. Joseph A. Eagle.

The "Huron Rangers," from Port Huron, served as Company E under the command of Capt. Charles S. Traverse.

⁷ "The War: Fourth and Fifth Regiments." *The Detroit Free Press*, May 4, 1861.

Company F consisted of the "Governor's Guard" from Detroit. Capt. Heber Le Favour led this company.

The "Washington Guard," from Saint Clair, approximately fifty miles north of Detroit, served as Company G of the regiment. It was led by Capt. George W. Wilson.

Capt. Louis B. Quackenbush commanded Company H, the "Ingersoll Rifles." This company originated in Owosso, located ninety miles northwest of Detroit.

The "Livingston Volunteers," Company I, came from Brighton, about fifty miles northwest of Detroit. The commanding officer of this company was Capt. John Gilluly.

Company K, the "East Saginaw Volunteers," was under Capt. Henry Miller.⁸

Although the 5th Michigan was created in early May, it did not acquire its regimental commander before June 10, when Governor Blair appointed Col. Henry D. Terry to command, Lt. Col. Samuel E. Beach ranking second, and Henry R. Mizner as major. Terry and Mizner were both from

⁸ Michigan Adjutant General's Office, *Record Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Kalamazoo, 1881), 5:1.

Detroit while Beach was a native of Pontiac.⁹ Maj. Mizner did not stay in this position for long, and was replaced by Maj. John D. Fairbanks, also of Detroit, who became third in command of the regiment just over two months later.¹⁰

On June 21, the officers of the "skeleton" regiment arrived at Fort Wayne.¹¹ This training camp, named for the county in which it was situated, was located on the outskirts of Detroit. For the next two and one-half months, Col. Terry's regiment would be stationed here, increasing in numbers and preparing themselves for the battlefields of Virginia.

Col. Terry spent much of June putting the pieces of the unit together.¹² On June 17, Col. Terry appointed men to specific positions, such as sergeant major of the regiment, the highest ranking non-commissioned officer, regimental adjutant, quartermaster, principal musician, et

⁹ "The New Regiments." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, June 10, 1861.

¹⁰ It is not known why this change occurred. *Record Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:42.

¹¹ "The War: Camp of Instruction." *The Detroit Free Press*, June 21, 1861.

¹² Order No. 1, June 11, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book, National Archives, Washington.

cetera.¹³ Col. Terry also affirmed that all ten companies, some of which were older than the regiment itself, would keep their respective nicknames.¹⁴

With the 5th Michigan in training camp, the regiment needed people who could practice medicine. At that time, a strong candidate for a permanent head regimental surgeon could not be found. So, on June 22, Col. Terry gave the position of acting assistant surgeon to Dr. Edward Lauderdale. His first orders included the vaccination of every man who enlisted into the regiment for smallpox, as well as to treat any sickness or injury the men might face.¹⁵ Lauderdale did not hold this position for long; on July 3, Governor Blair named Dr. Robert A. Everett of Hillsdale, Michigan, as permanent assistant surgeon.¹⁶ It was not until September 1 that Dr. Moses Gunn, a thirty-

¹³ Order No. 2, *Ibid.*, June 17, 1861; Order No. 3, *Ibid.*, June 21, 1861.

¹⁴ Order No. 3, *Ibid.*, June 19, 1861.

¹⁵ Order No. 4, *Ibid.*, June 22, 1861.

¹⁶ The Appointment of Robert A. Everett as Assistant Surgeon of the 5th Regiment of Michigan, July 3, 1861. Augusta Jupenlag Collection, 1861-1863, State Archives of Michigan, Lansing.

nine-year-old from Detroit, became the regimental surgeon.¹⁷

On July 1, the first volunteers began arriving at Fort Wayne to join the 5th Michigan. When the recruits entered the fort, the company commanders wearing the very impressive blue, wool, full-dress uniforms greeted them. The Detroit *Daily Advertiser* stated that the first day consisted of "taking the oath of allegiance to the United States and State of Michigan, to obey the President and all of the officers appointed over them." Some prospective soldiers were rejected from enlistment because of disabilities preventing them from performing military duties. The men were divided and placed into the ten separate companies, then took the affirmation as a regiment. "The whole of the 5th Regiment took the oath and departed with cheers."¹⁸

Because the regiment received less than 600 enlistees, there was a need for additional recruiting. It was not until late-August that the total reached 880 men, enough to

¹⁷ Jane Augusta Gunn, *Memorial Sketches of Doctor Moses Gunn, By His Wife: With Extracts From His Letters and Eulogistic Tributes From His Colleagues and Friends* (Chicago, 1889), 68-69.

¹⁸ "Mustering In the Three Regiments-Matters at the Camp." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, July 2, 1861.

make a regiment.¹⁹

The men who comprised the 5th Michigan came from diverse backgrounds. The ages of enlisted men ran from sixteen to fifty-four. Michigan did not become a state in the Union until 1837 and for approximately thirty years prior to that date, it was a relatively vacant territory. Therefore, a large proportion of its citizenry were *not* native to the region. The members of the 5th Michigan were not exceptions to this rule. Just over a quarter of its men were born in Michigan. Only twenty-four fewer were New York natives. Seven of the regiment's members were originally from the Southern states of Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia, but now suddenly took up arms against their native states. It should be noted, however, that the one enlisted man from Virginia was from Marshall County, which in 1863 became part of pro-Union West Virginia.

Another interesting aspect of the troops' backgrounds is that a third of the men were foreign-born. The 5th Michigan had representatives from Austria, Bavaria,

¹⁹ "The War: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Aug. 29, 1861.

Belgium, Bohemia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Prussia, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, Wales, and the West Indies.²⁰

Throughout the 19th Century, massive numbers of immigrants flocked from Europe to the United States. In 1860, more than eight out of ten people living in the States who were foreign-born lived in the North, where more industrial centers and larger harbors were located. New York and Boston were most attractive to immigrants, but many of them settled in the western portions of the North where new cities such as Cleveland and Detroit were quickly developing into major industrial centers in need of labor forces.²¹ Michigan saw some Irish-Catholic farm communities develop in Allegan County, as well as some noteworthy Dutch and Swedish settlements near Lake Michigan.²²

In 1860, the countries that provided most immigrants for the United States were England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, and Germany. With the exception of Canada,

²⁰ 5th Michigan Infantry Regimental Descriptive Books, Companies A to F and Companies G to K, National Archives, Washington.

²¹ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (New York, 1951), 1-4.

²² *Ibid.*, 16, 26, 34-35.

Michigan netted very few from these ethnic backgrounds, as the state was the new home of only about 6% of migrating English, 3% of incoming Irish, 6% of the Scottish, and 3% of those from Germany. A higher percentage of migrating Canadians, however, went to Michigan than any other state in the Union, with the exception of New York. The location of Michigan on the border with Canada is an obvious explanation for this discovery.²³ Therefore, it is not surprising that there were more Canadians fighting in the 5th Michigan than from any other categories of foreigners. In fact, Canadians made up about a tenth of the regiment. The numbers of other foreigners fighting in the 5th Michigan are also relatively consistent with national numbers, as Germans, English, Irish, Prussian, and Scottish natives ranked second through sixth in highest percentages of foreigners in the regiment. Approximately 8% of the regiment were German-born, 4% English-born, 3% from Ireland, 3% natives of Prussia, and 2% Scottish.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*, 664.

²⁴ 5th Michigan Infantry Regimental Descriptive Books, Companies A to F and Companies G to K.

Eight Jews served in the 5th Michigan, including a captain.²⁵

These men also came from a diverse range of occupational backgrounds. Over half were farmers, which was typical of Northern regiments. Few previously held occupations that would provide some preparation for war. Five of them were soldiers at the time of enlistment, fifteen had been engineers, and three cooks. These twenty-three men may have been the only ones with any preparation for army life. Numerous students decided to put down the books and pick up a rifle, as did just over a dozen teachers.

Oddly enough, the roster also included six boatmen, six fishermen, ninety-six sailors, and a ship captain. One might think these men would have been more inclined to enlist in the United States Navy. However, one must consider that the ocean was half a continent away from Michigan.

Also included were two ministers and three lawyers, ages thirty-seven, twenty-four, and twenty-three. All but

²⁵ Irving I. Katz, *The Jewish Soldier From Michigan In The Civil War* (Detroit, 1962), 18.

one of the attorneys served as officers. In addition, there were artists, bakers, barbers, blacksmiths, brewers, butchers, carpenters, clerks, dentists, druggists, firemen, hotel keepers, jewelers, lumbermen, machinists, masons, mechanics, miners, painters, physicians, newspaper printers, railroader workers, shoemakers, tavern keepers, and men of dozens of other every day jobs.²⁶

All of these men of different ages, from different parts of the country and the world, different occupations, and different lifestyles came together to support a popular cause: the preservation of the United States of America.

Regions of the North viewed the war differently. Many of the citizens from New England and the eastern half of the North wanted slavery abolished, in addition to the Union being preserved. Michigan and other states in the western half of the North were more interested in preservation of the Union. They did not care to make the war a crusade for the liberation of Negro slaves.²⁷

On August 20, the Detroit *Daily Advertiser* gave a

²⁶ 5th Michigan Infantry Regimental Descriptive Books, Companies A to F and Companies G to K.

²⁷ James I. Robertson, Jr., untitled lecture, Virginia Tech, Feb. 27, 2004.

full report on the progress of the regiment's formation and stated that "they, like all soldiers, desire to be as near the seat of war as possible...They are ready to go, and will be very glad to receive marching orders."

At that point, the men were anything but ready to go. The regiment had been training since July, but a large percentage of the recruits were recent arrivals and were less prepared than those who arrived the previous month. Furthermore, the men still did not have their uniforms. Rifles, bayonets, and other weapons and supplies still had not arrived at Fort Wayne, leaving marching and exercising as the only training routines.

Some positive signs existed. Only seven trainees were in the regimental hospital and were expected to recover rapidly. A systematic schedule of drilling had been developed and the regiment paraded at the end of every day of training.²⁸

The paper reported that trainees were put through "the most extreme severity, and walking around the camp wears the air of discipline." Thirty Crimean tents, where

²⁸ "Home Matters: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, Aug. 20, 1861.

officers and enlisted men slept, covered the parade ground. Company C, under the command of Capt. Trowbridge, had already boasted its own banner: a white square with a painted "C" in the middle.²⁹

Once the 5th Michigan assembled at Fort Wayne, the Detroit dailies continuously ran updates on the regiment, as it was a Detroit-based unit.³⁰ Nearly all events or changes that occurred within the regiment while training in camp were reported instantly. For example, on July 11, a story was printed about the local Trinity Church ladies delivering 150 havelocks made by the parish's ladies especially for the men of the regiment to attach to their kepis for protecting their necks from the sun. Col. Terry's thank-you letter to the ladies of the church also appeared in print.³¹

Religion was the Christian soldier's connection between camp life and his home. For many, the war

²⁹ "The War: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Aug. 20, 1861.

³⁰ Although a large percentage of the men fighting in the 5th Michigan were from outside of Detroit, it was created and trained in Detroit.

³¹ "Camp of Instruction." *The Detroit Free Press*, July 11, 1861.

strengthened faith in God while for others it caused them to lose belief.³²

While at Fort Wayne, the men of the 5th Michigan received permission to attend church services in Detroit on the Sabbath. The *Detroit Free Press* reported one occasion in July in which a Reverend Duffield gave a sermon especially for the regiment. Afterwards, the men boarded the *Clare* and headed back to Fort Wayne. Later that day, according to the article, there was a service held within the fort itself that provided the soldiers with another break from the routine of training. This was probably more than welcome.³³

Col. Terry and the 5th Michigan began to show more seriousness by mid-August 1861. After the 21st, members of the regiment were not authorized to be absent from the fort under any circumstances without a proper pass.³⁴ A very intense and full daily schedule developed and was carried out religiously. Reveille was at 5:00 every morning,

³² James I. Robertson, Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia, S.C.: 1988), 172-73.

³³ "The Military on the Barbate." *The Detroit Free Press*, July 16, 1861.

³⁴ Order No. 15, Aug. 21, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

followed by morning formation and drills from 5:15 until 6:00, then came breakfast. Sick call was at 7:15, just over an hour before a two-hour drill session. At noon, they ate dinner, and then drilled from 2:30 to 5:00 in the evening. Supper roll call, another formation, was at 5:30 and they were forced to eat quickly as the daily parade was only an hour later. Once the parade ended, soldiers were finally able to relax before "tattoo" at 9:00.³⁵ At tattoo, all lights were extinguished, and all men were required to remain in their quarters until reveille the following morning.³⁶

James A. Foreman of Clinton County was a soldier in Company D of the regiment. This twenty-five-year-old Michigan native was married, with one son, Paul, and a second unborn child, and was a carpenter at the time of his enlistment.³⁷ While at Fort Wayne, he wrote his wife, Dollie, a letter.

My dear

I thought I would not write until I heard from you but

³⁵ Tattoo was a term used before its replacement by "taps."

³⁶ Order No. 16, Aug. 28, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

³⁷ Jack A. Eagle, Letter to Headquarters, 5th Regiment of Michigan Infantry, Fort Wayne, Aug. 25, 1861.

we shall go for Washington Tuesday next and I suppose you do not get your mail but once a week. Consequently I write you at this time. We are all well and enjoying ourselves very well. We get our uniforms next Monday. We will not get paid until we get to Washington. While writing this I am on the ferry boat going up to Detroit. A lot of the boys have passes to go up to the city. We are to be back by four o'clock. It is pretty hard to drill about 7 hours each day. We have to be up at 5 o'clock and be in bed by 9 P.M. I will write again before leaving [for Washington]. There the boat has just landed and I will close. I wish I could send you and Paul kisses.

In haste Jim.³⁸

By the end of August, the soldiers were still largely without uniforms. They had only received blue, long-sleeved shirts and wool kepis, which were slightly slouched caps.³⁹ The rest of the uniform items would not be issued until September.

On September 11, 1861, Col. Terry issued the following order:

This Regiment will take up its line of march for Washington this Wednesday September 11th Evening at 7 oclock, the Field and Staff together with Co's A, F, D, J, C, H, and the Baggage belonging to the same will embark on the Steamer *Ocean* under the Command of Lieut

³⁸ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, early Sept. 1861, Foreman Papers, Thomas Little Private Collection, Brevard, N.C.

³⁹ "The War: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Aug. 30, 1861.

Col Beach, Companies E, K, G, B Quarter Master, Seargt and Commissary Sergeants together with the Baggage for the same will embark on the steamer *May Queen* under the command of Major Fairbanks.⁴⁰

The time had finally come for the 5th Michigan to join the war in Virginia. At this point, the members of the regiment had their uniforms and most of their supplies issued to them by Quartermaster Blackman, including a navy blue, wool, tunic-style blouse; several navy blue, flannel shirts; sky blue, wool pants; several pairs of undergarments; several pairs of socks; leggings; a pair of high-quarter shoes; a navy blue, wool kepi; a sky blue wool overcoat; a pair of mittens; a black, leather waist belt with a bronze, oval waist belt plate with "US" inscribed on it; a cartridge box; a knapsack; a smaller haversack; a canteen; and a wool blanket.⁴¹ Their rifles and bayonets awaited them in Washington.

Before boarding the steamers, however, the regiment had one final full formation and dress parade at Fort Wayne. During the review, the 5th Michigan received its regimental colors. As the governor, adjutant general, and

⁴⁰ Order No. 19, Sept. 11, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, no date.

several others presented the flag to the regiment, a statement was read aloud by a gentleman referred to by a reporter as "Mr. Backus"⁴²:

You are from us, you are of us, bound to us by many strong ties that knit together the social compact and give to society itself its greatest side...This banner which I now unfurl to the breeze of freedom, take it and guard it, not only as friendship's offering but as the ensign of truth and freedom. My friends, in the reception of this banner by you we feel more than compensated in the pledge that implies that you would never strike it...or will never surrender it to traitors.

Col. Terry formally accepted the banner and stated: "God grant it may never trail in the dust."

He then handed the flag to the selected color sergeant, the soldier responsible for carrying the banner, Amos A. Rouse of Company C. Under this flag, the "Stars & Stripes," the 5th Michigan would fight as one unit to preserve the Union they volunteered to serve.

After the presentation of the colors, the regiment marched past and saluted Governor Blair and boarded the steamers. Many family members and friends watched their sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, and friends leave

⁴² The article did not provide any background information for "Mr. Backus."

Michigan, uncertain of their return.⁴³

The 5th Michigan was assigned to Brig. Gen. Israel B. Richardson's brigade. Her sister units were the 2nd and 3rd Michigan Regiments, as well as the 37th New York.⁴⁴

Traveling on the *May Queen* with the regiment was a reporter from the *Detroit Daily Tribune* who wrote on September 13 that the spirits of the men were high and anxious as they sat around the cabins and shared delicacies which each other. "In anticipation of future excitement in soldiers' life, the hilarity of all the men is almost uncontrollable, and a not very quiet time is being had." They also received some musical entertainment from a private in Company K who played the piano.

"We expect to be in Cleveland at 7 A. M. tomorrow. Will breakfast at 4 ½ o'clock on board the boat. The *Ocean* is in Cleveland an hour or two ahead of us," he wrote.

"I will drop a line from Harrisburg."⁴⁵

⁴³ "The War: The Fifth Regiment. Presentation of Colors. Departure for Washington. 1st of the Officers of the Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Sept. 12, 1861.

⁴⁴ Charles B. Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader: The Civil War Journal of Charles B. Haydon* (New York, 1993), 103.

⁴⁵ "From the Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Daily Tribune*, Sept. 13, 1861.

From Detroit, the regiment made its way towards Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, then to Baltimore, Maryland, where they would transfer for Washington, D.C., their final destination, or as Col. Terry referred to it, the "Seat of War."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Order No. 21, Sept. 12, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

CHAPTER II

THE "SEAT OF WAR"

At approximately 2 a.m. on September 15, 1861, the 5th Michigan arrived in Washington. The regiment made a white shack nicknamed "The White House" near the city's depot its headquarters.

They ate a meal rapidly before curling up in blankets to recover from the long journey from Detroit. However, according to the *Detroit Daily Tribune*, about twenty men upon arrival were too excited about being in Washington and ventured off without permission, but were quickly rounded up by the provost guard and reclaimed by their commander, Col. Henry D. Terry.⁴⁷

It is highly likely that none of the enlisted men in the regiment had visited the nation's capitol prior to their arrival as its defenders. As a consequence, their arrival into the District of Columbia was an adventure and many temptations to wander from headquarters existed. Col. Terry recognized this and sought tighter discipline to keep

⁴⁷ On the day of their arrival, the 5th Michigan received its Enfield rifles.

order in the regiment. On the day of their arrival, Terry announced: "...no leave of absence will be granted to any officer beyond three hours, if by doing so, it will leave a company without two Commissioned Officers." Enlisted men received six hours of leave. Additionally, no member of the regiment, officer or enlisted, could wear any item of clothing other than an issued uniform, whether in camp or meandering around Washington.⁴⁸

The following morning at 9:00, the regiment participated in a formal dress parade and review.⁴⁹

On September 20, the *Detroit Free Press* published a letter written by an unidentified company commander of the 5th Regiment who described the events in Washington upon arrival. He spoke of his fascination of the city and its buildings. He visited St. Patrick's Catholic Church, climbed to the uncompleted dome of the Capitol Building, and went to the White House. There, they had an unforgettable experience.

This afternoon, Captain Wilson and myself thought we would take a stroll as far as the White House, and while promenading through the garden in front, we met

⁴⁸ Order No. 23, Sept. 15, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁴⁹ Order No. 22, *Ibid*.

a very tall gentleman dressed in black, with sharpened or painted whiskers, a yellowish complexion, whose form was slightly bent.⁵⁰ As we passed him, he politely touched his hat to Captain Wilson who was about two feet in advance of me and, as I moved he repeated the salutation also to me. I told Wilson, "that this must be Old Abe!" "No!" said Wilson. He asked a little girl if she knew who the gentleman was - she replied, "What, you live in Washington, and don't know the President - why, that is Mr. Lincoln, of course."⁵¹

It was not uncommon for President Lincoln to confront Union officers or soldiers visiting the White House.⁵²

In the same letter, the anonymous captain provided a description of Washington during the post-First Manassas period describing it as being under martial law. Nobody could roam the streets without first obtaining a pass from the provost marshal. "We have, in and around Washington, an immense army, and the rebels are within six miles of this city, and still strange to say, we have less talk about this war here in Washington than you do in Detroit," he wrote. The author of the letter even had an omen of his regiment's first assignment involving combat. He stated:

⁵⁰ "Captain Wilson" is George W. Wilson, commander of Company G.

⁵¹ "The War: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Sept. 20, 1861.

⁵² William C. Davis, untitled lecture, Virginia Tech, Apr. 5, 2004.

"I went up into the dome of the Capitol, and, with the aid of the spy glass, could see distinctly Munson's Hill, and the rebel flag flying over it."⁵³

Shortly after arriving in Washington, the regiment relocated to Camp Richardson.⁵⁴ The fort was still in the process of being constructed on the outskirts of Alexandria, approximately three miles from the Confederate position at Munson's Hill. Encamped with the 5th Michigan were the 2nd and 3rd Michigan Regiments, also in Richardson's brigade.

From this location, Dr. Moses Gunn, the 5th Michigan's regimental surgeon, wrote a letter to his wife, Jane Augusta, in which he expressed his feelings about his new position. "I should pronounce myself a very great fool for leaving home to become a camp pack-horse for a thousand men, for such is a surgeon to a regiment in the field," he wrote. In addition to disliking his role in the army, Gunn did not care for the humid weather of Virginia. "How I should like a goblet of iced Detroit River water!"

According to Gunn, morale of the men was already low

⁵³ The War: The Fifth Regiment." *The Detroit Free Press*, Sept. 20, 1861.

⁵⁴ Camp Richardson was named for Brig. Gen. Israel B. Richardson.

and had been since crossing the Potomac River into Virginia. "Our men, many of them, are cool and expect to meet death. One said he expected to be killed! I overheard others say the night we crossed Long Bridge, 'Well, boys, probably many of us are crossing this bridge for the first and the last time.'"⁵⁵ Such low morale was unusual for a regiment in the Army of the Potomac at this stage, as Gen. McClellan managed to sustain a high level of morale as a result of putting the army through heavy training, and spirits remained high until the first winter arrived.⁵⁶ It is likely that because the 5th Michigan only recently arrived, they were not yet accustomed to the hot late-summer weather.

In addition to the advent of fear and hot temperatures, another discomfort set in: constant rainstorms. In a September letter, Gunn discussed how much it rained at night and that "a few drops begin to penetrate the cloth [of his tent], and fall upon me like mist." On

⁵⁵ The Long Bridge stood where the present-day 14th Street Bridge now crosses the Potomac; Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 70-73.

⁵⁶ Bell I. Wiley. *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis, 1951), 276.

some occasions, the winds managed to blow down some of the tents.⁵⁷

In the meantime, Col. Terry and the officers of the 5th Michigan had to worry about maintaining order while the regiment had nothing to do but sit around in the capitol. Orders were issued concerning guard duty. Guard teams consisted of twenty-one privates and three supernumeraries taken on an equal basis from all eight companies in the regiment.⁵⁸ The team also included three corporals and a sergeant for reasons of accountability. Commanding the guard teams were a captain serving as "officer of the day" and a lieutenant serving as "officer of the guard." Established guard or picket posts within the camp were the guardhouse, the regimental headquarters, the roads leading into the camp, the quartermaster's tents, the sinks, and the magazine. Each of these posts had an armed man watching for enemy activity. These pickets were to be regularly relieved after shifts of a couple of hours. Col. Terry, like most regimental commanders, stated that any

⁵⁷ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 71-73, 104.

⁵⁸ Supernumeraries were surplus men assigned guard duty as understudies. They often performed the duties of delivering documents and other messages dispatched within the regiment.

sentinel found sleeping during his post or deserting it before regularly relieved would suffer death or such other punishment as a court martial might inflict.

Another issue Col. Terry attempted to curtail was gambling. It could bring disorder and associated troubles to any regiment. On September 25, he issued the following order: "All gaming for money or other valuables within the Regimental camp is strictly prohibited whether by soldiers, servants, or other attaches of the Regiment."⁵⁹ The usual punishment for gambling, though rarely enforced, was extra guard duty and forfeiting pay.⁶⁰

The longer the regiment was in camp, the greater the threat gambling and other acts posed for the unit. In this respect, at the end of September, it was fortunate that the 5th Michigan received its first assignment: to capture Munson's Hill, the Confederates' northernmost position south of Washington in Fairfax County, just outside Arlington. For the first two months after the battle of First Manassas, Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of the

⁵⁹ Order No. 24, Sept. 25, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁶⁰ James I. Robertson, Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray*, 95.

Union Army of the Potomac, was hesitant to attack the Confederates at this position or anywhere. He had spent the past months creating his army. However, McClellan was reluctant to put it into action. Not until late-September 1861 did Gen. McClellan notice that the Confederate flag was no longer flying over Munson's Hill. He then decided to make his move against the position.⁶¹

Gen. Israel B. Richardson's brigade, which included the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Michigan, as well as the 37th New York was ordered to take Munson's Hill. Little did the Yankees know that the Confederates had actually abandoned the position on September 28. No fight occurred when Federals took the position two days later.⁶² In fact, the officers and men of Richardson's brigade were surprised by what they saw when they arrived at the evacuated Confederate lines: strong earthworks, but fake artillery pieces. Before the 5th Michigan and other Union regiments attempted to take the hill, army engineers "took a careful survey, and reported it to be a 44-pounder," wrote the *Detroit Daily Tribune*.

⁶¹ Margaret Leech, *Reveille In Washington, 1860-1865* (New York, 1941), 115-16.

⁶² E. B. Long and Barbara Long. *The Civil War Day By Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865* (New York, 1971), 122.

"Upon close inspection, to day, this 44-pounder proved to be a log of white oak mounted on other logs. The log was not painted or dressed, but on the end was painted a large black spot, the exact size of the bore of a 44-pounder gun." This "44-pounder" was not the only piece of "artillery" the Confederates had mounted, as they also erected several false "10-pounder Parrotts [guns]." ⁶³

This was a relatively common practice employed by Confederate forces throughout the war. More than often, Southerners could not outman or outgun the superior Northern armies. Hence they used special tactics in order to intimidate the enemy or make them feel that they were superior to the Yankees and would be foolish to attack. These bogus artillery pieces became known as "Quaker Guns," as they were harmless. ⁶⁴

The 5th Michigan managed to help take the Confederate position, but no member of the regiment sighted "Johnny Reb," as he had moved south.

⁶³ "From Washington." *The Detroit Daily Tribune*, Oct. 3, 1861.

⁶⁴ Rod Gragg, *Civil War Quiz And Fact Book* (New York, 1985), 77.

The Union soldiers encamped on the hill did not think the Southerners were far away, and poised themselves for an assault.

"We slept in the open field that night and expected an attack," wrote Private James A. Foreman of Company D, 5th Michigan, to his wife in Clinton County. "We lay with our guns until day light. We expected all day yesterday they would advance on us and in fact we were formed into line of battle."⁶⁵ The attack never came.

On October 4, 1861, the Detroit *Daily Tribune* wrote the first combat report of the 5th Michigan, even though no fighting took place. However, the Michigan press made the event sound as glorious as possible in an article titled, "Exploits of the 5th Michigan Regiment":

The 5th Regiment has whatever glory there may be in the first occupancy of Munson's Hill. The men were overjoyed when they were ordered to move forward...Even the sick left their couches and seized their guns, determined to have a hand in the "onward movement" and it required all the Surgeons to make them yield and stay in camp...and when the order was given to march, every one started on a double quick for Munson's Hill, every one supposing that there was to be some tough fighting before they reached their destination, and

⁶⁵ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 1, 1861, Forman Papers.

all were disappointed in meeting no opposition from the rebels.⁶⁶

Although the 5th Michigan saw no action, it did become the first regiment in McClellan's newly formed Army of the Potomac to advance upon an enemy position in a relatively eventless, five-month campaign in northern Virginia.

On the day of the capture of Munson's Hill, Dr. Gunn wrote his wife a letter about the recent feat, but also mentioned that the occupying troops committed acts of vandalism against the locals' dwellings. "We have nothing to boast of in the line of anti-vandalism, some of our troops acting as badly as it is possible for men to act."⁶⁷ No court-martials took place.

The 5th Michigan was not by any means the only regiment to partake in such crimes. According to James Foreman, the 81st New York made up of "perfect devils" plundered a man's house atop Munson's Hill, breaking windows, damaging its walls, stealing any food found within, burning all outbuildings, and stealing the livestock.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "Exploits of the 5th Michigan Regiment." *The Detroit Daily Tribune*, Oct. 4, 1861.

⁶⁷ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 79-80.

⁶⁸ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 1, 1861, Foreman Papers.

Col. Terry took command of Munson's Hill. Now that his unit was in Virginia, the regimental commander had the issue of destruction of Southern citizens' private property. Therefore, he issued another order stating that any soldier who plundered or took into his possession any private property without proper authority would be court-martialed. Additionally, any soldier or officer who neglected to report other soldiers for plundering or stealing was also at risk of facing a court-martial hearing.

In another attempt to maintain discipline within the regiment, all men and officers were forbidden to fire their rifles or pistols without proper authority, though Col. Terry neglected to state the punishment for such actions.⁶⁹ It is likely this order was made to protect Virginia citizens, in addition to preventing accidents involving firearms from occurring in camp. Two days before the order came from Col. Terry, Dr. Gunn performed an amputation on a soldier who accidentally shot himself in the hand.⁷⁰ Pvt. James Foreman wrote home of a member of the regiment who

⁶⁹ Order No. 25, Sept. 30, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁷⁰ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 77.

was accidentally shot in the shoulder. "The men are very careless about shooting. We have very strict orders against shooting around camp but they will do it."⁷¹

Now that the 5th Michigan was in camp for an indefinite period, Col. Terry had to work at keeping his men out of trouble. The temptation to gamble, steal, fight, drink alcohol, or desert was great whenever boredom arose.

In an effort to keep order in the regiment, Terry mandated that all men participate in drills for an hour and a half every morning of the week except Sundays.⁷² In addition to marching, training generally included shooting practice, bayonet drills, and skirmishing exercises.⁷³ When desertion became a problem, the regimental commander doubled the amount of training time per day. Additionally, full-dress parades took place six afternoons a week.⁷⁴ By assigning more drill and inspection time to the regiment, officers hoped their men would have a more difficult time deserting.

⁷¹ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 6, 1861, Foreman Papers.

⁷² Order No. 31, Nov. 13, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁷³ James A. Foreman Diary, Jan. 29 and Feb. 10, 1862, Foreman Papers.

⁷⁴ Order No. 39, Dec. 18, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

Although these drills and parades gave the men of the 5th Michigan less time to partake in unauthorized activities, many men still found themselves in trouble. On November 12, 1861, Corporals Andrew Hanlein and James C. Nicol were the first two members of the regiment to be court-martialed. For the trial hearings, Col. Terry appointed Capt. John Gilluly as president and Capt. George Wilson commander of judge advocate.⁷⁵

Both were found guilty by the court for disobeying orders, forced to forfeit a half-month's pay, and were publicly reprimanded before the regiment. Additionally, Hanlein was reduced to the ranks.⁷⁶

Other men were court-martialed for being absent from camp without authorization or for drunkenness, "to the evil example of soldiers and to the injury of good morals and military discipline."⁷⁷

When members of the regiment continued to take unauthorized leaves of absence, as well as commit more serious acts, Terry tried a new method: invoking harsher

⁷⁵ Order No. 33, *Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1861.

⁷⁶ Order No. 34, *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1861.

⁷⁷ Order No. 37, *Ibid.*, Nov. 28, 1861.

punishments. On December 27, James Wright was found guilty of becoming "drunk and disorderly so that he was incapacitated for any duty" after tattoo and disturbing those soldiers sleeping with a "loud, boisterous tone of voice; swearing and profaning, to the detriment of good order and discipline in the camp" earlier that month and sentenced to carry a thirty-pound log over his shoulders for two hours on, two hours off, for a week.⁷⁸ William McIntyre also was charged with drunkenness and disorderly conduct after tattoo. During the incident however, when confronted by Capt. Henry W. Trowbridge, his company commander, McIntyre threatened to assault him. He pleaded "guilty," and was sentenced to "wear a ball and chain of the weight of twenty four pounds attached by a chain six feet long to the ankle, and be kept at hard labor for one month." McIntyre also had to forfeit one month's pay. Cpl. Charles Jacob Switzler, who refused to perform guard duty was brought up on charges that December. When told it was his rotation, Switzler replied disobediently, "[I]

⁷⁸ Order No. 44, *Ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1861; Tattoo is a term that predates "taps." At night, it instructed men to extinguish all lights and go to sleep.

don't care a damn whose turn it is. Suppose you send me to Hell; I guess I have to go." His corporal stripes stripped from him, he lost a month's pay in addition to being sentenced to carry a forty-pound log over his shoulders for two hours on and four hours off for a week.⁷⁹ Other punishments suffered by members of the regiment included living on a diet of bread and water for seven days in addition to wearing a twenty-four pound ball and chain around an ankle.⁸⁰ A high number of soldiers in the 5th Michigan court-martialed during this time period were non-commissioned officers, which could have caused a degree of breakdown in discipline in the regiment's platoons and squads, which NCOs commanded.

After the "capture" of Munson's Hill, the 5th Michigan and her sister regiments made the former Confederate position their new encampment. They did not remain there for long, and in mid-October the regiment moved to Fort Lyon.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Order No. 44, Dec. 27, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁸⁰ Order No. 46, *Ibid.*, Dec. 31, 1861.

⁸¹ Fort Lyon was named for Union Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon, who was killed at Wilson's Creek, Mo.

According to one eyewitness, Lyon was a large fort, though still under construction at the time Richardson's brigade occupied it. Situated approximately two miles southwest of Alexandria, it would hold sixty guns after completion.⁸²

Union regiments stationed at Fort Lyon were used for the defenses of Washington and reconnaissance patrols in northern Virginia. Approximately a month after being assigned to the fort, the 5th Michigan was sent on a scouting assignment to a village south of Alexandria called Occoquan in search for Confederate units reportedly in the area. Escorted by a cavalry unit and four artillery pieces, they discovered an old Confederate encampment, which appeared to have been vacated only two hours before their arrival. Later that same day, they found a rebel camp "apparently just deserted, with campfires still burning." The regiment returned to Fort Lyon and reported to Brig. Gen. Richardson on the enemy's likely location at Sangster's Crossroads, near Occoquan.⁸³

⁸² Charles H. Church, *Civil War Letters by Sergeant Charles H. Church* (Rose City, Mich., 1987), 14.

⁸³ OR, Ser. 1, 5:415-16.

While stationed in northern Virginia, members of the regiment visited Alexandria, as well as sites of historic significance such as Mount Vernon. Moses Gunn went to Alexandria to visit the Marshall House, which was the site of Col. Elmer Ellsworth's death.

James Jackson, the hotel owner, shot the Zouave officer after the latter removed the national flag of the Confederacy from its roof, where it prominently flew, making him the first Union officer killed during the war. One of Ellsworth's men, in turn, immediately killed Jackson.

Regardless of Virginia's being a hotbed for secessionists, Dr. Gunn admired the Old Dominion. In a letter he wrote to his wife from Alexandria, he said, "I am positively in love with Virginia."⁸⁴

James Foreman wrote more extensively in letters to his wife concerning his touring of Washington and Alexandria in late-October. He was "astonished" after visiting the Smithsonian, where he saw numerous paintings and statues, uniforms of George Washington and Andrew Jackson, as well

⁸⁴ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 93.

as some artifacts from Cortez's explorations. Also while in the nation's capitol, he visited the Patent Office, where he saw the Declaration of Independence. Like Dr. Gunn, Foreman went to Alexandria to visit the Marshall House, and even sent "a piece of the place where he [Col. Ellsworth] fell" to his wife.⁸⁵

Many Union soldiers did not feel welcome in Alexandria. Daniel G. Crotty, a member of the 3rd Michigan, referred to the Southern town as "one of the bitterest in the country against the soldiers of Uncle Sam." However, Crotty pointed out that "the people have to keep quiet, for it does them no good to show their hatred of us."⁸⁶

Crotty clearly enjoyed his visit at Mount Vernon more than Alexandria. Men were not allowed to carry any arms inside the mansion out of respect for the late Revolutionary War hero and often left change to assist with the house's repairs.⁸⁷ Many people in the North refused to see the father of their country as a traitor, regardless of

⁸⁵ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 28, 1861, Foreman Papers.

⁸⁶ Daniel G. Crotty. *Four Years Campaigning in the Army of the Potomac* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1874), 29.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

his ties to Virginia, the South, and the institution of slavery.

While encamped in northern Virginia, the regiment encountered a new enemy: sickness. This was the single biggest problem Union and Confederate armies faced throughout the war. More men died during the war of illnesses than from enemy gunfire. Healthy drinking water was very difficult to find, thus diarrhea was rampant and the leading killer during the war. Typhoid fever and pneumonia were also common. Additionally, one of every seven soldiers who fought in the Civil War contracted measles. Large numbers of men living in close quarters provided the perfect environment for the spread of illnesses. Once diarrhea began, there was an incredible amount of excrement in the camps every day in addition to tons of horse manure. Lice and other vermin went wherever the armies camped, and only the luckiest soldiers had the opportunity to change their uniforms even once throughout their enlistment.⁸⁸ When there was opportunity, some men took the initiative of washing their uniforms, including James Foreman, who used a stream, kettle, and soap to clean

⁸⁸ James I. Robertson, Jr., untitled lecture, Virginia Tech, Feb. 29, 2004; *Ibid.*, Mar. 31, 2004.

his clothing.⁸⁹

The 5th Michigan had its first casualty nearly four months before the first Confederate fired at a member of the regiment. A man died of a brain fever after "lying outdoors after a hard march." In a letter to his wife, Surg. Gunn said: "It is important to take the utmost care of one's health here, but the soldiers are proverbially careless on that point."⁹⁰

On October 6, James Foreman wrote to his wife: "Sam Christopher is very sick and they do not think he will live until morning."⁹¹ Poor fellow. It seems bad to come so far away from home and then to die in an army hospital. I would rather be shot in battle."⁹² Fortunately, Christopher did not die. However, he died from a bullet received at Gettysburg in 1863.⁹³

The first report of rampant sickness in the 5th

⁸⁹ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Jan. 5, 1862, Foreman Papers.

⁹⁰ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 74-75.

⁹¹ Foreman referred to Samuel Christopher, a twenty-year-old friend of his from Clinton County, Mich., Company D.

⁹² James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 6, 1861, Foreman Papers.

⁹³ *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:26.

Michigan came on November 17, 1861, when Col. Terry stated that 116 men, over 10% of the regiment, were listed as "sick." As the problem of illnesses in the regiment had previously never been so large, blame is easily pointed at the conditions surrounding camp life, and the problem would continue to grow as the war progressed and they remained in camp for longer periods of time.⁹⁴ At one point, even the regiment's assistant surgeon, Dr. Robert A. Everett, was added to the sick list, making the workload even greater for Dr. Gunn.⁹⁵

Where there were illnesses, there were also men feigning symptoms. In November 1861, the 5th Regiment already had this problem, as men were trying to dodge the daily drills, inspections, and parades.⁹⁶ In later stages, men would malingering in attempts to avoid combat. "There are a great many shirks in a regiment, who feign sickness," wrote Doctor Gunn to his wife, "these I must detect and

⁹⁴ Order, Jan. 17, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

⁹⁵ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 71-73.

⁹⁶ Order, Jan. 17, 1861, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

report back for duty."⁹⁷

In early February 1862, Surg. Charles S. Tripler, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, wrote a report to the Medical Director's Office providing statistics of sickness for every regiment in the entire army. At the time of the report, the 5th Michigan had forty-two sick members out of 930, or 4.52%. This was the lowest percentage in the brigade, and the tenth lowest in Heintzelman's division out of fourteen regiments. Therefore, although illnesses were a problem in the 5th Michigan, they did not suffer to an unusual degree when compared to other regiments.⁹⁸

Not all aspects of the 5th Michigan's camp life were bad. "We have with all our other hard fares a good deal of fun," wrote Foreman in a letter to his wife. "We found them (some members of the regiment) in the prettiest place you could imagine. It is in a level fine grove. The boys had fixed sleeping places with the boughs and the woods were all light up by the camp fires and all were feeling

⁹⁷ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 114.

⁹⁸ OR, Ser. 1, 5:713-14, 718.

first rate, some telling stories, others singing songs and hymns, each following the bent of his inclinations."⁹⁹

Letter writing was an aspect of camp life of most importance. In his letters home, Foreman insisted to his wife that she carry on with her daily life as if he were present, and get together with her friends often.¹⁰⁰ Foreman wrote to her frequently, and always sent his pay directly to her to support the family. "Enclosed I send you \$28 and with that you and Paul must fix up for the cold snowy weather of old Michigan," he told her.¹⁰¹

However, Dollie very seldom wrote back. "If you only knew how much good a letter does you would write each week," he wrote. "How I would like to see Paul but I have a conviction that I shall see you again but of course there is no certainty."¹⁰² Not receiving letters could break a soldier, and Dollie Foreman, throughout the war, was negligent in this respect. "There I see I have written a good deal more than you did," James wrote to her in

⁹⁹ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 1, 1861, Foreman Papers.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. to Nov. 1861.

¹⁰² The "Paul" mentioned was Paul Foreman, Jim's son. James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Oct. 1, 1861, Foreman Papers.

frustration. "I shant write you anymore until you learn to write a longer letter. Why can't you," he asked?¹⁰³

Foreman also wrote of Private Dan Wade, a member of his company, who was "swearing a blue streak" because he never got replies from the numerous letters he wrote to his wife.¹⁰⁴

One of the letters Dollie Foreman *did* write to her husband in Virginia included a photograph of her and their son, Paul. "I am very glad you sent the likeness not that I had forgotten how you looked but now I can see you every day," Foreman replied. "I have shown it to the boys in the squad and they all think you are real pretty and...did not see why I could go off and leave such a pretty wife and child."¹⁰⁵ As photography was still a relatively new phenomenon in 1861, Foreman, as well as his comrades, was probably that much more impressed by the picture.

While stationed in northern Virginia, the regiment did not remain in the same place. From early-October to early-December 1861, the 5th Michigan camped at Fort Lyon before

¹⁰³ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Jan. 5, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1861.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1861.

moving to Camp Michigan, situated just southeast of Alexandria near Mount Vernon. Here the 5th Michigan, as well as her sister units, remained until shortly before being sent to fight Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army in March 1862.

According to several eye-witnesses, Camp Michigan was a much more preferable camp setting. Daniel Crotty, a member of the 3rd Michigan stated: "We never had a camp in which we enjoyed ourselves better than at camp Michigan." Detailing camp life there, he recalled: "We have our moonlight dances and walks, debating schools, singing, music..."¹⁰⁶

A reporter, writing an article on the 5th Michigan at its new location, stated: "Our camp is pleasantly located amid a forest of evergreens, through which streets and room for tents have been cut, forming one of the most delightful sylvan retreats imaginable. Around many of the officers' tents are erected bowers of evergreen, with doors and windows, and along the tents of the men the trees form arches overhead, entirely protecting all from the keen

¹⁰⁶ Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning*, 36.

winds which sometimes prevail even amid these hills."¹⁰⁷

At Camp Michigan, Foreman and his comrades had bunk beds inside their tent, in addition to a stove they had recently purchased.¹⁰⁸ In a letter to a friend named, "Orve," Foreman stated: "We are in a very pleasant healthy place and the boys are contented and enjoy themselves first rate."¹⁰⁹

Although Moses Gunn did not care for the hot, humid Virginia weather in September, he started to appreciate it as winter drew closer. "I can hardly realize that there is sleighing in Michigan. The climate at this season is delightful," he wrote to his wife on December 8. "We have had some cold days, but have seen snow but twice, and then in small quantity."

A week later, Surg. Gunn requested a furlough to go home and visit his family in Detroit. "He hated to spare me. It is extremely difficult to do one's duty and please all," he informed his wife. Three days before Christmas,

¹⁰⁷ "From the Fifth Regiment: It's Camp-Christmas Among the Soldiers-A Scouting Party- A Rencontre." *The Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 9, 1862.

¹⁰⁸ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Dec. 15, 1861, Foreman Papers.

¹⁰⁹ James A. Foreman to "Orve," Dec. 22, 1861, *Ibid*.

Gunn declared in another letter: "My leave of absence has been granted, but only for three weeks. Only ten days more, God willing, and I shall join you."¹¹⁰

Few men were so fortunate as to obtain a pass to go home to their loved ones during the Christmas season. Nor were approximately 1,000 men fortunate to go for three weeks without the presence of their surgeon.

Sydney Walter, a corporal in Company F, informed a friend at home in a letter that December: "Our regiment are generally very healthy. There has been more deaths in our company than any other company in the regiment. We lost our third man last sunday. We have lowered two in alexandria and the other was lowered on or near our camp ground." Toward the end of the letter, Walter raised the issue of combat. "We have not seen any fighting yet and I don't think that we will for it seems to me that this war won't last long."

Until the summer of 1862, a large percentage of people from the North thought that the Confederacy would be easily and quickly defeated. However, there was an element of

¹¹⁰ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 114-15.

uncertainty. This is also evident in Cpl. Walter's letter. "Well, I hope it will not [last long] for it seems so bad to have so many innocent men called away from their families and friends not knowing whether they will ever return or not."¹¹¹ Most soldiers tried to not think about this during the Christmas season.

A news reporter wrote of the camp atmosphere during the wintry Christmas season in Virginia. It served as evidence to soldiers from the North that the Old Dominion was worthy of winter weather, and also that camp life was not always grim:

The winter of Virginia freezes the fingers of our troops as severely as does that of the Wolverine State, and letter writing is but a painful pleasure, nevertheless I will, in as few words possible, scribble off the news of the day in the gallant Richardson Brigade.

The Christmas holidays passed off as pleasantly as we could desire. On the 25th of December, Captain Trowbridge gave a dinner to the officers of the regiment and his men, which would rival shy at our homes.¹¹² Turkeys, chickens, oysters, champagne, &c., were to be had in abundance, and the Captain took advantage of the overflow in the market and stocked his table with all the delicacies of the season. The

¹¹¹ Sydney Walter to unknown recipient, Dec. 4, 1861, Sydney Walter Letters, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

¹¹² Capt. Henry W. Trowbridge of Company C.

superintendence of our "Daughter of the Regiment," Mrs. Lieut. O'Donnell, was shown in many of the delicacies prepared.¹¹³ Like a good angel of the fairy legend, her presence is visible everywhere, both in joy and sorrow - at the sick bed of the invalid and at the table of the gay. "What would we do without her sunny smile" is a question often asked.

Christmas evening, a party of the officers visited our brave General, and, after serenading him with the Third Regiment Band, wished him a merry Christmas.¹¹⁴

The Spirit of Christmas did not stay with the 5th Michigan for long, as the following month brought the regiment its first real taste of war. Additionally, Col. Terry's men did not see a single combat casualty in 1861. This would not be the case in 1862.

As soon as the new year commenced, rumors spread around camp that the regiment was about to be moved to a theatre of action. "There are all kinds of rumors here in regard to our movements," Foreman wrote to his wife on January 5. "There is now one that we are going to South Carolina soon but it may be only a rumor. But it is quite

¹¹³ Wife of Lt. William O'Donnell, executive officer of Company C. Lt. and Mrs. O'Donnell were from Saginaw, Michigan.

¹¹⁴ Correspondent was referring to Brig. Gen. Israel B. Richardson; "From the Fifth Regiment: It's Camp-Christmas Among the Soldiers-A Scouting Party- A Rencontre." *The Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 9, 1862.

evident that we shall not lay here a great while longer inactive."¹¹⁵

Foreman was right: action was approaching, but in Virginia. On January 9, Company H, under the command of Capt. Louis B. Quackenbush of Owosso, went on a scouting patrol towards Pohick Church, situated south of Alexandria on Virginia's Northern Neck. The Episcopal church, which George Washington once attended regularly, had been vandalized and plundered during an earlier picket by members of the 2nd Michigan.¹¹⁶

According to one battle report, once the company reached the church, Capt. Quackenbush led a team of twelve men down a hill toward Pohick Run. They received fire by an unknown number of Confederates hiding in the wood line. Pvt. Harvey Rosecrants was killed instantly by a bullet that entered just below the right ear. Hearing the rifle volley, the rest of Company H hurried down the hill to support their comrades. The Confederates fled as Yankee reinforcements arrived. The company hurried back to Camp

¹¹⁵ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Jan. 5, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹¹⁶ Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader*, 126-27.

Michigan, with Rosecrants' corpse carried on an ambulance.¹¹⁷

The next night, an unidentified member of the 5th Michigan became a casualty of war. As he was marching picket duty, a Confederate Minie ball struck him in the forehead, shattering his skull.¹¹⁸

At this time, members of the 5th Michigan found themselves poised against more than just area Confederate soldiers as a problem developed in Camp Michigan that same month: strife between the sister regiments. In late-January, all regiments of Richardson's brigade were issued new Austrian rifles, with the exception of the 3rd Michigan, camped alongside the 5th Michigan. The 3rd vented its anger toward Gen. Richardson on the 5th, causing a degree of animosity between the two units.

"The likes & dislikes, more especially the latter, of soldiers are very strong. I don't believe there is a Pvt. in the Regt. who would not go ½ mile out of his way to get rid of saluting Gen. R[ichardson]," wrote Charles B. Haydon

¹¹⁷ "The Michigan Fifth Regiment in a Skirmish." *The Detroit Free Press*, Jan. 14, 1862.

¹¹⁸ Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader*, 171.

of the 3rd Michigan in his daily journal. "Our men would today rather shoot or bayonet one of the 5th Mich. than a Secesh."¹¹⁹

Though January proved more eventful than previous months, February and March were more like December: wintry, but without the Christmas Spirit. Homesickness grew, the soldiers and officers yearned for their loved ones hundreds of miles away in Michigan, and more illnesses occurred.

On February 16, Foreman summed up the camp mood in a letter home to his wife:

Dear Dollie

I am feeling very lonesome today. I shall begin to think I am getting homesick for I am not contented in any place that we have been lately. How I would like to be with my dear, dear wife again to talk too and live over again some of the pleasant and happy times that I have spent with you. Wonder if you will have any kisses left for me when I get back. I have thought of you all of this many times when going my lonely rounds on guard of dark and rainy nights and of how I should have enjoyed myself this winter had I had stayed at home with Dollie and Paul.

You tell me you are sure I will get tired reading your letters. What a queer idea you must have. All the trouble I have about them is that they do not come oftener. And I think entirely short. Now don't you know that all most anything from Michigan and you

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

would interest me.

One band is now playing the funeral dirge over the remains of another member of regiment. Five have died from one company. They are buried side by side on a high beautiful spot with a board at there heads giving there names & company & regiment. It does not seem to be very unhealthy here but a good many have died mostly with the measles.¹²⁰

The 5th Michigan apparently was supposed to go on a scouting patrol that month, but the assignment went to the 3rd Michigan instead. "I understand 300 [members of the 5th] have the measles. The men dislike their places. If it were any other Regt. [than the 5th] they would have cared less."¹²¹ Clearly, the regimental rivalry continued to exist.

At the end of the month, the 3rd Michigan had to substitute for the 5th again for picket duty around Pohick Church, as the latter regiment had just lost seven of its soldiers to unspecified diseases.¹²² On March 1, five members of the 5th Michigan were buried; fourteen more died that night of measles.¹²³

¹²⁰ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Feb. 16, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹²¹ Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader*, 185.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 194.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 198.

Daniel Crotty of the 3rd Michigan clearly outlined the boredom of winter encampment in his memoir.

Winter life in camp is very weary, as it is but one routine over and over again - reveille in the morning, breakfast call, sick call, guard mount call, drill call, dinner call, which is the best of all the calls; the batallion, or brigade drill call, which is not liked very well; dress parade call, supper call, roll call and taps, which means lights out and cover up in blankets. All this gone through day after day, and after a time becomes tedious, leaving out the eating calls, which are very much appreciated."¹²⁴

Men of the 5th Regiment were bored by the lack of activity, too. Cpl. William F. Lerich of Macomb County wrote to his father about how he was ready to march towards Richmond and start fighting. "If we do start with these guns that we have got now their will be no such thing as stopping us. I can kill a man with mine a mile away any day." Also, in contrast to the opinion of other members of the 5th Michigan, Cpl. Lerich was not impressed by the Virginia landscape or its people's culture. "It is very hilly poor miserable country as far as I have seen it looks as though it had been run out and now more than half of the land is left to grow up to brush and small timber." Lerich

¹²⁴ Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning*, 33.

discussed his encounters with slavery. "They do not farm it here as they do in mich a man is no farmer at all unless he has fifteen hundred acors of land 60 or 70 nigers and the same amount of jack-asses the man licks the nigers and the nigers the jac asses."

Expressing an even deeper disliking of Virginia, Lerich criticized its warmer winter climate. "It is like spring here all winter but I would rather live in mich or eaven at the north pole than here evry step you take you will sink in the mud half way to your knees snow ten feet deep would be suitable to this nasty sticky slipery mud."

He signed his letter, "From your bad boy, Bill."¹²⁵ "Bill" was definitely in Virginia to fight and not to sit around camp for months on end. In the next letter Lerich sent home, he stated that he and his brother, Isaac, were considered "the toughest boys in the company [F]." He added: "You are afraid of our morals being corupted. I think it will be hard to spoil rotten eggs."

As stated in the previous letter, Lerich still insisted that the war's end was near. "We are expecting to

¹²⁵ William Lerich to Father, Jan. 26, 1862, Lerich Family Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Lansing, Mich.

here now that peace is declaired it is surtain that before the mdle of next month they will surender or their will not be a greas spot left of them."¹²⁶

The war would not be over by the middle of the next month, March. However, the 5th Michigan, along with its sister regiments, would be transported to Fort Monroe on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula to fight in the first major campaign of the war against Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate forces.

¹²⁶ William Lerich to Father, Feb. 21, 1862, *Ibid.*

CHAPTER III

OFF TO THE VIRGINIA PENINSULA & NOTABILITY

On March 17, the 5th Michigan, the rest of its brigade, and other parts of Gen. George McClellan's Army of the Potomac, boarded steamboats and disembarked from Alexandria.¹²⁷ Daniel C. Crotty, a member of the 3rd Michigan, recalled a black vessel floating in the middle of the river that caught his eyes. "On the lower deck sat our great President, on board, whittling away with his knife."¹²⁸ Abraham Lincoln, unlike many of his predecessors, liked to make himself visible to his soldiers, and the public in general, in an attempt to give them a sense of importance, as well as to boost their morale on the eve of a likely dangerous excursion.

As the steamboats moved downstream toward the Chesapeake Bay, navy ships and Fort Washington fired salutes.¹²⁹ The next day, the fleet arrived at its final

¹²⁷ Church, *Civil War Letters by Sergeant Charles H. Church*, 23.

¹²⁸ Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning*, 37.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

destination: Fort Monroe.¹³⁰

Completed in 1834, Fort Monroe was the largest brick fort in the United States, consisting of a sixty-three acre island formed by a moat.

The army arrived at Fort Monroe to find it surrounded on three sides by Union naval vessels. One of them, however, stuck out. "The Monitor is here & a most ridiculous looking craft she is," wrote the 2nd Michigan's Charles B. Haydon.¹³¹ Although no members of the Army of the Potomac had ever laid eyes upon the "Cheese Box On a Raft," the *USS Monitor* was already famous among all Northerners for saving the Union fleet in Hampton Roads against possible destruction by the *CSS Virginia* less than two weeks earlier.

Although Fort Monroe was a large fortress, its capacity of 2,625 men could not accommodate McClellan's entire army of over 100,000 men.¹³² As a result, many

¹³⁰ Church, *Civil War Letters by Sergeant Charles H. Church*, 23.

¹³¹ Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader*, 208.

¹³² John V. Quarstein, *The Civil War on the Virginia Peninsula* (Dover, N.H., 1997), 11-12.

regiments remained on their vessels, which they called "floating camps," for days after their arrival.¹³³

According to Pvt. Haydon, during the first night on the boats, soldiers in the Third Corps of the army, which included the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Michigan, as well as the 37th New York, raised a ruckus. "The 37th stole a barrel of whiskey & all got very drunk & noisy & were fighting all night." He also mentioned a member of his own regiment who "got in a quarrel with a lot of the 37th this [morning], broke his gun all in pieces over their heads & then went for them with an ax." Some drunken men, according to Haydon's testimony, "were foolish enough to go for Col. Poe last night but he quickly ended the performance by knocking 3 of them down the hatchway & kicking 2 others after them."¹³⁴ Explaining why such occurrences were taking place, Haydon noted: "The men now they are so crowded together are fighting continually."¹³⁵ Getting the men off the boats and into camps in the field was essential for remedying this situation.

¹³³ Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning*, 39.

¹³⁴ Col. Orlando M. Poe, a West Point graduate, served as the commanding officer of the 2nd Michigan during the Peninsular Campaign.

¹³⁵ Haydon, *For Country, Cause & Leader*, 207.

To provide more space for the army, McClellan eyed the remnants of the town of Hampton, located just on the other side of the bridge from Fort Monroe.

During the summer of 1861, Union Gen. Benjamin Butler had commanded Fort Monroe. He decided to use the houses and buildings in the village for quartering Union soldiers and slaves who had fled to Fort Monroe, where they were held as contrabands of war. Upon hearing this news, local Confederates under Gen. John Bankhead Magruder burned Hampton that August.¹³⁶

During the evening of March 20, two days after their arrival, the 5th Michigan went ashore and encamped at Camp Hamilton, established across Mill Creek from Hampton.¹³⁷ They did not remain there for long before moving across the river to establish Camp Heintzelman, named for their corps commander.¹³⁸

Camp life at Heintzelman was slightly different from the regiment's previous encampments. Here they found the

¹³⁶ Quarstein, *The Civil War on the Virginia Peninsula*, 54.

¹³⁷ Camp Hamilton was named for Lt. Col. Schuyler Hamilton, who served as Gen. Winfield Scott's secretary. James A. Foreman Diary, Mar. 20, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, Mar. 24, 1862.

pleasure of being able to go down to the beaches and creeks to collect oysters and clams, which were in abundance in the region, for extra food and private feasts.¹³⁹ Pvt. Jim Foreman of Company D was impressed by how much larger they were in Virginia than in Michigan. He wrote a letter to his wife and discussed Hampton by saying "a very pretty place it must have been. But the rebels burnt it to prevent it falling into our hands and making quarters of it for our troops. It is said that it has been burnt three times, once by the Indians in a very early day, again by the British in 1814 and again some six weeks ago."¹⁴⁰

While stationed in Hampton, Foreman's wife, Dollie, gave birth to their second child, a girl. While meandering around Hampton, Foreman stumbled upon a possible name for her when he walked through the cemetery of St. John's Episcopal Church.¹⁴¹ One gravestone erected in the corner

¹³⁹ Church, *Civil War Letters by Sergeant Charles H. Church*, 24.

¹⁴⁰ In actuality, in 1813 British troops under the command of Admiral Sir George Cockburn burned Hampton during the War of 1812. This event convinced the federal government of the need to construct Fort Monroe to protect Hampton from future invasions.

¹⁴¹ St. John's Episcopal Church is in downtown Hampton. After the burning of Hampton during the Civil War, all that remained of the church was its brick walls. Founded in 1610, St. John's is the oldest English-speaking church still in use in the United States.

of the churchyard captured his attention. "On it was engraved simply the name Regina," he wrote in a letter to his wife. "As I was looking upon it the thought came into my mind. What a pretty name for our little girl."

Perhaps most importantly, Foreman made a statement in the same letter that would prove to be the tone for most of the upcoming Peninsular Campaign: "Each time getting a little further into the enemies country but they keep evacuating and we sometimes think they are not going to give us a fight."¹⁴²

On Friday, April 4, the 5th Michigan and the rest of the Army of the Potomac began their westward trek up the Virginia Peninsula toward the Confederate capital of Richmond. The Federals advanced approximately ten miles toward Yorktown, situated on the banks of the York River. There the main Confederate line stood. That night, the Yankees pitched their tents in a plowed field where they made their campfires out of the local farmers' fence rails.¹⁴³

At 7:00 the next morning, the soldiers marched through

¹⁴² James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Mar. 28, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹⁴³ James A. Foreman Diary, Apr. 4, 1862, Foreman Papers.

the rain and arrived east of the Confederate lines at Yorktown.¹⁴⁴ Before McClellan's advance, Confederate forces under the command of Gen. Magruder had dug an extensive system of trench works, extending from the banks of the York River south across the Peninsula to the James River near Mulberry Island, a total distance of approximately fourteen miles. The earthworks carrying eighty-five pieces of heavy artillery and fifty-five field guns made the problem difficult for the Union army. However, McClellan had a serious advantage: the Confederates were dangerously out-manned. Magruder had only 15,000 troops, barely a tenth of the size of the Army of the Potomac.¹⁴⁵ Yet, Magruder convinced McClellan that he had far more men. This caused the Union commander to advance with extreme caution.¹⁴⁶

McClellan's slow advance gave Gen. Joseph Eggleston Johnston, commander of the major Confederate army, time to

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Apr. 5, 1862.

¹⁴⁵ Stephen W. Sears. *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*. (New York, 1992), 26-27.

¹⁴⁶ Quarstein, *The Civil War on the Virginia Peninsula*, 98.

reinforce the few Confederates in and around Yorktown and Warwick County.¹⁴⁷

Now with 56,000 men entrenched in defensive positions, the Confederates appeared to have the advantage. Additionally, McClellan was unable to get support of navy gunboats, originally intended to move up the York and James Rivers to attack the Confederate flanks while the army attacked the lines. Although the *USS Monitor* had rescued the wooden Union ships in Hampton Roads from the *CSS Virginia*, the Confederate ironclad still successfully defended the mouth of the James. The York River posed another problem. In addition to the Confederate batteries at Yorktown, an equally powerful fort at Gloucester Point, directly across the river from Yorktown, was heavily fortified. The Union Navy was unwilling to risk fire from both strongholds. Therefore, McClellan opted to lay siege to Yorktown and its lines.¹⁴⁸

For the first half of April, McClellan oversaw the placement of a large number of siege guns, including heavy

¹⁴⁷ Warwick County, Va., no longer exists. It became part of the City of Newport News in the 20th Century.

¹⁴⁸ Craig L. Symonds, *A Battlefield Atlas of the Civil War* (Baltimore, 1983), 28-29.

mortars, which were brought up the Peninsula to the Union lines east of Yorktown.¹⁴⁹

In a letter to his wife, Surg. Moses Gunn of the 5th Michigan discussed the efforts required in transporting the artillery pieces up the Peninsula. According to the doctor, approximately twenty miles of roads were constructed from Ship Point and Cheesman's Creek landing to the Union front lines to transport supplies and the heavy siege guns McClellan believed were necessary to destroy the Confederate batteries at Yorktown.¹⁵⁰

Now, suddenly, the advantage swung to the Union forces, as the superior siege guns were easily capable of destroying the Confederate lines. However, Johnston did as Jefferson Davis and his military advisor, Gen. Robert E. Lee, requested and held his ground for as long as possible to delay McClellan's advance.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ George B. McClellan, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865* (New York, 1992), 239.

¹⁵⁰ Ship Point jugged out between the Poquoson River and Cheeseman Creek on the York River side of the Peninsula. Cheeseman Creek was a tributary of the Poquoson River, entering from its western bank in York County; Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 120.

¹⁵¹ Symonds, *A Battlefield Atlas*, 29.

For nearly a month, the two armies lay entrenched.

During the first week of the siege, Pvt. Jim Foreman's diary entries discussed almost exclusively the cold, rainy weather. "Very cold with a slight snow," he wrote on April 10. "Decidedly sick of soldiering and wish myself home."¹⁵²

Foreman's mind was not on the Confederate capital, as news from home disturbed him tremendously. In a letter to his wife on April 12 he wrote:

My dear

Why is it I have not heard from you lately. Are you sick or anything very bad happened to you or Paul and our little girl. The last that I heard was from Lib announcing that Paul was very sick. Why have you not told me how you both were getting along. It has caused me a great many uneasy moments and then again I receive a short letter from Alma announcing that Father was not expected to live and since then no one has written me a word how he is. Thus you will see that I have received all the bad news without anything good.¹⁵³

The same letter implied that McClellan was not the only man in the Army of the Potomac who overestimated the outnumbered Confederate army. Foreman told his wife that Johnston had 100,000 men at Yorktown supported by hundreds

¹⁵² James A. Foreman Diary, Apr. 10, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹⁵³ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Apr. 12, 1862, Foreman Papers.

of heavy artillery pieces. He also informed her that Union bombardment would commence early the following week.¹⁵⁴

Not only were Foreman's calculations of the Confederates' strength incorrect; his predictions regarding the commencement of the bombardment were also wrong. He and the rest of the 5th Michigan sat around camp and performed picket duty for about three weeks. During much of April 1862, the regiment was outside Yorktown at Camp Winfield Scott, which partly consisted of wooden structures erected by Confederates in preceding months.¹⁵⁵

Although Surg. Gunn had established himself in comfortable and dry quarters, he still suffered the effects of camp life. Out of stationery, he was forced to "beg, borrow, and steal" paper and envelopes. A letter to his wife on April 24 was actually sealed with surgical plaster. To reassure his wife he wrote: "Don't be alarmed for my morals; we all interchange this dishonesty, then laugh about it."¹⁵⁶

Things were far worse for Jim Foreman. That same day,

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *OR*, Pt. 2, 30:637.

¹⁵⁶ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 121, 128-29.

he wrote to his wife:

This morning I received your letter announcing the death of our little girl. What can I say to console you in our sad bereavement. It cannot be expected that I would feel her loss as you do as I never saw her and had not learned to love her as you had. I could realize your feelings better by placing Paul in her place. I could hardly keep from crying or reading your letter. How sad and lonesome you must be.

Although the war preoccupied Foreman, news from home made his time in Virginia much worse. For a soldier fighting in the Civil War, receiving no mail was demoralizing. However, sad news did far more damage. The death of his daughter changed Foreman's view toward the conflict. In the same letter, he asked, "When is this accursed rebellion going to end. I fear not without the loss of thousands of more valuable lives. I believe it is carried on in the most uncivilized manner of any war known of late years."¹⁵⁷ Never had Foreman used such a tone in his writings. Some of his previous letters, like those of many other Union soldiers, had predicted an early, swift end to the conflict.

Although the war would continue for three more years, the siege of Yorktown only lasted for another week. Gen.

¹⁵⁷ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, Apr. 26, 1862, Foreman Papers.

Johnston did as President Jefferson Davis ordered and held his position at the Revolutionary War battlefield until McClellan was ready to begin the massive bombardment. Then Johnston began a slow retreat toward Richmond. By doing so, the Confederates forced the Yankees to waste a month preparing for a massive bombardment at Yorktown that would never happen. This increased the frustration in his army and lowered morale.

McClellan had planned for the bombardment to commence on May 5, but the Confederates unleashed a bombardment of their own to cover their retreat. The following morning, the Rebel lines at Yorktown were vacant.¹⁵⁸

Johnston's plans were to establish a new position of defense on the eastern outskirts of Richmond. In order to do so, he had to move his army quickly so that McClellan would be unable to catch him. To help his chances of escaping the pursuing Yankees, Johnston ordered Gen. James Longstreet to take 13,000 Confederates to prepare earthworks at Williamsburg to delay the Yankee advance.

The center of the Confederate line was Fort Magruder;

¹⁵⁸ Quarstein, *The Civil War on the Virginia Peninsula*, 110.

an earthen battery constructed the previous winter by the general for whom it was named. The right flank was controlled by Gen. Richard H. Anderson while Gen. Jubal A. Early commanded the left. Supporting the line were three brigades under Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill. His men held a position just south of the town of Williamsburg.¹⁵⁹ McClellan's army had to penetrate this line in order to catch Johnston and the rest of his army.

Leading the pursuit was the Army of the Potomac's Second Corps commander, Gen. Edwin V. Sumner. Under his command, he had the divisions of Joseph Hooker, William F. Smith, and Philip Kearny. At the start of the battle of Williamsburg, Kearny led the 3rd Division of Heintzelman's corps. The 3rd Brigade of Kearny's division, led by Gen. Hiram G. Berry, included the 5th Michigan, which was to achieve fame.¹⁶⁰

On the morning of May 5, the Union army began an attack. Sumner ordered Hooker to strike the center of Confederate line at Fort Magruder. The Confederate

¹⁵⁹ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 76, 82.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 360-61.

position proved too strong. Further hindering the assault was thick mud from the continuous rainstorms.¹⁶¹

After witnessing how badly his men beat back the Yankee charge, Longstreet decided to take advantage of the Union disorganization and make a countercharge with the aim of pushing the Federals back to the Yorktown-Hampton Road. Richard Anderson was placed in charge of the assault, which was immensely successful. A brigade under Confederate Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox captured a Union battery of ten cannons, which it turned around and fired at the retreating bluecoats. To Union veterans, it appeared as if Williamsburg was another battle of Manassas.¹⁶²

Sumner's attempt to attack the rear of Johnston's retreating army had backfired. However, the fight had not ended. Moving rapidly up the Lee's Mill Road toward the captured Union battery came Kearny's division, led by the 3rd Brigade, with the 5th Michigan in front.¹⁶³ The regiment opened fire on the Confederates; they returned the musketry. When Col. Terry saw that the Rebel fire was

¹⁶¹ Quarstein, *The Civil War on the Virginia Peninsula*, 114.

¹⁶² Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 73, 75.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 75, 77.

having effects, he ordered a charge. Surprisingly, the men in gray fled the battery they had just captured and retired to their original line of battle. From there, they opened fire anew, killing many members of the 5th Michigan, 2nd Michigan, and 37th New York. In order to avoid a slaughter, Terry ordered a second charge. This sent Confederates fleeing, and the 5th Michigan, with the support of two of its sister regiments, captured their rifle pits.¹⁶⁴ In the process, the regiment took nineteen prisoners.¹⁶⁵ The 5th Michigan played an intricate role in preventing the Army of the Potomac from suffering a serious setback in its first battle.

Members of the sister regiments commended the 5th Michigan for its role in the battle of Williamsburg. "Never did a regiment make a better fight during the war than that gallant 'Fighting Fifth,' a name they worthily earned on this bloody field," wrote Daniel G. Crotty of the 3rd Michigan. "They charged against fearful odds and took some breastworks from the enemy, and seven or eight times stood their ground against the enemy, who tried to dislodge

¹⁶⁴ *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 507-8.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 509.

them, and more than half of their men and officers were either killed or wounded."¹⁶⁶

Because casualties were so high, the battle did not end for many when the rifles and cannons ceased firing. For Surg. Gunn, the duties and hardships of battle had just begun.

Dismounting, I commenced my labors. It seemed I had hardly been engaged five minutes, when Captain LeFarren was brought back with the end of his nose shot off and his cheek horribly mangled; then in they came constantly-terribly shot and maimed, some dying as they were brought in. It seemed as though our regiment was being slaughtered! The rain continued to pour, the garments of the men and the ground on which they lay, literally soaking. None of us had on a dry thread; my own water-drenched trousers had dripped into my boots until my feet were in a bath.

Gunn and his assistants worked through the night, as wounded members of the regiment continued to arrive. Unfortunately, the regiment had no ambulance wagons. Only so many wounded could be transported at a time. Those shot in the arms, if bearable, walked to the hospital tents. The rest spent the night lying in the rain and suffering horribly. Many died under such conditions. Some even

¹⁶⁶ Crotty's assessment of the 5th Michigan's casualties in the battle was exaggerated, as only about 28% were killed or wounded; Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning*, 43.

spent two nights in the rain after being wounded.¹⁶⁷

Of the 500 members of the 5th Michigan who fought at the battle of Williamsburg, 144 were killed, wounded, or missing. Of the forty-two units in the battle, only three suffered higher casualties than the "Fighting Fifth."¹⁶⁸ According to Surg. Gunn, out of 426 soldiers in Kearny's division killed or wounded in the fight, about a third belonged to the 5th Michigan.¹⁶⁹ The reason for the high numbers in his regiment was simply because of their role in the battle - they led charges against the enemy twice.

In addition to the high numbers of enlisted men killed or wounded, the regiment's total casualties also included some key officers. Lt. Col. Samuel E. Beach, was severely wounded in the thigh and would not see action for three months.¹⁷⁰ Capt. Edwin T. Sherlock, commandant of Company A was shot in the arm.¹⁷¹ He would not see action again until

¹⁶⁷ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 136-37.

¹⁶⁸ OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 450.

¹⁶⁹ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 43.

¹⁷⁰ OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 450, 507-8; *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War*, 5:11.

¹⁷¹ OR, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 507-8.

the following January.¹⁷² Capt. Heber Le Favour was shot in the face and arm and left in critical condition, leaving no commander for Company F. Capt. Henry W. Trowbridge, commander of Company C, fell ill prior to the battle of Williamsburg.¹⁷³ Lt. James A. Gunning took charge of the company and was killed in action.¹⁷⁴

In a second report on the battle, Col. Terry gave special recognition to his regiment's casualties and medical staff by saying that Dr. Gunn and his staff performed their tasks remarkably well in treating the wounded. For the men of the unit who did not survive the action, he offered some words of condolence:

The dead sleep upon the field of our victory, and they sleep well. Their graves mark the spot where (beside the same breastworks) our Revolutionary fathers fought and fell before them, and though perhaps no report may be made of their devotion to the Union and the Constitution of the country, their surviving comrades will never forget them.¹⁷⁵

Families and friends of the members of the "Fighting Fifth" heard of their loved ones' success at Williamsburg

¹⁷² *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:113.

¹⁷³ Capt. Trowbridge died May 9, 1862, of typhoid fever at Fort Monroe.

¹⁷⁴ *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 507-8.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 509.

from newspapers such as the *Detroit Free Press*, which printed a highly detailed summary, taking its readers through the entire battle with plenty of detail and accuracy.¹⁷⁶ A week later the *Detroit Daily Advertiser* printed a similar summary with even more detail.¹⁷⁷ Nineteen days after the battle, Col. Terry's official after-battle report appeared in the *Detroit Free Press*.¹⁷⁸ Exactly one month after the fight at Williamsburg, newspapers published lists of casualties that included names, companies, and types of wounds.¹⁷⁹ Michigan citizens were not in any way deprived of news pertaining to their regiments.

The day following the battle, Union forces realized that the Confederates had evacuated the Williamsburg area and retired toward Richmond. There was no clear victor in this battle. Federals pushed the Confederates off of the field in the end, but on the other hand, Johnston got

¹⁷⁶ "The Michigan Fifth." *The Detroit Free Press*, May 14, 1862.

¹⁷⁷ "Yorktown Correspondence: Graphic Description of Michigan's Share in the Williamsburg Fight." *The Detroit Daily Advertiser*, May 21, 1862.

¹⁷⁸ "Battle at Williamsburg: High Commendation of the Michigan Troops." *The Detroit Free Press*, May 24, 1862.

¹⁷⁹ "From McClellan's Army." *Ibid.*, June 6, 1862.

exactly what he wanted out of it: a delay of the Yankee advancement so that his army could retreat without harassment by the enemy.¹⁸⁰

During May 6-9, the 5th Michigan encamped in and around Williamsburg. The town would never be in Confederate control again, though its citizens remained largely loyal to the Southern cause throughout Union occupation.

Cynthia Beverly Tucker Washington Coleman, an ardent secessionist, recorded the entrance of the Union forces into her town as they played "Yankee Doodle" and other songs.

They pass on up the Duke of Gloucester St. which in its time has echoed to the tramp of Hessians, English, French, Continental troops, and felt the noiseless foot-fall of the stealthy Indian. Indignant faces look out from behind closed blinds upon the desecration, as they feel it to be, of their beautiful old Town.

When the Union forces entered Williamsburg, Coleman was working as a nurse for wounded Confederate soldiers in Bruton Parish Church, as well as some of the other houses of worship in the town. These men soon became prisoners.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 82.

¹⁸¹ *Memoirs of Cynthia B. T. W. Coleman, May 5, 1862, Tucker Coleman Papers, 1664-1665, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.*

For the occupying Federal soldiers, being in Williamsburg was similar to visiting Washington and Alexandria with plenty of historic sites. The old Georgian Court House became a headquarters and regiments erected the tents over the town's greens.¹⁸² Jim Foreman thought the town "a very nice place or must have been before the Rebellion."¹⁸³ Other soldiers wrote similar accounts. "Most or rather a great many of the houses present the usual appearance of a captured town that is they look as if a 'dose of salts had been put through them' and they had been cleaned out," wrote Sam Putnam of the 25th Massachusetts. "In one respect all southern towns look alike, that air of neglect and decay hangs about them all, and Williamsburg is no exception."¹⁸⁴

On May 9, with the exception of a small occupational force, the Army of the Potomac packed up camp and renewed

¹⁸² Sam Putnam to father, 1862, Williamsburg Papers, 1632-1973, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

¹⁸³ James A. Foreman Diary, May 8, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹⁸⁴ Sam Putnam to father, 1862, Williamsburg Papers.

its move up the Peninsula pursuing Johnston's army.¹⁸⁵ The 5th Michigan marched as the first regiment in Kearny's division, a distinction earned from the battle four days earlier.¹⁸⁶

Since the regiment lost a number of officers at Williamsburg, Col. Terry made adjustments and promotions to fill in the suddenly vacant positions. All of Company C's officers were killed in the recent battle; so the regimental commander chose Lt. Henry C. Edgerly of Company B to take charge of the orphaned company, a duty usually reserved for captains, two notches higher on the scale of rank than Edgerly, as he was a second lieutenant.¹⁸⁷ The company commanders wounded during the battle retained their positions, though some remained in the hospital and could not serve in their capacities for indefinite periods of

¹⁸⁵ Williamsburg suffered during its occupation. In retaliation for a Confederate raid on a Union camp near the town, the Yankees burned the College of William and Mary in 1862. Cynthia Beverly Tucker Washington Coleman mentioned the destruction of houses in her memoirs. Another building storing a large collection of letters and other documents from the Colonial and Revolutionary periods suffered scavenging by Union soldiers.

¹⁸⁶ James A. Foreman Diary, May 8, 1862, Foreman Papers.

¹⁸⁷ Order No. 42, May 7, 1862, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

time.¹⁸⁸

On May 11, the soldiers camped for the night at West Point, a village on the banks of the York River in New Kent County. While encamped there, good news spread of the capture of Norfolk and the scuttling of the dreaded ironclad *CSS Virginia*, which up to that point had kept the Union Navy from moving up the James River.¹⁸⁹

The following day, Jim Foreman wrote a letter to his wife about New Kent County. "It is a very pretty country here about 40 minutes from Richmond," he said.¹⁹⁰ "About all the male population have left and are in the army. All the niggers are left." Not surprisingly, Foreman wrote that the blacks in the region were "the only ones that appear glad to see us."¹⁹¹ Although many of the Negro slaves on the Virginia Peninsula saw the Union soldiers as "Freedom Fighters," many of the bluecoats were against liberating the slaves and did not treat them kindly during encounters. "There is some very hot argaments amongst the

¹⁸⁸ Order No. 44, *Ibid.*, May 26, 1862.

¹⁸⁹ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 143-44.

¹⁹⁰ Pvt. Foreman's estimate is likely incorrect, and he probably intended to write, "40 miles."

¹⁹¹ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, May 12, 1862, Foreman Papers.

soldiers about the Nigers," Charles H. Church of the 3rd Michigan wrote to his father. "What will be done with them. The mas of the soldiers are in favor of having them put upon some island & shoot the first one that attempts to leave it. We give the Nigers no quarters. The majority in our Co. is Democratic."¹⁹²

Three days later, the regiment moved at 5:00 in the morning toward Cumberland Landing, where it remained for four days.¹⁹³ On May 16, Jim Foreman wrote to his wife. He realized how long the war was going to be, which was much longer than his earlier predictions. In the letter, he said that the largest fights were yet to occur, and that the war would not end "until all are killed." His experiences on the Virginia Peninsula gave him a real taste of the ardent Southern spirit that would be difficult to conquer. "I had no idea of the strong secession sentiment prevailing with everybody until we penetrated so far in the

¹⁹² At the time of the Civil War, the Democratic Party did not take the firm stand against slavery as the Republicans. Democrats were largely in favor of the war, but only as a means of preserving the Union; Church, *Civil War Letters by Sergeant Charles H. Church*, 25.

¹⁹³ The York River is formed at West Point where the Mattoponi and the Pamunkey Rivers meet. Cumberland Landing is located in New Kent County a few miles upstream on the Pamunkey, south of the Mattoponi, from West Point; James A. Foreman Diary, May 15, 1862, Foreman Papers.

country," he wrote to his wife. "A Union man is not to be found."¹⁹⁴

As the army drew closer to Richmond, morale did not seem to rise. On May 21, Surg. Gunn wrote a letter home from Baltimore Crossroads, approximately twenty miles from the Confederate capital. The 5th Michigan had "reached that point where every one is uncomfortable; I, no more so, perhaps than others, but I cannot incur the hardships incident to field service much longer if a resignation will relieve me from them," he said. "The nights are always cold and very damp, while the days are hot." In discussing his dissatisfaction with his role in the regiment, he stated: "The truth is that the administration of the medical department of the army is utterly imbecile. The great mistake I made was in not applying for a brigade surgeoncy."¹⁹⁵

This stance would only grow as the regiment continued to fight and suffer casualties. In another letter written a week later, Gunn said he would resign from his position.

¹⁹⁴ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, May 16, 1862, *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 153-54.

In many ways, the life of a surgeon was worse than that of a soldier. Constant pressure and labor was required of the surgeon, and with little to no reward.

Did any one dream for a moment that a surgeon's field had aught of glory about it? No! The glory consists of carnage and death. The more bloody the battle, the greater the glory. A surgeon may labor harder, must labor longer (we continued to fight three days), may exhibit a higher degree of skill, may exercise the best feelings of our poor human nature, may bind up many a heart as well as limb, but who so poor as to do him honor? There is no glory for our profession.¹⁹⁶

At 7 a.m. on May 31, the 5th Michigan resumed marching. Its destination was Fair Oaks Station, near the outskirts of Richmond, the position of the Army of the Potomac. Just west of there, Johnston's 60,000 Confederates massed and were preparing a major assault against the Union lines in an attempt to convince McClellan to halt his advance upon their capital.

The swampy Chickahominy River divided McClellan's army in two. Nine divisions under the commands of Generals Porter, Franklin, and Sumner were positioned north of the river while divisions from Keyes' and Heintzelman's corps, the latter including the 5th Michigan, situated themselves

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 157-58.

south of the river.

Johnston's strategy called for Confederates under Generals Daniel Harvey Hill, James Longstreet, and Benjamin Huger to attack Keyes' position at Fair Oaks Station while Generals Ambrose Powell Hill and John Magruder attacked Porter and Franklin north of the Chickahominy.¹⁹⁷

The battle commenced at about 1:00 p.m. when D.H. Hill's troops charged out of the woods directly at Keyes' line. They smashed into Gen. Silas Casey's division and sent the bluecoats running west.

Keyes pulled back from Fair Oaks Station and established a new line of defense near Seven Pines. In the middle of the afternoon, Hill assaulted this position. It appeared as if the Union forces would again be forced to retreat. However, the Yankees experienced relief when part of Heintzelman's corps arrived, led by the 3rd Brigade of Kearny's Division, which included the 5th Michigan.¹⁹⁸

The first of these regiments to enter the battle was the 3rd Michigan. Shortly after, the "Fighting Fifth"

¹⁹⁷ Symonds, *A Battlefield Atlas*, 30-31.

¹⁹⁸ John Macdonald, *Great Battles of the Civil War* (New York, 1988), 34-35, 37.

joined its sister regiment; then moved passed it and advanced directly toward the Confederate position. As soon as the Rebels were in sight, the 5th Michigan opened fire and drove them back. The 5th pursued its retreating foe until Hill's men were able to reposition themselves in a section of woods reduced to fallen timber near the original Confederate lines. From there, the Confederates opened a murderous fire. The men of the 5th Michigan began running low on cartridges while the enemy was being reinforced. As daylight diminished, Col. Terry ordered the retreat through White Oak Swamp.¹⁹⁹

The battle ended in a stalemate after Sumner moved his divisions behind Keyes', with both armies holding approximately the same positions in which they started that afternoon.²⁰⁰ However, it served as another personal victory for the 5th Michigan. It fought in two engagements thus far; in both, it managed to force Confederate units to retreat from positions previously taken from other Union regiments.

¹⁹⁹ *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 869-70.

²⁰⁰ Macdonald, *Great Battles of the Civil War*, 35.

The 5th Michigan at Fair Oaks,²⁰¹ as at Williamsburg, did not make such achievements without paying a heavy price. The regiment entered the battle with just over 320 men and suffered 155 casualties.²⁰² Among the killed were Lt. Charles H. Hutchins, the regimental adjutant, and the captain of Company H, Louis B. Quackenbush.²⁰³ Capt. Charles H. Travers of Company E was mortally wounded in the chest and died in less than two months from the wounds.²⁰⁴ Capt. George W. Wilson of Company G was hit in the shoulder and never served with the 5th Michigan in the same capacity again.²⁰⁵ Lt. John J. Knox, serving as commandant of Company D, was shot in the throat. Although he was hospitalized for a while, he did return to serve with the regiment later in the war.²⁰⁶

The long list of casualties of the 5th Michigan at Fair

²⁰¹ Confederates referred to this battle as "Seven Pines" while Union forces called it "Fair Oaks."

²⁰² William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (1861-1865)*, (Albany, 1889), 384.

²⁰³ Capt. Quackenbush is buried at the National Cemetery at Seven Pines.

²⁰⁴ *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 869-70.

²⁰⁵ Capt. Wilson, after recovery, became acting adjutant general of the 5th Michigan; *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:133-4.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:72; *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 869-70.

Oaks was printed in the Detroit *Free Press* in two pieces, showing the soldiers' family and friends that the regiment had been cut in half.²⁰⁷

After the battle of Fair Oaks, Col. Terry received a promotion to brigadier general.²⁰⁸ With Lt. Col. Beach still recovering from wounds suffered at Williamsburg, Maj. John D. Fairbanks assumed command of the 5th Michigan. One of his first responsibilities was to replace the four company commanders who were casualties in the recent engagement. With no other choice, Fairbanks reshuffled his regimental staff. Capt. John Pulford, who replaced Capt. Sherlock after Williamsburg, remained in command of Company A, while Capt. Judson S. Farrar continued to lead Company B, and Capt. William Wakenshaw remained commandant of Company H. Though wounded, Lt. John J. Knox was able to keep his position commanding Company D. Lt. Byron Ransford assumed command of Company C, while Lt. Henry C. Edgerly took command of Company E, and Lt. George W. Rose became

²⁰⁷ "Loss of Michigan Fifth and Seventh Regiments at the Battle of Fair Oaks." *The Detroit Free Press*, June 12, 1862; "The Battle of Fair Oaks." *Ibid.*, June 19, 1862.

²⁰⁸ *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:133-34.

commandant of Company I. Lastly, Lt. Franz Otto was to lead Company K.²⁰⁹

These new promotions served as proof of how thin the 5th Michigan had become. Three of the new company commanders, Ransford, Rose, and Otto, were enlisted men at the time of the regiment's formation.²¹⁰ Now they were on the regimental staff.

The month of May was a hard one for the regiment. Numbers and officers became reduced by more than half. For the most part, June was relatively uneventful. The 5th Michigan remained encamped and dug in around Fair Oaks Station constantly waiting for another attack.

Jim Foreman spent much of June digging graves for his dead comrades. "Such a sickening sight I never care to see again." He started to have "the shakes," or trembling, a common side effect after combat experience.²¹¹ For his

²⁰⁹ Order No. 45, June 2, 1862, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

²¹⁰ *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:47, 94, 102, 106.

²¹¹ James A. Foreman Diary, June 2, 1862, Foreman Papers.

problems, he regularly took doses of quinine and opium.²¹² He also testified that "there is but few that are really well in our company," and mentioned that a lack of water was a problem.²¹³ "We dig holes and then wait for [rain water] to soak in." Foreman hated going by the hospital because the sight of piled limbs sickened him. "I can hardly see how the surgeons can stand it."²¹⁴ Morale hit a new low in the regiment after Fair Oaks, regardless of the unit's triumphant roles in its two engagements. Pvt. William Reed of Clinton County, Michigan, lost his wife in late-June. With his being so far away from home, his four sons were practically orphans. In a letter to his wife at the same time, Jim Foreman discussed his being tired of war and how much he desired to go home.

Ten months ago today our regiment was sworn into the service for three years. I was fool enough to believe that rebellion would soon be played out and if alive go home again where my thoughts so often wonder. My expectations of seeing you and Paul again before the three years is up is daily growing less and less. I predict that our army will be repulsed here if so the South have achieved their independence.

²¹² Quinine, which was generally used to treat malaria, often caused diarrhea, which Pvt. Foreman would combat to such a degree as to warrant a medical discharge from the army in early 1863.

²¹³ James A. Foreman to Dollie Foreman, May 16, 1862, Foreman Papers.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Mid-June 1862; *Ibid.*, June 20, 1862.

In the same letter, Foreman spoke of morale in the regiment by saying: "I do not believe there is ten men in this regiment but what would go home tomorrow if they could get a discharge," he stated. "Presume when I write again I shall either be in Richmond, back at Fort Monroe or killed. God knows which."²¹⁵

Fair Oaks convinced McClellan that the Confederates outnumbered his forces. He refused to believe that they would have assaulted his lines as they did on May 31 if they were not in greater numbers than the Yankees. As a result of this false conclusion, McClellan became even more cautious and delayed all plans for an attack.²¹⁶

The battle also caused perhaps the most important change in command during the war. Joseph E. Johnston, leading the Confederate army, was wounded during the engagement. Jefferson Davis replaced him with Gen. Robert E. Lee.²¹⁷ Now McClellan faced a much stronger and smarter foe. However, nobody at that time was fully aware of this.

On June 25, the Seven Days campaign began. Two days

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, June 27, 1862.

²¹⁶ Symonds, *A Battlefield Atlas*, 31.

²¹⁷ Macdonald, *Great Battles of the Civil War*, 39.

later, the 5th Michigan went back into action in a small engagement at Oak Grove near the White Oak Swamp. Fortunately, only three men were wounded.²¹⁸ However, the "Fighting Fifth" proved unlucky on June 30. At Frayser's Farm, Lee attacked McClellan and attempted to cut off his retreat. McClellan foiled the plan, however, and withdrew to Malvern Hill, but not before Maj. John D. Fairbanks, commanding officer of the 5th Michigan, was mortally wounded.²¹⁹

The new commanding officer of the regiment became Capt. Judson S. Farrar, commandant of Company B.²²⁰ Under his leadership, the "Fighting Fifth" fought in its last engagement of the campaign at Malvern Hill. Here Lee assaulted McClellan one last time. Although the Confederates were repulsed, the Union commander abandoned his position, ending the Peninsular Campaign and head back to Washington.²²¹ Morale in the army was low, its leaders frustrated. McClellan's army of over 100,000 had spent

²¹⁸ *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 2, 190-91.

²¹⁹ Long, *The Civil War Day By Day*, 234; Fox, *Regimental Losses*, 384.

²²⁰ Order No. 16, July 22, 1862, 5th Michigan Infantry Order Book.

²²¹ Union soldiers referred to the Peninsula Campaign, the Confederate name, as the Peninsular Campaign; Long, *The Civil War Day By Day*, 235.

nearly four months on the Virginia Peninsula with one goal: to seize Richmond. They failed.

For the 5th Michigan, the Seven Days was not a friendly campaign. During the fights at Frayser's Farm and Malvern Hill, the regiment suffered an additional fifty-nine casualties, bringing the regiment's numbers down to 157.²²²

Two days after the battle at Malvern Hill, Surg. Moses Gunn, disgusted with the war, submitted his resignation.²²³ On July 15, the army approved his request, and he went home to Detroit.²²⁴

On August 21, the 5th Michigan boarded the steamer *Baltic* at Harrison's Landing on the banks of the James River and headed back to Washington.²²⁵

As the war progressed, Jim Foreman developed chronic diarrhea, resulting in his honorable discharge in January 1863. His dream of going home to see Dollie and Paul finally came true.²²⁶

²²² Fox, *Regimental Losses*, 384.

²²³ Gunn, *Memorial Sketches*, 165.

²²⁴ Dr. Gunn lived until 1887, and his wife had his letters published two years later.

²²⁵ James A. Foreman Diary, Aug. 21, 1862, Foreman Papers.

²²⁶ Pvt. Foreman lived until 1909.

William F. Lerich remained in the 5th Michigan until shortly before the Wilderness Campaign of 1864, when he was transferred to the Veteran Reserve Corps. He received an honorable discharge in August of that year.

Sydney Walter ended his service differently when he deserted from the regiment in October 1862.²²⁷

The 5th Michigan Infantry Regiment came back to Virginia later in the war, but with a new staff of officers and fresh recruits. In that sense, it was a different regiment than the one that fought in the Peninsular Campaign.

During the first year of the war, the 5th Michigan suffered nearly 350 combat casualties (nearly all during the Peninsular and Seven Days campaigns), in addition to the undocumented number of men who died of illnesses.²²⁸ When the regiment returned to Virginia with newly trained men under different leadership, the 5th continued to suffer high losses as they had nearly 415 casualties in five major engagements from December 1862 to May 1864.²²⁹ However, the

²²⁷ *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:45, 52, 76, 129.

²²⁸ Fox, *Regimental Losses*, 384.

²²⁹ *Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers*, 5:2-3.

regiment never lost men at the rate experienced in May 1862 when the 5th Michigan suffered approximately 300 casualties.²³⁰

When compared to other Union regiments from the Civil War, the 5th Michigan most definitely stands out. It had the second highest number of casualties of all Michigan infantry regiments in the war. When compared to all Union infantry regiments that fought, it ranked fifth in numbers of casualties.²³¹ A logical explanation for so many combat deaths and wounds in this regiment is the fact that the 5th Michigan played key roles in numerous charges against Confederate positions: twice at Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, and Petersburg.

The 5th Michigan proved to be a good, reliable regiment. In nearly every charge, it captured enemy positions, even though the size of the unit shrunk with

²³⁰ Fox, *Regimental Losses*, 384.

²³¹ George S. May, *Michigan and the Civil War Years, 1860-1865: A Wartime Chronicle* (Lansing, 1966), 84.

every advance. Therefore, it is not a surprise that it was viewed by leaders of the Army of the Potomac as a reliable regiment when called for duty. For their valor, it seems only appropriate that the 5th Michigan's battle flag was one of the first to be planted into the overrun Confederate earthworks at the end of the Petersburg campaign in April 1865. However, it is because of the courage and triumphs of the original members of this regiment who captured the Confederate positions at Williamsburg and Fair Oaks that it earned its rightful nickname, the "Fighting Fifth." And it was also these same men who gave the unit its reputation as a solid, dependable regiment. The newer recruits who fought in the 5th Michigan during later phases of the war followed in their footsteps.

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